RESOURCES

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Session 1:
The Structure of Social Change

PHILANTHROPY

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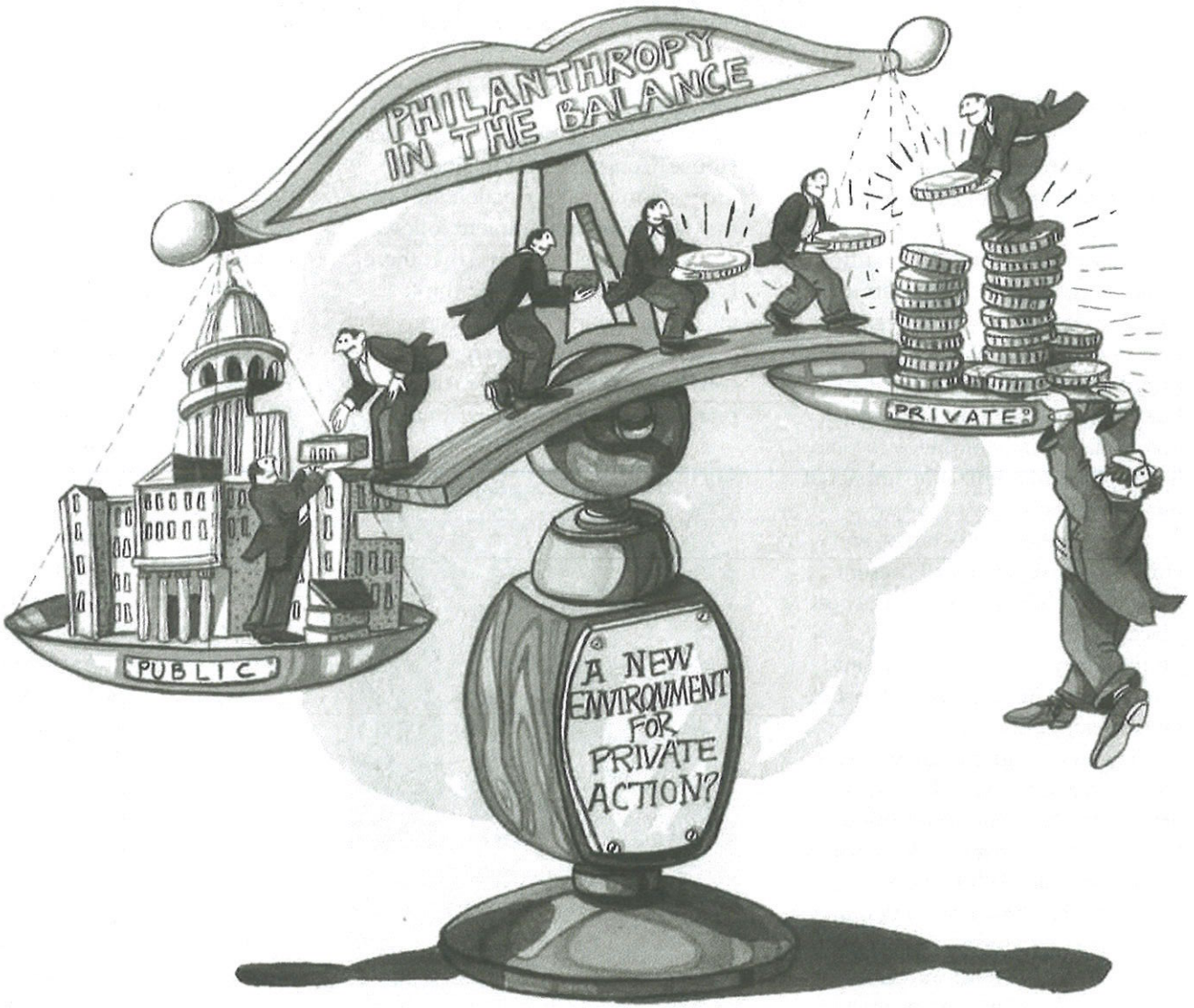


Proceedings of The Philanthropy Roundtable's 1995 Annual Meeting

FEATURING:

Robert Bothwell • Richard Fink • Steve Forbes • Stephen Goldsmith
Heather Higgins • Leslie Lenkowsky • William Lehrfeld

A PUBLICATION OF THE PHILANTHROPY ROUNDTABLE

From Ideas to Action: The Roles of Universities, Think Tanks, and Activist Groups

by Richard H. Fink

As grantmakers, all of us face the constant challenge of making our grants as effective as possible. We must choose between a multitude of organizations competing for funding. But what can guide us to ensure our grants will lead to lasting improvements in society? A haphazard approach certainly will not accomplish this. A strategy or plan is needed to maximize the impact of our limited resources.

Universities, think tanks, and citizen activist groups all present competing claims for being the best place to invest resources. As grantmakers we hear the pros and cons of the different kinds of institutions seeking funding.

The universities claim to be the real source of change. They give birth to the big ideas that provide the intellectual framework for social transformation. While this is true, critics contend that investing in the universities produces no tangible results for many years and even decades. Also, since many academics tend to talk mostly to their colleagues in the specialized languages of their respective disciplines, their research, even if relevant, usually needs to be adapted before it is useful in solving practical problems.

The think tanks and policy development organizations argue that they are most worthy of support because they work on real-world policy issues, not abstract concepts. They communicate not just among themselves, but are an immediate source of policy ideas for the White House, Congress, and the media. They claim to set the action agenda that leaders in government follow. Critics observe, however, that there is a surfeit of well-funded think tanks, producing more position papers and books than anyone could ever possibly read. Also, many policy proposals, written by

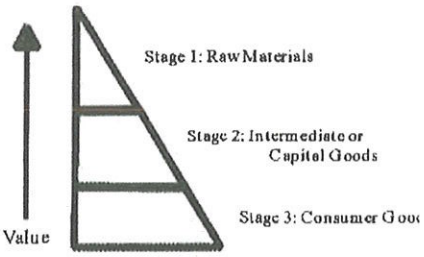
"wonks" with little experience outside the policy arena, lack realistic implementation or transition plans. And all too often think tanks gauge their success in terms of public relations victories measured in inches of press coverage, rather than more meaningful and concrete accomplishments.

Citizen activist or implementation groups claim to merit support because they are the most effective at really accomplishing things. They are fighting in the trenches, and this is where the war is either won or lost. They directly produce results by rallying support for policy change. Without them, the work of the universities and policy institutes would always remain just so many words on paper, instead of leading to real changes in people's lives. Others point out, however, that their commitment to action comes at a price. Because activist groups are remote from the universities and their framework of ideas, they often lose sight of the big picture. Their necessary association with diverse coalitions and politicians may make them too willing to compromise to achieve narrow goals.

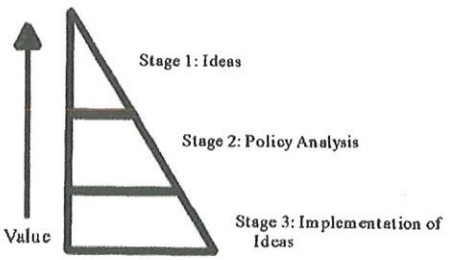
As grantmakers we can and should play a role in accelerating the process of change by gauging the climate for an idea, judging its stage of development, and then structuring our support accordingly.

— Richard Fink

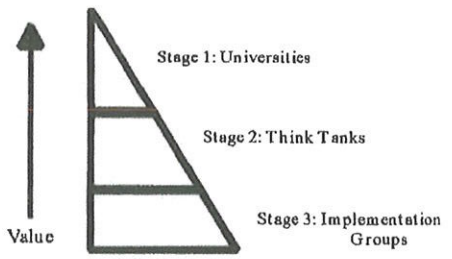
Many of the arguments advanced for and against investing at the various levels are valid. Each type of institution at each stage has its strengths and weaknesses. But more importantly we see that institutions at all stages are crucial to success. While they may compete with one another for funding and often belittle each other's roles, we at the Koch Foundation view them as complementary institutions, each critical for social transformation.



