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The Politics of Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE POLITICS OF CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS,
1979-1995

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY

TIMOTHY BERRY KREBS

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To Kristen

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CHAPTER I

CITY COUNCIL ELECTION POLITICS

Those who seek public office in the city of Chicago are drawn into the political arena for a variety of reasons. Many want the opportunity to exercise political power and to satisfy their personal ambitions. Others seek office in order to serve the public and to improve their communities. Regardless of motivation, political ambition seems to define Chicago politics. In elections held between 1979 and 1995, 1,135 candidates ran for the 50-member city council.¹ More importantly, the number of candidates who ran in 1995 (289) was 122 percent more than the number who ran in 1979 (130).² Thus, interest in serving on the Chicago city council appears to have become more intense over time.

Of the many candidates who seek local office, which ones are the most successful? Do incumbents dominate election outcomes and, if so, why? In what ways does the political environment affect when candidates run for office? How does campaign finance affect election outcomes? The

¹This total excludes candidates who ran in special elections.

²The increase in the total number of candidates running for alderman occurred despite their being no real change in the average number of open seat contests in these five elections. The average number of open seat elections was 6.2, with a standard deviation of 1.5.

purpose of this study is to assess these issues in local politics by examining four aspects of city council elections: the factors that determine election outcomes, the advantages of incumbency, the behavior of candidates challenging incumbents, and the role of money in local election campaigns.

In order to answer these questions a dataset including more than 700 Chicago city council candidates who campaigned for alderman between 1979 and 1995 was collected. Although others have examined factors that explain election outcomes (see Lieske 1989), this study adds to the literature by studying a larger number of candidates over a longer period of time than is found in most studies of city council elections. The determinants of when candidates' decision to run for office and how money influences the local political process, however, are two areas of the urban politics literature that, to date, either have not been examined or have not been examined very thoroughly. As a consequence this study will enable us to more fully understand local politics and city council election dynamics.

The first section of this chapter discusses how city councils and city council elections have been viewed in the urban politics literature, with specific attention paid to Prewitt's (1970) work on San Francisco Bay Area cities. In this section I seek to set the context for a more *political* understanding of city council politics. The second section

discusses factors related to electoral success in city council elections. By way of comparison, I also discuss findings of scholars who study congressional elections, especially those relating to the advantages of incumbency. This is followed by a review of explanations for the incumbency advantage in legislative elections. A discussion of how the political environment influences decisions of potential candidates to enter elections, with specific attention paid to strategic politicians theory as developed by Jacobson and Kernell (1983), appears in this subsequent discussion. The fifth section discusses the importance of campaign finance in legislative elections. The final section offers a critique of local elections research and suggests ways to extend the literature in this subfield of political science. This section also discusses the analyses planned for subsequent chapters.

City Councils, Electoral Competition, and Democratic Theory

Electoral competition is an important topic because of its linkage to notions of electoral accountability. Democratic theory suggests that the fear of being voted out of office forces incumbent officeholders to pay close attention to the citizens they represent, while executing their political duties (Schumpeter 1987). Ignoring the needs of one's constituents creates fissures within the electoral environment and increases the probability that

strong candidates will emerge to face current officeholders on election day. The pressure of the next election therefore forces incumbents to be accountable to voters.

While the present study does not directly assess the correlation between constituent views and legislative action, it does assess the antecedent condition of accountability, or electoral competition. This may seem ironic insofar as city council elections and their importance to ensuring electoral accountability have been downplayed in the literature. In a study of 87 Bay Area cities, Prewitt (1970) argued that conventional notions of the value of political competition for democratic systems did not apply to local politics because of the peculiar structure and environment within which local politics occurred. By and large the councilmen that he studied were unfazed by electoral circumstances. Fully 25 percent reached office via appointment rather than after a tough election contest and incumbents won 80 percent of the time that they sought reelection. Turnover among councillors also occurred most frequently as a result of individual council members deciding to retire voluntarily, rather than being forced from office by an angry electorate. Finally, what distinguished city council members from other politicians were a desire to perform one's civic duty, the norm of volunteerism, and a lack of political ambition (Prewitt 1970, 210-212).

Due to the number of local governments in the United States and their varied political structures and cultures, drawing generalizations about particular aspects of urban politics is difficult. Prewitt studied cities in one region of one state, all with similarly-reformed political institutions. Do these findings apply in other cities with different political structures and different political cultures? Although Feld and Lutz (1972) reached conclusions similar to those of Prewitt in their study of recruitment to the Houston city council, Engstrom and Pezant (1975) showed that competition for the New Orleans city council was highly politicized and executed by politically skilled candidates with clear political ambitions. The statistics cited above on the number of candidates who ran for the Chicago city council between 1979 and 1995 suggest that this too is a city that is fundamentally unlike the cities studied by Prewitt. This research also adds to current literature a study of a midwestern city with a relatively unreformed political system. For these reasons, studying Chicago will broaden our understanding of city council elections specifically and local politics more generally.

Uncovering what determines entrance to and exit from the Chicago city council is a central goal of this research. One way to examine electoral competitiveness is to look at factors shaping election outcomes. Below I discuss the major variables that have been identified in the literature

as important to shaping election outcomes.

Election Outcomes: Which Candidates Are Most Competitive?

The broader question of electoral competitiveness has been a special concern of legislative scholars for some time (for a summary of the literature, see Jacobson 1992) and only recently has become of interest to urban scholars (see Lieske 1989). Because incumbents comprise a large portion of all candidates, this section begins with a discussion of the incumbency advantage in city council elections. From there I focus on other factors that are expected to affect election outcomes, the incumbency advantage, how the political environment shapes candidates' decisions to run for office, and the role of campaign finance in city council elections.

The Importance of Incumbency in City Council Elections

Like other legislative elections, city council election outcomes are dominated by incumbents (Hagensick 1964; Howell and Oiler 1981; Jamieson 1978; Kirlin 1975; Lieske 1989; Pohlmann 1978). A 1991 survey conducted by the International City Management Association showed that 84 percent of incumbents were successful in their reelection attempts (DeSantis and Renner 1994,40). A similar survey conducted in 1975 showed that between 1962 and 1975 incumbent success rates increased to 78 percent from 72

percent (Karnig and Walter 1977,66). Thus, incumbents' success in city council elections seems to be increasing, much like incumbents in other legislative bodies who have become more secure electorally (Mayhew 1974a).

In addition to increased electoral security, recent surveys showed that incumbents were reelected most frequently in cities with populations over 500,000 (90%), compared with reelection rates of only 62.5 percent in cities with populations between 250,000 and 499,000. This may be related to the value placed on city council seats in these communities (Hagensick 1964). Because of greater prestige, incumbents may try harder to maintain their positions on city councils in large cities than they do in smaller communities. Incumbents also were most successful in cities with district election systems (61.6%) and in cities with partisan election ballots (63.4%) (DeSantis and Renner 1994,41; see also Jamieson 1978,950-951). A recent study of the 1991 Chicago city council elections demonstrated that incumbents realized a 19 point advantage over their challengers (Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner 1995,44).

The value of incumbency is greater in nonpartisan elections (which characterizes most city council elections) as incumbents' name identification replaces the more traditional party cue for voters. Pohlmann (1978) studied voting patterns in New York City between 1967 and 1975 in

order to uncover the relationship between partisanship and incumbency in lower salience elections, such as those for city council and state assembly. He found that the power of incumbency was greater in lower salience elections than in high salience elections such as those for the U.S. Congress (Pohlmann 1978,500; but see Hagensick 1964). Incumbents' power to ward-off strong challenge is buttressed further by voters' propensity to evaluate incumbents individually, rather than as part of the city council on which they serve (Kirlin 1975,268). Thus, generally unpopular councils may not alter the political support that any individual council member may receive. Incumbency also is more important than any campaign activity such as research, personal contact with voters, mass and elite mobilization, and advertising (Howell and Oiler 1981,155) that might also affect election outcomes.

Other factors besides incumbency also have been shown to be important in determining city council election outcomes. In discussing other variables that might influence election outcomes, I pay particular attention to factors that bestow legitimacy on individual candidates, before discussing how campaign spending, racial factors, and political parties might affect election outcomes.

The Role of Legitimation in City Council Elections

Incumbents are reelected most frequently because they

are better known and higher profile candidates. In addition to incumbency, factors that enhance candidates' name recognition and familiarity among voters are important variables. In this section I discuss these credentials and how they affect election outcomes.

The first set of legitimating credentials is candidates' background characteristics. For example, candidates with high status occupations (e.g., attorneys) and experience in nonpartisan and civic organizations often perform better in city council elections than candidates who lack these experiences (Lieske 1989; Merritt 1977). These kinds of background factors permit candidates to develop their communication skills and the professional contacts necessary for waging effective political campaigns. Candidates who hold prior elective offices or appointed positions also realize electoral advantages over candidates lacking such experiences (Merritt 1977).

Other studies of local elections have confirmed the importance of these variables. Byrne and Pueschel (1974) studied Democratic and Republican county central committee elections held in California between 1948 and 1970. They found that candidates' occupation, position on the ballot, ethnicity, gender, and use of a nickname were important predictors of candidates' share of the vote (Byrne and Pueschel 1974). In a survey of voters following local elections in Lexington, Kentucky during the mid-1980s,

Raymond (1992) found candidates' personal characteristics (whether they were perceived as hard working and honest) and background characteristics (job experience, volunteer service, and education) were the single most important predictors of the vote. Next in importance were candidates' name recognition, level of concern for the district, and ideology (Raymond 1992,253).

As another source of legitimation, newspaper endorsements also have been shown to be important predictors of election outcomes. Perhaps the most extensive study of the effect of endorsements in determining local election outcomes was conducted by Stein and Fleischmann (1987) who examined the effects of newspaper endorsements on city council election outcomes in Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Memphis, Peoria and Charlotte. They found that "those candidates receiving newspaper endorsements win at least 68 percent of their races" (Stein and Fleischmann 1987,335; but see Raymond 1992). News media endorsements also were shown to be important predictors of the 1991 Chicago city council election outcomes in a multivariate study conducted by the Chicago Urban League. Candidates who received endorsements from both of Chicago's daily newspapers received an increase of approximately 10 percent in their share of the vote (Lewis, Gierzynski and Kleppner 1995,44).

By far the most systematic examination of electoral

competition in local politics was conducted by Lieske (1989), who studied electoral outcomes in Cincinnati, a nonpartisan city with at-large elections, between 1969 and 1977. He focused specifically on indicators of candidates' legitimacy and acceptability for public office. In bivariate analyses, he reported that factors such as incumbency, candidates' race, campaign spending, education level, news media and party endorsements, and candidates' occupational status were important predictors of total votes received (Lieske 1989,158). In multivariate models, newspaper and partisan endorsements were critical predictors of success for first-time candidates, while political following, race, and ability to secure partisan and media endorsements explained much of the variation in the outcomes of races involving incumbents and experienced candidates (those who had run at least once before) (Lieske 1989,163-165). Because incumbents had the largest political followings among experienced candidates, they realized the largest electoral benefits.

Those who study congressional elections also have noted the value of legitimating credentials for candidates' success. All else being equal, the most successful candidates are those with political experience and ample campaign resources to spend on advertising for their campaigns (Abramowitz 1991; Jacobson 1992). Like council elections, incumbency shapes many outcomes of congressional

contests. In races that do not involve incumbents, candidates and candidates' abilities to communicate their messages to voters shape election outcomes.

Besides background characteristics and media endorsements, the literature also suggests that other variables such as campaign spending, party endorsements, and candidates' race might affect election outcomes. Below I discuss each of these variables in turn before proceeding to a discussion of runoff elections, the political environment and how it affects candidates' decisions to run for office, and the role of campaign finance in elections.

Campaign Spending

Campaign spending is an important determinant of election outcomes because spending permits candidates to communicate with voters about why they should be elected to office. It is far more effective (in terms of the number of voters candidates can contact) than campaigning door-to-door. Experience and credentials are less useful to candidates if they cannot be promulgated to a wide audience. Spending on advertising allows candidates to do this.

In study of partisan elections for a variety of local and state offices, including the city council, in Charlotte-Mecklenberg, North Carolina, Arrington and Ingalls (1984) found that candidate spending was a significant predictor of vote outcomes. This was found to be the case in various

elections they examined even after controlling for incumbency, race, gender, and party affiliation of the candidates. Candidate spending was more important for predicting outcomes in district elections, while incumbency was most important in at-large contests (Arrington and Ingalls 1984,125). A report prepared recently by the Chicago Urban League on the 1991 Chicago aldermanic elections also showed that spending was a significant predictor of candidates' share of the vote (Lewis, Gierzynski and Kleppner 1995,44).

Findings in the congressional elections literature also show that candidates who move thoroughly advertise themselves and their qualifications for office are likely to attract more votes (Abramowitz 1991; Jacobson 1980). Spending is especially important for challengers and candidates running in open seat elections who do not have the same amount of name recognition among voters as is typical for incumbents. The effect of incumbents' spending is somewhat vague (Green and Krasno 1988; Jacobson 1980). While they receive and spend more than their challengers, the effects of more money are not as great as for challengers.

Factors Affecting Election Outcomes: A Summary

Both the literature on city council elections and the literature on congressional elections point to the

importance of experience in determining legislative election outcomes. Incumbents are the most widely known and typically the most politically-experienced candidates in these contests. For nonincumbents, occupational background and civic involvement often lend candidates a certain amount of credibility with voters and other political elites. These advantages often translate into success at the polls. In addition to background factors, other variables such as news media endorsements lend legitimacy to candidates and their campaigns. Voters use newspapers as important sources of information about local politics. News media endorsements provide short-cuts for voters desiring to make informed choices in what are typically low salience elections. Similar to congressional elections, candidates' spending also is a significant determinant of candidates' share of the vote. The more thoroughly candidates can saturate their districts with information about themselves, the more votes they will receive.

The next section focuses on the role of local political parties in shaping local election outcomes and dynamics. Because of reform institutions (e.g., nonpartisan ballots), local parties play less of a role today than they did earlier this century (Welch and Bledsoe 1988). While their role in local elections may be less important, it is not altogether absent, especially in Chicago, a city that historically has had a very powerful Democratic party

influence in local politics.

Political Parties in Nonpartisan Election Systems

Political reformers sought to eliminate the role of political parties in local governments. In their opinion, local politics was apolitical (White 1890) and therefore should be rid of the influence of political parties. Their most enduring legacy has been the nonpartisan municipal ballot. This reform has had its effects on the nature of local politics, candidate emergence, and the types of candidates who win local office (Cassel 1985; Gilbert 1962; Gilbert and Cleague 1962; Hawley 1973; Lee 1960; Robinson and Dye 1978; Rogers and Arman 1971; Welch and Bledsoe 1988; Williams and Adrian 1959).

A fundamental question in local politics is how official designations of nonpartisanship affect the behavior of local parties and political processes. Nonpartisanship has weakened parties but by no means has it resulted in the complete absence of partisan activity in cities with such ballot forms. Nonpartisanship has resulted in varying local political styles. Dutton and Northrop (1978), for example, found that reformed cities, in general, were more likely to be characterized by strong group politics, but lacking strong political parties. In contrast, unreformed cities had both high levels of political party activity and high levels of group activity (so-called "coalition politics").

Not surprisingly, cities with partisan ballot structures have been found to have the highest levels of local party activity (Bledsoe and Welch 1987). But Bledsoe and Welch (1987) also found that party activity was lowest in cities with at-large election systems and nonpartisan ballots, that party activity was no greater in cities with district systems than in cities with at-large systems, and that among nonpartisan cities and those with larger populations were more likely to have more active political parties than those with smaller populations. This is clearly the case in Chicago where the Democratic Party has been, and to some extent, remains, one of the most powerful institutions in local politics. Similarly, the Democratic and Charter parties still play important roles in Cincinnati politics, influencing the outcomes of city council elections there (Lieske 1989).

For cities with active and influential party organizations the center of the party's strength has been the cadres of precinct organizations and party workers who stimulate turnout and votes for the organization's candidates. Wolfinger (1963) showed that precinct organizations and precinct captains had a significant effect on charter reform in New Haven during the late 1950s. "It is just in this sort of low-salience election that political machines are supposed to be most potent because their workers encounter less sales resistance and because the

lower turnout enhances the importance of their pool of voters" (Wolfinger 1963,398; but see Katz and Eldersveld 1961). In their study of 186 cities, Bledsoe and Welch (1987,264) found that "voter turnout is significantly linked to active parties," who also play a role in candidate recruitment (Merritt 1977,739-749).

In an extensive look at the functioning of local political parties, Crotty and his colleagues (1986) found that parties in Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, and Nashville, were very active in a variety of campaign activities. "Focusing on three critical areas of campaign activity - voter registration, door-to-door canvassing, and election-day get-out-the-vote drives - and comparing the parties across urban areas, two things stood out: all of the local parties engaged in each of the activities to a significant degree; and the intensity of effort invested in the individual activities is impressive, again higher than might be assumed" (Crotty 1986,29). Furthermore, the type of group activity (political action committees, business and labor groups) that one sees on the state and federal levels, was conspicuously absent in these cities (Crotty 1986,28).

In summary, we see that nonpartisanship has had a profound effect on city politics. Campaigns and candidates are more individual- or personality-centered in nonpartisan cities than in cities with partisan systems, where parties have greater control over who runs and over election

outcomes. Incumbents are advantaged in nonpartisan systems as voters turn to other voting cues besides party to make summary judgments on candidates' qualifications and experience. But, while nonpartisan cities generally have lower levels of party activity than partisan cities, their presence is only depressed, not completely absent.

Party organizations in nonpartisan cities assist candidates with their campaigns, stimulate voter turnout for endorsed candidates, and generally promote the party's slate of nominees. In addition to factors mentioned above, being chosen by the party for official support also confers recognition and credibility on candidates. In low salience elections, party endorsements represent significant organizational advantages for endorsed candidates. This is especially the case in Chicago, which has a very weak opposition party in the Republicans, and relatively weak group influences (Adrian 1959; Crotty 1986). The Democratic party has dominated Chicago politics since the mid-1950s. Thus, candidates running under the mantra of the Democratic party in their wards should reap large electoral advantages over other candidates who must organize their campaigns without the infrastructure of opposition parties or interest groups that might otherwise be influential in city politics.

Race and Ethnicity in Local Elections

Models of city council election outcomes and

competitiveness also have considered the racial or ethnic characteristics of candidates. In nonpartisan elections where voters have few other voting cues, we might expect candidate race to be an important predictor of the vote (Arrington 1978; Murray and Vedlitz 1978; Pomper 1966). Pomper (1966), in a study of nonpartisan and partisan cities in New Jersey, found that in nonpartisan cities voters used the ethnic and racial characteristics of the candidates as voting cues instead of party affiliation, or issue positions of the candidates. "The goal of nonpartisanship is fulfilled, as party identification does not determine the outcome. In the place of party, ethnic identification is emphasized" (Pomper, 1966,90). In an analysis of voting patterns in nonpartisan and partisan elections, Arrington (1978) also concluded that racial factors replace partisan ones in elections using nonpartisan ballots. This was true even when overtly partisan campaigns were run. "No change toward a partisan voting pattern and away from racial voting occurred until *both* a partisan campaign *and* a partisan ballot were present" (Arrington 1978,260). The effects of race also have been shown to vary according to voters socioeconomic status (i.e., the probability of choosing candidates on the basis of their racial characteristics was lower for voters with higher incomes) (Murray and Vedlitz 1978,38).

Several other studies also have concluded that

candidates' race is an important predictor of councilmanic election outcomes. Lieske and Hillard (1984) studied city council election outcomes in nonpartisan Cincinnati from 1969 to 1977. Regressing vote proportions for black and white candidates on race, class, and partisanship of voting precincts, they found that the "councilmanic vote in Cincinnati is highly structured along racial and partisan lines" (Lieske and Hillard, 1984,553). Similarly, Vanderleeuw (1990) found that levels of own-race voting varied over time and became most extreme as the largest racial groups (in this case black and white) approached equality in size. In contrast to Vanderleeuw's conclusions, a recent study of nonpartisan, at-large councilmanic elections in Detroit showed that levels of racial voting were high among white voters even after blacks became the city's racial majority (Herring and Forbes 1994,444).

Studies of Chicago politics also have demonstrated the importance of racial and ethnic voting in city politics (Kleppner 1985). In a study of mayoral elections between 1955 and 1979, Inglot and Pelissero (1993) found that ethnicity affected voting patterns within the city's Polish community. Especially among the middle-class Polish wards of the city's Northwest Side, ethnic voting improved the electoral fortunes of Polish candidates running against candidates backed by the machine. Racial voting is clearly less important in aldermanic elections than in citywide

elections, due to the presence of majority race wards in the city.

Candidates' race or ethnicity plays a considerable role in determining election outcomes in local politics. This is due, in part, to the fact that there is often little knowledge about candidates and what they propose to do once elected. And, although candidates' race or ethnicity provides voters with minimal information, it can signal to voters that candidates are in some way either like them or unlike them in terms of goals, values, and experiences. The finding that candidates' race or ethnicity provides voters with information about candidates can have powerful influences on elections. As Lieske (1989,169) concluded in his study of Cincinnati: "In sum, there is nothing ... to alter our ethnocultural interpretation of urban electoral politics. If anything, the results of this research provide support to a growing body of thought that is reinterpreting American electoral politics within a framework of racial, ethnic, and cultural conflict." Because voters often choose candidates on the basis of racial or ethnic reasons, it is important to control for this variable in models of election outcomes.

Runoff Elections

One feature that distinguishes city council elections

from other legislative elections is the runoff.³ In nonpartisan elections all candidates compete against one another at the same time, and the one who receives a majority of the votes is declared the winner. If no candidate receives a majority, then the two top vote-getters compete against each other in a runoff election.

Fleischmann and Stein (1987) examined nonpartisan city council runoff elections in Dallas, Fort Worth, and San Antonio, by testing three hypotheses about runoff elections developed in studies of state and congressional elections.⁴ First, that minority candidates are disadvantaged in runoffs when facing white candidates. Second, that primary leaders lose runoffs as voters move to support the underdogs. Third, that incumbents typically lose runoff elections because being forced into runoffs shows incumbent weakness and provides solid reasons for voters to ultimately reject

³Although partisan runoff primaries in state and congressional elections are more common in the South. See Bullock and Johnson, 1985.

⁴In an attempt to explain the factors that affected runoff election outcomes, Bullock and Johnson (1985) examined primary runoffs for statewide, state legislative and congressional races. They found empirical support for the notion that incumbents were disadvantaged in runoff elections. Examining the minority disadvantage hypothesis in a variety of partisan runoff primaries held in Mississippi during 1967, 1971 and 1975, Stewart, Sheffield and Ellis (1995) found that black candidates who won the first primary (the primary before the second runoff primary) did not do so because a large number of white candidates split the vote. Only when the first primary election outcome was close and the black candidate led the field of candidates, were black candidates disadvantaged vis-a-vis whites.

current officeholders in favor of new ones.

Their study found no support for the notion that minorities or primary leaders lose most frequently in runoff elections. However, they did find that incumbents forced into runoffs in district electoral systems did worse than incumbents forced into runoffs in at-large systems. They also found that candidates backed by nonpartisan slating groups did worse in runoff elections, on average, than did those candidates without formal organization support (Fleischmann and Stein 1987,383).

Wanting to test these hypotheses in a non-southern setting, Bullock and Gaddie (1994) applied these hypotheses to Chicago aldermanic runoff elections held between 1975 and 1991. They found that primary leaders and incumbents fared less well, vis-a-vis their southern counterparts in runoffs, than did second place finishers and nonincumbents. They also found that female and minority candidates were not systematically disadvantaged in runoff elections.

As this brief review has shown, studies of runoff elections suggest a number of variables worthy of consideration in any treatment of these contests in city council elections: candidates' race or ethnicity, status as primary leader, and incumbency. In addition to these variables, other factors such as candidates' political experience, media and party endorsements, and spending also should be controlled. By testing fully-specified models in

the Chicago case, one will be able to make more concrete determinations about the dynamics of runoff elections.

Explaining the Incumbency Advantage

As I have shown above, legislative elections, in general, are not very competitive, despite theoretical principles underlying the value of electoral competition for democratic systems. This is because incumbents are involved in most of these contests. In city council elections, incumbents win reelection with great frequency and are especially invulnerable in the country's largest cities.

Incumbency advantage has not been addressed by urban scholars. However, it has been one of the major issues in the congressional elections literature. In order to illuminate possible explanations for the advantage of incumbency in city council elections, I turn now to a discussion of some of the reasons given by congressional scholars for why incumbents are so invulnerable.

Numerous studies have offered alternative explanations for the incumbency advantage in congressional elections. Mayhew (1974a) coined the expression "vanishing marginals" to describe how more incumbents were winning U.S. House elections with high reelection vote percentages (i.e., greater than 55 percent). He concluded that greater use of taxpayer-funded ("frank") mail allowed incumbents to campaign year-round by providing a means through which they

could claim credit for district improvements and advertise their performance in office at no cost, an advantage unavailable to would-be challengers (Mayhew 1974a). Others argued that incumbents solidified their electoral position by paying careful attention to solving constituents' problems with federal agencies, and by providing other constituency services (Fiorina 1977). The ability of incumbents to ensure safe congressional districts by exercising influence over legislative redistricting also has been advanced as a possible explanation for increased incumbent electoral security (Tufte 1973; but see Cover 1977).

Congressional studies also have shown that incumbents face few serious electoral threats because they face few strong challengers (Jacobson 1987).⁵ In support of this notion, Abramowitz (1991) argued that politically-

⁵Banks and Kieweit (1989,1000) have argued that the reason weak candidates enter the electoral fray knowing that they may eventually challenge an incumbent is because the primary fight is less intense. Strong candidates (those with prior elective office experience) avoid the opposition's party primary knowing that the odds of defeating the incumbent in the general election are slim. This increases the odds that a weak candidate (facing other weak candidates in the primary) will emerge victorious at this stage of the electoral process. Losing the general election to the incumbent is less troublesome for candidates with little political experience because they are not expected to win anyway. For experienced candidates a general election loss is more devastating and shows electoral vulnerability. Furthermore, unknown candidates who perform reasonably well against an incumbent can increase their chances of success in subsequent elections (Banks and Kieweit, 1989,1013).

experienced challengers with plenty of resources at their disposal can cut into or decrease incumbents' electoral strength. He also found that incumbents' vote share is significantly affected by unfavorable national party tides and such factors as whether or not incumbents' records were damaged by scandal at the time of their elections (Abramowitz 1991). Still others point to the value of past electoral success and close attention paid by incumbents to district opinion on policy matters (DeBoef and Stimson 1995), the value of fundraising (Epstein and Zemsky 1995), and the role of campaign war chests in warding-off serious challengers (Box-Steffensmeier 1996).

While incumbents enjoy large electoral advantages over their opponents, challengers can overcome these initial disadvantages by spending large sums of money advertising themselves and their campaigns. Challengers with political experience also tend to perform better than political amateurs. Incumbents are hurt by unfavorable national political tides that favor one party over the other. Incumbents also are hurt by short-term political forces such as scandal or a series of unpopular floor votes that mobilize voters in support of the opposition.

While there is little agreement in the literature about why incumbents are advantaged, several areas of inquiry have been identified. Because of official nonpartisanship in Chicago, such factors as national political tides and short-

term forces that might affect the popularity of one party over another are unimportant in explaining the incumbency advantage in city council elections. Other factors such as incumbents' institutional positions, seniority, scandal, redistricting, political experience of the opposition, opposition spending, and organization support, however, may be important to explaining why incumbents enjoy large electoral advantages.

The Political Environment and Decisions to Run for Office

At this point we are safe in concluding that elections involving incumbents are relatively uncompetitive and that open seat elections are much closer and hinge upon such factors as candidate quality and candidate spending. In addition to these factors, the issue of when candidates decide to enter particular races is a critical factor shaping election outcomes. If, for example, the weakest candidates run against the most secure incumbents, turnover in these seats is highly unlikely. Similarly, if the strongest candidates only run in open seat elections, these will be the most competitive races.

In this section, I discuss how the political environment influences when candidates run for office, an important question if highly qualified candidates only run in open seats or against vulnerable incumbents. Because congressional scholars have addressed this issue more

thoroughly than urban scholars, I turn to that literature to inform my discussion.

Incumbents' electoral positions in both House and Senate elections are threatened most significantly when they are faced by high quality challengers, who emerge when incumbents appear vulnerable (Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Lublin 1994; but see Squire 1989). Incumbents attract high quality challengers during periods of economic downturn (when such downturn can be attributed to the policies of the incumbent's party), presidential unpopularity (when the president and the incumbent are of the same party), when national party tides favor the opposition party, and when the incumbent's issue positions are inconsistent with prevailing district sentiment (Bond, Covington, and Fleisher 1985; Jacobson and Kernell 1983).

Incumbents' electoral strength is decreased most significantly when challengers behave "strategically," running when electoral circumstances favor their candidacies (Canon 1993; Jacobson and Kernell 1983). High quality challengers (typically those with prior elective office experience), attract more campaign contributions from local organizations, individuals, and political action committees than less qualified candidates (Jacobson 1980). Because of this, they can run more effective campaigns (Jacobson 1980).

"Strategic" behavior is exhibited on the part of both candidates and contributors, neither of whom wants to risk

losing an election.⁶ Incumbents' stronghold on election outcomes can be loosened, and even broken, when competent challengers decide to run. Thus, in addition to candidate quality and campaign expenditures, when challengers decide to run for office is critically important to the competitiveness of elections (Bond, Covington and Fleisher 1985; Canon 1993; Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Lublin 1994). Popular incumbents are almost always going to win, regardless of their opposition. Vulnerable incumbents, while still more likely to win than challengers, are more likely to lose when faced by highly qualified, politically-experienced challengers.

The urban politics literature has not really addressed this issue in any systematic fashion. Sheffield and Goering (1978), however, in a study of school board elections, found that incumbents ran unopposed more frequently than nonincumbents, suggesting a certain amount of strategy on the part of candidates to avoid races with incumbents. Bledsoe (1993) in his study of city council careers, found a relationship between incumbents' vulnerability and vote share in subsequent elections. Marginal incumbents, who won their first election in close contests, were more likely to

⁶Candidates are risk averse because losing might be the end of their political careers. For contributors, the difficulty of supporting a candidate who does not win is that one's political access to the winning candidate may be closed. Winning candidates are not always eager to open their doors to those who supported their opponents in the most recent election.

be defeated in their reelection bids than incumbents who had won their first election by large margins (Bledsoe 1993,88-90). One reason for this might be that vulnerable incumbents found their opposition to be more skilled than it would have been were they less vulnerable politically.

Interestingly, inter-election vote swings for incumbents were more volatile in nonpartisan elections than in partisan ones. As Bledsoe (1993,90) states:

Nonpartisan councilors are more volatile in their marginality than partisan councilors - they are more likely to build on initially close margins and become secure, and they are more likely to see what should be secure margins evaporate and lose the next election. Council members in legally partisan environments show more stability over time.

He argued that in the more candidate-centered nonpartisan contests, individual political entrepreneurs were more likely to emerge and defeat incumbents. One may reasonably infer from this that in nonpartisan systems, candidates who can build organizations and run effective campaigns, might be better able to defeat vulnerable incumbents. In systems more tightly controlled by political parties, incumbents are more securely shielded from strong opposition.

In this section, we once again see how incumbency shapes the political landscape. Whether or not an incumbent is in the race is a strong predictor of the kinds of candidates who seek office. Generally speaking, the congressional literature shows that higher quality candidates choose to run in open seat elections and against

politically vulnerable incumbents (Bond, Covington and Fleisher 1985; Jacobson and Kernell 1983). On the local level, incumbents who win with impressive margins increase their share of the vote in subsequent elections more rapidly than incumbents who win with less impressive totals. In other words, close elections for incumbents signal to the political environment that incumbents are weak and capable of being defeated. The important point is that the most politically experienced candidates make decisions to run for office on the basis of strategic considerations, which inform them about their chances of winning.

The Role of Money in Legislative Elections

A fourth area of electoral competition in local politics that I examine is campaign fundraising. Campaign fundraising is a critical part of most campaigns, be they for local, state, or national office (see Sorauf 1988). As discussed above, how much money candidates are able to spend to communicate with voters is directly related to number of votes they receive on election day. In order to spend money, candidates must first raise money. An overlooked and under-researched area of the urban politics literature is that of campaign fundraising. Below I discuss the issue of campaign finance in legislative elections.

Campaign spending is a critical campaign activity because it permits candidates to communicate with voters

about their qualifications for office. Candidates communicate with voters through television, radio, newspaper, and billboard advertisements. Congressional scholars who have examined campaign finance point out that candidates also spend money on direct mail, campaign rallies, phone banks, and get-out-the-vote drives (Ansolabehere and Gerber 1994, 1109). Through advertising, candidates are able to promote positive images of themselves and to define their opponents. These factors ultimately increase candidates' name recognition and chances for political success (Abramowitz 1991; Green and Krasno 1988; Jacobson 1980).

In addition to examining the relationship between spending and votes, other analyses have examined the dynamics of campaign fundraising. These studies have attempted to describe and explain the relationship between campaign fundraising and the election cycle (Epstein and Zemsky 1995; Krasno, Green and Cowden 1994). Because Federal Elections Commission reports are disaggregated by reporting periods (usually a period of months), it is possible to understand the "flow" of fundraising during a campaign and how this might vary among candidates. Krasno, Green and Cowden (1994), in a study of fundraising in 1985 and 1986, showed (not surprisingly) that incumbents raised more money than challengers in every reporting period of the campaign, especially directly before the election, and that

incumbents could generate revenue quicker than other candidates in response to well-financed challengers. More importantly, overall levels of challenger fundraising were significantly related to the amount of money they could generate early in their campaigns, suggesting that contributors do not invest in hopeless candidates (Krasno, Green and Cowden 1994).

Campaign fundraising also is an important campaign activity in city council elections.⁷ A report prepared by the Urban League on campaign fundraising in the 1991 Chicago city council elections, however, showed that fundraising success was primarily a function of candidates' race, political organization support, pre-election name identification, and number of opponents. While incumbents outraised nonincumbents in dramatic fashion, this effect did not show up in multivariate analyses (Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner 1995,45). Other than this study, very little work has been done on this issue in the urban politics literature, despite its importance to cities such as Los Angeles and New York that, in recent years, have moved to reform their campaign finance systems for local candidates (Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner 1995,31-38).

In summary, campaign finance plays an important in legislative elections. Spending is a critical predictor of

⁷Similar to campaign research, personal contact with voters, mass and elite mobilization, and advertising (Howell and Oiler 1981).

election outcomes, while fundraising represents an important campaign activity. Who is able to raise the most money and at what time during the campaign are two factors that will likely affect election outcomes. The urban politics literature, however, has not examined these issues in any depth.

Overview of the Study

As this review of the literature has shown, local election outcomes and the outcomes of congressional elections are shaped by many of the same factors. Incumbency, candidates' personal qualifications for office, political experience, and campaign spending all are important predictors of election outcomes. Local elections and those for federal office, however, are different in a number of respects. They occur in different contexts, with different rules that govern outcomes. Nonpartisanship, runoff elections, and the role of political parties are central among these differences.

Two areas of inquiry that have received considerable attention elsewhere but have received no attention in the urban politics literature are (1) incumbency advantage and how the political environment affects candidates' decisions to run for office; and (2) the role of money in local elections. Furthermore, while there have been more attempts in the urban politics literature to understand local

election outcomes, these models, in general, have not been fully specified. In some cases, these models have not controlled for particular variables such as campaign expenditures or important background characteristics of candidates (Howell and Oiler 1981), while others have examined only small numbers of candidates (Lieske 1989).

