



INSIGHT

Lessons learned from our grantmaking programs

New Experiments in Minority Voter Mobilization

A Report on the California Votes Initiative

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Contents

Foreword	2
Executive Summary	3
The Starting Point	5
Initiative Overview	8
Individual Outreach Campaign Results	10
Conclusions	38
References	42

**Let us vote in multitude
To echo the voice of community
Only when we vote
Then needs and concerns will be addressed
We would no longer be ignored
So don't take democracy lightly.**

Opening verse of "Power of the Ballot," a Vietnamese American voting song (see page 26).

Foreword

In California, the pronounced disparity in civic participation across communities with differing socioeconomic and ethnic characteristics is especially problematic. Our state is home to a diverse population of residents, a substantial portion of whom are newcomers to this region and the country. In addition, many long-time residents, particularly those in low-income and ethnic communities, feel disconnected from the political process and are therefore disinclined to engage in civic affairs. As a result, there is a significant gap in the makeup of Californians who regularly participate in elections — and therefore have disproportionate political clout — and the state's full population of eligible voters.

The James Irvine Foundation, with a mission to expand opportunity for the people of California, established its California Perspectives program to improve decision making on significant state issues. We recognize that sound public decision making requires good information, effective decision-making systems and representative public participation.

As part of our efforts toward this end, in 2006 the Foundation launched the California Votes Initiative, a multiyear effort to increase voter participation in targeted areas and evaluate the effectiveness of various nonpartisan strategies for increasing voting rates. This report documents findings from the first phase of the initiative, through March 2007. In 2009, a subsequent report will summarize cumulative findings and insights from the voter outreach conducted for the June 2006 through November 2008 elections.

This initiative explicitly seeks to test various approaches to improve voting rates among infrequent voters and to lead us to a deeper understanding of the relative effectiveness of various nonpartisan voter outreach strategies. Since we are testing various approaches with a goal of identifying those strategies that yield the best results, we expect to see varied results across the organizations funded by Irvine, as documented in this report. In sharing these initial findings, we hope the report provides civic organizations, the philanthropic community and others who seek to boost civic participation with a deeper understanding of the potential to encourage broader participation in our elections and thereby foster more representative public decision making.



James E. Canales

President and Chief Executive Officer
The James Irvine Foundation
September 2007

Executive Summary

Substantial numbers of California's eligible voters do not participate in state and local elections, resulting in public decision making that fails to reflect the needs and perspectives of the full population. Low levels of voter participation within low-income and ethnic communities can limit elected officials' awareness of and responsiveness to the interests and concerns of these communities.

As part of the California Votes Initiative, The James Irvine Foundation supported a cadre of nonprofit organizations enlisted to mobilize voters in local communities having significant populations of low-income households and residents of minority ethnicity. In the weeks leading up to the June and November 2006 elections, these organizations used a variety of outreach approaches to increase turnout, including congregation-based outreach, neighborhood-based outreach, live phone calls, multilingual materials and information provided via ethnic and mainstream media.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of these mobilization efforts, the authors of this report collaborated with these local organizations to conduct a series of field experiments. Results from these two elections indicate a strong correlation between the level of personal connection made through outreach and the likelihood that the members of a community with historically low voter participation will vote.

The California Votes Initiative

In early 2006, The James Irvine Foundation launched the California Votes Initiative to accomplish three goals:

1. Improve voting rates among infrequent voters — particularly those in low-income and ethnic communities in the San Joaquin Valley and the Southern California counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino.
2. Glean lessons about effective approaches to increasing voter turnout among these populations and share with the civic engagement field in California and across the country.
3. Encourage increased policymaker and political candidate attentiveness to low-income and ethnic communities by demonstrating a growth in voter participation among these groups.

The Initiative supports nonpartisan voter education and outreach conducted by nine community-based organizations that are employing a range of strategies to encourage infrequent voters to participate in elections, including door-to-door outreach, phone banking, voter forums, mailers and other methods.

To date, the Initiative has provided voter outreach support and evaluation for two election cycles in 2006 and one in 2007. Prior to its completion, the Initiative will provide support, conduct an evaluation and share findings from election cycles in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Additional information about the Initiative is available at www.irvine.org.

Among outreach techniques attempted, the evaluation found that face-to-face canvassing close to Election Day works best. Volunteer phone-banking produces variable but often substantial effects. Robotic phone calls are ineffective, even when from a trusted source. And direct mail, whether in the form of postcards, handwritten notes, or voter guides, has relatively weak effects. The evaluation also discerned promising new insights meriting further study in future elections, as noted below.

This report describes evaluation findings from the first two election cycles covered by the California Votes Initiative, based on outreach conducted prior to the June 2006, November 2006 and, in one case, March 2007 elections. A future report will incorporate summarized findings from the 2008 election cycles as well.

Best Practices

To date, the California Votes Initiative has uncovered or confirmed the following best practices for voter mobilization efforts in low-propensity voter communities.

1. Campaigns should ideally use face-to-face canvassing.
2. Phone bank calling is enhanced by pre-screening and follow-up with those who earlier expressed an intention to vote.
3. Canvassers should be well-trained and drawn from the local communities of interest.
4. An information-rich message may be more effective than a basic one.
5. Going to the field too early can decrease the effectiveness of a campaign.

Topics for Further Study

Through a second phase of outreach and evaluation during the 2008 election cycles, the Initiative aims to explore the following topics pertaining to voter mobilization for key communities.

- Effectiveness of second-round contacts with people who have expressed a commitment to vote during first-round contacts
- Impact of using local volunteers
- Effectiveness of outreach strategies relative to voter age and language utilized in outreach communications
- Differences in using information-rich versus basic outreach messages
- Differences associated with qualitative campaign elements, e.g., canvasser training

The Starting Point

Activists and everyday citizens alike have noted with dismay the low rates of participation in American elections. Voter participation is particularly low among racial and ethnic minority groups, including African Americans, Asians and Latinos.

Testing Voter Mobilization

In the past decade, an increasing number of scholars have turned to field research with these populations in order to determine how best to increase turnout among low-propensity voters.¹ Most of these studies have been conducted by academics working with student volunteers.² However, as knowledge of the scientific and practical benefits of field experimentation has spread, an increasing number of community organizations have collaborated with academics in designing their experiments, allowing researchers to examine the effectiveness of these “real world,” community-based efforts.³

Previous field experiments have made great strides in recent years in terms of developing a list of best practices for mobilizing low-propensity voters. Dozens of experiments indicate that door-to-door canvassing is the most powerful method of turning out voters; phone calls from volunteer phone banks can also significantly increase turnout. Mailers, robotic calls and other indirect methods tend to be ineffective. Experiments also suggest that the quality of a canvassing or phone-banking campaign — the sincerity and commitment of those who make contact with voters — is crucial to its success.

More than one hundred field experiments in voter mobilization have been conducted since 2000,⁴ but very few of these experiments have focused specifically on ethnic communities. While it may be tempting to assume that findings with general populations can be generalized to ethnic communities, research shows that approaches effective with Anglos (non-Latino whites) will not necessarily work for African Americans, Latinos and Asians.⁵

¹ Gerber and Green (2000).

² Examples: Mattland and Murray (2005); Michelson (2003), (2005), (2006a); Trivedi (2005), Wong (2005).

³ Green, Gerber, and Nickerson (2003); Green and Michelson (2007); Ramírez (2005); Michelson (2006b); Nickerson (2007).

⁴ Gerber and Green launched the subfield.

⁵ Robert Putnam’s exploration of social capital and interpersonal networks, for example, has been supplemented by other research showing that these dynamics operate differently in ethnic communities: Putnam (1995), (2000); García Bedolla (2005); Harris (1999); Chávez, Wampler and Burkhart (2006).

Past Experiments by Voter Ethnicity

Prior to The James Irvine Foundation launch of the California Votes Initiative, a limited number of voter mobilization field experiments had been conducted among ethnic communities. Following is a summary of the findings of the experiments published to date.

Personal contact has been effective with African American voters

An effort to increase African American turnout in the November 2000 elections using direct mail and commercial phone banks did not have a clear impact on voter turnout.⁶ Three door-to-door canvassing efforts targeting African Americans were conducted by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) in November 2001 and November 2003.⁷ Results varied across settings, but these experiments all had large and statistically significant impacts on turnout, demonstrating that personal contact seems to be an effective method to increase African American voter turnout in local elections, a finding consistent with other populations.

Phone calls and postcards have resulted in modest South and East Asian voter turnout gains

For the November 2002 elections, one effort used live telephone calls and postcards to mobilize East Asian and South Asian registered voters, which resulted in modest turnout gains, a 2.2 percentage-point increase in turnout among those individuals who received a telephone call and a 1.3 percentage-point gain among those who received a postcard.⁸ Another field experiment reaching out to South Asian voters (Hindu and Sikh Indian Americans) prior to the November 2004 elections used English-language postcards, with varying messages designed to make ethnic or civic identities salient.⁹ The difference between turnout among those in the treatment group and those in the control group was not statistically significant.¹⁰

A limited number of experiments focused on voter mobilization among ethnic groups has generated some data regarding successful techniques.

Latino voter turnout has been increased by canvassers of shared race/ethnicity, live bilingual calls and follow-up contact

Field experiments targeting Latino voters are somewhat more common. In 2001, a nonpartisan door-to-door canvassing experiment aimed to increase turnout in a school board election in the majority-Latino rural town of Dos Palos, California.¹¹ Although both Latinos and non-Latinos of all party affiliations were targeted, turnout increased only among Latino Democrats, suggesting a relationship to the ethnicity and partisanship of the canvassers (all of whom were

⁶ Green (2004b).

⁷ Green and Michelson (2007).

⁸ Wong (2005).

⁹ Trivedi (2005).

¹⁰ While they did not result in large turnout gains, these experiments showed the feasibility of multilanguage efforts, demonstrating that surnames could successfully be used to sort Asian registered voters into national-origin subgroups for language-specific targeting.

¹¹ Michelson (2003).

Latino Democrats). A similar 2002 experiment in Fresno, California expanded on these findings by using canvassers of all races and ethnicities, targeting Latino youth participation in the state's gubernatorial election. This effort found that Latino canvassers were more effective at reaching Latino voters than were non-Latino canvassers.¹² A six-city effort by the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) in 2002 found that Latino turnout was not boosted by robotic calls or direct mail, but that live calls (scripted but conversational messages delivered by bilingual staff) increased turnout by 4.6 percentage points.¹³ A door-to-door campaign in Maricopa County, Arizona, conducted by ACORN in November 2003 encouraged Latino voters to vote to maintain the county hospital. Those who indicated in an initial round that they intended to vote "yes" were targeted to receive a second contact from canvassers. This campaign had a large and statistically significant impact, increasing turnout by 12 percentage points among contacted voters in one-voter households and 17.6 percentage points in two-voter households.¹⁴

¹² Michelson (2006a).

¹³ Ramírez (2005).

¹⁴ Michelson (2006b).

Initiative Overview

Initiative Design

In order to approach answers to outstanding questions about effective outreach methods and, in the process, improve voting rates within California's low-income and ethnic communities, The James Irvine Foundation began early implementation of the California Votes Initiative in January 2006.

The Initiative was designed with a number of characteristics that allow for a robust assessment of the effectiveness of various outreach strategies among various communities:

- Outreach projects are designed upfront to incorporate an experimental evaluation approach
- A diverse array of organizations and communities are involved
- A three-year time period of voter outreach (2006 to 2008) permits the evaluation to occur over multiple election cycles

Methodology

The California Votes Initiative evaluation utilized randomly assigned treatment and control groups, allowing for robust statistical evaluation of their impact. This research approach begins with the definition of a population of eligible registered voters in a target area. Individuals are then randomly divided into treatment and control groups through the use of a computerized random number generator.