CONSUMER SATISFACTION
HAYEK'S STRUCTURE OF PRODUCTION
(FIGURE I)



CITIZEN WELL-BEING
STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CHANGE
(FIGURE II)



CITIZEN WELL-BEING
INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIAL CHANGE
(FIGURE III)

HAYEK'S MODEL OF PRODUCTION

Our understanding of how these institutions "fit together" is derived from a model put forward by the Nobel laureate economist Friedrich Hayek.

Hayek's model illustrates how a market economy is organized and has proven useful to students of economics for decades. While Hayek's analysis is complicated, even a modified, simplistic version can yield useful insights for grantmakers.

Hayek described the "structure of production" as the means by which a greater output of "consumer goods" is generated through savings that are invested in the development of "producer goods"—goods not produced for final consumption.

The classic example in economics is how a stranded Robinson Crusoe is at first compelled to fish and hunt with his hands. He only transcends subsistence when he hoards enough food to sustain himself while he fashions a fishing net, a spear, or some other producer good that increases his production of consumer goods. This enhanced production allows even greater savings, hence greater investment and development of more complex and indirect production technologies.

In a developed economy, the "structure of production" becomes quite complicated, involving the discovery of knowledge and integration of diverse businesses whose success and sustainability depend on the value they add to the ultimate consumer. Hayek's model explains how investments in an integrated structure of production yield greater productivity over less developed or less integrated economies.

By analogy, the model can illustrate how investment in the structure of production of ideas can yield greater social and economic progress when the structure is well developed and well integrated.

This is not a suitable forum for elaborating the riches of Hayek's model. For simplicity's sake, I am using a snapshot of a developed economy, as Hayek did in parts of *Prices and Production*, and I am aggregating a complex set of businesses into three broad categories or stages of production (Figure I). The higher stages represent investments and businesses involved in the enhanced production of some basic inputs we will call "raw materials." The middle stages of production are involved in converting these raw materials into various types of products that add more value than these raw materials have if sold directly to consumers. In this model, the later stages of production are involved in the packaging, transformation, and distribution of the output of the middle stages to the ultimate consumers.

Hayek's theory of the structure of production can also help us understand how ideas are transformed into action in our society. Instead of the transformation of natural resources to intermediate goods to products that add value to consumers, the model, which I call the Structure of Social Change, deals with the discovery, adaptation, and implementation of ideas into change that increases the well-being of citizens (Figure II). Although the model helps to explain many forms of social change, I will focus here on the type I know best—change that results from the formation of public policy.

APPLYING HAYEK'S MODEL

When we apply this model to the realm of ideas and social change, at the higher stages we have the investment in the intellectual raw materials, that is, the exploration and production of abstract concepts and theories. In the public policy arena, these still come primarily (though not exclusively) from the research done by scholars at our universities. At the higher stages in the Structure of Social Change model, ideas are often unintelligible to the lay person and seemingly unrelated to real-world problems.

Continued on page 34

Fink, continued from Page 11

To have consequences, ideas need to be transformed into a more practical or useable form.

In the middle stages, ideas are applied to a relevant context and molded into needed solutions for real-world problems. This is the work of the think tanks and policy institutions, such as the Heritage Foundation, the Reason Foundation, the Cato Institute, or the Pacific Research Institute. Without these organizations, theory or abstract thought would have less value and less impact on our society.

But while the think tanks excel at developing new policy and articulating its benefits, they are less able to implement change. Citizen activist or implementation groups like Citizens for a Sound Economy, the National Taxpayers' Union, or Defenders of Property Rights are needed in the final stage to take the policy ideas from the think tanks and translate them into proposals that citizens can understand and act upon. These groups are also able to build diverse coalitions of individual citizens and special interest groups needed to press for the implementation of policy change (Figure III; *see page 11*).

Lessons for Grantmakers

What lessons can be drawn from the Structure of Social Change model for grantmakers? First of all, funding is required at all stages to produce sustainable social change. The model tells us that we need to have all stages strong and functioning to maximize output in the final stage. Also, it is vital to promote the development of pipelines or connections between the stages, for the model tells us that the output of one stage is the input for the next. Therefore, projects that promote linkages and complementarity between groups at the different stages are an important investment for grantmakers.

Secondly, the model also indicates that, in order to have an impact, grantmakers should fund projects tied to the real-world needs of citizens. The focus of grantmakers on the real problems caused by government regulation and interventionist policies is a good example of institutions from all three stages contributing to the solution of a practical problem. As the result of grant makers' increased investment in research — both inside and outside the universities — during the 1950s and 1960s, a market-oriented intellectual framework was further articulated and directed toward specific problems areas. In the 1970s and 1980s, the development and growth of think tanks, as well as the policy proposals they produced, were a result of the enhanced output of ideas from this previous investment in research. In the 1980s and 1990s, citizen activist groups emerged and grew, using the market-oriented proposals developed in the think tanks to press for policy changes that reduce government regulation.

Thirdly, the Structure of Social Change model suggests that grantmakers should use their support to encourage organizations to continually reassess where they have a comparative advantage. As the structure of social change evolves there will be market forces that will increase the division of labor and specialization. Most institutions excel in one area or stage, and not in others. For example, within the world of public policy, the Cato Institute has a comparative advantage as a think tank. It excels at publishing studies, hosting forums, and crafting free-market policy positions. Cato is successful because it realizes what its comparative advantage is, and does not try to duplicate the work of the universities or the implementation groups.

Fourthly, the Structure of Social Change model informs us that we should also seek to fund ideas at the level that is appropriate to their development at any given time. The concept of flatter and lower tax rates, for example, is an idea that has been discussed and developed for many years at the university and think tank level. It is soon to be on the table for legislative debate that will lead to defeat, modification, or adoption. Additional funding therefore is now critical at the citizen activist or implementation

group level for those who feel that this is a priority issue. Other ideas are in need of more fundamental development, so it is important to concentrate funding for these on universities and research organizations. As grantmakers we can and should play a role in accelerating the process of change by gauging the climate for an idea, judging its stage of development, and then structuring our support accordingly.

Finally, the model implies that we need to invest in sound institutions and in productive people at every stage, since without them many good ideas may not have consequences. Grants can be used to strengthen institutions and encourage them to develop cultures based on key core values, solid management systems, and effective incentive and learning systems. Grantmakers can also help in identifying, educating, and supporting productive people within organizations. While these factors warrant a more systematic articulation than is possible here, each factor is critical to building effective and sustainable social progress.

We at the Koch Foundation find that the Structure of Social Change model helps us to understand the distinct roles of universities, think tanks, and activist groups in the transformation of ideas into action. We invite other grantmakers to consider whether Hayek's model, on which ours is based, is useful in their philanthropy. Though I have confined my examples to the realm of public policy, the model clearly has much broader social relevance. •

Richard H. Fink is president of the Charles G. Koch and Claude R. Lambe charitable foundations and senior vice president of Koch Industries.

The New York Times https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/26/us/politics/overton-window-democrats.html

How the Politically Unthinkable Can Become Mainstream

By Maggie Astor
Feb. 26, 2019

You may have heard about the Overton window, and that's not about to stop. With the political landscape shifting in sometimes startling ways, what was once an obscure idea has gained broader relevance.

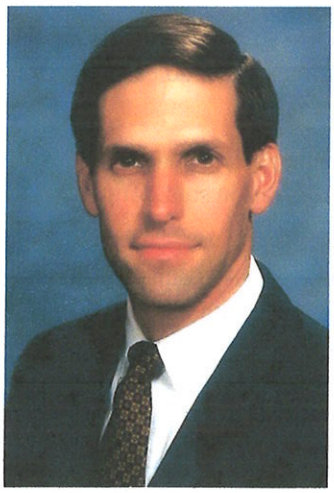
But while the term has been bandied about lately, it hasn't always been by people who know what they're talking about. And it's important to get this right. You've probably noticed that policies once dismissed out of hand — from "Medicare for all" to a 70 percent top tax rate; from sweeping action on climate change to abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement — are being discussed in mainstream circles now. The Overton window is a useful way to understand what's happening.

