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CHAPTER 5

Rethinking Why People Vote

Voting as Dynamic Social Expression

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In political science and economics, voting is traditionally conceived as a quasi-rational decision made by self-interested individuals. In these models citizens are seen as weighing the anticipated trouble they must go through in order to cast their votes, against the likelihood that their vote will improve the outcome of an election times the magnitude of that improvement. Of course, these models are problematic because the likelihood of casting the deciding vote is often hopelessly small. In a typical state or national election, a person faces a higher probability of being struck by a car on the way to his or her polling location than of casting the deciding vote. Clearly, traditional models cannot fully explain why and under what conditions citizens tend to vote.

In this chapter we will develop a novel framework for understanding why people vote. Instead of conceptualizing voting as a self-interested decision that is made at a single moment in time, we conceptualize voting as self-expressive social behavior that is influenced by events occurring before and after the actual moment of casting a vote. This conceptualization has several benefits. First, it helps to explain existing behavioral research that does not parsimoniously fit within the more traditional models of voting. Second, it helps identify several additional, currently underappreciated, factors that may affect people's likelihoods of voting. These derive from behavioral research in fields that have not previously been linked to voting (notably, social and cognitive psychology and behavioral economics).

Our conceptualization is best appreciated when viewed in contrast to traditional accounts of voting behavior. As described above, those conceive of voters as quasi-rational agents who evaluate whether to cast a vote by weighing the expected subjective benefit of voting against the expected subjective cost of voting. Those accounts generally encompass two types of benefits. The first is the impact that one expects her vote to have on the outcome of a given election. This "instrumental" benefit equals the difference in utility that a voter would derive from the preferred candidate versus the alternative candidate winning the election, multiplied by the subjectively assessed likelihood of casting the pivotal vote (Downs, 1957; Tullock, 1968). However, instrumental benefit cannot explain why millions vote in elections that they can reasonably be expected to know are not close. This fact gives rise to a "consumption" benefit from voting (Blais, 2000), which includes the pleasure a person experiences from fulfilling her civic duty to vote (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968) and the avoidance of the potential displeasure of having failed to vote when it might have mattered (Fiorina, 1974). The sources of this consumption benefit from voting have not been systematically analyzed. In some respects, the following account of voting as *dynamic social expression*—could be interpreted as unpacking this consumption benefit. However, not all of what we will describe fits neatly into this classification, and not all potential components of consumption benefit will be incorporated into our account.

We begin with a review of recent field experimental research exploring the impact of different modes of get-out-the-vote (GOTV) contact on turnout. The broad conclusion of this research is that the more personal the mode of contact, the more effective it is. Traditional models of why people vote are mostly silent on whether and why this would be the case. This deficiency helps motivate our conceptualization of voting as a fundamentally social behavior. In addition, we add two behavioral observations to our framework: voting is influenced by actions occurring before and after the moment of voting, and voting is an expression of one's identity.

We cite GOTV research throughout this chapter as empirical support for our account of why people vote. That research enables us to develop a behavioral model grounded in observations of actual behavior, rather than a purely theoretical model grounded in questionable assumptions about behavior. In some cases, extant GOTV research confirms that parts of our model actually do causally affect people's likelihood of voting. In other cases, for which no extant research exists, we propose new GOTV field experiments to test our hypotheses. GOTV research is important not only for theoretical reasons but also for practical reasons: it can generate useful prescriptive insights for (cost-effectively) stimulating turnout in elections. The economic benefits of increased efficiency in GOTV efforts are significant because tens of millions of dollars are spent on such efforts in each federal election cycle. More importantly, increased effectiveness of GOTV efforts can achieve the social objective of increasing the number of citizens who participate in elections.[1]

The chapter is organized as follows. The first section, "Mode of GOTV Contact," reviews recent field experimental research exploring the impact of different modes of GOTV contact. This research helped motivate our conceptualization of voting as a fundamentally social behavior. Each of the three key elements of our framework of why people vote are then discussed. The second section, "Dynamic: Voting Is Affected by Events before and after the Decision," describes research supporting the view that voting behavior can be affected by actions occurring before and after the moment of actually casting a vote. The third section, "Social: Voting Is Influenced by Affiliative and Belonging Needs," discusses the implications of construing voting as a fundamentally social behavior. The fourth section, "Identity: Voting as an Expression of Identity," explores the potential implications of thinking of voting as an expression of one's personal and social identity. In the second through fourth sections, we discuss promising directions for future research to test and extend our conceptualization of why people vote. Finally, in the summary, we conclude with a brief review and discussion of our hopes for future research and theory building on this rich topic. Throughout this chapter we deliberately constrain our discussion to methods of promoting, rather than suppressing, participation, and to GOTV tactics that can be employed without the use of deceptive messages.

Mode of GOTV Contact: More Personal = More Effective

The last decade has witnessed an explosion in experimental field research examining the factors that influence citizens' likelihoods of voting. This began with the seminal 1998 study examining the relative impact of different modes of GOTV contact in an election in New Haven, Connecticut (Gerber and Green, 2000a). These investigators varied both the mode of contact and the content delivered to the citizens once they were contacted. Gerber and Green found no statistically meaningful differences in turnout across the variations in message content that they tested, but they did find very large differences across modes of communication. The vast majority of subsequent research in this area has continued to focus on the impact of different modes of GOTV contact, rather than on GOTV content. Thus, until recently little progress has been made in determining which GOTV message strategies are most effective in turning out voters. In fact, in Green and Gerber's quadrennial literature review summarizing the experimental work on voter mobilization, they underscore that the GOTV content does not seem to matter much (2004, p. 36).[2]

In the days and weeks leading up to an election, campaigns and their agents use a variety of communication modes to encourage citizens to vote. These range from the highly personal, such as face-to-face canvassing, to the highly impersonal, such as a prerecorded message over the phone ("robo-calling"). As mentioned, research in this area has generally found that the more personal the mode of contact, the larger its impact on the contacted citizen (Green and Gerber, 2004, 2008). In fact, Gerber and Green (2000a) suggest that the decline in voter turnout in the latter half of the twentieth century might be explained to a large extent by the use of increasingly impersonal modes of GOTV contact.