The mobilization effort then targets all individuals in the treatment group, although for door-to-door and telephone efforts, not all individuals in the treatment group can be successfully contacted. After the relevant election, turnout rates for the treatment and control groups are compared. All of the experiments described here, including those in the California Votes Initiative, consult public records of voting history rather than asking individuals to recall this information. The difference in voting rates is then subjected to statistical analysis, taking into account both the contact rate (the number of individuals in the treatment group successfully contacted) and prior voting history for each individual. Efforts are evaluated using a standard 95 percent confidence level, meaning that researchers are 95 percent confident that the statistical estimates resulting from the analysis are accurate. Results that fall below this 95 percent confidence level may be suggestive (particularly as they approach the 95 percent level), but they are not considered reliable.

For each get-out-the-vote campaign involved in the California Votes Initiative, evaluators examine "intent-to-treat effects" (the differences in turnout between the treatment groups and the control groups), as well as "treatment-on-treated" effects (the effect of the treatment on those who actually received it). The distinction arises in those cases where only some citizens assigned to the treatment group are actually contacted.¹⁵ Comparing turnout among those actually contacted to those not contacted (both those in the control group and the portion of the treatment group whom were never reached) misestimates the effect of the outreach effort because some individuals are simply easier to contact and, potentially, are more likely to turn out to vote. In other words, it is not simply random that some voters in the treatment group are contacted and others are not.¹⁶ In order to avoid drawing biased inferences, we compute a treatment effect by employing two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression, using "contact" as an explanatory variable and "assignment to the treatment group" as an instrumental variable. This estimator is equivalent to dividing the intent-to-treat effect by the contact rate (the proportion of the treatment group that was contacted).¹⁷

¹⁵ Contacts are defined as the canvassers actually speaking with the targeted voter personally and delivering the intended mobilization message. Messages left on answering machines or with other members of the household (either by telephone or in person) do not qualify as contacts.

¹⁶ Arceneaux, Gerber, and Green (2006).

¹⁷ As explained in Gerber and Green (2000).

Initiative Participation

In the weeks prior to the June 2006 primary elections and the November 2006 midterm elections, Irvine worked with a number of community organizations in California to increase turnout among low-propensity voters, primarily within low- and moderate-income ethnic communities.

All of the community organization efforts were funded by Irvine, and funded groups were encouraged to participate in an experimental evaluation of their efforts. In consultation with the evaluation team, the community organizations planned their own preferred form of voter mobilization, including leafleting, direct mail, robotic calls, live phone calls and door-to-door canvassing.

The grantees and evaluation team determined jointly which efforts were most conducive to experimental evaluation and thus, not all aspects of their outreach efforts were assessed. One grantee, California Public Interest Research Group, conducted considerable outreach activities at college campuses; however, due to the limitations concerning the number of campuses on which the work was conducted, the outreach could not be evaluated utilizing the experimental evaluation design. This organization's 2008 outreach efforts will be evaluated.

Outreach Organizations	Geographic Outreach Areas
Asian Pacific American Legal Center APALC	Los Angeles County
California Public Interest Research Group CALPIRG	Los Angeles County
Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice CCA EJ	Riverside and San Bernardino counties
Central American Resource Center CARECEN	Los Angeles County
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials NALEO	Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties
Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance OCAPICA	Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties
Pacific Institute for Community Organization PICO	San Joaquin Valley; Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project SVREP	Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties
Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education SCOPE	Los Angeles County

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Individual Outreach Campaign Results

The remainder of this paper is dedicated to summarizing the effectiveness of each group’s outreach campaign and sharing implications of the findings for future nonpartisan voter mobilization efforts.

Among the mobilization tactics studied, effectiveness varied considerably, with some proving ineffective and others profoundly influencing the voting rates among those targeted. It should be noted that any given experiment’s results are subject to sampling fluctuation. Thus, when reviewing several dozen experiments, it is not unusual to encounter negative results. Such findings can be expected as a matter of chance. In this study, occasional negative effect estimates are interpreted to mean that intervention simply had no positive effect on turnout. Table 1 provides an overview of the various outreach campaigns.

Table 1. Road Map to the California Votes Initiative Experiments

	June 2006 experiments	November 2006 experiments	March 2007 experiments
APALC	Live phone banking and mailers in English and relevant language to six Asian national-origin groups in Los Angeles County	Similar campaign, but with nine Asian national-origin groups and an imbedded message-effect experiment	
CCAEJ	Door-to-door in Mira Loma/Glen Avon community of Riverside County with pledge cards and Election Day door hangers	Door-to-door in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties with pledge cards; election weekend follow-ups with polling place information flyers and Election Day door hangers	
CARECEN	Door-to-door canvassing and live phone banking of Latino voters in Pico Union/Westlake community of Los Angeles, starting several months before the election	Door-to-door canvassing and live phone banking in same community with voter pledge cards mailed back to voters showing polling place information and election weekend follow-up contacts (both door-to-door and by telephone)	
NALEO	Live and robotic calls to Latino voters in Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties	Live and robotic calls to same community, with robotic calls used to screen numbers for live phone banking	Live and robotic calls to Latino voters in the city of Los Angeles, with robotic calls used to screen numbers for live phone banking
OCAPICA	n/a	Live phone banking and mailers in English and relevant language to three Asian national-origin groups in Orange County	
PICO	Variety of small-scale efforts throughout the state, including two live phone banking efforts; focus on indirect efforts such as mailers, leaflets and robotic calls	Variety of small-scale outreach efforts throughout the state, with focus on personal tactics (door-to-door and live phone banking), as well as the use of multiple contacts	
SVREP	n/a	Door-to-door canvassing, live phone banking and mailers to Latino voters in five communities in Los Angeles, with a focus on telephone calls and reminder calls to those expressing an intention to vote in initial contacts	
SCOPE	Door-to-door in South Central Los Angeles	Door-to-door in South Central Los Angeles, with some voters targeted for second contact	

Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC) was founded in 1983 and has long worked in Southern California to advance Asian Pacific American civil rights, provide legal services and education, and achieve a more equitable society. While APALC is the nation's largest organization to focus on the legal needs of the Asian Pacific Islander community, it had not conducted a voter mobilization campaign prior to the June 2006 election.

As part of the California Votes Initiative, APALC ran a campaign that consisted of making phone calls and sending direct mail to a variety of Asian national-origin groups. The organization conducted a phone banking campaign for the June 2006 primary in California from May 18 to June 5, from 5 to 9 p.m. on weekdays and 1 to 5 p.m. on weekends. Bilingual interviewers were used to allow for in-language mobilization of the included national-origin groups, including South Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese.¹⁸

In addition to the phone banking campaign, APALC held a press conference prior to each election to explain and publicize the get-out-the-vote campaign. Press conferences were well attended, particularly by the ethnic media. Prior to the November 2006 election, APALC held seven focus groups in order to help refine its get-out-the-vote messages.

The pool of experiment subjects was culled from the Los Angeles County Registrar's list of registered voters as of April 1, 2006. Asian individuals were identified based on place of birth and full names. APALC used internal ethnic name lists to determine the particular Asian ethnic background of each individual. The file was further culled to include only low-propensity voters, defined as those who had voted in fewer than two of the last four major elections, were younger than 25, or were newly registered. The list of names was then narrowed to only include individuals residing in geographic areas with large numbers of Asian voters. The remaining list of about 110,000 individuals was cleaned by a commercial vendor to include only those with valid mailing addresses and phone numbers, resulting in a pool of 43,875 registered voters that was then randomly divided into treatment and control groups.

APALC's mailers had weak effects on voter turnout, but its phone banking efforts were more successful.

Prior to the June 2006 primary election, APALC called approximately 9,000 registered voters and sent bilingual mailers to approximately 11,000 registered voters. Groups of registered voters on the APALC list were selected randomly to receive a phone call, a mailer, or both. Phone calls were conducted in cooperation with eight other local Asian Pacific Islander organizations. The same get-out-the-vote message was used for all ethnic groups: "Voting empowers our communities and is easy." Mailers included general information about the candidates and measures on the ballot, the voter's polling place and the right of "decline-to-state" voters (those who declined to declare a political party affiliation) to request partisan ballots. Translation was provided by the relevant partner organizations, and the photos were customized for appropriateness to each national-origin group.

¹⁸ Although APALC also worked to mobilize Cambodians, the number of registered voters in this group was too small to allow for a field experiment.

As Table 2 indicates, APALC’s mailers had weak effects on voter turnout, but its phone banking efforts were more successful. With the exception of Vietnamese Americans, turnout was higher in the treatment groups than in the control groups.

Table 3 reports the corresponding treatment-on-treated effects. Combining all national-origin groups, 2SLS analysis reveals that turnout among those who received a phone call was 2.5 percentage points higher than the control group.¹⁹ Given the population’s base voting rate of 8.4 percent, this is actually a substantial effect. To raise a group’s turnout from 8.4 percent to 10.9 percent represents a 30 percent relative gain in votes. The effort was most effective among South Asians (4.8 percentage point increase in turnout), Japanese Americans (3.1 percentage points) and Filipino Americans (6.9 percentage points). While these differences are close to statistically significant, the differences observed across groups are not.

During the November 2006 campaign, APALC attempted to make contact with approximately 18,700 voters, including attempted calls to 12,000 voters and mailers to 10,900 voters (some voters were targeted to receive both a call and a mailer). Phone bankers made bilingual calls in nine languages and dialects, including English, Khmer, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Tagalog, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese. In-language mailers were sent to targeted Chinese American, Korean American and Vietnamese American voters. The get-out-the-vote message used in these contacts was developed using the results of a series of seven focus groups conducted by APALC and its partner organizations in the months prior to the campaign.

Table 2. Contact Rates and Turnout Rates for APALC Campaign, June 2006 Election

	Phone call contact rate	Control group turnout rate	Phone call treatment group turnout rate	Mailer treatment group turnout rate	Phone call and mailer treatment group turnout rate
South Asian N=1,520	29.8%	6.3% (1,101)	7.4% (419)	n/a	n/a
Chinese N=18,061	19.3%	8.0% (12,076)	8.4% (956)	8.2% (3,408)	8.8% (1,621)
Filipino N=5,328	20.2%	9.2% (3,298)	10.5% (631)	8.3% (576)	9.5% (823)
Japanese N=2,774	33.8%	12.4% (2,162)	13.6% (612)	n/a	n/a
Korean N=8,930	27.6%	7.6% (5,386)	8.1% (1,113)	7.9% (994)	8.2% (1,437)
Vietnamese N=5,660	13.6%	8.2% (3,829)	7.0% (213)	7.8% (1,294)	6.2% (324)

Number of observations in parentheses.

¹⁹ Slightly more significant than the results achieved by Wong (2005).

