

Partisan Mobilization Using Volunteer Phone Banks and Door Hangers

By
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This article presents the results from a statewide partisan voter mobilization experiment in Michigan during the 2002 gubernatorial election. The tactics studied are volunteer phone calls and door hangers. With regard to turnout, the conclusion reached is that volunteer phone calls boost turnout by 3.2 percentage points and door hangers boost turnout by 1.2 percentage points. This effect size implies that both mobilization technologies are cost-competitive with door knocking and that partisan and nonpartisan campaigns are equally effective at increasing turnout. A postelection survey was used to determine whether the partisan blandishments to vote changed candidate preference. No evidence of persuasion from campaign contact was detected by the survey. However, the survey did indicate that the campaign failed in targeting likely Democratic voters and excluding likely Republican voters, emphasizing the need for detailed party databases.

Keywords: experiment; flyer; door-to-door; partisan; mobilization; vote choice; turnout; phone

The return to field experiments has led to a rapid advancement of knowledge in the study of voter mobilization. Field experiments not only offer unbiased estimates of the effectiveness of various mobilization tactics, but they also allow researchers to compare the relative cost-effectiveness of different techniques. In this way, academic theories of collective action problems can be answered while providing practical guidance for political campaigns. For instance, a 1998 New Haven experiment (Gerber and Green 2000b) estimated that face-to-face canvassing increased the propensity to turn out by 8 to 10 percentage points (a fact confirmed during the 2001 YouthVote canvassing—see Green, Gerber, and Nickerson 2003), direct

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mail boosted turnout 0.5 percentage points, and professional phone calls boosted turnout not at all (a finding replicated in the 1998 West Haven, CT study—see Gerber and Green 2001). Such calculations help campaign consultants to allocate get-out-the-vote (GOTV) resources efficiently.

Despite the many virtues of the 1998 New Haven experiment, there are few actual nonpartisan door-to-door canvassing campaigns. Most GOTV operations are on behalf of a candidate, particular issue, or political party. The extent to which partisan and nonpartisan GOTV appeals motivate voters differently is an empirical question that can be tested. This article will attempt to address this question by determining the effectiveness of partisan mobilization strategies.

Nonpartisan blandishments to vote might not approximate the efficacy of partisan messages for several plausible reasons. First, partisan messages may provide a boost to turnout by giving citizens something for which to vote. An appeal to abstract duty may not be as motivating as a concrete cause or personality.

Second, party labels may grant a campaign and canvassers added legitimacy and persuasiveness. The Democratic and Republican parties are unmatched brand names in the field of electoral politics within the United States, and voters may respond more favorably to known quantities than to less salient organizations such as the Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) or the League of Women Voters. While members of the opposing party may react negatively to such contact, members of the party should respond more favorably. Since parties target their supporters for GOTV outreach, partisan messages might elicit greater turnout than similar nonpartisan efforts.

Third, partisan campaigns may cause some voters to feel that they belong to a larger movement. Partisan canvassers wear buttons and/or T-shirts identifying their organization. Households in the neighborhood display yard signs supporting candidates. Radio and TV advertisements also help to give the sense that support for the candidate is ubiquitous. Thus, the psychological selective benefits of participation may be stronger for partisan mobilization efforts than nonpartisan appeals.

Finally, in their favor, nonpartisan GOTV appeals may be more effective at boosting turnout than partisan appeals because they represent a more altruistic form of behavior. Presumably, the partisan caller is placing the calls because she or he supports the candidate or cause. That is, the caller gains something from the voter's behavior. As a result, voters may be suspicious of both the message and the messenger. In contrast, the YouthVote nonpartisan GOTV appeals (Nickerson 2004) do not ask the voter to do anything but turn up at the polling place on Election Day. The caller has nothing to gain from the transaction but has decided to volunteer time in any case. Voters may be responsive to such displays of conspicuous altruism.

