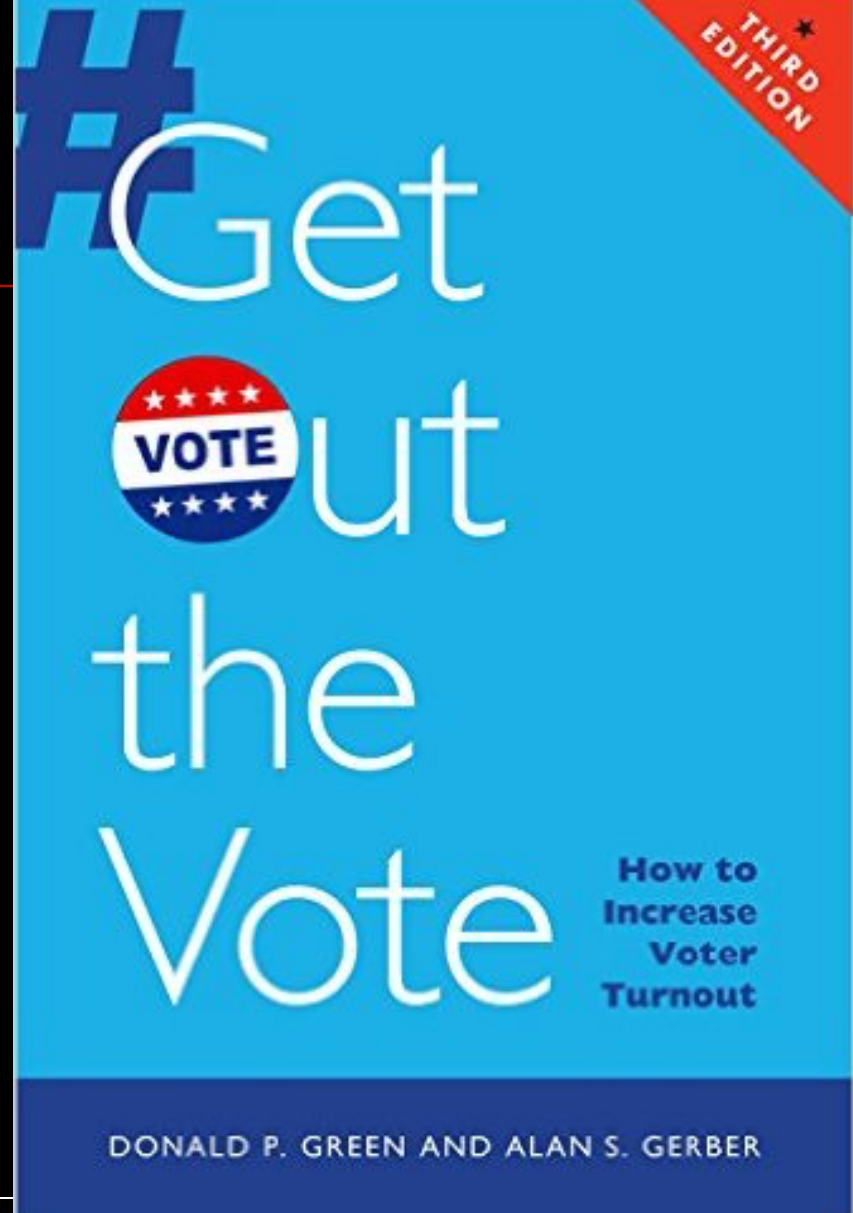

*Seven Things to
Know about
Mobilizing Voters*

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Voter mobilization: What works?

- Using randomized field experiments to find out
- Distinction between the rate at which a group votes and the marginal effect of a GOTV intervention: low propensity voters can be a source of additional votes
- Partisan campaigns care about net additions to vote margin; hence, the importance of targeting

Burgeoning experimental literature (some of which is proprietary)

■ Tactics

- Canvassing
- Phone calls (commercial, volunteer, robotic)
- Mail, email, texting
- Social media, events, mass media
- Registration drives

■ Messaging

- Nonpartisan vs. advocacy, social psychological tactics
- Frequency and synergy

Important to keep context in mind when reading experimental results

- Who are the subjects?
- Under what experimental conditions do subjects encounter the experimental stimulus?
- How much time elapses between the treatment and the behavioral outcome?

(1) The more personal, the more effective

- Personal continuum ranges from door-knocking to robo calls
 - Trade off between quality and quantity
- Canvassing increased turnout in 44 of 51 studies

(2) Quality matters in personal communication

- Tricky to define and measure “quality”: authentic, heartfelt, unscripted, unhurried
- Often comes up in the context of phone calls, given the trade-off between commercial and volunteer calls
- Mann & Klofstad (2015): what sorts of calls were the callers recruited/trained to make?

(3) Social norms matter

- Social pressure tactics: assertion of norms, monitoring, and disclosure
- Tests using the “Neighbors” and “Self” mailers
 - Problems of backlash and negative press
- Evolution of messages that stress gratitude or pride rather than shame

(4) Advocacy appeals tend not to mobilize

- Hypothesis 1: Voters respond to the “heat” of a campaign
- Hypothesis 2: Advocacy appeals mobilize when they underscore what’s at stake
- Remarkably little experimental support for either hypothesis

(5) Little evidence of “synergy”

- Claims that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, due to the “conversation” that is engaging the voter through multiple modes
- Interaction effects?
- Remarkably little experimental support: one of eleven tests

(6) Follow-up phone calls among the “yes” respondents

- Caveat to the no-synergy thesis
- Special role of commitment norms?
- The promising results obtained with volunteer callers have been spotty when replicated with commercial phone banks

(7) Social media's elusive effects

- Splashy *Nature* article on FB “I Voted!” widget
 - Results are rather subtle
- No mobilizing effect in two large-scale tests with Rock The Vote news feeds
- Some evidence of mobilization in the wake of friend-to-friend interactions about politics

Future of GOTV Research

- Supertreatments – motivation and social reinforcement?
- Organization – block captains?
- Optimization of message, mode, timing, and targeting can result in 3x gains in efficiency