Local Canvassing: The Efficacy of Grassroots Voter Mobilization

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This article offers empirical evidence supporting a relationship between social influence and voter turnout by comparing the effectiveness of face-to-face get-out-the-vote visits by canvassers living in a voter's local neighborhood against visits by canvassers from other neighborhoods. We analyze data from a randomized campaign conducted by a local community outreach group during the 2006 general election. We utilize natural variations in the assignment of canvassers to determine that the effect of being contacted by the campaign is higher in precincts where some canvassers were working in their own neighborhood.

[Supplementary material is available for this article. Go to the publisher's online edition of Political Communication *for the following free supplemental resource: alternative specifications of the analysis using fixed effects (Table A1), separating out precincts where there was any local canvassing from where there was none (Table A2), a balance check for the randomization (Table A3), and descriptions of the contact rate and treatment effect excluding outliers (Figures A1 and A2).]*

Keywords mobilization, turnout, social influence, randomized experiment, canvassers, neighborhood

Recent findings from get-out-the-vote (GOTV) field experiments have emphasized the power of interpersonal contact in driving mobilization efforts. Dozens of experiments have shown that door-to-door canvassing is the most powerful method of turning out voters (Gerber & Green, 2000; Green & Gerber 2008; Green, Gerber & Nickerson, 2003).[1] Experiments that highlight social comparisons between individuals also appear to produce large effects, such as threatening to reveal individuals' vote histories to their neighbors (Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008) or to publish a list of voters (or abstainers) in the local newspaper (Panagopoulos, in press). These experiments suggest that there are important social interactions at work behind the turnout decision.

At the heart of the debate about what mobilizes individuals to vote is a tension between mechanisms based upon individual-level decisions and mechanisms based upon decisions involving an individual's social context.[2] The vast scholarly literature on voting and participation has focused on issues such as socioeconomic status, civic resources, and the importance of direct mobilization in order to explain what motivates individuals to act politically (Campbell, Cowerse, Miller, & Stokes 1960; Kenny, 1992; Leighley, 2001; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Uhlaner, Cain, & Kiewiet, 1989; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Recently a small body of scholarly literature has begun to document the role of social networks in political behavior. Individuals' social networks are closely associated with their political participation choices—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; Fowler, 2005; Knoke, 1990; McAdam, 1986; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; Nickerson, 2008). Some scholars have argued that this correlation can be attributed to the fact that individuals are most likely to listen to election information from individuals who have similar interests themselves and behave like these individuals (Downs, 1957; McClurg, 2004). Still another group of scholars suggest that individuals rely upon information from their broader social context (Großer & Schram, 2006; Lassen, 2005; McClurg, 2003; Putnam, 2000). Robert Huckfeldt (1979; p. 579) argues, based on his research on survey discussants, that "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." A final group of scholars have suggested that social interactions instigate shared behaviors via social psychological mechanisms such as social conformity, social pressure, and reciprocation (Cialdini, 2007).

Our study investigates the role that direct, interpersonal contact plays in stimulating political behavior, operationalized as door-to-door appeals from neighbors. Scholars have documented the role of the broader community in determining individual participation. 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. This work suggests that there are important collective activities within social networks and local communities that influence an individual's subsequent decision to vote. We suggest that individuals are likely to base their decisions on the cues they are given by their peers.

We anticipate that neighbors will have larger mobilization effects, consistent with other survey work on political behavior. For example, 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. This suggests that it is not

necessary to influence potential voters through their closest social networks, but that using local canvassers or others that are less intimately related to those targets can have a marked influence on political attitudes and behavior.

In particular, we focus on whether individuals change a particular political behavior—in this case, voter turnout—when explicitly cued about that behavior from another individual in their social environment. Previous field experiments have demonstrated that the more personal the mobilization contact, the more effective the contact is at increasing turnout (Arceneaux, 2007; Nickerson, 2006, 2007). Many of these personal appeals are delivered by volunteers. We suggest that an additional way to personalize the campaign is for the messages to be delivered by volunteers who are members of the local community. Consistent with many possible mechanisms, these local canvassers are likely to yield additional social influence, whether directly (where the canvasser knows the voter personally and exerts social pressure) or indirectly (where the canvasser reminds the voter of an implicit social norm held by her or his general social environment).

