



MOBILIZING THE LATINO YOUTH VOTE

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CIRCLE WORKING PAPER 10

AUGUST 2003, UPDATED JANUARY 2004



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

ABSTRACT

Less than a third of Latinos vote in Presidential elections, while less than one fourth participate in Congressional elections. Turnout among young Latinos (age 18-25) is even lower. This paper describes the results of a field experiment aimed at increasing turnout among young Latinos in Fresno, California conducted in the fall of 2002. Canvassers went door-to-door during the final two weekends before Election Day to urge registered young people to go to the polls. Young people of all races/ethnicities were targeted. In addition to testing the effectiveness of personal contact and how this varies among registered voters of various races/ethnicities, the project also included two imbedded experiments. First, the race/ethnicity of the canvassers was randomly assigned, to test whether Latinos and non-Latinos are equally effective at getting Latinos and non-Latinos to the polls. Second, the message delivered to contacted registered voters was randomly assigned, to test whether young Latinos are more receptive to a message which stresses group solidarity or one that emphasizes civic duty. The experiment demonstrates that Latino canvassers are better than non-Latinos at contacting young Latino voters, and that young Latinos are more receptive than are non-Latinos to door-to-door mobilization efforts.

I. THE LATINO TURNOUT PROBLEM

About 50% of eligible Americans participate in presidential elections, 36% in midterm congressional elections. Latino turnout is even lower. Less than a third of Latinos vote in presidential elections, while less than one fourth participate in congressional elections. Only 45.1% of Latino citizens voted in 2000, and only 32.8% voted in 1998 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002a). In California in 2002, Latinos comprised 28% of the voting-age population but only 16% of likely voters. Much of this is explained by the relatively low socioeconomic status (SES) and high rate of noncitizenship (about 40%) of the Latino population (see, e.g., DeSipio, 1996; Hero and Campbell, 1996). Another strong explanatory factor is the relative youth of the Latino population; the median age of Latinos is only 25.8, compared to 38.6 for non-Latino whites (Anglos).

Recent years have seen a surge of interest in the power of mobilization efforts to increase Latino political participation (Verba, Scholzman and Brady, 1995; Garcia, 1997; Wrinkle et al., 1996; Diaz, 1996; DeSipio, de la Garza and Setzler, 1999; de la Garza and Lu, 1999; Hritzuk and Park, 2000; Shaw, de la Garza and Lee, 2000; de la Garza and Abrajano, 2002). These survey-based studies suggest that mobilization can increase Latino turnout, but the results are not entirely consistent. Despite this scholarly interest, Latinos have largely been excluded from get-out-the-vote efforts conducted by the major political parties (Verba, Scholzman and Brady, 1995; Hero et al., 2000). In addition, Latinos who are targeted are generally contacted by non-Latino activists, despite evidence that Latinos are most effectively mobilized by other Latinos (Shaw, de la Garza and Lee, 2000; Michelson 2003).

Using a fully randomized field experiment, this study tests the hypothesis that Latinos can be mobilized through personal mobilization tactics. In addition, this study focuses on mobilizing young Latino voters, aged 18-25. Lopez (2003) finds that turnout among Latino youth lags significantly behind that of Anglo and African-American youth,

and that in a nationwide survey, Latino youth were least likely (compared to Anglo and African-American youth) to view voting as an important activity. Unlike earlier field experiments in Latino voter mobilization, this study uses both Latino and non-Latino canvassers to test whether the messenger matters. Finally, multiple mobilization messages are tested, to explore whether Latino youth are best mobilized by outreach efforts which emphasize civic duty or community solidarity.

II. THE CURRENT STUDY

The current experiment consisted of a door-to-door nonpartisan get-out-the-vote drive for the November 5, 2002 general (gubernatorial) election in Fresno, California. A list of registered voters was obtained from the county elections office about three weeks prior to the election. This file included over 340,000 individuals, over 60,000 of whom were voters aged 18-25. The file was culled to include only precincts in which there were a large proportion of young registered Latinos, and precincts of decreasing proportions of Latinos were added to the experiment list until a total of 6,000 names were obtained, half of which were Latino. Latino surnames were determined using the 1990 U.S. Census list of Spanish surnames, which is estimated to be 94% accurate (see Word and Perkins, 1996). This list was then randomly divided into two equally sized treatment and control groups.