Joseph P. Overton introduced the concept in the 1990s as an executive at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a conservative think tank in Michigan. He never expected it to gain widespread recognition, said Joseph G. Lehman, president of the Mackinac Center, and it didn't until after Mr. Overton died in 2003.

Mr. Overton just wanted to explain to potential donors what the point of a think tank was, so he created a brochure with a cardboard slider. The brochure listed the range of possible policies on a single issue, from least to most government intervention. On education — an example the Mackinac Center uses — it might run from zero public investment in education to compulsory indoctrination in government schools. But neither of those extremes is going to happen. Only part of the range is achievable, and when Mr. Overton moved his slider, different policies fell into what he called the window of political possibility.

"Public officials cannot enact any policy they please like they're ordering dessert from a menu," Mr. Lehman said in an interview. "They have to choose from among policies that are politically acceptable at the time. And we believe the Overton window defines that range of ideas."

Grass-roots mobilization can shift the window. So can think tanks, which was Mr. Overton's point. But despite a misconception driven by Glenn Beck's novel "The Overton Window," the window is a description, not a tactic: Shifting it doesn't mean proposing extreme ideas to make somewhat less extreme ideas seem reasonable.



Joseph P. Overton was an executive at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in the 1990s when he introduced the concept now known as the Overton window. He died in 2003.

via The Mackinac Center for Public Policy

"It just explains how ideas come in and out of fashion, the same way that gravity explains why something falls to the earth," Mr. Lehman said. "I can use gravity to drop an anvil on your head, but that would be wrong. I could also use gravity to throw you a life preserver; that would be good."

The key is that shifts begin with the public. Mr. Overton argued that the role of organizations like his own was not to lobby politicians to support policies outside the window, but to convince voters that policies outside the window should be in it. If they are successful, an idea derided as unthinkable can become so inevitable that it's hard to believe it was ever otherwise.

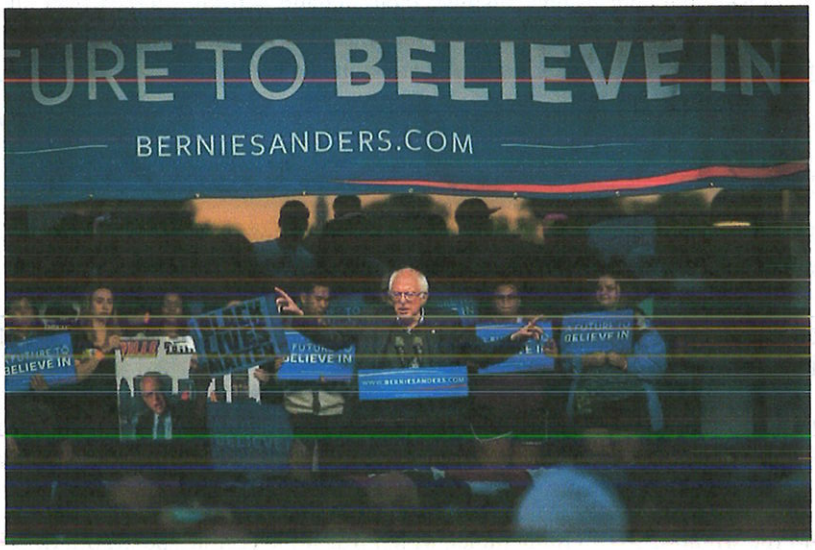
The current shift toward progressive economic policies is clear and quantifiable. Take some of the legislation introduced by Senator Bernie Sanders, whose 2016 presidential campaign helped popularize these ideas. In 2015, his bills to make public colleges free and expand Social Security had no co-sponsors in the Senate. Two years later, they had seven and 17, respectively, in addition to 50 and 133 co-sponsors in the House. His signature measure, the Medicare for All Act, had no Senate co-sponsors in 2013 (he didn't introduce it in 2015), but four years later it had 16, along with 125 in the House.

"We have come a very, very long way in the American people now demanding legislation and concepts that just a few years ago were thought to be very radical," Mr. Sanders said in a recent interview.

His support for these policies set him apart in the 2016 Democratic field, but they are mainstream positions among the 2020 candidates — because, increasingly, they are mainstream positions among the voters those candidates are courting. Mr. Sanders emphasized as much in announcing his second presidential campaign on Tuesday.

Most telling, perhaps, is that even opponents are taking the ideas seriously: They might not want Medicare for all, but they believe it could happen and are fighting it accordingly. If a policy is dead on arrival, you don't have to fight it.

That the Overton window is shifting doesn't necessarily mean policies like Medicare for all will be enacted, and it doesn't say anything about whether they are good or bad. But it does say something meaningful about the political climate.



Many of the ideas Senator Bernie Sanders proposed during his presidential campaign in 2016 have since been adopted by large numbers of Democrats. Sam Hodgson for The New York Times

Part of the story is polarization: Democrats moving left and Republicans right, to an extent "that we haven't seen previously in a modern political period," said Mary Layton Atkinson, a political scientist at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte who studies public opinion and issue framing. "Republicans have become just as entrenched in their own conservative policy preferences."

As support for more ambitious policies has increased among Democrats, there has also been "a wave of young party leaders who are less encumbered by a long voting history tying them to more moderate and less progressive policy stances," Dr. Atkinson said. "And they're being supported by a base that is ready to hear these messages."

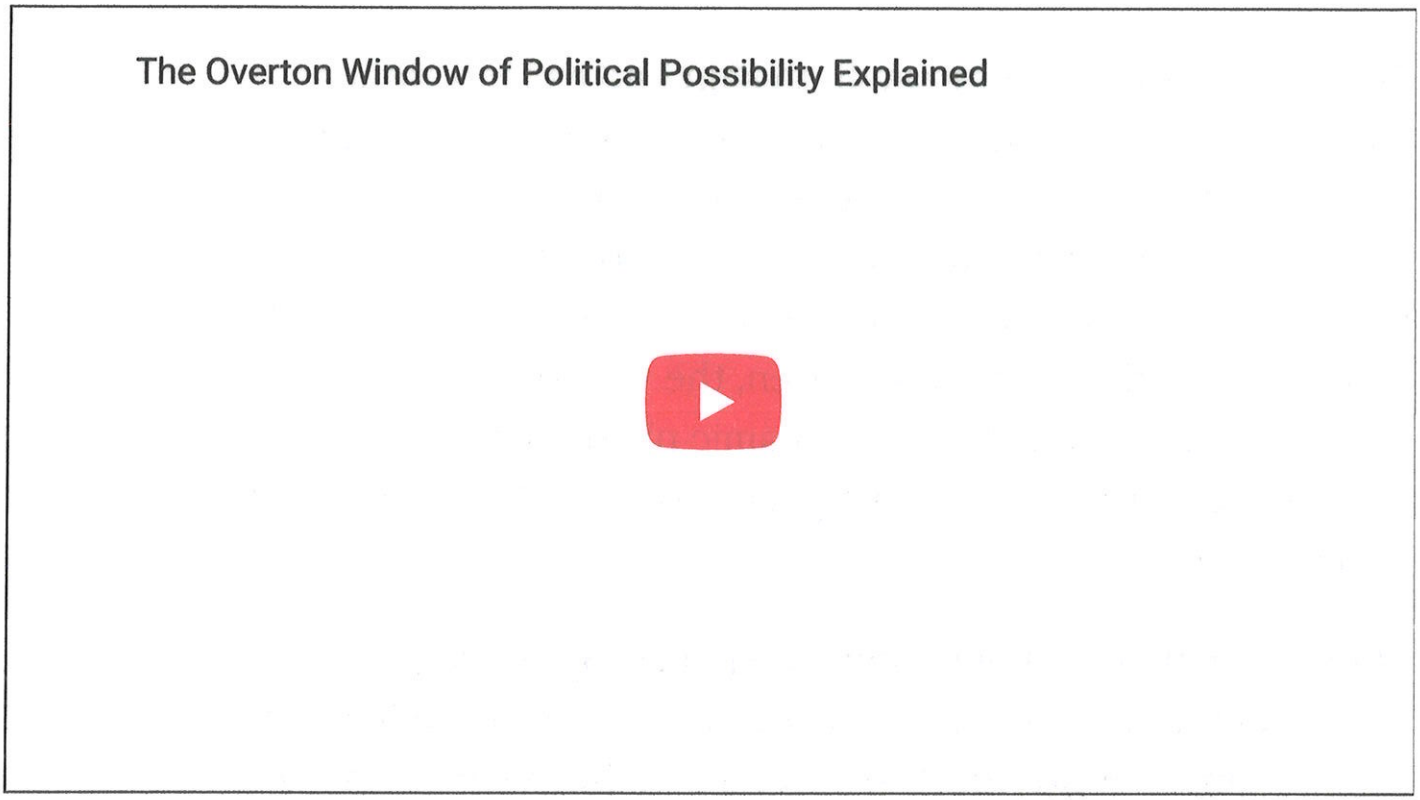
But polarization isn't the only factor. Polls show that some support crosses the partisan divide. Forty-five percent of Republicans in one poll supported Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's suggestion to tax income over $10 million at 70 percent; among all American adults, 59 percent supported that. Thirty-seven percent of Republicans said they would vote for a candidate who supported a Medicare for all plan; 53 percent of all Americans said the same.