Personal, Face-to-Face Contact

Naturally, different forms of GOTV communication vary in their cost per contacted household: reaching a person through paid face-to-face canvassing is generally more expensive and labor-intensive than reaching a person through paid phone banking, and reaching a person through paid phone banking is generally more expensive and labor-intensive than reaching a person through paid direct mail.[3] That said, the mode of GOTV contact that results in the largest increase in turnout per contacted voter is personal, face-to-face contact. Initial experimental research found that a nonpartisan face-to-face canvassing effort had a 5–8 percentage point mobilizing effect in an uncontested midterm election in 1998 (Gerber and Green, 2000a) compared to less than a 1 percentage point mobilizing effect for live phone calls and for mailings. More than three dozen subsequent experiments have overwhelmingly supported the original finding that personal, face-to-face contact is more effective than less personal channels. The relative effectiveness of canvassing has been replicated in municipal elections (Arceneaux, 2005; Green, Gerber, and Nickerson 2003;

Michelson, 2003, 2005; Nickerson 2005) and federal elections (Arceneaux and Nickerson, 2006; Middleton and Green, 2008; Murray and Matland, 2005; Nickerson, Friedrichs, and King, 2006). It has also been demonstrated in several targeted populations, including younger citizens (Nickerson, 2006c; Nickerson, Friedrichs, and King, 2006), Latinos (Michelson, 2003; Murray and Matland, 2005), and African-Americans (Arceneaux, 2005).

Studies have looked at the effectiveness of canvassing efforts during low-salience elections (Arceneaux, 2005) as well as higher-salience, competitive elections (Bennion, 2005). Middleton and Green (2008) examined the canvassing effort of the partisan organization MoveOn.org in an especially high-salience election: battleground states during the 2004 presidential election. Uniquely, MoveOn.org's effort relied on local volunteers who were embedded in neighborhood social networks to mobilize voters. Face-to-face canvassers who are local and familiar can deliver GOTV contacts in especially personal ways compared to typical volunteers who are strangers to their GOTV targets. Impressively, this personalized form of canvassing resulted in a 9 percentage point increase in turnout compared to precincts that were not canvassed and were matched after the election based on identical observable characteristics. This impact is especially large when considering the very high salience of that election, and therefore the high level of baseline turnout.

Personal, Phone Calls

Dozens of experiments have examined the effectiveness of GOTV messages delivered by telephone. Several general findings emerge, all of which are consistent with the broad conclusion that the more personal a GOTV strategy, the more effective. First, the most effective phone calls are conducted in an unhurried, "chatty" manner. This has been found using professional phone banks especially trained to conduct conversational, unhurried calls (Nickerson, 2007) and using volunteers with training and good supervision (Nickerson, 2006d). Second, although even calls delivered in a rushed manner tend to have some effect (estimates vary but these calls appear to boost turnout by about 1 percentage point), they tend to be less effective than unhurried calls. This has been found using professional phone banks (McNulty, 2005; Nickerson, 2007) and volunteers (Nickerson, Friedrichs, and King, 2006). Finally, there is some preliminary evidence that recontacting those who had reported after an initial call that they intended to vote can be among the most effective phone-based GOTV methods (Michelson, McConnell, and Bedolla, 2009). We consider this strategy among the most "personal" of phone techniques because it involves referencing details of a past call. As we will discuss in "Dynamic Voting," this strategy also leverages the behavioral tool of *self-prediction and commitment*.

Impersonal, One-Way Communications

The least personal and the least effective GOTV communication channels entail one-way communications. First, written pieces encouraging people to vote that are mailed directly to households have consistently been shown to produce a small, but positive, increase in turnout (Green and Gerber, 2008). However, as we will see in the section "Identity," a recent study has suggested that more personalized content included within the direct mail pieces (e.g., showing citizens their voting record and that of their neighbors) can render them much more effective (Gerber, Green, and Larimer, 2008). Second, GOTV leaflets delivered to households by canvassers have been found to have small positive effects on participation rates (Gerber and Green, 2000b; Nickerson, Friedrichs, and King, 2006), especially among unaffiliated voters (Gerber and Green, 2000b). Third, calling households to deliver a prerecorded script, what are known as "robocalls," has not been found to have any measurable impact on turnout (Green and Gerber, 2008). Finally, GOTV email messages have no effect whether sent by partisan organizations (Stollwerk, 2006) or nonpartisan organizations (Nickerson, 2006a). All told, these impersonal modes of contact have a small-to-negligible effect in stimulating participation.

Interpreting the Impact of More Personal Communications

Why are more personal modes of GOTV contact more effective in stimulating turnout? Traditional rational models of voter behavior might suggest the following answers. First, personal modes of GOTV contact may have more impact because they affect how likely a citizen would be to notice the information (e.g., it is easier to dismiss a message presented on a leaflet than a message delivered by a person at one's door). Second, citizens may more carefully attend to messages delivered in more personal and interactive ways (e.g., a person may listen more intently to and engage with a message delivered by a person at their door than with a message delivered by mail).

Though enhanced attention no doubt contributes to the heightened impact of more personal communications, we suggest that this heightened impact is enhanced by the social dimension of more personal interactions. For instance, the attention account cannot readily explain why even the most effective telephone calls are less than half as effective as face-to-face canvassing. Apparently, some aspect of face-to-face interactions renders targets more receptive to appeals (Reams and Ray, 1993). Naturally, a deeper social connection is fostered in face-to-face interaction than over a telephone. This social connection likely engages people's empathy and their fundamental desire for acceptance, both of which tend to engage the motivation to behave in socially desirable ways (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Additionally, more personal communication channels facilitate the detection of social similarity between the target and the communicator, which has been shown to increase a target's likelihood of complying with requests (Burger et al., 2004). Finally, more personal GOTV communication may provide an opportunity for targets to make more compelling commitments about their future behavior. Indeed, asking people to publicly commit to a future behavior (e.g., voting) has been shown to increase their likelihood of following through on that behavior (e.g., Sherman, 1980), and such commitments have greater impact when they are made in more public ways (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955).