Eighty canvassers of various races and ethnicities were hired to conduct the canvassing effort, including 50 Latinos and 30 non-Latinos (two African-Americans, 13 Anglos, and 15 Asians). Recruitment was conducted through campus flyers and via email messages to student canvassers who had worked on a previous experiment. Many experienced canvassers returned to work on the Fresno experiment and assisted in recruiting additional canvassers for the new project. A training session was held on the Friday before canvassing began, on October 25. At the training session, canvassers were instructed how to approach registered voters, what they could and could not say about the election and the various candidates and propositions on the ballot, and how to fill out their

control sheets. Canvassers were instructed to decline to discuss individual candidates or propositions, and to limit their conversations with registered voters to their assigned scripts and to the mechanics of voting, such as when and where they could vote. Canvassers also were instructed to decline to state their own political preferences, including their own preferred political parties or candidates. Canvassers rehearsed their scripts and reviewed what to do in frequently encountered situations.

Canvassers were divided into 40 matched pairs (either two Latinos or two non-Latinos), and assigned a list of either Latino or non-Latino registered voters. Canvassers worked in pairs to ensure their safety, and also to protect the integrity of the experiment. In other words, working in pairs meant that canvassers were more likely to follow instructions and to accurately report their activities. During the two weekends before Election Day, October 26-27 and November 2-3, canvassers went door-to-door to mobilize individuals on their lists. Each individual on the treatment list was randomly assigned to receive a message that emphasized either civic duty or community solidarity.

Each contact began with the canvassers introducing themselves as Fresno State students. One of the canvassers then delivered a mobilization message that encouraged voting in the upcoming election. The registered voter was asked to commit to going to the polls on Election Day. Canvassers also distributed to each contacted voter a one page flyer which reinforced the content of the treatment message and listed the address of the local polling place and the times it would be open for voting.

Registered voters chosen to receive the civic duty message (Treatment Group A) were reminded that voting is an important and patriotic civic duty, that as an American citizen they should fulfill that civic duty, and that voter participation is a crucial part of American democracy. Latino voters (identified using surname analysis) chosen for the community solidarity message (Treatment Group B) received a message that emphasized voting as a tool for ethnic group solidarity. Potential voters were reminded that politicians are more likely to pay attention to groups that vote, that voting sends a message to politicians

that Latinos are politically active and aware, and that participation likely benefits the Latino community. If a potential voter assigned to treatment group B was listed as non-Latino (based on surname analysis), the message was altered slightly to remove the references to ethnicity. The scripts used by the canvassers can be found in the appendix.

III. SOCIAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Latino voter participation in the 2002 elections in California was expected to be very low. A Field Poll released Monday, Nov. 4, estimated that overall turnout would be only 39.2% of those eligible, a figure much lower than that of most midterm elections.¹ Several factors were expected to depress Latino turnout in particular. Most Latinos in California are strongly Democratic, and their likely choice for governor would normally have been Davis. However, in the weeks leading up to the election, Davis made several decisions which disappointed Latinos. In early October, Davis vetoed a bill which would have allowed some undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses. This led the Latino Legislative Caucus to announce that they would not endorse his bid for re-election. A second major factor expected to depress the Latino vote was that outreach efforts to the Latino community were negligible. In 2000, Latinos in Fresno were bombarded with millions of dollars in targeted advertising, including direct mail and Spanish-language television spots (see Michelson, 2004). In 2002, by comparison, the wooing of the Latino vote was almost nonexistent.