The GOTV experiment presented in this study investigates the potential role of social influence to increase turnout. In this article, we compare the effect of being contacted by someone from the local community versus the effect of being contacted by someone from another community. We do so by analyzing an observational study from a voter mobilization experiment, examining the marginal effect of local canvassing. In our analysis, local canvassers are more effective at mobilizing than non-locals. We argue that though quasi-experimental in nature, these patterns of political participation illustrate the role that social mechanisms play in determining whether or not an individual will turn out to vote.[3] These results both validate findings from other mobilization campaigns that have argued their efficacy is also driven by social networks and suggest that the power of grassroots campaigns may lie in their ability to recruit local volunteers.

SCOPE, South Los Angeles, and Local Canvassers

The experiment was conducted by Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), a grassroots political organization located in South Los Angeles. South Los Angeles is a low-income neighborhood with traditionally low turnout rates.[4] SCOPE has worked since 1993 to reduce structural barriers to social and economic opportunities for poor and working-class communities in South Los Angeles and, in recent years, to increase civic engagement and voter turnout. SCOPE accomplishes its mission by recruiting volunteers from the South Los Angeles area who commit to canvass precincts by sharing SCOPE's message via door-to-door campaigns, and walkers are often residents of the areas they canvass.

For this experiment, SCOPE recruited a set of volunteers to canvass residents of South Los Angeles, in order to increase turnout from the region. All canvassers lived in South Los Angeles and during the campaign all wore identical yellow T-shirts with a SCOPE label on the back and a name tag on the front. All canvassers read the identical script. But some canvassers differed from others in one key way: They lived in the neighborhood they were canvassing.

Neighborhoods are often nebulous entities and hard to define geographically (Wong, 2010). Here, we use ZIP codes as a proxy; ZIP codes are an appropriate proxy for neighborhoods in general, and particularly for South Los Angeles. The U.S. Postal Service designates ZIP codes based upon geographically compact areas for mail delivery, and ZIP codes do not change each election cycle and may more closely resemble the geographic boundaries of a neighborhood. ZIP codes are a common proxy for neighborhoods in a

variety of fields of study, including medicine, economics, and political science (e.g., Aizer & Currie, 2004; Boslaugh, Luke, Brownson, Naleid, & Kreuter, 2004; Gould & Martin, 1986; Ku, Sonenstein, & Pleck 1993; Powell, Slaferb, Mirtchevaa, Baoa, & Chaloupkaa, 2007). In South Los Angeles, 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 (Garcia & 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 local canvassers from the local store or park. This is confirmed by anecdotal accounts from SCOPE canvassers, who reported that they recognized many of their targets when canvassing their own ZIP codes.

The script used by SCOPE canvassers during the campaign was designed to emphasize an individual's social neighborhood network. Canvassers spoke of the importance of issues on the ballot to "our community." Regardless of whether or not canvassers were working their own ZIP code, they told contacted voters: "We're out today talking to our neighbors about the upcoming elections." They 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."[5]

Because all canvassers used the same script, we are able to isolate the effect of using locals versus non-locals as canvassers. That is, we are able to distinguish the effect of the social cue delivered by a local canvasser. All contacted voters received the same information as to the importance of the election and of participating as part of their community. However, those contacted by local canvassers were more likely to know or recognize the canvasser as someone from their own neighborhood. Based upon the authors' interviews with canvassers, many canvassers recognized approximately 1–2 people from each of their local canvassing efforts of the 10–12 they successfully contacted over the course of a single shift.[6] This increases the likelihood the canvasser will wield some social influence towards the voter. For example, it is possible the canvasser and voter will interact in the future and that the voter believes the canvasser may ask her whether or not she conformed to the earlier request to turn out. Another possibility is that the canvasser is a more trusted source of information. We thus hypothesize that local canvassers will generate higher levels of turnout because they are capable of exerting additional social influence on the voter.