In order to understand more fully local election dynamics, scholars need to examine larger numbers of candidates, test fully specified models, and utilize time-series designs. The aim of this research is to begin bridging the gap between what we know about congressional elections and what we know about city council elections, while being sensitive to the obvious differences between the two political settings.

To begin this process, Chapter Two establishes the political context of Chicago city council elections and presents the study's research design. Using data collected on city council candidates who ran for office between 1979 and 1995, Chapter Three presents an analysis of election outcomes in both regular and runoff aldermanic elections. Chapter Four examines the value of incumbency in shaping election outcomes and patterns of candidate emergence in local elections. In Chapter Five, I examine fundraising in local campaigns, by analyzing candidates' campaign disclosure reports. A concluding chapter addresses the implications of the findings for our understanding of

electoral competition in city council elections.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH DESIGN

As indicated in the preceding chapter, the central purpose of this study is to understand more fully competition in city council elections. Electoral competition is an important topic because of its linkage to democratic theory, which suggests that elections in a democracy ought to be free and fair and that voters should be able to choose from among a wide range of candidates in determining who their representatives will be.

The following discussion describes how this research attempts to understand electoral competition in local politics. It describes the study's setting, research methods, variables that will be used, and hypotheses to be tested in subsequent chapters. A final section discusses the data that are used in this analysis. Four research areas are identified for analysis: predicting election outcomes, incumbency advantage, the factors that predict candidate emergence, and campaign fundraising in city council elections. Because the study focuses only on Chicago, considerable attention is given to that city's history and political culture. Below I present a justification for studying Chicago city council elections

and then I examine the literature on Chicago politics and urban political machines.

Chicago Politics

Why study Chicago city council elections to understand electoral competition in city council elections? First, the city's 50 city council seats are highly sought-after posts. As mentioned in Chapter One, 289 candidates ran for alderman in 1995 (an average of 5.78 per seat). While I do not analyze the motivations of aldermanic candidates, there are several aspects of the job that might make it attractive for would-be aldermen. The salary paid to aldermen is one possible reason for seeking the office. Before the 1995 election, aldermen were paid \$55,000 annually. After the 1995 elections, the outgoing city council and the mayor agreed to increase salaries for the new city council to \$75,000. They serve four-year terms and, because the position is technically part-time, do not have to relinquish outside income. Quite often this is the first elective office for many aldermen, thus service on the city council provides aldermen with practical experience in government and politics and increases their name recognition with voters, two factors that might be useful in election campaigns for higher office.

Policy-related motivations for would-be aldermen also are apparent. Aldermen are largely responsible for ensuring

that their wards get a fair share of city services and development funds, therefore a certain amount of power and prestige is conferred on these officeholders. Although the Chicago city council is typically a rubber stamp for the mayor (Rakove 1975), it does have the legislative authority to function as a powerful policy-making body as well (Kleppner 1985,241-249). Thus, in addition to the individual factors that might entice someone to run for alderman, there are policy-related reasons for running as well. For these reasons, competition for the office of alderman tends to be intense (at least in terms of the sheer number of candidate seeking the office), a prerequisite for any study of electoral competition.

Second, both structural and cultural aspects of local politics make Chicago a worthy setting for a study of electoral competition. Chicago is a fairly unreformed city when compared to Cincinnati, the other major city whose city council elections have undergone analyses similar to those conducted here (Lieske 1989). Cincinnati's city council is elected in nonpartisan, at-large elections. Because Chicago uses a district format, the differences between these two types of cities can be explored. Cincinnati has reformed political structures and no political machine activity of note.¹ Chicago is reformed in only two ways: its city

¹Cincinnati does, however, have a number of political party organizations that are active in city politics (see Lieske, 1989).

council elections are nonpartisan and they are held in off-years (years in which state and national elections are not held). As we will see below, Chicago also has a strong history of political machine activity. Thus, in general, there might be interesting differences between what we know about a reformed city and what will be learned about a relatively unreformed city.

Third, there is a long history of understanding urban politics through the lens of Chicago. Chicago has been used as a laboratory for understanding local government and politics in countless studies of political machines, bureaucracies, mayoral politics, and ethnic and racial politics.² While these studies have covered almost all aspects of urban government and politics, they have largely excluded the politics of city council elections. As I have shown in Chapter One, only a couple of studies have been conducted specifically on Chicago city council elections (Bullock and Gaddie 1994; Lewis, Gierzynski and Kleppner 1995). This study builds on these two works, as well as the

²The following is a sampling of the literature that has used Chicago as the setting for studies in these substantive areas. On machine politics see Banfield (1961); Banfield and Wilson (1963); Gottfried (1962); Gosnell (1968); Rakove (1975); Allswang (1977); Guterbock (1980); and Erie (1988). On bureaucratic politics see Mladenka (1980); Jones (1981); Koehler and Wrightson (1987); and Mladenka (1989). On mayoral politics see O'Connor (1975); Gove and Masotti (1982); Holli and Green (1984); Kleppner (1985); and Holli and Green (1989). On ethnic and racial politics see Zikmund (1982); Pinderhughes (1987); and Inglot and Pelissero (1993).

work of Lieske (1989), who studied Cincinnati. It does so by examining the factors that shape election outcomes, by looking at the value of incumbency and challenger behavior, and by studying the role of money in local politics. Furthermore, there have been no multivariate, time-series analyses of Chicago aldermanic elections to date.

Below I discuss Chicago's political machine heritage. As I demonstrate, the Chicago political machine is not a monolithic, immutable force. In fact, most agree that the machine does not exist today (Granger and Granger 1987; Grimshaw 1992). In addition to changes to the political machine, demographic changes and redistricting have altered the Chicago political landscape in dramatic ways, especially on the ward level where city council elections occur. I turn now to a discussion of machine politics in Chicago.

Political Machines and Election Outcomes

Chicago is unique among cities because of its ability to resist changes sought by political reformers. As mentioned, nonpartisanship in city council elections and off-year council and mayoral elections are the only two reform elements adopted by city leaders this century. Although ballots are officially nonpartisan, local politics in this city has been dominated by the Cook County Democratic Party ("machine") for the past 60 years (see Rakove 1975).

Under the leadership of Mayor Richard J. Daley, the machine was able to elect its slated candidates in citywide, aldermanic, party committeeman, county, state and federal elections with remarkable consistency. Candidates running with machine endorsement enjoyed the benefits of large numbers of campaign workers, financial support, and the aid of party elites (Guterbock 1980,226-227). To a large degree they still enjoy the benefits of voter registration drives, door-to-door campaigning, and election day assistance from the party organization (Crotty 1986,187). The political structure of ward committeemen and precinct captains that made the Daley machine powerful is still in place, although there currently is no clear leader among the party hierarchy.

Political organizations derive their power from a variety of sources. Some have argued that machines maintain power because of their ability to distribute particularized benefits to supporters of machine-backed candidates (Merton 1949). Others have argued that in addition to engaging in this type of "exchange" behavior, machine leaders ensure that benefits (offices, patronage jobs, constituent services) are distributed widely to incorporate and appease competing interest groups (Dahl 1961). A more recent treatment of machine politics suggested that machines stay in power because of their ability to balance the supply of divisible benefits with the number of demands placed on the

organization (Erie 1988).

In general, the machine in Chicago is considered to be in a state of decline, or even nonexistence (Grimshaw 1992; Granger and Granger 1987; Kemp and Lineberry 1982; Kleppner 1985; Erie 1988). The evidence supporting this view is substantial. Kemp and Lineberry (1982), for example, posited that the Chicago machine relied upon a large number of "deliverable" (high turnout, high degree of machine support) and "controllable" (low turnout, high degree of machine support) wards for its electoral domination. As they have demonstrated, however, in the 1977 special election primary following Daley's death, the number of deliverable wards decreased substantially at the same time that the number of "renegade" (high turnout, anti-machine vote) increased (Kemp and Lineberry 1982,11). Beginning with the 1967 general election, the number of deliverable black wards also decreased. Prior to this time, these wards were critically important for machine success (Kemp and Lineberry 1982,17). As support from predominantly black wards became less certain during the 1970s, the machine grew more dependent on votes from white ethnic wards, which were shrinking in number vis-a-vis minority wards (Kemp and Lineberry 1982,23).

Grimshaw (1982,65) also has argued that the machine lost black support in the late 1960s. By the early 1970s, a split in the city's politics along racial lines was evident.

The machine could no longer assume unified black support, nor could it appease the demands of the black middle-class for equality in education, housing, and jobs, without the risk of alienating its white ethnic voters, who preferred a more conservative approach on matters of racial integration and equality. Because of increased minority power and a smaller white ethnic presence in the city, the machine lost its grip on party primary election outcomes. Primary election outcomes (in partisan elections) were critical to the machine because in a one-party area, primary election winners typically win the general election (Grimshaw 1982,71-85).

The Michael Bilandic and Jane Byrne administrations that followed Daley further antagonized relations between the machine and the black community. Bilandic angered the black community when he and aldermen Edward Vrdolyak (Tenth Ward) and Edward Burke (Fourteenth Ward), convinced black alderman Wilson Frost (Thirty-Fourth Ward), who was President Pro-tempore of the city council, to support Bilandic as Daley's successor, in exchange for becoming the chairman of the city council's powerful finance committee (Grimshaw 1992,150). Byrne, who had won the 1979 mayoral election with support from the discontented black, lakefront liberal, and Northwest Side Polish wards, quickly lost support from the black community when she sought, unsuccessfully, to expand her political base to include more

white ethnics. Fearing a reelection fight with Richard M. Daley in 1983, she began to place white ethnics in control of Chicago public schools, public housing and the ward redistricting process, three areas of city government where blacks either had, or had wanted, to exercise more power. In doing so, Byrne alienated herself from the coalition of voters that comprised two-thirds of her winning coalition in 1979, blacks and lakefront liberals (Grimshaw 1992,160). Anger in black and liberal wards in response to Byrne administration policies, a massive voter registration drive in the black community, and Richard M. Daley's bid for the Democratic nomination for mayor in 1983, opened the door for Harold Washington, a black congressman from the city's South Side (Grimshaw 1992,164).

In addition to broad political changes that decreased machine strength, the internal dynamics of the machine changed in the aftermath of Daley's death. The positions of mayor and party chairman, unified under Daley, were separated. Bilandic, an alderman from Daley's own 11th Ward became mayor, and George Dunne, an administrator and long-time party activist, became party chairman. While Daley had centralized his control over ward committeemen (and thus over election outcomes in the wards), "the party organization, under Dunne, became a much more decentralized structure, with power devolving to the ward committeeman to a degree unknown during the Daley years" (Rakove 1982,227).

In addition, control of patronage shifted from the organization to the mayor's office (Rakove 1982,227). With fewer resources to control and faced with an increasingly powerful set of ward committeemen, the centralized machine that had existed under Daley lost control. In the 1979 mayoral primary, the machine even failed to perform its "gatekeeper" control over the election ballot, as Byrne emerged and successfully exploited a natural disaster (the blizzard of 1979) to win the primary election over incumbent Mayor Bilandic (Kemp and Lineberry 1982,24). Upon assuming office, Byrne gutted the bureaucracy of its top-level officials who controlled most of the policy expertise in the city. She was then forced to turn to lower-level party operatives who "were unfamiliar with the dynamics, informal relationships, and policies of the system that Daley had created and Bilandic had retained" (Rakove 1982,232) for policy and political advice. This further increased the power of the city council and ward committeemen at the expense of the professional bureaucracy and the city's business leaders (Rakove 1982,232-243).

During the 1980s, regular Democrats (those slated by the leadership of the Cook County Democratic Party) lost the mayoralty twice. In the 1983 mayoral election, the machine lost again as Democratic primary voters backed Harold Washington, the city's first black chief executive, against two white candidates, incumbent Mayor Byrne and the late

Mayor Daley's son, Richard. Washington was reelected in 1987. "Thus, for some years, there has been more myth than reality to the notion of the Machine's invincibility, and there are solid reasons to suppose that its decade-long decline is not going to be reversed" (Kleppner 1985,246). In a recent interview, Richard M. Daley supported this conclusion about the weakened Chicago machine "There's no machine. There's nothing" (Kass 1996,17).

Despite these setbacks, a 1981 survey of party leaders in Cook County suggested that politics on the ward level in Chicago has changed very little over time (Crotty 1986). In particular, Democratic party leaders have been reluctant to embrace new forms of campaigning - high technology polling, telephone canvassing, and television appeals - preferring to cling to "retail" politics, based on one-on-one contact with voters (Crotty 1986). Ward-level party officials have deep community roots and are still very committed to maintaining political control of their wards (Crotty 1986). Thus there may be reason to believe that these activists did not suddenly disappear following the Bilandic defeat and Washington's watershed victory in 1983. In characterizing the Chicago Democratic Party today, it is reasonable to suggest that it represents a loose factionalism, composed of 50 separate fiefdoms (wards) controlled by ward committeemen and aldermen. In this respect it more closely resembles the decentralized organization that existed prior to Daley being

elected mayor in 1955, when he immediately moved to consolidate both governmental and political authority in the mayor's office. The major difference between ward politics today and ward politics prior to 1955 is that the current ward committeemen do not have the same power and patronage resources to divide among the party faithful (see Rakove 1982,217-218 for a description of the pre-1955 Cook County political machine).

City Council and Ward Politics in the 1980s and 1990s

The election of Harold Washington in 1983, and the 1986 special elections that sent four new minority representatives to City Hall, had profound effects on the city council and ward politics.³ During the 1983 election, "an unprecedented number of new and reform-minded black and Hispanic ward leaders were swept into office, clinging to Washington's long coattails. By 1987, over 80 percent of the black aldermen in the council had been elected during the Washington era, and nearly all of them had built their political careers outside the machine" (Grimshaw 1992,182). Despite these victories, in the early 1980s the council was still controlled by white ethnic politicians determined to block Washington's reform agenda. They immediately moved to assign loyal supporters to committee chairmanships, block

³Between 1979 and 1995, the ward boundaries in Chicago were redrawn six times (1981, 1982, 1983 (twice), 1986, and 1992).

mayoral appointments, and pass their own budget. Not since Daley removed much of the policy-making authority from the council in 1955 had the council exercised such power (Grimshaw 1992,185).

White ethnic control of the city council and minority control of the mayor's office ushered in a period of intense political and racial fighting between the executive branch controlled by Washington, and the city council, controlled by 29 anti-Washington aldermen (25 of whom were white) (Kleppner 1985,247-248). This period is commonly referred to as the "council wars." Only as a result of court-ordered redistricting and special elections in 1986 did this period end. Following the special election, reform-minded members of the council were joined by four new minority members sympathetic to Washington's agenda. The balance of power in the council was split evenly, with 25 members supporting Washington and 25 members opposing him. Because the mayor is entitled to cast tie-breaking votes in the city council, the pro-Washington forces now controlled the agenda and policy outcomes. Thus the political exclusion experienced by blacks and other minorities during successive administrations in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and during the period of the "council wars," motivated blacks and other minorities in city council contests as well as in citywide races.

Redistricting. As mentioned above, increased minority presence on the city council resulted from a series of court decisions that substantially re-worked the city's ward boundaries, largely in favor of minority interests. The transformation of the city's ward boundaries reflected profound demographic shifts that have occurred in Chicago during the past 25 years. For example, in 1970, 65.6 percent of Chicago's population was white. By 1980 that total had decreased to 42.9 percent and in 1990 whites comprised only 37.9 percent of Chicago's population. In 1970 blacks comprised 32.6 percent of the population, a total that increased to 39.7 percent in 1980, and decreased only slightly in 1990 to 38.5 percent. Hispanics are the only group that has seen a steady increase in their percentage of the population, going from 7.4 percent in 1970 to 14 percent in 1980 and 19.6 percent in 1990.⁴

For the most part, these demographic changes have only slowly translated into greater minority representation in the city council. After the 1979 election, blacks and Hispanics held only 32 percent of the seats in the city council, despite being over 50 percent of the population. By contrast, whites held 68 percent of the seats in the city council, despite comprising only slightly over 40 percent of

⁴This information was taken from the 1970 and 1980 Chicago Statistical Abstracts and from the *Metro Chicago Political Atlas-1994*, Metro Chicago Information Center, Northern Illinois University. p.6.

the population. After the 1983 election, whites still controlled 64 percent of the city council, while blacks and Hispanics held only 36 percent.

The relationship between population and seats began to change after the 1987 elections, which were the first regularly scheduled elections following court-ordered redistricting and special elections in 1986. Whites saw their percentage of seats drop from 64 to 56, while blacks and Hispanics saw their percentage of seats increase from 36 to 44. These numbers remained constant after the 1991 elections, despite a third decrease in size of the city's white population in as many decades. As a result of the 1995 elections, the council is now majority-minority. Blacks and Hispanics make-up 54 percent of the council (roughly equivalent to their numbers in the population). For the most part, between 1979 and 1995 what whites lost in terms of seats, Hispanics gained. Hispanics increased their representation on the city council 14 percent, and whites saw their representation decrease 22 percent.

These changes have dislodged the old guard, white ethnics who dominated Chicago politics for most of this century. Now there are only seven aldermen on the city council who were elected prior to 1980, all of whom are white ethnics.⁵ The distribution of white and minority

⁵Edward Burke (Fourteenth Ward) was first elected in 1969; Theris Gabinski (Thirty-Second Ward) was first elected in 1969; Burton Natarus (Forty-Second Ward) was first

aldermen reflects settlement patterns in the city, with blacks dominating the city's South and West Sides, and whites controlling the city's North and Southwest Sides. In general, the relationship between the current Mayor Daley and the city council is congenial, more closely resembling the relationship between the first Mayor Daley and the city council than anything else. The city council has routinely passed the mayor's budgets by overwhelming majorities. Much of this support is attributable to Daley's close work with the aldermen in ensuring that their wards get a fair share of city revenues (Kass and Kirby 1995).⁶

Ward Politics. The late 1980s represented a significant turning point for minority representatives in ward politics as well. As Grimshaw (1992,182) points out, "Only one-third of the eighteen black committeemen elected in 1988 had been put in office before Washington's election." Minority group

elected in 1971; Bernard Stone (Fiftieth Ward) was first elected in 1973; Richard Mell (Thirty-Third Ward) was first elected in 1975; Eugene Schulter (Forty-Seventh Ward) was first elected in 1975; and Patrick Huels (Eleventh Ward) was first elected in 1977.

⁶It also is related to the fact that during the 1990s, Mayor Daley has made 17 appointments to the council, thus ensuring himself a certain amount of political loyalty. Therefore, while there were dramatic political changes in the city council, the governing relationship between the mayor and council has been relatively calm, despite the fact that the council was increasingly composed of minority group members during this time. This stands in sharp contrast to the early 1980s, when the executive and legislative branches of city government also were controlled by different racial groups.

success in ward elections has profoundly affected the racial composition of the city's ward committeemen. In 1995, the Cook County Democratic Party, the chief organ for past electoral domination, is still led by a long-time party regular (Thomas Lyons), but only a bare majority of Chicago's ward committeemen are white.⁷ More importantly, there are more political independents among the city's ward committeemen than at any time before.⁸ (A political independent in Chicago is a Democrat who opposes machine or regular Democrats.) Ward committeemen today play the role of independent power broker more often than party loyalist, supporting candidates in their own and neighboring wards. Candidates who are supported by high profile committeemen also are not entirely beholden to them once they are elected. In the 1995 city council elections, committeemen in the Second and Twenty-Ninth Wards supported challengers to their incumbent patrons (Ryan 1995,2:1). According to Ryan (1995,2:1 and 2:6):

Such broken alliances have become increasingly common in Chicago politics as former proteges find it easier to break ranks with their mentors...That kind of tiff was unheard of during the Democratic machine's vaunted days of monolithic control. Then, the political lives

⁷In 1995, 25 of the city's 49 ward committeemen were white, 19 were black, and 5 were Hispanic. There was one vacancy.

⁸Current or former committeemen, such as Bobby Rush (Second Ward), Dorothy Tillman (Third Ward), Toni Preckwinkle (Fourth Ward), Luis Gutierrez (Twenty-Sixth Ward), and Danny Davis (Twenty-Ninth Ward), are long-time independent Democrats.

of such ungrateful benefactors would have been abruptly snuffed out.

Another important change in ward politics today is that a majority of committeemen also are elected officials (19 of whom are incumbent aldermen). This is contrary to an earlier period when committeemen stayed "in the background, in control of the ward organization, its patronage, and its perquisites but out of the public eye. There they are not subject to criticism by the mass media and reform groups whose normal targets are public officeholders" (Rakove 1975,109).

Thus, as this section has shown, there have been large changes in Chicago politics during the past forty years. The Chicago political machine controlled election outcomes during most of the period between 1931 and 1975. The degree of electoral control, however, began to decrease in small amounts during the middle 1970s and accelerated during the 1980s with Washington's mayoral election victories and minority group success in ward redistricting, city council and ward committeeman elections. Today, the party is loosely organized at the county level. Ward committeemen are not beholden to party leaders and incumbent aldermen are more independent from their ward's committeeman than ever before (as mentioned, however, in many cases the positions are held by the same person). Individualized power is now exercised in city council elections and ward politics, rather than collective power being exercised through central

party organs. These changes are expected to affect Chicago city council elections because now it might be easier for relatively independent, unknown candidates to compete in open seat races, to challenge incumbents, and to raise campaign funds, than it was when the political machine was organized and centrally directed.

Now that I have discussed the nature of Chicago politics and some of the broader factors in the political environment that have fundamentally altered the course of politics in this city, I move to a general discussion of the research methods used in the study and the models that I will test in subsequent chapters. The models presented below reflect both what is known about local elections, generally, and what is known to affect local election dynamics in Chicago, specifically.

Data and Methods

This study examines candidates who ran in regularly scheduled Chicago city council elections held between 1979 to 1995 and who received five percent or more of the vote.⁹ The year 1979 was chosen as the starting point because that was the first election for which reliable campaign

⁹Because this study is concerned with competitive candidates, I have limited it to only those candidates receiving five percent or more of the vote in their elections.

disclosure data were available.¹⁰ Five elections (1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995) are analyzed. Below I develop models to explain election outcomes, incumbency advantage and candidate emergence, and the role of money in city council elections.

Predicting Aldermanic Election Outcomes

The first area of inquiry that I address is election outcomes. The *dependent variable* is measured by taking the percentage (share) of the vote won by each candidate. Using share of the vote won by each is a more suitable method for measuring election outcomes than using total number of votes received because it accounts for differences in voter turnout across wards. The literature reviewed in Chapter One points to a number of *independent variables* that are useful in predicting election outcomes. These variables can be broken down into four general categories: *political*, *financial*, *endorsements*, and *environmental*.

Political Variables. In general, we know that incumbents typically win reelection. This is due to their greater name

¹⁰The law that governs campaign finance disclosure in Illinois (P.A. 78-1183) went into effect on September 3, 1974 (State of Illinois Board of Elections, 1993:1). Data from the 1975 elections are not included because many of the candidates either failed to report, were not required to report because they did not meet the minimum threshold for reporting purposes, or their records were mishandled by the State of Illinois Board of Elections, the unit of state government responsible for implementing the act.

recognition among voters, experience in office, ability to claim credit for ward improvements, and greater access to media. In my analysis of election outcomes, *I hypothesize that incumbency will be the strongest predictor of electoral outcomes.* The effect of incumbency was measured by including a dummy variable coded 1 for incumbents and 0 for nonincumbents.

Like incumbents, politically-experienced nonincumbent candidates are expected to have greater name identification with voters and thus are likely to win more votes than political amateurs. These highly qualified candidates typically have volunteers or elite connections they can call to work in their campaigns (i.e., to have an organization they can mobilize) and to have greater experience raising money for political purposes. Lieske (1989), in his study of Cincinnati city council elections, used a variety of indicators of political quality such as candidates' achieved status (e.g., professional occupation, education) and experience in previous campaigns to measure candidate quality (all of his measures were dummy variables).

In this study, nonincumbent candidates who had experience in elective office (state legislator, Democratic Committeeman) or some other high-level government position (e.g., an appointed official in a public bureaucracy) were coded 2. Nonincumbents with other types of political experience such as being a political aide, precinct captain,

ward secretary, former alderman, former Democratic Committeeman, or a former candidate were coded 1. Especially in Chicago, candidates with connections to ward organizations or to ward voters might have an advantage over candidates lacking such connections and experience. Those who lacked any political experience at the time of their election were coded 0. *I expect a positive and significant correlation between political experience and candidates' vote share.*

Financial Variables. A second category of variables is financial. As the literature has shown, candidates who are able to spend large sums of money in their campaigns are able to make themselves and their qualifications for office more widely known. Being more widely known improves candidates' ability to garner votes. Among other things, candidates use money to advertise themselves in the newspapers, on radio and television, through direct mail, and via billboard ads. Advertising enables candidates to overcome the disadvantages of obscurity (which is the situation most nonincumbents find themselves in at the start of a campaign). Thus I included in the model a variable for candidates' spending. Candidates' spending for nonincumbents was measured as the total of all spending from the date they created their campaign committees through June

30 of the election year.¹¹ For incumbents (and those who had run in previous elections), campaign spending is the total of all expenditures made from July 1 in the year of their previous election to June 30 of their current election.¹² All spending was measured in 1995 dollars and *is expected to be positively correlated with candidates' vote share*. In addition to candidate expenditures, total opposition expenditures also was included to measure how effectively candidates' opponents were able to campaign and advertise. *This spending is expected to be negatively correlated with candidates' vote share*.

Endorsements. A third category of independent variables is endorsements. News media endorsements are likely to be strongly related to election outcomes because in many cases these might be the only publicity given to candidates' campaigns. Media endorsements often serve as convenient cues for voters when evaluating candidates in nonpartisan elections, when voters cannot rely on party cues. The two major daily newspapers in Chicago are the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times*. Candidates were coded 0 if they received neither of these endorsements, 1 if they were

¹¹Even though the elections are over in February, I assume that spending after the election through June 30 is to cover costs associated with the aldermanic election and is not being used to campaign for some other office.

¹²All spending for other candidates and other elections has been factored out.

endorsed by one newspaper, and 2 if they received both newspapers' endorsements. Because endorsements from the two major papers often overlap, this scale permits one to measure the effects of media endorsements without experiencing multicollinearity that would likely result if the *Tribune* and *Sun-Times* endorsements were treated separately.

A second type of endorsement is that which is conferred on candidates from local political parties or political organizations. Lieske (1989) showed that candidates who received either the Republican, Democrat, or Charter party endorsements were stronger candidates than those candidates who did not receive such support. As discussed above, a critical feature of Chicago politics is the ward political organization. Ward organizations endorse candidates in local elections and then work to get voters to the polls, to advertise their slated candidates, and, in general, to thwart the opposition. To measure the political value of ward endorsements, a dummy variable was included with candidates who received the organization endorsement coded 1, all other candidates 0. Given Chicago's strong Democratic party organization history, *I expect a strong, positive correlation between this variable and candidates' vote share.*

Environmental Variables. A fourth category of environmental

variables are important for understanding election outcomes in both aldermanic and runoff elections. Several aspects of the political context that candidates find themselves in might affect election outcomes. One of these is the number of opponents candidates have in their elections. Because all candidates for a seat on the city council compete against each other at the same time (similar to a party primary election), *a candidate's vote share is likely to be inversely related to the total number of opponents one faces*. In order to determine the independent effect of this possibility, I included a variable for total number of opponents one has in an election. Number of opponents is a continuous variable ranging from one to seven.

Ward demographic factors also should influence candidates' share of the vote. As the literature has suggested, voters often turn to other factors such as a candidate's race or ethnicity in making their choices when other voting cues such as party affiliation are absent (Herring and Forbes 1994; Pomper 1966; Vanderleeuw 1990). In order to control for this, I have coded candidates on the basis of whether or not they were members of the minority population in their ward at the time of the election. Candidates who were in the minority were coded 1 and those who were part of the majority population group were coded 0. *Because of the propensity of voters in nonpartisan elections to use race or ethnicity as a voting cue, I expect minority*

candidates to be disadvantaged in these elections vis-a-vis those candidates who are members of the majority population group.

Predicting Runoff Election Outcomes

Elections to the Chicago city council require a runoff in cases where no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote in the first election. This system ensures that the eventual winner has the support of a majority of voters in the ward. Runoff elections are different than regular aldermanic elections because they pit the strongest two candidates from the first election against one another. They also are different than regular aldermanic elections because voters pay greater attention to the runoff and because candidates and campaigns are intensely focused on winning the support from voters who supported other candidates in the first election. A third way in which runoffs are different than regular aldermanic elections is the length of time candidates have to campaign. Runoffs occur approximately six weeks after the first election, thus candidates have a relatively short period of time to shop for votes. For these reasons, I expect the election dynamics in these contests to be substantially different than the dynamics of regular aldermanic elections. Two variables in particular, money and organization support, should assume greater importance in these contests than they

do in the earlier elections. Below I develop a model to predict the outcomes of these elections.

The outcomes of runoff elections are analyzed using percentage of the vote won by each candidate as the *dependent variable*. The rationale for using share of the vote won is the same one discussed above. In general, it shows how well each candidate performed in the election.

Analyses of the runoff election outcomes will test all of the predictor variables described thus far (with the exception of number of opponents and minority status of the candidates,¹³ plus two other variables that have been identified in the literature as being important in predicting outcomes of these elections. In addition, candidate spending was calculated differently in this model than it was in the model of aldermanic election outcomes. In this model, runoff election spending is the total election spending through June 30 of the election year minus all spending up to the date of the aldermanic election. I assume that pre-aldermanic-election spending produces a higher share of votes only in the first election and not in the runoff election. Candidates with a large amount of resources left over to spend in the runoff campaign can flood their wards with advertising during this relatively

¹³In these elections, number of opponents is constant (each candidate has only one opponent). Ward demographics are likely to be unimportant here as the runoff candidates typically represent the ward's majority population group.

short, but intense, campaign period much more effectively than candidates with few resources.

In the preceding chapter it was noted that three "myths" pervade the study of runoff elections. One suggests that incumbents lose when forced into runoffs because they are perceived as weak, a perception which causes voters to gravitate toward the nonincumbent. A second suggests that minority candidates lose in mixed-race runoffs because white voters rally behind white candidates. A third suggests that the primary election leader loses in the runoff because voters move to support the underdog.¹⁴

Because Chicago's wards are racially and ethnically concentrated, the second myth (minority loss) cannot be tested adequately because most of these contests involve candidates of the same race or ethnicity. The other two myths, however, can be tested. In order to accomplish this, a dummy variable was included in the model for the leader in the first election and for the incumbent. *Both of these variables are expected to be negatively correlated with candidates' share of the vote.*

In summary, election outcomes are expected to be affected by factors that are specific to each candidate, such as political experience or qualifications for office, campaign spending, the ability to obtain critical media and

¹⁴See Bullock and Johnson (1985); Fleischmann and Stein (1987); Bullock and Gaddie (1994); and Stewart, Sheffield and Ellis (1995).

party endorsements, and a variety of environmental factors beyond the immediate control of individual candidates (see Table 1). In addition to examining aldermanic elections, this portion of the study also focuses on runoff elections. By testing multivariate models of runoff election outcomes, one can move beyond the descriptive analyses that dominate the literature in this area.

The Incumbency Advantage and Candidate Emergence

An ever-present concern in electoral politics is the domination of election outcomes by incumbents. This is problematic because of its relationship to democratic theory and the notion that elections in a democratic system should be competitive. In theory, all candidates should start from a level playing field and attempt to capture as many votes as they can based on their ideas for how to improve either the political process, policy outcomes, or both. This ensures that voters have equal information about candidates and can make their decisions about who to vote for on the basis of rational criteria. Of course, election dynamics rarely reflect this ideal. The major factor that affects the ideally competitive election is incumbency. This portion of the analysis considers in greater detail the factors that affect incumbents' share of the vote.

The advantage of separating incumbents from nonincumbents is that it enables one to explore the effects

TABLE 1

**Model of Election Outcomes, Chicago City Council Elections,
1979-1995**

MODEL OF CANDIDATES' VOTE SHARE

I. Dependent Variable: candidates' share of the vote (both
aldermanic and runoff elections)

II. Independent Variables:

A. Political

1. incumbency (+)
2. Democratic Committeeman (+)
3. former Democratic Committeeman (+)
4. Republican Committeeman (+)
5. former Alderman (+)
6. current or former state legislator (+)
7. former candidate (+)
8. political aide (+)
9. political volunteer (+)
10. current or former ward secretary (+)
11. appointed official (+)
12. incumbent in the runoff (-)
13. aldermanic election leader (-)

B. Financial

1. candidate spending (+)
2. opposition spending (-)

C. Endorsements

1. *Chicago Tribune* (+)
2. *Chicago Sun-Times* (+)
3. regular Democratic Organization (+)

D. Environmental

1. number of opponents (-)
2. candidate's minority status (-)

Note: The predicted direction of the relationship is in parentheses.

of variables that would be irrelevant in an analysis of nonincumbents only. Here, the *dependent variable* is incumbents' share of the vote. A second *dependent variable*, incumbents' electoral margin (which can be either positive or negative depending on if the incumbent wins or loses), also is used to measure the competitiveness of elections involving incumbents (see Abramowitz 1991). To measure this variable, the difference between an incumbent's vote share and that of their closest competitor was calculated. In both models, the same independent variables will be employed. They are discussed below.

The literature suggests several *independent variables* that are useful in understanding these specific election outcomes. For the sake of organization, the independent variables can be divided into four categories: *incumbent-related*, *financial*, *endorsements*, and *environmental*.