Mode of GOTV Contact: Summary and Future Directions

Gerber and Green's initial New Haven experiments, and the many experiments that have followed, developed a method for assessing the effectiveness of GOTV communication channels and inductively accumulated insights into what motivates people to vote. Future research should explore other modes of GOTV contact such as television or radio ads encouraging turnout (surprisingly little of which has been done to date) and the common practice of holding signs on highly trafficked streets to remind people of an election. Other modes of GOTV contact include emerging digital technologies, such as online banner ads, social networking tools like Facebook or Twitter, and text messaging. Preliminary research on some of these modes of contact has already begun (TV: Gerber et al., 2006; Green and Vavreck, 2006; radio: Panagopoulos and Green, 2006; Internet: Iyengar, 2002; text messaging: Dale and Strauss, 2007), and a clearer understanding of their effectiveness will be of substantial value in the years to come. Another important factor affecting a citizen's likelihood of voting is his or her eligibility to cast a vote. Eligibility involves individual-level registration status (naturally, today's unregistered voters are less likely to vote in this fall's election), state-level registration rules (for instance, how cumbersome a process is required), and state-level voting qualification requirements. All three of these are rich areas for additional research that could inform GOTV best practices, laws regarding election eligibility, and, most fundamentally, our understanding of why people vote. Finally, it merits mention that voting early, either by mail or in person, is increasingly popular. A better understanding of how to specifically mobilize citizens to vote early, and the impact of early voting on overall turnout, will be extremely valuable. For example, in the 2008 U.S. presidential election, 24.3% of total votes cast were cast before election day. While initial research suggests that encouraging early voting might increase turnout (Mann, 2009), many questions remain unanswered.

As mentioned, the traditional account conceives of voting as a static, self-interested, and quasi-rational decision. Such models cannot readily accommodate the experimental findings that more personal modes of GOTV contact are more effective in mobilizing citizens to vote. To accommodate the impact of communication mode on voter mobilization as well as new findings concerning the impact of specific messages, we propose to modify the traditional account of voting in three respects. First, we note that voting is not merely a static event that occurs at a single point in time but rather a dynamic constellation of behaviors that are extended over time, from the initial formation of an intention to vote to the act of casting a vote to the subsequent knowledge that one has or has not voted. Second, voting is not a purely self-interested act but an inherently social one that may accrue not only instrumental and consumption benefits but also fulfill basic needs of affiliation and belonging to a larger group. Third, voting is not merely a decision, it is also an expression of one's identity. Conceiving of voting as a dynamic social expression broadens the range of factors that can influence voting in three important respects. The following three sections will explore some implications of each of these facets in turn.

Dynamic: Voting Is Affected by Events before and after the Decision

Conceiving of voting not as a static decision but rather as a constellation of behaviors that extend over time suggests that events that occur before and after the moment when a person decides to vote can affect whether or not she actually follows through and casts a vote. In this section we will discuss two areas of behavioral research that are relevant to what occurs before the moment a person decides whether or not to vote. We will then discuss a third area of behavioral research that is relevant to what occurs after the moment a person decides whether or not to vote.

Before Deciding to Vote: Self-Prediction and Commitment

One means to facilitate the performance of a socially desirable behavior is to ask people to predict whether they will perform the behavior in the future. In order to present oneself in a favorable light or because of wishful thinking or both, people are generally biased to answer in the affirmative. Moreover, a number of studies have found that people are more likely to follow through on a behavior after they have predicted that they will do so, a pattern referred to in different literatures as the "self-erasing nature of errors in prediction" (Sherman, 1980), the "self-prophecy effect" (Greenwald et al., 1987), and the "mere measurement effect" (Morwitz, Johnson, and Schmittlein, 1993). In one classic study (Sherman, 1980) participants were contacted over the phone to answer questions about a variety of topics. For half of participants, the survey included the question of whether they believed they would volunteer for three hours at the American Cancer Society if they were ever asked to do so; 48% of these participants said they thought they would. The other half of participants were not asked to make such a prediction. Three days later a different volunteer came to all participants' doors to ask if they would volunteer for the American Cancer Society. Whereas only 4% of participants who had not made a self-prediction agreed to volunteer, a whopping 31% of participants who had previously made a self-prediction agreed to volunteer. Thus, participants were optimistic in predicting their likelihood of agreeing to volunteer, but the act of making a public affirmative prediction made them substantially more likely to volunteer than had they not self-predicted.

Several factors have been found to moderate the effect of self-prediction on behavior. First, the effect is stronger when people turn their self-predictions into commitments, articulating a desire and a will to perform the behavior. Commitment elicitation adds a socially binding element to self-prediction and increases the social costs of failing to fulfill one's self-prediction (Schlenker, Dlugolecki, and Doherty, 1994). Self-commitment has been found to increase compliance even in the absence of explicit accountability (for a review see Cialdini, 2003). This is because commitments activate a basic desire in people to bring behaviors into consistency with their beliefs and their expectations about themselves (Bem, 1972; Festinger, 1964). Second, self-prediction/commitment effects tend to be much stronger when they are made in more public ways. For instance, one study found that a public vote makes three-person juries more likely to deadlock (Kerr and MacCoun, 1985). Third, self-predictions/commitment effects are stronger when they are viewed as authentic and voluntary, and they tend to diminish or disappear to the extent that they appear to be the result of bribery or coercion. For instance, in one classic study, participants asked to tell another student that a boring task had been fun were more likely to rate the task as actually having been interesting if they had been paid a paltry $1 to talk up the study than if they had been paid a coercive $20 to do so (Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959).

Self-prediction/commitment effects have an obvious application to the GOTV context: asking citizens to articulate their intention to vote should make them more likely to actually turnout. In fact, one of the earliest studies examining the effect of self-prediction on behavior examined the domain of turnout: asking a small number of college students if they intended to vote in the 1984 U.S. general election and asking them to verbalize their most important reason for voting increased their likelihood of actually voting by more than 23 percentage points (Greenwald et al., 1987). A confound in the design was that the treatment did not isolate self-prediction, but instead also included a question about why voting is important. Given that these two questions were combined for the study's treatment group, one cannot be certain whether self-prediction, specifically, caused the increased turnout. Greenwald and colleagues ran a follow-up study in which they attempted to replicate the original finding and to isolate the effect of self-prediction (Greenwald et al., 1988). The follow-up experiment found a comparably sized self-prediction effect, but only among participants whose vote history suggested that they were occasional voters, as opposed to those who had consistently voted or failed to vote. They also found that the follow-up question regarding why people think they should vote had an additive effect, but also only among occasional voters.