Leaders like Mr. Sanders and Ms. Ocasio-Cortez argue that voters are rejecting longstanding economic assumptions because those assumptions haven't yielded the promised results. "I think the line of trickle-down economics improving the lives of everybody doesn't work when in the last 30 or 40 years, the lives of the middle class have become significantly more difficult at the same time as we've seen massive income and wealth inequality," Mr. Sanders said.

That sentiment is far from universal, and many Americans still support "trickle-down" policies. Conservatives and some moderates — including possible presidential candidates like Michael Bloomberg — view proposals like "Medicare for all" or a wealth tax as extreme, and it is not clear how those proposals would play in a presidential general election.

But since Mr. Sanders and Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, who is also running for president, began speaking on national stages about ideas once confined to small circles, criticism of those ideas has ceased to dominate the political conversation, and voters are seeing practicality in ideas long considered idealistic. (Ms. Warren's campaign did not make her available for an interview.)

"I think people like Warren and Sanders deserve a lot of credit for advancing these ideas before they were cool," said Tom Perriello, executive director for U.S. programs at the Open Society Foundations, who co-wrote an article last year about the increasing popularity of once-unthinkable policies. "It created a conversation people hadn't heard before, and then had the option to look at it and say, 'Wait, that sounds like a much better idea than what I've been hearing before.'"



A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE OVERTON WINDOW

... the Overton Window can both shift and expand, either increasing or shrinking the number of ideas politicians can support without unduly risking their electoral support.

The Overton Window is a model for understanding how ideas in society change over time and influence politics. The core concept is that politicians are limited in what policy ideas they can support — they generally only pursue policies that are widely accepted throughout society as legitimate policy options. These policies lie inside the Overton Window. Other policy ideas exist, but politicians risk losing popular support if they

champion these ideas. These policies lie outside the Overton Window.

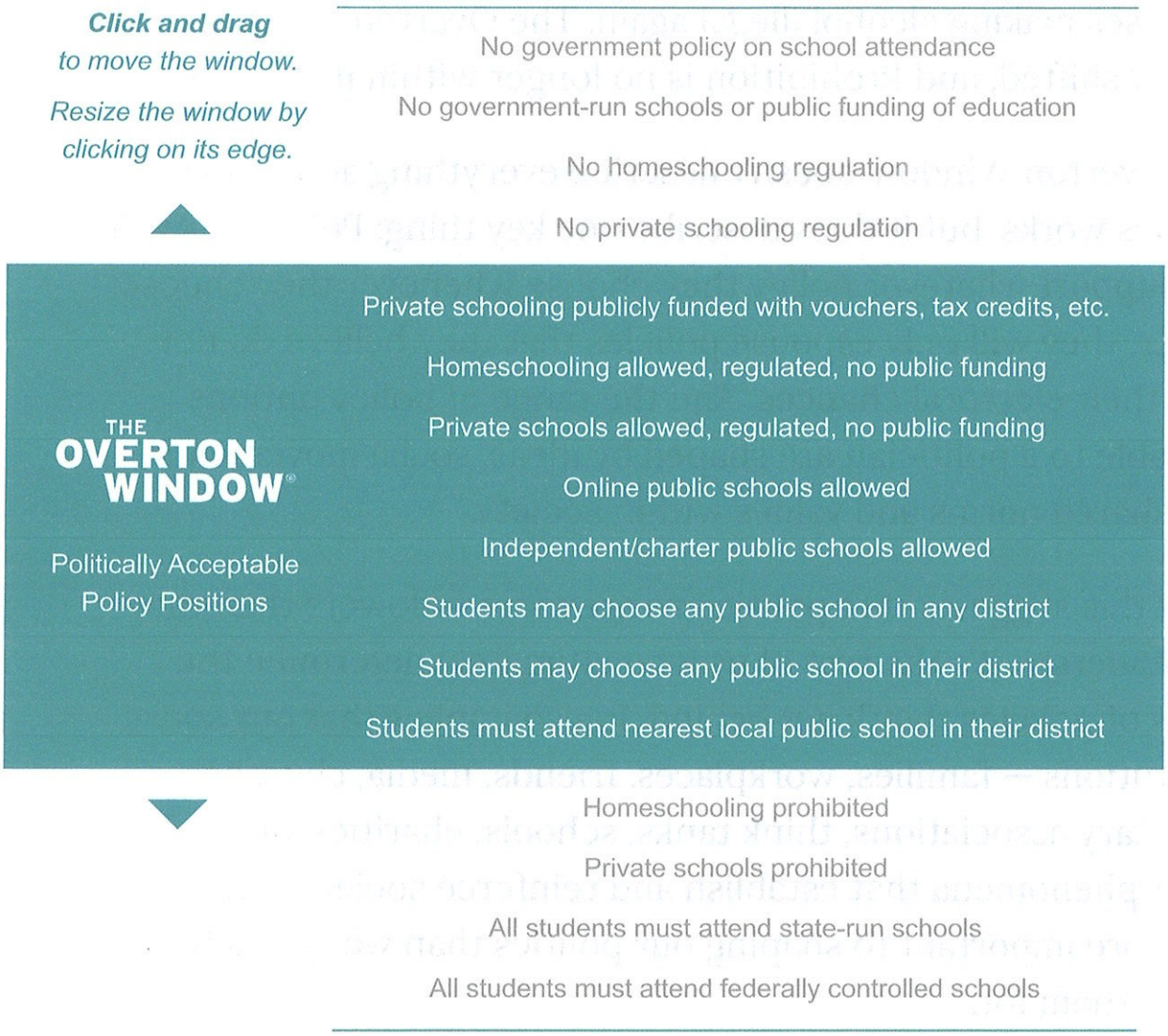
But the Overton Window can both shift and expand, either increasing or shrinking the number of ideas politicians can support without unduly risking their electoral support. Sometimes politicians can move the Overton Window themselves by courageously endorsing a policy lying outside the window, but this is rare. More often, the window moves based on a much more complex and dynamic phenomenon, one that is not easily controlled from on high: the slow evolution of societal values and norms.

Think for a minute about education policy. By and large, our society agrees that providing children with a formal education is a good thing. But how best to accomplish this policy is a wide open question. There are dozens of different policies that could be used.

Now imagine the different policy options for providing children a formal education lined up along a spectrum. On one end, you'd find a policy idea to use the power of the federal government to provide education to all children — a top-down, centralized approach. On the other end of the spectrum, you'd find just the opposite policy idea: no government involvement whatsoever, leaving the provision of education to private citizens. See the image below that shows a handful of these policy options and ideas.

MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

An Example from Education Policy



Virtually no politician endorses either one of the policies at the ends of this spectrum. We can posit then that these policies lie outside the Overton Window. The policies that politicians do champion — tax-funded public school districts, regulated private schools, independent public charter schools, etc. — exist between these two ends of the spectrum and are solidly within the Overton Window.

To get an idea of how the Overton Window can change over time, think about the Prohibition Era. Just a few generations ago, the sale and use of alcoholic beverages was made illegal by

federal law, suggesting that this policy was safe inside the Overton Window. But fast forward to today when people poke fun of the folly of Prohibition and virtually no politician endorses making alcohol illegal again. The Overton Window has clearly shifted, and Prohibition is no longer within its borders.

The Overton Window doesn't describe everything about how politics works, but it does describe one key thing: Politicians will not support whatever policy they choose whenever they choose; rather, they will only espouse policies that they believe do not hurt their electoral chances. And the range of policy options available to a politician are shaped by ideas, social movements and shared norms and values within society.

All of this suggests that politicians are more followers than they are leaders — it's the rest of us who ultimately determine the types of policies they'll get behind. It also implies that our social institutions — families, workplaces, friends, media, churches, voluntary associations, think tanks, schools, charities, and many other phenomena that establish and reinforce societal norms — are more important to shaping our politics than we typically credit them for.

So, if you're interested in policy change, keep the Overton Window in mind, as it is a helpful guide. If your idea lies outside the window, trying to convince politicians to embrace it is a steep hill to climb. You'll likely need to start at the ground level, slowly building support for your idea throughout the broader society, and then if it catches root there, politicians will eventually come onboard. Even if the policy change you care about most currently lies within the window, maybe you should re-evaluate if there's a better option that you're not considering

because it lies outside the Overton Window and no current politician endorses it.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Joseph P. Overton, former senior vice president at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy

Q: Who created the concept of the Overton Window?

The Overton Window was developed in the mid-1990s by the late Joseph P. Overton, who was senior vice president at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy at the time of his death in 2003.

Q: Can the Overton Window be shifted by lies, distortions or misunderstandings?

Yes, but it's obviously wrong to intentionally disseminate misleading information. The Overton Window reflects what society believes, which can be as easily influenced by truth and facts as it can be by inaccurate or deceptive information. Even mistakes can shift the window. The massive underestimate of Medicare costs probably contributed to the program's creation in the 1960s. The false belief that weapons of mass destruction would be found in Iraq contributed to support for that war.

Q: What is the Mackinac Center for Public Policy?

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to improving the quality of life for all Michigan citizens by promoting sound solutions to state and local policy questions. The Mackinac Center assists policymakers, scholars, business people, the media and the public by providing objective analysis of Michigan issues. The goal of all Center reports, commentaries and educational programs is to equip Michigan citizens and other decision makers to better evaluate policy options.

Q: What is the connection between the Mackinac Center and Glenn Beck's book, "The Overton Window"?

The book is based on Beck's adaptation of the Overton Window concept developed by the Mackinac Center. A character in the book reveals the origin of the concept to be a think tank in the

Midwest. The Mackinac Center was not involved in the creation of the book. Beck's "The Overton Window" is a work of fiction published in 2010.

Q: How does The Mackinac Center use The Overton Window?

The Mackinac Center uses The Overton Window to help promote its policies. By providing information on political decision making and attempting to influence citizens and lawmakers, the window can be shifted to make Michigan a freer and more prosperous state.

Q: How can I help the Mackinac Center promote better public policy in Michigan and reach as many people as possible?

The Mackinac Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that depends on thousands of generous contributors like you. For more information on how you can become a member, please click here.

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RESOURCES

Session 2:
What Motivates Your Neighbor

FORBES > LEADERSHIP > LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

Building Community As If People Mattered

Brook Manville Contributor ⓘ

(Photo: Shutterstock)

"What kind of America would you like to have?

Instead of the usual electoral horserace questions, a recent focus group of citizens was simply asked about their vision for a better nation. Peggy Noonan, the WSJ columnist who reported the story, reprised the group's

answers--"a solid education system," "no more war," "people with joy in their work," "our country leading again, including in morals"—and then reflected that the respondents were looking back to "when things seemed assumptive of progress." She noted the comments, unexpectedly, emphasized not individual desires, but rather "hopes [that] were communal, societal."

In Search Of Hope

I was less surprised than Ms. Noonan. Amidst rapid global economic and social change, as institutions and hierarchies erode, people everywhere are trying to find—or rebuild—communal values, to restore some collective optimism to their lives. It's happening throughout society: in neighborhoods, towns, businesses, churches.

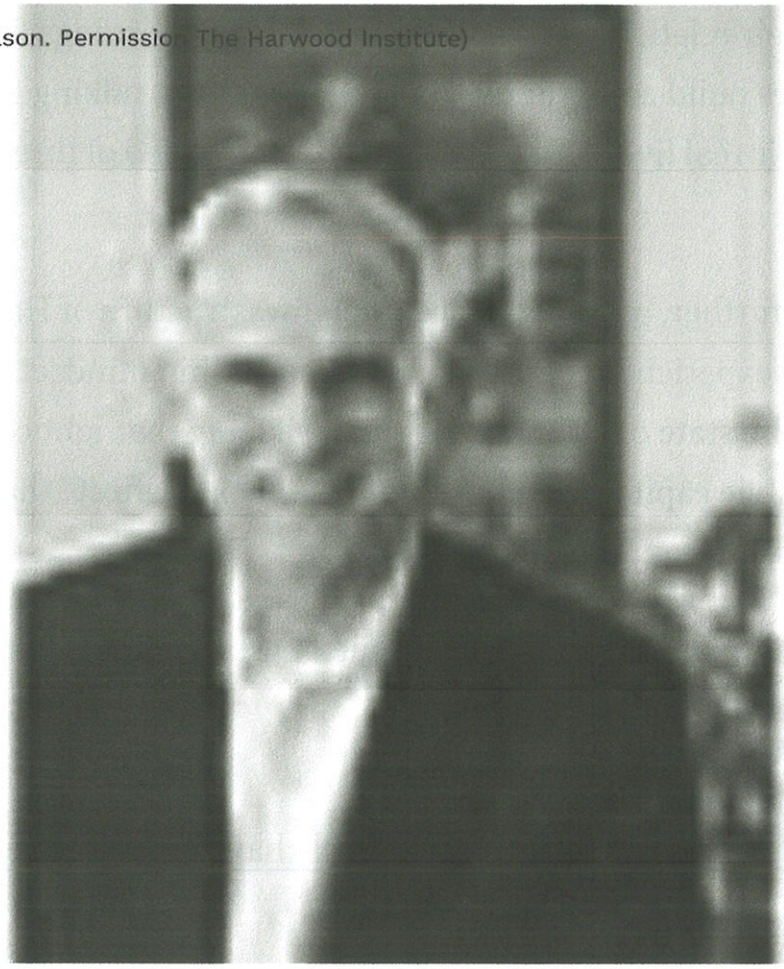
And they are searching for a new kind of leadership to help with that. Many Americans, looking beyond this toxic election, are wondering about something more universal: how do the best leaders actually succeed in "building community"—whatever the would-be community might be?

Watch on Forbes:

The 'How' Of Community Leadership

That question began my recent conversation with Richard Harwood, a practitioner and thinker who since 1988 has devoted himself to such inquiry. His Harwood Institute for Public Innovation has helped transform thousands of communities around the world, strengthening collective progress among people who share some common purpose.

(Photo: Corey Wilson. Permission: The Harwood Institute)



It Begins—And Ends—With The People

What unifies it all for Rich Harwood is people: building a community always comes back to the core, its human members. As he explained, unless a leader lives that truth, no progress can ever be sustained.