Incumbent-Related Variables. Incumbent-related variables include seniority, committee assignments, scandal, quality of the opposition, and method of election. Contrary to what one might think, the literature on congressional elections has consistently shown that incumbents with longer tenures in office are at an electoral disadvantage (and thus at greater risk of losing) compared to those who are just beginning their careers or who are in the middle of their careers (Abramowitz 1988, 1991). Some incumbents are

probably more adept at knowing when to retire, rather than waiting to be strongly challenged or even defeated at the polls. *In applying this theoretical principle to city council elections, I hypothesize that as incumbents' seniority increases, their share of the vote and electoral margin will decrease.*

A second incumbent-related variable measures the effect of incumbents' institutional positions on their electoral performance. The congressional literature points to the value of committee assignments for reelection purposes (Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974b). To test the effect of these institutional factors on city council election outcomes, all incumbents were coded according to whether or not they were committee chairman at the time of the election. One might expect that being a committee chairman, especially on high profile committees such as Finance, Budget or Zoning, to be a strong predictor of incumbent's share of the vote and election margin. Theoretically, one might expect that committee chairmen are better able to steer local tax dollars and development projects into their wards and to claim credit for doing so, than rank and file committee members. They also might be able to be more effective ombudsman for business interests in their wards. *I expect committee chairmen to reap larger electoral benefits than rank and file committee members.*

A third incumbent-related predictor of these election

outcomes is the question of whether or not the incumbent candidate has been tainted by scandal. As Abramowitz (1988, 1991) has shown, scandal was a significant predictor of the vote in both House and Senate elections involving incumbents. Admittedly, the measurement of this variable is subjective. If, for example, incumbents were implicated in a bribery scandal, then they were coded as having been tainted by scandal whether they were eventually convicted of illegal activity or not. Petty campaign squabbling or innuendo about corruption are not sufficient enough to classify an incumbent as having been tainted by scandal. This also is the type of factor that does not affect many incumbents overall and when it is a factor, many incumbents are affected at the same time. For example, "Operation Incubator," a 1980s federal investigation into bribery in Chicago politics, resulted in numerous indictments of city aldermen at about the same point in time. Nonetheless, its effect on incumbents' electoral success is expected to be strong. Using dummy variables coded 1 for incumbents involved in scandal, 0 otherwise, *I hypothesize that this variable will be negatively correlated with incumbents' share of the vote and electoral margin.*

A fourth incumbent-related variable refers to the quality of an incumbent's opposition. As much of the literature on election outcomes has shown, incumbents who face high-quality challengers are more likely to experience

tough reelection contests (Bond, Covington and Fleisher 1985; Green and Krasno 1988; Jacobson 1978). Challenger quality was measured by including a variable for the most experienced challengers in races against incumbents. The measurement of this variable is the same as that described above for nonincumbent candidates generally. Challengers were coded 0 if they had no political experience at all. If they had experiences such as being political aides, precinct captains, or political volunteers (among other variables), they were coded 1. If the most experienced challengers had experience in elective positions or were high ranking governmental officials, they were coded 2. Experienced challengers are expected to be more politically-effective than those who have lower levels of experience, thus *I expect a negative correlation between incumbents' vote share and margin of victory in the face of stronger opposition.*

A fifth incumbent-related variable is incumbents' method of selection to the aldermanic post. Most incumbents are initially elected to office. Others, however, are appointed by the mayor to fill a vacancy on the council and then run in the next regularly scheduled election for a full term of office. As mentioned above, there have been numerous appointments to the city council during the time frame under study, especially during the 1990s. Thus many incumbents are running as appointed candidates who have been in office only a short period of time and should not be

expected to enjoy the full advantages of incumbency in their first aldermanic election. To determine if this holds true, appointed incumbents were coded 1, all others 0. *I expect a negative correlation between appointed incumbents and their share of the vote and electoral margin.*

Financial Variables. The financial variables include both incumbents' spending and challengers' spending. For incumbents, this variable was measured the same way it was described above. All spending was adjusted to 1995 dollars to account for inflation. Challengers' spending in this model was aggregated to indicate the total amount of spending by all challengers. While challengers spend money to promote themselves, the practical effect is to decrease an incumbent's share of the vote and electoral margin since most are targeting their actions toward defeating the incumbent rather than other challengers. *Thus I expect that as aggregate challenger spending increases, incumbents' share of the vote and electoral margin will decrease. Conversely, incumbent spending should be positively correlated with incumbents' share of the vote and margin of victory.*¹⁵

¹⁵The effect of incumbents' spending on share of the vote is an interesting theoretical question due to the debate on this issue in the congressional literature (Green and Krasno 1988; Jacobson 1978). Because this has not been examined in the local politics literature, I hypothesize that their spending will be positively correlated with their share of the vote. The results of the analysis will

Endorsements. The endorsement variables are expected to work the same way as described above. Incumbents were coded on the basis of how many news media endorsements they received from Chicago's daily newspapers (0,1,2). Incumbents also were coded 1 if they received their ward organization's official endorsement. *The effect of both of these variables is expected to be significant and positive.*

Environmental Variables. A final category of variables relates to the environment of elections involving incumbent candidates. Similar to the general model of election outcomes the number of challengers (amount of opposition) is included as a control variable. One new environmental variable is redistricting. Redistricting is expected to affect only incumbents because they have a stake in old ward boundaries. By contrast, open seat candidates and challengers have no stake in old ward boundaries and thus are unaffected by any changes generated from redistricting. Conceivably, the effect of redistricting on incumbents' share of the vote could be neutral, depending on the number of incumbents whose districts were made safer, rather than less secure. Practically, however, I expect that the effects of a safer seat will not balance out the negative effects wrought by an unfavorable redistricting. *Thus*

determine the exact effect of incumbent spending in local elections, and whether or not it operates the same way that it does in House elections.

incumbents whose districts were redrawn as a result of the 1980 or 1990 censuses, are expected to receive fewer votes than those whose districts were not redrawn.

In summary, the ability of incumbents to win votes is expected to be a function of certain variables specific to them such as institutional positions (e.g., committee chairmanships), seniority, scandal, running as appointees, and spending. It also is expected to be vary in relation to challenger quality and spending, media and party endorsements, and environmental factors that affect incumbents and challengers alike (see Table 2).

These models, however, do not explain candidate behavior. In the following section I propose models to explain how the political environment affects decisions by candidates to enter particular races. I discuss how the political environment affects nonincumbents generally, before presenting a model to explain the emergence of challengers. The unit of analysis is the ward. In both cases, I focus on the number of candidates who choose to run at any given time, as well as the political experience of those candidates.

Predicting Nonincumbent Candidate Emergence and Candidate Quality

Chapter One discussed how candidates in legislative elections make decisions to run for office on the basis of

TABLE 2**The Incumbency Advantage and Challenger Behavior Models,
Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995****INCUMBENCY ADVANTAGE MODEL****I. Dependent Variables:**

1. incumbents' share of the vote
2. incumbents' electoral margin

II. Independent Variables:**A. Incumbent-Related**

1. seniority (-)
2. committee chairman (+)
3. challenger quality (-)
4. method of selection (not appointed/appointed) (-)
5. scandal (-)

B. Financial

1. incumbent spending (+)
2. aggregate challenger spending (-)

C. Endorsements

1. *Chicago Tribune* (+)
2. *Chicago Sun-Times* (+)
3. regular Democratic organization (+)

D. Environmental

1. number of challengers (-)
2. redistricting (-)

CANDIDATE BEHAVIOR MODEL**I. Dependent Variables**

1. challenger quality
2. number of challengers

II. Independent Variables: environment variables only.

1. redistricting (-)
2. machine ward (-)
3. open seat/non-open seat (-)
4. percent black in the ward (+)
5. percent Hispanic in the ward (+)

TABLE 2 (continued)**The Incumbency Advantage and Challenger Behavior Models,
Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995****CHALLENGER BEHAVIOR MODEL****I. Dependent Variables**

1. number of challengers
2. challenger quality

II. Independent Variables**A. Incumbent-Related**

1. previous election margin (+)
2. seniority (+)
3. scandal (+)
4. method of selection (not appointed/appointed) (+)
5. cash-on-hand (-)
6. committee chairman (-)

B. Environmental

1. redistricting (+)
2. percent black in the ward (+)
3. percent Hispanic in the ward (+)
4. machine ward (-)

Note: The predicted direction of the relationship is in parentheses.

objective criteria. In a general sense, these criteria indicate to candidates their odds of winning. For example, more candidates may choose to run in open seat elections thinking that their chances of victory are greater because they do not have to face incumbents. Or, more candidates may choose to run against incumbents who are perceived as politically vulnerable. In other words, the more politically-savvy candidates behave "strategically."

Does this idea, developed in the congressional elections literature, apply in local elections? To answer this question, I examine the behavior of all nonincumbents. Two dependent variables are employed: total nonincumbents in each race and political experience of the most experienced nonincumbent in each race. If more candidates run in open seat races than against incumbents, then there would be evidence to suggest that these candidates made their decisions to run for office on the basis of some objective criterion (e.g., absence of an incumbent on the ballot). In addition, knowing when experienced candidates decide to run for aldermen is important because of all nonincumbents, ones with experience are expected to be the most successful. Moreover, it is important to know if experienced candidates are more strategic in their behavior than candidates without experience. I first analyze all nonincumbents together, before examining challengers specifically.

In looking at nonincumbents generally, *I expect to find*

that more and better candidates run in wards that are recently redistricted than in wards that are not. I expect this to be the case because the political environment in redistricted wards is typically less stable, a characteristic that should encourage candidates to run. Another feature of wards, whether they can be characterized as machine or independent, might affect the behavior of nonincumbents. Due to the ability of machine organizations to control which candidates run for office in particular elections, I expect to find fewer candidates running in these wards. Furthermore, of the candidates who do run, I expect them to have less political experience than candidates who run in non-machine (independent) wards.

Likewise, whether a seat is open or not should affect both the number and quality of nonincumbent candidates who decide to run for office. Knowing how difficult it is to defeat incumbents, candidates will likely avoid running in these races. In addition to these factors, I also control for the demographic composition of wards (percent black and percent Hispanic in each ward). It might be the case that more candidates run in majority minority wards than in majority white wards. Historically, the opportunities for minorities to exercise political power in Chicago have been limited. Because the city's population has become more black and Hispanic over time, I expect this to have some effect on candidate emergence. With the exception of the

demographic characteristics, all of these predictors are dummy variables.

In addition to examining the political factors that might affect candidate emergence generally, I also examine factors that might affect the behavior of political challengers. Chapter One demonstrated that high quality candidates emerge to challenge incumbents when political conditions show that incumbents are vulnerable (Bond, Covington, and Fleisher 1985; Jacobson and Kernell 1983). On the local level, national political circumstances will have no effect (especially in a city dominated by one party) on the quality of challengers or the number who emerge to face incumbents. Thus we turn to purely local factors concerning incumbents themselves.

The *dependent variables* in this analysis are number of challengers incumbents face in their reelection contests and political experience of the most experienced incumbent challenger in each race, measured according to the scale identified above. Both of these variables are continuous. I expect that as an incumbent's vulnerability increases, both the number and quality of challengers will increase. The premise of this analysis is that strategic challengers emerge to face weak incumbents.

How might one measure incumbent vulnerability? Incumbent's *previous election margin* might be the first signal to potential candidates that incumbents are

vulnerable to strong challenges. Thus as incumbents' margin of victory in their previous election increases, both the quality and number of challengers will decrease. Similarly, *incumbent seniority* might precipitate the emergence of a highly qualified and large challenger pool. Challengers often charge that long-time incumbents are out of step with district opinion or that they lack the energy to effectively represent district voters. Therefore, *I hypothesize that as an incumbent's seniority increases, more and better qualified candidates will emerge to challenge them.*

Incumbents tainted by *scandal* and incumbents who were originally *appointed to office* and who are in their first election for the seat, also should attract a larger number of well-qualified challengers than incumbents who are scandal-free or who have already won the office in an election.

A final incumbent variable is their *cash-on-hand* at the start of the campaign. Assuming that challengers make decisions to run sometime during the summer or fall of the year before the election, one might expect that the amount of money an incumbent has on hand in July (the summer finance disclosure report deadline is June 30) prior to the election might have a deterrent effect on the quality and number of challengers who emerge to face incumbents. In other words, incumbents with large campaign war chests are better able to deter strong challengers than incumbents with

fewer resources. In order to test this proposition, I included in the analysis the amount of money incumbents had in their campaign accounts on July 1 in the year before the aldermanic election. *I expect that as incumbents' cash-on-hand at the start of the campaign increases, the quality and number of challengers will decrease.*

Redistricting also is expected to play a part in the decisions by potential candidates to challenge incumbents. Incumbents who are running for the first time under new ward boundaries are more likely to face high quality challengers, as well as a greater number of challengers, than incumbents whose ward boundaries are not redrawn. Redistricting often gives a ward new voters that incumbents have not incorporated into their base of support. These new voters may provide the support that strong challengers can exploit to their advantage, forcing incumbents into runoffs or even winning the election outright. Thus I included a dummy variable for redistricting to test the hypothesis that redistricted incumbents are more vulnerable to strong challengers than those whose ward boundaries have not changed. For reasons identical to those presented above, I also control for ward demographic factors (percent black and percent Hispanic in each ward) at the time of the election.

Having developed models to predict election outcomes, and to explain the incumbent advantage and nonincumbent candidate emergence (see Table 2), I now move to the third

part of this analysis of Chicago city council elections. Below I specify a model to understand competition for campaign contributions in city council elections, a factor that is critically important to how well candidates are able to advertise themselves and put their qualifications for office before the voters.

Examining the Role of Money in City Council Elections

With the exception of a Chicago Urban League study of campaign finance in the 1991 Chicago city council elections (Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner 1995), there have been no in-depth studies conducted on this topic in the urban politics literature. The analysis in Chapter Five addresses this question in two ways. First, I examine how candidates' fundraising changes throughout the election cycle. Does fundraising become more intense immediately before the election, or are candidates concerned with other campaign activities (such as meeting voters or community groups) at that time? Second, I examine the variables that affect candidates' ability to raise money for their campaigns. Because finance data are somewhat more complete in years later in the time frame, I analyze fundraising for 1987, 1991, and 1995 only.

Campaigns and Fundraising. The first way that I examine fundraising is by looking at the "flow" of campaign

contributions within election campaigns. A recent study of House elections indicated, not surprisingly, that incumbents held a fundraising advantage over nonincumbents in every campaign reporting period between 1985 and the 1986 House elections (Krasno, Green and Cowden 1994). Because campaign disclosure reports are required of city council candidates at different times before the election, it is possible to understand the specific points during campaigns that candidates are most heavily involved in fundraising.¹⁶ This primarily descriptive examination of fundraising focuses on differences between incumbents, challengers, and candidates running in open seat elections, as well as candidates required to compete in runoff elections.

Predicting Candidates' Fundraising. This chapter also tests a model of candidates' fundraising using candidates' total contributions as the *dependent variable*. Fundraising is examined at two points in time. The first time point is December 31 in the year prior to the election. The second time point is June 30 of the election year. By examining fundraising at two points in time instead of one, it is possible to gain a better understanding of how campaign fundraising is affected by different variables during the

¹⁶Because candidates are only required to report spending on an annual basis (in early years) and a semi-annual basis (in later years) it is not possible to analyze the "flow" of spending in a similar fashion during 1987.

election cycle. In addition, by including all candidates together I can compare incumbents to nonincumbents. After analyzing all candidates together I look specifically at factors that might influence challengers' ability to raise money for their campaigns. I expect that candidates' total contributions are largely a function of the various independent variables already discussed, as well as some new variables that will be outlined below.

When examining fundraising at the first time point, I use incumbency, candidate's race or ethnicity, number of opponents, and fundraising effort, as predictor variables. If incumbents raise significantly greater amounts of money than nonincumbents, this should be reflected in this variable. *I hypothesize that incumbents will be able to raise more money than nonincumbents for two reasons. First, they have probably developed more extensive contacts during their tenure in office that allow them to raise more money than nonincumbents, who are less likely to have developed an extensive network of contributors. Second, contributors are expected to more readily back incumbents because of the greater likelihood that incumbents will win reelection.*

Candidate's ability to raise money also should be related to their race or ethnicity. Assuming that candidates for local office raise most of their funds within their own wards (see Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner 1995), it is likely to be the case that candidates running in more

affluent wards will raise more money than candidates running in less affluent wards. Because black and Hispanic candidates tend to run in wards that are less affluent than white wards, *I expect to find a negative relationship between candidates' race and fundraising.*

Number of opponents also should influence fundraising. Since it is likely to be the case that candidates are seeking funds from within their own wards, a candidate's ability to raise money might be related to the number of other candidates who are seeking funds from the same sources. *Thus, I expect that number of opponents should have a negative effect on candidates' fundraising.*

Candidates' fundraising also should be a function of the effort or time they devoted to this campaign activity. In order to account for fundraising effort, I include a variable that measures number of months candidates were involved in fundraising prior to the election, using information gathered from candidates' campaign disclosure reports. *I expect candidates' fundraising to be higher where candidates spend more time working on fundraising.*

In addition to incumbency, candidate's race or ethnicity, number of opponents, and effort, opposition spending also should affect candidates' fundraising. Spending, especially on advertising, is one of the most visible signs to candidates about how well their opponents are able to reach voters and to increase their own name

identification. *As this number increases, I expect candidates to counter by raising funds more aggressively.*

Finally, I test to see if fundraising that is done early in campaigns relates to fundraising that occurs later. In other words, is successful fundraising a cumulative process, affected by the ability of candidates to raise money early? Krasno, Green and Cowden (1994) have found that the ability of House challengers to raise money was significantly related to the amount of money that they could generate early in their campaigns, suggesting that contributors were willing to give to candidates who could "prove" their fundraising ability. The same dynamic might be at work here, as candidates build on fundraising momentum generated early in the election cycle. *Thus I expect fundraising totals (less the amount from the first reporting period) of candidates to be positively related to the total amount of money they are able to raise early in the campaign.*

Challengers' Fundraising. After I examine the correlates of fundraising for all candidates, I examine factors that affect challengers' ability to raise money for their campaigns. In doing so, I test all the variables that have been identified above, as well as a measure of challenger quality. The ability of challengers to raise campaign funds is expected to vary according to their *political experience.*

The more politically experienced they are (based on the political experience indicator I have used throughout this chapter), the more campaign funds they are likely to receive.

Campaign Fundraising: A Summary

Chapter five focuses on the dynamics of campaign fundraising as it occurs in the election cycle. This is an important topic because *when* candidates are able to generate contributions often has a significant effect on election outcomes. If incumbents are the only candidates who can raise large sums of money in the month before the election, then this has profound implications for the competitiveness of these elections. If only politically-experienced nonincumbents can raise large amounts of money immediately before the election, then what are the implications for citizen-politicians who lack real "political" experience, but who nonetheless want to serve their wards as alderman? In order to discuss these larger questions, one needs basic information on campaign fundraising. This analysis seeks to provide that information.

In Chapter Five I also test a model to predict candidates' total contributions (see Table 3). The ability of candidates to raise money for their campaigns is expected to be related to a variety of factors, such as incumbency, fundraising effort, political experience, opposition

TABLE 3**Model of Candidates' Total Contributions, Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995**

MODEL FOR ALL CANDIDATES**I. Dependent Variable:**

1. candidates' total contributions
2. candidates' total contributions (minus contributions from the first reporting period).

II. Independent Variables**A. Candidate-Related**

1. incumbency (+)
2. fundraising effort (+)
3. candidate's race: black or Hispanic (-)

B. Financial

1. opposition spending (+)
2. early campaign contributions (+)

C. Environmental

1. number of opponents (-)

CHALLENGERS' FUNDRAISING MODEL**I. Dependent Variable**

1. challengers' total contributions
2. challengers' total contributions (less first reporting period receipts)

II. Independent Variables**A. Candidate Variables**

1. candidate quality (+)
2. fundraising effort (+)
3. candidate's race or ethnicity: black or Hispanic(-)

B. Financial

1. opposition spending (+)
2. early campaign contributions (+)

C. Environmental

1. number of opponents (-)

Note: The predicted direction of the relationship is in parentheses.

spending, number of opponents, and race or ethnicity. I also expect fundraising to be related to the ability of candidates to generate funds early in their campaigns. The findings from this portion of the analysis will extend the existing literature on local elections into an area of inquiry that has been covered extensively by those studying other legislative bodies such as the U.S. Congress.

Methods and Data Sources

This study uses both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to reach conclusions about the politics of Chicago city council elections. Ordinary least squares regression analysis is used to explain variation in the study's dependent variables (see Tables 1, 2, 3). This statistical method allows one to test the effects particular independent variables have on the dependent variable holding constant all other independent variables in the model. Ordinary least squares is useful in cases where the dependent variable is continuous or scaled in ratio form (i.e., when zero is a meaningful value). Predicting candidates' share of the vote is an example of a variable that is continuous. In any election, candidates can receive between zero and 100 percent of the vote. The regression coefficients that are produced by ordinary least squares represent the effect on the dependent variable of a one unit change in the independent variable, holding constant other

independent variables.

The data for this study can be broken down into five general categories: *candidates' background data, official election returns, campaign finance, incumbent-related variables, and ward demographics*. In general, candidates' background data come from newspaper clippings files of aldermanic elections held at the Municipal Reference Desk in Chicago's Harold Washington Library. These files are an invaluable source of data on aldermanic elections because they include information from Chicago's major daily newspapers, as well as information from the hundreds of community and neighborhood papers that exist in the city. Information on candidates' background characteristics such as occupational status, political experience, ward organization connections, newspaper endorsements, and race were gleaned from these sources. The 1979 and 1983 election return data also were gathered from the Municipal Reference Desk's collection of official returns. Election return data for 1987, 1991 and 1995 were gathered from official returns located at the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners.

Campaign finance data were collected from the State of Illinois Board of Elections, which houses the campaign disclosure reports filed by all candidates running for alderman whose expenditures or revenues exceeded \$1,000 at any point during their campaigns (State of Illinois Board of Elections 1993,1). The first step in collecting these data

was to complete separate request forms for each candidate's political campaign committee(s). The completed forms were then mailed to the State Board of Elections offices in Springfield, Illinois, where a member of the staff copied the campaign disclosure reports. In the end, more than 1,000 (4x6) microfiche cards were copied and delivered. These cards contain both revenue and expenditure data on all aldermanic candidates who entered elections between 1979 and 1995 and who were required by law to file reports. In order to ensure a complete set of records, an inventory was taken of the campaign disclosure reports that I requested versus the ones that I received. Ultimately, there were only a few disclosure reports that did not make it into the first box of reports that were mailed to me in late September, 1995.

Finally, incumbent-related variables such as committee assignments were collected from the Harold Washington Library's collection of the official proceedings of the city council. Ward demographic data were collected from city government reports based on official census data (City of Chicago 1973, 1983, 1991, 1993; Election Data Services 1995).

The research design that I have presented in this chapter is suitable for answering the following four questions. First, which factors determine election outcomes in both aldermanic elections and runoff elections? Second, which factors undergird the incumbency advantage? Third,

which factors explain decisions by candidates to run for the Chicago city council? And, fourth, which factors predict candidates' ability to raise campaign funds? The following chapter presents the analysis of election outcomes, in both regular aldermanic elections and runoff contests.

CHAPTER III

DYNAMICS AND COMPETITION IN CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

This chapter is concerned with determining which factors affect outcomes in city council elections. It presents descriptive, as well as inferential, evidence from Chicago city council elections in an attempt to address this issue. The results of the analysis will broaden our understanding of city council election dynamics and competition for office.

The chapter is divided into several distinct sections. The first section discusses the results of multiple regression analyses performed on each election year in the time frame and attempts to discern which factors (e.g., incumbency, spending, media endorsements) are most important in predicting candidates' share of the vote. The second section presents results from regression analyses undertaken on nonincumbent candidates, an important subset of all candidates, which includes candidates who run in open seat contests as well as those who challenge incumbents. The third section examines variation in city council election dynamics vary between wards. For example, do the same factors predict election outcomes in majority black and majority white wards? Because there are no *a priori* reasons

for thinking that the dynamics might be different, this part of the analysis is somewhat more exploratory in nature than the analyses that precede it. The fourth section examines runoff elections, which are required when no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote in the initial aldermanic election. The final part of the chapter summarizes the major findings and addresses the implications of the results for our understanding of urban politics.

The analyses presented in this chapter are based on a sample of 631 candidates who ran for the Chicago city council in regularly scheduled elections held from 1979 to 1995. All special elections were excluded. I also excluded all candidates who received less than five percent of the vote in their elections. There were both theoretical and practical grounds for limiting the study in this fashion. Theoretically, because I am interested in electoral competition, it made sense to exclude candidates who were not minimally competitive in their elections. Of the various reasons for seeking local office (see Bledsoe 1993,70-80), many do so simply for the publicity it gives them and are not seriously concerned with winning. Practically, it reduced to a manageable level the number of observations for which I had to collect data. As mentioned in Chapter One, more than 1,100 candidates ran for the city council during this period.

To begin the analysis I present below descriptive

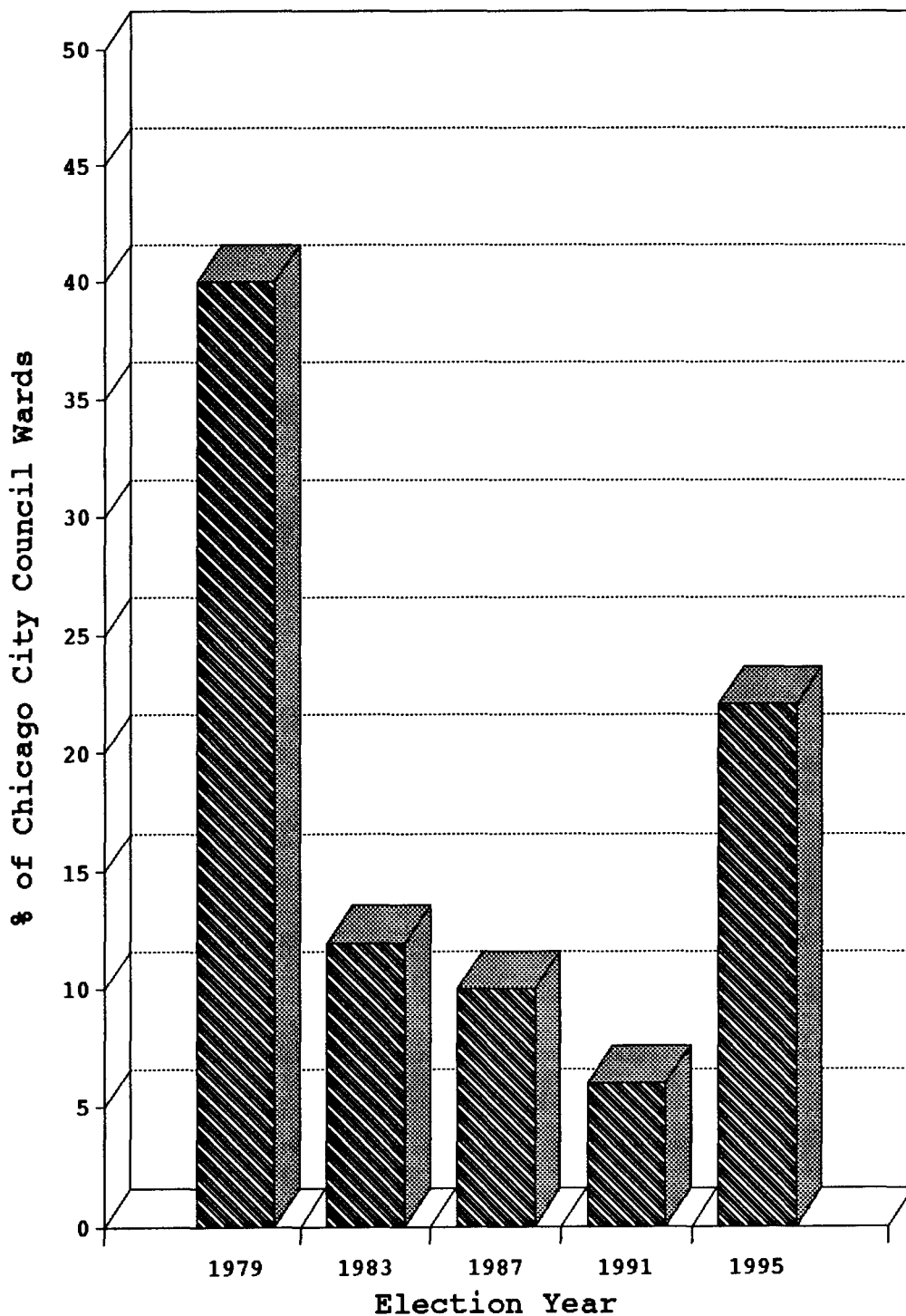
information on the nature of competition in Chicago city council elections, by examining who wins and who loses these races. Following this I test multivariate regression models to determine correlates of candidates' vote share in city council elections.

The Nature of Competition in Chicago City Council Elections

Before testing multivariate models of candidates' vote share in city council elections, it is instructive to know when competition is absent from aldermanic elections. This will permit some basic understanding of city council election dynamics and will inform the analyses that follow. Figure 1 shows the percentage of wards in which only one candidate was running (i.e., was unopposed) in each of the five elections held between 1979 and 1995. As one can see, the least competitive election year was 1979. In this year, 20 wards had only one candidate in the election. Judging from the number of wards with unopposed candidates, one might suggest that the level of competition in Chicago city council elections has increased over time, despite the upsurge in the number of wards with unopposed candidates during the 1995 election.

These numbers, however, do not describe patterns in who wins and who loses these contests. Of 137 opposed candidates who won outright (i.e., were not forced into

Figure 1. Percentage of Wards with Candidates Who Ran Unopposed

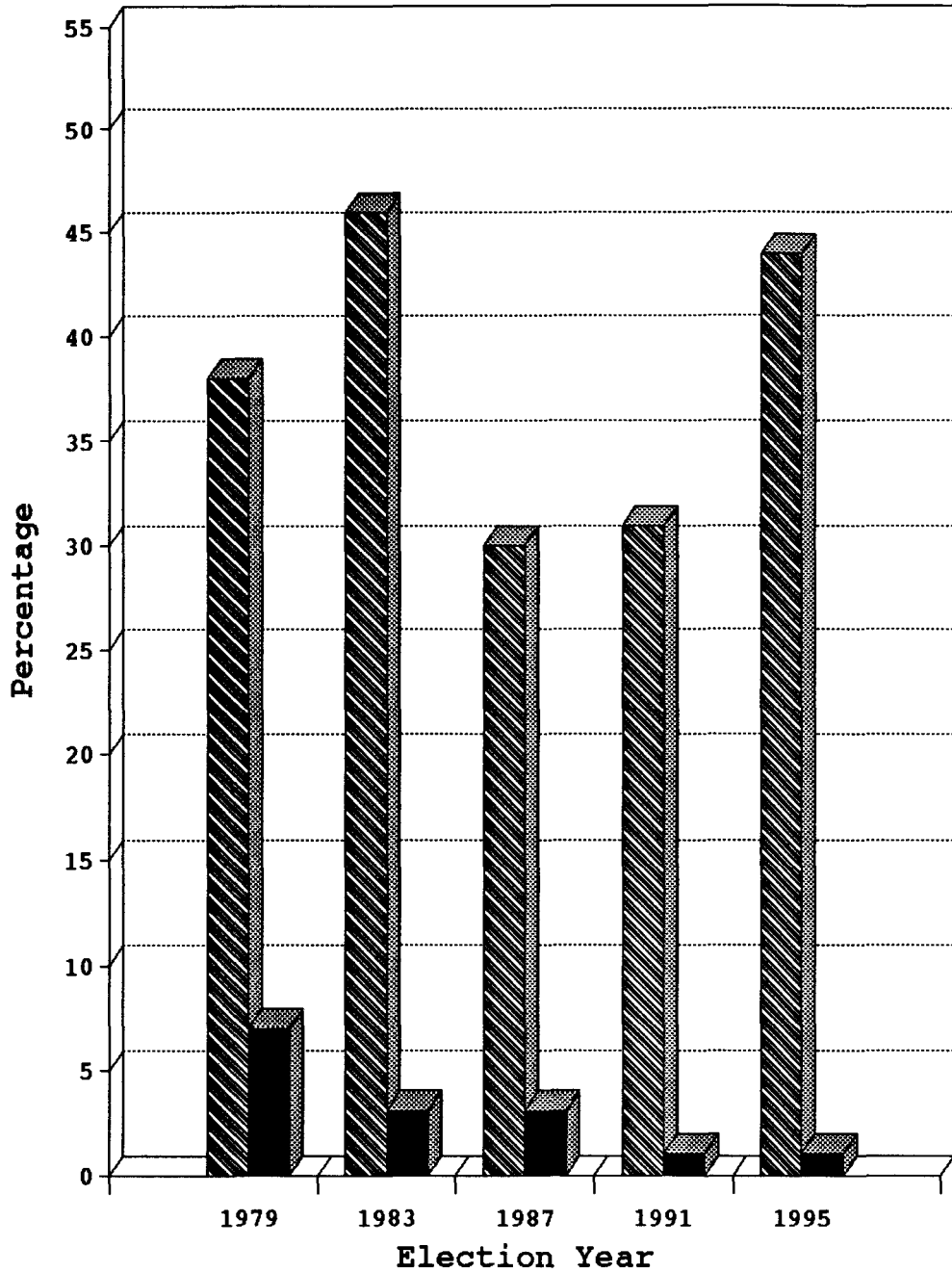




runoff elections), 117, or 85.4 percent, were incumbents.¹ Incumbents also dominated nonincumbents in terms of vote share. Figure 2 graphically shows the percentage of incumbents receiving between 51 and 60 percent of the vote. The percentage of incumbents falling within this category is important because it indicates how difficult it is for incumbents to win reelection. In the congressional elections literature, much has been written about the decline in the number of marginal incumbents who win reelection with 55 percent or less of the vote. Today, most House incumbents win with vote shares far in excess of this total, leading many to the conclusion that House elections are hopelessly one-sided affairs favoring incumbents (see Erikson 1971; Mayhew 1974a; Fiorina 1977; Ferejohn 1977; Jacobson 1987).

As one can see, there is no clear pattern to the percentage of incumbents winning reelection with between 51 and 60 percent of the vote (a "marginal" reelection percentage for incumbents) in Chicago city council elections. Incumbent electoral security was threatened most severely in 1979, 1983 and 1995, but less so in 1987 and 1991. It is reasonable to speculate that incumbents in 1979

¹Logistic regression analysis performed on each election year confirmed the dominance of incumbency in predicting who wins Chicago city council elections. In 1979, incumbency alone correctly predicted 86 percent of the cases. Between 1983 and 1995, incumbency alone correctly predicted over 95 percent of the winners and losers in these contests.

Figure 2. Candidates Who Received Between 51 and 60 Percent of the Vote



 % of Incumbents  % of Nonincumbents

were less able to control election outcomes in the aftermath of the Cook County Democratic Party's general political demise. Decreased machine efficiency in aldermanic elections probably opened-up the political system within wards to more independent candidates (i.e., those not aligned with county Democrats). Because ward boundaries were redrawn before the 1983 and 1995 elections, it is likely that redistricting had an effect on incumbents' electoral security in those years, forcing many into the marginal category. The general picture to emerge, however, is that incumbents are safe bets to win reelection, very much like incumbents running for reelection in other legislative bodies.