In the experimental design described in the next section, individual voters are residents of households that are randomly assigned to receive a canvasser or not. However, the type of canvasser is not randomly assigned. Each day of the campaign, each canvasser was assigned to walk in several precincts. The assignment of canvassers to precincts was haphazard but not random, as canvassers were assigned to precincts based upon the order of their arrival to the SCOPE office. The analysis of local canvassing is based upon observational data. Since there was no systematic process of assignment, it is necessary to look carefully at the canvasser-assignment data to determine if there are any systematic patterns that would bias the results.

Table 1

Differences in covariate means for precinct assignment, according to whether precincts were locally canvassed

Variable	Not local mean	Local mean	Difference (*SE*)
Democratic registration	0.70	0.77	−0.07* (.007)
Republican registration	0.08	0.06	0.02* (.004)
Decline-to-state registration	0.17	0.13	0.04* (.006)
Other registration	0.04	0.04	0.00 (.003)
Age	39.05	42.17	−3.13* (.292)
Vote history	1.54	1.58	−0.04* (.017)
Female	0.59	0.61	−0.02* (.01)
Precinct size	360	310.7	49.32* (1.53)
	N = 9,822	*N* = 5,545	

Note. Each cell entry describes the difference in means between individuals based upon the haphazard assignment of local canvassing. Asterisks denote instances where the difference is statistically significant based upon a two-sample *t* test with unequal variances.
*α = .05.

A comparison of areas canvassed by local canvassers to areas canvassed by non-locals reveals minimal substantive differences. In the first column of Table 1, we present the average voter characteristics from the Los Angeles County Registrar Recorder voter file for those who are in precincts that were not canvassed by any local canvassers. We include the partisan registration (Democratic, Republican, decline-to-state, and other), gender, age, the average number of elections each voter has participated in out of the last three elections for which he or she was eligible, and the size of the precinct. For example, of the 9,822 individuals who live in precincts where no local canvasser was assigned, the average age was 39.98 years. In the second column, we present the average voter characteristics of the 5,545 individuals who live in precincts where at least one local canvasser was assigned. The third column describes the difference between the non-local and local means, and asterisks indicate whether those differences are statistically significant at the α = .05 level. The data in these columns are based upon canvasser *assignment* and not based upon whether or not these voters were assigned to treatment or control or whether these voters were successfully contacted. While the differences are small, there are statistically significant differences for most of the observed characteristics. This is similarly true when we focus only on those individuals who were successfully contacted in Table 2.

To ensure that we control for these small differences, we incorporate the partisan registration, age, gender, size, and vote history covariates in all subsequent analyses. SCOPE was active in all of these ZIP codes and was successful at recruiting canvassers from the neighborhoods of 96% of the individuals in our experiment. Canvassers were assigned daily to canvass a full list of new precincts, and thus it is possible to see the effects of the same canvassers working both in their local ZIP code and non-local ZIP codes. In Table 5, which is described in more detail in the next section, we see that the effectiveness of local canvassing cannot be explained by canvasserspecific effects.

Table 2

Difference in covariate means for precinct assignment, among contacted individuals, according to whether precincts were locally canvassed

Variable	Not local mean	Local mean	Difference (*SE*)
Democratic registration	0.74	0.78	−0.04* (.012)
Republican registration	0.07	0.06	0.01* (.007)
Decline-to-state registration	0.14	0.12	0.02* (.009)
Other registration	0.04	0.03	0.01 (.001)
Age	42.04	43.96	−1.93* (.507)
Vote history	1.68	1.70	−0.02 (.028)
Female	0.62	0.62	0.00 (.02)
Precinct size	358.43	303.14	55.29* (2.45)
	$N = 3,112$	$N = 2,231$	

Note. Each cell entry describes the difference in means between individuals based upon the haphazard assignment of local canvassing among those individuals who were successfully contacted. Asterisks denote instances where the difference is statistically significant based upon a two-sample *t* test with unequal variances.

*$\alpha = .05$.