Table 3. Treatment-on-Treated Effects for APALC Campaign, June 2006 Election

	N	2SLS phone no covariates	2SLS mail no covariates	2SLS phone with covariates	2SLS mail with covariates
All	43,397	2.6 (1.6)	-0.05 (0.3)	2.9+ (1.6)	0.01 (0.3)
South Asian	1,520	3.8 (4.9)	n/a	4.8 (4.9)	n/a
Chinese	18,061	2.7 (3.2)	0.3 (0.5)	2.8 (3.2)	0.4 (0.5)
Filipino	5,328	5.9 (4.8)	-0.9 (1.0)	6.9 (4.8)	-0.8 (1.0)
Japanese	2,774	3.4 (4.6)	n/a	3.1 (4.5)	n/a
Korean	8,930	1.3 (2.5)	0.2 (0.7)	1.5 (2.4)	0.2 (0.7)
Vietnamese	5,660	-10.7 (8.9)	-0.4 (0.8)	-10.5 (8.7)	-0.3 (0.8)
Pooled		2.3+ (1.6)	0.01 (0.3)	2.5+ (1.5)	0.09 (0.3)

Standard errors in parentheses. Estimates obtained by regressing vote on phone contact and mail, using assignment to phone calls and mail as instrumental variables. Covariates include voter history for four previous statewide elections. + = $p < .10$. The subgroup numbers do not add up to the total because some individuals are missing national-origin information.

The target population for the November campaign consisted of registered voters sharing three characteristics: 1) surnames implied Asian ancestry, 2) deemed to be low-propensity voters, 3) resided in geographic areas with large numbers of Asian voters. The resulting subset of the voter registration list of 132,563 voters was sent to a commercial vendor to identify individuals with valid mailing addresses and phone numbers. This procedure yielded 33,457 voters for assignment to treatment and control groups.

The content of the phone bank scripts was nonpartisan. Using feedback from its focus groups, APALC decided to compare the effects of two messages for each ethnic group (except Japanese American and Vietnamese American voters, for whom only the universal message was used).²⁰ Call scripts featured either the universal message which emphasized that “voting empowers our community” or an alternate message that was specific to each ethnic group depending on the responses of focus group participants of the same ethnicity. Voters in each ethnic group (except Japanese and Vietnamese) were divided into either a universal treatment group or an alternate treatment group, and each group was called using the appropriate script.

Callers also informed interested voters about their polling location and gave them other basic Election Day information, such as polling place hours and the availability of translated materials. Scripts included ethnic-specific hotline numbers that voters could call for assistance. Additionally, the scripts listed common reasons for not voting that individuals might give

²⁰ Outreach coordinators decided not to divide up the message for these two groups because the relatively small size of their lists for those national-origin groups made it unlikely that we would find a statistically discernible difference from the messaging.

(for example, voting is inconvenient), followed by appropriate caller responses. The phone bank ran almost daily from October 18 until November 6 at APALC's office. The hours of phone banking were 5 to 9 p.m. on weekdays and 1 to 5 p.m. on weekends.

As during the June outreach, in November 2006 APALC experimented with mailings sent to targeted voters. In contrast to the June campaign, APALC's November mailings included Easy Voter Guides that were sent either in-language (for Chinese American, Korean American and Vietnamese American voters) or in English. To determine which language materials to send to a voter, APALC used age and place of birth information to predict voters' English proficiency. English versions of the guide were sent to voters who were either U.S.- or foreign-born and 35 years or younger. Translated versions were sent to Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese voters who were foreign-born and more than 35 years old. If place of birth information was not available in the voter file, as was the case for many individuals, it was assumed that the voter was foreign-born, and the language of outreach was determined based on age. APALC sent English versions of the guides to Cambodian, Filipino, Japanese and South Asian American voters. APALC and its partner organizations prepared bilingual labels that were attached to the front cover of the guides. The label identified the organizations participating in the project to let voters know who was sending them the guides, listed a phone number to call if the voters had questions, and provided a link to the Easy Voter Guide Web site so that voters could download English and/or translated versions of the guide. The guides were mailed between October 16 and October 23, arriving between October 20 and 31, within two weeks of Election Day.

In preparing to carry out the campaign, 33,457 low-propensity Asian Pacific Islander voters residing in targeted geographic areas with valid mailing addresses and phone numbers were randomly assigned to one of four groups: 7,858 were to receive a phone call only; 6,775 were to receive a mailer only; 4,106 were to receive both a phone call and mailer; and the remaining 14,718 were to receive neither a phone call nor mailer. Of the 11,964 voters to receive a phone call, 501 were Cambodian, 4,057 were Chinese, 2,053 were Filipino, 1,124 were Japanese, 2,619 were Korean, 1,038 were South Asian, and 572 were Vietnamese. In an attempt to reach these voters, 30,236 calls were placed, including 1,077 to Cambodian registered voters, 9,561 to Chinese registered voters, 6,051 to Filipino registered voters, 3,180 to Japanese registered voters, 5,809 to Korean registered voters, 2,519 to South Asian registered voters, and 1,525 to Vietnamese registered voters. (The subgroup numbers do not add up to the total because some individuals are missing national-origin information.)

The phone bank produced an increase in turnout of 3.7 percentage points, while the Easy Voter Guides did not have a statistically significant effect.

Table 4 shows the breakdown of results for each experimental group and target population, illustrating the so-called intent-to-treat effects (the raw turnout rates for each of the randomly assigned experimental groups). By and large, the effects were positive. Table 5 shows effects of the mailings and of actual (as opposed to intended) contact by phone canvassers. Again, the estimated effects were mostly positive, but there was also considerable sampling variance for each of the national-origin groups. The pooled results indicate that the phone bank produced an increase

in turnout of 3.7 percentage points (with a standard error of 1.4), while the Easy Voter Guides did not have a statistically significant effect. Table 6 shows that the two phone banking scripts were similarly effective, in keeping with several previous phone banking experiments that have found negligible differences in the effectiveness of ethnic versus universalistic nonpartisan appeals.

Table 4. Contact Rates and Turnout Rates for APALC Campaign, November 2006 Election

	Phone call contact rate	Control group turnout rate	Phone call treatment group turnout rate	Mailer treatment group turnout rate	Phone call and mailer treatment group turnout rate
South Asian N=1,588	35.7%	29.9% (271)	33.0% (542)	40.2% (276)	34.2% (486)
Cambodian N=581	26.9%	12.5% (40)	17.4% (242)	5.0% (40)	21.4% (257)
Chinese N=14,497	36.3%	25.7% (7,618)	26.7% (2,889)	27.8% (2,741)	27.3% (1,137)
Filipino N=4,186	29.9%	32.9% (1,520)	34.6% (1,457)	33.2% (596)	34.9% (585)
Japanese N=2,554	34.4%	37.1% (1,138)	35.4% (804)	33.6% (387)	39.6% (316)
Korean N=5,984	39.1%	28.5% (1,999)	29.3% (1,521)	28.0% (1,338)	30.8% (1,069)
Vietnamese N=3,894	39.5%	23.1% (1,947)	25.7% (342)	24.8% (1,349)	22.2% (225)

Number of observations in parentheses.

Table 5. Treatment-on-Treated Effects for APALC Campaign, November 2006 Election

	N	2SLS phone no covariates	2SLS mail no covariates	2SLS phone with covariates	2SLS mail with covariates
All	33,204	2.6 (1.6)	1.2* (0.5)	3.7* (1.5)	0.6 (0.5)
South Asian	1,575	-3.9 (8.2)	4.2+ (2.5)	1.2 (7.3)	4.7* (2.3)
Cambodian	579	39.6* (14.9)	3.8 (3.5)	43.6* (14.3)	4.3 (3.3)
Chinese	14,385	1.4 (2.3)	1.6+ (0.8)	2.6 (2.1)	0.8 (0.8)
Filipino	4,158	5.7 (5.2)	0.4 (1.6)	7.3 (4.9)	-0.05 (1.5)
Japanese	2,545	1.4 (5.7)	-0.1 (2.1)	1.9 (5.3)	-1.2 (2.0)
Korean	5,927	4.1 (3.2)	0.5 (1.2)	4.2 (3.0)	-0.02 (1.1)
Vietnamese	3,863	1.5 (4.9)	0.9 (1.4)	2.6 (4.4)	0.7 (1.3)
Pooled		2.7* (1.6)	1.2* (0.5)	3.7* (1.4)	0.7+ (0.5)

Standard errors in parentheses. Estimates obtained by regressing vote on phone contact and mail, using assignment to phone calls and mail as instrumental variables. Covariates include voter history for five previous statewide elections. + = p<.10, * = p<.05. The subgroup numbers do not add up to the total because some individuals are missing national-origin information.

Table 6. Turnout Rates for Alternative Phone Scripts for APALC Campaign, November 2006 Election

	Voter turnout among those contacted		Voter turnout among those assigned to be called		
	Universal appeal	Ethnic appeal	Control	Universal appeal	Ethnic appeal
South Asian	43.2% (185)	42.1% (183)	29.9% (271)	33.6% (533)	33.5% (495)
Cambodian	28.6% (70)	29.7% (64)	12.5% (40)	18.7% (273)	20.4% (226)
Chinese	35.4% (724)	36.0% (742)	25.7% (7,618)	27.2% (2,053)	26.4% (1,973)
Filipino	45.5% (330)	47.8% (278)	32.9% (1,520)	35.1% (1,045)	34.2% (997)
Japanese	47.4% (386)	n/a	37.1% (1,038)	36.6% (1,120)	n/a
Korean	41.2% (505)	42.8% (514)	28.5% (1,999)	30.0% (1,302)	29.9% (1,288)
Vietnamese	32.6% (224)	n/a	23.1% (1,947)	24.3% (567)	n/a

None of the comparisons between phone script conditions is significant at the $p < .05$ level. Controls exclude the mail-only experimental group.

Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice

For the June 2006 election, the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ) targeted four precincts in the rural communities of Mira Loma/Glen Avon in Riverside County. Although CCA EJ had never before conducted get-out-the-vote activities, the organization has been active working on environmental justice issues in this neighborhood for 25 years, with the help of a number of established community outreach (*promotora*) volunteers. Because of the low concentration of registered voters in this largely Latino and African American community, CCA EJ cast the net widely: The pool of registered voters included in the experiment included all new registrants and all voters who had voted in at least one of the previous five major elections. All of the canvassers were residents of the five targeted precincts. Canvassers encountered numerous challenges in their attempts to reach voters due to the distance between homes with registered voters, gated communities, guard dogs and a general lack of sidewalks. Nevertheless, one-fourth (24.5 percent) of those assigned to the treatment group were successfully contacted.

Those contacted were asked to sign a pledge card promising participation in the upcoming election. They were also asked several short survey questions, including questions about their level of satisfaction with elected officials and their opinion of the most important public issue in their community (for example, jobs, health care, the environment). Voters were given packets from the canvassers that reinforced the get-out-the-vote message. At 5 a.m. on Election Day, volunteers began distributing door hangers at the residences of all successfully contacted voters, reminding them to vote. This resulted in a few secondary face-to-face contacts as residents encountered the volunteers at their doorsteps; however, the number of such contacts was not recorded.

In the five targeted precincts, turnout among those randomly assigned to the control group was 11.1 percent, as compared to 19.6 percent among those randomly assigned to the treatment group (Table 7). This 8.5 percentage-point difference (the intent-to-treat effect) is both substantively large and statistically significant at the .001 level. Of those targeted, 19.7 percent were successfully contacted. Dividing the intent-to-treat estimate by the contact rate provides an estimate of actual face-to-face contact of 43.1 percentage points, with a robust cluster standard error of 12.5 percentage points. In other words, when CCAEJ canvassers actually contacted a person on the target list, they increased his/her probability of voting from 11.1 percent to 54.2 percent — among the largest estimated treatment effects to emerge from a voter mobilization field experiment. This estimate comes down to a still-impressive 33.6 percent (SE = 11.7) when controls are added for the precinct of residence, ethnicity and voting history in the four previous elections.