Thus, the 1998 New Haven study provides an unbiased estimate of the effectiveness of nonpartisan voter mobilization techniques, but the results may not hold for partisan GOTV campaigns. The external validity of the findings is of unusual importance because partisan activities constitute the bulk of voter mobilization in the United States. The second way in which the 1998 New Haven experiment does not mirror partisan voter mobilization is the lack of strategic targeting. All of the

registered voters in New Haven, regardless of party affiliation, neighborhood, or past turnout history, were randomly assigned to the different treatment regimes. In contrast, most political campaigns conserve scarce resources by focusing attention upon targeted neighborhoods and voters. For example, a campaign may focus upon “persuadable” voters at one point in the campaign and shift resources toward “supporters” in the final Election Day push. Also, partisan campaigns largely ignore voters who are deemed certain to turn out and those individuals who are almost certain not to vote. Similarly, every registered voter in New Haven was eligible to receive all forms of campaign contact (i.e., knock on the door, mail, or phone) from Gerber and Green; no attention was paid to age, neighborhood, or past voter

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history. In actual partisan settings, campaigns attempt to use the tactics that best fit the neighborhood and person under the constraints of the campaigns resources. One way that randomized field experiments can be useful is by measuring turnout effects in the target categories often used by the parties. Nonpartisan campaigns orchestrated by academics, however, will have difficulty replicating the strategy employed by partisan campaigns and might be qualitatively different in other ways as well.

This article fills in an important gap in the voter mobilization literature by examining the effectiveness of a partisan GOTV effort. A randomly selected control group was extracted from the master voter list of the Michigan Democrats during the 2002 gubernatorial election. The campaign was then left to mobilize the treatment group in the manner it thought most appropriate across the state. After the election was over, two dependent variables were measured. First, official voter turnout records were consulted to determine whether the individuals assigned to be contacted by the campaign turned out to vote at higher rates than the control group. Second, a postelection survey was conducted to measure vote choice among members of treatment and control groups in five of the house districts where the experiment was conducted. The activities studied are the ones actually used by a party, in the places a party actually targeted, in the manner that a party appeals to

voters. Thus, the results accurately capture the effectiveness of GOTV appeals in a partisan context.

The 2002 Michigan gubernatorial race was closely contested, pitting Republican Lt. Governor Dick Posthumus against Democratic Attorney General Jennifer Granholm. Granholm won with only 51 percent of the vote. Nearly 3.2 million voters—a record for a nonpresidential year—cast ballots. The campaign environment was rich with media attention, while partisan and nonpartisan groups worked to get voters to the polls. The experiments reported below were a part of that widespread GOTV effort on behalf of Granholm.

The results of the experiment suggest that partisan and nonpartisan campaigns are equally effective at boosting turnout. In previous studies, nonpartisan volunteer phone calls were found to increase turnout by 3.8 percentage points in past experiments (Nickerson 2004) and door hangers were found to boost turnout by 0.8 percentage points (Gerber and Green 2000a). The partisan experiments described in this essay yield results within a standard error of both nonpartisan estimates. Furthermore, the postelection survey suggests that vote choice is not changed as a result of contact from the campaign. The treatment and control groups demonstrate the same level of support for both Granholm and the Democratic candidate for the local house district.

The next section of the article describes the experimental protocol. The voter turnout results are then presented, and the cost-effectiveness of partisan voter mobilization is assessed. Results from the survey are discussed, and the article concludes with directions for future research.

Design

Two voter turnout efforts of the Michigan Democratic Party's Youth Coordinated Campaign (YCC) in fourteen state house districts¹ are presented in this article: door hangers with candidate literature and partisan phone calls from volunteers. The fourteen state house districts were selected by the Michigan Democratic Party to maximize the electoral influence of the YCC. Three criteria were used in making this determination: (1) the size of the Democratic or Independent eighteen- to thirty-five-year-old voting population, (2) the number of contested races on the ballot, and (3) the capacity of the local organizations such as the College Democrats of Michigan or the Michigan Young Democrats.

Each of the fourteen sites had a coordinator responsible for the implementation of a GOTV campaign. Differences in geography and institutional capacity made it necessary for some coordinators to focus upon only one of the GOTV techniques. The adoption of different mobilization tactics for different areas of the state should be viewed as a strength of the research design rather than a deficiency. Each coordinator took stock of local campaign resources and the targeted neighborhoods and used the strategies that maximized electoral prospects. The randomized nature of the experiment ensures an unbiased estimate of the marginal boost in

turnout from each tactic used (i.e., the study is internally valid). The effectiveness of a mobilization strategy where it was not implemented cannot be tested, but given that the local party coordinator explicitly rejected implementing tactics in certain areas, external validity is not a large concern. This study accurately measures the actual behavior of the party rather than a researcher's best estimation of the process.

Thirteen sites successfully completed the experimental protocol for the door hanger experiment, and six completed the phone call experiment.² Subjects were drawn from a composite list of registered voters in Michigan maintained by two outside vendors. The YCC then winnowed the list down to Democratic and Independent voters between the age of eighteen and thirty-five. Registered voters sharing the same address and surname were then placed into households. The resulting list contained 55,472 households and 70,591 registered voters in areas where the experiment was conducted.