Table 3

November 2006 SCOPE experiment: Intent-to-treat effect and treatment-on-treated effect

% voting in control	% voting in treatment	Contact rate (%)	ITT	TOT
33.7	36.7	45	3.0*	6.63*
(1,205/3,578)	(4,324/11,789)		(0.95)	(2.09)

Note. Standard errors are robust and clustered by household, with a total of 13,354 clusters. Two individuals in the control group were inadvertently treated.

*$\alpha = .05$.

Experimental Design

From a pool of new registrants and occasional registered voters in 50 precincts in South Los Angeles, we randomly assigned households to control and treatment groups.[7] Households were randomly assigned either to be contacted by a canvasser or to receive no contact.[8] Approximately 20% 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 household assigned to the treatment group was targeted for a visit from a canvasser who may or may not have been a resident of the neighborhood. These assignments are described in Table 3. SCOPE's get-out-the-vote campaign began on Saturday, October 7 2006, and organized volunteers to canvass door-to-door. The campaign sent canvassers out each Saturday before the election as well as the Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday immediately prior to and including election day (November 7, 2006). Approximately 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. A paid team of canvassers, many of whom were recruited from the volunteer population, contacted potential voters

6 days each week (never on Sundays). This process continued until the election. By election day, 45.24% (5,341 individuals) of the treatment group was contacted.[9]

We then classified each individual who was contacted by a canvasser who shared their ZIP code as contacted by a local, hereafter referred to as "local canvassing." Most 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. Because the assignment of canvassers to neighborhoods was haphazard, our analysis of local contact is quasi-experimental.

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 equivalent to the ITT divided by the contact rate (see Green & Gerber, 2008). Turnout among those assigned to the treatment group was 36.7%, compared to 33.7% in the control group, for an ITT of 3.0 percentage points. Using two-stage least squares (2SLS), we estimate a TOT of 6.6 percentage points. As noted above, the usual effect 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 Arceneaux & Nickerson, 2009). Both the ITT and the TOT are statistically significant at traditional levels.[10]

Our next analysis examines the relationship between the intensity of local efforts within precincts and the success of the campaign. We define the *intensity* of local 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 local 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 local effort. Then we consider the marginal effect of a local contact for the subset of voters who were successfully contacted.

There are two possible ways in which local canvassing could positively affect the success of the campaign. The first is that local 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 local effort: Each dot represents a precinct's contact rate, with the bars representing the 95% confidence interval (CI) for the precinct contact rate. The x-axis is the fraction of contacts within that precinct that were made by a local canvasser. The line (the measurement of the contact rate given that amount of local canvassing) is fit through the precinct estimates (the dots), with the shading demonstrating the 95% confidence interval for the fitted line. The line is essentially flat; it slopes downward very slightly but is effectively pulled downward by the one lone estimate with over 60% local canvassing. In other words, local canvassers do not have higher contact rates than canvassers who are non-locals.[11]

We next examine the relationship between precinct-level TOT estimates and the intensity of local canvassing. Again the dots demonstrate the precinct-level estimates of the local
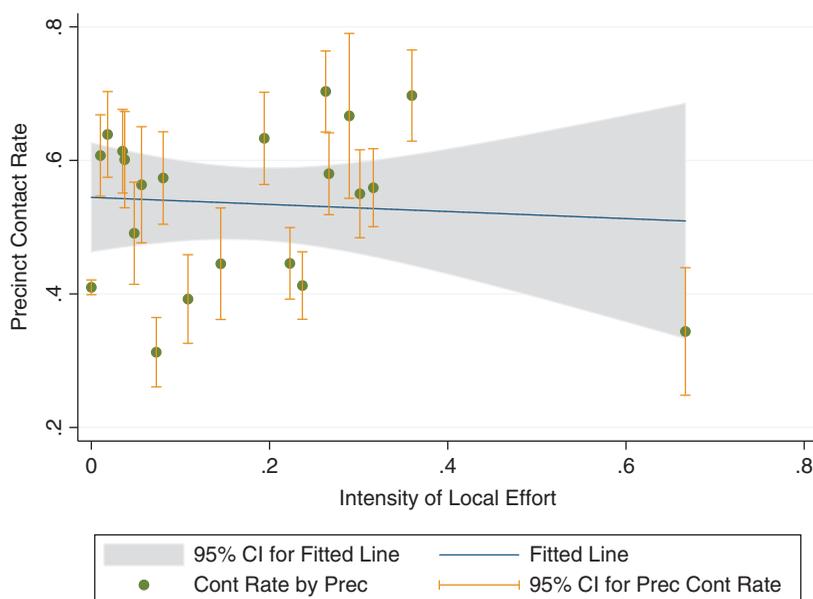
Figure 1. Contact rate by percentage of local canvassing. (Color figure available online.)