Some caveats are in order when translating these studies into a contemporary GOTV context. The original studies were conducted over the phone more than two decades ago, when telephone calls were less widely used for voter mobilization. Recent election cycles have seen an increased use of the telephone as a GOTV communication channel, and we suspect that this practice could result in the decreased efficacy of any single call relative to those made in the 1980s. In a more recent study conducted during the 2000 U.S. presidential primary (Smith, Gerber, and Orlich, 2003), 1,160 citizens were contacted and assigned to one of four conditions: control, self-prediction only, reason-to-vote only, combined self-prediction and reason-to-vote. All conditions followed the procedures used by Greenwald and his collaborators. In contrast to the very large treatment effects reported by them, this experiment found very small, statistically insignificant treatment effects for self-prediction or for eliciting a reason to vote. Smith and colleagues also failed to find the effect for occasional voters relative to frequent and infrequent voters suggested by the follow-up study by Greenwald and colleagues (1988).

Smith, Gerber, and Orlich (2003) suggested that the effect sizes found by Greenwald and his colleagues

(1987, 1988) may not replicate in a contemporary GOTV application. However, the Smith study does not altogether disprove that self-prediction can be a useful part of GOTV content—exploratory analysis merging the infrequent and occasional voters together reveals that the self-prediction treatment (including all participants who made a self-prediction) resulted in a (nonsignificant) 3.2 percentage point increase in turnout. As we will discuss later, these two subgroups appear to be the most susceptible to other behavioral interventions as well (see "Following the Herd: Descriptive Social Norms," below). A recent study conducted during the 2008 presidential primary in Pennsylvania (N = 287,228) found that GOTV election encouragement calls that also elicited a self-prediction resulted in a marginally significant 2.0 percentage point increase in turnout relative to an untreated control group (Nickerson and Rogers, 2010).

Future research can examine different modes of eliciting self-prediction and commitment and can also contribute to our knowledge of the underlying mechanisms. For example, pledges or petitions could be incorporated into canvassing efforts or rallies. Emerging social-networking technologies provide new opportunities for citizens to commit to each other that they will turnout in a given election. These tools facilitate making one's commitments public, and they also allow for subsequent accountability following an election (see "Thinking about What Happens after the Election: Social Pressure and Accountability," below). In addition to demonstrating the relevance of this behavioral phenomenon in the domain of voting, research on this topic could also advance the basic behavioral science. For example, it could address questions such as whether commitment and self-prediction become more or less effective when leveraged repeatedly (e.g., over several election cycles). Also it is an open question whether citizens become more accurate, and less optimistically biased, in their self-predictions when asked multiple times over several elections.

After Deciding to Vote: Implementation Intentions

Though public self-predictions and commitments have been found to increase the likelihood that people follow through on what they say they will do, behavioral research has identified an even more effective method for increasing that tendency. Asking people to form a specific if-then plan of action, or implementation intention, reduces the cognitive costs of having to remember to pursue an action that one intends to perform (Gollwitzer, 1999; Gollwitzer and Sheeran, 2006). Research shows that when people articulate the how, when, and where of their plan to implement an intended behavior, they are more likely follow through. This occurs by cognitively linking two critical elements. First, by anticipating a situation that is important for implementing an intention (e.g., locating one's polling place), one is more likely to automatically recognize in the moment that the situation is critical for fulfilling one's intention (e.g., register one's vote). Second, by anticipating how one will behave in a given situation (e.g., on my way to work next Tuesday morning), one is more likely to automatically behave in ways that fulfill one's intention. Implementation intentions link intention-relevant situations with intention-relevant behaviors. These pairs can be thought of as "if situation Y, then behavior X" (Gollwitzer, Bayer, and McCulloch, 2005; Gollwitzer and Sheeran, 2006).

The formation of implementation intentions has been shown to affect dozens of repeated behaviors, such as taking vitamin supplements (Sheeran and Orbell, 1999) or exercising (Lippke and Ziegelmann, 2002; Milne, Orbell, and Sheeran, 2002). An aspect that is more relevant to voting is that implementation intentions have also been found to increase the likelihood of completing one-time behaviors that must be executed within a finite window. In one study, students were told to pick up their reading material at their teaching assistant's office during an eight-hour window on the following day (Dholakia and Bagozzi, 2003, study 1). Half the participants were told that the materials were optional for the course, but they were instructed to formulate detailed implementation intentions about when, where, how, and how long it would take to pick up the reading materials at the TA's office. The other half of participants were told that the readings were very important for the course, but they were not instructed to formulate implementation intentions. Results showed a dramatic effect of the manipulation: a large majority of students in the implementation intentions condition (72%) actually retrieved the reading materials during the eight-hour window the following day, whereas a minority of the students who were merely told that the materials were very important (43%) actually retrieved them during the specified window.

Translating research on implementation intentions into the GOTV context would first entail eliciting from citizens a goal intention to vote. Notice that goal intentions are self-predictions and thus exploit the aforementioned self-prediction effect, if one occurs. Second, translating implementation intentions into the GOTV context would involve prompting citizens to detail how they will follow-through on their goal intention to vote. When will they vote? How will they get to their polling place? Where will they be before going to their polling place? One aspect of facilitating implementation intentions that is especially appealing for GOTV efforts is that it could be incorporated into the GOTV telephone calls preceding an election that are currently in widespread use by campaigns. A recent experiment conducted during the 2008 presidential primary in Pennsylvania ($N = 287{,}228$) found that GOTV phone calls eliciting implementation intentions increased turnout by 4.1 percentage points relative to an untreated control group. This treatment effect was more than twice as great as an election encouragement call that also elicited a self-prediction (Nickerson and Rogers, 2010). More research is needed, but these are promising initial findings.

Thinking about What Happens after the Election: Social Pressure and Accountability

Conceptualizing voting as dynamic behavior rather than a static decision suggests that events that occur after the decision to vote, and even after the act of voting, can affect one's likelihood of voting. In particular, holding a person publicly accountable for whether or not she voted may increase her tendency to do so. Feelings of accountability can be induced by leading people to believe that they could be called upon to justify their behavior to others after making a judgment, decision, or performing an action (see Lerner and Tetlock, 1999). Studies have found that when people are merely made aware that their behavior will be publicly known, they become more likely to behave in ways that are consistent with how they believe others think they should behave (Posner and Rasmusen, 1999; Rind and Benjamin, 1994). Accountability has been successfully leveraged in public campaigns to pressure people to perform socially valued behaviors. For instance, at one point Italy exposed those who failed to vote by posting the names of nonvoters outside of local town halls (Lijphart, 1997: 9 n18).