Figures 3 and 4 more dramatically display the incumbent advantage in these contests. Figure 3 shows the percentage of incumbent and nonincumbent candidates who received less than 50 percent of the vote in their elections. Nearly 100 percent of nonincumbent candidates in each election received less than 50 percent of the vote, and thus were unable to claim victory in the first election. Figure 4, which shows the percentage of candidates who received greater than 60 percent of the vote, displays almost the exact opposite pattern. Incumbent candidates have clearly dominated the field of candidates winning 60 percent or more of the vote in their elections. Overall, incumbents tend to cluster near the high-end of the vote scale, while nonincumbent

Figure 3. Candidates Who Received
50 Percent or Less of the Vote

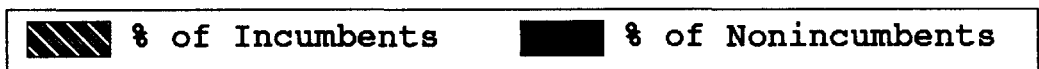
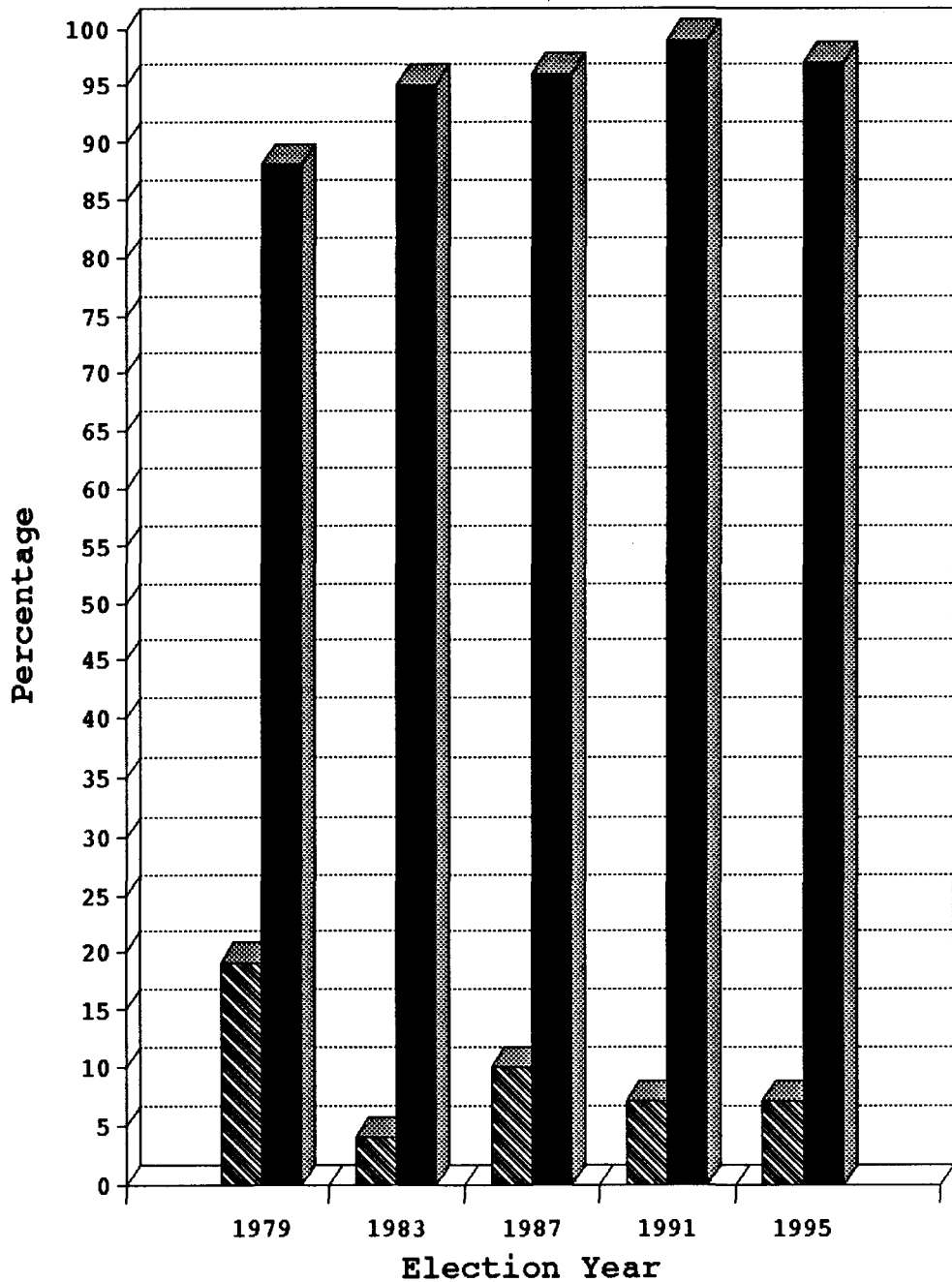
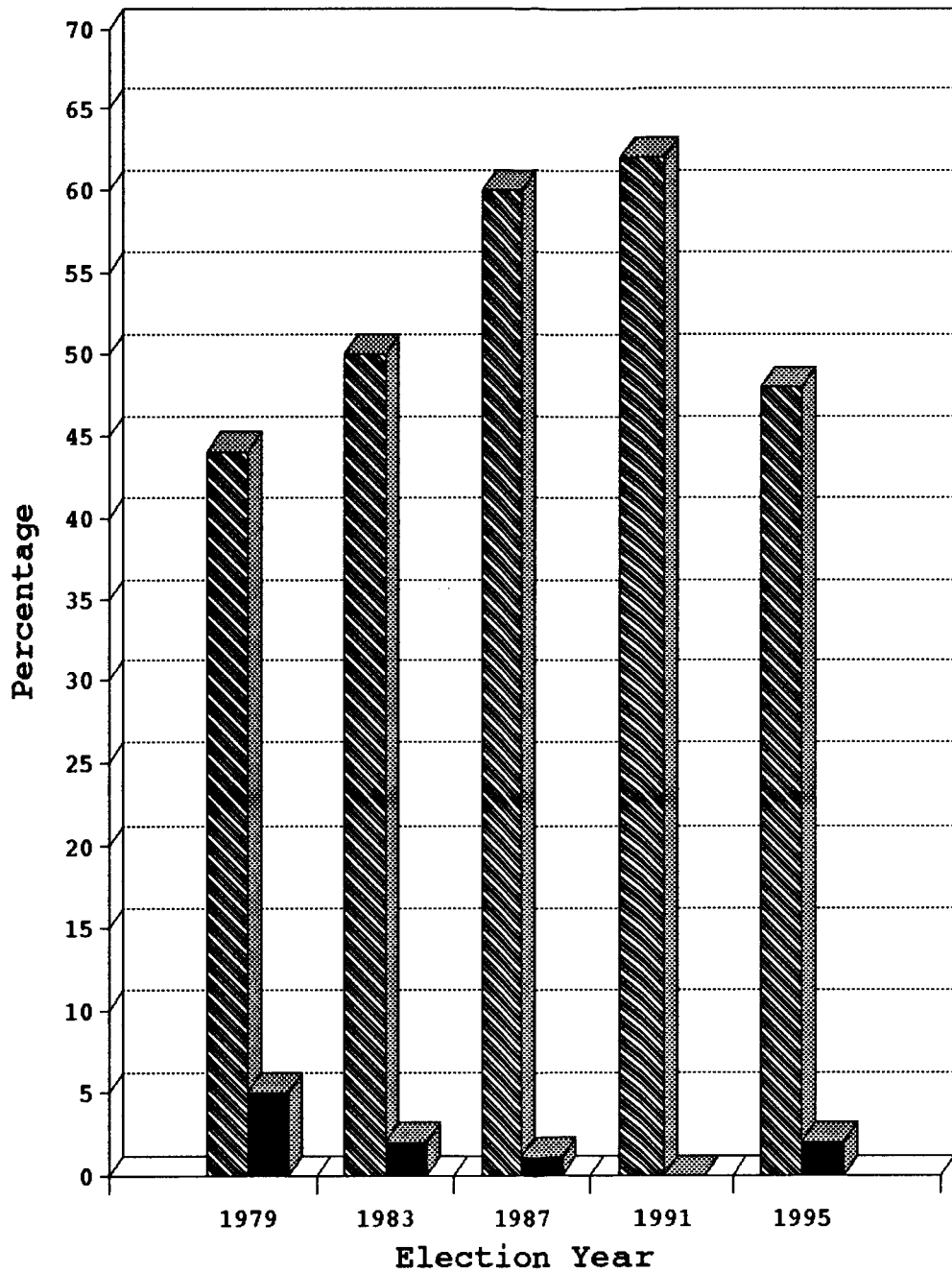




Figure 4. Candidates Who Received 60 Percent or More of the Vote



 % of Incumbents  % of Nonincumbents

candidates generally fall in the low-end (below 50 percent of the vote).

Incumbent candidates are clearly at an advantage in city council elections. The advantage, however, is difficult to evaluate precisely. On the one hand, the number of wards with unopposed candidates, has decreased in every election since 1979 with the exception of the 1995 election when it increased, but did not come near the 1979 total of 20. The percentage of incumbents winning with "marginal" vote percentages has not gone below 30, and reached peaks of over 40 percent in both 1983 and 1995, suggesting that in these two elections, a greater percentage of incumbents faced difficult reelection battles. On the other hand, the percentage of wards with unopposed incumbents winning with 60 percent or more of the vote increased steadily between 1979 and 1991, only to fall dramatically in 1995, from 62 percent to 48 percent of all opposed incumbents running for reelection.

Predicting Candidates' Share of the Vote

To precisely gauge the incumbent advantage and to more broadly understand the factors that are important for predicting success in Chicago city council elections, I present and test a series of multiple regression models. Multiple regression allows one to understand the effect particular variables have on the dependent variable, holding

constant other factors that might also affect how candidates perform in elections. The model presented in Chapter Two highlighted the importance of three categories of variables: candidate's political experience, media and party endorsements, and campaign spending. The *dependent variable* is candidates' share of the vote. The unit of analysis is the individual candidate.

As described in Chapter Two, the analysis below is designed to test the following hypotheses:

Political Experience. Political experience is expected to be a critical factor in predicting how well candidates perform in their elections. Of all the different types of political experiences one might have, *incumbency is expected to be the most important.* In addition to incumbency, I have included in the model of nonincumbents a variable that measures other types of political experience. For example, candidates who held other elective office are typically better known among voters than candidates lacking such experience, and therefore are expected to be more competitive in their elections. I have coded nonincumbents according to the amount of political experience they had at the time of their elections. Those with no political experience at all were coded 0. Nonincumbents who had experience as political aides, political volunteers, former ward committeemen, former aldermen, or former political

candidates were coded 1. Incumbent committeemen, current or former state legislators, and upper-level political officials (e.g., appointed officials) were coded 2. I expect a strong and positive correlation between nonincumbent political experience and share of the vote received by these candidate.

Political and Media Endorsements. I expect a strong, positive correlation between Democratic Party ward organization endorsements and candidates' share of the vote. In addition, candidates may also be endorsed by one, or both, of the city's major newspapers. Because media endorsements (a) lend credibility to candidates and (b) increase their name identification among voters, I expect a strong and positive relationship between this variable and candidates' share of the vote.

Campaign Spending. As candidate spending increases, candidates' share of the vote should increase as well. I also expect a strong, negative correlation between opposition spending and candidates' vote share. Both candidates' spending and opposition spending were measured in 1995 dollars and converted into thousands of dollars to ease interpretation of regression coefficients. In addition, as the literature has shown, there is often a diminishing marginal return between campaign spending and

candidates' share of the vote (see Jacobson, 1978). Because this relationship violates the linearity assumption in multiple regression analysis (see Berry and Feldman 1985, 51-53), I used the natural log of both candidates' spending and opposition spending in thousands of dollars as opposed to the actual figure for these two variables. The natural log of spending corrects for the nonlinear relationship between spending and votes.

Environmental Variables. In addition to the variables described above, a number of control variables were utilized in the analysis. The most important of these is expected to be the number of opponents candidates face in their elections. On average candidates face approximately three opponents (2.82) (data not shown). *As this number increases, I expect candidates' vote share to decrease, as each candidate in the race detracts from other candidates' vote share.* I have also included a variable denoting whether or not candidates who ran for alderman were running as members of the minority population in their wards, to control for the propensity of voters to support own-race candidates. In order to account for this possibility, all candidates were coded on whether or not their race or ethnicity matched that of the majority population in their wards. Non-majority race candidates were coded 1 and majority race candidates were coded 0. *I expect minority*

candidates to receive fewer votes than majority candidates.

Findings

Bivariate Correlates of Candidates' Vote Share

Table 4 presents results of bivariate correlations between model variables and candidates' percentage of the vote. Bivariate correlations are important because they indicate strength of relationships between independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are categorized in four ways: candidate's experience (political and professional); financial variables; endorsements; and political environment. Of the many candidate experience variables, incumbency is the strongest predictor of candidates' vote share. In addition to incumbency, whether or not candidates were the incumbent Democratic Committeeman at the time of the election, also seems to be an important predictor of the vote. With few exceptions, none of the other experience variables are significant in the bivariate case. Contrary to other research (for example, Lieske 1989), candidates' occupational status appears to have no influence on election outcomes. In all of the election years shown in Table 4, professional occupation is negatively signed, contrary to my expectations.

Candidates' political experience, therefore, seems to be important factors in election outcomes. Not all experience variables are the same, however. As expected,

TABLE 4

**Bivariate Correlations between Candidates' Vote Percentage and Model Variables,
Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995
<u>Candidates' Experience</u>					
Incumbent	.58**	.70**	.77**	.78**	.79**
Democratic committeeman	.37**	.40**	.51**	.49**	.45**
Former alderman	.02	.05	-.00	-.01	-.06
Former Democratic Committeeman	_____	_____	-.04	-.04	-.08
Precinct captain	.02	-.06	-.01	-.04	-.11
Ward secretary	-.03	.17	-.05	-.05	_____
Former candidate	-.25	-.06	-.15	-.12	-.09
State legislator	.09	-.00	.05	.01	.09
Political volunteer	-.18	.03	-.07	-.07	-.08
Political aide	-.07	-.05	-.02	-.09	-.05
Appointee	.04	_____	-.15	-.03	.15
Professional occupation	-.09	-.17	-.20	-.21	-.12
Community activist	-.15	-.11	-.07	-.09	-.05
Minority status	-.23	.11	-.14	.15	.06

TABLE 4 (continued)

**Bivariate Correlations between Candidates' Vote Percentage and Model Variables,
Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995
<u>Financial Variables</u>					
Spending	.46**	.53**	.54**	.51**	.62**
Opposition spending	-.28*	-.25**	-.45**	-.44**	-.35**
<u>Endorsements</u>					
Media	.41**	.51**	.62**	.71**	.73**
Democratic Party	.70**	.66**	.72**	.72**	.68**
<u>Political Environment</u>					
Number of opponents	-.56**	-.45**	-.47**	-.51**	-.43**
Number of cases	79	134	133	159	126

Note: _____ means that there were no candidates with this type of experience.

*p = .01 (one-tailed test).

**p = .001 (one-tailed test).

elective office experience is the most important experience to have. More importantly, candidates with ward-level elective office experience appear to benefit greatly from their experience. Incumbent aldermen and incumbent Democratic Committeemen are the two most important elected officials in city wards. This experience, and name identification among ward voters, appears to pay dividends at the polls. Candidates with other types of political experience do not appear to benefit from it to any significant degree. In many instances, the sign of the coefficients are not in the expected direction and, when they are correctly signed, they are not significant.

Financial variables -- candidates' spending and opposition spending -- are in the expected direction and significant at the .001 level. Consistent with my hypotheses, this indicates that campaign spending is an important predictor of election outcomes. In addition to spending, candidates who are endorsed by local media and their ward's Democratic party organization benefit from the exposure they get from this and from the legions of party workers who support the organization's candidate on election day. Candidates' vote share also appears to vary inversely with the number of candidates in the race. This stands to reason; more candidates in the race should decrease each candidate's vote share to a certain degree. Finally, being part of a minority group in one's ward also does not appear

to hurt candidates' chances of success in city council elections.

Bivariate correlations, however, do not show the effect that these variables have on candidates' vote share holding other factors constant. They do provide some guidance, however, in sorting out exactly which variables ought to be included in multivariate regression models. For example, the bivariate analysis shows that incumbency and Democratic Committeeman variables should be controlled for in models predicting election outcomes. Similarly, candidates' spending, opposition spending, endorsements (both those given by media sources and local Democratic organizations), and number of opponents, are probably good indicators of election outcomes as well. Because candidate's race is a theoretically important variable, it is also included in the models that follow despite the lack of significance for this variable in the bivariate case. Multiple regression can determine if these relationships are indeed significant or if they weaken (i.e., are spurious) when other factors are controlled.

Multivariate Model Findings

Table 5 displays results of multiple regression models for each election year. The results show that all of the significant factors mentioned above, remain significant when controlling for alternative explanations of vote outcomes.

Overall, the models perform exceptionally well; none explains less than 65 percent of the variation in candidates' share of the vote. Incumbency status exerts a significant and positive effect on candidates' share of the vote. In each election year, incumbents realize an increase in their share of the vote of nearly 20 percentage points, significant at the .001 level. Candidates who are also their ward's Democratic Committeeman also appear to benefit from their experience, although the effect is less consistent and less powerful than that for incumbency. These findings and those presented above for the bivariate model suggest that there is a clear hierarchy among types of political experience, with incumbency located at the top.

As hypothesized, candidates' spending is a strong and significant predictor of candidates' share of the vote in each election; as candidates spend more in their campaigns, their vote share increases. Opposition spending also behaves in the predicted direction, but its effects are much less consistent than those shown for candidates' spending. In only three of the five years (1979, 1983 and 1991) is opposition spending significant and negatively correlated with candidates' share of the vote.

Because high multicollinearity existed between incumbency and Democratic organization support,² the

²Incumbency and Democratic organization support are strongly correlated and highly significant (.64, $p = .001$). In none of the election years does the bivariate

Democratic organization endorsement variable was excluded as a predictor variable from the analysis shown in Table 5. The other type of endorsement, from media sources, however, was included in the model and is a very strong predictor of the vote in all the elections except 1979. That media endorsements are not significant for 1979 is likely due to the fact that the 1979 analysis is based on about 40 percent fewer cases than is shown in the other cross-sectional analyses. It may also be related to the fact that the Cook County Democratic Party machine probably had more control over election outcomes in 1979, as voters looked to the organization more than to the media for guidance in who to select. In general though, as candidates move from zero endorsements to one endorsement, and from one endorsement to two endorsements, they receive a fairly substantial increase in the share of the vote. Voters obviously rely heavily on cues given by local print media late in the campaign season in making their choice for alderman in their ward.

In addition to these variables, number of opponents is a significant predictor of candidates' vote share. As hypothesized, candidates' vote share decreases as this number increases. Each additional candidate in the race results in a vote share increase of over three points. This finding indicates that electoral environment is an important

relationship between incumbency and Democratic organization support drop below .52 ($p = .001$). In 1991, the relationship reached its peak at .70, ($p = .001$).

TABLE 5

Candidates' Vote Percentage, Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995, by Election Year, (OLS)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995
Incumbent	.179*** (.37)	.204*** (.42)	.197*** (.37)	.205*** (.41)	.215*** (.43)
Democratic Committeeman	.093+ (.14)	.105*** (.17)	.079* (.12)	.054* (.08)	.039 (.06)
Spending	.023*** (.31)	.013** (.16)	.020*** (.24)	.011*** (.13)	.019*** (.22)
Opposition spending	-.013* (-.16)	-.006 (-.06)	-.018*** (-.18)	-.021*** (-.14)	-.009 (-.07)
Media	.022 (.09)	.070*** (.29)	.045** (.16)	.071*** (.27)	.063*** (.23)
Opponents	-.050*** (-.30)	-.040*** (-.29)	-.033*** (-.24)	-.037*** (-.24)	-.031*** (-.18)
Minority	-.058 (.10)	.043* (.06)	-.031 (-.03)	-.044 (-.05)	-.035 (-.02)
Intercept	.393***	.288***	.316***	.340***	.271***
Adj. R2	.65	.73	.75	.80	.76
F-value	21.848***	53.260***	57.640***	91.308***	57.579***
Number of cases	79	134	133	159	126

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized regression coefficients in parentheses. +p = .10; *p = .05. **p = .01. ***p = .001.

part of city council elections and that variables largely beyond the control of individual candidates (like number of opponents) have discernable effects on election outcomes.

Somewhat contrary to expectations (but consistent with findings in the bivariate model), whether or not candidates are minorities in their wards has little effect on election outcomes. In fact, being in the minority in 1983 appears to have helped those candidates. That this variable is not more important in predicting election outcomes is related to the fact that few non-majority race candidates run in these elections due to large amounts of racial segregation in the city and the presence of super-majority wards. In addition to these factors, many of the candidates who run in wards with demographics that put them in the minority happen to be white incumbents seeking reelection. While no minority represents a majority white ward, white incumbents historically, and in the present context, do represent majority black wards.³

The analysis of the five separate elections suggests a clear pattern among the variables. Examining the standardized regression coefficients in Table 5, one can see that incumbency is the strongest predictor of the vote, followed by number of opponents, media endorsements,

³Larry Bloom (Fifth Ward), a white incumbent, represented a majority black ward from 1983-1995. Thomas Murphy (Eighteenth Ward), also a white incumbent, represents majority black residents on the city's Southwest Side.

campaign spending and the dummy variable for Democratic Committeeman. These variables were predicted to be the strongest variables in the model and, indeed, that is what the regression models for each election year indicate.

The pooled regression model presented in Table 6 tells a similar story. Pooling the cases allows for greater variability among the predictors and permits one to make broader claims about the findings than is possible through the type of cross-sectional analyses presented in Table 5. The results in Table 6 confirm much of what was found when looking at each election year separately. Incumbency is again the strongest predictor of candidates' share of the vote. Incumbent candidates realize a 21 percent advantage over nonincumbents. Number of opponents also is significant and inversely correlated with candidates' vote share. Media endorsements, candidates' spending, and opposition spending, also are significant and in the predicted direction. The least influential of the significant predictors is Democratic Committeeman, which reflects the inconsistent nature of the relationship between this variable and candidates' vote share found above. Likewise, the minority race variable also is not significant. With no exceptions, the unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients are nearly identical with those presented in the analysis of each election year. This suggests that these variables are

TABLE 6

**Candidates' Vote Percentage, Chicago City Council
Elections, 1979-1995, Pooled Model (OLS)**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	b coefficient (standard error)	standardized coefficient
Incumbent	.209*** (.013)	.42
Democratic Committeeman	.073*** (.015)	.11
Spending	.016*** (.002)	.20
Opposition spending	-.014*** (-.002)	-.13
Media	.057*** (.006)	.21
Opponents	-.037*** (-.003)	.25
Minority	.010 (.018)	.01
Intercept	.313***	
Adj. R2	.75	
F-value	272.548***	
Number of cases	631	

***p = .001.

robust predictors of city council election outcomes. Overall, the model explains 75 percent of the variation in candidates' vote share.

The analyses presented here confirm most of the hypotheses developed in Chapter Two and tested above for candidates' share of the vote in city council elections. Incumbency, spending, media endorsements, and electoral environment variables such as number of opponents, all are significant predictors of election outcomes. The most important variables are those that enhance candidates' name identification among voters. Obviously, being an incumbent politician in the ward (alderman or Democratic Committeeman) enhances the possibility that one will be recognized (and recognized favorably) by voters on election day. Spending and media endorsements play a similar role. Spending and endorsements give candidates exposure from which they might not otherwise benefit.

Candidates' Share of the Vote in Races that Involve Incumbents

Including all candidates together in the same model may understate the effect of incumbency (and thus the incumbency advantage) in predicting election outcomes. Because many of the races included in Table 5 and Table 6 do not involve incumbents (i.e., are open seats), the size of incumbents' electoral advantage may be decreased somewhat.

Table 7 shows results of an analysis of those races that involve incumbents. *In this model, I expect to see the value of incumbency increase vis-a-vis the results in the tables discussed above.* The results show that this is, in fact, the case. The size of the coefficient associated with the incumbency dummy variable is larger in Table 7 in four of the five elections studied. According to the results of this model, incumbents' electoral advantage over challengers never drops below 20 points and reaches a peak of 24 points in the 1995 elections. In other respects, the effects of these variables are very consistent with what is shown in Table 5 and Table 6.

Candidates who are their ward's Democratic Committeeman at the time of the election realize an increase in their share of the vote (although the effect is not significant in the 1991 and 1995 elections). Candidates' spending, opposition spending, and media endorsements, also have significant effects on candidates' vote share. As is noted above, minority candidates are not disadvantaged in these elections. In fact, in four of the five elections, the sign of the coefficient for minority candidates is positive, although this variable is not significant in any one year. This analysis lends validity to the claim made above that the reason minorities are not disadvantaged in these elections is because many of the minority candidates happen

TABLE 7

Candidates' Vote Percentage in Races that Involve Incumbents, Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995, by Election Year (OLS)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995
Incumbent	.220*** (.51)	.238*** (.51)	.203*** (.39)	.204*** (.41)	.242*** (.50)
Democratic Committeeman	.112* (.19)	.066* (.11)	.085* (.12)	.039 (.06)	.044 (.07)
Spending	.016** (.22)	.012** (.14)	.019*** (.22)	.011** (.12)	.013** (.15)
Opposition spending	-.021** (-.27)	-.014** (-.14)	-.019*** (-.20)	-.022*** (-.14)	.002 (.02)
Media	.006 (.02)	.061*** (.25)	.048** (.16)	.081*** (.30)	.070*** (.26)
Opponents	-.070*** (-.33)	-.033*** (-.22)	-.036*** (-.20)	-.035*** (-.01)	-.038*** (-.19)
Minority	.029 (.05)	.054 (.07)	-.040 (-.03)	.060 (.05)	.113 (.05)
Intercept	.424***	.282***	.320***	.329***	.231***
Adj. R2	.71	.79	.77	.84	.82
F-value	20.351***	60.632***	56.788***	100.219***	72.329***
Number of cases	57	109	115	132	108

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized regression coefficients in parentheses. * $p = .05$. ** $p = .01$. *** $p = .001$.

to be incumbent aldermen who typically win reelection.

Next I examine a model to explain nonincumbent candidates' vote share to determine, in particular, the relationship between being endorsed by the ward's Democratic Party organization and candidates' vote share.

Nonincumbent Candidates

As mentioned above, because of the high correlation between incumbency and ward organization support, it was statistically difficult to accurately measure the separate effects of the ward organization support variable on candidates' share of the vote.⁴ As discussed in Chapter Two, the Democratic Party in Chicago, via its subunits located in the city's wards, has been critically important to the success or failure of many candidates over time. This is still expected to be the case, despite the fact that the centralized political party that existed under Mayor Richard J. Daley does not exist today (Erie 1988; Kemp and Lineberry 1982). It is possible to speculate, however, that the effect of this variable will weaken over time as we move away from the machine's heyday in the 1970s.

⁴There is also a strong relationship between incumbency and being the ward's Democratic Committeeman (.50, $p = .001$) and being endorsed by local media (.49, $p = .001$). While these levels of collinearity are high, they are not too strong to drop from multivariate models, in which some covariation between independent variables is expected to exist.

In order to understand the effectiveness of ward organizations and the effect their endorsements have on candidates' share of the vote in Chicago city council elections, I performed an analysis similar to the one discussed above for challengers, controlling for election type (i.e., whether they were running in an open seat election or were facing an incumbent). By including candidates for open seats and challengers in the same model, one is able to examine candidates for open seats who, combined, are too few in number during any election year to analyze separately. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 8.

Overall, the models perform well, predicting a large degree of the variance in candidates' share of the vote. Reading across the top row of coefficients, one can see that having the support of the Democratic ward organization has a profound effect on how well candidates do at the polls. The size of the unstandardized coefficient is stable, positive, and significant at the .001 level in each of the four elections between 1979 and 1991. Candidates who receive the backing of the Democratic organization in their wards can expect an increase in their share of the vote in the range of 15 to 18 percent. The effect of the organization support variable, however, drops precipitously in the 1995 election. Reading down the 1995 column, one can speculate why this might be the case. In 1995, candidate's political

TABLE 8

Nonincumbent Candidates' Vote Percentage, Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995
Organization support	.183*** (.41)	.232*** (.53)	.146*** (.37)	.166*** (.41)	.024 (.06)
Election	-.030 (-.09)	-.033+ (-.10)	-.066** (-.20)	-.003 (-.01)	-.069** (-.21)
Political experience	-.022 (.08)	.002 (.01)	-.001 (-.01)	.025* (.14)	.063*** (.32)
Spending	.020*** (.34)	.008* (.13)	.016*** (.33)	.012*** (.25)	.015*** (.27)
Opposition spending	-.001 (-.02)	-.003 (-.05)	-.006 (-.10)	-.007 (-.06)	-.001 (-.01)
Media	.054** (.25)	.074*** (.41)	.008 (.03)	.038** (.19)	.049** (.20)
Opponents	-.053*** (-.39)	-.026*** (-.27)	-.036*** (-.47)	-.027*** (-.31)	-.029*** (-.29)
Minority	-.020 (-.04)	-.025 (-.04)	-.021 (-.03)	.012 (.02)	-.033 (-.04)
Intercept	.333***	.244***	.332***	.234***	.268***
Adj. R2	.74	.71	.51	.57	.53
F-value	22.217***	32.246***	13.955***	20.627***	14.244***
Number of cases	61	104	100	121	94

Note: Unstandardized coefficients; standardized coefficients in parentheses.*p = .05. **p = .01. ***p = .001.

experience had its largest effect on election outcomes, decreasing (in part) the importance of ward organization support for nonincumbents in the 1995 election. Political experience that increases candidates' name recognition and practical government experience are more beneficial than those experiences that do not have this effect.

Election type (open seat versus one involving an incumbent) also exerts a significant and negative effect on candidates' share of the vote, suggesting that nonincumbents who challenged incumbents in 1987 and 1995 were at a disadvantage vis-a-vis candidates running in open seat elections. The effect of this variable is confounded somewhat by the fact that nonincumbents running in open seat elections are included with challengers. In the years for which election type is significant, the percentages of nonincumbents challenging incumbents reached peaks of 83.4 percent and 80.8 percent, respectively.

Media endorsements and number of opponents also behave in predictable ways. With the exception of the 1987 election, media endorsements have a positive and significant effect on candidates' vote share. Next to organization backing, number of opponents is the strongest and most consistent predictor of the vote. Each additional opponent produces a decrease in candidates' vote share of approximately three to four percent, similar to the analysis of all candidates.

As hypothesized, candidate spending also is a strong predictor of the vote, although it is not as powerful as either organization support and number of opponents. Overall, the variables that increase one's name recognition and credibility among voters -- organization support, campaign spending, media endorsements -- are strong predictors of the vote. A candidate's political experience and the type of election in which they are participating have inconsistent effects on the vote. In the case of open seats versus those against incumbents, nonincumbents do worse in elections that involve incumbents (i.e., the sign of the coefficient is always as hypothesized). Candidates' political experience is both positive and negative throughout the time frame, but only in two of the five elections is it significantly related to candidates' vote percentage. Clearly, the more important variables for nonincumbents are those that confer legitimacy on them (media endorsements and party backing) and those that permit them to advertise themselves and their campaigns to wider audiences (i.e., campaign spending). In addition, candidates' vote share is unaffected by race or ethnicity.

In general, the results reported above indicate that being endorsed by the ward's Democratic organization has an effect on nonincumbent candidates' vote share similar to the effect incumbency status has on candidates' vote share when all candidates (incumbent and nonincumbent) are examined

together. Somewhat unexpectedly, actual political experience has only a small effect on how well these candidates perform. The surest way for nonincumbent candidates to reach office appears to be through endorsements (both political and media), spending, and being strategic, or running for office when seats become open, rather than trying to unseat incumbents.

Elections in Majority Black and Majority White Wards

As shown, candidates' race or ethnicity has little effect on candidates' vote share. This was true in the bivariate case and in multiple regression models. Including all candidates together, however, may mask important differences among wards whose populations differ demographically. In order to determine if differences exist across wards with different concentrations of voters, I divided the sample of candidates into two groups based on majority population in their wards. In one group are candidates who ran in wards with a majority (51% or more) white population and in another are candidates who ran in wards with a majority black population.⁵ I tested a regression model on these subsamples of candidates that included *incumbency status, spending, opposition spending, media endorsements, number of opponents, and minority status*

⁵There were too few Hispanic candidates to run regression analysis.

variables. Candidates' share of the vote is the *dependent variable*.

Table 9 presents the results of the analysis for the majority black wards. The model explains a substantial percentage of candidates' vote share in each election year. Incumbency status again is the most significant predictor of candidates' share of the vote. Spending, media endorsements and number of opponents also are significant predictors, although not in every election year.

Table 10 presents the results of the analysis for the majority white wards. Like majority black wards, incumbency is the most important predictor of the vote in these elections. Number of opponents appears to be a more consistent predictor of vote share in majority white wards than it was found to be in the majority black wards. This suggests that the fewer white candidates who run for the city council are able to garner a larger share of the vote vis-a-vis the average black candidate, which is, in fact, the case.

In comparing factors that predict candidates' vote share in majority white wards to factors that predict candidates' vote share in majority black wards, it is apparent that incumbency status is a slightly more important predictor of the vote in majority black wards than it is in majority white wards. Nonetheless, in both cases, it is highly significant. Overall, however, there are no

TABLE 9

Candidates' Vote Percentage, Chicago City Council Elections in Majority Black Wards, 1979-1995, by Election Year (OLS)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995
Incumbent	.248*** (.56)	.243*** (.55)	.245*** (.45)	.241*** (.54)	.232*** (.48)
Spending	.018+ (.26)	.019*** (.23)	.020** (.22)	.007 (.10)	.015* (.17)
Opposition spending	-.012 (-.15)	-.021* (-.15)	-.037*** (-.26)	-.016 (-.11)	-.007 (-.05)
Media	.003 (.01)	.046** (.20)	.034 (.11)	.048** (.19)	.078** (.29)
Opponents	-.033 (-.21)	-.018* (-.14)	-.034 (-.11)	-.033*** (-.22)	-.048*** (-.22)
Minority	-.055 (-.11)	.058 (.09)	-.071 (-.04)	.072 (.09)	.140 (.08)
Intercept	.352***	.255***	.387***	.309***	.260***
Adj. R2	.60	.77	.81	.72	.74
F-value	9.328***	43.410***	48.180***	36.961***	33.487***
Number of Cases	35	76	66	86	69

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized regression coefficients in parentheses.

*p = .05. **p = .01. ***p = .001.

TABLE 10

Candidates' Vote Percentage, Chicago City Council Elections in Majority White Wards, 1979-1995, by Election Year (OLS)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995
Incumbent	.183*** (.37)	.233*** (.49)	.191** (.38)	.184** (.38)	.199** (.41)
Spending	.032*** (.37)	.007 (.10)	.020* (.24)	.015* (.15)	.033+ (.23)
Opposition spending	-.012*** (-.15)	.002 (.03)	-.012+ (-.16)	-.029** (-.21)	-.026 (-.24)
Media	.045+ (.16)	.078** (.34)	.056+ (.20)	.085** (.33)	.076* (.28)
Opponents	-.066*** (-.36)	-.087** (-.36)	-.032** (-.32)	-.046* (-.23)	-.063* (-.19)
Minority	-.031 (-.05)	-.13 (.10)	.045 (.03)	_____	_____
Intercept	.401***	.399***	.307***	.385***	.334***
Adj. R2	.67	.59	.62	.82	.81
F-value	15.671***	11.892***	14.702***	38.695***	19.716***
Number of cases	44	46	51	41	23

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized regression coefficients in parentheses. +p = .10; *p = .05. **p = .01. ***p = 001.

differences between what it takes to get elected in majority black wards and what it takes to get elected in majority white wards. Incumbency, spending, media endorsements, and number of opponents are significant predictors of outcomes in both majority black and majority white wards. These findings reinforce the importance of legitimation, by political organizations and local media, advertising, and experience, for candidate success in city council elections.

A final electoral context is that of the runoff election. In Chicago's nonpartisan city council election system, wards that do not produce a majority winner are required to hold runoff elections between the top two vote-getters to determine the winner of the seat. Below I discuss outcomes in runoff elections, testing new variables shown in the literature to be important predictors of the vote in these kinds of elections.

Runoff Elections

Runoff elections for the Chicago city council are held when no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote in the initial aldermanic election held approximately six weeks prior to the runoff. Because they pit the top two vote-getters from the first election against one another, these elections are hotly contested and closely watched by local political elites and voters.

Two questions addressed in studies of runoff elections

are pertinent to this research. The first relates to the idea that the leading candidate from the first election suffers in the runoff election as voters rally around the underdog. The second suggests that incumbents are disadvantaged in runoff elections because of their perceived weakness in not being able to beat back strong challengers. According to the hypothesis and some empirical findings, voters then seize the opportunity to defeat an incumbent by supporting the nonincumbent (see Bullock and Gaddie 1994; Bullock and Johnson 1985; Fleischmann and Stein 1987; Stewart, Sheffield and Ellis 1995).