treatment, with the bars representing the 95% confidence interval for each precinct estimate. The x-axis demonstrates the intensity of the local effort—the fraction of individuals in that precinct who were contacted by a local canvasser. The line (the measurement of the amount of turnout given that fraction of local canvassing) is fit through the precinct estimates (the dots), with the shading demonstrating the 95% confidence interval for the fitted line. In this figure, the line has a clearly positive slope: As the intensity of the local effort increases, turnout increases.[12]

In order to provide a point estimate of the slope in Figure 2, we conduct a meta-regression of precinct-level 2SLS estimates to generate estimates of the overall effectiveness of the campaign and of local canvassing while taking into account the different contact rates across precincts. Our model examines the impact that local canvassing has on the treatment effect. We first estimate the treatment-on-treated effect in each precinct where there was local canvassing. We then regress this estimate on the fraction of individuals in each precinct contacted by local canvassers, weighting each estimate by the standard error of each precinct's treatment-on-treated estimate. By pooling estimates and standard errors, we obtain the most precise estimate of the population variance (Hedges & Olkin, 1985).

The coefficients generated by the meta-analysis confirm our finding that local canvassers are more effective than non-local canvassers at increasing turnout, whether or not we include control variables (Table 4).[13] The estimate for the share of contacts that are local is positive, statistically significant, and approximately 0.52 percentage points. In other words, if a campaign were to increase the intensity of local canvassing by 10 percentage points, it would increase turnout by 5.2 percentage points.[14]

Yet, this result should be interpreted with some caution for two reasons. First, the independent variable represents the percentage of the successful contacts made by local canvassers. Increasing the number of local canvassers is not equivalent to increasing the number of successful contacts. Second, this result could be attributable to specific precinct
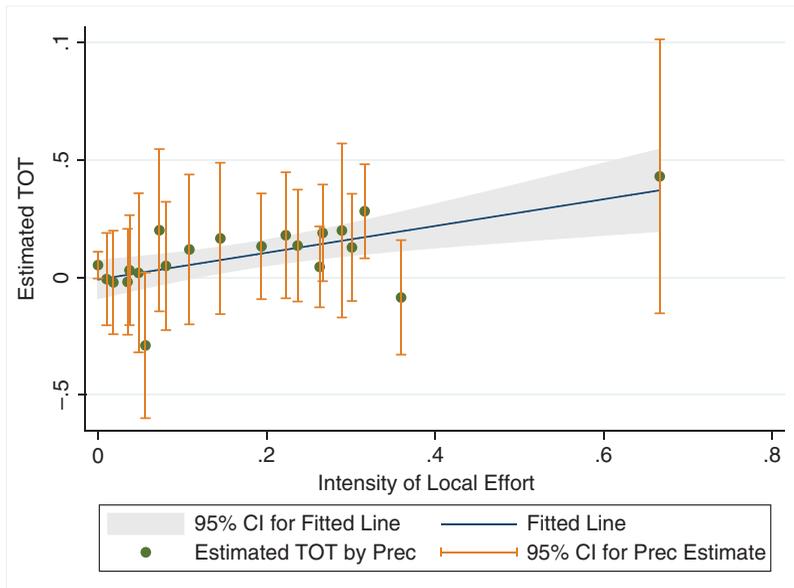
Figure 2. Treatment-on-treated effect by percentage of local canvassing. (Color figure available online.)