On the other hand, some factors present were expected to increase Latino turnout. It is well known that the presence of a viable Latino candidate increases Latino turnout (Arteaga, 2000; Kaufmann, 2003). The 2002 election included several viable Latino candidates running for re-election, including Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante, as well as some Latinos running in close races for open seats, such as Nicole Parra (for State Assembly) and Henry T. Perea (for City Council). In addition, the Farm

¹ Voter participation in Fresno County in 2002 proved to be among the lowest in the state; at 33.6%, Fresno County ranked 49th of 56 counties, well below the state average of 36.1%. Counties with lower turnout rates tended to be those with large Latino populations, including Los Angeles, Imperial, and Riverside Counties (California Secretary of State website, www.ss.ca.gov/elections/sov/2002_general/reg.pdf, accessed 12/15/03).

Worker Vote Project worked during the final months of the election season to mobilize Latino voters, although their campaign focused only partly on the city of Fresno and was more active in other parts of Central California.

The precincts chosen for canvassing for the experiment overlap with the 29th and 31st State Assembly districts, the 14th and 16th State Senate districts, and the 19th and 20th U.S. Congressional districts. In the two Congressional districts, Republican George Radanovich (19th) and Democrat Cal Dooley (20th) were expected to win reelection easily. According to Dooley's campaign manager, Tracy Sturman, the campaign nevertheless did conduct some voter mobilization efforts, including some door-to-door canvassing. Other major campaigns restricted their efforts to television advertisements and direct mail.

Local city council and school board races also overlapped the precincts in which the experiment was conducted. Door-to-door canvassing was conducted by Henry T. Perea and Richard Caglia in their race for a seat on the Fresno City Council, as well as by School Board candidate Luisa Medina, who successfully won a three way race that included incumbent Bill Riddlesprigger. In general, however, candidates for local offices used more impersonal methods of campaign advertising, including mailings, sign postings, and telephone calls.²

Personal conversations with candidates and campaign managers from the various electoral areas surrounding the experimental precincts indicated that there was little overlap in canvassing efforts. In other words, while some local candidates and campaigns did engage in door-to-door canvassing, particularly for local school board and city council races, these efforts did not focus on mobilizing young people or young Latinos.

After the election, a list of actual voters was purchased from the county elections office. Each of the 6,000 individuals on the treatment and control lists was searched for on the list of voters. Not all of the names could be found. Of the 6,000 on the original list, 89 could not be found on the post-

election list of voters. The most likely explanation for this is that these 89 individuals had either changed their names or moved out of the county between mid-October 2002 and January 2003. In addition, it was determined that 127 of the names were duplicates – individuals who were registered either twice (N=121) or three times (N=6). This means that the final dataset was reduced to 5,740 individuals, only 5,651 for whom turnout information for the 2002 election was available. Of the 5,740 in the final list, 2,882 (50.2%) were Latinos and 2,858 (49.8%) were non-Latinos. The control group of 2,835 included 1,392 Latinos (49.1%) and 1,443 (50.9%) non-Latinos. The treatment group of 2,905 included 1,490 Latinos (51.3%) and 1,415 (48.7%) non-Latinos.

Because Fresno is a very diverse city (39.9% Latino, 8.4% African-American, 11.2% Asian), the non-Latino treatment and control groups include substantial numbers of African-Americans and Asians (in addition to Anglos). However, as there is no standard method for determining race based on surnames, all non-Latinos are generally treated as one group. This means that there may be more going on in the canvasser-voter mixes than can be reliably determined here. For example, when both the contacted voter and the canvasser were African-American, there may have been some unrecorded boost to the mobilization effort.

IV. RESULTS

A. Contact Rates

Canvassers visited each address multiple times, as time allowed, to try to contact voters who were not home. Due to the mobile nature of young individuals (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass, 1987; Highton and Wolfinger, 2001), many had moved. As stated by Nickerson, "young people literally represent moving targets" (2002: 10).³ Among the 2,905 registered voters on the treatment lists, at least 1,220 (42.0%) had moved. This does not include those who may have moved from addresses where no contact was made. Overall, the canvassing effort was very successful:

³ See Nickerson (2002) for an extensive discussion of youth mobility.

⁴ These statistics do not include 95 individuals from the original treatment list of 3000 who were later determined to be listed either twice or three times as registered voters, thus inflating the likelihood of their being chosen for treatment. 32 voters with duplicate listings were also omitted from the control group statistics presented below.