Bullock and Gaddie (1994) studied runoff elections in Chicago in order to compare findings from a northern, industrial city to findings of other scholars who studied runoff elections in southern cities. They found that both candidates who led the primary field and incumbents won their runoff elections *less* frequently than was found to be the case in studies of runoff elections in southern cities. The research presented here does not attempt such a comparison and, in fact, asks a separate question. That is, what effect might these variables, in conjunction with spending,⁶ media endorsements, and party support, have on candidates' share of the vote in runoff elections? Presumably, if there is a relationship between being the

⁶Both spending variables have been adjusted to reflect only spending that was reported immediately following the first election through the end of the reporting period.

leader in the first election or being the incumbent, and winning or losing in runoff elections, then there might be a relationship between these factors and candidates' share of the vote in these contests.

Table 11 presents the results of the multiple regression model of runoff elections held in Chicago between 1979 and 1995. Because so few candidates compete in runoff elections during any one cycle, it was necessary to pool the observations into a single data set to run regression analysis. For the sake of parsimony, only incumbency, organization support, media endorsements, both spending variables, and a dummy variable for election leader were included in the model.

Contrary to expectations, the findings indicate that candidates who lead the field in the first election are not disadvantaged in runoff elections. In other words, voters are not moving toward the underdog during the subsequent election. In addition, judging from the size of the standardized coefficient for the election leader variable, this is the single *strongest* predictor in the model.

Incumbents, however, do not benefit from their incumbency status when forced into runoffs. The sign and size of the coefficient for incumbency suggest that the value of incumbency fades quickly when they are challenged hard in first elections. Challengers who succeed to such an extent as to force incumbents into runoffs do appear to

TABLE 11

**Candidates' Vote Percentage, Chicago City Council
Runoff Elections, 1979-1995, Pooled Model (OLS)**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	b coefficient (standard error)	standardized coefficient
Incumbent	-.012 (.014)	-.07
Organization support	.031* (.014)	.20
Media	.025* (.007)	.27
Spending	.012*** (.004)	.16
Opposition spending	-.005* (.003)	-.16
Election leader	.053*** (.013)	.33
Intercept	.422*** (.014)	
Adj. R2	.36	
F-value	11.038***	
Number of cases	109	

* $p = .05$.

** $p = .01$.

*** $p = .001$.

benefit from shifting momentum in their campaign. In this sense, the idea that incumbents are disadvantaged in runoffs is confirmed.

An overall impression of the findings from the model of runoff elections is that the variables have a less powerful effect on candidates' vote share than they did in the analyses of the initial aldermanic election. Incumbency is a case in point. The coefficient for incumbency is about 19 points lower than that reported in almost all the models discussed above, which partly explains the decrease in the ability of the model to predict candidates' vote share. With only two candidates in the race, and considerably greater amounts of media attention to these elections, the need for voters to rely on cues given by incumbency status, organization support, or media endorsements, decreases. Other factors, such as how candidates stand on issues, candidate character, and assistance from voters and volunteers from neighboring wards, while difficult to measure, might be important for understanding these elections.

Discussion

When examining all candidates simultaneously or examining a subset of nonincumbent candidates, the foregoing analysis delivers a consistent message: success in city council elections is a function both of being widely known

and having one's candidacy legitimized by outside sources. Incumbency, media endorsements, campaign spending, and Democratic party support all work to separate certain candidates from the rest of the pack. In very predictable fashion, incumbent candidates are able to separate themselves from other candidates most effectively, and thus to outperform them in elections. Incumbents, especially in nonpartisan elections such as those for the Chicago city council, have credentials and a set of experiences that increase their vote-getting ability. Being more widely known, they are able to attract votes in ways nonincumbents cannot. Media endorsements also are an outside source of legitimation for candidates that increases their ability to attract votes. Setting aside the troublesome statistical issue of whether media endorsements improve candidates' overall chances of success or whether those making the endorsement simply pick the likely winner, candidates who gain this type of exposure do very well at the polls.

In addition to incumbency and media endorsements, spending also enhances candidates' ability to garner votes. The main purpose of campaign spending is to increase one's name identification among voters and to explain to voters why one would be an effective public servant. As the findings presented above show, this certainly is the case. Candidates who are able to more-thoroughly advertise themselves, reap electoral rewards that poorly-funded

candidates do not. Candidate spending is significant even in an environment with a strong political party that is able to advertise and work for particular candidates, and where districts are relatively small (55,000 to 60,000 residents), thus decreasing the need for broad-based, mass appeals.

In addition to these factors, being endorsed by the Democratic ward organization improves the chances of success for candidates. In this regard, incumbents enjoy a two-fold advantage. First, they have a certain amount of legitimacy and stature within their wards because of their positions as incumbent office-holders. They have governmental experience and name identification that separates them from nonincumbents. Second, because incumbents often are officially endorsed by their ward's Democratic organization (in many instances they also are their ward's committeeman),⁷ they have political credibility conferred on them as well. Presumably, party elites have evaluated incumbents' tenure in office and have deemed it worthy of official recognition and support. The positive message disseminated by incumbents themselves and ward organizations percolates through the electorate and is driven home to voters on election day as organization workers mobilize get-out-the-vote efforts in support of the party's candidate.

⁷The bivariate correlation between being the incumbent alderman and the ward's Democratic Committeeman are as follows: .36** in 1979; .52** in 1983; .61** in 1987; .53** in 1991; and .50** in 1995 (** $p = .001$).

The relative effect of being endorsed by the ward organization is much clearer in the analysis of nonincumbents. As stated above, the ability of the Cook County Democratic Party to "deliver" wards for the party's candidates in citywide races has decreased substantially over time. The ability of individual Democratic organizations to deliver votes for candidates in their wards, however, has not decreased over time and is very clearly a factor in these elections (with the exception of 1995). In the four elections held between 1979 and 1991, endorsement from the ward's Democratic organization paid dividends at the polls. On average, endorsed candidates could expect to receive a 15 percent boost in their share of the vote as a result of this important party endorsement.

As I have shown in the analyses of all the candidates, the issue of credibility and name familiarity are critical to the success of city council candidates. When looking at nonincumbents, candidate's political experience was a significant predictor of the vote, but only in the 1991 and 1995 elections. Before 1991, political experience mattered little in predicting nonincumbents' vote share. It is possible that the political environment in wards is opening up to highly-qualified candidates who may or may not be associated with the Democratic organization. The lack of significance for the organization support variable in the 1995 analysis of nonincumbents suggests that experienced

candidates did well in their elections. Only time will tell if organization support is no longer significant for nonincumbents, or if the 1995 findings were merely an aberration. The variables with the greatest and most consistent effect on the vote are those that enhance candidates' credibility and familiarity among voters - organization support, media endorsements, and spending.

These are not the only variables that have a significant effect on the vote, however. Included as a control variable, number of opponents was a consistent predictor of candidates' vote share. It was, without variation, negative and statistically significant. Although perhaps less theoretically interesting than the variables described above, that number of opponents is a significant predictor of candidates' vote share highlights the importance of electoral context in local politics. To a certain degree the fate of individual candidates is beyond their control and dictated by decisions of individual candidates to enter the political fray in their wards at different points in time.

Another important finding that emerged from this analysis was the lack of significance for candidates' race in determining city council election outcomes. Much of the literature suggests that candidates' racial or ethnic background is an important cue for voters in nonpartisan elections (Herring and Forbes 1994; Pomper 1966). In other

words, voters refer to this feature of candidates when deciding how to cast their ballot because of the paucity of information on what candidates stand for or their qualifications for office. The major reason race was not an issue in Chicago city council elections held between 1979 and 1995, is that district segregation often precludes the emergence of candidates whose racial or ethnic background varies from that of the ward's majority population. White candidates run in predominantly white wards; black candidates run in predominantly black wards; and Hispanic candidates run in predominantly Hispanic wards. Of the minority candidates who do run, many are their ward's incumbent alderman, thus helping to negate the issue of racial voting.

The findings presented in this chapter both supported and contradicted the literature on city council elections. Consistent with the literature (DeSantis and Renner 1994; Karnig and Walter 1977; Lieske 1989), incumbents were shown to dominate election outcomes, both in terms of who wins and who loses, and in terms of candidates' vote share. Incumbents won 85.4 percent of the time that they sought reelection. Political experience, campaign spending, opposition spending, news media endorsements and support from local political organizations were significant predictors of the vote, which is what one would expect based on current literature. In addition, "fixed" factors in the

campaign (Howell and Oiler 1981,155), such as number of opponents, was a consistent predictor of how well candidates did in their elections; a finding that is also consistent with the literature. In general, however, the findings reported in this chapter were consistent with only one component of Lieske's (1989,167) theory of legitimacy, which "explicitly assumed that the distribution of the candidate vote totals is largely determined by three factors: (1) their cultural acceptability for public office; (2) their social standing within the community; and (3) the political mechanisms and processes that legitimate or bestow group and institutional approval on them." Having already discussed the importance of factors that confer legitimacy or lend credibility to candidates, below I describe why the first two components of his theory do apply in the case of Chicago.

In two major respects the findings in this chapter depart from the literature. Lieske (1989), for example, found that candidates' achieved status in life and political experience paid dividends at the polls, controlling for other factors, such as incumbency, party support and media endorsements. Candidates from high-status occupations (lawyers, businessmen) and candidates with "political followings" (based on votes received in prior campaigns) could expect to receive more votes than candidates from low-status occupations or candidates who had never sought

political office before. My findings indicate something quite different for Chicago on these two dimensions. Bivariate correlations (see Table 4) between candidates' occupational status and vote share, and between candidates' status as former political candidates and vote share, did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance to warrant inclusion in the multivariate models presented above, a clear departure from Lieske's findings on Cincinnati.

This difference is most likely related to the type of election system found in each city and expectations placed on local politicians from voters. Electorates in cities with at-large election systems, such as Cincinnati, are likely to value different types of qualifications for office. For example, they might be more concerned about electing the most qualified person for the position, in terms of background and training, who can advocate for the needs of the entire city, rather than choosing a political insider, who might have more parochial interests to serve. In Chicago, because of its district election system, how effective one is on the city council (and in city council elections) has little to do with articulating an overall vision for the city and everything to do with ensuring that one's ward receives its share of city services and improvements. In this city, where political connections are paramount, it might be that voters choose candidates based

on who they believe will be most effective as alderman, rather than candidates with the most impressive resumes. Indeed, in many aldermanic campaigns, the major issues are simply who will be most effective in bringing home the ward's share of city services and who will be a full-time alderman, on call round-the-clock for ward residents in what are technically part-time positions. Stressing one's background could be a liability in a city where aldermen can earn two salaries, one from the city and the other from private pursuits, and where voters expect full-time attention. Finally, in a city as politically pragmatic as Chicago, voters are not going to waste votes on candidates who have lost once or twice before, the same type of candidates that Lieske's (1989,165) argues will keep "the support of at least three of every four voters who cast ballots for them in a prior campaign."

In another departure from the literature, candidates' race or ethnicity also mattered little in predicting election outcomes, thus contradicting Lieske's (1989,167) theory about the importance of candidates "cultural acceptability for public office." One should expect candidates' race and ethnicity to matter more in at-large elections where candidates run citywide. In district elections, most of the candidates share the same racial or ethnic identification. In order to account for the propensity of voters to use race or ethnicity as a cue in

voting, I coded candidates on the basis of whether or not they were running as minorities in their wards. In all of the analyses, whether or not they involved incumbent candidates, minority candidates were not significantly damaged electorally due to their minority status.

Now that I have shown which factors are most important in predicting success in city council elections, it is time to examine more thoroughly the questions of why incumbents are advantaged to the degree that they are, and which factors are important for understanding why candidates choose to challenge incumbents at all. These questions are addressed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER IV
INCUMBENCY ADVANTAGE AND CANDIDATE STRATEGY
IN CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Understanding which candidates have the upper-hand in city council elections is important because advantage translates into votes received on election day. More importantly, the questions of who is advantaged and what factors affect electoral competition affect the extent to which public officials are held responsible to the people that they serve. In this chapter, I explore the nature of competition for office by focusing on two aspects of city council elections: incumbency advantage and candidate emergence.

As the findings in Chapter Three demonstrate, incumbents enjoy a clear advantage over their opponents. In this chapter, I examine more thoroughly the factors that undergird this advantage in Chicago city council elections. By focusing on incumbents, I am able to test the effect that variables specific to incumbents and their electoral circumstances have on their ability to garner votes on election day. The analysis will provide information about the nature of competition in city council elections that involve incumbents and will increase our understanding of

the precise nature of the incumbency advantage.

A related question deals with challengers' decisions to oppose incumbents. Given the enormous advantages of incumbency, why does anyone oppose them when they seek reelection? The second part of the chapter explores this issue by examining political circumstances in which candidates emerge to run for office. I first examine all nonincumbent candidates to see if any general patterns exist that might explain when candidates run for the city council. I then move to a more in-depth analysis of the emergence of incumbent challengers.¹ This is an important facet of city council elections because most elections involve incumbents. By examining candidate emergence I seek to understand the electoral conditions that encourage or discourage candidates from entering city council races.

Knowing *when* candidates decide to run for office, however, is different than knowing when highly qualified candidates run for office. In order to explore this issue, I examine factors related to the emergence of high quality challengers. Examining challenger political quality may also shed light on the advantage incumbents have in city council elections. For example, if we know that incumbents are consistently challenged by politically inexperienced

¹Throughout this discussion, nonincumbents who challenge incumbents are referred to as challengers. By definition, therefore, all other nonincumbents ran for open seats.

candidates, or that the quality of opposition makes no difference to how well incumbents do on election day, this moves us forward in terms of understanding why incumbents rarely fail to be reelected. Both topics -- incumbency advantage and candidate emergence -- have received only slight attention in the urban politics literature.

Explaining Incumbency Advantage and Challenger Behavior

After controlling for spending, media and political organization endorsements, and number of opponents, incumbents maintain a 20 point advantage against their challengers. While it is clear that incumbents realize an electoral boost simply because they are current officeholders, it is unclear why this is the case.

Consistent with aspects of democratic theory, the literature that informs this analysis suggests that understanding the incumbency advantage is important for reasons of "electoral accountability" (Abramowitz 1991,35). Several competing explanations have been offered by those who study congressional elections for why incumbents in that legislative body are difficult to defeat. For example, some have suggested that the incumbency advantage is rooted in the system of perquisites (e.g., franking privilege) and institutional power (e.g., committee positions), which members of Congress exploit to enhance their reelection prospects (Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974b; but see Cover 1977).

Others have argued that the weakening of partisan identification in the electorate (Ferejohn 1977) and the increased presence of gerrymandered districts favoring incumbents (Tufte 1973), have improved the ability of incumbents to withstand electoral competition. Related to these explanations are those suggesting that incumbents insulate themselves from electoral competition by cultivating loyalty from their constituents via personal services (Fiorina 1977). More recent examinations of this subject have focused on the lack of quality opposition to incumbents (Jacobson 1992), differences between incumbents and challengers in how much they spend on their campaigns (Abramowitz 1991), and how media exposure affects incumbents' ability to win votes (Goidel and Shields 1994). Thus, while there is a clear recognition of the incumbent electoral advantage, there is little agreement as to why it exists in the first place.

This chapter tests similar explanations for the incumbent advantage in local elections. For example, it may be the case that incumbents enjoy an electoral advantage because of a lack of viable or high quality opponents on election day. If incumbents regularly face candidates who do not provide serious alternatives to voters, then this should improve the ability of incumbents to compete. An alternative explanation might be that incumbents use their institutional positions (e.g., committee chairmanships) to

satisfy the interests of their constituents, thus further solidifying their base of political support in the community. From their positions within the council, incumbents may be able to more effectively satisfy constituency concerns.

I also examine how redistricting, scandal, incumbent seniority, and method of achieving office (election or appointment) affect election outcomes. In addition to these factors that are more specific to incumbents, I also examine how incumbents' spending, opposition spending, media and political organization endorsements and number of opponents affect the ability of incumbents to win votes.

Related to why incumbents enjoy a distinct electoral advantage is the practical question of why anyone would want to challenge an incumbent, given how hard it is to defeat one. Because choices about when to challenge incumbents may alter election outcomes, it is important to explore the circumstances in which nonincumbent candidates make that decision. The literature on congressional elections is informative. It has suggested that the strongest challengers (i.e., those with the most political experience), emerge to face incumbents when circumstances indicate that they (incumbents) are politically weak (Bond, Covington, and Fleisher 1985; Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Lublin 1994; Squire 1989). Research has indicated that the best challengers emerge when national and local political

conditions improve their chances of winning. Research also has shown that the most experienced challengers avoid running against incumbents with large amounts of cash-on-hand to fund their reelection campaigns (Box-Steffensmeier 1996).

In this chapter, I apply this theory to local elections, relying both on personal factors related to incumbents and more historical or political factors affecting their wards. Because there is little relationship between urban and national political outcomes, only local factors are considered. In addition to examining the conditions that affect how many candidates emerge in these contests, I also focus on predictors of challenger quality. Below I present the results of my analyses of incumbency advantage and candidate emergence. Following that is my analysis of candidate emergence.

Findings

Incumbency Advantage in Local Elections

The electoral advantage of incumbents in city council elections is very clear. Figure 5 shows the percentage of opposed incumbents who won reelection in the first aldermanic election, thereby avoiding runoff contests. Incumbents have won reelection more than 60 percent of the time in the last three aldermanic elections (1987, 1991, and 1995). Not only are incumbents winning at very high rates,

they also have enjoyed a fairly steady increase in average vote margin over the five elections held from 1979 to 1995. In other words, the distance between incumbents' vote share and vote share of their closest competitors has increased, suggesting that the competitiveness of these elections has decreased over time.

While these patterns identify a clear pattern, they do not explain why incumbents are electorally advantaged to the extent that they are. Table 12 presents results from the estimation of two multiple regression models predicting incumbents' share of the vote. The equation estimated in Model 1 is designed to show the effects of variables that were not tested in models presented in Chapter Three.

For example, incumbents were coded on the basis of whether or not they were city council committee chairmen at the time of the election. *As mentioned, committee chairmanship may provide incumbents with an institutional base of power that they can use to enhance their reelection prospects.* Incumbents also were coded on the basis of whether or not they were appointed to office by the mayor and were therefore running in their first election. *The expectation here is that appointed incumbents are more vulnerable politically than those who have been around for a number of years and have won at least one election to the office.* In addition, I have included a dummy variable for redistricting, which indicated whether or not the election

Figure 5. Incumbents' Average Vote Margin and Percent Who Win

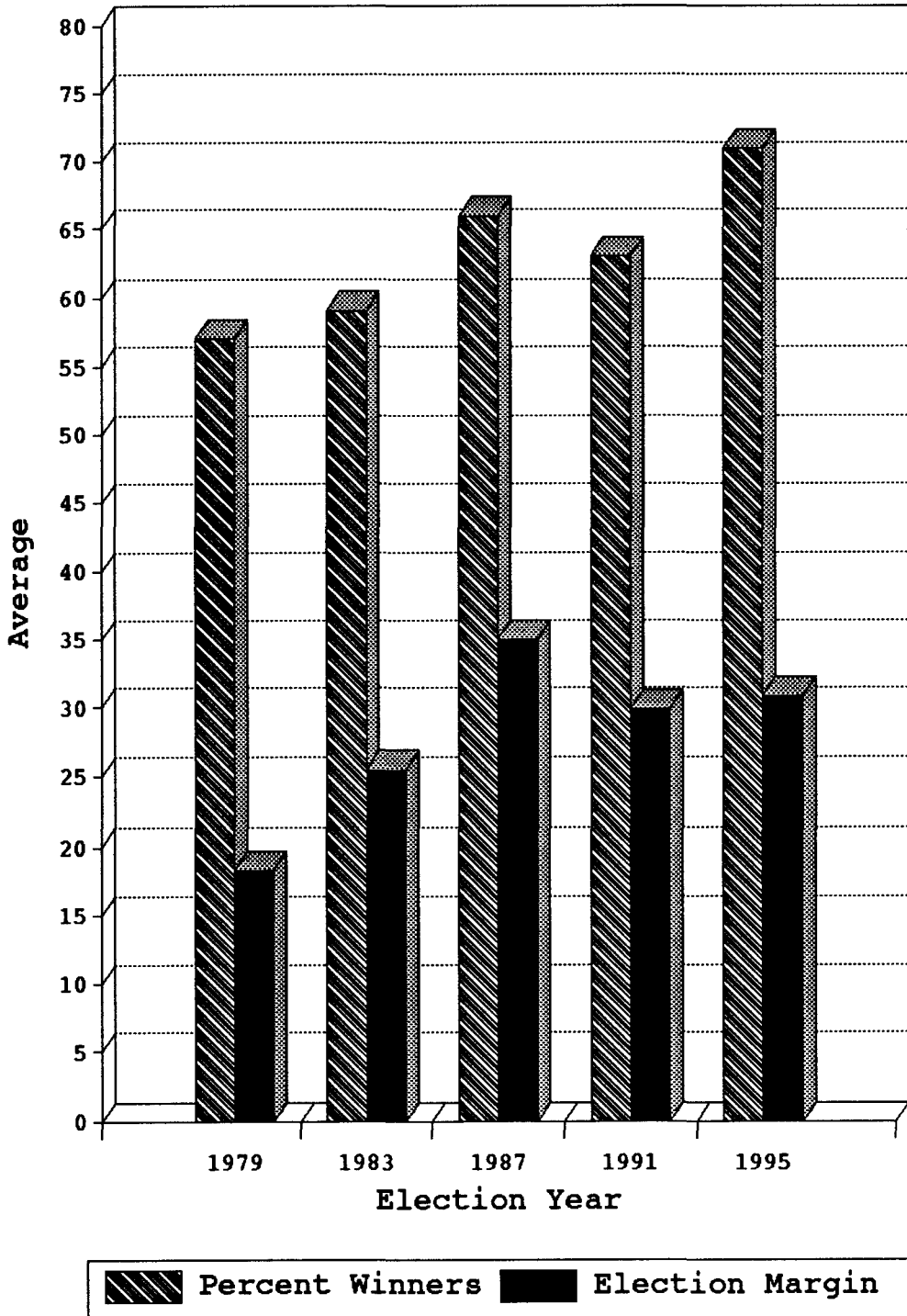


TABLE 12

**Incumbents' Vote Percentage, Chicago City Council
Elections, 1979-1995 (OLS)**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2
Challenger Quality	-.086*** (.015)	-.020 (.014)
Committee Chairman	.006 (.029)	-.015 (.023)
Appointed	-.055 (.043)	.032 (.035)
Redistricting	.010 (.023)	.004 (.018)
Seniority	.002 (.003)	.002 (.002)
Scandal	-.075+ (.042)	.023 (.034)
Spending	_____	.010* (.005)
Opposition Spending	_____	-.026*** (.005)
Media	_____	.060*** (.012)
Opponents	_____	-.051*** (.008)
Organization Support	_____	.076*** (.023)
Intercept	.608*** (.028)	.577*** (.039)
Adj. R ²	.17	.59
F-value	7.103***	20.70***
Number of cases	176	150

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. Unopposed incumbents are excluded. +p = .10; *p = .05; ***p = .001.

was held under new ward boundaries. *I expect that incumbents' vote share should decrease under new and untested district boundaries.* Finally, I control for the effects of scandal by including a dummy variable coded 1 for incumbents tainted by scandal at the time of their election and 0 otherwise.² *As another indicator of vulnerability, scandal should be negatively associated with incumbents' vote share and incumbents' vote margin.*

The two variables that are not dummy variables are seniority and challenger quality. Seniority is simply number of years incumbents had served on the city council at the time of the election. *I expect more senior councilors to be perceived as politically vulnerable because of their susceptibility to attack from political newcomers.* Challenger quality also should be negatively associated with incumbents' vote share and vote margin. In quantifying challenger quality, I have used the political experience score of incumbents' strongest or highest quality challenger, using the measure of nonincumbent political experience developed in earlier chapters.³ The most

²This is necessarily subjective. In determining which incumbents were tainted by scandal, I tried to focus only on very serious charges (e.g., indictments) or allegations that were recurrent during the course of the campaign.

³There were two instances where incumbents faced-off against one another because of redistricting. These were Joseph Bertrand against Larry Bloom in the Fifth Ward (1983) and Carol Bialczak against Mike Wojcik in the Thirtieth Ward (1995).

experienced challengers are expected to perform better than others because they are probably more widely known to the electorate and to important political elites. They also are expected to be somewhat more politically sophisticated, and therefore better able to run more effective campaigns than candidates who lack this experience. Being known to the electorate (even if only moderately) should peel votes away from incumbents.

Overall, Model 1 explains 17 percent of the variation in incumbents' vote share and shows that challenger quality is the most significant predictor variable. Incumbents who face politically experienced challengers see their vote share reduced by 8.6 percent. Contrary to expectations, however, none of the other new predictor variables are significant at the .05 level. The scandal variable, indicating whether or not the incumbent was tainted by scandal at the time of the election, however, is in the expected direction (negative) and significant at .10.

Model 1, however, is intentionally underspecified in order to show how the new predictor variables affect incumbents' vote share in a multivariate model, and to make comparisons between it and Model 2. Because none of the new predictor variables are significant in Model 1, there is little reason to believe they will be significant after adding several other predictor variables. Model 2 shows that this is the case. This model adds variables (e.g.,

spending, media endorsements, Democratic organization support, and number of opponents) shown in Chapter Three to be important in predicting candidates' vote share generally. Overall, Model 2 explains a much greater proportion of the variation in incumbents' vote share (59% compared to 17%) and considerably reduces the effect of challenger quality. This model indicates that the incumbent advantage in city council elections is related to the same factors that predict candidates' vote share in the first place, and that incumbents do well in their elections despite the quality of their opposition. In other words, factors such as spending, and endorsements from local media and political organizations undergird incumbents' electoral performance in the same way they bolster candidacies of nonincumbents. With the exception of challenger quality, none of the new predictor variables even behave as anticipated.

These findings indicate that one way for challengers to compete seriously with incumbents is to spend large sums of money advertising themselves and making voters aware that they are viable alternatives to incumbents.⁴ Unfortunately for challengers, average opposition spending during the time frame is only \$34,747, compared to average incumbent spending, which is \$78,624. Figure 6 shows the disparity between average incumbents' spending and average opposition

⁴Opposition spending is the total amount of money spent by all nonincumbents in races involving incumbents.

spending. While average incumbent spending was actually lower than average challenger spending in the 1979, it has, in every election since then, doubled and nearly tripled average opposition spending.

A second way to explore incumbency advantage in city council elections is to analyze incumbents' vote margin. Instead of explaining vote share, this analysis tries to explain the distance between incumbents' vote share and that of their nearest competitor (in some cases, the dependent variable is negative, which means that someone other than the incumbent finished first in the aldermanic election). This dependent variable is different from vote share because it measures the competitiveness, or closeness, of elections involving incumbents. Table 13 shows the results from two models designed to predict incumbents' vote margin.

Results from Table 13 are very consistent with results from Table 12. In Model 1, none of the new variables significantly affect incumbents' vote margin, with the exception of challenger quality and, overall, the model predicts less than 10 percent of the variation in incumbents' vote margin. Model 2 presents results from a fully specified equation. The predictors added to model 2 behave as expected and are statistically significant (the exception being number of opponents, which, although negatively signed, is not significant). The model performs reasonably well with an Adjusted R^2 of .46.

Figure 6. Average Incumbent and Opposition Campaign Spending

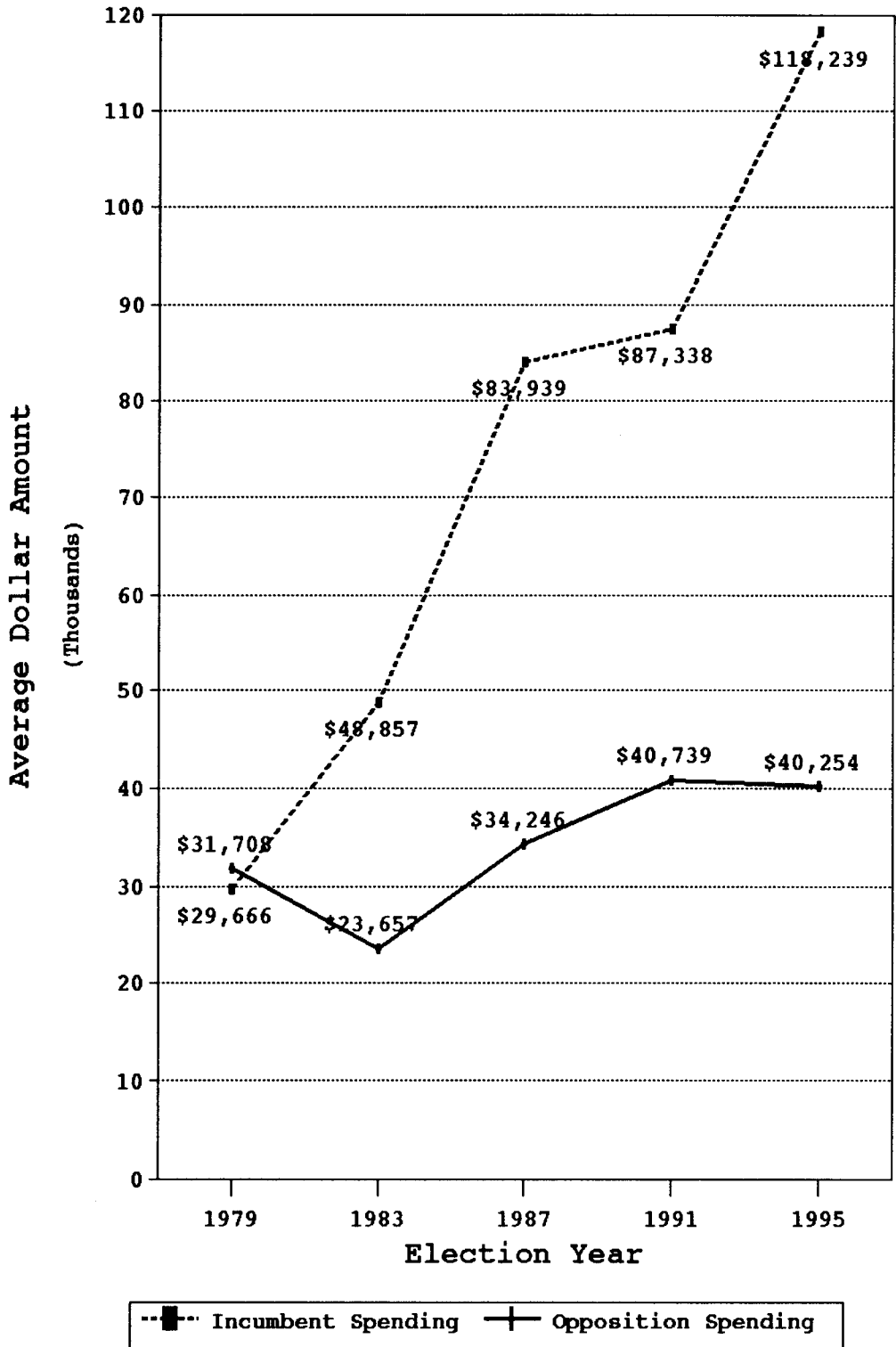


TABLE 13

**Incumbents' Vote Margin, Chicago City Council Elections,
1979-1995 (OLS)**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2
Challenger Quality	-9.995*** (2.367)	-2.992 (2.304)
Committee Chairman	4.595 (4.445)	-.731 (3.780)
Appointed	-3.133 (6.533)	4.287 (5.801)
Redistricting	1.867 (3.494)	.440 (3.002)
Seniority	.083 (.388)	.144 (.351)
Scandal	-4.264 (6.483)	7.944 (5.519)
Spending	_____	1.961** (.753)
Opposition Spending	_____	-4.479*** (.802)
Media	_____	10.161*** (.351)
Opponents	_____	-.826 (1.320)
Organization Support	_____	14.011*** (3.695)
Intercept	33.462*** (4.351)	12.679* (6.449)
Adj. R ²	.09	.46
F-value	3.870***	13.337***
Number of cases	176	150

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. Unopposed incumbents are excluded. *p = .05; **p = .01; ***p = .001.

Two findings from Model 2 are noteworthy, especially when compared to the same model in Table 12. First, number of opponents has a negative, but insignificant, effect on the closeness of these elections. This relationship runs counter to the analyses from Chapter Three and from Table 12. Thus, while number of opponents affects incumbents' vote percentage in general terms, it has little effect on the distance between incumbents and their nearest competitors in terms of vote share. This finding suggests that incumbents cannot be defeated by forcing them to compete with large numbers of challengers and that number of opponents has only marginal influence on the closeness of these elections, despite the fact there is a relationship between number of opponents and incumbents' vote share.

Table 13 also shows that organization-supported candidates are distinctly advantaged. This is the single most important predictor variable and indicates that incumbents backed by the Democratic organization in their wards realize a 14 point edge over their closest rivals. This finding lends considerable empirical validation to a claim made in the previous chapter that one of the major reasons why incumbents are such formidable opponents is due to their ability to secure support from the Democratic political organization in their wards.

These two analyses show that the incumbency advantage in Chicago city council elections is a function of

organization backing, media support, and campaign spending. Incumbents' advantage can be lessened somewhat by large amounts of opposition spending, all else being equal. It is rarely the case, however, that opposition spending approaches that of incumbents. In fact, the trend is in the opposite direction; incumbents' spending has increased over time, while opposition spending has remained fairly constant (and at considerably lower levels). Considering the advantage incumbents have over nonincumbents, under what circumstances do any candidates seek to unseat them? The analyses that follow provide some answers to this question.

Candidate Emergence and Candidate Strategy

Before examining the conditions or circumstances that affect challenger emergence, it is important to understand circumstances in which nonincumbent candidates run for the city council in general. This is distinct from questions about why candidates seek office (i.e., what are their personal motivations?) and questions about candidate recruitment (Bledsoe 1993; see also Kazee and Thornberry 1990). Instead, this part of the analysis applies the "strategic politicians" theory developed by Jacobson and Kernell (1983) to local elections. By looking at the question in this way, I am able to shed light on how the political environment shapes candidates' decisions to run for office.

In addition to examining the total number of candidates who might seek office in particular wards in given elections, I also try to predict the emergence of high quality nonincumbent candidates. This is accomplished by taking the score of the most politically-experienced nonincumbent in the race as the dependent variable. The unit of analysis is the ward.

Five independent variables are used to predict number of candidates running in each ward: redistricting, machine ward, open seat/non-open seat election, and two demographic factors, percentage of the ward that is black and percentage of the ward that is Hispanic. As mentioned above, redistricting is a dummy variable coded 1 for wards that were redistricted and that were holding their first election under the new boundaries and 0 otherwise. I expect a positive correlation between redistricting and number of candidates. *It is my hypothesis that candidates will consider their chances for victory to be greater under new ward boundaries and therefore run more frequently in these situations.* Machine is a dummy variable coded 1 for wards that were considered machine wards at the time of the election and 0 otherwise.⁵ *Due to the ability of machine*

⁵There are 26 wards that I have defined as machine wards. Machine wards are those that, historically, have been loyal to the Cook County Democratic Party. Most, but not all, are machine wards throughout the time frame. Some, because of changes in ward boundaries brought by redistricting and/or changes in political control, were only considered machine wards in certain election years.

ward political organizations to control access to the ballot and competition for office (Kemp and Lineberry 1982; Rakove 1975), I expect a negative correlation between the machine ward variable and number of candidates. Open seat/non-open seat is a dummy variable coded 1 if there was an incumbent running in the election and 0 if the seat was open. I expect fewer candidates to run in wards where incumbents are seeking reelection and more candidates to run in open seat elections. Candidates who behave strategically will wait to run in open seat elections rather than risk challenging incumbents, where they are almost sure to lose. Finally, because more candidates run in minority wards (see Chapter Three), I have included measures in the model for the size of wards' black and Hispanic populations.