Table 7. Contact Rates and Turnout Rates for CCAEJ Campaign, June 2006 Election

	Contact rate	Turnout rate
Treatment group (N=1,431)	19.7%	19.6%
Control group (N=350)	n/a	11.1%

For the November 2006 campaign, CCAEJ expanded its pilot project from June 2006 to include a much larger group of targeted voters and extended its mobilization campaign into a second county (San Bernardino). Many canvassers were new to get-out-the-vote activities, but had relationships with precinct residents: 84 percent were residents of the targeted precincts. The campaign began on October 7 and lasted through Election Day. In that time period, CCAEJ's canvassers contacted 374 voters in Riverside and 1,366 voters in San Bernardino. Canvassers provided residents with voter information, including a card delineating their voting rights and the voter guide provided by the Secretary of State's office. They asked voters to sign a pledge card and also conducted an extensive follow-up during the weekend before Election Day and on Election Day itself. During the weekend follow-up, canvassers provided voters with flyers reminding them about Election Day and specifying their polling place. On Election Day they placed door hangers with this information on each voter's door during the morning and canvassed throughout the day.

When canvassers contacted a person, they increased his/her probability of voting from 11.1 percent to 54.2 percent — among the largest estimated treatment effects to emerge from a voter mobilization field experiment.

During the canvassing, individuals contacted in San Bernardino County were asked to identify the issues that they were most concerned about. They most frequently expressed concerns about public safety, health care and education. As none of these issues was addressed directly on the November 2006 ballot, canvassers responded by encouraging residents to stay involved,

organize and ensure that their issues were represented in future elections. In the weeks before the election, CCAEJ held a number of community meetings to help residents analyze ballot issues, discuss the importance of the upcoming election, the importance of voting, the various propositions and measures, and their concerns about local measures. CCAEJ also helped to sponsor a well-attended candidates forum bringing together all San Bernardino City Unified School Board candidates.

Because CCAEJ addressed only a portion of the initial areas slated for canvassing, analysis was pared down to this geographic subset of 28 precincts, comprising a total of 9,586 voters. Of the 7,209 target voters assigned to the treatment group, 24 percent were actually contacted by canvassers. As shown in Table 8, applying 2SLS to each precinct separately (in light of precinct variation in contact rates and disturbance variances), the average treatment effect is 6.9 percentage points with a standard error of 4.1 percentage points.²¹ The average treatment effect of 6.9 percentage points is close to the 7-point effect typical of door-to-door canvassing campaigns. The speculated difference in effectiveness between CCAEJ’s June and November efforts reflects the operational challenge of scaling up its canvassing efforts to a substantially larger geographic area and of conducting the November mobilization in communities where CCAEJ was not as established as an organization and lacked a well-developed volunteer *promotora* network.

Table 8. Treatment-on-Treated Effects for CCAEJ Campaign, November 2006 Election

2SLS	2SLS with precinct controls	2SLS with precinct controls, past voting controls, and precinct x treatment assignment interactions in first-stage equation	Pooled 2SLS results across precincts
4.3 (6.0)	2.8 (6.0)	4.9 (4.1)	6.9 (4.1)

Robust cluster standard errors in parentheses.

Central American Resource Center

The Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) conducted phone banking and door-to-door mobilization of low-propensity Latino voters in the Pico-Union/Westlake community of Los Angeles, an area heavily populated by recent immigrants from Mexico and Central America, particularly from Guatemala and El Salvador. CARECEN had experience with get-out-the-vote prior to its involvement in the California Votes Initiative, having worked to increase local voter turnout in the March and May 2005 Los Angeles mayoral contests.

²¹ Evaluators also looked for evidence of differential effectiveness across the 28 precincts and found little (chi-squared with 27 degrees of freedom = 32.3, p = .22).

For the June 2006 campaign, CARECEN targeted voters living in the Pico-Union neighborhood who were Latino (identified by surname) and who either had registered since the last statewide election or had voted in three or fewer of the last four statewide elections. Phone calls targeted just the subset of voters whose phone numbers were listed in their voter registration information. The mobilization effort began several months prior to the election. Door-to-door canvassing and phone banking activities were performed four times a week with a weekly average of 14 hours in the field, weekdays from 5 to 8 p.m. and weekends from 4 to 7 p.m. Canvassers encountered some difficulty reaching targeted voters on their walk lists due to locked gates and other barriers to entry in this particular geographic area. Nevertheless, contact rates for both efforts were noteworthy: 43.9 percent for the door-to-door effort and 30.7 percent for the phone effort.²² Fully 48 percent of individuals targeted for door-to-door visits were contacted before May 1; 72 percent were contacted more than three weeks prior to Election Day.

Comparing turnout rates among those in the treatment groups to those in the control groups, however, reveals that the CARECEN mobilization effort was only moderately successful in terms of turning people out to vote. Table 9 reports that among those living in households

Mobilization effects were somewhat stronger among those with known phone numbers. Turnout was 23.1 percent for those targeted to receive both a phone call and a door-to-door visit.

with unknown phone numbers, turnout was 14.5 percent for those in the door-to-door canvassing treatment group, compared to 14.3 percent in the corresponding control group. These figures imply a treatment-on-treated effect of approximately 1.0 percentage point, but the difference is not statistically significant. Mobilization effects were somewhat stronger among those with known phone

numbers. Turnout was 21.7 percent for people assigned to the control group, 22.0 percent among those who were targeted to receive only door-to-door contact, 22.4 percent for those assigned to receive a call, and 23.1 percent for those targeted to receive both a phone call and a door-to-door visit. Applying 2SLS to these figures generates estimated canvassing effects of 0.6 percentage points (clustered SE = 4.9) among those with unknown phone numbers and 1.0 percentage points (clustered SE = 2.6) among those with known phone numbers. The estimated effect of a phone contact in the latter group is 3.3 percentage points but with a standard error of 4.7 percentage points. Given the large standard errors, it is difficult to say which treatment was more effective. However, the pooled estimate of the canvassing effect ($b = 0.9$, $SE = 2.7$) is clearly disappointing because the implied 95 percent confidence interval does not include 7 percentage points, which is what previous experimental studies of canvassing suggest is the expected effect.

²² CARECEN used primarily monolingual Spanish speakers to conduct its June election mobilization effort; as a result, individuals on the treatment list who were monolingual-English were often not successfully contacted. The extent to which the contact rate was affected by this limitation of the mobilization effort is unknown.

Table 9. Contact Rates and Turnout Rates for CARECEN Campaign, June 2006 Election

No valid phone number	Experimental groups			
	Control	Canvass only	Call only	Canvass and call
Voted	14.3%	14.5%		
Contacted by canvassers		35.8%		
N	719	771		
Valid phone number				
Voted	21.7%	22.0%	22.4%	23.1%
Contacted by canvassers		44.2%		45.0%
Contacted by callers			27.5%	26.3%
N	1,694	1,933	657	813

One explanation for the small impact of CARECEN's efforts in June 2006 is that the organization's early presence in the field gave contacted voters time to forget that they had been contacted. For the November 2006 campaign, CARECEN shifted its strategy to involve repeated contacts on a smaller treatment group over a shorter period of time in the field. These changes were expected to enhance CARECEN's effectiveness at increasing turnout. In addition, the November effort incorporated a follow-up voter pledge card and door-to-door and Election Day telephone reminders. During the door-to-door visits, voters were asked to write their names and addresses on voter pledge cards; these postcards were then mailed back to the voters a week before Election Day, with polling place information specific to the individual voter. Postcard recipients were not randomly assigned; all voters reached door-to-door were asked to complete them. Thus, the estimated effect of the experimental treatment represents the combined effect of the door-to-door appeal, the leaflets that canvassers distributed to voters, and the follow-up postcard.

In addition, CARECEN held several weekly voter education sessions and a voter forum on November 4 to discuss the mechanics of voting and various ballot initiatives. Representatives from CARECEN gave interviews to various media outlets that led to television, radio and newspaper coverage by both English-language and Spanish-language outlets before the election. News stories featured the canvassing campaign and the voter forum.

Latino residents included in the treatment and control groups were new and occasional voters.²³ During the first round of canvassing, from the last week of September until the third week of October 2006, more than 50 percent of voters ($N = 2,422$) were successfully contacted. A total of 1,179 successful contacts were made from the third week of October to the first week of November 2006. Canvassers provided voters with Easy Voter Guides to educate them about

²³ "Occasional" voters are defined as those who voted in one to three of the last five major elections, and "new" voters as those who registered after September 2005.

the election and also spoke with them about the campaign and the importance of voting. The Easy Voter Guides contained easy-to-read, nonpartisan information about the candidates for statewide office and the statewide ballot measures on the November 2006 ballot, and they were available in multiple languages. The guide for November 2006 also provided the get-out-the-vote message, “It’s your future. Vote for it!” on the front cover. A few weeks into the CARECEN outreach canvassers also began asking voters to sign pledge cards committing to vote. On Election Day, CARECEN spoke with 120 voters by phone and visited 673 door to door. CARECEN’s overall contact rate of 52.8 percent was a great improvement on the organization’s June effort.

Despite gains in the contact rate, results were somewhat disappointing once again, as illustrated in Table 10. Turnout in the control group (N = 1,565) was 52.5 percent, as compared to 52.2 percent in the treatment group (N = 4,584). Applying 2SLS to each precinct separately and pooling the results across precincts (thus controlling for different contact rates across precincts) generates a treatment-on-treated estimate of 3.4 percentage points with a standard error of 2.9 percentage points (Table 11). Isolating registered voters who had participated in at least one prior election, canvasser contact increased turnout by 15.7 percentage points (SE = 5.6). By contrast, the effect among those who had not voted prior to 2006 was negligible (-0.1 percentage points, SE = 3.1). CARECEN’s overall average effect of 3.4 percent appears to reflect the fact that the latter group is approximately five times larger than the former.

Table 10. Contact Rates and Turnout Rates for CARECEN Campaign, November 2006 Election

	Experimental groups	
	Treatment	Control
% contacted	52.8%	
% voting	52.2%	52.5%
N	4,584	1,565

Table 11. Treatment-on-Treated Effects for CARECEN, November 2006 Election

2SLS	2SLS with precinct controls	2SLS with precinct controls and precinct x treatment assignment interactions in first-stage equation	Pooled 2SLS results across precincts
-0.6 (3.0)	-0.1 (3.0)	2.1 (2.9)	3.4 (2.9)

Standard errors in parentheses.

Overall, CARECEN’s canvassing efforts appeared to be less effective than canvassing campaigns conducted by other groups described in this report. One hypothesis suggests that this resulted from scripts that did not focus exclusively on the upcoming election. Instead, CARECEN’s scripts included information about services provided by the organization, such as legal services and education. Canvassers asked contacted voters if they were interested in receiving literature from CARECEN about their activities, and voters were invited to attend voter education forums hosted by CARECEN. In addition, contacted voters were asked to name their two top areas of concern for their community (for example, jobs, education, health care), adding a survey component to the mobilization effort. Under these conditions, the voter mobilization message may have been diluted and, therefore, less likely to endure between the date of contact and the election. Another possibility is that the target population, which included many “habitual non-voters,” may have been more difficult to mobilize than other low-propensity communities.

The voter mobilization message may have been diluted and, therefore, less likely to endure between the date of contact and the election.

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) has worked since 1981 to increase the political empowerment of Latinos in California and nationwide. In the weeks prior to the June and November 2006 elections, NALEO conducted a phone-based voter mobilization campaign designed to encourage participation by Latino registered voters living in Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. In addition to the phone banks, NALEO sponsored a bilingual voter information hotline; monitored polling places in Los Angeles, Orange County and Riverside to ensure they opened on time; provided assistance in the languages required by the Voting Rights Act; and worked with Univision, a Spanish-language television station, to produce and air public service announcements promoting the election and the information hotline.