In a recent field experiment, Gerber, Green, and Larimer (2008) investigated the effectiveness of manipulating accountability in a direct-mail message. A first group of households received a mailing with a message encouraging them to vote. A second group of households received a similar mailing with the additional information that researchers would be studying whether or not the residents of the household voted by examining publicly available records. This condition tested the effect of having one's voting behavior observed by a third party, in this case anonymous researchers. A third group of households received a similar mailing in which the message also included a display of the turnout history of those who reside in the household. This message also reported that a follow-up letter would be sent after the upcoming election to report who in the household voted and who did not. This condition tested the effect of having one's voting behavior known to others in one's household. Finally, a fourth group of households received a similar mailing in which the message included a display of the turnout history of not only those who reside in the household, but also that of their neighbors. This mailing also reported that one's neighbors received a similar mailing, and that the recipient and his or her neighbors would receive a follow-up letter after the election to show who in the neighborhood had voted and who had failed to vote. This condition tested the effect of having one's voting behavior known to others in one's neighborhood, in addition to one's own household. Altogether, this study examined the effect of varying degrees of accountability induced by a single mail piece on citizen's voting behavior.

Results indicated a dramatic impact of the social accountability manipulation on turnout: the condition that induced the greatest level of social accountability (in which one's neighborhood was involved) resulted in an astonishing 6.3 percentage point increase in turnout compared to the mailing that used the standard encouragement to vote message. This study demonstrates that a normally impersonal and ineffective GOTV channel (direct mail) can be used to deliver a highly personalized message that strongly impacts turnout. To put this in context, a standard GOTV mailing has around a 0–2 percentage point impact on turnout (Green and Gerber, 2008).

Social: Voting Is Influenced by Affiliative and Belonging Needs

The second facet of our conceptual model of voting as dynamic social expression is that it is a fundamentally social act. People are strongly motivated to maintain feelings of belonging with others and to affiliate with others (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Failure to meet these needs can have consequences for health (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1984; Lynch, 1979), and well-being (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade, 2005; Myers, 1992). The insight that voting can partly satisfy these social needs can generate a number of GOTV content strategies. We have already mentioned the effectiveness of manipulating social accountability concerning whether or not a person casts a vote. Other GOTV strategies that can increase turnout by serving social needs could involve encouraging people to go to their polling place in groups (i.e., a buddy system), hosting after-voting parties on election day, or encouraging people to talk about voting with their friends, to name a few. In this section we will describe behavioral research that explores some GOTV strategies motivated by the insight that people are concerned for others and that they tend to behave in ways that are consistent with social expectations of appropriate behavior.

Tending to One's Own: Voting for the Sake of Others

Social identity theory posits that people spontaneously classify themselves and others into groups. People derive self-esteem from their membership with groups, even if those groups are arbitrary or ad hoc (Tajfel, 1982). Once people identify with an in-group, they are willing to incur a cost to help other members of their group. For instance, one study looked at people's willingness to give up money for the sake of a member of one's group in a dictator game, a strategic interaction in which one player (the "dictator") is asked to allocate a fixed amount of money between herself and another participant (Forsythe et al., 1994). Typically, studies of the dictator game have found that the average allocation of money from the dictator to anonymous others ranges from 10% to 52%, despite the fact that the rational solution is for the dictator to keep all of the money for himself (Camerer, 2003). Interestingly, Fowler and Kam, 2007 (see also Edlin, Gelman, and Kaplan, 2007; Fowler and Kam, 2006; Jankowski, 2002) found that people allocated more money to an anonymous participant who shared their political party identification than to an anonymous participant who had a different party identification.

Incorporating the welfare of others into why people vote can have several implications for stimulating turnout. In particular, messages that emphasize the importance of the issues at stake in the election for *other* favored citizens (e.g., one's neighbors, friends, or family) may motivate citizens to vote. Although this approach may seem obvious, it has not been used systematically in GOTV messaging and has not yet been studied carefully in controlled field experiments.

Following the Herd: Descriptive Social Norms

The basic need for belonging can influence people to behave in ways that are consistent with how they expect others to behave. This expectation is referred to as a descriptive social norm. Research by Cialdini and colleagues has found that people tend to conform to descriptive social norms, particularly when people feel uncertain about what kind of behavior is appropriate (Cialdini, 2003; Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren, 1990; Reno, Cialdini, and Kallgren 1993). Note that the motivation to conform may be strong even if the descriptive social norm violates how others believe a person *should* behave (i.e., the prevailing injunctive norm). This research suggests that including descriptive social norms in persuasive appeals when actual behavior runs counter to a community's desired behavior can have perverse effects (Cialdini et al., 2006). If a descriptive social norm does not reflect a desired behavior (e.g., "The park is actually full of litter . . ."), then highlighting the descriptive social norm, even if to contrast it with the desired behavior (e.g., ". . . so please do not litter"), can actually impair the effectiveness of the appeal (Cialdini et al., 2006; Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990, experiment 1;). This is because in addition to saying "one should not litter," the message also says "many people do litter." Studies have demonstrated the strong influence of descriptive social norms on behavior in a variety of real-world situations, including littering (Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren, 1990), recycling (Cialdini, 2003), binge drinking on college campuses (Mattern and Neighbors, 2004), stealing (Cialdini et al., 2006), and towel reuse in hotels (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius, 2008).

Political campaigns often use descriptive social norms in GOTV content, but they sometimes do so in detrimental ways. For example, in the final days before the 2004 U.S. presidential election, when candidate John Kerry spoke to a group of women in Milwaukee, he referred to the "roughly 38 million women who didn't vote in 2000." We surmise that this approach is common among political professionals because they are not aware of the power of descriptive social norms. A survey of self-identified experts in GOTV confirms this suspicion: 43% reported believing that a message emphasizing that "turnout among the young is relatively low and/or decreasing" would be more effective in motivating turnout than another emphasizing that "turnout among the young is relatively high and/or increasing" (Rogers, 2005).

Although research from social psychology suggests that emphasizing high turnout will be more motivating than emphasizing low turnout, there are reasons why one might suspect this will not be the case in the context of voting. In particular, the higher the turnout is for a given election, the less likely any one person's vote will affect the outcome (Downs, 1957). Even if a voter were concerned with not only which candidates and issues prevail but also the margin of victory (e.g., to increase the mandate for the favored candidate or issue; see Light, 1999), a vote cast in a low-turnout election will be of greater political importance than a vote cast in a high-turnout election.