Table 4
Random effects meta-analysis regression

Variable	No covariates	With covariates
Local contact	0.517*	0.573*
	(.223)	(0.274)
Intercept	−0.011	−0.362
	(0.049)	(0.479)
N	20	20
Outlier excluded		
Local contact	0.485*	0.552*
	(.240)	(0.288)
Intercept	−0.007	−0.390
	(0.050)	(0.493)
N	19	19

Note. The dependent variable used here is the estimate of the treatment effect by precinct. The share of local contacts is calculated at the precinct level. Covariates include Democratic registration, age, gender, previous vote history, Latino surname, and indicators for missing age and gender variables. Only those precincts with at least one local contact are included in this analysis.
*$\alpha = .05$.

characteristics, walker characteristics, or voter characteristics. Below, we explore the possibility that the local canvasser effect is driven by certain particularly effective walkers or particular precincts. Since canvassing was conducted over multiple days, walkers made both local and non-local contacts on different days of canvassing. We include these results

Table 5
OLS coefficients: Effect of local contact on turnout among contacted individuals

Variable	OLS	OLS with control vars.	OLS with walker fixed effects	OLS with walker fixed effects and control vars.
Local contact	0.056*	0.044**	0.113**	0.094*
	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Democratic registration		0.009		0.011
		(0.015)		(0.015)
Age		0.001*		0.001
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Missing age		−0.025		−0.022
		(0.036)		(0.036)
Female		−0.015		−0.014
		(0.018)		(0.018)
Missing female		0.079		0.065
		(0.147)		(0.148)
Vote history		0.175**		0.174**
		(0.007)		(0.007)
Latino		0.127**		0.122**
		(0.023)		(0.023)
Precinct fixed effects		Included		Included
Walker fixed effects			Included	Included
Constant	0.307**	0.108**	0.500**	0.215
	(0.050)	(0.023)	(0.174)	(0.163)
F(covariates)	5.23	17.16	3.05	10.28
N	5,343	5,343	5,343	5,343

Note. There is a separate fixed effect coefficient for contacts made by unknown walkers (399 observations). Local contact indicates contact from those walkers who were from the same ZIP code as the voter. The dependent variable is whether or not the contacted individual turned out to vote. Analysis is conducted on successfully contacted individuals only. Standard errors are clustered by household.
*$\alpha = .05$; **$\alpha = .10$.

in Table 5, where we focus only upon those individuals who were successfully contacted by the campaign.

The first two models in the columns of Table 5 estimate the marginal effect of local contact on the subset of voters successfully contacted by the campaign. The dependent variable used here is an indicator of whether or not the contacted individual turned out to vote. The first model includes only the local contact variable, which indicates the proportion of contacts received by individuals that were made by a canvasser living in their ZIP code, and a constant term. We find that, as expected, the coefficient for local contact is large and statistically significant. These coefficients are presented in the first column of Table 5. 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 local contact is large and statistically significant. The haphazard assignment of the local canvassers necessitates that we present this second model, where we acknowledge that those precincts that received

local canvassers compared to those precincts that did not are different with respect to these observed covariates. By including these covariates in the model in the second column, we ensure that they are not driving the observed local effect.

We then turn to two models that incorporate fixed effects for walkers. These models allow for direct comparison with the first two models presented in the first two columns of Table 5—they differ only in the inclusion of walker fixed effects. Note that the coefficients for the percentage of local contact remain large and statistically significant. Across all models there is a positive and statistically significant effect of local contact, regardless of the inclusion of walker fixed effects or control variables. Thus, we conclude that the local effect is not caused by a particularly charismatic set of walkers who happen to live in neighborhoods with high turnout. Nor is the local effect caused by a particular set of unobserved precinct characteristics. Instead, the get-out-the-vote message appears to be more effective when delivered by someone living in a voter's own neighborhood. The magnitude of the effect of local canvassing here is much larger than in the meta-analysis: If a voter communicates with a local canvasser, the voter is approximately between 4 and 11 percentage points more likely to vote. By pairing the meta-analysis of Table 4 with the observational analysis of Table 5, we are able to conclude that local canvassing has a positive and significant effect on turnout. The meta-analysis allows us to look for heterogeneity from our randomized experiment. Including the additional controls in the observational analysis allows us a better sense of the relative benefit from local campaigns.