In the weeks prior to the June 2006 election, NALEO partnered with three local community organizations in an attempt to contact treatment groups totaling 68,942 individuals. The target pool included young voters (ages 18 to 24) who had Spanish surnames, voters newly registered since the last major statewide election, and infrequent voters who had participated in only one or none of the previous four major elections. Phone banking began on Saturday, May 20, and continued through Monday, June 5. Only one phone call was placed to households with more than one registered voter in the treatment group; however, successful contacts were defined narrowly as a live conversation with the intended target individual. In some counties, multi-voter households were excluded from the randomized assignment.

Table 12. Contact Rates, Intent-to-Treat Effects and Treatment-on-Treated Effects for NALEO Campaign, June 2006

	Contact rate	% Voting, control group	% Voting, treatment group	2SLS treatment-on-treated effect, with covariates
Fresno County (N=15,962)	9.2%	6.4%	6.1%	-2.7 (4.2)
Los Angeles County (N=16,968)	12.4%	19.5%	19.8%	2.1 (5.0)
Orange County (N=12,830)	9.6%	18.5%	19.3%	8.4 (7.2)
Riverside County (N=11,468)	10.6%	14.4%	15.0%	5.8 (6.3)
San Bernardino County (N=11,714)	9.9%	8.3%	8.7%	3.6 (5.1)
All 5 Counties Pooled (N=68,942)				2.1 (2.4)

Results from the June 2006 campaign were disappointing. Contact rates varied from a low of 9.2 percent in Fresno County to a high of 12.4 percent in Los Angeles (Table 12). The mobilization effort seems to have failed to move significant numbers of voters to the polls, and the low contact rates meant high standard errors and high uncertainty for the estimates of the treatment effect. Pooling all five counties yielded an average treatment effect of 2.1 percentage points — but a standard error of 2.4 percentage points calls into question whether the mobilization effort had any effect at all.

Based on NALEO's experience in June 2006, when live callers found it frustrating to call non-working numbers, the organization began its fall campaign with a round of robotic calls designed to encourage voter engagement and screen its telephone list for non-working numbers. Live calls were made to the resulting list of working numbers, encouraging voter participation. A total of 8,831 targeted individuals were contacted by phone, representing 27 percent of the target population. This rate ranged from 41 percent in Fresno County to 20 percent in San Bernardino. The overall contact rate is more than double the corresponding rate in June of 2006, which suggests that a preliminary round of robotic calls is an effective and inexpensive means by which to improve the efficiency of a live phone bank.

A preliminary round of robotic calls is an effective and inexpensive means by which to improve the efficiency of a live phone bank.

Prior to the November election, NALEO's callers reminded voters of the upcoming election and stressed the impact of elections on voters and their families, including issues of jobs, education, health care and immigration. Voters were asked to verbally pledge to vote and, regardless of the response, were encouraged to call the group's toll-free number with any questions about voting or the election.

To gauge the effectiveness of this voter mobilization campaign, households (defined by a common telephone number) were randomly assigned to treatment or control groups. This random assignment was conducted separately for each county in order to accommodate the expected capacity of each county’s phone bank. Callers at each site recorded whether they succeeded in speaking with targeted voters.

Three kinds of statistical analysis were conducted, all of which take account of the fact that households, not individuals, were the unit of random assignment. First, the effects of the initial round of robotic calls were gauged. Consistent with past experiments on the effects of robotic calls conducted by this and other groups, no effect was found (b = -0.2 percent, SE = 0.6 percent, N = 61,422). Second, was an assessment of the average effects of live phone calls among those who were actually reached by phone. In keeping with other analyses, this estimation was conducted by means of an instrumental variables regression in which vote is regressed on contact with canvassers. Random assignment is used as an instrumental variable. This analysis was conducted separately for each of the counties because NALEO’s contact rates varied markedly across precincts. As shown in Table 13, pooling the results across five county-level experiments generates an average treatment effect of 0.7 percentage points (SE = 1.5).

Table 13. Contact Rates, Intent-to-Treat Effects and Treatment-on-Treated Effects for NALEO Campaign, November 2006

	Contact rate	% Voting, control group	% Voting, treatment group	2SLS treatment-on-treated effect, with covariates
Fresno County (N=7,991)	41.4%	20.8%	23.1%	1.2 (2.2)
Los Angeles County (N=11,260)	25.9%	49.4%	47.0%	-4.4 (5.3)
Orange County (N=8,392)	29.4%	39.0%	39.3%	-0.4 (3.3)
Riverside County (N=7,552)	21.0%	34.5%	37.4%	11.8 (5.4)
San Bernardino County (N=9,212)	19.9%	17.7%	17.5%	-2.5 (4.0)
All 5 Counties Pooled (N=44,407)				0.7 (1.5)
Young Voters (18-24) (N=12,542)				4.4+ (3.0)
Non-Young Voters (25+) (N=31,865)				0.0 (1.9)

+ p<.10, one-tailed. Clustered standard errors in parentheses.

Finally, the campaign was examined to find whether its success varied according to three categories that the group used to classify its targeted voters: young voters (age 18 to 24), new registrants, and low-propensity voters (who have voted in no more than half of the last four elections). NALEO seems to have been especially effective in mobilizing young voters. Among young voters (N = 12,542), the effect was fairly strong: Contact increased turnout by

4.4 percentage points with a standard error of 3.0 percentage points. This effect has a p-value of .06, which means that there would be a 6 percent chance of seeing an estimated effect this large if the true effect were zero. By contrast, the effect among non-young voters ($N = 31,865$) was 0.0 percentage points with a standard error of 1.9. The difference in coefficients for young and non-young is marginally significant ($p < .10$). Thus, the overall average effect of 0.7 percentage points reflects the relative sizes of these groups.

One hypothesis coming out of the November 2006 analysis was that perhaps the scripts being used by NALEO were compromising the effectiveness of the mobilizing conversation. NALEO's March 2007 phone banking campaign was designed to test this hypothesis: the organization conducted a live phone banking campaign for the Los Angeles municipal election with two different scripts. One script, mirroring that used in previous campaigns, was relatively short, reminding voters of the upcoming election and encouraging participation. The second script was more information-rich, aiming to also educate voters about the candidates and issues on the ballot. Registered voters in single- and multi-voter households were randomized separately, and the treatment groups were then further subdivided into two random groups, one for each type of script. Overall, 5,822 voters were slated for treatment in this campaign.

Table 14. Contact Rates and Intent-to-Treat Effects for NALEO Campaign, March 2007

	Informational message group		Basic message group		Control group
	% Voting	Contact rate	% Voting	Contact rate	% Voting
Single-voter households ($N=2,786$)	16.6%	40.8%	16.8%	39.4%	14.4%
Multi-voter households ($N=3,660$)	22.5%	48.5%	20.7%	42.3%	19.3%
All households ($N=6,446$)	19.9%	45.3%	18.9%	41.0%	17.3%

This third California Votes Initiative experiment by NALEO was markedly more successful than those previous. Contact rates were significantly higher: 45.3 percent for the informational message group and 41.0 percent for the basic message group. Unfortunately, these greatly different contact rates (having a difference of 4.3 percentage points) preclude a direct comparison of the effectiveness of the two messages. The data, however, are suggestive, even if not conclusive, that the longer, more informative scripts worked better in mobilizing targeted voters: In single-voter households, turnout in the control group was 14.4 percent, compared to 16.6 percent for those targeted to receive the informational message and 16.8 percent for those targeted to receive the basic message. In multi-voter households, turnout in the control group was 19.3 percent, compared to 22.5 percent for those targeted to receive the informational message and 20.7 percent for those targeted to receive the basic message (Table 14).

Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance

The Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA) has worked for more than a decade to improve opportunities and outcomes for low-income Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Orange County, including programs covering youth development, education, community health and economic development. While OCAPICA has long been active in political issues of concern to the Asian Pacific Islander community, the organization directly mobilized voters for the first time in fall 2006. In addition to OCAPICA's phone banking campaign, the organization collaborated with the Orange County Registrar to engage the community in workshops and presentations that focused on how to register, obtain and use absentee ballots, and request in-language voting materials. OCAPICA worked with the registrar to discuss recruitment of bilingual poll workers, planning and organizing town hall meetings, training of poll workers, display of in-language materials at polling places, name badges for bilingual poll workers and polling place signage.

OCAPICA also conducted a variety of community outreach activities. In the Chinese community, the organization distributed more than 3,000 Easy Voter Guides at outreach events at Chinese churches, community organizations and markets. OCAPICA sent a community bulletin with voting information to 500 residents and worked to place five articles in Chinese newspapers about voting. In the Korean community, the organization distributed more than 3,000 Easy Voter Guides at outreach events in Korean churches, community organizations and markets, and another 2,000 at a local Korean festival. In the Vietnamese community, OCAPICA distributed more than 2,000 Easy Voter Guides and other voting information on site at three local businesses, worked to place 13 articles about voting in Vietnamese newspapers, and participated in three talk shows on Vietnamese radio. The organization collaborated with the local Vietnamese radio station weather and traffic announcer to mention voting in every morning broadcast, and it also arranged for a voting song, titled "Power of the Ballot," to be played on three different Vietnamese radio programs every day from September 17 through Election Day.

"Power of the Ballot" Translated Text

Let us vote in multitude
To echo the voice of community
Only when we vote
Then needs and concerns will be addressed
We would no longer be ignored

Power of the ballot is immeasurable
One day, our dream will take shape
So don't take democracy lightly

We feel pity for our homeland
Still living in tyranny, destitution
Many have fallen to have privileges to vote
Here we have the rights to contribute
To speak and to voice our will

Let us remind each other
Let all corners turn out to vote
Aunties, uncles and friends
Let us pledge with the ballot in hand.

In the weeks prior to the November 2006 election, OCAPICA conducted a phone-based voter mobilization campaign designed to encourage participation by members of the Asian Pacific Islander American community living in Orange County. Canvassers included 11 Vietnamese Americans, four Chinese Americans (Mandarin speakers), and five Korean Americans, all of whom were fully bilingual. One of the Korean volunteers was a prominent community leader whose voice was often recognized by contacted voters. All of the Vietnamese volunteers were over age 40. Younger volunteers within other Asian Pacific Islander communities were generally assigned to call voters under age 35.

Target communities were registered voters of Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese ancestry. The outreach campaign consisted of Easy Voter Guides and/or phone calls from the group's local phone bank. For each ancestry group, households were divided between those likely to be predominantly English-speaking and those that were not, using the same criteria as that used by APALC. This distinction created six ancestry-by-language combinations. Chinese American registered voters were sent either English or Chinese translation Easy Voter Guides and were called in either English or Mandarin. Korean American registered voters were sent either English or Korean translation Easy Voter Guides and called in English or Korean. Vietnamese American registered voters were sent either English or Vietnamese translation Easy Voter Guides and called in English or Vietnamese.

OCAPICA's callers encouraged individuals to take an interest in the issues surrounding the November election, provided polling locations and times, and attempted to reply to common reasons for not voting. Contact rates for the phone-calling campaign varied by national origin and by language within national origin group. Rates included: 40 percent among Mandarin-speaking Chinese American targets, 20 percent among English-speaking Chinese American targets, 55 percent among Korean-speaking Korean American targets, 38 percent among English-speaking Korean American targets, 41 percent among Vietnamese-speaking Vietnamese American targets, and 30 percent among English-speaking Vietnamese American targets. The phone banks attempted to contact all voters at least three times but evidently had a harder time reaching English-speakers across all the national origin groups.