² Information about voter mobilization efforts conducted by candidates and their staffs was collected using emails and telephone calls to campaign managers for all of the relevant campaigns. The first email was sent two weeks subsequent to the election; follow-up emails and telephone calls were made in December and January.

for young people targeted by Nickerson (2002). In his six-city study, contact rates ranged from 18.3% to 37.8%. Contacts are defined as the canvassers actually speaking with the targeted voter personally, and delivering the intended mobilization message. Voters who were reached but did not allow the canvassers to deliver their intended message are not included as contacts, and messages were not left with third parties (such as siblings, spouses or parents).

TABLE 1. CONTACT RATES

	Non-Latino Canvassers	Latino Canvassers		
		All	Experienced	New
All Voters	40.6	47.6	46.7	49.0
(N)	(522/1286)	(770/1619)	(462/990)	(308/629)
Latino voters	43.0	56.1	51.3	60.6
(N)	(297/691)	(448/799)	(200/390)	(248/409)
Non-Latino voters	37.8	39.3	43.7	27.3
(N)	(225/595)	(322/820)	(262/600)	(60/220)

As shown in Table 1, contact rates were higher for Latino canvassers than for non-Latino canvassers, particularly when the voters were also Latino. There are several hypotheses for this. One stems from the fact that many of the Latino canvassers had worked on an earlier canvassing experiment, while all of the non-Latino canvassers were new hires. This means that some of the Latino canvassers were more likely to be experienced and therefore more effective. Another possible factor leading to increased contact rates for Latino canvassers is that they were more motivated, because they knew that the object of the study was to examine how to best increase Latino turnout. Latino canvassers may also have had more success in contacting voters because they were more likely to feel comfortable in the Latino neighborhoods in which some of the canvassing was conducted. Finally, it is possible that Latino residents, seeing non-Latinos at the door holding clipboards, may have been less likely to open their doors and allow for contacts to be made, whereas those seeing Latinos at the doors (albeit also holding clipboards) may have been more likely to admit that they were home.⁵

In order to test whether the stronger contact

rates for Latino canvassers were due to experience, contact rates were calculated separately for teams that did or did not include a canvasser who had worked on the earlier experiment. As shown in Table 1, Latino canvassers (both experienced and new) were both more effective at contacting Latino voters than were non-Latino canvassers, but the differences for non-Latino voters are smaller and less consistent. In fact, shared ethnicity is even more important than experience. Experienced Latino canvassers were much more effective at reaching Latino voters than were inexperienced non-Latino canvassers, but inexperienced Latino canvassers were the most effective of all. This suggests that there is something about being a Latino canvasser trying to reach Latino voters which makes such canvassing more effective, regardless of the experience level of the canvasser. However, it is unclear whether this is due to increased motivation or an increased willingness on the part of Latino voters to open their doors, if not a combination of both factors.

Contact rates were also calculated for Asian surname voters, which comprise 6.9% (N=395) of voters in the experiment.⁶ Overall, 36.8% of Asians

⁵ The point about clipboards is not made in jest. In one instance, a small child answered the door and could be heard, as he ran back into the house, yelling (in Spanish), "There's a lady with a clipboard at the door."

⁶ My thanks to Wendy Tam Cho for her help in constructing the Asian surname lists used to identify Asian voters. These include common Cambodian, Chinese, Hmong, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian and Vietnamese surnames, compiled from various sources. Copies of the lists are available from the author on request.

were successfully contacted, but among those targeted by teams of Asian canvassers the contact rate is only 24.3%. This may be due to the fact that most of the Asian canvassers were South Asian, while many of the voters were Southeast Asian. In other words, while most Latino canvassers and voters were of the same national origin (Mexican), the Asian-on-Asian canvasser-to-voter matches were less likely to be “true” matches.