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 with a brief 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, Bedolla, & McConnell, 2009), the quality of the canvassing (Michelson, Bedolla, Medina, et al., 2009), and, here, whether or not canvassers are from the local neighborhood. There appear to be a range of possibilities for how 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. Generating a pool of local canvassers may be one of these strategies.

SCOPE was very successful in this campaign partly because its members are established in the community and have a well-developed get-out-the-vote infrastructure within their organization. In other words, they are are able to recruit volunteers that are part of the community's social network and are able to conduct a high-quality, personal campaign. 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 local canvassing. Local canvassers mobilize more effectively than non-local canvassers.

Across our analyses, we consistently observe a positive and statistically significant effect of local canvassing. We focus our attention on Table 5, where we observe a 4 to 11 percentage point increase in turnout based upon contact with a local canvasser among those individuals who are successfully contacted, while controlling for characteristics that

are unique to particular walkers or precincts as well as those covariates we observed from the voter file (partisan identification, gender, age, voting history), precinct fixed effects, and walker fixed effects. The inclusion of these additional controls ensures that they are not confounding our observation that local canvassing increases turnout, and the additional controls allow us to more precisely estimate the magnitude of the effect. In order to ensure that this effect is not attributable to an increased ability of local canvassers to contact voters, we conduct a meta-analysis in Table 4 where we predict the size of the TOT based upon the intensity of the local canvassing effort. This estimate allows us to use the random assignment of individuals to treatment and control groups in conjunction with the haphazard assignment of precincts to receive local canvassing, ensuring that we can control for the possibility that local canvassers may have higher contact rates.[15] Again, we find positive and statistically significant effects of local canvassing. The additional analyses add validity to our conclusion that there are larger effects in precincts where SCOPE was able to contact a greater percentage of individuals with local canvassers.

This experiment suggests avenues for future experiments to explore potential mechanisms driving the efficacy of social pressure mobilization experiments. As we observe in this study, if an individual from the broader social network specifically delivers the request, there is an additional effect beyond that of simply delivering the message that it is necessary to vote in "our community" (a message received by everyone in the experiment). Does deploying local canvassing increase conformity? Does deploying local canvassing increase the trustworthiness of the message? Is there additional similarity between the canvasser and the voter that stimulates the local effect? Are canvassers more motivated when working in their own neighborhood?

While we see evidence that local canvassing is more effective, we cannot fully unpack the mechanism that drives the effectiveness of these sorts of campaigns. Canvassing by non-locals was still effective, albeit less so. Our empirical analyses demonstrate that the local effect is not attributable to the charisma of a few walkers or the characteristics of the locally canvassed precincts. Furthermore, by including the variables from the voter file, such as previous vote history, in our analyses, we know that the local effect is not attributable to differences in these characteristics among contacted voters. Local canvassing may be more effective because locals carry increased credibility that turning out is important for the community. Local canvassing may also be more effective because the local canvasser signals a shared social norm to the voter. Some of the local canvassers knew the contacted voters personally, and they may anticipate interacting with them again in the future and thus have an increased desire to conform to the norm of voting, similar to the "acquaintance" effect described by Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague (2004).

Further experiments are needed to increase our understanding of why door-to-door canvassing works. The effectiveness of local canvassers tells us that social networks and communities may play key roles in driving political participation. As hypothesized by Putnam, social networks are linked to political behavior. In this case, neighborhood volunteers—embodying a cohesive geographic area—increased the effectiveness of face-to-face blandishments to vote. Neighbors are more effective than individuals from other neighborhoods, even within a larger community. This experiment suggests that political behavior is cued through social interaction and that the use of local volunteers, much touted by campaign managers and grassroots organizations, is in fact key to a successful mobilization effort. While vote choice is very personal, exercised behind a screen or curtain to ensure privacy, the decision to vote is in many ways an expression of community solidarity, an endorsement of the fundamental presumption of democracy as a means of collective action.