The results of this analysis are presented in Table 14. The model explains 27 percent of the variation in number of candidates who run in Chicago's wards. Redistricting has no effect on candidate emergence, and the sign of the regression coefficient is negative, contrary to my hypothesis. It is possible to speculate that instead of encouraging candidates to run, redistricted boundaries serve to insulate from competition incumbents who run for reelection in the vast majority of city council elections.

Machine wards have a significant and negative effect on

TABLE 14

**Number of Candidates by Ward, Chicago City Council
Elections, 1979-1995 (OLS)**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	b coefficient (standard error)	standardized coefficient
Redistricting	.013 (.167)	.00
Machine	-.571** (.194)	-.18
Open Seat/non-Open Seat	-1.153*** (.253)	-.25
Percent Black	1.582*** (.270)	.41
Percent Hispanic	.936+ (.492)	.12
Intercept	3.540*** (.307)	
Adj. R ²	.27	
F-value	19.602***	
Number of cases	250	

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.
Standard errors are in parentheses.

+p = .10; **p = .01; ***p = .001.

number of candidates. In machine wards, .57 fewer candidates enter city council races. In addition to wards' machine status, the most important variables are whether elections involve incumbents, and size of the black population. Judging from the sign of the regression coefficient, more candidates choose to run in open seat elections and more candidates run in wards with higher percentages of blacks. Elections involving incumbents have 1.2 fewer candidates than do open seat contests. These two findings reflect a) strategic behavior on the part of candidates to run in open seat contests; and b) the more politically open character of elections in wards with greater concentrations of blacks (number of candidates being a measure of political openness).

There also seems to be a general tendency for higher quality candidates to run for open seats as well. Table 15 shows the results of a regression model predicting nonincumbent candidate quality. The dependent variable is coded 0,1, or 2 and indicates the level of political experience of the *most* experienced nonincumbent candidate in the race. The results indicate a strong and negative relationship between races that involve incumbents and nonincumbent political quality. The quality score for the most qualified nonincumbents in races against incumbents is lower by .72, when compared to the most qualified nonincumbents in open seat races. Similarly, the most

qualified nonincumbent candidates avoid running in machine wards that, in addition to being represented by long-time incumbents, also are more likely to be tightly controlled by party organizations that will more than likely put their support behind candidates loyal to the party, rather than behind the most qualified candidates.

The results also suggest that nonincumbent candidate quality is related to number of black residents in wards. Wards with higher concentrations of blacks are more likely to experience elections with at least one highly qualified nonincumbent candidate. It is possible to speculate that this is related to two factors. First, because more candidates tend to run in black wards generally, the probability of one of those candidates being politically experienced is higher. Second, because ward redistricting that occurred during the time frame resulted in many new black wards, this probably presented the first opportunity for many qualified nonincumbent candidates to run for the city council. Based on evidence showing that more candidates run in wards with high concentrations of black residents, it is reasonable to suggest that city council seats in these wards are more highly sought-after than seats in predominantly white wards. The value placed on these posts and the competition for office in black wards also appears to encourage the emergence of at least one (maybe more) well-qualified candidate(s).

TABLE 15

**Nonincumbent Candidate Quality, Chicago City Council
Elections, 1979-1995 (OLS)**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	b coefficient (standard error)	standardized coefficient
Redistricting	-.018 (.088)	-.01
Machine	-.296** (.102)	-.19
Open Seat/non-Open Seat	-.724*** (.133)	-.31
Percent Black	.438** (.142)	.23
Percent Hispanic	-.047 (.256)	-.01
Intercept	1.307*** (.162)	
Adj. R ²	.19	
F-value	13.009***	
Number of cases	250	

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.
Standard errors are in parentheses.

p = .01; *p = .001.

Number of Candidates and Candidate Quality:

A Summary of Findings

In general, evidence suggests that candidate emergence in city council elections is mainly a function of political and demographic circumstances. Wards with traditional machine organizations and incumbent aldermen seeking reelection have fewer candidates (and fewer well-qualified nonincumbent candidates) running in them. By contrast, wards with high concentrations of black residents tend to have aldermanic elections contested by more candidates. In addition, there is a greater chance that at least one nonincumbent candidate will be politically experienced in wards with higher concentrations of blacks, than in predominantly white or Hispanic wards. Nonincumbent candidate quality also appears to be related to political circumstances. Higher quality nonincumbent candidates tend to emerge in open seat elections, where their chances of victory are greater, rather than in elections involving incumbents.

These analyses have demonstrated patterns in the behavior of nonincumbent candidates. However, because elections that involve incumbents characterize most city council elections, it is useful to examine the behavior of candidates who challenge incumbents. Because their behavior might affect the competitiveness of city council elections involving incumbents, it will be informative to determine if

challengers' behavior is random in nature or more systematically geared toward defeating incumbents. In order to provide an answer to this question, the analyses that follow examine the number, and political experience, of challengers who face incumbents in city council elections.

Challenger Emergence

Based on findings presented above, the number and political experience of nonincumbent candidates is related to political and demographic factors. The evidence suggests that nonincumbent candidates prefer to run in open seat elections, thereby avoiding the pitfalls of running against incumbents. In addition, the most politically experienced nonincumbents also prefer to avoid incumbents. Because election outcomes are often dictated by the individuals who decide to run for office (see Lieske 1989), determining when challengers choose to run against incumbents is an important question. In order to answer this question, I examine a) the number of challengers who emerge to face incumbents; and b) the political experience of those challengers.

The assumption here is that "strategic" challengers are those who emerge to face vulnerable incumbents. For example, incumbents might be vulnerable in years when their ward boundaries are new. Conversely, challengers might avoid running against powerful committee chairs, or against incumbents with large campaign war chests (i.e., cash-on-

hand) to spend on their elections.⁶ As discussed above, challengers might also make decisions to run against incumbents based on incumbents' previous election vote share.

The results of the analysis predicting number of challengers by ward are presented in Table 16. Three models are shown. Model 1 tests the same variables that were used in predicting candidate emergence, shown in Table 14 and Table 15 (redistricting, ward status as independent/machine, open seat/non-open seat, percent black, and percent Hispanic). This model explains 19 percent of the variation in number of challengers. Consistent with earlier analyses, challenger emergence is shown to be a function of ward demographic factors such as percent black and percent Hispanic. Contrary to expectations, however, whether the ward is a machine ward or not is unrelated to predicting number of challengers. This is most likely due to the fact that incumbents who ran unopposed were excluded from the analysis. Many of the city's machine wards are controlled by incumbents who regularly face no opposition. In three elections (1979, 1983, 1987), Fred Roti (First Ward) faced no opposition. It was not until he went to prison on a corruption charge, and his ward boundaries were redrawn, that competition returned to the First Ward. Likewise,

⁶Cash-on-hand is the amount of money incumbents reported having in their campaign finance accounts on July 1 in the year prior to the election.

Edward Burke of the Fourteenth Ward faced no opposition in each of the five elections under study here. Of the remaining machine wards, this aspect of ward politics appears to matter little in deterring incumbent opposition.

Model 2 adds the other variables hypothesized to influence challenger behavior. Overall, this model adds little to the explanatory power of Model 1 (only 1 percent more in explained variation). Again, ward demographic factors are the most important variables predicting challenger emergence. None of the factors related to incumbent vulnerability or strength are statistically significant at the .05 level, although ward status as machine and scandal do reach the .10 level of significance. The only variable that is not in the predicted direction is seniority. I expected more senior incumbents to be perceived as politically vulnerable *because* of their time in office. These incumbents have more identifiable public records that challengers can run against, might be vulnerable to challenger arguments that "it's time for a change," and might be perceived as out-of-touch with district sentiment. This, however, is clearly *not* going on in Chicago, as more senior members of the city council attract fewer challengers relative to their more junior colleagues.

TABLE 16

Number of Incumbent Challengers, Chicago City Council Elections, 1979-1995 (OLS)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Machine	-.206 (.204)	-.442+ (.245)	-.369 (.228)
Redistricting	.035 (.171)	-.046 (.175)	-.046 (.174)
Percent Black	1.397*** (.267)	1.107*** (.281)	1.305*** (.280)
Percent Hispanic	1.206* (.509)	1.135* (.546)	1.133* (.529)
Seniority	_____	-.011 (.021)	-.000 (.020)
Committee Chairman		.216 (.214)	.197 (.222)
Scandal	_____	.618+ (.327)	.521 (.328)
Cash-on-Hand	_____	.004 (.004)	(.004) (.004)
Vote Percentage ¹	_____	-.007 (.005)	_____
Appointed Incumbent	_____	_____	.988** (.326)
Intercept	1.677*** (.235)	1.978*** (.336)	1.565*** (.282)
Adj. R ²	.19	.20	.22
F-value	11.040***	5.326***	6.312***
Number of cases	177	154	169

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. Unopposed incumbents are excluded.

¹In the incumbent's previous election.

+p = .10; *p = .05; **p = .01; ***p = .001.

In Model 3 I have substituted incumbents' status as an appointee for incumbents' vote percentage in the previous election as a sign of political vulnerability. In cases where vacancies occur on the city council, the mayor has the power to appoint new council members subject to council approval. *I expect appointed incumbents to attract more challengers because, due to their limited time in office, they are less likely to have developed the type of constituency loyalty that elected incumbents typically have achieved.* Although the overall explanatory power of the model improves little, the incumbent appointee variable is correctly signed (positive) and statistically significant. Appointed incumbents attract approximately one more challenger than do elected incumbents.⁷

Challenger Quality

As shown above, the political experience of incumbents' challengers is related to how well incumbents perform on election day, even if only marginally. They are better able to mount credible campaigns than those challengers who lack experience. Thus, it is important to know if decisions by politically experienced challengers to seek office are based on perceptions of incumbents' political strength in the ward.

⁷It should be clear that these appointees are competing in their first election for the office.

Table 17 presents results of analyses that explain challenger quality. The assumption of this analysis and the models tested here is identical to the analysis presented in Table 16. Higher quality challengers are expected to emerge when incumbents are vulnerable and will avoid challenging incumbents who appear difficult to unseat. The unit of analysis is wards in which incumbents are seeking reelection.

Model 1 presents results of the regression analysis using machine, redistricting, percent black, and percent Hispanic as predictors of challenger quality. The quality of challengers in machine wards is clearly lower than that found in non-machine wards. Experienced political candidates therefore appear to make a negative judgment about the probability of their own success in these kinds of wards and act accordingly. This table also indicates that none of the other predictors are significant and, overall, the model predicts only 8 percent of the variation in challenger quality.

Model 2, by contrast, is a fully specified equation that includes the other indicators of incumbent vulnerability and strength. This model performs considerably better than Model 1, although percentage of explained variation (R^2) not overwhelming (18%). Again, the quality of incumbent opposition in machine wards is

TABLE 17

**Challenger Quality, Chicago City Council Elections,
1979-1995 (OLS)**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Machine	-.359** (.130)	-.413** (.157)	-.465*** (.144)
Redistricting	-.045 (.109)	-.018 (.112)	-.038 (.110)
Percent Black	.233 (.267)	.102 (.180)	.176 (.177)
Percent Hispanic	-.196 (.325)	-.003 (.348)	-.168 (.335)
Seniority	_____	.018 (.013)	.002 (.013)
Committee Chairman	_____	.020 (.137)	-.025 (.140)
Scandal	_____	.038 (.209)	.122 (.208)
Cash-on-Hand	_____	-.002 (.003)	-.002 (.003)
Vote Percentage ¹	_____	-.010*** (.003)	_____
Appointed Incumbent	_____	_____	-.296 (.206)
Intercept	.833*** (.150)	1.346*** (.215)	.894*** (.178)
Adj. R ²	.08	.18	.11
F-value	4.915***	4.617***	3.195***
Number of cases	177	154	169

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses.

¹In the incumbent's previous election.

p = .01; *p = .001.

generally lower than that found in independent (non-machine) wards. The only indicator of incumbent vulnerability that is significant is incumbents' vote share in their previous elections. As this percentage increases, challenger quality in the subsequent election decreases. This is in marked contrast to the findings presented in Table 16, where it was shown that incumbent vulnerability (as indicated by their previous vote share) was not significant in predicting number of challengers. The findings indicate that incumbents who did poorer than their colleagues in their previous elections tend to face higher quality challengers, although not greater numbers of them, a finding that is consistent with my hypothesis.

Model 3 attempts to determine if being an appointed incumbent affects the quality of challengers who emerge to face incumbents. Holding constant all other predictors and excluding incumbents' previous vote share (appointed incumbents do not have a previous vote share), this model indicates that it does not. Judging from the findings presented in Table 16 and Table 17, appointed incumbents might face a greater number of challengers than incumbents who have won an election, but they do not necessarily face a better crop of challengers. This may have do with the fact that these aldermen are appointed by incumbent mayors, and thus can typically rely on mayoral endorsements and support in their first election battle, a fact that higher quality

challengers might consider when making decisions about when to run for office.

Challenger Emergence and Challenger Quality: A Summary

The findings reported here suggest that challenger emergence is mainly a function of ward demographics. More challengers emerge in black and Hispanic wards than in white wards, and there is evidence to suggest that more challengers emerge to face appointed incumbents who are running in their first election for their seats. The findings also show that higher quality challengers are strategic in two ways: a) they do not challenge incumbents in machine wards; and b) they tend to challenge incumbents whose support in the ward appears soft (based on previous vote share). Comparing Table 16 and Table 17, the evidence shows that political candidates make decisions to challenge incumbents on the basis of some indicators of incumbent vulnerability and not others.

Discussion

This chapter has sought to uncover the basis for the incumbent advantage in Chicago city council elections and to predict candidate emergence in these contests. The findings indicate that the basis for the incumbent advantage is organization backing, campaign spending, and media endorsements. None of the other factors specific to

incumbents or their unique political circumstances appear to affect outcomes in these elections. These findings are consistent when predicting both incumbents' vote percentage and incumbents' vote margin. Incumbents' electoral advantage also is only marginally affected by the quality of opposition, a finding which represents a clear theoretical departure from other studies of legislative elections (see Abramowitz 1991; Jacobson and Kernell 1983).

The basis for the incumbent advantage in city council elections is an important issue that gets to the heart of questions related to representation and competition in city council elections. This analysis has provided some answers to why incumbents dominate local election outcomes. The question is: what are challengers to do? The analyses presented above indicate that the most promising thing that challengers can do to decrease the size of the incumbent advantage is to spend money, a finding that is consistent with studies done on U.S. House elections (see Abramowitz 1991). While this is one possible way to make aldermanic elections involving incumbents more competitive, the downside is that average opposition spending (by all incumbent challengers) lags far behind average incumbent spending, a fact which is unlikely to change anytime soon. Knowing the difficulty of unseating incumbents, and more than likely satisfied with the status quo, contributors give to incumbents in far greater amounts than they do to

challengers (see Chapter Five). Thus we are likely to continue to see the most competitive races taking place in open seat elections.

The second part of this chapter was devoted to learning more about factors related to candidate emergence, especially in races against incumbents. In general, the findings indicate that more candidates run in minority wards than in white wards, in open seat elections, and in non-machine or independent wards. That more candidates run in minority wards is likely related to two factors: Harold Washington's 1983 and 1987 campaigns for mayor and the political activism that they spawned, and minority group success in ward redistricting battles. Washington's mayoral campaigns, combined with hostility toward both incumbent Mayor Jane Byrne and President Ronald Reagan, mobilized black voters and activists in dramatic fashion. In addition to increasing the size of the black electorate, Washington's political movement also educated black activists in how to run effective campaigns for local office (Grimshaw 1992, 168-169). Minority activism was likely encouraged further as a result of minority group success in ward redistricting battles, which increased the number of city council seats for which black and Hispanic candidates would be competitive.

The creation of majority minority wards in the late 1980s and early 1990s may also have encouraged more

candidates to run in the 1991 and 1995 elections. Because of ward redistricting success, there has been little time for incumbents in these wards to solidify their electoral base and to entrench themselves in office. As the coefficient for incumbent seniority suggests, challengers are not going after long-term incumbents, preferring instead to challenge newer members. These newer members tend to be black and Hispanic, and to represent black and Hispanic wards.⁸

Candidate emergence also is a function of whether seats are open or involve incumbents seeking reelection. This stands to reason as one would expect candidates who are serious about winning to avoid running against incumbents. Machine wards also had a negative effect on the number of city council candidates who ran for office in these wards during the time frame. This, however, is most likely an artifact of the few machine wards that, throughout much of the time frame, featured only the incumbent alderman running for reelection. When the sample of candidates is restricted to incumbent challengers (excluding unopposed incumbents), the findings suggest that whether wards are independent or not has little direct effect on number of challengers and

⁸In the 1991 elections, 59 percent of black incumbents and 100 percent of Hispanic incumbents had served five years or less, compared to 38 percent for white incumbents. At the time of the 1995 elections, 53 percent of black incumbents and 100 percent of Hispanic incumbents had served 5 years or less, compared to 43 percent of white incumbents.

that the most important variable is minority population size. In addition to this factor, incumbents who were appointed to office (and running in their first elections) tend to attract larger numbers of opponents than incumbents who reached office via the normal election route at least once before. It is likely the case that within wards, there are several individuals who desire office and who think they should be considered to fill appointments. Knowing that the odds of defeating entrenched incumbents are long, they run in the first election following an appointment, when the appointed incumbent is still relatively unknown to voters.

The political character of wards and incumbents' previous election vote share, however, while having little effect on number of challengers, do have discernable effects on the quality of opposition that emerges to challenge incumbents. Regardless of how challenger quality affects incumbents' vote share, the expectation that politically experienced candidates base their decisions to run on measures of incumbent vulnerability is born out. Higher quality candidates tend to emerge against vulnerable incumbents and to avoid running in machine wards. Research on city council careers indicates that marginal incumbents are twice as likely as electorally secure incumbents to remain marginal five years after their initial election

(Bledsoe 1993,89).⁹ Based on the findings from Chicago city council elections, this may be due to the fact that higher quality candidates are more likely to run against vulnerable incumbents than they are to run against safe ones. Thus we see a certain amount of strategy and calculation on the part of city council candidates when deciding to run for local office, a finding that is consistent with results from studies of other types of legislative elections (see Bond, Covington, and Fleisher 1985; Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Squire 1989).

In all of the analyses contained in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, the ability to spend money has been shown to be of great value in determining outcomes and dynamics in city council elections. Related to this question is what factors affect the ability of candidates to raise campaign money in the first place. Chapter Five examines variation in campaign fundraising and how one might characterize fundraising patterns within election years.

⁹Bledsoe's (1993,89) research also showed that a majority (54%) of incumbents who were considered vulnerable after their first election had increased their electoral margins to comfortable levels five years later. For incumbents who had won their first election with comfortable margins, 76 percent remained electorally safe five years later.

CHAPTER V

CAMPAIGN FUNDRAISING IN CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

In previous chapters I have shown that campaign spending is a critical variable in predicting candidates' share of the vote in Chicago aldermanic elections. This is true both for incumbents and nonincumbents, and indicates that how extensively candidates are able to advertise themselves to the electorate is important for improving name identification among voters and increasing the number of votes candidates receive on election day. Candidates spend money to advertise themselves via billboard and media ads, to print and produce campaign leaflets, and to raise money.

Most studies dealing with campaign finance have focused on candidates for national office (Alexander 1992; Jacobson 1980; Sorauf 1988), while others have examined campaign fundraising in the states (Box-Steffensmeier and Dow 1992; Dow 1994; Huckshorn 1985; Redfield 1995). Very few scholars, however, have examined fundraising in local campaigns. The reasons for this are unknown, but it might be related to the fact that there is no one source of data on city council campaign finance. While the research presented in this chapter does not make use of a comprehensive database on local campaign finance, it does

utilize data on candidates who ran in the last three (1987, 1991, and 1995) Chicago aldermanic elections. Because city councils office often constitutes a starting point for those wanting careers in politics (Bledsoe 1993, 169-173),¹ the findings presented in this chapter will provide an important addition to existing literature.

Campaign fundraising is examined instead of spending because spending is typically viewed as an independent variable, rather than as something to be explained. Explaining fundraising is more theoretically important than explaining spending because candidates cannot spend what they do not have. And, as the linkage between spending and votes becomes clearer (Arrington and Ingalls 1984; Jacobson 1980; Lieske 1989), this campaign activity (fundraising) assumes greater relevance for candidates' success. Understanding which candidates (incumbents, challengers, and those running in open seat elections) are best able to raise money for their campaigns, therefore, is an important question because of its linkage to electoral competition.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze campaign fundraising by city council candidates. Specifically, I look at three questions. First, what are the differences in fundraising among candidates and how might one characterize the pattern of fundraising during the election cycle?

¹In addition, as Bledsoe (1993,156) points out, many councilors in large cities view the city council as a step up the political ladder, rather than as a step down.

Second, what factors explain variation in candidates' ability to raise money for their campaigns? And third, what effect does early fundraising success have on subsequent efforts to raise money? The answers to these questions will provide needed insights into the ability of candidates to compete in the drive to raise money for their campaigns. It will also provide needed insights into the dynamics of campaign fundraising and how this varies among candidates.

I specifically examine the 1987, 1991, and 1995 Chicago aldermanic elections.² Chicago is a particularly useful place to study patterns in campaign fundraising due to the size of its city council (50 members) and because of the availability of campaign finance data.³ These two factors enable one to analyze variation in fundraising for a large number of candidates over time. While scholars have examined many aspects of city council campaigns including campaign research, advertising, and mass mobilization (Howell and Oiler 1981; Raymond 1992), the issue of fundraising has largely been ignored.

The chapter proceeds in four sections. Below I discuss literature relevant to this research. The second section presents descriptive data on campaign fundraising in the

²Because the 1991 and 1995 campaign disclosure reports require more extensive reporting of campaign contributions, I spend the most time in this chapter looking at these elections.

³Chicago city council candidates were first required to file campaign disclosure reports in 1975.

1987, 1991 and 1995 elections and breaks down candidates' campaign spending reports by reporting periods to determine when candidates are most active in soliciting funds. Using these data and research findings in the literature as guides, I develop and test a model to explain variations in candidates' fundraising, the results of which are presented in the third section. The final section discusses the chapter's implications for our understanding of campaign fundraising in city council elections.

Campaign Fundraising

As mentioned above, campaign fundraising is an important strategic element of campaigns because of the relationship between spending and votes. While the effects of campaign spending in determining candidates' vote share in national elections are well-known (Abramowitz 1991; Green and Krasno 1988; Jacobson 1980), less work has been done on this question as it relates to local elections. The limited number of studies that have been done, however, indicate that candidates' ability to spend money to enhance their name recognition pays-off electorally. Arrington and Ingalls (1984), for example, found that campaign spending was a significant predictor of vote outcomes in local and state legislative elections in North Carolina. Campaign spending also was shown to be a significant predictor of total votes received, even after controlling for candidate

qualifications, political following, and race in a study of Cincinnati city council elections (Lieske 1989,158). Similarly, in a study of the 1991 Chicago aldermanic elections conducted for the Chicago Urban League, Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner (1995,44) found that campaign spending was second in importance only to incumbency in predicting candidates' vote percentage. In general, campaign spending bridges the gap between candidates and voters and helps to educate the public about candidates' platforms and qualifications for office.

With the exception of the Chicago Urban League's research (which also looked at fundraising), however, there have been no in-depth studies conducted on the topic of fundraising in the urban politics literature. In the Urban League study, fundraising was shown to be mainly a function of candidates' race, political organization support, pre-election name identification, and number of opponents (Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner 1995,45). Somewhat surprisingly, however, incumbency was not found to be a significant predictor in a multivariate model of total contributions, although incumbents were shown to dominate nonincumbents in terms of average levels of fundraising (Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner 1995,25). Other treatments of fundraising in local politics have been primarily journalistic in nature and have focused on mayoral elections, rather than city council contests (see Sorauf

1988,291-292).

Fundraising in state and national elections, however, has received considerably more attention due in large measure to the availability of campaign finance data, which became available on the national level in 1972 (Alexander 1992; Jacobson 1980). Several studies inform the research presented in this chapter. For example, the ability of candidates to raise campaign money has been linked to the quality of their campaign organizations (i.e., whether or not they use paid consultants, high-tech polling, legal counsel) (Herrnson 1992), and to how aggressively candidates pursued campaign contributions (Grenzke 1989,259). In addition to these factors, other research has shown that candidates who experienced fundraising success early in their campaigns were able to generate greater contributions than their opponents (Krasno, Green and Cowden 1994,465). Thus, certain candidates (e.g., incumbents, white candidates), who pursue funds aggressively, are expected to be advantaged in terms of how much money they can raise for their campaigns. In addition, research on the dynamics of fundraising has indicated that early money has a positive effect on fundraising conducted at later points in campaigns.

Thus, I expect a number of factors to influence variation in candidates' ability to raise money for their campaigns. Incumbency, candidates' political experience,

number of opponents, candidates' race, and fundraising effort, all are expected to influence the ability of candidates to raise money. Candidates who are successful in raising funds early also are likely to experience fundraising success as their campaigns progress. Below I present descriptive data on fundraising differences among candidates in city council elections.

Findings

Average Contributions by Type of Candidate

In this section I present data that show variations in candidates' fundraising. Understanding these basic differences is important because it helps inform hypotheses tested later in the chapter and because it helps to establish a context within which to analyze these questions.

Figure 7 shows average contributions for incumbents, challengers, and candidates for open seats in each of the three election years.⁴ As expected, incumbents dominate all other candidates in terms of how much money they can raise for their campaigns. Moreover, incumbents are the only candidates who have experienced steady increases in their fundraising totals. Between 1987 and 1991, average incumbents' contributions grew, in constant dollars, by 17.5 percent (\$48,986 to \$57,562), and from 1987 to 1995 average

⁴All analyses in this paper include only candidates who faced opposition.

incumbents' receipts grew by more than 50 percent.

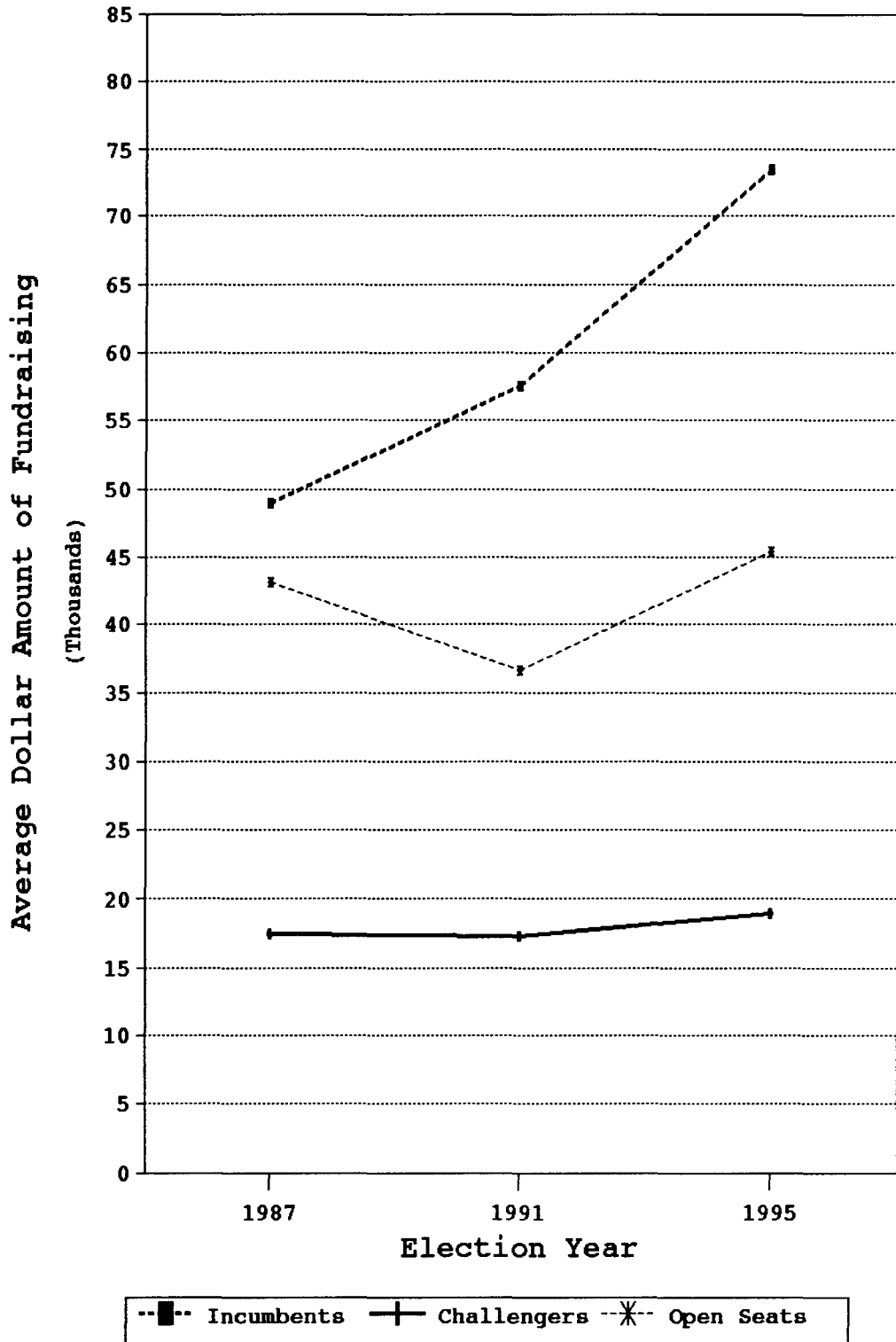
The same cannot be said for nonincumbents. Virtually no change in average contributions for challengers occurred in these elections. From 1987 to 1991, average challenger contributions grew by \$126 (1%), and between 1987 and 1995, average challenger contributions increased by \$1,644, from \$17,246 to \$18,890 (9.5%). The story is somewhat different, however, for candidates running in open seat races. While the differences between 1987 and 1995 are small (5%), these candidates are able to generate significantly greater amounts of money for their elections than are challengers.⁵ In general, these elections are more competitive, compared to elections involving incumbents,⁶ thus stimulating public and media interest, and campaign dollars. On average, candidates in open seat races also have more political experience than those who challenge incumbents.⁷ These descriptive findings are consistent with the literature that has examined other legislative elections (Jacobson 1980), and consistent with what one might expect based on limited

⁵Unreported analysis indicated that these differences were significant.

⁶The percentage of candidates from open seats who were forced to compete in runoff elections was 35 percent in the time period, compared to 26 percent for incumbent candidates.

⁷53 percent of candidates in open seat elections had some type of political experience, compared to only 37 percent for challengers.

Figure 7. Fundraising Differences,
Chicago City Council Candidates



research on local fundraising.

There are clear fundraising differences between candidates, a factor that ultimately affects candidates' ability to wage competitive campaigns. Incumbents are able to raise the most funds, while those candidates in the most difficult political situations (challengers) raise the least. While knowing average differences among candidates is important, it is also important to understand when candidates are most active in terms of fundraising. Candidates who are able to raise large amounts of money in the weeks before the election should be able to advertise themselves and their campaigns better than those who are unable to raise such funds. Moreover, timing is important because voters are more likely to pay greater attention to campaigns as the election date approaches. Below I present descriptive data on candidates' average daily receipts at various time points in the 1991 and 1995 election cycles.

Fundraising Patterns

Because candidates are required to file periodic reports disclosing their campaign fundraising activity, it is possible to understand at what point in their campaigns candidates most actively pursue funds and how this might vary among candidates. After meeting a \$1,000 threshold in either contributions or expenditures, candidates for the Chicago city council are required to file campaign finance

disclosure reports. Candidates file two semi-annual reports each year, as well as pre-election reports thirty days in advance of an election. Because I have limited this study to the twelve-month period beginning July 1 of the year prior to the election, I have three time points for all candidates, one covering campaign activity through December 31; another from January 1 to a date thirty days prior to the primary election; and a third report covering activity from the end of the pre-election report through June 30.⁸ Candidates who compete in runoff elections are required to complete a fourth report, which they file with state authorities thirty days prior to the runoff.

Because reporting periods vary in length, it was necessary to create a standard measure for contributions. This was done by dividing total contributions received during the reporting period by the number of days in the period, to derive an average daily contributions total.⁹ By standardizing this variable, it is possible to make comparisons concerning the relative amount of fundraising

⁸This third period is not a legal reporting period. Instead, I subtracted the amount of revenue reported in the January reporting period from the semi-annual report ending June 30, to determine the amount of fundraising activity by candidates in the period following the first pre-election report.

⁹For 1991, the periods (in days) were: 7/1/90-12/31/90 (184 days); 1/1/91-1/27/91 (27 days); for runoff candidates only, 1/28/91-3/3/91 (35 days); and 1/28/91-6/30/91 (154 days). For 1995, the periods were: 7/1/94-12/31/94 (184 days); 1/1/95-1/29/95 (29 days); for runoff candidates only, 1/30/95-3/5/95 (36 days); and 1/30/95-6/30/95 (153 days).

activity for each candidate during each reporting period. The following reporting periods were analyzed for the 1991 election:

1. Semi-annual report: 7/1/90-12/31/90
2. Pre-election report: 1/1/91-1/27/91
3. Pre-election report (runoff candidates only): 1/28/91-3/3/91
4. Semi-annual (less first pre-election report): 1/28/91-6/30/91

The following reporting periods were analyzed for the 1995 election:

1. Semi-annual report: 7/1/94-12/31/94
2. Pre-election report: 1/1/95-1/29/95
3. Pre-election report (runoff candidates only): 1/30/95-3/5/95
4. Semi-annual (less first pre-election report): 1/30/95-6/30/95

This descriptive analysis will permit some understanding of the internal dynamics of fundraising, when it occurs most, and how it varies across candidates. It will also show how much money runoff candidates are able to raise for their general election campaigns.