Estimation of the effects of phone calls and mailing of Easy Voter Guides took into account the fact that households, not individuals, were the unit of random assignment. The average effects of mobilization were gauged among people actually reached by phone. This analysis was conducted by means of an instrumental variables regression. This regression controls for whether the voter received a mailing. Table 15 depicts the intent-to-treat effects. Overall, the effects for the phone bank tended to be positive, while those for the Easy Voter Guide were mixed. As Table 16 shows, the results were highly variable across ethnic and linguistic subgroups, due to the sizable standard errors associated with each subgroup's estimates. Pooling across all groups generated a treatment-on-treated phone contact effect of 2.9 percentage points (SE = 2.5).

Overall, the effects for the phone bank tended to be positive, while those for the Easy Voter Guide were mixed.

Adding controls for voting in the previous four elections increased the estimate to 4.2 percentage points and decreased the standard error to 2.3 percentage points. The effects of mailings were weakly negative and statistically insignificant.

Overall, distribution of the Easy Voter Guides produced disappointing results, while phone calls generated treatment-on-treated results close to or exceeding the 3 percentage-point level that is typical of this type of intervention.

Table 15. Turnout Rates and Contact Rates for OCAPICA Campaign, November 2006 Election

Ethnicity	Language	Phone call contact rate	Control group turnout rate	Phone call treatment group turnout rate	Mailer treatment group turnout rate	Phone call and mailer treatment group turnout rate
Chinese	Mandarin	40.1%	32.7% (1,809)	n/a	35.0% (1,385)	32.9% (489)
Chinese	English	19.8%	26.5% (1,879)	n/a	21.3% (314)	26.5% (324)
Korean	Korean	54.9%	32.3% (1,501)	n/a	35.4% (644)	33.7% (1,145)
Korean	English	38.0%	17.7% (864)	15.2% (33)	14.1% (206)	14.8% (522)
Vietnamese	Vietnamese	40.8%	36.1% (2,560)	n/a	36.4% (1,443)	38.5% (1,445)
Vietnamese	English	30.4%	24.5% (4,927)	29.8% (312)	20.9% (345)	26.3% (438)

Table 16. Treatment-on-Treated Effects for OCAPICA Campaign, November 2006 Election

Ethnicity	Language of contact	N	2SLS phone no covariates	2SLS mail no covariates	2SLS phone with covariates	2SLS mail with covariates
Chinese	Mandarin	3,683	-5.2 (6.4)	2.3 (1.7)	0.2 (6.0)	1.1 (1.6)
Chinese	English	2,517	26.4 (17.3)	-5.2* (2.6)	22.9 (16.4)	-4.1+ (2.5)
Korean	Korean	3,290	-3.1 (4.6)	3.1 (2.3)	1.3 (4.2)	0.7 (2.1)
Korean	English	1,625	0.3 (7.4)	-3.1 (2.7)	2.8 (7.0)	-3.1 (2.6)
Vietnamese	Vietnamese	9,971	5.1 (4.5)	0.2 (1.4)	3.8 (4.2)	0.3 (1.3)
Vietnamese	English	6,022	18.0* (6.7)	-3.8* (1.9)	13.7* (6.1)	-3.1+ (1.7)
All groups pooled		27,108	2.9 (2.5)	-0.6 (0.9)	4.2* (2.3)	-0.8 (0.7)
All groups pooled	Non-English	16,944	-0.1 (2.9)	1.8 (1.1)	2.1 (2.7)	0.6 (0.9)
All groups pooled	English	10,164	11.1* (4.7)	-4.0* (1.3)	9.9* (4.4)	-3.3* (1.2)

Standard errors in parentheses. Estimates obtained by regressing vote on phone contact and mail, using assignment to phone calls and mail as instrumental variables. Covariates include voter history for five previous statewide elections. + = p<.10, * = p<.05.

Pacific Institute for Community Organization

The Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) is a statewide network of 19 faith-based community organizations. The network has been active since 1995, training local community and congregation members in ways to improve the quality of life in low-income and immigrant communities through policy initiatives. Prior to PICO's involvement in this project, the network had conducted numerous grassroots voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns, typically targeted at local ballot initiatives concerning education and affordable housing, such as the affordable housing bond measure on the November 2002 ballot (Proposition 46). In the weeks leading up to the June 2006 elections, PICO launched a diverse round of get-out-the-vote experiments aimed at mobilizing members of PICO-affiliated churches and their surrounding communities, which often include ethnic minorities living in low-income neighborhoods, as illustrated in Table 17. With the exception of live calls made by two groups in Stockton, PICO's interventions in June 2006 tended to be those commonly characterized as "indirect" as they do not involve a person-to-person conversation. Such tactics included postcards, leaflets and robotic calls.

These indirect treatments, however, sometimes included personal touches. For example, one congregation distributed a small number of handwritten letters. Its robotic calls were recorded by a local pastor — a credible and distinguished source. Leaflets and certain postcards provided useful information about polling place location and local candidates. A meta-analysis of the postcard experiments shows that neither the standard postcard nor the postcard with polling place information increased voter turnout.

Leafleting produced one interesting and unexpected result. On the Saturday before Election Day, Long Beach canvassers distributed voter guides that summarized local candidates' positions on four leading issues, as expressed in a PICO-sponsored candidate forum. The result

When canvassers distributed voter guides that summarized local candidates' positions on four leading issues, the result was immense — but could not be achieved again in subsequent attempts.

was immense: a 9.2 percentage-point increase in turnout, which is statistically significant at the .01 level. The unexpected success of this type of leafleting prompted follow-up experiments in November 2006. The PICO affiliate in Long Beach distributed door hangers that encouraged voting to help solve local problems. Another affiliate in Fullerton distributed a one-page flyer in English

and Spanish to targeted voters that presented the issue positions and other information about Fullerton City Council candidates. Unlike in June 2006, neither of the November leafleting experiments raised turnout.

Other PICO efforts in June, though potentially promising for the future, produced results that were either disappointing or ambiguous. Of eight small affiliate experiments using robotic calls recorded by local pastors, only one seemed to lead to higher turnout. A meta-analysis of

these results suggests that these calls do not increase voter participation. This finding is consistent with a long list of experimental studies on the mobilizing effects of robotic phone calls.²⁴ The handwritten notes also produced disappointing results; however, the small size of the treatment group in this study (N = 223) means that this finding is subject to a great deal of statistical uncertainty and that this tactic requires further study. Live phone calls, a mobilization tactic that typically produces positive effects, yielded mixed results in this case. One local organizing ministry did two rounds of calls during the week prior to the election, and a second congregation’s callers conducted three rounds of calls, one of which occurred on Election Day. One of the two sites produced a positive effect, but in each case the small sample size means that the results are subject to a great deal of statistical uncertainty.

Table 17. Turnout Rates for PICO Campaigns, June 2006 Election

	Type of intervention	N (control + treatment)	Intent-to-treat effect (% pts.)	Robust cluster standard error
Fresno	Robotic call from pastor	383	3.09	5.53
LA – site 2	Robotic call from pastor	984	-4.92	3.61
Stockton – site 1	Live phone calls	254	3.00	6.81
Stockton – site 2	Live phone calls	1,040	-0.66	3.64
LA – site 4	Handwritten letter	587	-1.72	4.78
Orange County	Leaflet with polling place location	3,610	1.13	1.42
Long Beach – site 1	Leaflet with local voting guide	647	9.16	3.53
Long Beach – site 2	Postcard with polling place location	251	1.78	5.17
Long Beach – site 3	Postcard with polling place location	1,082	4.22	2.35
Long Beach – site 4	Postcard with polling place location	892	-1.05	2.75
Long Beach – site 2	Postcard	287	2.85	5.38
Long Beach – site 3	Postcard	1,097	0.76	2.03
Long Beach – site 4	Postcard	851	0.86	2.89
LA – site 1	Postcard	1,549	-2.62	3.11
LA – site 2	Postcard	984	0.44	3.67
LA – site 3	Postcard	2,404	-0.42	2.44
LA – site 4	Postcard	852	2.99	4.01
Sacramento – site 1	Postcard	1,291	6.25	3.23
Sacramento – site 2	Postcard	3,018	0.71	2.32

²⁴ Green and Gerber (2004).

During the weeks leading up to the November election, PICO's affiliates launched an array of experiments that tested the effects of randomly-assigned combinations of robotic calls from pastors, live phone calls from local phone banks, leaflets, mailers and door-to-door canvassing. The innovation in the November campaign was door-to-door canvassing, a tactic that PICO's affiliates had not used during the June 2006 campaign. All of the door-to-door canvassing experiments distributed Easy Voter Guides. Another innovation was the use of multiple contacts.

Many of these campaigns were small in size but well-executed, judging from the high contact rates they achieved. The four door-to-door efforts in Sacramento, Colusa, Fullerton and Bakersfield reached 32.7 percent, 66.8 percent, 47.6 percent and 22.4 percent of their targeted individuals, respectively. Contact rates for phone campaigns ranged from a high of 87.4 percent in Colusa to a low of 17 percent for one site in Los Angeles. Overall, PICO affiliates directly contacted 3,369 voters at their homes or by telephone and many thousands more through indirect methods of robotic calls, leaflets and mailers.

In order to gauge the effectiveness of this voter mobilization campaign, households were randomly assigned to treatment or control groups for each affiliate. Treatment groups were then further randomly subdivided as needed to create target groups for different methods or combinations of methods of outreach being planned by each affiliate. For door-to-door efforts and live phone banking, canvassers recorded whether they succeeded in speaking with targeted voters.

The pattern of voter turnout for each experimental group is illustrated in Table 18. The table's notes briefly describe each outreach campaign. Table 19 reports in greater statistical detail the apparent effects of the canvassing and phone calling efforts at each site.

Pooling across sites, door-to-door canvassing proved to be the most effective tactic, increasing turnout by 4.0 percentage points among those whom the canvassers contacted. The standard error of 2.8 percentage points implies that there is an 8 percent probability that one would observe an effect as large as 4 percentage points simply by chance. The other tactics were apparently ineffective. The average treatment-on-treated effect of phone calls was -0.8 percentage points. The standard error of 2.3 percentage points leaves open the possibility that these calls were, in fact, as effective as typical nonpartisan calls (which have an effect of about 3 percentage points). Robotic calls from local pastors had an average intent-to-treat effect of 0.4 percentage points; the fact that the standard error of this result is just 0.8 percentage points means that it is highly unlikely that such calls have an effect of greater than 2 percentage points. This result reinforces the emerging conclusion that robotic calls are ineffective, even when recorded by a trusted source. In contrast to June 2006, neither of the November leafleting experiments raised turnout. The most disappointing result of all concerns the effects of postcards. The cards were shown to have a -1.8 percentage-point effect on turnout. Given the standard error of 0.7 percentage points, this result is statistically significant in the unexpected direction. It appears that the one tactic that worked well was door-to-door canvassing, which increased turnout by 4 percentage points. On average, none of the other four tactics — phone calls, robotic calls, direct mail, or leaflets — appeared to mobilize PICO's target constituency, regardless of whether they were used separately or in combination.

