

Strangers vs Neighbors: The Efficacy of Grassroots Voter Mobilization

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Abstract

Research suggests that social capital and social networks have an impact on individual decisions to vote. This paper offers empirical evidence on the relationship between social distance and voter turnout by comparing the effectiveness of face-to-face get-out-the-vote (GOTV) visits by canvassers living in a voter's local neighborhood and canvassers from other neighborhoods. We analyze data from a randomized campaign conducted by a local community outreach group during the 2006 General Election. We estimate that the effect of being contacted by the campaign is 3-4 percentage points higher in precincts where some canvassers were working in their own neighborhood. Additional results from a meta-analysis of precinct level data imply that increasing the share of contacts made by canvassers working in their own neighborhood increases the effectiveness of the campaign. These results suggest that communities with historically low participation may be able to capitalize on their own community level social capital to increase their participation in the political process.

1 Introduction

At the heart of the debate about what mobilizes individuals to vote is a tension between individual and contextual level explanations. Much of the political behavior literature, building on the psycho-social model of participation that came out of *The American Voter*, has looked at individual level characteristics, such as socioeconomic and civic resources, to explain differences in electoral turnout. Yet, even though this literature established that individuals with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to vote, this work cannot explain why, even though over the past three decades Americans have become more educated and wealthier, participation rates have not increased in step with this trend. Similarly, rational choice theory, with its emphasis on individual level calculations of self-interest and utility, has been unable to explain turnout in mass elections (Green and Shapiro 1994). The vast scholarly literature on voting and participation has focused on issues such as socioeconomic status and civic resources and the importance of direct mobilization in order to explain what it is that motivates individuals to act politically (Campbell et al. 1960, Verba and Nie 1972, Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, Leighley 2001, Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet 1989, Kenny 1992).

Focusing more on social context, Robert Putnam (2000) argued that the decline of community-based social capital, which he defines broadly as organizationally-based activity, explains the decline of civic engagement in the United States. Putnam's approach is similar to that of Huckfeldt (1979: 579) who argues:

Political activity seldom occurs in individual isolation; as a result, the social context is an important determinant of the extent to which individuals participate in politics. Individual characteristics, attributes, and personality factors do not entirely determine the extent of individual political activity. People also respond to political events, cues, and opportunities that are specific to a given environment. External social factors, as well as individually intrinsic factors, provide powerful explanations for political participation.

Putnam suggests individuals are influenced by both individual and contextual motivations, and that in fact these motivations interact with each other.

We observe that political discussion within individuals' social networks is positively correlated with their participation choices. Knoke (1990) finds that individuals with politicized social networks are more likely to engage politically. There is a positive correlation between individuals who are politically active and the existence of relationships with other individuals who are politically active (Bolton 1972; Briet, Klandermans and Kroon 1987; Gerlach and Hine 1970; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; McAdam 1986). This work suggests that there are important collective activities, within social networks and local communities, which influence an individual's subsequent decision to vote. Yet, this work does not identify the mechanism which leads individuals to behave similarly.

Information may play a role in influencing an individual's behavior. For example, McClurg (2003: 450) finds the information provided by an individual's social networks to be key:

Discussions with friends who are interested or active in politics can help people learn about the reasons for participating while reinforcing the idea that such behavior is desirable among one's peers. People also may be exposed to information about the mechanics of electoral politics and involvement.

Quasi-experimental evidence from the field suggests that individuals use information from their surroundings to decide whether or not to cast a vote (Lassen 2005). Individuals are most likely to listen to election information from individuals whom they believe have their best interests at heart or have similar interests themselves and to behave like these individuals (Downs 1957, McClurg 2004). In experimental studies in the laboratory, Großer and Schram (2006) have shown that providing information about turnout decisions of others significantly increases turnout. Sharing information may also indirectly reduce the cost of voting by communicating with a "trusted agent" (Downs 1957:232).

Social pressure within a social group may be another strong motivator. Carlson (1999) finds that civic participation in communities is a strong predictor of voter turnout. Schram

and van Winden (1991) have shown that social pressure influences the decision to vote. McClurg (2006) finds that neighborhood partisan context affects turnout. In a large-scale field experiment, Gerber, Green and Larimer (2008) find that social pressure in the form of publicizing the names of people in the community who have voted significantly increases turnout. Individuals are unlikely to make voting decisions in isolation. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1995) find significant influence of friends and acquaintances. In a study based on interviews of 1,500 main respondents and 900 acquaintances, they found that discussant effects, defined as the ability to influence candidate preference, were weaker among close friends than among pairs who were just friends or regular contacts. The people who are strategically located to affect political preferences and choices are not necessarily close friends, but rather the structurally provided associates with whom we share a common life space (1995). This suggests that it is not necessary to influence potential voters through their closest social networks, but that using neighbors or others that are less intimately related to those targets can have a marked influence on political attitudes and behavior. At a minimum individuals' turnout choices are likely to be observed by their immediate household, and potentially by others in their community.

Social groups may also play a role in directly reducing the cost of voting. Nickerson (2008) finds evidence of significant spillovers within households; successfully contacting one individual in a household also affects the probability that other members of the household who were not directly contacted will vote – Nickerson finds that 60% of the propensity to vote is passed on to other members of the same household. Fowler (2003) also studies the social effects of turnover in social networks, finding that one act of social influence has important multiplier effects. One possible explanation for these spillover effects is that individuals are more likely to vote if they can do so with others, via carpooling or relaying directions to polling places, for example. Another possibility is that the social norm of voting is reinforced when others in an individual's household are making known their intention to participate.