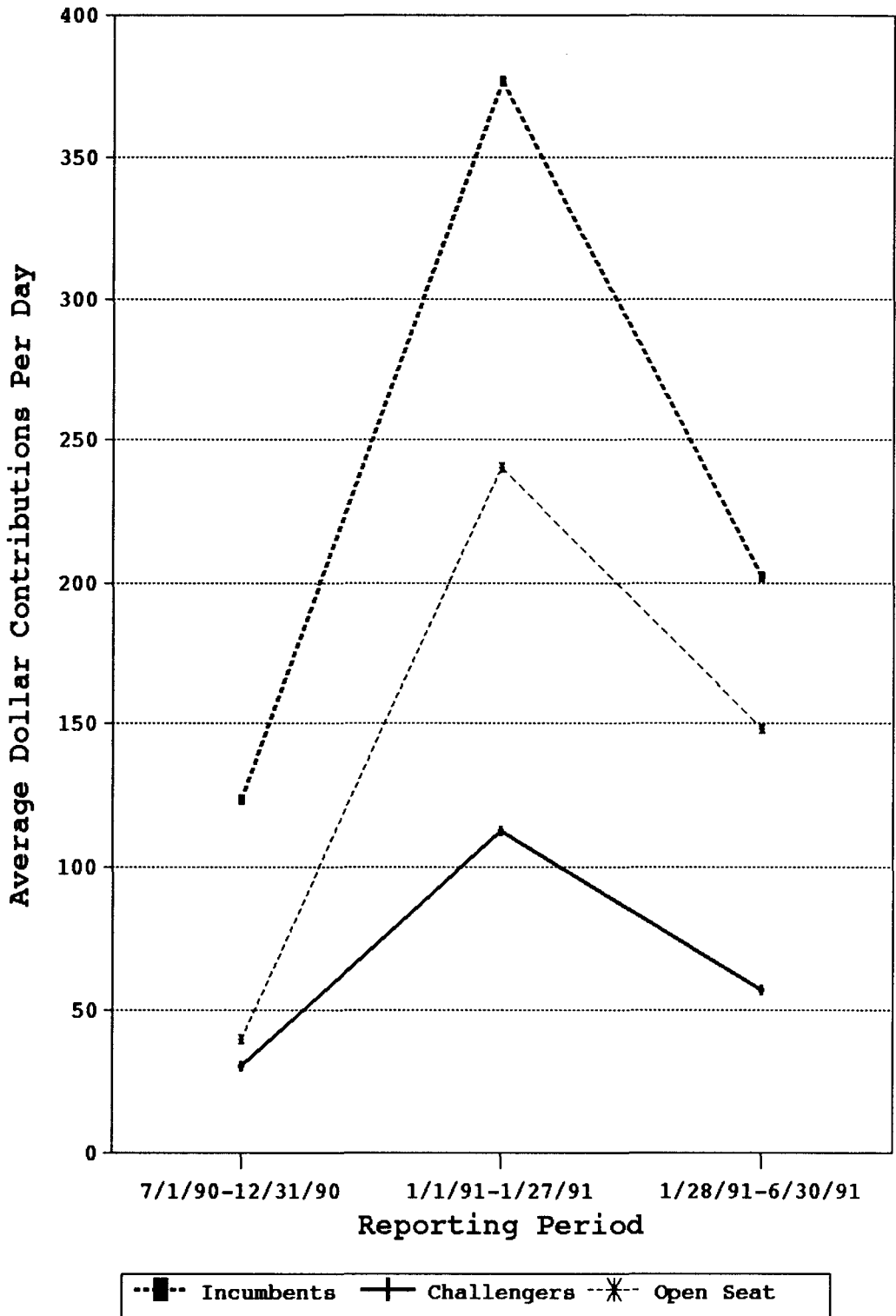
Figure 8 shows average daily campaign contributions for three classes of candidates in the 1991 elections: incumbents, challengers, and those running in open seat elections. As one may have guessed, incumbents hold a distinct advantage over their opponents (challengers) in terms of total funds raised, and also raise far more than open seat candidates. Incumbents raise more money than their opponents, on average, in each of the reporting

periods shown. During the period ending December 31, 1990, incumbents averaged \$123.56 per day in contributions. By contrast, challengers averaged only \$30.16 per day in contributions. At the end of the pre-election reporting period, incumbents averaged \$376.68 per day in contributions, while challengers, although improving their average daily contributions total, lagged far behind incumbents at only \$112.57 per day. During the third period, which includes the month prior to the election and three months after the election in which one would expect less fundraising activity (at least for those not participating in April runoff elections), incumbents raised \$201.62 per day, compared to challengers who raised \$56.75 per day.

Candidates for open seats, like challengers, have limited fundraising success during the six month period prior to the election year, averaging only \$39.42 per day in total contributions. Open seat candidates, however, pick up the pace considerably (vis-a-vis those who challenge incumbents) as the election day approaches, averaging \$240.01 per day in contributions during January. They also do better than challengers in the third period shown, averaging \$91.45 more than challengers in average daily contributions.

The pattern for the 1995 aldermanic elections is nearly identical to that seen in 1991 (see Figure 9). The only

Figure 8. Fundraising by Chicago City Council Candidates, 1991



real differences are in the totals reported by open seat candidates. In general, they reported slightly lower average totals than in 1991 (\$76.77 in the first period; \$216.52 in the second period; and, \$167.28 in the third period). Incumbents and challengers reported nearly identical amounts in both elections.

Because they are required to file an additional pre-election report of campaign contribution activity, an analysis of runoff candidates' reports paints a more accurate picture of the ebb and flow of campaign money during the election year. This is because runoff candidates are required to file a report thirty days prior to the April election, and thus their second pre-election report covers the month in which the primary election occurs. Figure 10 shows average daily contributions for incumbents, challengers, and open seat candidates who ran in 18 aldermanic runoff elections in 1991.

The data indicate that candidates are busiest raising money during the month of February. This is clearly what would be expected as candidates race to finish first in the primary and as the demand for money intensifies. Incumbents lead other candidates during the period from January 28 to March 3, averaging \$593.17 per day in contributions. Open seat candidates and challengers also raise impressive amounts of money, averaging over \$300 per day during this

Figure 9. Fundraising by Chicago City Council Candidates, 1995

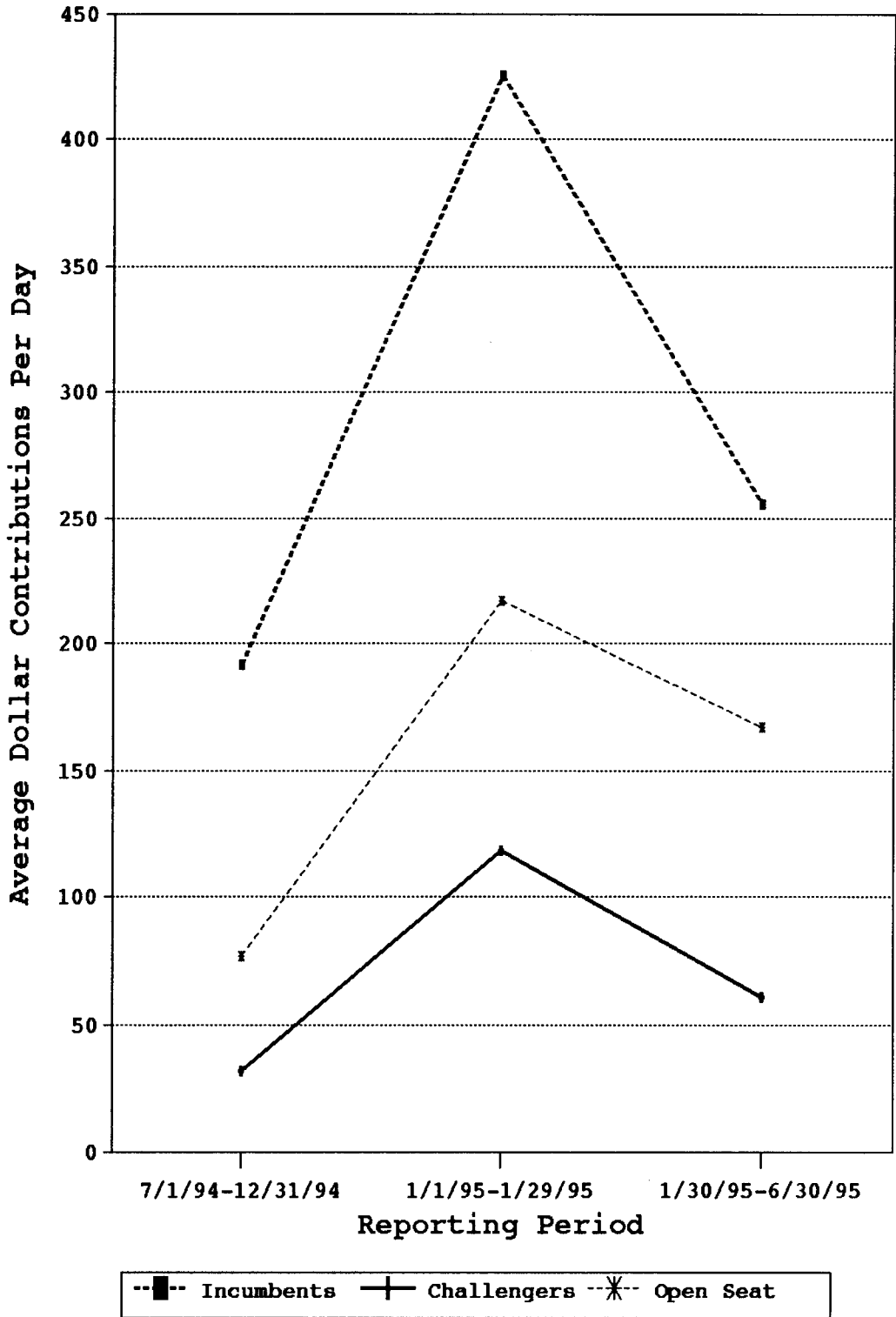
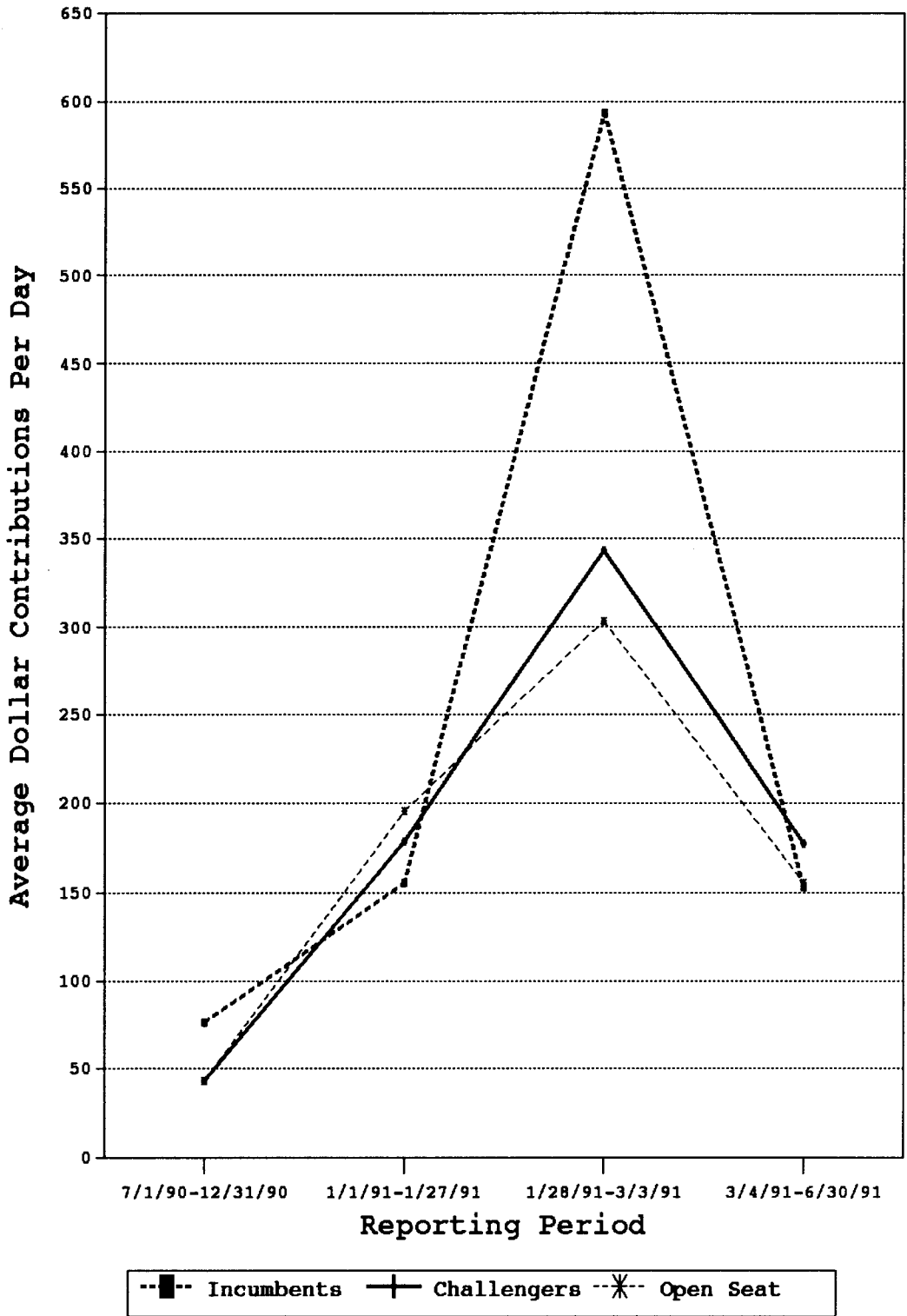


Figure 10. Runoff Fundraising, Chicago City Council Candidates, 1991



month. Second, the top open seat and challenger candidates make dramatic improvements in their ability to raise money, increasing their average daily totals from only \$50 per day to over \$300 per day in the span of three months. This is most likely a reflection of two factors: a) time committed to fundraising vis-a-vis other campaign activities, and b) success in primary elections. Third, while incumbents raise, on average, approximately \$300 more than nonincumbents during the month of February, this is most likely a sign of electoral desperation than electoral strength. The inability to raise significantly greater amounts of money than challengers during the first two reporting periods might be why they are forced into runoff elections in the first place. They are able to generate funds as the election approaches in February, but this may not be enough to avoid the April runoff election to retain their seats on the council.

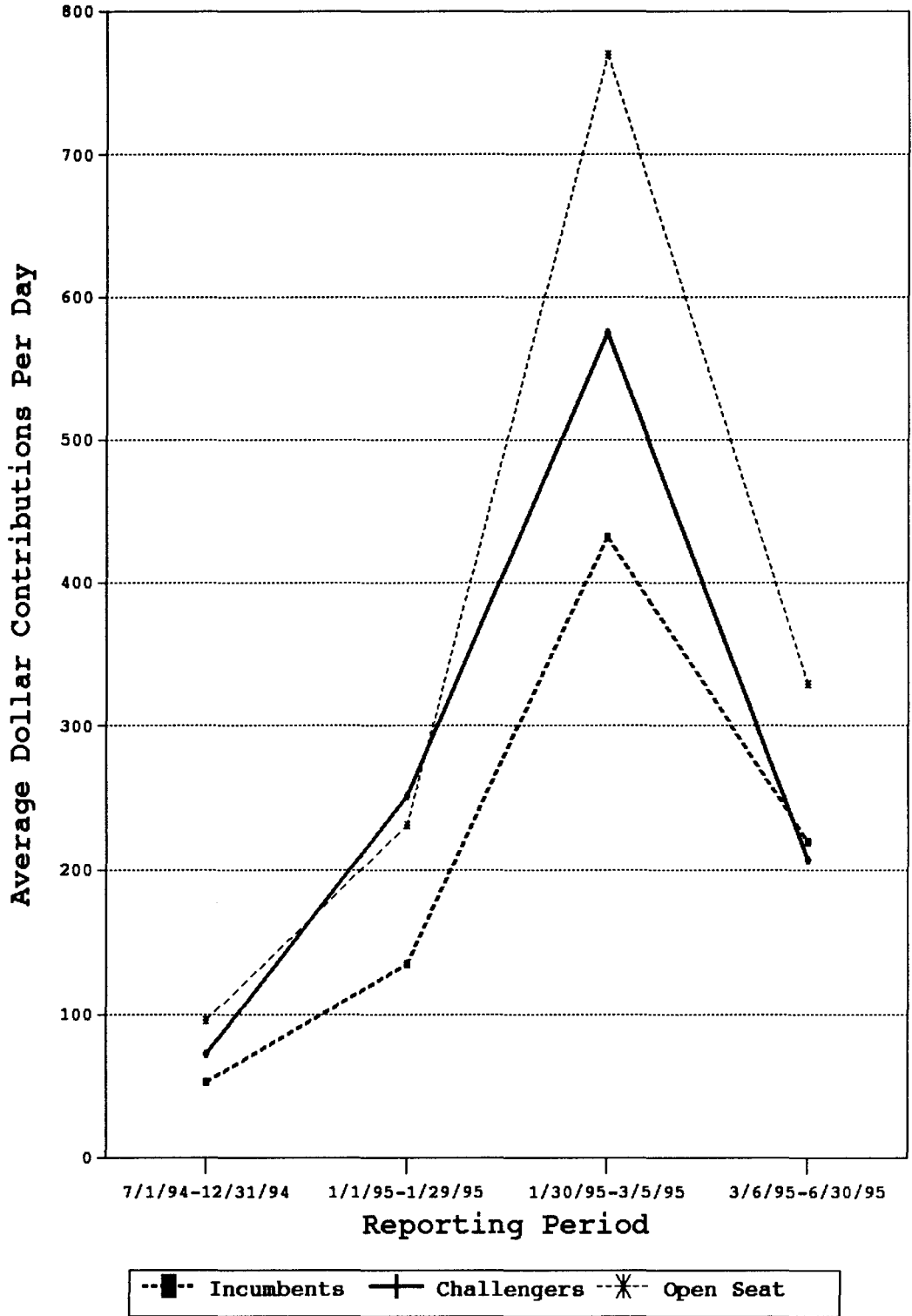
The 1995 data for runoff candidates (see Figure 11) also show that candidates are most involved in fundraising during the month of the primary election. Unlike the 1991 elections, however, the data indicate that among runoff election candidates, those in open seat contests were the ones raising the most money. In fact, the 1995 data show that open seat candidates raised similar amounts of money as did incumbents forced into runoffs in 1991. Challengers in runoff elections also were able to eclipse their incumbent

opponents in terms of average daily receipts.

Surprising as the 1995 data may be, they are most likely due to the fact that among the 22 candidates in 11 runoff elections, several of the challengers, and many of the candidates in open seat races, had high degrees of pre-election name identification and political experience. Of the six runoff candidates for open seats on the council, four (Jesse Granato and C. Victoria Almeida in the First Ward; Janet Oliver-Hill in the Fifth Ward; and Vilma Colom in the Thirty-Fifth Ward) had some political experience, either as candidates themselves, or as staff members to incumbent aldermen. Two of these candidates, Almeida and Oliver-Hill, were the incumbent Democratic committeeman in their wards at the time of the election. Colom was similarly advantaged. Having run once before for citywide office, she was also the beneficiary of substantial support from powerful alderman and ward committeeman Richard Mell from the neighboring Thirty-Third Ward.

Among challengers, Geraldine Laury was endorsed by the Second Ward Democratic Organization and also is the sister of former alderman, now congressman, Bobby Rush. In the Southeast Side Tenth Ward, former state representative and incumbent ward committeeman Clem Balanoff squared-off against the incumbent Alderman John Buchanan. Hal Baskin in the Sixteenth Ward, who faced incumbent Shirley Coleman, received substantial pre-election news coverage for being

Figure 11. Runoff Fundraising, Chicago City Council Candidates, 1995



not only a one-time felon, but also allied with 21st Century Vote, a political action committee founded by gang leaders on the city's South Side. Walter Burnett in the Twenty-Seventh Ward received similar exposure and also had the benefit of being endorsed by Cook County Recorder of Deeds Jesse White, his employer at the time of the election. Finally, in the city's Thirty-Ninth Ward, Anthony Fornelli, who faced incumbent Margaret Laurino, most likely benefited from his experience and contacts in the legal profession, as well as from his experience in civic affairs as a member of the Chicago Plan Commission. Clearly, 1995 saw the emergence of several highly qualified nonincumbents, and patterns in fundraising reflected this fact. While one cannot generalize from the patterns established in the 1995 runoff elections, it is instructive to see that highly qualified candidates can be effective in the fundraising arena, even against incumbents.

The data and anecdotal evidence for the 1995 runoff elections indicate that candidates are quite active during the month of February raising money in order to make contacts with voters that they hope will translate into votes on election day. Comparing the results from 1991 and 1995 runoff elections, one is struck by the ability of nonincumbent candidates in the more recent election to generate revenue for their campaigns. As discussed, this is most likely due to the fact that these candidates were

politically-involved and politically-connected prior to their campaigns, advantages that apparently paid dividends in terms of their ability to finance their campaigns.

The Ebb and Flow of Campaign Dollars: A Summary of Findings

Challengers clearly have the hardest time raising money for their campaigns, as is evidenced by their relatively low average daily totals shown in each of the three reporting periods in 1991 and 1995. This is most likely a reflection of strategic behavior on the part of those contributing money to campaigns. Because the odds of unseating incumbents are long, and because most contributors prefer to back winners, contributions flow more readily to incumbent candidates. It is also very likely that due to the lack of political experience of challengers (see Chapter Four), they find it difficult to make and sustain the kinds of contacts in the business and political communities to help them raise money for political campaigns. Because open seat candidates have more political experience than other nonincumbents in general, and because their ability to compete seriously for office is enhanced by not having to face incumbents, these candidates are able to raise considerably more funds than challengers during each reporting period.

Although these descriptive data tell an important part of the story, it does not allow one to rule out alternative hypotheses. Incumbency may be a very important predictor of

candidates' ability to raise money. Based on the evidence presented thus far one might guess that this would be the case. It may also be the case, however, that black and Hispanic candidates find raising money more difficult than white candidates, or that fundraising is a dynamic process influenced by early contributions. Fundraising may also be related to electoral competition. In order to explore these possibilities, I test multivariate models of campaign fundraising.

A Model to Explain Campaign Fundraising

A number of variables are expected to influence candidates' ability to raise money. Some of these factors relate to candidate attributes (such as race or political experience), while others relate to candidates' electoral circumstances. Because incumbents typically win reelection, and because contributors are usually pragmatic in their donating practices (i.e., they give to likely winners) (Box-Steffensmeier and Dow 1992,624), I expect significant fundraising differences to exist between incumbents and nonincumbents. To account for this, I have included a dummy variable coded 1 for incumbents and 0 for nonincumbents. *In general, I expect incumbency to be a positive and significant predictor of total campaign contributions.*

In addition to incumbency, I expect candidates' race or ethnicity to be an important predictor of contributions

received. Because candidates draw contributions from their own wards primarily, and because racial and ethnic minorities run in wards with lower levels of personal income, *I expect minority candidates to report fewer contributions than white candidates who run in more affluent wards.* To control for this possibility, I have included a dummy variable for candidates' race.

I also expect total contributions to be related to the amount of time or effort (in months) that candidates devote to fundraising. Using a combination of when campaign committees were created and when candidates filed their last reports, I was able to estimate the amount of time candidates devoted to raising money for their campaigns during the period under study. Because incumbents' committees exist from one election to the next, they were all credited with 12 months of fundraising activity. Nonincumbents typically create their committees much closer to the primary election¹⁰ and therefore the amount of time they engage in fundraising is much shorter and varies more extensively than for incumbents. Unlike state and national politicians who employ professional campaign consultants and organizations, local candidates in Chicago are more likely

¹⁰Throughout this chapter I use the term primary when referring to aldermanic elections. Technically, these elections are not primaries because candidates can win their seats by getting more than 50 percent of the vote. Runoff elections are held between the top two vote-getters when no one candidate receives a simple majority.

to rely on personal campaigning. This is not to say, however, that they are not serious or professional in their attempt to win office. One measure of their devotion and professionalism as it relates to their campaigns is the amount of time they allocate to fundraising.

Candidates' fundraising also should be related to the amount of competition they face on election day. Competition is measured according the amount of resources opposition candidates can mobilize in support of their efforts. Opposition spending, for example, should affect candidates' fundraising, as this is a visible sign of the quality of opponents' campaigns and should elicit a response on the part of others to increase the intensity of their own fundraising. *Because of this I expect that as opposition spending increases, candidates will try to keep pace by increasing their own fundraising.*¹¹

Number of opponents also is included as a measure of electoral competition. Because the overall amount of money available in wards for campaign contributions is likely to be limited, *I expect greater numbers of opponents to have a negative effect on candidates' total revenues.* With more candidates seeking money from the same pool of funds, each additional candidate in the race should have a negative

¹¹Opposition spending is the sum total of all spending by one's opponents.

effect on any one candidate's ability to generate revenue.¹² Number of opponents is simply the number of candidates in the race, minus one.

The *dependent variable* is candidates' total campaign fundraising (minus in-kind gifts), which was taken from candidates' campaign finance disclosure reports filed with the state. Fundraising is measured at two points in time. The first time period is the one ending December 31 of the year prior to the election, and the second period is the one ending June 30 of the election year.¹³ Although there are other reporting periods, I focus on these two time periods because this is when most fundraising activity takes place. I test separate models for each period, expecting that fundraising will be influenced by different variables at different points in campaigns. *Independent variables* include incumbency, candidates' race or ethnicity, number of opponents, fundraising effort, previous contributions, challenger quality, and opposition spending. The results of my analysis are presented below.

In all cases, total contributions for each candidate

¹²Of course, candidates can raise money throughout the city, but most tend to generate revenue within their wards (see the Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner (1995), pages i-ii).

¹³I have not analyzed the 1987 elections because the nature of candidates' campaign finance disclosure reports prohibits one from determining how much money candidates raised in the six month period ending the year prior to the election and in the first six months of the election year.

were converted into constant dollars (1995=100) and divided by 1,000 to simplify interpretation of regression coefficients. Candidates who did not file reports were coded as raising no money for their campaigns. Because the vast majority of candidates were either incumbents or challengers (85%), I focus primarily on these candidates. I examine the 1991 and 1995 election years separately for different groupings of candidates. The unit of analysis is the candidate and ordinary least squares regression is used to analyze the data.

Table 18 presents results from an analysis of incumbents and challengers who ran in the 1991 election. The results from the first time period are somewhat surprising. Incumbency, expected to be the strongest predictor, is not significant in this time period. By contrast, what appears to matter most is the amount of time (in months) candidates devote to fundraising. Candidates who devote more time to fundraising raise more money than those who devote less time. Judging from the size of the coefficient, candidates produce about \$911 each month they raise funds during this part of the election cycle. The coefficients for candidates' race and number of opponents, while in the predicted direction, are not significant, and the variable denoting candidates' ethnicity (Hispanic) is neither significant, nor in the predicted direction.

The results from the model predicting fundraising in

TABLE 18

Factors Influencing Fundraising by Chicago City Council Candidates in the 1991 Elections

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	<u>First Reporting Period</u> ¹	<u>Second Reporting Period</u> ²
Incumbent	4.713 (3.455)	20.248*** (5.737)
Black	-2.750 (2.932)	-7.227 (5.255)
Hispanic	2.182 (5.084)	-11.175 (9.099)
Number of Opponents	-.977 (1.013)	-2.292 (1.824)
Fundraising Effort	.911** (.305)	_____
Previous Contributions	_____	.695*** (.169)
Opposition Spending	_____	-.164 (.116)
Intercept	10.723*** (3.241)	14.655* (6.365)
Adj. R ²	.23	.41
F-value	7.628***	13.575***
Number of cases	111	110

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses.

¹Period ending December 31, 1990.

²Period ending June 30, 1991.

* $p = .05$.

** $p = .01$.

*** $p = .001$.

the subsequent time period are presented in the second column. The *dependent variable* is total contributions as of June 30 of the election year. To this model I have added two variables: candidates' total contributions at the end of the first time period, to determine whether or not raising money is a dynamic process that builds on early fundraising success, and total opposition spending, as one measure of electoral competition (the other being number of opponents). This model *excludes* the fundraising effort variable because it is constant for most candidates during this period.¹⁴

These results indicate that the model explains 41 percent of the variation in candidates' fundraising. The coefficient for the incumbency variable shows that incumbents realized a \$20,000 advantage over their challengers in this period of the 1991 election cycle. In addition to incumbency, each \$1,000 of contributions in the first period is matched by approximately \$700 in the second period. Thus, as hypothesized, the most important predictors are incumbency and previous contributions. Both of these indicators measure candidate viability. Incumbents are clearly favored to win elections and therefore are able to attract large sums of money. Similarly, candidates who

¹⁴There were a few instances when candidates did not get credit for 6 months of fundraising in the second time period but, in general, there is very little variation on this variable.

are able to raise money early in campaigns demonstrate their seriousness and ability to win elections. Other findings show that the coefficients for candidates' race, ethnicity, and number of opponents, while in the predicted direction, are not significant. Also, contrary to my hypothesis, opposition spending exerts a negative, but insignificant effect on candidates' fundraising.

Table 19 shows results of identical models tested on the 1995 aldermanic elections. Overall, the model for the first reporting period explains 53 percent of the variation in candidates' fundraising. Contrary to 1991, in the first reporting period the incumbent dummy variable is a positive and significant predictor of fundraising. The size of the coefficient suggests that incumbents raised about \$17,000 more than the average challenger in this election. Candidates' race also is highly correlated to fundraising. Black candidates, on average, raised about \$14,000 less than white candidates. If one assumes that campaign funds are generated locally (within wards), then ward socioeconomic status (on average lower for black candidates than for white candidates) might be important in determining overall contributions.¹⁵ This, in conjunction with the fact that the overwhelming number of black candidates run in majority black wards (only 3% of all black candidates ran in non-

¹⁵Indeed, this is what the Chicago Urban League found in their study of campaign finance in Chicago city council elections (see pages 22-24 of their report).

TABLE 19

**Factors Influencing Fundraising by Chicago City Council
Candidates in the 1995 Elections**

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	<u>First Reporting Period</u> ¹	<u>Second Reporting Period</u> ²
Incumbent	16.587*** (3.458)	20.277*** (5.867)
Black	-14.373*** (3.418)	-8.862 (6.041)
Hispanic	-8.778+ (4.592)	-.912 (7.089)
Number of Opponents	-1.549 (1.403)	-3.040 (2.221)
Fundraising Effort	.459 (.342)	_____
Previous Contributions	_____	.775*** (.161)
Opposition Spending	_____	.018 (.113)
Intercept	20.951*** (3.775)	18.709* (8.296)
Adj. R ²	.53	.62
F-value	22.830***	13.575***
Number of cases	96	96

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.
Standard errors are in parentheses.

¹Period ending December 31, 1994.

²Period ending June 30, 1995.

+p = .10.

*p = .05.

***p = .001.

majority black wards), might explain this finding. By contrast, the coefficient for Hispanic candidates, while in the predicted direction (negative) is considerably smaller and significant only at the .10 level.

The findings for the second time period are very consistent with the same model presented in Table 18. Incumbency is the strongest predictor, suggesting that incumbents enjoyed a \$20,000 advantage over challengers in the 1995 election. In addition to incumbency, fundraising early in the campaign cycle also is a strong predictor of later fundraising success. For each \$1,000 raised in the period ending December 31, \$775 was raised in the subsequent time period. The other variables in the model, while not significant, are in the predicted direction. In general, the model performs very well with an Adjusted R^2 of 62 percent.

As expected, the findings presented in Table 18 and Table 19 show that incumbency is a very strong predictor of campaign fundraising. These findings are consistent with my hypotheses and the descriptive data presented above. The only case where incumbency was not a significant predictor of fundraising was during the first period of the 1991 elections. It is possible to speculate that incumbents felt more electorally-secure during this election, than they did in 1995. For example, in 1995 incumbents were running under new ward boundaries and therefore may have been more

concerned with raising money earlier in the process in order to reach "new" ward voters. In 1991, they did not face this sort of pressure, as ward boundaries were last changed in 1986. That black candidates had a more difficult time raising money in 1995 than in 1991 when compared to white candidates is more difficult to speculate on. It is possible that increased fundraising by incumbents (a majority of whom are white) exacerbated differences between black and white candidates generally, to produce the significant differences found in the first time period for 1995.

In the second time period, incumbency status and previous contributions were found to be significant predictors of fundraising. Both of these findings suggest that contributors to local political campaigns make pragmatic decisions about which candidates to support. Incumbents are very likely to win their elections and, therefore, receive more in contributions. Incumbents also have relationships with contributors that most challengers must develop from scratch, a distinct disadvantage for challengers who typically emerge fairly late in the campaign process. These findings also support the hypothesis that candidates who prove that they can raise money early in the campaign season reap fundraising advantages over those who are less successful. That candidates benefit from their fundraising success early in campaigns also suggests that

there is a dynamic to fundraising unseen in descriptive data, one which suggests that fundraising is a dynamic process. Both of these findings are consistent with conclusions reached by scholars who have studied other legislative elections (see Krasno, Green and Cowden 1994).

While incumbents raise significantly greater amounts of money than challengers, it is unclear what factors explain fundraising differences *among* challengers. Because the ability to raise and spend money is closely connected to election outcomes, and because challengers have the most difficult time getting elected, it is important to understand what variables might affect challengers' fundraising. Below I present results from regression models designed to predict challengers' fundraising in the 1991 and 1995 elections.

Challengers' Fundraising

In predicting challengers' fundraising I again look at the 1991 and 1995 elections separately. I also divide the fundraising process into two periods which, together, encompass the six months before the start of the election year and the first six months of the election year. While the dependent variables in this analysis are the same as those tested above, I have added a new predictor variable. In place of incumbency I substitute a variable measuring challenger political quality. In all other respects, the

models developed to predict challengers' fundraising are consistent with those tested above.

As much of the literature on legislative elections has shown, higher quality challengers give incumbents their most difficult reelection battles (Bond, Covington and Fleisher 1985; Green and Krasno 1988; Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Krasno, Green and Cowden 1994,471). One of the reasons that they give incumbents tough reelection fights is because their political experience enhances their ability to raise money. For example, challengers with state legislative office experience or ones with previous experiences as staff members to elected officials are expected to generate more revenue for their campaigns than challengers without this political background. They are expected to know the fundraising "ropes" somewhat more extensively than inexperienced challengers and to benefit accordingly. Thus, I have coded challengers according to the amount of political experience they had at the time of their elections, using the measure of challenger political experience outlined in previous chapters. *I expect a positive and significant relationship between challenger political experience and fundraising.*

The findings in Table 20 show results of challengers' fundraising in the 1991 elections. The first column shows results from the model predicting fundraising in the first period. The model explains 31 percent of the variation in

challengers' fundraising. Candidate political experience, contrary to my hypothesis, is unrelated to fundraising success during the early part of the campaign. Number of opponents and fundraising effort, however, are significant and the signs of the coefficients are in the predicted direction. The coefficient for number of opponents indicates that each opponent decreases challengers total contributions by approximately \$1,500. Greater attention to fundraising by challengers can offset this somewhat. Challengers are able to generate approximately \$1,000 each month they are involved in raising money.

The second column shows results of challengers' fundraising in the second fundraising period under examination here. The findings indicate that challengers' fundraising in this period is primarily a function of early campaign contributions. For every \$1,000 in contributions they bring in during the first period, they raise slightly over \$1,200 in the subsequent period. In contrast to the results for the first period, number of opponents is seemingly unimportant for predicting fundraising in the second period. Challenger political quality, race or ethnicity, and opposition spending also appear unrelated to challengers' fundraising.

The findings for the first reporting period in 1995

TABLE 20

Factors Influencing Fundraising by Chicago City Council Challengers in the 1991 Elections

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	First Reporting Period ¹	Second Reporting Period ²
Candidate Quality	1.047 (1.480)	2.153 (2.061)
Black	-1.099 (2.173)	-2.713 (3.002)
Hispanic	-3.617 (3.538)	-2.470 (4.920)
Number of Opponents	-1.487* (.690)	-.879 (.988)
Fundraising Effort	.964*** (.197)	_____
Previous Contributions	_____	1.232*** (.137)
Opposition Spending	_____	.072 (.061)
Intercept	11.473*** (2.317)	4.132 (3.753)
Adj. R ²	.31	.58
F-value	8.615***	20.251***
Number of cases	85	84

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses.

¹Period ending December 31, 1990.

²Period ending June 30, 1991.

* $p = .05$.