Michigan electoral politics is unusual in that the official voter files do not keep track of party membership because of the open primary system. The lack of party registration on the voter roll makes targeting would-be supporters more difficult for political campaigns. The companies that maintain the voter file on behalf of the state political parties attempt to use prior participation in party primaries and voter identification from canvassers as indicators of a person's political leanings. The information is incomplete, however, especially for young voters. For that reason, organizers used precinct-level vote choice to target Democrat-friendly neighborhoods. One of the surprising findings of the survey is the degree to which these efforts were unsuccessful in targeting potential Democratic supporters.

The unit of randomization for the experiments was the household. Slightly less than half of the homes possessed known phone numbers, and 80 percent of these homes were assigned to receive a phone call prior to the election. The households in the phone treatment group were then placed into a random order so that numbers not attempted by the campaign could be rolled into the control group. Sites varied in the amount of effort put toward calling voters, and the final balance was 10,547 in the treatment group and 5,634 in the control group.

Treatment and control groups for door hangers were assigned in geographic units based upon the first seven digits of a household's nine-digit zip code. Only those units containing twenty or more eligible households were deemed densely populated enough to warrant walking door-to-door to deliver door hangers. The efficiency of GOTV tactics that involve walking is a concern for any campaign, but more so for the YCC, since households with potential Democratic supporters between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five are scattered unevenly. Thus, sparsely populated areas were not part of the field experiment.

Sixty percent of the households in targeted areas were randomly assigned to receive a door hanger in the three days leading up to Election Day. Areas that did not receive any attempt to deliver the treatment on the part of the campaign were subsequently excluded from the experiment. Restricting the sample in such a manner may raise minor concerns about generalizability, but this way of handling sam-

ples in no way biases the results, and it contributes to the precision of the estimates (see Nickerson 2005).

Random assignment ensures that on average the subjects in the treatment and control conditions possess the same underlying propensity to vote, but there is a chance that a particular assignment is skewed. While unobserved causes of voting cannot be examined, measured correlates of voting can be checked for balance. No significant difference was found between the treatment and control groups with regard to age or vote history. The difference between treatment and control groups in turnout during the 2000 election was 0.1 percent among door hangers and 0.4 percent advantage for the control group in the phone experiment. Turnout in the 1998 election was also close with the treatment and control groups in the door hanger experiment exhibiting no difference at all and another 0.4 percent advantage for the control group in the phone experiment. Similarly, the treatment group was 0.1 percent older than the control group in the door hanger experiment, and the relationship was precisely reversed in the phone experiment. By every observable measure, the treatment and control groups appear identically composed.

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Both the door hanging and volunteer phone bank efforts were typical of political campaigns. The messages in the phone calls and on the door hangers specifically mentioned the gubernatorial candidate, a high-salience office, and stressed voting for the “Democratic ticket.” The major difference between the campaign run by the YCC and a regular campaign was the emphasis placed on young people. Two phone scripts were used (see the appendix). Both scripts were short, informal, and contained many pauses. Calling began two weeks prior to the election in most of the districts, but two sites began one month in advance. Door hangers named the statewide and local candidates and also provided the voter with the location of his or her polling place (see Figure 1). The door hangers were distributed the Saturday, Sunday, and Monday leading up to Election Day.

The sample for the postelection survey was taken from five house districts³ where the YCC indicated the local campaigns were strong. Subjects were drawn from the treatment and control groups in equal proportions. Interviewing began the night of the election and concluded the following day. All told, 976 subjects completed surveys. Members of the control group were as likely to respond as members of the treatment group.

FIGURE 1
SAMPLE DOOR HANGER

The next section presents the results from the experiments. The door hanger will be discussed first, followed by the volunteer phone calls, the cost-effectiveness of GOTV techniques, and then the results from the survey.