The social interactions at work behind the turnout decision are therefore an essential

component of theoretical and empirical work on voter turnout. If neighborhood effects are important for determining voter participation, grassroots political campaigns should be able to leverage neighborhood social contacts in order to increase turnout. Invitations to vote from neighbors should be more effective than invitations to vote from strangers because canvassers from the neighborhood are recognized and therefore more trusted. The GOTV experiment presented in this study investigates the power of social trust to increase turnout. Previous field experiments have demonstrated that the more personal the mobilization contact, the more effective the treatment. Dozens of experiments have shown that door-to-door canvassing is the most powerful method of turning out voters (Gerber and Green 2000, 2001; Green and Gerber 2008, Green, Gerber and Nickerson 2003). A quality effort can be expected to increase turnout by 7-10 percentage points.¹ Recently, researchers have attempted to unpack what makes canvassing more or less effective (Michelson, García Bedolla and McConnell 2009, Michelson et al. 2009). In our experiment, we compare another dimension of the quality of a contact: the effect of being contacted by a neighbor versus a stranger.

The experiment described here was conducted by a long-standing, trusted community organization in South Los Angeles. The organization itself is multi-racial and has a strong volunteer base in the community. The experimental subjects in this study are new registrants or occasional voters who are residents of a low-income neighborhood in Los Angeles with traditionally low turnout rates.²

Putnam's work indicates that individuals in marginalized communities such as South Los Angeles will be affected by their social context. Although there have been a number of critiques of Putnam's treatment of race in his analysis (Portes 1998, Hero 2003, Jennings and Withorn 2007), Putnam's general approach has some affinity with works that

¹Phone calls from volunteer phone banks can also significantly increase turnout, while mailers, robo-calls, and other indirect methods tend to be ineffective.

²New or occasional voters are defined as having participated in fewer than four of the last ten general elections, based upon the voter turnout and registration records provided by the Los Angeles Registrar Recorder's Office. Median family income is \$29,718 and about 30 percent of the population lives below the poverty line; 50.9 percent of the residents have less than a high school education. The area is 55.9 percent Latino and 38.9 percent African-American (U.S. Census).

look at the importance of “linked fate” on political engagement in marginal communities (Dawson 1994, 2001; Tate 1993, García Bedolla 2005). Linked fate theory suggests that individuals who share a strong group identity believe that their personal fate is tied to that of the collective. In other words, the success of individuals and the group are tied together. This increases the willingness of those who have strong feelings of linked fate to act to benefit the community or group (Tajfel and Turner 1986). However, the bulk of this work has looked only at how issues of linked fate affect members of the same racial group and little of this work has looked directly at how these questions affect voter mobilization using a rigorous experimental methodology. Here we hypothesize that the relevant community of interest will be the neighborhood, and that this relationship will influence individual level choices to participate. In other words, we hypothesize that neighbors in this mixed-race community will trust each other more than strangers, not because of race-based feelings of linked fate but because of community-based social trust. We believe that linked fate can include communities, like South Los Angeles, and can cross racial and ethnic boundaries. We find that while door-to-door canvassing by members of a trusted community organization is effective at increasing turnout, neighbors are more effective than strangers.

The major experiment described in this paper was conducted by Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), a grassroots political organization located in South Los Angeles. SCOPE has worked since 1993 to reduce structural barriers to social and economic opportunities for poor and working class communities and in recent years to increase civic engagement and voter turnout in disadvantaged communities. SCOPE has spent years recruiting volunteers from the South Los Angeles area who are committed to canvass precincts prior to an election, and walkers are often residents of the areas slated for campaigning.

For the June 2006 primary election in California, we partnered with SCOPE to conduct a randomized field experiment to measure the power of their GOTV campaign. A pool of voters from 26 precincts was randomly divided into treatment and control groups, and

SCOPE canvassers then walked door-to-door in their target precincts in the weeks prior to the election to attempt to mobilize individuals on the treatment list.³ Canvassers included volunteers working on Saturdays and paid teams working throughout each week. The campaign started in mid-May, but the bulk of contacts were made during the last four days of the campaign. During the weekend before Election Day, SCOPE canvassers also attempted to speak again with voters they had contacted earlier and who had expressed an intention to vote.

The June mobilization effort contacted 1,934 targeted voters, for an overall contact rate of 34.6 percent. After the election, we calculated intent-to-treat (ITT) and treatment-on-treated (TOT) effects based on validated voter turnout information from the Los Angeles County Registrar. Turnout in the treatment group was 18.3 percent, compared to 17.3 percent for the control group, an ITT of 1.0 percentage points. Pooling across precincts to account for variations in contact rates, 2SLS analysis generates a TOT of 8.0 percentage points with a standard error of 3.0, statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level. This is well within the standard 7-10 percentage point effect to be expected from a well-conducted door-to-door effort (Green and Gerber 2008).

More interesting were results comparing mobilization effects based on post-hoc comparisons of canvassers working within and outside of their home precincts. While the number of “neighbor” contacts was too small to find statistically significant differences - only 168 contacts were made by neighbors - the results suggested that these contacts were significantly more effective than contacts made by strangers (defined as contacts by individuals from other precincts in the larger South Los Angeles community). These results can be seen in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3. Those who received a home-turf (neighbor-on-neighbor) contact were more likely to vote.

Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 Go Here

The effect of using neighbors versus strangers was examined more directly in a field

³Verification that the covariates are balanced with respect to their means can be seen in the Appendix, in Table 10.

experiment conducted with SCOPE for the November 2006 election. The general campaign mirrored that of the primary election, with two notable differences. First, the campaign was limited to low-propensity registered voters (those who had voted in fewer than four of the previous five major statewide elections or who were newly registered). Second, and more importantly, a much larger proportion of contacts were made by neighbors: approximately 1/3 of 5,343 total contacts.

2 The November Campaign

Individuals from the pool of low-propensity voters were randomly assigned either to be contacted by a canvasser or to receive no contact. SCOPE's get-out-the-vote campaign began on Saturday, October 7th, 2006 and organized volunteers to walk in targeted precincts each Saturday before the election as well as the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday immediately prior to and including Election Day (November 7, 2006).⁴ A paid team of canvassers, many of whom were recruited from the volunteer population, walked precincts to contact potential voters six days each week (never on Sundays). This process continued until the election.

Two different categories of canvassers were used in the experiment: strangers and neighbors. Both strangers and neighbors were likely to live in South Los Angeles and to be similar to the experimental population in terms of race and ethnicity. Neighbors, however, were residents of the same ZIP code as the individuals in the treatment group, whereas strangers lived in different ZIP codes. While neighborhoods are often nebulous entities and hard to define geographically, we believe ZIP codes are an appropriate proxy for several reasons, and particularly in South Los Angeles. The postal service designates ZIP codes based upon geographically compact areas for mail delivery and ZIP codes do not change each election cycle, unlike precinct boundaries, and may more closely resemble the geographic boundaries of a neighborhood. ZIP codes are a common proxy for

⁴Approximately 20 volunteers arrived each Saturday, participated in a brief training session, and spent 2 to 3 hours canvassing in the local neighborhoods. They then returned for lunch and were debriefed.

neighborhood in a variety of fields of study, including medicine, economics, and political science (e.g. Boslaugh et al. 2004, Aizer and Currie 2004, Gould and Martin 1986, Powell et al. 2007, Ku, Sonenstein and Pleck 1993). In South Los Angeles, we believe that ZIP codes are especially appropriate given the nature of the larger community. Many residents of the area do not have personal automobiles, and a significant amount of within-neighborhood activity is thus confined to walkable distances. The average size of a ZIP code in this case is 3.9 square miles and contains an average of 1,580 occasional voters (Garciz and Pitkin 2007). In other words, residents of this community are likely to do their grocery shopping within their ZIP code (walking to a local convenience store rather than driving to a larger supermarket), and to socialize within their ZIP code at parks and with their immediate neighbors. This means that individuals sharing a ZIP code, while they may not know each other personally, likely would recognize many of their neighbors from the local store or park. This is confirmed from anecdotal accounts from SCOPE canvassers, who reported that they personally knew many of their targets when canvassing their own ZIP codes, although the number of such contacts was not recorded.

The script used by SCOPE canvassers during the campaign was designed to cue social norms and feelings of linked fate. Canvassers spoke of the importance of issues on the ballot to “our community”. Regardless of whether or not a canvasser was working their own ZIP code, they told contacted voters: “We’re out today talking to our neighbors about the upcoming elections” and then went on to say, “This is an important election. There are lots of issues on the ballot that impact our neighborhoods. We want to make sure our community demonstrates our power by turning out to vote.” The script concluded with: “SCOPE is a grassroots organization building power in our neighborhoods. We believe that the only way we’ll be able to change the conditions in our community is by getting organized and taking action.”

Because all canvassers used the same script, we are able to isolate the effect of using neighbors versus strangers as canvassers. All contacted voters received the same information and were given similar cues as to the importance of the election and the social

norm of participating. However, we hypothesize that those contacted by neighbors were more likely to know or recognize the canvasser as someone from their own neighborhood. This increased the unspoken level of interpersonal trust between canvasser and voter – an important component of social capital (Putnam 2000) – and thus increased the desire of the voter to act as requested due to a heightened sense of linked fate and an increased desire to conform to social norms.

The assignment of canvassers to precincts was haphazard but not random. However, non-parametric tests comparing areas canvassed by neighbors to areas canvassed by strangers reveals minimal differences, as seen in Table 4. While the samples are not perfectly balanced, the differences are substantively small, with the exception of Latino voters who are represented more heavily in home-turf precincts.

Table 4 Goes Here

3 Experimental Setup and Data

From a pool of new registrants and occasional registered voters in 50 precincts in South Los Angeles, we randomly assigned individuals to control and treatment groups. The randomization was conducted by household, and households with more than three registered voters were excluded from the experiment because of concerns that the campaign would only be able to contact a small share of the household. About 20 percent of the pool was placed in the control group, creating a treatment group of 11,789 individuals and a control group of 3,578 individuals. Each individual assigned to the treatment group was targeted for a visit from a canvasser who may or may not have been a resident of their neighborhood. These assignments are described in Table 5. By Election Day, 45.24% (5341 individuals) of the treatment group was contacted.⁵

⁵This contact consisted of receiving at least one door-to-door visit, sometimes a second, and often also a doorhanger. A doorhanger is a piece of campaign mail left on the household's front door. We define treatment as having received any campaign contact. During the last week of the campaign, some individuals were randomly assigned to receive a second treatment. Analysis of the marginal effect of the second contact yields no statistically significant effect at traditional levels and all analysis which follow will simply

We then classified each individual who was contacted by a canvasser who shares their ZIP code as contacted by a neighbor, hereafter referred to as “home-turf canvassing.”⁶ Because the assignment of canvassers to neighborhoods was haphazard our analysis of home-turf contact is quasi-experimental. We confirm that there are no particular patterns of assignment of canvassers in Table 4.