The high overall contact rate means that the intent-to-treat effect is larger than it otherwise would have been. The principal complication of experimental studies of voter mobilization is that only some citizens assigned to the treatment group are actually contacted. Comparing turnout among those actually contacted to those not contacted (both those in the control group and those in the treatment groups who were not contacted) overestimates the effect of canvassing, because registered voters who are easier to reach tend also to be more likely to vote (Gerber and Green, 2000). Correct estimation of the effect of canvassing must isolate the treatment effect from the intent-to-treat effect by dividing the intent-to-treat effect by the observed contact rate. This is equivalent to performing a two-stage least squares regression of vote on actual turnout using randomization as an instrumental variable (see Angrist, Imbens, and Rubin 1996; Gerber and Green 2000). Because the efficiency of this estimator is an increasing function of the contact rate, a strong contact rate is helpful for determining the effectiveness of mobilization efforts.

B. Randomization Check

A logistic regression was performed to confirm that registered voters were distributed randomly to the treatment and control groups. Assigned group (treatment or control) was regressed on a variety of independent variables, including voter ethnicity, age, precinct, and voter history. The results (not shown) find that none of the coefficient estimates are statistically significant, confirming that the groups are random.

C. Intent-to-treat Effects

Intent to treat effects, comparing those assigned to the treatment groups to those in the control group, are shown in Table 2. Because each

pair of canvassers was assigned to a specific precinct, control groups are shown separately for Latino and non-Latino canvassers. This holds constant other variables which might be unique to each precinct, making the treatment vs. control comparisons more accurate. Among Latino voters, turnout increased for those assigned to Latino canvassers by 1.7 percentage points from the control group to those in the treatment group (8.1% vs. 9.8%), and for those assigned to non-Latino canvassers by 2.8 percentage points (5.7% vs. 8.5%). Among non-Latino voters, turnout among those assigned to Latino canvassers increased by 1.4 percentage points from the control group to the treatment group (8.0% vs. 9.4%), and among those assigned to non-Latinos turnout increased by 0.8 percentage points (9.6% vs. 10.4%).

TABLE 2. INTENT-TO-TREAT EFFECTS (PERCENTAGE VOTING)**(A) Full Sample**

	Latino Canvassers		Non-Latino Canvassers	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
Latinos	9.8	8.1	8.5	5.7
(N)	(78/799)	(60/742)	(59/691)	(35/615)
Non-Latinos	9.4	8.0	10.4	9.6
(N)	(77/820)	(62/772)	(62/595)	(61/635)

(B) Individuals who did not vote in 2000 (including those too young to vote in 2000)

	Latino Canvassers		Non-Latino Canvassers	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
Latinos	7.0	6.3	6.0	4.6
(N)	(47/647)	(41/654)	(37/615)	(26/571)
Non-Latinos	7.1	5.5	7.0	7.3
(N)	(52/728)	(37/674)	(35/499)	(40/550)

(C) Individuals who voted in 2000

	Latino Canvassers		Non-Latino Canvassers	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
Latinos	29.0	21.6	34.4	20.9
(N)	(31/107)	(19/88)	(22/64)	(9/43)
Non-Latinos	31.3	25.8	30.7	25.0
(N)	(25/80)	(25/97)	(27/88)	(21/84)

Also shown in Table 2 are turnout rates for those who did and did not vote in 2000 (including those who were not yet old enough). Voting rates in 2002 for those who participated in the 2000 general election are much higher than for those who did not, which reemphasizes the importance of taking voter history into account when examining turnout.

Among non-voters (individuals who did not vote in 2000), turnout among Latino voters targeted by Latino canvassers increases by 0.7 percentage points (6.3% vs. 7.0%) and among those targeted by non-Latino canvassers by 1.4 percentage points (4.6% vs. 6.0%). Among non-Latino voters, turnout for those targeted by Latino canvassers increased by 1.6 percentage points (5.5% vs. 7.1%) and for those targeted by non-Latino canvassers turnout decreased by 0.3 percentage points (7.3% vs. 7.0%). Among those who did vote in 2000, turnout for Latino voters targeted by Latino canvassers increased by 7.4 percentage points (21.6% vs. 29.0%), and for those targeted by non-Latino canvassers turnout increased by 5.5 percentage points (25.8% vs. 31.3%). Among non-Latino voters, turnout for those targeted by Latino canvassers increased by 13.5 percentage

points (20.9% vs. 34.4%), while turnout for those targeted by non-Latino canvassers increased by 5.7 percentage points (25.0% vs. 30.7%).