Results and Discussion

Door hangers

The YCC door hanger experiment provides a precise estimate of the effect of campaign literature drops for two reasons. First, the experiment is extremely large

TABLE 1
 EXPERIMENTAL DOOR HANGER EFFECT ACROSS THIRTEEN STATE HOUSE DISTRICTS

House District	4	6	21	26	52	53	54	55	60	62	75	94	95	Pooled
N	2,228	3,147	798	3,204	350	1,251	2,086	1,063	1,885	399	1,901	2,941	4,857	
Control turnout (percentage)	34.3	31.6	38.4	41.7	7.9	25.2	33.6	32.7	26.5	17.5	48.4	40.2	31.1	
Treatment turnout (percentage)	35.3	33.0	32.9	42.6	7.6	26.5	33.8	29.1	27.3	25.3	51.9	43.7	32.9	
Intent to treat (percentage)	1.1 (2.1)	1.5 (1.7)	-5.5 (3.5)	0.8 (1.8)	-0.2 (2.9)	1.3 (2.5)	0.1 (2.1)	-3.6 (2.9)	0.8 (2.1)	7.8 (4.3)	3.5 (2.3)	3.5 (1.9)	1.8 (1.4)	1.2 (0.6)
Contact rate (percentage)	82.0	86.6	84.5	68.2	43.8	54.0	55.2	88.6	60.9	30.5	77.5	84.8	79.3	
Estimated treatment (percentage)	1.3 (2.5)	1.7 (2.0)	-6.5 (4.2)	1.2 (2.6)	-0.5 (6.7)	2.4 (4.7)	0.3 (3.8)	-4.1 (3.3)	1.4 (3.4)	25.5 (12.8)	4.5 (3.0)	4.1 (2.2)	2.3 (1.7)	1.6 (0.7)
p value	.30	.19	.94	.32	.53	.31	.47	.89	.34	.02	.07	.03	.09	.02

NOTE: Sixty percent of subjects were assigned to the treatment group. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. p values are a one-sided test. Pooled results are calculated using precision weight averaging.

TABLE 2
EXPERIMENTAL PHONE EFFECT FOR STATE HOUSE DISTRICTS

House District	21	23	55	60	75	94	Pooled
<i>N</i>	3,585	1,863	1,896	1,497	3,754	3,586	
Assigned treatment (percentage)	72.1	52.7	47.5	43.7	74.6	73.3	
Control turnout (percentage)	44.8	38.0	31.1	33.6	52.0	43.2	
Treatment turnout (percentage)	44.6	39.8	31.4	38.1	52.2	47.4	
Intent to treat (percentage)	-0.2 (1.9)	1.8 (2.3)	0.4 (2.1)	4.5 (2.5)	0.2 (1.9)	4.2 (1.9)	1.6 (0.8)
Contact rate (percentage)	48.5	47.8	54.3	43.9	51.6	52.3	
Estimated treatment (percentage)	-0.3 (3.8)	3.7 (4.7)	0.7 (3.9)	10.3 (5.6)	0.3 (3.6)	8.1 (3.6)	3.2 (1.7)
<i>p</i> value	.53	.22	.43	.03	.47	.01	.03

NOTE: *p* values are for a one-sided test. Numbers in parentheses report standard presents. Results are pooled using precision weighted averaging.

and took place in thirteen of the fourteen targeted state house districts. Second, contact rates were high because successful “contact” does not require the subject to be home or available. If a volunteer successfully left the flyer on or in the immediate vicinity of the subject’s door, it was deemed a “contact.” Noncontacts could arise from idiosyncratic factors such as a dog in the yard but tended to result from secure apartment buildings to which volunteers did not have access or unfamiliar streets the volunteer could not locate (see Table 1, fifth row, for contact rates).

In ten of the thirteen door hanger experiments, the treatment group voted at a higher rate than the control group (see Table 1, fourth row). When all thirteen sites are pooled together, the rate of turnout in the treatment group is 1.2 percentage points higher than in the control group (with a standard error of 0.6 percentage points). This intent-to-treat effect implies that twelve new votes were created for every one thousand flyers where delivery was attempted. The effects vary from district to district, but not more than one would expect by chance.

The high contact rate across sites means the treatment-upon-the-treated effect differs little from the intent-to-treat effect. Pooling across all thirteen sites where door hangers were studied using precision weighted averages, I find a 1.6 percentage point boost in turnout with a standard error of 0.7 (see Table 1, rightmost column, sixth row).⁴ In other words, for every one thousand flyers actually delivered, sixteen new votes were created. Alternatively, a person in a household receiving a flyer would be 1.6 percentage points more likely to vote than had she or he not received the flyer.⁵ Thus, it appears that door hangers are an effective means of boosting voter turnout across a wide range of neighborhoods. It is tempting to conclude that the YCC’s partisan door hangers are 50 percent more effective at boosting turnout than Gerber and Green’s nonpartisan leaflets. This difference could be

generated, in part, by the fact that YCC included assigned polling locations on door hangers. On the other hand, the experiments are not precise enough to rule out the possibility that the differences are due to sampling variability.