4 Methods and Results

We begin by estimating the intent-to-treat effect (ITT) and the treatment-on-treated effect (TOT), using validated voter turnout data obtained from the Los Angeles County Registrar. The ITT is the observed difference in turnout between those assigned to the treatment and control groups. The TOT is the ITT divided by the contact rate (see Green and Gerber 2008). Turnout among those assigned to the treatment group was 36.7 percent, compared to 33.7 percent in the control group, for an ITT of 3.0 percentage points. Using 2SLS we estimate a TOT of 6.6 percentage points. As noted above, the usual power of a well-conducted door-to-door canvassing effort is 7-10 percentage points, and the observed effect here is very close to that general standard. That the campaign was limited to low-propensity voters likely accounts for the slightly smaller overall effect, as these were voters less likely to be on the cusp of voting (see Nickerson and Arceneaux 2009). Both the ITT and the TOT are statistically significant at traditional levels.

Table 5 Goes Here

We estimated models calculating the effects of the campaign both with and without covariates, including partisan registration, age, voter history, ethnicity (measured by surname), and gender. Additionally, so as to adjust for the potential of precinct level varia-

consider the effect of the individuals receiving any campaign contact. The marginal second contact results are available from the authors on request. Although the assignment of doorhangers was not random, the existing literature on the effectiveness of doorhangers suggests that they have an extremely small effect on turnout (Nickerson 2005, Gerber and Green 2000, Green and Gerber 2008, Nickerson, Friedrichs, and King 2005).

⁶Most canvassers walked a single neighborhood (ZIP code). However, some ZIP codes were walked by 30 different canvassers and a few canvassers walked as many as 20 different ZIP codes.

tion, we present results from a different specification which incorporates fixed effects for each precinct. Our results are displayed in Table 6. There is a statistically significant and positive effect of receiving any contact across all methods of estimation.⁷ These results yield TOTs ranging from 4.8 to 6.6 percentage points.

Table 6 Goes Here

Our next analysis examines the relationship between the intensity of home-turf efforts within precincts and the success of the campaign. We define the *intensity* of home-turf efforts as the share of total contacts made by canvassers working in their own ZIP code. We treat this variable as exogenous. Below, we justify this assumption by showing that differences in the effect of the campaign across precincts were not due to differences in contact rates across precincts. We analyze the effect of home turf canvassing in two ways. First, we consider treatment effects separately by precinct and determine whether the size of the treatment effect is related to the intensity of the home turf effort. Then we consider the marginal effect of a home-turf contact for the subset of voters who were successfully contacted. There are two possible ways in which home-turf canvassing could positively affect the success of the campaign. The first is that home-turf canvassers may be more likely to make contact with voters, whether because people are more likely to answer the door for someone who lives in the neighborhood or because canvassers make a larger effort when working in their own neighborhood. The second is that the same number of contacts would be made, but each contact might be more persuasive and have a larger impact on the probability of voting.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between precinct level contact rates and the intensity of home-turf effort: each green dot represents a precinct's contact rate, with the yellow bars representing the 95% confidence interval for the precinct contact rate. The x-axis is the fraction of contacts within that precinct which were made by a home-turf canvasser. The blue line (the measurement of the contact rate given that amount of home-turf

⁷We include indicators for whether or not the age or female control variables are missing and then fill in values for age and female to match those missing spaces. This allows us to directly compare the estimates of any contact across all models.

canvassing) is fit through the precinct estimates (the green dots), with the grey shading demonstrating the 95% confidence interval for the fitted line. The blue line is essentially flat; it slopes downward very slightly but is effectively pulled downwards by the one lone estimate with over 60% home-turf canvassing. In other words, home-turf canvassers do not have higher contact rates than canvassers who are strangers.

Figure 1 Goes Here

We next examine the relationship between precinct level TOT estimates and the intensity of home-turf canvassing. Again the green dots demonstrate the precinct level estimates of the home-turf treatment, with the yellow bars representing the 95% confidence interval for each precinct estimate. The x-axis demonstrates the intensity of the home-turf effort – the fraction of individuals in that precinct who were contacted by a home-turf canvasser. The blue line (the measurement of the amount of turnout given that fraction of home-turf canvassing) is fit through the precinct estimates (the green dots), with the grey shading demonstrating the 95% confidence interval for the fitted line. In this figure, the blue line has a clearly positive slope: as the intensity of the home-turf effort increases, turnout increases.

Figure 2 Goes Here

Figure 2 demonstrates that as the intensity of the home-turf effort increases, the effectiveness of the campaign increases significantly. In fact, as the blue line would have an intercept very close to zero, it suggests that a campaign that consists of only contacts by strangers would have little effect, while the effect of increasing the intensity of home-turf contact is significant. This provides powerful support for our hypothesis that home-turf canvassing is more effective at increasing turnout.⁸

⁸Due to some concern that the positive relationship between home turf contacts and the effectiveness of the campaign was driven by one outlier where the share of home turf contacts was greater than 50%, we present in the Appendix the same graph with this potential outlier excluded. The strong positive relationship persists.