Intent-to-treat effects for Asian and non-Asian voters (not shown) indicate that non-Asian canvassers were better able to mobilize Asian voters than were Asian canvassers. This may be due to the fact that many of the non-Asian canvassers were experienced, while all of the Asian canvassers were new. Also, any Asian-on-Asian boost to the mobilization effort may have required a closer national-origin group match. As noted above, many of the Asian canvassers were of South Asian descent, while most of the Asian voters were of Southeast Asian descent.

D. Message effects

Exploration of the differential effect of the two mobilization messages is shown in Table 3. For Latino voters, the ethnic solidarity message is more effective. For non-Latino voters, the group solidarity message is more effective when delivered by non-Latinos, but the civic duty message is more effective when delivered by Latino canvassers.

TABLE 3. MESSAGE EFFECTS (PERCENTAGE VOTING)

<u>Voter Ethnicity</u>	<u>Civic Duty Message</u>	<u>Community Solidarity Message</u>	<u>Controls</u>
Latinos	9.2	9.2	6.9
(N)	(71/772)	(66/718)	(96/1392)
Non-Latinos	8.5	11.1	8.9
(N)	(59/693)	(80/722)	(128/1443)
 <u>Canvasser & Voter Ethnicity</u>			
Latinos-on-Latinos	8.0	11.0	
(N)	(32/398)	(45/410)	
Non-Latinos-on-Latinos	8.4	9.0	
(N)	(30/356)	(29/323)	
Latinos-on-non-Latinos	10.3	9.6	
(N)	(41/397)	(37/384)	
Non-Latinos-on-non-Latinos	9.4	11.6	
(N) (27/286)	(35/301)		

These differences are suggestive, hinting that young people may not be as receptive to the civic duty message as they are to a message which stresses community solidarity. However, the differences are not statistically significant.

E. Mobilization Effects

The actual effect of the mobilization effort was tested by comparing members of the two treatment groups to the control group, taking into account the contact rates for each group. This was accomplished using two-stage probit, a method similar to two-stage least squares but more appropriate for a model with a dichotomous dependent variable. The regression models (results are shown in Table 4) assume that both mobilization messages were equally effective. Intent-to-treat is used as an instrumental variable for actual contact. This means that the instrumental variable is correlated with the included independent variables (as being in a treatment group increases the likelihood that one was contacted), but is not systematically related to the regression error, as

treatment group status was determined randomly.

Recent studies (e.g. Michelson, 2003) have used the two-stage conditional maximum likelihood model recommended by Rivers and Vuong (1988) or the instrumental variables probit model recommended by Lee (1981) to analyze data from get-out-the-vote field experiments. However, Gerber and Green (2003) find that such models are inaccurate when used with experimental models in which only a portion of the treatment group actually receives the treatment and the turnout rates are very low, as is the case here. The data is therefore analyzed using the maximum likelihood method and program provided by Gerber and Green, which unfortunately does not allow for covariates. Because voters were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, without attention to prior voter history or other characteristics, the absence of these covariates from the model is not expected to change the results.

TABLE 4. MAXIMUM LIKELIHOOD TWO-STAGE PROBIT REGRESSION RESULTS

	Parameter estimate	Asymptotic std. error
<u>Latino Voters</u>		
Non-Latino canvasser	.198	(.153)
Latino canvasser	.295*	(.133)
<u>Non-Latino Voters</u>		
Non-Latino canvasser	.178	(.170)
Latino canvasser	.048	(.133)

* $p \leq .05$.