Volunteer phone calls

Partisan volunteer phone calls were tested in six of the fourteen targeted state house districts. More sites might have decided to engage in calling were space in call centers more readily available for the YCC.⁶ The sites that did participate followed the protocol very strictly, and the resulting experiment is the largest volunteer phone experiment conducted to date (see Table 2, first row).

Completing a phone call is more difficult than dropping off a piece of paper, so the contact rates were lower in the phone experiment than the door hanger experiment (see Table 2, sixth row). The major cause of the difference is that the phone experiment relied upon subjects' answering the phone or possessing an answering machine. A phone call was counted as a "contact" when either a person at the other end of the line picked up the phone and listened to the script or when a message could be left. A subject was not listed as contacted when the person answering the phone could confirm that the intended target had moved, there was no answer, or the line was disconnected. Leaving a message on an answering machine is unlikely to be as effective as speaking with a person directly, thus lumping both modes of delivering the script together is a conservative estimate of the effect of volunteer phone contact.

In five of the six volunteer phone experiments, voter turnout was higher in the treatment group than the control group. Pooling the six estimates together, the intent-to-treat effect for volunteer phones is estimated to be 1.6 percentage points (see Table 2, fifth row, for intent-to-treat effects). That is, for every one thousand phone calls *attempted*, sixteen votes were created.

Because the contact rate was around 50 percent, the effect of actually receiving a phone call from the campaign will be roughly twice as large as the intent-to-treat effect. After adjusting for the contact rate, one would estimate that receiving a volunteer phone call boosts turnout by 3.2 percentage points (see Table 2, seventh row).⁷ That is, for every one thousand phone calls completed, thirty-two new votes were created. In other words, a person contacted by the YCC via phone became 3.2 percentage points more likely to vote, on average.

The similarity between a prior finding of 3.8 for nonpartisan volunteer calls and the 3.2 discovered here for partisan phone calls suggests that partisan phone calls are not radically different from nonpartisan volunteer phone calls.

Cost-effectiveness

Now that there is an estimate of the efficacy of the two voter mobilization technologies, it is possible to calculate their relative cost-effectiveness. As a baseline for comparison, face-to-face canvassing generates one vote for every \$26 spent.⁸ One might think that the larger boost in turnout would mean phone calls are more cost-

TABLE 3
 DOLLARS PER VOTE CREATED AT \$15 WAGE RATE
 FOR VOTER MOBILIZATION TECHNOLOGIES

	Boost in Turnout from Contact	Contacts per Hour	Dollars per Vote Created
Door hanger	1.6	40	\$23
Volunteer phone call	3.2	18	\$26

effective than door hangers, but a volunteer can drop off more literature in an hour than she or he can complete phone calls. The relative ease of a particular mode of communication may compensate for less absolute boost in turnout.

The number of contacts made per hour for each technology will vary considerably across time and place. For instance, the speed with which workers can distribute door hangers depends critically upon the layout of the neighborhood. Moving door-to-door to drop off the literature is simply faster in dense urban areas than in suburban or rural regions. The assumed contacts per hour used in Table 3 represent the approximate rate of contact for the experiments conducted in Michigan, but the calculation is easy to adapt to the reader's circumstances.

Assuming that labor costs \$15 an hour, Table 3 calculates the expense of creating a single vote for door hangers and volunteer phone calls. The table does not take into account the expense of purchasing lists,⁹ printing materials,¹⁰ or establishing multiple phone lines. Surprisingly, both door hangers and volunteer phone calls are cost-competitive with prior estimates of face-to-face canvassing costing \$23 and \$26 per vote, respectively. Personal forms of contact may boost turnout more than impersonal communications, but the ability to contact a much larger number of people each hour compensates for the reduced effectiveness of each individual contact.

The cost-effectiveness of door hangers is perhaps the most striking finding in this set of experiments. Although 1.6 percentage points is not a large boost in turnout, hanging literature on a doorknob takes very little time, and volunteers can move from door to door very quickly. If anything, \$23 per vote *underestimates* the cost-effectiveness of literature drops for two reasons. First, households will often have more than one voter in residence. Multiple people in a household can see a door hanger, whereas only a single person will receive the phone call. Second, dropping off literature is a very low-skill job that involves little contact by volunteers with voters, meaning it may be possible to pay less money for the labor involved in delivering door hangers. Both of these factors outweigh the 7.3 cents that YCC paid for each door hanger. If the budget calculation were altered to accommodate 1.5 voters seeing each delivered door hanger and a wage rate of \$10, then the dollars-per-vote estimate for door hanger drops to \$10 a vote. Thus, in some circumstances, door hangers may be the most cost-effective means of boosting turnout among supporters.