Recent research by Gerber and Rogers (2009) has examined the impact of descriptive social norms in two field experiments during statewide gubernatorial elections in New Jersey and California. Each experiment had the same general structure. Participants were called by a professional GOTV phone bank during the three days before the election and strongly encouraged to vote. Half of participants heard a message that used true statistics about turnout in elections over the previous twenty years to emphasize that turnout would be high in the upcoming election. These participants heard statements such as "In the last election [in CA or NJ] X million citizens VOTED." The remaining participants heard a message that used true statistics about turnout in elections over the previous twenty years to emphasize that turnout would be low in the upcoming election. These participants heard statements such as "In the last election [in CA or NJ] X million citizens FAILED TO vote." At the end of all messages, the strength of participants' motivation to vote in the upcoming election was elicited. Both studies showed that the motivation to vote significantly increased when participants heard a message that emphasized high expected turnout as opposed to low expected turnout. For example, in the New Jersey study, 77% of the participants who heard the high-turnout script reported being "absolutely certain" they would vote, compared to 71% of those who heard the low-turnout script. This research also found that moderate and infrequent voters were strongly affected by the turnout information, whereas frequent voters were unaffected by the information.

Identity: Voting as an Expression of Identity

The final facet of our account of voting as dynamic social expression is that citizens can derive value from voting through what the act displays about their identities. People are willing to go to great lengths, and pay great costs, to express that they are a particular kind of person. Consumer research has shown, for example, that brands that people purchase tend to be viewed as an extension of their identities (Belk, 1988; Fournier, 1998). Similarly, social identity research has shown that people are motivated to behave in ways that are consistent with behavior of in-groups with which they most strongly identify and that doing so boosts their self-esteem (Tajfel, 1982). They also strive to be seen by others as they see themselves (Swann and Read, 1981). Moreover, people experience dissonance when their behavior contradicts their beliefs; behaving in ways that are consistent with one's self-views can avoid this aversive state of dissonance (Festinger, 1964). For all of these reasons, the candidate or party for whom one votes and the very act of voting may serve important signaling functions to oneself and to others.

Conceiving of voting as an act of self-expression suggests at least three approaches to increasing voter turnout. First, one can influence how a citizen construes what it means to vote. Casting a vote could be framed as meaning anything from "I care about this election outcome" to "I care about my family's future and setting a good example for them" to "I care about my society and fulfilling my civic duty." GOTV content that emphasizes a meaning that is more highly valued by voters should be more effective at mobilizing voting.

A second way to increase the expressive value of voting is to increase the extent to which a citizen's voting behavior will be observed by other members of one's in-group. Recall the study mentioned in "Dynamic: Voting Is Affected by Events before and after the Decision" that found that voter turnout was increased by the threat to publicize a citizen's voting record after the upcoming election (Gerber, Green, and Larimer, 2008). In that section we highlighted the motivational power of the shame of nonvoting being exposed publicly. We also suspect that part of the motivational power of this intervention derives from the pride of having one's successful voting being publicly recognized. Such pride in voting can also be engendered in several other ways; for example, by providing to those who cast a vote stickers that say "I voted!" or by posting voting records in public places.

The third means of changing the expressive value citizens derive from voting is to influence the extent to which the act of voting expresses a desired identity. We will focus on this approach as we review research on three tactics shown to affect people's behavior by changing how they see themselves, and we will discuss how each might be employed in the GOTV context.

Initiating the "Voter Identity": Foot-in-the-Door

One common tactic that influences behavior by engaging a target's identity is the so-called foot-in-the-door technique. This tactic involves asking a person to accede to a relatively small request in order to increase the likelihood that he or she will agree to a larger request in a related domain in the future. For instance, in one classic study, this technique was used to increase the percentage of people willing to post a large, crudely written sign on their front lawns that read "DRIVE CAREFULLY" (Freedman and Fraser, 1966). Half of participants were asked by a stranger who came to their homes if they would be willing to display the sign. Only 17% agreed. The other half of participants had been approached by a different stranger two weeks earlier and asked if they would place a small, three-inch sign in their window or car that read "Be a safe driver." Nearly all agreed to this first minimal request. However, when these people were asked to post the large, crudely written billboard in their lawns, an astonishing 76% agreed. This surprising effect arose because participants who first agreed to post the three-inch sign came to see themselves over the course of the two intervening weeks as "the kind of people who care about safe driving." The increased willingness to acquiesce to the subsequent bigger request (e.g., posting the large billboard in their lawns) has been interpreted as resulting from a change in the targets' perceptions of themselves.

In order for the foot-in-the-door technique to increase a behavior, several conditions must be met (Burger, 1999). First, people must interpret their original small behavior as having been of their own choosing and as not having been motivated by some other extrinsic reward (Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959). Second, the more often people are reminded of their original small behavior, the more effective it will be in influencing their self-perceptions (Hansen and Robinson, 1980). At the same time, however, there is a danger of making the first request so large that a person can decide that having performed it, she has "done enough" (Cann, Sherman, and Elkes, 1975; Snyder and Cunningham, 1975), especially if the first request was made by the same requester immediately before the second request (Chartrand, Pinckert, and Burger, 1999). Third, the first request must elicit a high percentage of acquiescence. Just as when people agree to a small behavior they become more likely to later agree to a larger behavior, if people do not agree to the first request, they may become *less* likely to later agree to a larger behavior.[4]

The foot-in-the-door method could be used in GOTV strategy by asking citizens to comply with a small request relevant to voting prior to election day. This could include wearing pins on their shirts, putting bumper stickers on their cars, or volunteering a small amount of time or money to a campaign. Thus far, use of the foot-in-the-door technique has not yet been well studied in the context of GOTV. However, one study attests to the power of such initial requests on subsequent voting: citizens who would not have voted in an odd-year local election but were induced to do so in a GOTV canvass experiment were almost 60% more likely to vote in the subsequent election the following year compared to citizens who were not induced to vote in the odd-year local election (Gerber, Green, and Shachar, 2003).