As shown in Table 4, the mobilization effort was most effective when Latino voters were contacted by Latino canvassers. Although turnout increased slightly in other configurations (for non-Latino voters and for Latino voters assigned to non-Latino canvassers), these increases fail to reach statistical significance. Turnout for Latinos voters who were targeted by Latino canvassers, however, increased significantly, with the likelihood of participation increasing by almost 30 percent. Given that turnout among Latino youth is so low to begin with, this is quite a substantive effect.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Researchers have long believed that Latinos are most effectively mobilized to vote by Latino activists. Survey-based mobilization experiments suggested that this was the case, as did the Dos Palos experiment (Michelson, 2003), which used only Latino canvassers. This experiment confirms that belief with the first completely randomized field experiment to use both Latinos and non-Latinos to try to mobilize the Latino vote. The findings are dramatic, and substantively large: young Latino voters contacted by door-to-door canvassers are more likely to vote, and those targeted by Latinos are more likely to be contacted.

Latino canvassers were more effective at making contact with targeted Latino voters. It may be that Latino canvassers are more enthusiastic and therefore more effective when targeting co-ethnics, or it may be that Latino voters are more likely, when seeing an unfamiliar face at the door, to open the door and make themselves available to a co-ethnic rather than to a stranger who is Anglo, Asian, or African-American. Or it may be a combination of both effects. Regardless, the benefit of using Latino activists to get out the vote is confirmed by this experiment.

It is important to note that the increased turnout of Latino voters targeted by Latino canvassers is attributable to contact rates, rather than to some sort of rapport effect created when a Latino voter is contacted by a co-ethnic. Latino voters targeted by non-Latino canvassers were less likely to be

successfully contacted, but those who were contacted were just as likely to be mobilized to vote. This means that the boosted effect on turnout of using Latino canvassers may be achieved using non-Latino canvassers if methods are found of increasing their contact rates.

Low Latino voter turnout can have serious policy consequences which disadvantage the Latino community, particularly at the local level (Alford and Lee, 1968; Casel, 1986; Guinier, 1994; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Wattenberg, 1998; Hajnal, Lewis and Louch, 2002). If young Latinos don't vote, then public policy is unlikely to favor their interests or political preferences. As the size of the Latino population grows, but Latino turnout does not, this disparity becomes more notable and more troubling to those interested in political equity.

Latinos are more likely to vote if someone asks them, but candidate- and political party-driven get-out-the-vote efforts generally concentrate on likely voters, which tends to exclude young people and people of color. In addition, most of these mobilization efforts are manned by non-Latinos. These two political realities combine to create an environment in which Latinos are unlikely to go to the polls. They are unlikely to be targeted for mobilization, and those conducting the mobilization effort – non-Latino canvassers – are less likely to successfully make contact with them. Turnout rates for Latinos are therefore likely to remain low unless dramatic changes are made. In order to increase Latino turnout, more Latinos need to have face-to-face contact with a voter mobilization activist. In order to successfully reach those Latino voters, more canvassers should be Latino activists.

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Appendix. Canvasser Scripts

Civic Duty Message (SCRIPT A)

“Hi. My name is _____ and I’m a student at Fresno State. I want to talk to you a few minutes about the upcoming elections on Tuesday, November 5.

- Voting is an important civic duty
- As a citizen, you have a responsibility to vote on Election Day
- Exercising your right to vote helps keep America strong

“Can I count on you to vote this Tuesday?”

Community Solidarity Message (SCRIPT B)

If Latino

“Hi. My name is _____ and I’m a student at Fresno State. I want to talk to you a few minutes about the upcoming elections on Tuesday, November 5.

- Voting gives the Latino community a voice
- Your vote helps your family and neighbors by increasing Latino political power
- Voting tells politicians to pay attention to the Latino community

“Can I count on you to vote this Tuesday?”

If NOT Latino

“Hi. My name is _____ and I’m a student at Fresno State. I want to talk to you a few minutes about the upcoming elections on Tuesday, November 5.

- Voting gives your community a voice
- Your vote helps your family and neighbors by increasing local political power
- Voting tells politicians to pay attention to your community

“Can I count on you to vote this Tuesday?”

CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. Although CIRCLE conducts and funds research, not practice, the projects that we support have practical implications for those who work to increase young people's engagement in politics and civic life. CIRCLE is also a clearinghouse for relevant information and scholarship. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts and is now also funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York. It is based in the University of Maryland's School of Public Affairs.

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