To understand why this result is so surprising, compare the door hanger result to estimates of the cost-effectiveness of partisan direct mail. Gerber, Green, and Green (2003) estimated that eight partisan mailings sent to a household boost turnout by 1 percentage point. At 40 cents a mailing, it would cost a campaign \$320 to generate a single vote. Even using a more generous nonpartisan estimate of 0.5 percentage points for each piece of mail (Gerber and Green 2000b), the dollars-per-vote calculation comes out to \$80 per vote. In comparison, door hangers are extremely cheap even after accounting for the \$7,300 expense for designing and printing one hundred thousand door hangers.

Several factors might contribute to a door hanger's larger boost in turnout as compared to direct mail. First, timing may account for the differential boost in turnout. Door hangers typically arrive a day or two before Election Day, while the need to send multiple pieces of direct mail to individuals (taking into account the vagaries of the U.S. Postal Service) requires parties to send mail well in advance. Second, door hangers arrive isolated from other competing notices and are more likely to be read. Direct mail from parties arrives with the daily mail and is often thrown away with "junk" mail. Third, a door hanger is slightly more personal than direct mail. While the hanger is clearly printed in bulk, an individual took the time to walk by and place it on a voter's door. The slightly more personal attention may be sufficient to boost turnout a measurable amount. Finally, the door hanger provided the resident with his or her polling place address, which may have boosted turnout.

The reader should not take Table 3 to imply that the manner in which a campaign mobilizes supporters is irrelevant. Campaigns still need to adapt strategies to their surroundings. For instance, many local elections may feature insufficient voters for leaflets to alter appreciably the outcome of an election. Similarly, in rural areas, moving door-to-door may be too time-consuming to be cost-effective. On the other hand, phone numbers may not be available for large sections of the target group or voters may screen calls, forcing campaigns to contact such people in person. The cost estimates in Table 3 help a campaign plan but in no way dictate strategy.

Survey results

The prior analysis uses official voter turnout data to determine whether contact from the campaign influenced a person's decision to vote. It says nothing about the candidates a person voted for and whether the campaign influenced that decision-making process. The survey was designed to measure the vote choice of both the treatment and control groups. However, the most striking finding from the survey is not experimental at all. What stands out in the survey is the extent to which the campaign failed to isolate and target supporters of Granholm. The YCC isolated neighborhoods that had supported the party in past elections, and the voter files maintained by the vendors weeded out Republicans and flagged Democrats whenever possible. Yet the respondents in the five house districts surveyed were more likely to identify themselves as Republicans than Democrats (see Table 4).

TABLE 4
PARTISANSHIP OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strong Democrat	111	11
Democrat	157	16
Lean Democrat	116	12
Independent	106	11
Lean Republican	108	11
Republican	148	15
Strong Republican	167	17
Refused	63	6

Of the people responding to the survey, 32 percent are Republicans and 27 percent are Democrats. Since the people surveyed were drawn exclusively from the GOTV target lists used by the YCC, the survey should find very few Republicans in the sample. These numbers imply that the party did a poor job of targeting its supporters. Moreover, it means that the voter mobilization efforts described above may have moved as many Republicans to the polls as Democrats. This result points to the major obstacles that parties must overcome in areas where the official voter file does not record party affiliation. In such instances, it is imperative that parties carefully keep records of supporters.

The GOTV phone call did leave a residual psychological impact.¹¹ Respondents in the phone treatment group were more likely than those in the phone control group to report being contacted by a political campaign (see Table 5, second through fourth columns). A chi-square test confirms that the difference is unlikely to be due to chance ($p < .01$). However, the subjects who claimed to be contacted had a hard time recalling the nature of the contact. The treatment group was no more likely than the control group to report being contacted via phone (see Table 5, fifth through seventh columns) or by the Democratic Party (see Table 5, eighth through eleventh columns). Thus, the effect of the phone call upon voters is extremely shallow.

The survey did not detect differences in the levels of support for either Gubernatorial candidate Granholm or the local Democratic candidate for state house of representatives (see Table 6). The treatment and control groups for the phone experiment express remarkably similar support for Granholm (see Table 6, second column) and the local Democratic house candidate (see Table 6, third column).¹² The standard error for each estimated difference is extremely large, but the results from the survey do not support the proposition that the phone calls from the YCC appreciably moved support toward the Democratic Party.