We next conduct a meta-regression of precinct level 2SLS estimates to generate estimates of the overall effectiveness of the campaign and of home-turf canvassing while taking into account the different contact rates across precincts.⁹

Table 7 Goes Here

The coefficients generated by the meta-analysis confirm our finding that neighbors are more effective than strangers at increasing turnout, whether or not we include control variables (Table 7).¹⁰ The estimate for the share of contacts that are home-turf is positive, statistically significant and approximately 3.8 percentage points. In other words, if a campaign were to increase the intensity of home-turf canvassing by 10 percentage points, they would increase turnout by 3.8 percentage points.

We extend this analysis by looking carefully at the 2SLS estimates when separating the data into precincts where there was home-turf canvassing and precincts where there was not. We present evidence in Table 8 that breaks the data into these two subsets, both with and without the inclusion of control variables.

Table 8 Goes Here

The estimated TOT for the subset of home-turf precincts is positive and statistically significant in both models. However, the estimated treatment effect is smaller in the precinct where no home-turf contact occurred and is not different from zero when covariates are included. These regressions provide additional evidence that in fact the success of the campaign we observe is due to the success of home-turf canvassing specifically and not merely face-to-face contact in general.

⁹Our model here examines the standardized mean difference between the treatment and control effects; we estimate the treatment effect and the impact that home-turf canvassing has on the treatment effect (our quantity of interest) by performing a regression in which we incorporate the local average treatment effect of each precinct and weight that value by an estimate of the population parameter. We then regress this estimate on the fraction of individuals in each precinct contacted by home-turf canvassers. By pooling estimates and measurements of variance we obtain the most precise estimate of the population variance (Hedges and Olkin 1985).

¹⁰We replicate these results without the outlier in the Appendix.

We next explore the possibility that the home-turf effect is driven by certain particularly effective walkers. Walkers could have made both home-turf and non home-turf contacts on different days of canvassing.

Table 9 Goes Here

The first two models in Table 9 estimate the marginal effect of home-turf contact on the subset of voters successfully contacted by the campaign. The dependent variable used here is an indicator for whether or not the contacted individual turned out to vote. The first model includes only the variable *share home turf contact*, which codes the share of contacts received by an individual that were made by a canvasser living in their neighborhood, and a constant term. We find that, as expected, the coefficient for home-turf contact is large and statistically significant. These coefficients are presented in the first column of Table 9. The second model includes all of the covariates we have incorporated in our prior analyses, including precinct fixed effects; again we find that the coefficient for home-turf contact is large and statistically significant. We then turn to two models which incorporate fixed-effects for walkers. These models allow for direct comparison with the first two models presented in the first two columns of Table 9 – they differ only in the inclusion of walker fixed-effects. Note that the coefficients for the percent home-turf contact remain large and statistically significant. Across all models there is a positive and statistically significant effect of home-turf contact, regardless of the inclusion of walker fixed-effects or control variables. Thus we conclude that the home-turf effect is not caused by a particularly charismatic set of walkers, but instead by something about the interaction of canvassers with people living in their own neighborhood.

5 Conclusions

Despite low levels of socioeconomic resources and a focus on low-propensity voters, SCOPE’s team of door-to-door canvassers was able to successfully increase turnout in

targeted neighborhoods of South Los Angeles for the November 2006 election. This confirms a growing body of research that shows that unlikely voters (as opposed to the likely voters generally targeted by mobilization campaigns) can be moved to turn out relatively easily, with just a five-minute face-to-face conversation at their home. As we continue to try to understand why this works, new experiments have varied aspects of these campaigns, such as whether or not voters are contacted a second time (Michelson, García Bedolla and McConnell 2009), the quality of the canvassing (Michelson et al. 2009) and, here, whether canvassers are neighbors or strangers.

SCOPE was very successful in this campaign partly because they are established in the community and have a well-developed get-out-the-vote infrastructure within their organization. In other words, they are a trusted source of information and are able to conduct a high-quality campaign. In addition, we find that their ability to use local residents as canvassers played an important role in their success. Grassroots organizers and campaign consultants often assert that local canvassers are important; our work provides empirical confirmation to back up those claims. We observe a significant increase in turnout as a result of home-turf canvassing. This increase – an additional 4 percentage points above the base increase with a 10 percentage point increase in home-turf canvassing – is dramatic. Neighbors mobilize more effectively than strangers.

That we are able to isolate the effect of home-turf canvassing, however, does not fully unpack the mechanism that drives the effectiveness of these sorts of campaigns. Canvassing by strangers was still effective, albeit less so. Further experiments are needed to increase our understanding of the reason that door-to-door canvassing works. But that neighbors mobilize more effectively than strangers tells us that social trust matters. As hypothesized by Putnam, social trust is linked to political behavior. In this case, increased social trust - crossing racial and ethnic lines but embodying a cohesive geographic area - increased the effectiveness of face-to-face blandishments to vote. Neighbors are more trusted than strangers, and individuals are more likely to want to support the group when that interpersonal trust exists and is cued through social interaction.