*** $p = .001$.

mirror those for the 1991 election, with one exception (see Table 21). In this model, challengers' race is related to how much money they can raise for their campaigns. During this part of the 1995 election, black challengers raised approximately \$6,500 less than white challengers. This is consistent with the analysis of all candidates. When incumbents are dropped from the model, the difference between black and white candidates decreases. One might infer from this that even larger differences exist between black and white incumbents. In addition to candidates' race, the amount of time challengers put into fundraising is, once again, significant and in the predicted direction, although the effect of effort is somewhat less than in 1991. This finding indicates that it may be beneficial for candidates to begin raising money well in advance of the election in order to build a fundraising base and to generate momentum for their campaigns. The other predictor variables -- challenger quality, number of opponents, and ethnicity -- are in the predicted direction, but are not significant.

The findings for the second half of the 1995 election cycle also are similar to those in 1991. This model explains 59 percent of the variation in challengers' fundraising. In 1995, however, challenger political experience is significantly more important than in 1991. A one unit change in quality produces about \$5,400 in

TABLE 21

Factors Influencing Fundraising by Chicago City Council Challengers in the 1995 Elections

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	First Reporting Period ¹	Second Reporting Period ²
Candidate Quality	1.380 (1.415)	5.429* (2.189)
Number of Opponents	-1.254 (.943)	-1.967 (1.404)
Black	-6.471** (2.406)	-1.563 (3.882)
Hispanic	-5.050 (3.142)	5.995 (4.427)
Fundraising Effort	.752*** (.201)	_____
Previous Contributions	_____	1.084*** (.162)
Opposition Spending	_____	.044 (.067)
Intercept	14.126*** (2.588)	6.205 (5.306)
Adj. R ²	.39	.59
F-value	9.901***	17.568***
Number of cases	71	71

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses.

¹Period ending December 31, 1994.

²Period ending June 30, 1995.

*p = .05.

**p = .01.

***p = .001.

additional campaign revenues (significant at .05). The greater significance of quality in this election reduces the effect of early money, although this variable is still highly significant. The coefficient suggests that for each \$1,000 in revenues generated early in campaigns, challengers raise almost \$1,100 during the subsequent period. Indeed, early money appears to be more important for challengers than for incumbents, as one might expect. The results from Table 18 and Table 19, which included incumbent candidates, showed that early money had a significant effect on later fundraising, and that for each \$1,000 in prior contributions, candidates received \$695 and \$775 in 1991 and 1995, respectively. Excluding incumbents from the analysis, one sees the size of the coefficient for previous contributions increases dramatically for challengers (to \$1,232 in 1991 and \$1,084 in 1991 and 1995, respectively). It is most likely that incumbents have much less need for funds than do challengers and that, if forced into serious contests, they can raise the money they need fairly quickly. Challengers do not enjoy such a luxury and, as this analysis shows, they clearly benefit from their ability to demonstrate fundraising success early on in their campaigns.

Candidates' Fundraising and the Effect of Early Money:

A Summary of Findings

As expected, candidates' fundraising is largely a

function of incumbency, financial success early in campaigns, and amount of time devoted to this campaign activity. Incumbents enjoy enormous advantages over challengers, a finding that was shown in both descriptive and inferential data analysis. The effect of early money is greatest for aldermanic challengers who typically must raise name identification with voters quickly to be competitive against their more widely-known and better-funded incumbents. The ability to raise large amounts of money early in campaigns sends signals to the political and financial community that challengers might be able to compete well against incumbents. Without this fundraising advantage it is impossible for challengers to overcome the enormous advantages, both political and organizational, that keep incumbents nearly invulnerable to defeat or strong challenges. Because they start at such high funding levels and because residents and political leaders within their wards are already well aware of their records in office, incumbents do not reap the same fundraising advantages from early money as do challengers. In fact, intense fundraising during the reporting period ending December 31, probably sends a negative signal to potential contributors that the incumbents are in political trouble. Candidates who spend more time (in months) raising money are typically more successful than those who spend less time on this activity.

Discussion

This chapter has sought to determine which factors are most important in predicting candidates' campaign receipts. It started with the assumption that campaign fundraising is important not only because of the time devoted to it by candidates, but also because of the link between campaign spending and candidates' vote share.

The descriptive data indicated that incumbents and candidates in open seat races are able to generate the largest sums of money for their campaigns (although the differences between what incumbents raise and what open seat candidates raise are vast). The differences between incumbents and the men and women who challenge them, however, is even larger, a finding that was shown in multivariate models to be statistically significant. Campaign fundraising activity also varied depending on the time period in which candidates were working. As the data from the analysis of the various reporting periods indicated, candidates were most actively involved in fundraising during the first two months of the election year. This applied to both the 1991 and 1995 elections.

In general, the multivariate models showed that incumbency and the ability to generate funds early in campaigns are the most important predictors of campaign contributions. The amount of time candidates devote to fundraising also is a consistent predictor of fundraising

totals. To a lesser extent, candidates' race is an important variable. Black candidates, in general, raise less money than white candidates. Hispanic candidates also received less than whites in contributions but, in general, the differences were not significant. Because of intense racial concentration within wards, however, these findings about candidates' race may have little overall significance for political representation in Chicago's city council. Very few black or Hispanic aldermanic candidates run against white candidates. In the vast majority of elections, they faced candidates of their own racial grouping.¹⁶ The comparative fundraising disadvantage experienced by black and Hispanic candidates does, however, have implications for citywide office. Unless slated by the Cook County Democratic party in citywide races, black and Hispanic candidates may be forced to run high-tech campaigns, requiring significant amounts of revenue, without a fundraising base. These conditions likely give white candidates for citywide office significant advantages in advertising their campaigns and stimulating interest in their candidacies.

The findings also suggested that persistence pays off

¹⁶This is not to say that non-majority race candidates do not win in Chicago city council elections. Chicago's Fifth Ward, a majority black ward following the 1981 redistricting (Fremon 1988,48), elected a black alderman for the first time in 14 years. However, there are no black or Hispanic incumbents representing majority white wards.

when it comes to raising campaign money. Those candidates who devoted more time to fundraising generated more in total contributions than those who made less of an effort. In addition to amount of time candidates put toward raising money, candidates who experienced fundraising success early in their campaigns were the same candidates to experience success later in their campaigns. This finding indicated that fundraising in these elections was a dynamic process influenced by candidates' effort and early campaign receipts.

More generally, the findings showed that there was a momentum to fundraising, as was evidenced by the relationship between early fundraising totals and later contributions. Candidates and their campaigns build a certain amount of momentum as elections approach, momentum that often translates into winning and losing. This finding was especially important for challengers.

This chapter has presented the third of three analyses chapters dealing with the politics of city council elections in Chicago. The final chapter attempts to summarize the study's major findings and implications for our understanding of competition for local office. It also relates these findings to other research and attempts to draw some conclusions about how this research fits into the broader study of elections.

CHAPTER VI

UNDERSTANDING CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS: THE CASE OF CHICAGO

This study has evaluated factors associated with electoral competition in local politics by focusing on four different dimensions of city council elections in Chicago: variables that affect election outcomes, the advantages of incumbency, candidate emergence, and campaign fundraising. The findings indicate that much of the electoral process in city council elections is affected by incumbency, not only in terms of predicting candidates' vote share, but also in terms of when candidates decide to run for office. In addition, while incumbency is not significantly related to overall levels of fundraising, its effect is seen in more subtle ways. For example, incumbents enjoy large fundraising advantages over nonincumbents and, in general, are better able than nonincumbents to respond to opposition spending by generating funds of their own.

I undertook this study because in contrast to the literature on congressional and state legislative elections that is rich and diverse, very little is known about many of these areas of inquiry on the urban level. This final chapter presents a summary of the study's major findings and places these findings into a broader theoretical framework.

In so doing, I will explain how my research fits into and complements the literature on urban politics.

The Chicago City Council Elections Project

To examine the different aspects of local elections that I focused on, I developed a data set on approximately 700 candidates who ran for the Chicago city council in regularly-scheduled elections held between 1979 and 1995. I chose Chicago as the setting for this study for a number of reasons. First, in each election a large number of individual candidates sought to win a seat on the city council. For example, in 1995 approximately six candidates, on average, ran in each ward of the city. Because the number of individual candidates seeking seats on the council is large, there is fairly stiff competition for these posts, a prerequisite for any study of this nature.

Second, I chose Chicago because of its election structure. In many respects Chicago is representative of other large cities that currently employ nonpartisan ballots with district election systems, or ones that are moving toward district election systems because of court-ordered changes.¹ Because of its district election format, Chicago offered an opportunity to test some of the claims made in similar studies of city council elections in jurisdictions

¹Dallas is an example of a large city required by federal courts to adopt a district election system (see Christensen 1995, 148).

that use at-large election systems.²

Third, Chicago is an important place to study because, unlike other cities, it has strong party organizations in many of the city's 50 wards. Chicago is unique in this regard because its ward-based Democratic party organizations have, in many respects, withstood the pressures of official nonpartisanship, which have hurt local parties in other cities (see Welch and Bledsoe 1988). Although not as strong as they once were, ward organizations still play an important role in city politics. As a result, I have been able to gauge the strength of local party structures, and their role in elections, over a period of years.

For these reasons, Chicago is a useful place to study city council elections. City council elections dynamics also tend to be a fairly under-researched subject in city politics. For this reason, much of my work borrows from models of congressional elections. With this in mind, I summarize the study's major findings below.

Summary of Major Findings

Factors That Affect Election Outcomes

The first question that I asked was: what factors

²Cincinnati, for example, uses an at-large election format, although its ballot structure is nonpartisan like Chicago's (see Lieske 1989). Due to the limited number of studies that have been done on this topic, it was important to test some of the theories put forth in the Cincinnati study in a different electoral environment.

affect election outcomes? For the purpose of this study, election outcomes were measured in terms of candidates' vote share. Vote share is a standard way to measure election outcomes and permits one to compare the effects of different variables on the dependent variable, controlling for differences in district-by-district voter turnout.

In order to explain variation in candidates' vote share I used data on their background characteristics, such as their race or ethnicity and amount of political experience they had prior to their campaigns for office. I also included different measures of candidates' political resources. This included such variables as campaign spending, media endorsements, and party organization support. I also controlled for the competitive context of their elections by taking into account both the number of opponents each candidate faced on election day and total opposition spending.

The findings indicate that incumbents have a decided electoral advantage over nonincumbents. In general, the typical incumbent enjoys a 20 point advantage over nonincumbents in terms of vote share. While the direction and significance of the coefficient was not surprising, it was somewhat startling to see how large a role incumbency plays in predicting election outcomes. Other political resources are important as well, although their impact is not as large as that of incumbency. Campaign spending,

media endorsements, and support from ward political organizations play an important role in deciding which candidates receive the largest share of the vote, suggesting that the ability to get one's name before voters and to receive political legitimation from outside sources are keys to success in these elections.

The competitive context also plays a role in determining candidates' vote share as election outcomes are, in part, a reflection of the number of individual candidates vying for each seat. Although less theoretically important, this aspect of local elections should be controlled for in future studies, unless the elections under examination involve only two candidates.

The Incumbency Advantage

Because incumbents hold a sizable advantage over nonincumbents, it was important to explore the underlying cause(s) of that advantage. This was done by focusing specifically on incumbents' vote share and the margin of difference between incumbents' vote share and that of their closest competitor. In predicting incumbents' vote share and incumbents' vote margin, I tried to distinguish variables related specifically to incumbents, from other variables shown to predict election outcomes generally. For example, I expected that institutional positions (e.g., committee chairmanships) might be one factor undergirding

incumbent electoral strength. I also expected seniority, challenger quality, scandal, whether or not the incumbent was appointed to office or had run in at least one election before, and redistricting to affect incumbents' vote share and vote margin. The findings indicate, however, that incumbents' electoral strength is statistically unrelated to all these factors, with the exception of challenger quality, which, in the case of predicting vote share, is only moderately significant. None of the other predictor variables are significant, contrary to my expectations.

The factors that explain incumbents' advantage are the same ones that explain candidates' advantage in the first place. Factors such as spending, media endorsements, organization support, number of opponents, and opposition spending, all are significantly correlated to incumbents' vote share and vote margin. Recall, however, that organization support was not included in the model designed to explain vote share of all candidates.³ Its inclusion and significance in models explaining incumbents' vote share and vote margin therefore indicates that a major reason why incumbents enjoy an electoral advantage is due, in part, to this variable. Party organizations do play a critical role in Chicago aldermanic elections. This is shown for

³Analyses related to Chapter Three showed a high degree of multicollinearity between incumbency and organization support. Because of this multicollinearity, I excluded the organization support variable from the model predicting candidates' vote share (see Table 5 and Table 6).

incumbents and for nonincumbents alike.

Candidate Emergence

This part of the analysis focused on the environmental circumstances that predict *when* candidates run for office and that predict when high quality nonincumbents run for office. I hypothesized that factors such as redistricting, ward-level historical factors (i.e., whether the ward had a history of machine politics), ward demographics, and nature of the election (i.e., open seat/non-open seat) would affect the quantity and quality of candidates running in these elections. In addition to addressing this issue, I also attempted to explain *challenger* emergence and *challenger* quality.

In general, ward-level historical factors, size of the ward's black population, and whether or not the election involved an incumbent are the best predictors of both number of candidates running in each ward and the emergence of quality nonincumbents. Two of these factors -- machine ward and open seat/non-open seat -- were viewed as contextual factors capable of influencing perceptions of one's prospects for victory. Based on the evidence, I argue that candidates, in general, are calculating and strategic when they decide to enter city council campaigns and that their behavior is not random. For example, fewer candidates choose to enter races that involve incumbents or that take

place in machine wards. The quality of the most experienced nonincumbent also is affected by the presence of an incumbent on the ballot and whether or not the ward has a history of strong machine politics.

I then examined incumbents' challengers. In this analysis I also sought to uncover the political-environmental circumstances that would compel candidates to challenge incumbents, looking for evidence of strategic behavior on the part of these individuals. I hypothesized that challengers would emerge when incumbents appeared weak, using such factors as redistricting, committee positions, incumbents' seniority, cash-on-hand, previous election vote percentage, whether or not incumbents' were appointed to office, and ward demographic factors as predictors of both strength and weakness. I also examined whether or not incumbents' involvement in scandal at the time of the election, had any bearing on challenger behavior.

In general, the findings indicate that number of challengers is unrelated to any of the variables designed to measure incumbents' weakness or strength. However, a second model indicates that incumbents who are appointed to office before running in their first election to the seat did, in fact, attract more challengers than incumbents who had won the seat at least once before. Thus, challengers appear to be making strategic calculations to run against appointed incumbents.

I also looked at the quality of incumbents' strongest challengers in these wards, utilizing the same model. The findings indicate incumbents' previous vote share does make a difference in the quality of candidates that emerge to face incumbents. As this number increases, the quality of incumbents' strongest challenger decreases accordingly.

Although somewhat less striking than the findings for nonincumbents generally, the research suggests that challengers do behave strategically when they decide to run against incumbents. Number of challengers is, in part, a function of the extent to which incumbents are entrenched in office. Incumbents just appointed to office, who have not competed in real elections for their seat, attract more challengers. Similarly, high quality challengers are deterred somewhat by incumbents' previous election vote share. This measure indicates to politically- experienced challengers just how electorally strong incumbent are in their district.

Campaign Fundraising in City Council Elections

The third major area of interest in this research dealt with campaign finance. Specifically, I focused on factors that explain candidates' ability to raise revenue for their election bids. In addition to studying factors that explain variations in fundraising, I also examined the timing of contributions to better understand the ebb and flow of

fundraising during the course of the campaign itself.

Descriptively, the findings indicate that incumbents enjoy enormous fundraising advantages over their challengers and that they outraise those candidates who run in open seat elections as well. Data also show that candidates are intensely involved in fundraising during January and February of the election year. Thus most candidates are busiest raising money for their campaigns in the weeks immediately prior to election day and not all year long.

Incumbents' fundraising advantages are seen more definitely by examining results of multivariate regression models. As the models show, incumbency is clearly the most powerful predictor of fundraising. Other factors such as fundraising effort, candidate's race, number of opponents, and candidate quality are often strong predictors of total contributions as well. In addition to these factors, candidates who raise money early in the electoral process are more effective at raising funds later in the process, suggesting that there is a certain momentum to fundraising. This is even more important in light of the fact that candidates are busiest raising money for their campaigns in the few weeks prior to their elections. Fundraising is not a well-ordered process where candidates build their base of revenue and then set out to reach as many voters as they can prior to election day. Their ability to raise money develops over time and reflects, in large part, early

financial success.

Chicago City Council Elections and the

Broader Study of Local Politics

Factors that Affect Election Outcomes

Throughout this research I have argued that the literature on city council elections is incomplete, especially when compared to the literature on congressional and state legislative elections. This is unfortunate considering that the number of city councils in the United States far exceeds the number of other legislative institutions. In addition to their presence in most incorporated places, city council members are required to make policy decisions that affect areas of everyday importance to citizens. Understanding how these individuals attain power on the local level is therefore an important theoretical question.

Scholars have approached the study of city councils in a variety of ways. Some have examined how structural features of local government (e.g., nonpartisan ballots, at-large elections) affect the representation of racial and ethnic minorities and the representation of women on city councils (Alozie 1992; Bullock and MacManus 1991; Engstrom and McDonald 1981, 1982; Welch and Karnig 1979). Others have examined patterns of racial bloc voting in city council elections, in attempts to understand the variables that

affect voter choice (Herring and Forbes 1994; Vanderleeuw 1990, 1991). A third group of scholars has examined city council elections from the perspective of factors that affect the ability of candidates to attract votes on election day (Lieske 1989; Merritt 1977; Raymond 1992 Sheffield and Goering 1978; Stein and Fleischmann 1987). The number of studies falling into this category is considerably smaller than the number of studies found in the other two areas that I have identified.

The research presented in the preceding chapters clearly falls into this third category. Indeed, it directly builds on the work of Joel Lieske (1989), who studied factors affecting outcomes in Cincinnati city council elections held between 1969 and 1977. Because his study represents the most exhaustive of its kind in the urban politics literature, I pay particularly close attention to it now. He found that size of candidates' political following, newspaper and partisan endorsements, and racial identification of the candidates were the most important variables predicting total votes received (Lieske 1989, 163-165).

More generally, Lieske articulated a "legitimacy" theory of local election outcomes. He suggested that candidate vote totals were a result of their perceived acceptability to the public. The most important factor was one's political following. Lieske (1989, 168) argued that

incumbents and candidates who had run for office once before retained "75 percent of all voters who backed them in their most recent try for elected office." Because incumbents have the largest political following, they enjoy the largest advantage in council elections. Nonincumbent newcomers (for the most part unknown to the public), by contrast, benefited most from newspaper and partisan political endorsements.

In many respects, my findings mirror those of Lieske's. Although I did not measure political following directly, I have found incumbency to be the most significant predictor of election outcomes in these contests. The value of incumbency, as was shown in Chapter Four, is largely related to the ability of incumbents to secure partisan endorsements and to mobilize a large segment of the voting population in their favor. One might speculate from this finding that incumbents retain a sizable portion of their support in their constituency from one election to the next, an argument that is similar to the one made by Lieske. I have also found that newspaper and partisan endorsements play a critical role in predicting electoral success. Thus, many of the same factors shown to predict election outcomes in at-large Cincinnati also are at work in a district-based election system such as Chicago.

In some ways, however, my findings are inconsistent with those of Lieske's. For example, the only background characteristic that I found to be important in predicting

election outcomes was political experience⁴ and, generally, these findings were inconsistent across election years. The relationship between other background characteristics such as occupational status and vote share were so weak in bivariate analyses that they did not warrant inclusion in the multivariate models of election outcomes.

The different findings on the value of particular background characteristics between Chicago and Cincinnati, however, are most likely related to structural features of city council elections in each city. One might naturally expect candidates' occupational status (such as being attorneys or businessmen) to be more influential in at-large elections than it is in district elections. Indeed, the literature on this topic suggests that upper-status candidates (a category into which attorneys and businessmen would fall) do perform better in these contests than other candidates because of their greater ability to mount viable citywide campaigns (Welch and Bledsoe 1988).

In addition to these factors, the findings on Chicago city council elections indicate a much more significant role for campaign spending in predicting election outcomes, holding constant other important predictor variables. In this regard, my findings are much more consistent with those

⁴Lieske did not consider candidates' political experience, choosing instead to examine such factors as educational training, occupational studies, and political resources such as endorsements from newspapers and party organizations.

of the Chicago Urban League in their study of the 1991 Chicago aldermanic elections and other research on local election outcomes (see Arrington and Ingalls 1984).

Knowing precisely how spending affected outcomes in Cincinnati city council elections is unclear because Lieske (1989, 163-167) excluded campaign spending from his multivariate model, despite there being highly significant bivariate correlations in his initial analysis.⁵ Direct comparison to his findings, therefore, is difficult. I have shown that spending is important in a city with district-based elections, a finding that one might not have expected considering that it is easier in districts for candidates to canvass voters door-to-door (which requires less money) than it is in at-large contests.

Finally, the fact that the racial characteristics of candidates are unimportant in predicting outcomes also is related to structural features of Chicago politics. While candidates' race does matter in at-large elections (see also Herring and Forbes 1994), it is relatively unimportant in Chicago, a city with intense racial segregation and numerous uniraical wards. Because there are few mixed race wards in Chicago, voters generally choose from a list of candidates who share each other's racial or ethnic identification. This fact of Chicago politics forecloses the possibility of racial bloc voting in city council elections. In addition,

⁵See Lieske (1989, 158) Table 1.

many of the minority candidates who run in Chicago city council elections also happen to be incumbent aldermen, a factor that lessens the effect of candidate's minority status.

In general, however, I conclude that the similarities between my findings and those of other scholars far outweigh the differences. Incumbents dominate local election outcomes and political resources that lend legitimacy to candidates (such as media and party endorsements) do improve vote share. Campaign spending also is critically important in determining the outcomes of these contests. Below I discuss how my findings regarding incumbency advantage, candidate emergence, and political fundraising add to or enhance existing theory in these areas of the literature.

The Incumbency Advantage

In this part of the analysis I explored factors underlying the incumbency advantage in city council elections. Because no one has really examined this issue as it relates to local elections, I turned to the literature on Congress to inform the analysis. Attempts to quantify the incumbency advantage on the congressional level, however, have reached mixed conclusions. Some have suggested that the incumbency advantage is based in the system of congressional perquisites, institutional power, and the ability to provide personal services to constituents (Fenno

1973; Fiorina 1977; Mayhew 1974a). Others have argued that changing patterns in mass behavior have insulated incumbents from competition because voters make their choices on who they know rather than on political partisanship (Ferejohn 1977). Still others have questioned the entire notion of incumbency advantage, arguing instead that incumbents are as vulnerable to defeat now as they have been in the past (Jacobson 1987; but see Bauer and Hibbing 1989).

My findings on this subject do not lend themselves to any firm conclusions. In fact, because city councils are, in important ways, unlike the U.S. Congress, it was difficult to isolate institutional factors that might explain the incumbency advantage. First, aldermen do not have the same kinds of staff resources upon which they can build powerful constituency service operations and to build apolitical bonds with ward residents. They are, of course, expected to run errands for constituents and many are quite effective at this part of their job. However, trying to understand constituency operations on the local level is a difficult task that would most likely require personal interviews with incumbents. Second, because council elections are nonpartisan, changes in voters' perceptions of political parties was necessarily removed as an alternative explanation for the incumbency advantage.

As a proxy measure for the ability of incumbents to service constituency needs, I included a dummy variable for

whether or not incumbents were committee chairmen at the time of their election. I hypothesized that incumbents who held committee chairmanships at the time of their election would be better able than those who did not hold such positions to direct city resources into their wards or to claim credit for particular ward improvements. The findings indicate that this is not the case. Whether or not incumbents are committee chairmen at the time of their election has no bearing on their electoral performance. Instead, other factors far outweighed the importance of institutional power on incumbents vote share. Incumbents vote share is explained by spending, opposition spending, media and party endorsements and number of opponents.

How do these findings affect existing theory in this area of the literature? In some ways they confirm the idea that city councils are weak local institutions. If incumbent aldermen cannot use the institutional resources available to them to improve their electoral positions, it means either that the institution is weak or that people outside the institution are paying very little attention to the policy-making role of aldermen. It may also be reflective of the fact that voters in Chicago expect aldermen to pay closer attention to ward interests and running errands for constituents, than to policy-making in general.

Candidate Emergence

Due to a lack of research on the urban level about the influence of environmental factors on candidates' decisions to run for office, I also relied heavily on the congressional elections literature to inform this part of my analysis. In examining this question I did not focus on how formal agents within the political process (for example, parties or interest groups) affect candidates' decisions to enter the political fray, but rather how the political context affects the kinds of races candidates choose to compete in and how context affects the behavior of politically experienced candidates.

The literature has shown that candidates in other legislative elections decide to run based on perceptions of their ability to win (Bond, Covington and Fleisher 1985; Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Squire 1989). For example, political challengers make choices about when to challenge incumbents based on objective measures of incumbents' base of support in their districts or states, such as national political tides or local political conditions. In applying this theory to local elections, I have found that candidates for local office also take into consideration objective conditions in the political environment that might affect their chances of winning. As mentioned above, more candidates enter open seat races and, of those candidates, there is a greater likelihood that they will be more

politically-experienced than candidates who challenge incumbents. Those candidates who do run against incumbents are more likely to challenge ones who were recently appointed to office, rather than those who have been in office longer and who have won a previous election. In addition, high quality challengers appear to base their decisions to run for office on incumbents' previous election vote share, an important summary measure of the strength of incumbents' electoral position in their ward.

In this regard, my findings support the notion that aldermanic candidates in Chicago are strategic in their political behavior. However, in a departure from the congressional elections literature, the findings presented above on candidate emergence also indicate that district demographics play an important role in predicting when candidates' run for office. A larger number of candidates, and a larger number who have political experience, run in wards with high concentrations of black residents. I have argued that this is a uniquely urban political phenomenon that has been affected by mayoral politics, the rise of a new political party (the Harold Washington Party), and success in ward redistricting battles. All of these factors are reflective of broader changes in Chicago politics. Instability and change, especially in black areas and black wards of the city, manifest themselves in city council politics. With little change taking place in white areas

and white wards of the city, the same type of political dynamic is not present.

Campaign Fundraising in City Council Elections

Very little is known about campaign fundraising in local politics. What is known comes from studies conducted by public interest groups such as the Urban League. Due to paucity of studies in this area of inquiry (especially on the local level), the findings that I have presented on campaign fundraising greatly enhance our understanding of this issue.

Like the previous three topic areas that I examined, I have also looked to the literature on other legislative elections to inform this part of my analysis. The findings on Chicago city council elections suggest that fundraising dynamics in this city are very similar to dynamics found in other legislatures. Overall, incumbents have a distinct fundraising advantage over nonincumbents. Candidates for open seats raise the second highest amounts of money and challengers, like challengers elsewhere (see Jacobson 1980), raise the least amount of money for their campaigns, despite having the greatest need for funds. This most likely reflects the shortage of quality candidates who emerge to challenge incumbents (being inexperienced they probably have fewer money-raising contacts), and decisions by contributors to give to likely winners (incumbents). Also candidates who

are able to raise money early in their campaigns are the ones who achieve fundraising success later in their campaigns.⁶ This is very consistent with Krasno, Green and Cowden's (1994) recent findings. In these respects, money raising dynamics on the local level closely resemble dynamics on the national level.

The significance of the fundraising effort variable reflects the "amateur" character of local politics. The more sophisticated candidates begin raising money earlier in the process, with the knowledge that money increases the likelihood of electoral success. They gear their campaign operations in this direction and experience greater fundraising as a result. Greater fundraising permits them to spend more and to make contact with larger numbers of voters. Success in fundraising helps produce success on election day.

The findings on campaign fundraising in Chicago also reflect the peculiar nature of local politics. The negative sign of the regression coefficient for black candidates is indicative of the fact that most candidates raise money not from political action committees, like we see in Congress and state legislatures, (see Jacobson 1992; Redfield 1995), but within their communities (Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner 1995). Because community economic status varies

⁶Because of a small number of cases, I did not test this assumption for candidates running in open seat contests.

dramatically throughout Chicago (white wards are generally more affluent than black wards), fundraising also varies between candidates on the basis of their race.

Council Elections and the Study of Local Politics: A Summary

The research presented above on city council election dynamics has, on the one hand, provided additional empirical evidence for claims made by others who have examined factors affecting council election outcomes. Most notably, I have shown that many of the factors used by Lieske (1989) to predict council election outcomes in that city, also were useful in predicting Chicago aldermanic election outcomes. In the three other areas of local elections that I have examined, however, I have extended the urban politics literature by applying models developed in studies of other legislative elections (e.g., Congress) to city council elections. My findings show that there are many similarities in the nature of city council elections in a large city such as Chicago and those of national legislative elections. For example, incumbents enjoy enormous electoral advantages over their challengers. Second, nonincumbent candidates, for the most part, consider the broader political environment and how it might affect their chances for victory before running for office. Third, many of the same factors that influence patterns in fundraising in national elections play a large role in explaining variation

in fundraising on the local level.

Discussion: Putting Chicago Into Context

Much of what we have come to understand about city councils is based on studies done in the early 1970s on 87 communities in the Bay Area of Northern California. Those findings suggested that councils are, for the most part, composed of individuals who are unmotivated by political concerns and who want to serve their communities in the capacity of volunteers (Prewitt 1970,210-212). Because these cities were fairly homogeneous in terms of population and because they had similar governmental forms, generalizations were inherently difficult.

Recent studies have begun to fine-tune this understanding of city councils. Bledsoe (1993,176), for example, argues that while there are those in city councils who are motivated by civic duty, there are others who are motivated by the "thrill of political competition, the sheer enjoyment of politics, and the possibilities of seeking higher political prizes in the future." Bledsoe (1993,176-178) also identifies city councilors who are motivated by other factors such as serving their particular neighborhood, political partisanship, single issues, or self promotion. Clearly, there is wide variation in the kinds of individuals who seek local office and in their motivations for so doing.

One of the factors that might affect the political

environment in cities is size and diversity of the population. Larger and more diverse cities are likely to produce larger councils, which are required to address a larger number of issues than councils in smaller, less diverse cities. In order to address the greater volume of issues and to manage demand from the political environment, councils in large cities are often established as full-time institutions.⁷ They also are likely to create the kinds of internal mechanisms (e.g., standing committees) to deal with environmental pressures that are placed on them (Pelissero and Krebs N.d.) and to be expected to respond to constituency concerns over public policy matters (Clingermayer and Feiock 1993, 1994). Clearly, these kinds of city councils are more similar to legislatures on other levels of government, than they are to city councils in smaller, homogeneous cities.

Understanding city councils through the lens of the Bay Area studies therefore may not be very informative when examining cities such as Chicago. The findings presented throughout this research, and the findings from other recently published studies, provide support for this idea. Although I have only examined the individuals who seek to serve on the council, it is clear that these people do not ignore political considerations in their attempts to win

⁷Although the Chicago city council is technically a part-time legislature, it functions more like a full-time council.

office. All told, candidates spend sizable amounts of money making political appeals, a campaign activity that becomes more intense as elections approach. That politically-experienced candidates run for the Chicago city council suggests that the dynamics and expectations about the councilor's job in that city are considerably more political than conventional wisdom might suggest. In addition, candidates also make calculated and sophisticated decisions about when to run for office to increase the likelihood of their own success. These findings indicate that political motivation and political practice are very much a part of big city politics, unlike what we might find in cities with smaller, homogeneous populations, and reformed political structures.

In what way are these findings generalizable? To the extent that the research presented above is generalizable, it is to other cities with large populations, nonpartisan ballots, and ward or district-based elections. Because the findings on the factors affecting election outcomes in Chicago are quite similar to those of other cities such as Cincinnati, one might also be able to make claim that they will apply in large cities generally, despite whatever differences might exist between them in terms of election structure.

The Nature of Competition in City Council Elections

City council election dynamics are determined in large part by incumbency and money. Incumbency determines who is advantaged in these contests and it determines in large measure the number and quality of candidates who decide to run in particular wards. Incumbency also affects campaign fundraising which, due to its linkage to campaign spending, is a critical feature in Chicago city council elections. The outcomes of Chicago politics also are determined in large part by political party organizations. Candidates supported by their ward's Democratic party are considerably more likely to win, than candidates who rely largely on their own political organizations.

The implications of these findings for competition in Chicago city council elections are many. If one desires a local political system where all candidates have an equal opportunity to inform voters about their campaign ideas and that ensures regular turnover among elected officials, several reforms might be offered. Equalizing candidates' ability to inform voters would require some means of equalizing spending between candidates, because spending represents the primary means by which candidates make contacts with would-be constituents during election campaigns. Equalizing spending would probably require some form of public financing of campaigns, systems that are

already in place in some large cities.⁸

Instituting limits on expenditures might also improve the ability of underfunded candidates to compete. By capping spending, you reduce the need for candidates to continually seek funds. This, however, might have the unintended consequence of decreasing the ability of challengers to compete against incumbents, who are much more widely known in their constituencies than are challengers. Likewise, limiting contributions may force candidates to appeal to a larger segment of the community for funds but, like spending limits, may simply limit the ability of challengers to overcome incumbents' name identification advantages.

Ensuring electoral turnover could be accomplished rather easily through term limitations. By limiting the terms of incumbents, turnover in office is assured. These reforms -- public financing of campaigns, spending and revenue limits, and term limitations -- face serious difficulties in Chicago, where political culture and history would indicate that it is less susceptible to reform ideas than other localities. In addition, a system that advantages incumbents is unlikely to be changed by the ones benefiting. The one element of political reform that Chicago has adopted (nonpartisanship of council elections)

⁸New York and Los Angeles are examples of two large cities that have adopted public financing plans. See Lewis, Gierzynski, and Kleppner (1995, 31-38).

has not eliminated the role of party organization in city politics. Indeed, this is still one of the major factors that affects competition in these elections, especially in terms of who wins. Actions of government, however, can have little effect on the presence or absence of political organizations within particular districts. The only agent that might decrease the advantage secured by candidates backed by the Democratic party is a viable alternative structure, namely a strong opposition party capable of matching the ability of the established organization to get-out-the-vote and to spread the word in support of chosen candidates. In Chicago, the Republican party has never had a very strong presence and the independent political movement has largely succeeded in taking control of the Democratic party in many wards.⁹

Conclusion

While this study has examined four critical aspects of city council elections -- factors that affect election outcomes, the incumbency advantage, candidate emergence, and fundraising -- it has only done so for one city. Future studies should test these hypotheses in other cities that have different political systems and different political histories. It might be the case that smaller cities with

⁹Historically, Democrats in Chicago have been distinguished on the basis of whether or not they were aligned with the machine or if they were independent.

less diverse populations and at-large elections exhibit none of the patterns found in Chicago. It might be that these findings are generalizable only to similarly situated city councils.

Future studies also should seek to explain the incumbency advantage in greater detail. Less quantifiable variables such as constituency services or favors, the ability to claim credit for district projects, and participation in previous elections may have cumulative effects on voters that shape their perceptions of incumbents' work and that heightens incumbents' name identification. It might be that intensive interviewing of members and staff would be necessary to understand more clearly the incumbency advantage.

Future research also should examine more extensively issues related to campaign finance in city politics. On the urban level, scholars have not paid much attention to these topics. This may have to do with the fact that city councils are generally perceived as weak institutional actors in city government. Regardless, the political process is fundamentally unlike the governing process, and such things as city council campaigns, city council elections, campaign finance, and candidate strategy warrant more attention than they have been given. This study represents a contribution to that wider understanding of city council elections.

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