Notes

1. A quality effort can be expected to increase turnout by 7–10 percentage points. Phone calls from volunteer phone banks can also significantly increase turnout, while mailers, robocalls, and other indirect methods tend to be ineffective (Green & Gerber, 2008). Recently, researchers have attempted to unpack what makes canvassing more or less effective (Michelson, Bedolla, & McConnell, 2009; Michelson, García Bedolla, Medina, Sarpolis, & Coera, 2009).

2. Building on the social-psychological model of participation that came out of *The American Voter*, the political behavior literature has traditionally looked at individual-level characteristics, such as socioeconomic and civic resources, to explain differences in electoral turnout. Though this litera-ture established that individuals with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to vote, it cannot explain why participation rates have not increased as Americans have become more educated and wealthier. 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 & Shapiro, 1994)

3. in political science the term quasi-experiment is used to refer to any observational study where the manipulation is not randomly assigned (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In our analysis, the assignment of local canvassers to particular precincts is haphazard but not random, while the assignment of any canvasser whatsoever to individuals is random.

4. Median family income in South Los Angeles is $29,718, and about 30% of the population lives below the poverty line; 50.9% of the residents have less than a high school education. The area is 55.9% Latino and 38.9% African-American (U.S. Census).

5. Canvassers spent each morning in a training session reviewing the script to ensure conformity, but it is possible that there is important variance in canvasser adherence. For this reason, we include canvasser-specific effects in the results presented in Table 5.

6. Social influence may also have been triggered when voters recognized local canvassers, but we are unable to measure the frequency with which this occurred.

7. New or occasional voters are defined as having participated in fewer than four of the last 10 general elections, based upon the voter turnout and registration records provided by the Los Angeles Registrar Recorder's Office.

8. Balance checks for the randomization can be seen in Table A3 (available from the publisher's online edition of this article), and as randomization was conducted at the household level, all standard errors are clustered by household. 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 single person within the household.

9. This 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 anal-ysis that follow will simply consider the effect of the individuals receiving any campaign contact. Dropping those individuals who received a second campaign contact does not weaken the results for local canvassing. The existing literature on the effectiveness of doorhangers suggests that they have an extremely small effect on turnout (Gerber & Green, 2000; Green & Gerber, 2008; Nickerson, 2005; Nickerson, Friedrichs, & King, 2006).

10. 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 variation, we present results from a different specification that incorporates fixed effects for each precinct. Our results are displayed in the in Table A1 (available from the publisher's online edition of this article). There is a statistically significant and positive effect of receiving any contact across all methods of estimation. We include indicators for whether or not the age or gender control variables are missing and then fill in values for age and gender to match those missing spaces. This allows us to directly compare the estimates

of any contact across all models. Our results are robust to each specification, and these results yield TOTs ranging from 4.8 to 6.6 percentage points.

11. We also estimate the relationship between the contact rate and local intensity without the outlier (where the share of local contacts was greater than 50%). Excluding the outlier does suggest there is a slight positive relationship. As such, analysis of the effectiveness of the treatment will focus on the TOT estimates, which account for the contact rate. The figure without the outlier is included in Figure A1 (available from the publisher's online edition of this article).

12. We also estimated the power of local canvassing without the outlier (where the share of local contacts was greater than 50%). The strong positive relationship persists. The figure without the outlier is included in Figure A2 (available from the publisher's online edition of this article).

13. Analysis excluding the outlier generates the same result and is included in the lower half of Table 4.

14. We extend this analysis by looking carefully at the 2SLS estimates when separating the data into precincts where there was any local canvassing and precincts where there was none. We present evidence in Table A2 (available from the publisher's online edition of this article) that breaks the data into these two subsets, both with and without the inclusion of control variables. These results again support the finding that canvassing by locals is more effective. The estimated TOT for the subset of local precincts is positive and statistically significant in both models, as described in each column. However, the estimated treatment effect is smaller in the precincts where no local 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 local canvassing specifically and not merely face-to-face contact in general

15. These results are further supported when we simplify the analysis and include additional covariates in the appendix in Table A2 (available from the publisher's online edition of this article). While these two different types of analysis ensure that the positive results in Table 5 are not attributable to the contact rate of local canvassers, they do not control for as much variability as Table 5 and thus should not be used to extrapolate the magnitude of the local canvassing effort.

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