"But ironically, the more 'community' has become important to leaders—as it has in recent years—the more they've squeezed out the human element as they try to 'fix the problems.' They gloss over what people really care about. A new generation of technocrats has turned community building into a Gantt chart, endless initiatives following a schedule. Even worse, they often frame challenges around their own good—not the common good."

Turning Outward

Rich went on to describe how would-be community leaders must "turn outward"—away from themselves, instead focusing horizontally on

members, their relationships, and their collective yearnings for progress. "Great leaders build community from the outside in, talking and listening to people in their real lives. They abandon the heroic ego of directing top down."

As we spoke further, a deeper conceptual infrastructure of Harwood's accumulated experience emerged--about leadership mindset and skills, how to diagnose the state of a community, establishing the right context (creating "public capital"), and promoting a "ripple effect" that encourages other leaders, groups and citizens to join in.

Six lessons for community leaders seemed particularly distinctive:

Hope And Understanding

1.Your most important job is to help people have hope, and believe in the possibility of progress.

"Members of a struggling community may talk about problems, but what motivates them is hope for a better life, and belief that they might somehow get there. Great leaders will acknowledge challenges—but they rapidly pivot to summon a 'can-do' spirit among as many members as possible. Nothing's more important than sparking a sense that if people work together, they will succeed."

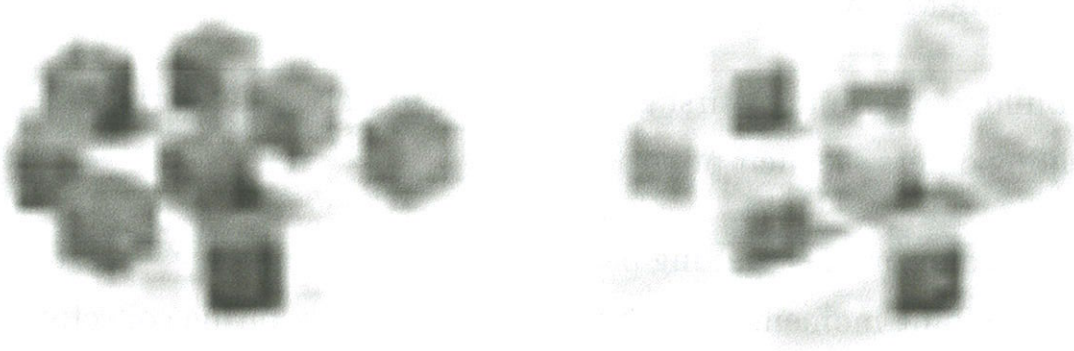
2. You earn credibility as a leader through authentic understanding of the community itself.

Instead of raw power, Harwood's approach stresses leadership credibility: becoming trusted as someone who truly understands the opportunities, traditions, networks and relationships which give life to a community. A good leader doesn't mandate; he or she co-creates.

"Regrettably," Rich explained, "'community understanding' often gets defined as data—a poverty rate, school drop-out statistics, etc. Of course

data is useful—but it can crowd out what's really on people's minds. A leader must combine data with 'public knowledge': what people are feeling, talking about, and aspiring to, even if those collective feelings are out of sight."

"A few years ago, we worked in Mobile County, Alabama, to help accelerate school reform that had been bogged down ever since the 1954 Supreme Court decision of Brown vs Board of Education. Polarizing race issues stymied progress: many whites blamed bad schools on unwillingness of blacks to improve their lives, while many blacks felt the root cause was an implicit effort to maintain local segregation. The data highlighted the stagnant student test results, low graduation rates, declining spending, etc."



(Photo: Shutterstock)

"But when we brought together the various community and civic groups, a steering committee formedto engage citizens about their shared aspirations. Local leaders were surprised to learn that white rural people felt just as neglected educationally as members of the black community. The conversations sparked interest for more people, both black and white, to get involved, working together to improve the schools. This new 'public

knowledge' stimulated critical collaboration that ultimately led to increased educational funding, new math and science programs, and improved teaching and test results."

Does Political Identity Matter?

"How important is political identity?" I asked. "Do leaders have to be 'the right color' or ethnic origin, or have deep personal experience in a community?"

"Of course those things help—but they're not required. Most important is that you have the trust and right relationships—and achieve real understanding of people involved. You also need courage to face what will be tough challenges from some of those same people—and demonstrate back to them you really care about helping the community build itself up. Leadership can't be about you; it has to be about everybody else."

Building Momentum

3. Build momentum by first getting people to work together and then helping others see their progress.

Harwood prioritizes "getting people on the right trajectory"—starting and then building momentum with achievable, hope-inspiring collective work.

"Another misunderstood community leadership practice is 'creating vision.' Those exercises can become blue-sky, untethered from reality. People get discouraged when there's no forward movement. Great leaders start by leading community conversations, and then guide members towards valuable but near-term achievable goals. They build on that progress over time."

"Mobile County again serves to illustrate. The leaders there laid the foundation for measurable school reform, beginning with local discussions about people's shared aspirations. Those first steps mobilized a sense of

common purpose and public support for more educational funding; that in turn allowed the leaders to involve the broader community in making concrete reforms. As more people worked together, and saw initial success, still others joined in.

(Photo: Shutterstock)

4. Foster "can-do" narratives," not disconnected storytelling.

Storytelling has become a new pillar of leadership, but Rich Harwood explained how it can sometimes be counter-productive. "People don't need isolated tales of nostalgia or stories that don't lead to action. Much more energizing is when leaders encourage what I call "can-do narratives"—accounts collaboratively constructed by members that are coherent, positive and forward-looking. The best of these evolve organically—laying out the trajectory people see themselves following to achieve longer-term success together."

"I saw the power of such narratives years ago, in Battle Creek Michigan. Teams collaborating on an initial pilot project constructed a story for one of their retreats, like a Dr. Seuss kids' book. This 'Battle Creek Fable,' as it came to be called, confessed why they had been struggling, and what they

now wanted to achieve to improve local education, healthcare, and social services."

"They actually acted it out as a little play at the retreat, and then later shared it more widely, as a public document. As they updated the narrative every few months, it became a chronicle about themselves--how they overcame initial barriers, and then began to succeed—and where they next wanted to go. It successfully engaged others to become part of the movement."

Everyone At The Table?

5. Lead with "pragmatic selectivity"

Another community-building myth Harwood explodes is "always getting everyone around the table."

(Photo: Shutterstock)

"If you pursue that too literally, it can kill momentum-- and people lose hope. An effective community leader is ruthless about making choices—who

to 'run with' (the right partners, citizens most committed to real change, etc.), where to productively start collective efforts, how fast to move, etc."

"The right balance is to be 'opportunistically inclusive'—work with whoever is authentically willing to collaborate on goals most people agree on. In the Bible, Abraham had a tent that was open on all sides—so that travelers from everywhere could come in. The good community leader, like Abraham, must be ready to accept new travelers once they are ready to join the collective effort. You should never exclude anyone who legitimately wants to help make progress—but the leader must avoid getting drawn into arguments with naysayers who harp on problems instead of solutions."

Virtual Or Not

6. Lead even more intentionally if the community is virtual

Over the years Harwood's practice has expanded into helping leaders of regional networks, extended virtual partnerships, and larger, technology-enabled communities. He emphasizes that community-building leadership, whatever the setting, follows most of the same principles that work in smaller towns and cities.

"Building hope, creating momentum for progress, being selective in where and how you work to create initial trust—the practices are essentially the same. But at greater scale, or in virtual situations, the leader does have to be even more intentional, almost exaggerated at times--to help people work together when they don't know one another or even see one another."

"With virtual, the typical pitfall is over-emphasizing technology, instead of people's hopes and aspirations. Remember, virtual communities will likely not be people's primary source of relationships—and it's easier for them to opt out."

"Larger, and virtual community-building calls for particularly focused leadership: to really understand the public knowledge across members, and

being clever in packaging it so people understand one another's deeper aspirations. The leader must also take extra care to nourish the broader context that fosters collective action—opportunities for people to collaborate on something winnable, encouraging face-to-face relationships whenever possible, creating more easily understood narratives when members are online."