Voting as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Identity Labeling

Identity labeling entails explicitly reinforcing a facet of a person's real or ideal self that is associated by the desired behavior. This could be a group identity (i.e., an American citizen) or a more personal self-categorization (i.e., the kind of person who cares about America) (Turner et al., 1987). For example, one study looked at the effect of creating and reinforcing in fifth-grade students the social identity that they were members of a litter-free classroom. The researchers reinforced this identity over the course of eight days. One example of how this was done is that on the fifth day a sign was posted in the room reading "We are [Mrs.] Andersen's Litter-Conscious Class." This social-identity reinforcement more than tripled the percentage of litter discarded in the wastebasket relative to that of a control classroom (Miller, Brickman, and Bolen, 1975). The treatment was also more than twice as effective as repeatedly asking a different set of students over a similar eight-day period not to litter.

The identity-labeling tactic could be factored into GOTV content in a variety of ways. One method would be to reinforce and make salient an identity that a person already likely possesses that would encourage her to vote. For example, one could develop a message that emphasizes a target's identity as an American, as a parent or grandparent, as an environmentalist, as a soldier, etc. This method would entail selectively reinforcing the preexisting identity that is most likely to induce the pro-social behavior of voting.

Another method would be to induce an identity that may not already exist but that is plausible. A common method used to do so in past research is to ask participants to complete a survey that is ostensibly intended to assess the degree to which the participants possess some characteristic. After completing the instrument the experimenter provides (false) feedback using a label that allegedly derives from participants' responses. A study in 1978 used this method to determine how potent identity labeling could be in voter mobilization (Tybout and Yalch, 1980). Experimenters asked participants to complete a fifteen-minute survey that related to an election that was to occur the following week. After completing the survey, the experimenter reviewed the results and reported to participants what their responses indicated. Participants were, in fact, randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Participants in the first condition were labeled as being "above-average citizen[s] . . . who [are] very likely to vote," whereas participants in the second condition were labeled as being "average citizen[s] . . . with an average likelihood of voting." Participants were also given an assessment sheet corresponding to their labels. These identity labels proved to have substantial impact on turnout, with 87% of "above average" participants voting versus 75% of "average" participants voting.

While this study provides insight into the potential of identity labeling for GOTV content, it must be interpreted with caution for several reasons. First, this study relied on a small sample size ($N = 162$) and has not yet been replicated. Second, the study was conducted more than two decades ago, so the contemporary political environment may result in participants responding differently to such a design. Third, the fact that the average turnout across conditions was so high (81%) indicates that the population used in the study was prone to voting in the first place. This meant that the "above average" label was probably credible to those who received it. Such a label would likely not be credible when delivered to members of a population who rarely, or never, vote. In order for an identity label to be effective, it must be credible to its recipient (Allen, 1982; Tybout and Yalch, 1980).

The identity-labeling method used in this study is also ethically dubious because it depends upon delivering false or misleading feedback to participants. However, this technique could be ethically applied in a variety of ways, the simplest of which is to merely assert that a target citizen is the kind of person who values his or her right to vote. How best to use identity labeling to increase turnout is a promising avenue for future research. A first-order question is, Through what mode of GOTV contact can identity labeling have an impact? These include direct-mail pieces, television, radio, and billboard advertising, speeches, and all direct contact with potential voters (e.g., canvassing, rallies, etc.). While we surmise that the more personal and interactive modes of GOTV contact will enable the strongest identity-labeling treatments, it is not inconceivable that vivid mail or TV messages could be highly effective as well.

Seeing Oneself Voting: Visual Perspective

A third tactic for changing behavior by affecting how people see themselves involves using a visualization technique. Illustrations of this tactic build off classic research showing that actors and observers tend to have different explanations for behaviors. Whereas observers are prone to attributing a behavior they witness (i.e., a person tripping over a rock) to dispositional characteristics (i.e., the person is clumsy), actors tend to attribute the same behavior to situational factors (i.e., the trail was treacherous) (Gilbert and Malone, 1995; Jones and Nisbett, 1971). More recently, studies have found that when people are induced to recall their own past behavior from an observer's perspective, it increases their tendency to attribute their behavior to their own disposition, relative to when they are induced to recall their own past behavior from a first-person perspective (Libby, Eibach, and Gilovich, 2005).

In a recent study exploring how visual perspective can affect voting, Ohio college students were guided through a one-minute visualization that entailed picturing themselves entering the voting booth and casting a vote. This visualization took place on the night before the 2004 U.S. presidential election. One group of participants were guided to picture themselves from the third-person perspective, and another group of participants were guided to picture themselves from the first-person perspective. Three weeks after the election, the participants reported whether or not they had voted in the election: 90% of those who had been guided to visualize themselves voting from the third-person perspective reported having voted, whereas only 72% of those who had been guided to visualize themselves voting from the first-person perspective reported having voted. Moreover, the difference in reported turnout was statistically mediated by the extent to which participants reported seeing themselves as the kind of people who vote. Although this study had a small sample size ($N = 90$) and measured self-reported behavior rather than actual voting behavior, the tactic merits follow-up research. Like the previous two tactics for leveraging voting as an expression of identity, this one suggests a potentially powerful tool for stimulating turnout.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter we have observed that one challenge to traditional accounts of voting as a static, self-interested and quasi-rational decision is that voter mobilization efforts are more successful when communicated through more personal media. We have advanced an alternative account of voting as dynamic social expression. In motivating each facet of this reconceptualization we have drawn on behavioral research that has not been traditionally cited in the GOTV literature. Note that the three facets we discuss (dynamic, social, and expression of identity) are somewhat overlapping categories; for example, the social accountability intervention that we cited above relies on all three: (1) it works because people consider a consequence long after the decision to vote that has nothing to do with the election outcome (i.e., it is dynamic); (2) it works because people care how their neighbors view them (i.e., it is social); and (3) it works because people wish to see themselves as good citizens (i.e., it entails an expression of identity).

Of course, traditional models could be extended to accommodate these factors. For example, the positive influence on voting of articulating implementation intentions could be modeled as a reduction in the cognitive costs of voting. Similarly, satisfying affiliation needs by casting a vote could be modeled as a consumption benefit of voting. However, we assert that the power of our new conceptual model is that it is theoretically generative: it makes explicit a set of new variables that have been found to empirically influence behavior (and often voting itself) that do not naturally follow from the traditional model of voting as a static self-interested decision.