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7 Tables and Figures

Table 1: June Treatment Assignments by Precinct

Precinct	Control	Treatment	Total
9000288A	59	228	287
9001026B	92	206	298
9001189B	55	184	239
9001314A	68	123	191
9001747A	72	264	336
9001755A	65	256	321
9001779A	52	195	247
9002024A	48	162	210
9002025A	32	135	167
9002087A	93	260	353
9002090A	80	263	343
9002091A	72	165	237
9002101A	73	232	305
9002137A	79	254	333
9002162A	77	187	264
9002167A	69	238	307
9002179A	80	247	327
9002211A	106	242	348
9002219A	76	249	325
9002461A	57	200	257
9002477A	42	158	200
9002481A	57	190	247
9002482A	79	185	264
9002484A	60	229	289
9002497A	45	109	154
9005414A	94	269	363
Total	1782	5430	7212

Table 2: June Effect of Contact: Intent-to-Treat Effect and Treatment Effect

N in treatment group	5430
N in control group	1782
N in the treatment group who are actually treated	1897
N in the control group who are inadvertently treated	26
N who voted in the treatment group	994
N who voted in the control group	308
Percent Voting – Treatment	18.31%
Percent Voting – Control	17.28%
Percent Contacted – Treatment	34.94%
Percent Contacted – Control	1.46%
Contact Rate	.3347
Estimated ITT Effect	1.0217
SE of ITT Effect	1.0385
Estimated Treatment Effect	3.00
SE of Treatment Effect	3.00

Standard errors are robust and clustered by household.

Table 3: June Logistic Regression: Covariates on Turnout Amongst Contacted Individuals

Variable	Coefficient
Home-turf Contact	.474* (.196)
Vote history	.096* (.021)
Age	.019* (.004)
Missing Age	-17.7* (3.4)
Democratic Registration	.695* (.174)
Female	.134 (.109)
Constant	-3.14* (.234)
N	1923
Clusters	1448
Pseudo R2	.055
* = $\alpha = .05$	
** = $\alpha = .10$	

Standard errors are robust and clustered by household.

Table 4: Covariate Balance, Difference in Means Between Home-Turf Precincts vs Not

Variable	Control Group	Treatment Group	KS Statistic
Democratic Registration	0.71	0.78	0.07**
Age	39.05	0.07	0.10**
Vote History	1.54	1.58	0.02
Latino	0.13	0.05	0.08**
Female	0.59	0.62	0.02
* = $\alpha = .05$			

Each cell entry describes the difference in means between the random assignment of individuals in precincts where there was and was not home-turf canvassing.

Table 5: Effect of Any Contact: Intent-to-Treat Effect and Treatment Effect

N in any first wave treatment	11789
N in control group	3578
N in the treatment group who are actually treated	5341
N in the control group who are inadvertently treated	2
N who voted in the treatment group	4324
N who voted in the control group	1205
Percent Voting — Treatment	36.68%
Percent Voting — Control	33.68%
Percent Contacted — Treatment	45.30%
Percent Contacted — Control	.06%
Contact Rate	.4524
Estimated ITT Effect	3.0002
SE of ITT Effect	.9479*
Estimated Treatment Effect	6.6305
SE of Treatment Effect	2.0912*
Household Clusters	13354

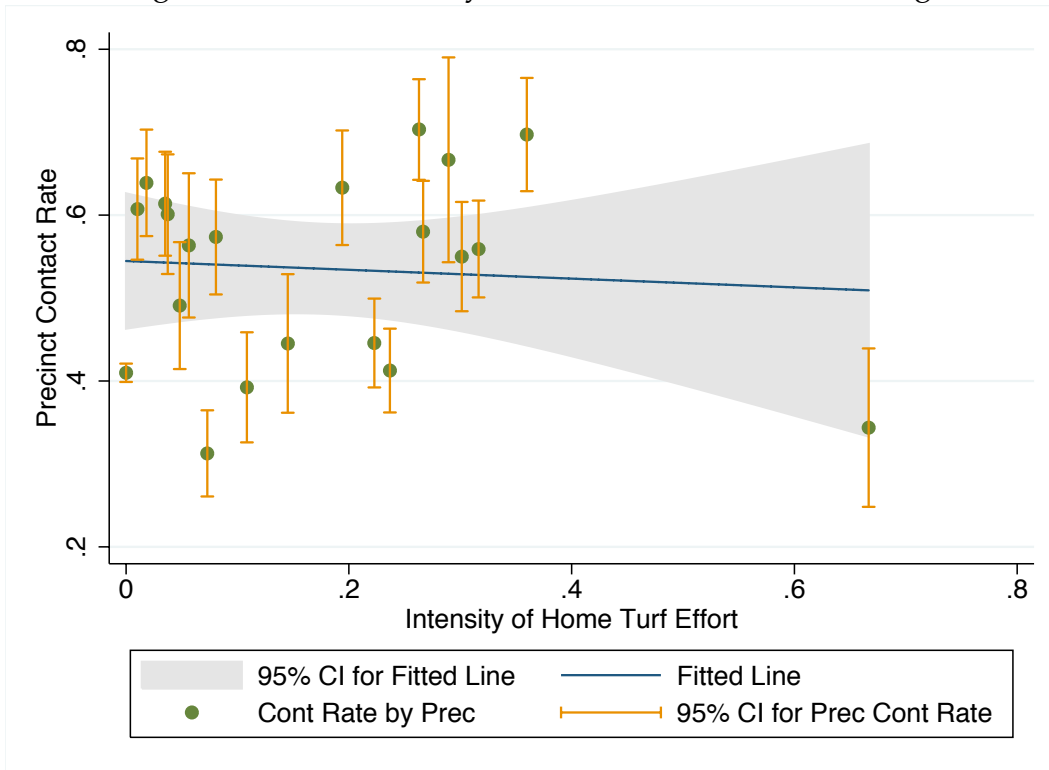
Standard errors are robust and clustered by household.