The survey results should be read with caution. The extremely robust mobilization effects detected in the phone and door hanger experiments are not detected in the restricted survey pool. The standard errors for estimates within the surveyed population are large enough that subtle changes in opinion and mobilization might

TABLE 5
ABILITY TO RECALL CONTACT FROM YOUTH COORDINATED CAMPAIGN BY PHONE TREATMENT CONDITION

	Did Anyone from One of the Political Parties or Campaigns Call You Up or Come Around Your House?			Were You Contacted by Phone, in Person, or Both?			Which Party Contacted You?			
	Don't Know	No	Yes	In Person	On Phone	Both	Republican	Democrat	Both	Don't Know
Control	4 (1)	138 (31)	303 (68)	43 (14)	200 (66)	60 (20)	30 (10)	32 (11)	212 (70)	28 (9)
Treatment	10 (2)	91 (22)	314 (76)	42 (13)	209 (67)	63 (20)	33 (11)	31 (10)	216 (69)	32 (10)

NOTE: Top number represents cell counts. Number in parentheses represents the percentage of respondents within the treatment condition for each question.

TABLE 6
VOTE CHOICE BY PHONE TREATMENT CONDITION

Office	Support for Granholm	Support for Democratic State House Candidate
Control support for Democrat	48.3% [381]	48.7% [351]
Treatment support for Democrat	47.5% [337]	46.6% [311]
Difference	-0.8% (3.7)	-2.1% (3.9)

NOTE: Numbers in brackets represent *N*. Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

go unnoticed. The “null result” with regard to mobilization might account for the lack of opinion change among those surveyed in the treatment group. The survey is simply not powerful enough to detect subtle changes in the attitude among subjects with any reliability. However, the survey can rule out large persuasive effects. The upper bound on the 95 percent confidence interval for support of Granholm and the local Democratic house candidate is 6.3 and 5.4 percentage points, respectively. That is, the last-minute forms of contact tested in this article are extremely unlikely to shift public opinion by more than 5 percentage points.

Conclusion

The two studies described in this article are the first to use large-scale field experiments to study partisan door hangers and volunteer phone calls. Despite the many virtues of the nonpartisan experiments conducted by Gerber and Green, such experiments cannot tell researchers and practitioners how voters respond to partisan blandishments to vote. This article addresses that gap and suggests that partisan campaigns are statistically indistinguishable from past nonpartisan studies. Even modest encouragement by parties can move citizens to vote.

Modest is an apt description of the YCC. A common complaint of the dollars per vote estimate from field experiments is that the cost of mobilizing voters does not take into account fixed overhead costs. The dollars per vote estimates provided in Table 3 do not take into account any fixed costs that a campaign would incur. However, the efforts of the YCC demonstrate the fixed costs need not be prohibitive. The total budget for the campaign was \$53,317, which included all labor, travel, health care, printing, and the purchase of voter lists. Taking into account all the direct voter mobilization activities of the YCC and all the expenses incurred, every vote generated by the YCC cost between \$38 and \$41. Admittedly, the campaign took advantage of volunteer labor and spare office space when possible, but such actions are typical of small-scale political campaigns. The bottom line is that expense is not the major hurdle to grassroots mobilization for a political campaign.

While the YCC provided a cost-effective means of moving voters to the polls, the postelection survey showed no evidence that the additional voters contributed to a Democratic margin of victory. Since the sample contained as many Democrats

as Republicans in the five districts surveyed, the only way the mobilization could have been helpful in electing candidates is if the campaign contact changed opinion. Unfortunately, the survey provides no evidence that opinion change took place. Thus, the YCC efforts at voter mobilization were ultimately ineffective, and targeting potential supporters proved to be the major hurdle to overcome.

One normative implication from this finding is that, in states where party membership is not listed on the voter rolls, political parties need to keep detailed databases of constituent support. Sharp decreases in the price of electronic storage space and computing power make creating, managing, and using such a detailed database expensive, but financially feasible. The investment is necessary in ideologically mixed neighborhoods so that supporters can be effectively targeted. An initial investment in a self-generated database may ultimately yield more narrowly tailored appeals. Party membership is a noisy measure of political commitments, and a carefully maintained and sufficiently detailed database might increase the persuasiveness of partisan appeals.

[I]n states where party membership is not listed on the voter rolls, political parties need to keep detailed databases of constituent support.