Table 18: Turnout Percentages for PICO Campaigns, November 2006 Election (N in parentheses)

	Control	Door	Live call	Robotic call	Mailer	Leaflet	Live and robotic call	Mail and leaflet	Robotic call and leaflet	Robotic call and mail	Live and mail	Door, live and mail
Stockton	36.3% (190)		39.9% (386)									
Sacramento	35.3% (218)	39.7% (234)										
Colusa (live call)	62.2% (450)		64.6% (1,363)									
Colusa (door)	66.5% (982)	72.9% (258)										
Arbuckle	40.4% (245)		46.9% (520)									
Williams	50.2% (217)		50.6% (500)									
San Bernardino	34.1% (273)											32.2% (547)
Fresno	36.5% (211)			33.2% (253)	30.7% (251)	26.1% (245)		33.8% (225)	35.6% (239)			
Orange County	37.3% (542)	34.2% (863)										
LA – site 1	46.3% (575)		44.0% (672)	47.0% (658)	45.1% (658)					45.4% (670)	47.1% (660)	
LA – site 2	47.1% (550)		48.1% (615)	45.3% (618)	46.4% (621)					48.2% (625)	45.9% (617)	
LA – site 3	36.0% (375)		42.2% (500)	40.6% (508)	38.9% (496)							
LA – site 4	54.0% (565)		49.0% (789)	50.8% (793)	47.9% (685)							
LA – site 5	45.0% (686)		38.5% (919)	46.3% (915)	38.9% (913)							
LA – site 6	51.8% (357)		48.6% (650)	45.9% (654)			49.4% (695)					
LA – site 7	49.9% (515)			52.8% (956)	46.2% (964)					49.7% (969)		
Visalia	38.6% (477)				31.0% (1,185)							
Long Beach – site 1	31.7% (463)					31.8% (1,096)						
Long Beach – site 2	45.6% (450)					45.1% (933)						
Bakersfield	44.1% (719)	42.8% (474)										

Stockton: Phone banking conducted by a local church-based group.

Sacramento: Door-to-door canvassing conducted by a local church-based group. Eight volunteers and four staff knocked on doors of voters who participated in four or fewer of the past six elections, passing out Easy Voter Guides and reminding people to vote. Guides and notes were left for people not at home. Almost all of the volunteers who participated in the door-to-door outreach were bilingual in Spanish or Hmong, although most of the people in the neighborhood they targeted (which was near one of their member churches that has a Spanish-speaking congregation) spoke English. Four of the eight volunteers were 18 years old or under.

Colusa/Arbuckle/Williams: Door-to-door canvassing and phone banking conducted by a local church-based group. Door-to-door in Colusa city only. These are three small towns north of Sacramento, all in Colusa County. Many of the volunteers were recent graduates of the group's citizenship classes, primarily Spanish speakers reaching out to Spanish speakers. Easy Voter Guides were distributed in English and Spanish. Door-to-door canvassing was conducted by three volunteers. Phone banking was conducted by seven volunteers in Colusa, six volunteers in Arbuckle, and six volunteers in Williams. The volunteers overcame fears of public speaking and language barriers in order to encourage others to vote.

San Bernardino: Combination door-to-door, live phone banking and mailers by a local church-based group. Door-to-door canvassers distributed Easy Voter Guides. Mailers included a brief recap of a voter forum held in conjunction with the League of Women Voters as well as a reminder to vote.

Fresno: Mailers, leaflets and robotic calls. Postcard content emphasized "sacred duty" to vote and that responsible citizenship is a virtue in the Catholic tradition. The robotic call, made by the local pastor, described voting as a responsibility and the way to help build a just society.

Orange County/Fullerton: Door-to-door canvassing conducted by a local church-based group. Distributed Easy Voter Guides as well as a homemade nonpartisan guide for city council candidates. Materials were left at households where people were not at home. Some canvassers experienced language barriers in trying to communicate with voters.

Los Angeles: Phone banking, robotic calls, and postcards from various Catholic churches in a local church-based group. Robotic calls were recorded by pastors; most were bilingual. Phone banking conducted mainly by youth due to need for bilingual volunteers. Postcard emphasized Catholic duty to be a responsible citizen; phone calls characterized voting as a duty of citizens.

Visalia: Postcard sent by a local church-based group. Graphic read "Faithful Citizenship" and body content mentioned concern for health and safety of neighborhood as reason to vote. The postcard also included polling place information.

Long Beach: Leafleting conducted by a local church-based group. Door hangers reminded voters to participate and mentioned issues of youth violence, affordable housing, air quality and health care. Site two's leaflets featured images of Jesus and Mary.

Bakersfield: Door-to-door canvassing conducted by a local church-based group. Canvassers delivered Easy Voter Guides and also conducted short interviews to determine priority issues among residents. Voters not at home were left a hand-written note followed up by a handwritten note.

Table 19. Treatment-on-Treated Effects for PICO Door-to-Door Canvassing and Live Phone Banking Campaigns, November 2006 Election

	Door-to-door canvassing	Live phone calls	Door-to-door, live call and mailer
Stockton		9.7 (12.9) 8.6 (9.9)	
Sacramento	13.4 (15.4) 19.8 (13.6)		
Colusa	9.6 (5.3) 7.6 (4.0)	0.6 (3.6) -0.8 (3.0)	
Arbuckle		13.9 (9.9) 15.2 (9.3)	
Williams		1.0 (12.7) -1.0 (11.8)	
San Bernardino			-7.2 (16.5) -2.2 (10.8)
Orange County	-6.5 (6.6) -5.4 (5.0)		
LA – site 1		-2.5 (12.1) 2.2 (10.7)	
LA – site 2		-0.9 (10.7) -3.8 (9.4)	
LA – site 3		29.5 (17.9) 19.4 (16.1)	
LA – site 4		-29.0 (17.8) -27.6 (16.5)	
LA – site 5		-28.3 (12.7) -24.3 (10.9)	
LA – site 6		-11.5 (13.0) -7.8 (11.9)	
Bakersfield	-5.6 (15.4) 17.2 (10.6)		

Entries in parentheses are robust cluster standard errors. The top entry in each cell reports the results without controls for past voter turnout; the lower entry reports the results after controlling for turnout in the previous four elections. All door-to-door canvassing used Easy Voter Guides. The experiment in Orange County also used a localized voter guide to the Fullerton City Council election. Some targets for LA sites one and two also received mailers. Some targets for LA site five also received robotic calls.

Southwest Voter Registration Education Project

Perhaps the most striking experimental findings to emerge from the 2006 California Votes Initiative studies come from the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP), a group that has long mobilized Latino voters in Los Angeles County. Voters in SVREP's pool included Latino-surname voters who had registered after August 1, 2004, or had not voted in any primary or general election since 1998. The study was limited geographically to five districts in Los Angeles that are heavily Latino (with average Latino populations of 48 percent). Approximately half of the target voters were age 25 or younger.

The get-out-the-vote campaign consisted of three components: a preliminary mailing, calls from a local phone bank and door-to-door canvassing. Phone banking was the campaign's centerpiece. The mailing, sent approximately three weeks before Election Day, included an inspirational message from the head of SVREP about the salience of the issues on the ballot for Latino voters. Phone canvassing was conducted in the three weeks prior to the election, with up to six attempts made to contact each individual on the treatment list. The average contact rate in treatment precincts was 24 percent. Callers asked residents whether they intended to vote; those who responded affirmatively were contacted a second time the day before the election and reminded to vote.²⁵ As time allowed, some voters were contacted an additional time between the initial and reminder calls.

Callers asked contacted voters whether they intended to vote; those who responded affirmatively were contacted a second time the day before the election and reminded to vote.

Door-to-door canvassing was conducted on November 4 and 5 — the weekend prior to Election Day. Only large precincts (roughly 16 or more) where the phone banking campaign indicated a large number of likely voters were targeted for this aspect of the mobilization; precincts chosen for door-to-door canvassing were also selected based on geographical proximity to SVREP's headquarters. Canvassers discussed with contacted voters the importance of voting, and they provided information about how to contact the local election office if they had questions. They also left a copy of the inspirational message from the leader of SVREP that was included in the mailer. Overall, about 10 percent of precincts in the treatment group were targeted for door-to-door mobilization; the contact rate was approximately 15 percent.

The experimental design consisted of two rounds of random assignment. First, 478 precincts were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. The 432 treatment precincts comprised 29,316 individuals, while the 46 control precincts comprised 3,071 individuals. The treatment precincts were further divided into treatment households comprising 25,000 voters and control households comprising the remaining 4,316. Excluding approximately 4 percent of the

²⁵ This tactic, incidentally, proved highly effective in an experiment involving a PIRG mobilization campaign directed at young voters in 2003 (Green 2004).

sample who moved or dropped off the voter registration lists by the time of voting in 2006, the remaining control group comprised 7,387 people, and the treatment group comprised 24,154 people. Within the treatment group, 23.7 percent were contacted at some point by phone and just 2.8 percent by face-to-face canvassers. Because door-to-door canvassing was such a small part of SVREP’s outreach campaign, including this form of contact in the analysis would have been nearly inconsequential. For simplicity and to isolate the effects of phone calls, attention was focused on the precincts where no canvassing occurred. In the geographic subset (N = 8,390), the treatment group was contacted by phone at a rate of 24 percent and voted at a rate of 36.5 percent, as compared to a voting rate of 34.3 percent in the control group. As shown in Table 20, the treatment-on-treated effect of phone calls is 9.1 percentage points with a robust cluster standard error of 3.2 percentage points. Whether viewed in comparison to the results presented above or in comparison to other recent experimental studies of phone banking, this estimate stands out as possibly the strongest documented effect for live phone calls in a study that included a large number of observations.²⁶

Table 20. Turnout Effects of SVREP Phonebank Campaign, November 2006 (Clustered Standard Errors)

	2SLS model, no covariates	2SLS model, with covariates
Contact	9.3** (3.1)	9.1** (3.2)
N	25,862	25,862

** p<.01, one-tailed. Includes only the subset of precincts where no door-to-door canvassing occurred. Standard errors in parentheses.

Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education

Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) has worked since 1993 to reduce structural barriers to social and economic opportunities for poor and working class communities. For many years, the organization has also strived to increase civic engagement and voter turnout in disadvantaged communities. SCOPE’s voter mobilization campaign for the June 2006 election focused on low propensity voters living in 26 selected precincts in South Los Angeles, where the organization has focused its mobilization efforts over several election cycles. The door-to-door campaign was conducted by two kinds of canvassers, volunteers working on Saturdays and paid street teams working throughout the week. The campaign started in mid May, about four weeks before Election Day, but made the bulk of its contacts during the last four days of the campaign. During the weekend before Election Day, SCOPE also attempted to speak again with voters it had contacted earlier.

Canvassers who walk precincts in which they live are substantially more effective than other canvassers.

²⁶ This figure is inflated somewhat by the effects of mailings, but judging from other mailing experiments, this bias is likely to be relatively small.

In all, this face-to-face canvassing effort reached 1,943 targeted voters, for an overall contact rate of 34.6 percent. Individuals assigned to the treatment group were contacted at rates ranging from 7.3 percent to 53.9 percent across precincts. 2SLS was used to estimate the treatment-on-treated effect in each precinct, since precincts’ rates of contact and turnout varied markedly. Across precincts, turnout in the control group samples ranged from 6.3 percent to 30.5 percent. Pooling over precincts, door-to-door contact increased turnout by an estimated 8.0 percentage points with a standard error of 3.0 percentage points, statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level (Table 21).

One interesting, albeit tentative, finding from the June SCOPE experiment was that canvassers who walked precincts in which they live were substantially more effective than other canvassers. This finding fell short of statistical significance but warranted further investigation, as described in the account of the November canvassing effort.