Table 6: Coefficients from 2SLS, Effect of Any Contact on Turnout

Model	2SLS	2SLS with Control Vars.	2SLS with Precinct Fixed Effects
Any Contact	.066* (.021)	.051* (.020)	.048* (.02)
Democratic Registration		.016** (.008)	
Age		.002* (.000)	
Vote History		.16* (.004)	
Latino		.096* (.014)	
Female		.002 (.010)	
Missing Age		-1.63* (.247)	
Missing Female		-.045 (.079)	
Constant	.340* (.008)	.017 (.012)	.580* (.033)
Precinct Fixed Effects			Included
Household Clusters	13354	13354	13354
N	15367	15367	15367
F	F(1,13353) = 10.05	F(8,13353) = 302.74	F(50,13353) = 3.94
* = $\alpha = .05$			
** = $\alpha = .10$			

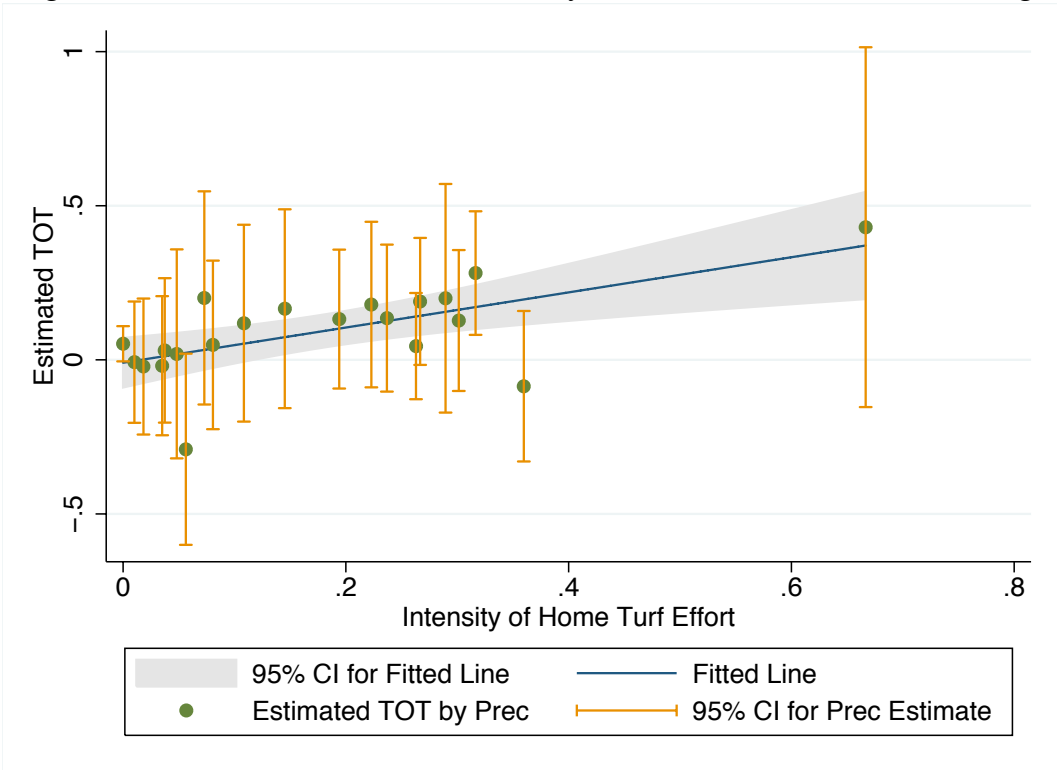
Note: The random assignment for treatment in the first wave is used as an instrument and has correlation .4016 with the treatment variable. Standard errors are clustered by household.

Figure 1: Contact Rate by Percent Home-Turf Canvassing.



Note that each dot represents one precinct.

Figure 2: Treatment-on-Treated Effect by Percent Home-Turf Canvassing.



Note that each dot represents one precinct.

Table 7: Random Effects Meta-Analysis Regression

Variable	No Covariates	With Covariates
Share of Contacts that are Home-Turf	0.382** (.157)	0.321** (0.153)
Intercept	0.025 (0.023)	0.001 (0.022)
* = $\alpha = .05$		
N	50	50

The dependent variable used here is the estimate of the treatment effect by precinct. The share of home-turf contacts is calculated at the precinct level.

Table 8: 2SLS, Separated by Home-Turf Canvassed Precinct vs Not

	2SLS		2SLS with Control Vars.	
	Coefficients (Home-Turf)	Coefficients (Not)	Coefficients (Home-Turf)	Coefficients (Not)
Contact	.085* (.030)	.052** (.029)	.070* (.028)	.037 (.027)
Democratic Reg.			.001 (.014)	.024* (.010)
Age			.002* (.000)	.001* (.000)
Vote history			.155* (.007)	.163* (.005)
Latino			.117* (.030)	.090* (.016)
Female			-.007 (.016)	.007 (.011)
Missing Age			-2.14* (.395)	-1.37* (.319)
Missing Female			.030 (.136)	-.086 (.070)
Constant	.330* (.013)	.340* (.010)	.008 (.022)	.021 (.014)
F(Covariates, Clusters-1)	8.53	3.20	110.22	194.22
Household Clusters	4807	8547	4807	8547
N	5545	9822	5545	9822
* = $\alpha = .05$				
** = $\alpha = .10$				

The instrument used here is the treatment assignment from the first wave. Standard errors are clustered by household.