Several types of studies present themselves as natural extensions of the research presented here. The first set of follow-up studies concerns the external validity of these findings. The YCC focused only upon voters younger than thirty-five. It is possible that older voters respond differently to blandishments to vote, and the proposition is easily tested. The campaign studied here supported Democratic candidates. There is little reason to believe that Republican voters and campaigns would behave differently, but verifying this supposition would be useful. The campaign also took place in a tightly contested battleground state. Perhaps partisan GOTV drives receive different responses in less competitive regions.

The second set of follow-up studies involves refinement on the technology of voter mobilization. While the efficacy of volunteer phone calls and door hangers are established in this article, the current analysis offers no evidence on whether the timing is critical to its effectiveness.¹³ Furthermore, it would be useful to see at what point the technique reaches saturation. Gerber, Green, and Green (2003) demonstrate that the effects of direct mail are additive up to a point. Does the finding hold true for door hangers, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings? If so, at what point does each technology reach the point of diminishing returns? The article also only concerns two technologies a campaign may seek to employ. Experi-

ments on partisan radio and TV advertisements, professional phone banks, and rallies would help to fill in the gaps in the cost-effectiveness of campaign strategies.

In all of the tactics described in this article, the entirety of the interaction between the campaign and the voter takes place in thirty seconds on the phone, at the door, or glancing at a door hanger. Many political consultants insist effective campaigns create a relationship between the voter and the campaign through a series of six to eight contacts. Contacts repeated over time may differ in character, quality, and effectiveness from essentially anonymous one-shot strategies. The hypothesized difference between campaign types is plausible, but it should be tested empirically.

Appendix Phone Scripts

Phone Script 1: Issues

- Hi, my name is _____ [first name].
- I'm calling from the Youth Coordinated Campaign to ask for your support for _____ [target campaign] as well as Jennifer Granholm and the rest of the Democratic ticket.
- This is the most important election in decades for Michigan with _____ [issue] and _____ [issue] being debated.
- Young voters can make all the difference in these close elections.
- Can we count on your support on November 5th?
- Thanks for your time and for more information you can visit _____ [target campaign(s) Web site].

Phone Script 2: Information

- Hi, my name is _____ [first name].
 - I'm calling from the Youth Coordinated Campaign to ask for your support for _____ [target campaign] as well as Jennifer Granholm and the rest of the Democratic ticket;
 - (IF LISTED) And to remind you that your (new) polling location is _____.
 - Young voters can make all the difference in these close elections.
 - Can we count on your support on November 5th?
 - Thanks for your time and for more information you can visit _____ [target campaign(s) Web site].
-

Notes

1. Michigan State House districts 4, 6, 21, 23, 26, 52, 53, 54, 55, 60, 62, 75, 94, and 95. These districts included, for example, portions of Ann Arbor, Canton, Detroit, East Lansing, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Royal Oak, Springfield, and Woodhaven, among other cities.

2. Five sites combined flyers and phone calls. Within the sites that used both flyers and phone calls, so few subjects (roughly five thousand) were eligible to be in the treatment group for both that the interaction effects cannot be reliably estimated.

3. State house districts 21, 23, 75, 94, and 106.

4. A one-tailed Wilcoxon signed rank test confirms the result by suggesting the odds of the treatment and control group having the same baseline rate of turnout are only 4 in 100.
5. Including control variables through two-stage least squares or two-stage endogenous probit does little to change the estimated effectiveness of leaflets at increasing voter turnout.
6. Rooms with multiple phone lines were already booked by more established campaigns with larger budgets (the total budget for the Youth Coordinated Campaign [YCC] was \$50,000 and that included salary and health insurance for the paid coordinator). Sufficient phone lines were obtained in areas where the local party heads realized that the YCC represented a cheap supply of labor.
7. A one-tailed Wilcoxon signed rank test confirms the result by suggesting the odds of the treatment and control group having the same baseline rate of turnout are only 7 in 100.
8. Using the 7.1 percentage point increase in turnout from contact found in Green, Gerber, and Nickerson (2003) and assuming canvassers contact eight people per hour and are paid \$15 an hour.
9. The total cost of procuring the voter lists from the two vendors was \$1,400. Given the standing relationship between the Michigan Democratic Party and the vendors, the price may be lower than many campaigns would pay.
10. The cost for designing and printing one hundred thousand door hangers was \$7,300.
11. No difference was seen between the treatment and control groups with regard to the door hangers.
12. Similarly, there was absolutely no difference between the two canvassing groups.
13. While there was substantial variability in when calls took place, the timing depended upon the organization of the local campaign. It is impossible to disentangle the independent effect of timing and organizational quality.

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