We also wish to underscore the fact that not all citizens will respond equally to each of the behavioral interventions mentioned in this chapter; naturally, some people are more susceptible to some types of influence than others. In recent years GOTV professionals have found it effective to tailor "microtargeted" messages that highlight particular issues to specific individuals based on their consumption habits and demographic characteristics (Fournier, Sosnik, and Dowd, 2006; Gertner, 2004). Likewise, we suspect that the effectiveness of particular kinds of behavioral appeals might be predicted from observable demographic variables. For example, as was discussed above, Gerber and Rogers (2009) found that though infrequent and occasional voters were highly affected by whether or not expected turnout would be high or low, frequent voters were unaffected in either direction. This result suggests that GOTV content involving descriptive social norms should be targeted at voters who are expected to be moderately likely or unlikely to vote. Similarly, the study looking at the effect of self-prediction on subsequent voting (Smith, Gerber, and Orlich, 2003) suggested that this same subgroup of citizens might be most susceptible to self-prediction and commitment effects.[5]

Another example of a psychographic characteristic that could prove promising for microtargeting GOTV content is a person's propensity to self-monitor (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1974). Highly self-monitoring persons are especially concerned with how others see them. This characteristic has been shown to be positively related to how much people change their behavior when they are made aware that others will know how they behave in a given situation (Lerner and Tetlock, 1999; Snyder, 1974). High self-monitors tend to conform to what they believe they "should" do when they are aware that others will know about their behavior. One could imagine that the accountability intervention reported by Gerber, Green, and Larimer (2008) could be especially effective on citizens who are high self-monitors and relatively ineffective on citizens who are low self-monitors. Further research might test these predictions.

In this chapter we have explored several ways that the three facets of our account of why people vote could be incorporated into GOTV strategy. The three facets are summarized in Table 5.1, with relevant areas of behavioral research for each facet, as well as the major GOTV tactics that follow from each area of research. We believe that our approach has both practical and theoretical value. Practically, most of the behavioral principles that we cite have not yet been widely recognized by practitioners and policy makers. Although some current best practices implicitly leverage some of these theories, innovations in GOTV strategy are not systematically guided by these insights. We hope that providing a limited set of scientifically grounded behavioral principles to voter mobilization experts will help them devise more effective GOTV methods. At the same time, we hope that policy makers who are interested in increasing voter participation find this framework useful. For example, policy makers may publish the names of those who do and do not vote as regular practice or leverage other public services around election time to facilitate vote plan-making, or incorporate social-norm information into ballot guidebooks that are mailed to citizens before elections. It is worth noting that whereas more personal modes of GOTV contact tend to be more costly than less personal modes, more effective GOTV messages are generally no more costly than less effective messages, suggesting that using some

Table 5.1 Implications of voting as dynamic social behavior

Implication	Behavioral research	Recommended GOTV tactic
Dynamic: voting affected by events before and after decision	Self-prediction and commitment	Elicit vote intention (especially public commitments)
	Implementation intentions	Ask how, when, where, about voting
	Social pressure and accountability	Make voting records publicly accessible
Social: voting influenced by affiliative and belonging needs	Social identity	Emphasize benefits to favored others (in-group members)
	Descriptive social norms	Emphasize high expected turnout
Expression: voting as an expression of identity	Self-perception, social identity	Label, or make salient, a (social) identity that encourages voting
	Cognitive dissonance	Facilitate small steps, foot-in-the-door
	Correspondence bias	Facilitate picture of oneself voting from the third-person perspective

of the above behavioral principles in GOTV efforts could result in costless increases in impact.

Theoretically, by testing the behavioral principles discussed in this section in the GOTV context we might better understand the roles that each of these variables play in citizens' decisions to participate in democratic elections. In addition to expanding our understanding of why people vote, testing these behavioral principles in the GOTV context can also provide opportunities to learn more about the moderators and mediators of behavioral phenomena and also provide insight into how these phenomena interact. To cite one example, the discovery by Gerber and Rogers (2009) that some subgroups appear to be unaffected by descriptive social norms whereas others are very much affected by them provides not only a novel practical insight but also a novel theoretical insight into the study of descriptive social norms and suggests a direction for continuing theoretical research.

Communications around voter mobilization are just one type of political communication. Others include policy communications, campaign persuasion, candidate debates, and fund-raising communications, to name a few. The behavioral insights described in this chapter—as well as others not described herein—probably also apply to these areas. This exploration of why people vote illustrates some potential synergy between behavioral research and field experimentation. A more realistic behavioral model of individual behavior can generate new approaches for more effectively influencing voters. Moreover, field research that systematically investigates these behavioral principles can generate new insights for enriching theoretical models of human behavior. For these reasons, we foresee behavioral approaches playing an increasingly prominent role in research on political communications and on best practices among political professionals.

Notes

1. There are several reasons why enhancing voter turnout is a socially desirable objective. First, because elected officials have an incentive to represent the interests of the individuals they expect to vote in future elections, maximizing participation results in broadening the constituency that holds government accountable and to which government must be responsive. Second, when people vote they tend to see themselves as more civically engaged and thus may be more likely to engage in other civic activities (Finkel, 1985; Gerber, Green, and Shachar, 2003). Third, higher turnout increases the perceived legitimacy of an elected government, which increases the perceived legitimacy of the laws it enforces. Additionally, stimulating turnout in a given election encourages habitual voting behavior; inducing voting in the present election increases the likelihood of continued voting in the future (Gerber, Green and Shachar, 2003). To the extent that we accept that greater turnout is socially desirable, this means that successful GOTV has beneficial intermediate-term consequences in addition to immediate ones.

2. In light of more recent studies demonstrating a large effect for communications with striking messages (see the sections "Dynamic," "Social," and "Identity"), this conclusion is softened somewhat in their subsequent reviews of the literature to "subtle variations" have little effect (Green and Gerber, 2008, p. 70).

3. Estimating the cost per net vote generated requires estimating the cost per contact. Since these estimates vary widely, there is no universal answer to the question of how much it costs to generate a single new vote. For more information on this topic, see Green and Gerber (2008).

4. That said, if one makes a first, extreme request that is rejected and is immediately followed by a second, smaller request, this can increase compliance to the second request because the target may feel compelled to reciprocate the concession made by the requester (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1975).

5. This is consistent with a recent meta-analysis of fourteen GOTV canvassing experiments. It found that mobilization efforts affect citizens whose past vote history suggests they were on the cusp of whether or not to turn out in a given election; that is, they have a moderate probability of voting in a given election (Arceneaux and Nickerson, 2009).

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