SCOPE’s November campaign also used door-to-door canvassing techniques. The target population was South Los Angeles registered voters who had voted in fewer than three of the previous five elections. In this campaign, “re-contacts” were conducted as a separate experiment. The door-to-door campaign began on October 7 and ran every day each week but Sunday through Election Day. Leaders and canvassers had two training opportunities in September before the program was launched. And each day before the start of canvassing, participants took part in role playing and evaluation.

In all, this face-to-face canvassing effort reached 5,341 targeted voters, for an overall contact rate of 45.3 percent (Table 22). 2SLS was used to estimate the treatment-on-treated effect in each precinct, since precincts’ rates of contact and turnout varied markedly. Pooling over precincts, door-to-door contact increased turnout by an estimated 6.6 percentage points with a standard error of 2.1 percentage points, statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Pooling across precincts, home-turf canvassers increased turnout by 7.0 percentage points, with a standard error of 2.8, while non-home-turf canvassers had a smaller effect (3.7 percentage points, $SE = 2.7$) that is not statistically distinguishable from zero (Table 23). The difference in effectiveness between home-turf canvassers and other canvassers falls just short of statistical significance, warranting further investigation.

Table 21. Contact Rates, Intent-to-Treat Effects and Treatment-on-Treated Effects for SCOPE Campaign, June 2006

	% Contacted	% Voting	Treatment-on-treated effect
Treatment Group (N=5,430)	34.6%	18.3%	8.0** (3.0)
Control Group (N=1,782)		17.3%	

** $p < .01$, one-tailed. Standard error in parentheses. Due to varying contact rates in different precincts, this estimate was obtained by pooling estimated effects precinct by precinct.

Table 22. Contact Rates, Intent-to-Treat Effects and Treatment-on-Treated Effects for SCOPE Campaign, November 2006

	% Contacted	% Voting	Treatment-on-treated effect
Treatment Group (N=11,789)	45.3%	36.7%	6.6** (2.1)
Control Group (N=3,578)		33.7%	

** p<.01, one-tailed. Standard error in parentheses.

Table 23. Turnout Effects of SCOPE Campaign, November 2006 (Clustered Standard Errors)

	2SLS model, no covariates		2SLS model, with covariates	
	Home-turf canvassers	Not home-turf canvassers	Home-turf canvassers	Not home-turf canvassers
Contact	8.5* (3.0)	5.2** (2.9)	7.0* (2.8)	3.7 (2.7)
N	5,545	9,822	5,545	9,822

** p<.01, * p<.05, one-tailed. Standard errors in parentheses.

Conclusions

How best to mobilize voters in communities comprised largely of infrequent voters? The following best practices emerged from the California Votes Initiative experiments to date.

Best Practices

1. Campaigns should ideally use face-to-face canvassing.

The most personal and immediate of voter outreach methods, face-to-face canvassing is recommended whenever possible.

2. Phone bank calling is enhanced by pre-screening and follow-up with those who earlier expressed an intention to vote.

The next most effective option is live phone banks. While Initiative results do not recommend the exclusive use of robotic calls, using these pre-recorded calls to screen out bad numbers maximizes the efficiency of a subsequent live phone bank — this is of particular importance in large-scale outreach efforts. Also, follow-up calls should be made to those who express an intention to vote during the first contact. In contrast to the findings of previous research, the Initiative's results suggest that investment in follow-up calls made to this select subset of likely voters is a wise use of resources that can result in significant increases in turnout.

3. Canvassers should be well-trained and drawn from the local communities of interest.

The effectiveness of using local face-to-face and phone bank canvassers affiliated with local organizations is likely influenced by the rapport and trust they are able to establish with contacted voters. But this cannot be taken for granted; even local canvassers from a trusted organization need to be well trained in order for their contacts with voters to be effective. This is a finding supported not only by Initiative experiments, but by previous published work as well.

4. An information-rich message may be more effective than a basic one.

Various experiments testing different messages have generally found that the content of the message does not matter. But a March 2007 NALEO experiment found that an information-rich phone bank message was more effective than a shorter message. However, this may be because the information-rich message was more interactive, resulting in a deeper conversation with contacted voters beyond the delivery of a memorized script. The effect then may signify evidence of the importance of a quality contact, rather than the importance of the content of the delivered message, confirming what is known from previous research. Other Initiative experiments, and other published experiments, have failed to find any message effects.

5. Going to the field too early can decrease the effectiveness of a campaign.

Timing matters to both door-to-door canvassing and phone bank canvassing. Initiative findings recommend that canvassing not begin before four weeks out from Election Day. Although an organization's earlier efforts may help build its reputation in the community, voters are unlikely to recall or be influenced by get-out-the-vote messages made several months before the polls open.

In keeping with prior experimental findings, the evaluation of the Initiative outreach conducted before the June and November 2006 elections found that direct personal appeals tend to work best. The impact of the various outreach campaigns is illustrated in Table 24.

Table 24. Pooled Treatment Effects, California Votes Initiative (percent voting)

		Contact rate	Pooled actual treatment effects*
APALC	Phone bank	See Tables 2 (page 12) and 4 (page 15)	June: 2.5% pts. (1.5) Nov: 3.7% pts. (1.4) Nov: youth (age 18-24) 13.4% pts. (5.0)
CCA EJ	Riverside City	June: 24.5% Nov: 9.3%	June: 33.6% pts. (11.7) Nov: 6.9% pts. (4.1) (both counties)
	San Bernardino County	Nov: 17.5%	
CARECEN	Phone bank	June: 30.7%	3.3% pts. (4.7)
	Door-to-door	June: 43.9% Nov: 52.8%	June: 0.9% pts. (2.7) Nov: 3.4% pts. (2.9) Nov: previous voters 15.7% pts. (5.6)
NALEO	Phone bank	Fresno County – June: 9.2%, Nov: 41.4% Orange County – June: 9.6%, Nov: 29.4% LA County – June: 12.4%, Nov: 25.9% Riverside County – June: 10.6%, Nov: 21.0% San Bernardino County – June: 9.9%, Nov: 19.9%	June: 2.1% pts. (2.4) (all five counties) Nov: 1.1% pts. (0.7) Nov: youth (age 18-24) 4.4% pts. (3.0)
	City of LA/March 2007	Basic message: 41.0% Info-rich message: 45.3%	
OCAPICA	Phone bank	See Table 15 (page 28)	Nov: 4.2% pts. (2.3) Nov: English calls 9.9% pts. (4.4)
PICO	Door-to-door	Sacramento – 32.7% (Nov) Colusa – 66.8% (Nov) Fullerton – 47.6% (Nov) Bakersfield – 22.4% (Nov)	Nov: 4.0% pts. (2.8)
SVREP	Phone bank	24% (Nov)	9.1% pts. (3.2)
SCOPE	Phone bank	June: 34.6% Nov: 45.3%	June: 8.0% pts. (3.0) Nov: 6.6% pts. (2.1)

*Actual treatment effects control statistically for the contact rate and voter history. Standard errors in parentheses.

Outcomes by Approach

Door-to-door Canvassing

Door-to-door efforts yielded a high effect of 33.6 percentage points (as well as other strong but common effects including 6.9 to 8 percentage points) in turnout among voters contacted within an organization’s home turf. Some door-to-door efforts either resulted in a very small impact of 1 to 4 percentage points or failed to have a statistically significant effect on voter participation. Closer examination of these experiments suggests that organizations that have an established relationship with the community achieve stronger results than do organizations without these relationships. Similarly, organizations that deploy canvassers in precincts close to their home neighborhoods usually achieve strong results as well.

Past studies have shown that quality is also important. High-quality canvassers are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and conversational in their interactions with contacted voters. Less-qualified canvassers may deliver messages in a way that sounds rehearsed, and they may be unable to have a true conversation with the voter about the election. Although this aspect of a successful campaign requires further research and was not specifically studied during this first phase of the California Votes Initiative, organizations that spent more time training their volunteers were generally more successful than those who spent little time doing so.

Another important factor is timing. One organization that had its canvassers walk precincts more than four weeks before the June election failed to have an impact on turnout. Although it is possible that the failure of this group to increase participation among its targeted voters was due to other issues with the campaign, this is unlikely given that this finding mirrors that of prior experiments with other populations. Generally, voters are not focused enough on the election this far out before Election Day for early contact to have an impact. When the same organization conducted a similar campaign during several weeks immediately prior to the November election, it had a significant impact on voters who had participated in at least one prior election.

Finally, we found that follow-up direct mail or postcards (including pledge cards signed by contacted voters) are not reliable ways to increase the effectiveness of a door-to-door effort. Several Initiative experiments split their treatment groups of voters into subgroups, some of which received these types of follow-up indirect contacts. In a few isolated instances, these subgroups had statistically significant boosts in turnout. However, in the majority of cases, there was no measurable effect.

Live Phone Banking

For the live phone banking effort using follow-ups with “yes” voters, the effect was 9.1 percentage points in turnout. Several experiments realized stronger effects when targeting young voters or individuals who had voted in at least one prior election.

Stronger phone bank results were achieved where the organization made follow-up calls to self-identified likely voters. Some preliminary evidence suggests that an information-rich message may be more effective than a shorter, simpler message. Initiative experiments also indicated that large-scale phone banking efforts can be made more efficient by using robotic calls to screen initial lists of telephone numbers, although robotic calls themselves do not increase turnout.

Indirect Methods

By comparison, indirect methods proved to be of little value. Robotic calls, even when recorded by a person whom voters considered to be a trusted source, such as a local pastor, were not effective. Despite one experiment that showed some success with follow-up postcards that included personalized polling place information, this tactic was not found to be a consistently reliable method of increasing turnout. Similarly, direct mail and leaflets or door hangers were generally not effective, even when using “homegrown” local voter guides or handwritten letters.

Further Study

Building upon findings of the 2006 experiments, the California Votes Initiative evaluation team will join outreach organizations in designing experiments to discern further the effectiveness of various outreach strategies in encouraging greater voter participation in low-income and ethnic communities. Outstanding questions will be explored in the Initiative experiments planned for February, June and November 2008.

Currently, it appears that mobilizing voters in low-propensity communities requires some form of live conversation, whether in person or on the phone. The features required to make this conversation successful merit further exploration. Although the evaluation team suspects that the quality and focus of the conversation determines the magnitude of its effects, and that the relationship of the canvassers to the community may matter, experimental researchers have only begun to conceptualize and measure the dimensions of quality. Rarely have aspects of quality been randomly manipulated within the context of a single outreach campaign.²⁷

The next steps in this line of research are, first, to observe more closely the mobilization process in each group in order to develop testable propositions about best practices and, second, to craft a new line of experimental studies that establish which particular aspects of campaigns are most essential to success.

In 2008, the Initiative evaluation team plans to use information documented in this report to study whether an individual mobilized in one election is then more likely to participate in subsequent elections — even if not contacted — as well as how many contacts or cycles it takes to turn a low-propensity voter into a habitual voter.

The team hopes to explore additional message effects, including the difference between the effectiveness of messages focused solely on get-out-the-vote, messages that engage the voter through a survey on important problems, and messages that address a particular proposition or race on the ballot (while remaining neutral).

Given the significant costs of direct contact efforts, the team will look for ways to make indirect methods more effective, possibly through the use of social networks, by adding personalized touches to those outreach efforts, or by using multiple tactics in combination.

Topics Meriting Additional Analysis

- Effectiveness of second-round contacts with people who have expressed earlier a commitment to vote
- Impact of using local volunteers
- Effectiveness of outreach strategies relative to voter age and language utilized in the communication
- Differences in using information-rich versus basic outreach messages
- Differences associated with qualitative campaign aspects, e.g., canvasser training

²⁷ Nickerson (2007).

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