Why All This Now?

I closed by asking Rich why building better communities today really mattered—and why it mattered so much to him.

"Everywhere I look, people are losing hope. They see a status quo that isn't working. We've come to an inflection point, too many people sensing we can't go on like this."

"But at whatever level or in whatever domain you're living and working, the greatest source of progress through history has always been 'the community.' Tomorrow's best leaders must do whatever they can to rekindle the can-do spirit of that fundamentally human invention. It's the challenge that still wakes me up every morning."
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Brook Manville

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Brook Manville is Principal of Brook Manville LLC, consulting on strategy and organization, with special interest in networks, learning, and leadership.

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F.O.R.M. (FAMILY, OCCUPATION, RECREATION, AND MESSAGE)

Damond Nollan | 6:29 PM | 18 Comments marketing & sales

The Truth: We Love To Tell OUR Stories

Have you ever been in a situation where you just met someone new and there is an awkward silence in the room because neither one of you knows exactly what to say? Here is an interesting fact, people love to talk about themselves. Crazy, right?

If you look at a group picture, where you are also included, who is the first person you look for? Yourself, of course. Well, conversations with people are no different. Each one of us has a

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NEWSLETTER

story.

In the sales industry, or just when someone is working to be better at networking, I found that people use a technique called **F.O.R.M.** to break the ice on new relationships.

What Does F.O.R.M. Mean?

Ok, you're probably asking, "What is it and what does it mean?" **F.O.R.M.**, which is an acronym that stands for **F**amily (or from), **O**ccupation, **R**ecreation, and **M**essage (money or motivation), is an easy way to build rapport with new people and carry a conversation from an awkward silence to a comfortable engagement.

The way F.O.R.M. works is by striking up a conversation with someone and using one of the four letters as a guide for what topics to discuss. Here is an example of how you might use F.O.R.M. in your next conversation. Imagine that you just met someone in the grocery store. As you both are waiting in line for the cashier to check you out, this might be a random (but quite standard) conversation.

Example Conversation

You: Wow! Those are some pretty neat shoes you got there. Where did you get them from?

Note: Notice that I started with a compliment? Paying someone a compliment is always a great way to break the ice. However, it is important to be sincere. Don't compliment someone if you don't truly feel that way.

Them: Oh, yeah! Thanks. I grabbed these on sale over at the Nike Factory.
You: Really. How much did you get them for?
Them: They were originally going for $200, but I bought these for $25.
You: Wow! That really is a good deal. I'm going to need to learn from you how to shop. (Laugh)
Them: (Laughing)

Note: I just moved from a compliment over to the first letter (F).

Them: I'm from Seattle. You?
You: I'm from Tacoma. Who do you know from Tacoma?
Them: I know tons of people...(this could go on for a while)

Note: For the sake of this example, let me move on to the next letter (O).

You: So, what do you do for a living?
Them: I'm an aviation engineer with Boeing.
You: Nice! How did you get into that line of work?
Them: (They respond with a story)

Note: Continuing with the conversation, I'll move on to the letter (R).

You: So, what do you do for fun?
Them: I like to shop, eat, and read books on hamster breeding.
You: Wow! I've never met a real life hamster breeder. (Ask another question here)

Note: At this point, you should see how it works. Since I've gone through each letter, let me finish with (M). For those interested in the conversation, topic, or person, this is probably when you'd say something about staying in contact. Remember, we are in a grocery line, so this conversation can only be so long. However, if you find that you do want to keep it going, moving to "M" is a great way to stay connected.

You: Listen, it's almost my turn to check out. I am really interested in hearing more about this hamster breeding idea. Would it be okay to exchange numbers so I can hear more about it?
Them: Absolutely!

What do you think? Easy enough, right?

For some, this may take some practice. The good news is that you can do this with people you don't know and people you know well. It's just a strategy for connecting with someone quickly and painlessly.

relationships with people, review the list of example questions that one can ask during a casual conversation.

Family

- Where are you from?
- Where did you go to high school or college?
- How many kids do you have? What are their names and ages?
- Are you married? What is your spouse's name?

Occupation

- What kind of work do you do?
- What do you like about your job?
- What do you like least about your job?
- How long have you been working there?
- How did you get started in that field?

Recreation

- What kind of things do you do for fun?
- Where would you like to vacation if money was not required?
- What are some of your favorite places in the world?
- What do you do to relieve stress?
- What's the most exciting thing you've ever done?

Message

Once you have built rapport with someone, the message portion of F.O.R.M. is really your transition toward booking a meeting from a meeting (BAMFAM). Assuming that you like the person that you're talking with, and you actually want to stay in contact with them, use one of the following statements to reconnect.

A good way to transition may be like this, "I couldn't help but overhear that you [dont' like your job, need more money, or want to vacation more], let me ask you a question...[use one of the questions below]"

- Do you mind if we exchange numbers and talk more about it?

- Are you open to the idea of earning some extra money part time?
- Are you open to earning a couple thousand dollars a month part time?
- Are you open to the idea of traveling more for less?
- If I found a way to [fill in the blank], would you want to know about it?

While for those in the sales industry may find the message portion quite valuable, the message can be simply used to reconnect on a personal (not business) level. For personal, simply exchange numbers or figure out how the two of you can connect again.

Secret Sauce: Listening

While F.O.R.M. may have gained popularity in the sales industry, the strategy is just as relevant in life. The key to success in talking with anyone is to be an active listener.

What is an active listener? It's when you ask questions and actually take part in listening to the answer. Instead of using a question to impose your will and story upon them, take a moment to understand what the other person is sharing. The next question you ask should be built on what the other person just said.

It is important to understand that shooting off questions without giving a piece of your story can feel like an interrogation. So, get good at finding that balance between talking all the time, listening all the time, and a real conversation (ebb and flow of ideas).

For those who are in sales, how can you ever begin to help people solve their problems if you don't know what their problems are? You have to take an active listening approach to first understand before you seek to be understood.

Anywho, I hope this article on F.O.R.M. is helpful. I would love to hear your thoughts or experiences in the comment section below.

Read More

- My Strategy for Building a Solid, Meaningful, and Relevant Network

FORBES > LEADERSHIP > CAREERS

How To Build Community And Why It Matters So Much

Tracy Brower, PhD Contributor
I write about happiness, work-life fulfillment and the future of work.

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Oct 25, 2020, 06:30pm EDT

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Community is critical to our health and wellbeing. GETTY

You're feeling the effects of the pandemic, quarantines and social isolation acutely. You're missing your people, your network and your community.

Sure, you've stayed in touch with those with whom you're closest, but your more distant ties are diminishing, disappearing or declining.

Community is critical to our overall wellbeing and the decline of our connectedness is coming at the same time mental health issues are on the rise. In a study by Queen's University, 27% of people said they were suffering from loneliness, and research from Washington State University found all ages suffer from social anxiety and FOMO (fear of missing out) which are correlated with low self-esteem and low self-compassion. In addition, a newly-published study by the University of Houston showed the mental health effects of the pandemic will be both long lasting and potentially devastating.

We are social animals and our instinct is to find strength in numbers. We appreciate a small circle of people, but need larger circles as well. Our health and happiness are inextricably linked with our connections.

Yet despite the sweeping effects of the pandemic, we can strengthen and sustain community. You can have impact as an individual, and as a leader.

Purpose

Strong communities have a significant sense of purpose. People's roles have meaning in the bigger picture of the community and each member of the group understands how their work connects to others' and adds value to the whole. As members of community, people don't just want to lay bricks, they want to build a cathedral.

Build your community by keeping your purpose in mind and reminding yourself of how your contribution matters. You're a great parent, aunt or uncle, and you're having a meaningful impact on children's learning. Or you're participating on a key project which will affect the user experience for your company's customers. Or you're processing payments at a university where students will get their start toward their life goals. Even everyday contributions matter to the community as a whole.