Table 9: OLS Coefficients: Effect of Home-Turf Contact on Turnout for Contacted Individuals

Variable	OLS	OLS with Control Vars.	OLS with Walker Fixed Effects	OLS with Walker Fixed Effects and Control Vars.
Percent Home-Turf Contact	0.056* (0.024)	0.044** (0.025)	0.113** (0.031)	0.094* (0.031)
Democratic Registration		0.009 (0.015)		0.011 (0.015)
Age		0.001* (0.000)		0.001 (0.000)
Missing Age		-0.025 (0.036)		-0.022 (0.036)
Female		-0.015 (0.018)		-0.014 (0.018)
Missing Female		0.079 (0.147)		0.065 (0.148)
Vote History		0.175** (0.007)		0.174** (0.007)
Latino		0.127** (0.023)		0.122** (0.023)
Precinct Fixed Effects		Included		Included
Walker Fixed Effects			Included	Included
Constant	0.307** (0.050)	0.108** (0.023)	0.500** (0.174)	0.215 (0.163)
F(Covariates)	5.23	17.16	3.05	10.28
* = $\alpha = .05$, = $\alpha = .10$				
N	5343	5343	5343	5343

Note: There is a separate fixed effect coefficient for contacts made by unknown walkers (399 observations). Percent Home-Turf Contact indicates the number of walkers that made a contact who were from the same ZIP code as the voter. The dependent variable is whether or not the contacted individual turned out to vote.

8 Appendix

Table 10: June Covariate Balance: Difference in Means Across Treatment and Control

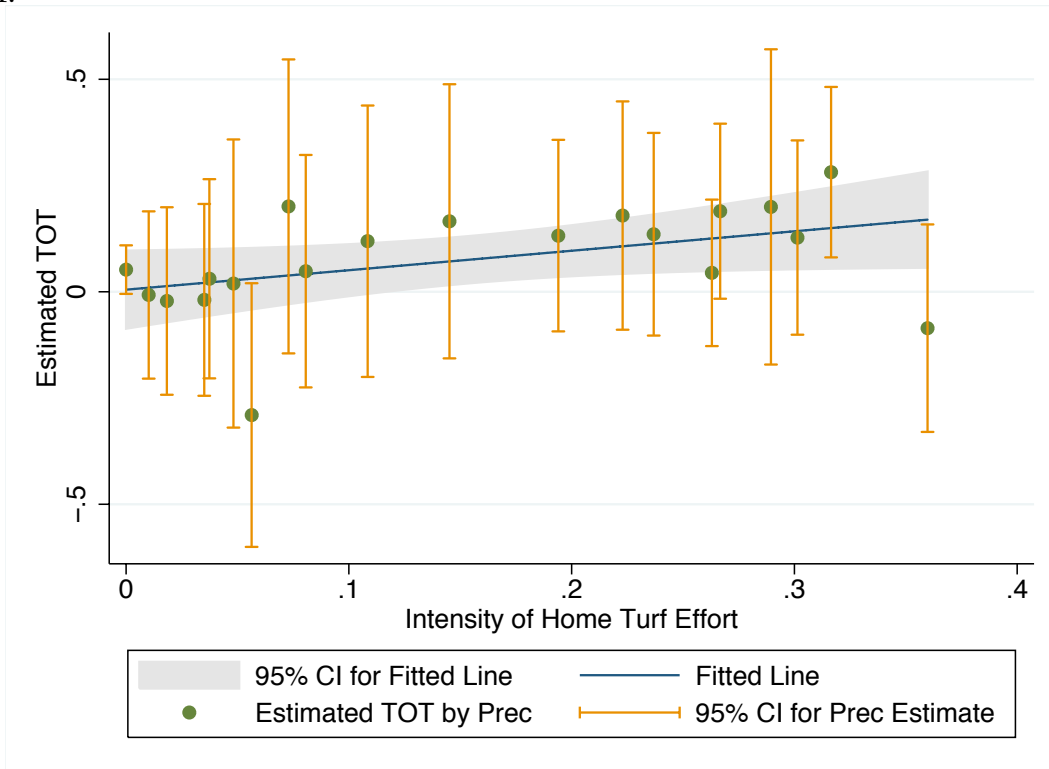
Variable	Difference in Means	N
Democratic Registration	-.003 (.011)	7212
Republican Registration	-.002 (.006)	7212
Decline-to-State Registration	-.003 (.009)	7212
Other Registration	.008 (.006)	7212
Age	-.135 (.463)	6850
Vote History	-.058 (.076)	7212
Female	.002 (.013)	7212
* = $\alpha = .05$		
** = $\alpha = .10$		

Table 11: Random Effects Meta-Analysis Regression - Outlier Excluded

Variable	No Covariates	With Covariates
Share of Contacts that are Home-Turf	0.355** (.165)	0.297* (0.159)
Intercept	0.027 (0.024)	0.021 (0.022)
* = $\alpha = .05$, * = $\alpha = .10$		
N	49	49

The dependent variable used here is the estimate of the treatment effect by precinct. The share of home-turf contacts is calculated at the precinct level.

Figure 3: Treatment-on-Treated Effect by Percent Home-Turf Canvassing Without the Outlier.



Note that each dot represents one precinct.