As a leader, provide people with vision and line of sight so they are crystal clear about the broader purpose of the organization and how their work fits into the whole. Also give them a sense of business literacy so they understand context and know how they can be proactive and make an impact. Taking these actions will give individuals a better experience, and also strengthen the overall community.

Belonging

When we are part of a thriving community, we feel a sense of kinship, camaraderie and connectedness. There is a place and a role for each person, and group members feel they can bring all of themselves to their work and their team. There are high levels of trust and psychological safety in which people know others will have their backs and will give them not only the benefit of the doubt, but the space to apply their talents and develop new ones. Within a strong community, people feel valued and all work has dignity. In addition, the needs of each member and the needs of the whole organization are fully met. As Plato said, "The part cannot be well unless the whole is well." Communities take care of their members and vice versa—because they are invested in the collective success of the group.

The strength of our bonds matters too. A just-published study by Ohio State University found people feel more supported when their networks are more tightly knit. In other words, when your own connections know each other, you're more likely to feel supported.

Build your community by staying in touch with people—even if you have to accomplish it virtually. Invest time and energy in maintaining your bonds. Send a quick note to someone you haven't seen in a while or call a more distant acquaintance. While making a phone call may seem very yesterday, a new study by the University of Texas Austin found voice calls can create stronger bonds than text messages.

Also, demonstrate compassion and help others feel a sense of belonging. New findings published in the *Journal of Neuroscience* found people made better decisions when they considered others. After yoga, invite a new attendee to have a physically-distanced coffee with your core group, or ask for input from a colleague on your project. People appreciate being welcomed and valued. The sense of belonging you extend strengthens the whole.

As a leader, hold regular one-on-ones with your staff members. Have frequent meetings with your team so you can coordinate tasks and ensure people are making meaningful connections. Encourage team members to pull each other in, obtain feedback and work through tough challenges together. Encourage people to build their social capital—their relationship ties (think: webbing) across organizations. Social capital is positive for people because it provides the opportunity for growth, learning and advice. And it is good for organizations because social capital helps people get work done more effectively and efficiently.

Resilience

Strong communities are always evolving. They aren't immune from tough circumstances, instead they adapt and become stronger as they cope together. The most effective communities support members who take risks, try new things and go out on limbs to create and innovate. Effective communities also embrace conflict and diversity—working through differences of opinion and making space for civil discourse and the learning that occurs from appreciating multiple points of view.

New research published in *The Economic Journal* found the most novel, disruptive innovations, and those which linked technologies across and between fields were most likely to arise within cities. This was because the networks in cities were denser—with more people exchanging ideas and testing new thinking across social and professional groups.

Build your community by seeking new learning and stretching your own skills. When people within communities are continually developing, the communities themselves progress as well. Help members of your group who are struggling by encouraging plenty of expression, especially from those with fresh or novel opinions. Innovation often comes from the edges—previously untested, untried or unpopular ideas.

As a leader, encourage career growth and support people if they try something new and fail. Don't let perfection get in the way of progress. If you're not seeing some mistakes or missteps, your team may not be reaching high enough. When work is stellar, recognize it. Also hold people accountable for performance, while also making room for team members to stretch.

We are craving community and cannot live our best lives without it. Our mental health and our physical health literally depend on being part of strong and capable communities. Remind yourself how much you matter, and take action to strengthen and sustain your community.
Follow me on Twitter or LinkedIn. Check out my website or some of my other work here.

Tracy Brower, PhD

I am a Ph.D. sociologist and the author of The Secrets to Happiness at Work exploring happiness, fulfillment and work-life. I am also the author of Bring Work to... **Read More**

Session 3:

The Power of Storytelling

PublicNarrative
self & us & now

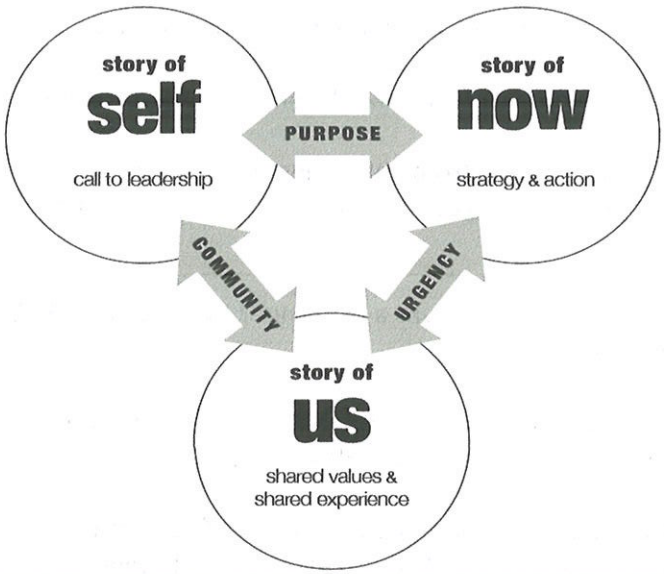
PUBLIC NARRATIVE WORKSHEET

In this worksheet you will focus primarily on your story of self. But public narrative is not primarily a form of self-expression. It is an exercise of leadership by motivating others to join you in action on behalf of a shared purpose. Although this worksheet focuses on your "story of self", the goal is to identify sources of your own calling to the purpose in which you will call upon others (story of us) to join you in action (story of now). Remember, public narrative requires learning a process, not writing a script. It can be learned only by telling, listening, reflecting, and telling again – over, over and over. This is to get you started.

1. **A story of now**: What urgent challenge do you hope to inspire others to take action on? What is your vision of successful action? What choice will you call on members of your community – in this case, your classmates - to make if they are to meet this challenge successfully? How can they act together to achieve this outcome? And how can they begin now, at this moment? Describe this "now" in two or three sentences.

2. **A story of us**: To what values, experiences, or aspirations of your community – in this case your classmates at the very least - will you appeal when you call on them to join you in action? What stories do you share that can express these values? Describe this "us" in two or three sentences.

3. **A story of self**: Why were you called to motivate others to join you in this action? What stories can you share that will enable others to "get you." How can you enable others to experience sources the values that move you not only to act, but to lead? Focus on this section, trying to identify key choice points that set you on your path.



telling your public narrative

WHY STORIES?

Stories are how we learn to make choices. Stories are how we learn to access the moral and emotional resources we need to face the uncertain, the unknown, and the unexpected

mindfully. Because stories speak the language of emotion, the language of the heart, they teach us not only how we "ought to" act, but can in inspire us with the "courage *to*" act. And because the sources of emotion on which they draw are in our values, our stories can help us translate our values into action.

A plot begins when a protagonist moving toward a desired goal runs into an unexpected event, creating a crisis that engages our curiosity, choices he or she makes in response, and an outcome. Our ability to empathetically identify with a protagonist allows us to enter into the story, feel what s/he feels, see things through his or her eyes. The moral, revealed through the resolution, brings understanding of the head and of the heart. Stories teach us how to access moral resources to face difficult choices, unfamiliar situations, and uncertain outcomes. Each of us is the protagonist in our own life story; we face everyday challenges, we author our own choices, and we learn from the outcomes – the narrative of which constitutes who we are, our identity

By telling personal stories of challenges we have faced, choices we have made, and what we learned from the outcomes, we become more mindful of our own moral resources and, at the same time, share our wisdom so as to inspire others. Because stories enable us to communicate our values not as abstract principles, but as lived experience, they have the power to move others.

Stories are specific – and visual - they evoke a very particular time, place, setting, mood, color, sound, texture, taste. The more you can communicate this visual specificity, the more power your story will have to engage others. This may seem like a paradox, but like a poem or a painting or a piece of music, it is the specificity of the experience that can give us access to the universal sentiment or insight they contain.

You may think that your story doesn't matter, that people aren't interested, that you shouldn't be talking about yourself. But when you do public work, you have a responsibility to offer a public account of who you are, why you do what you do, and where you hope to lead. If you don't author your public story, others will, and they may not tell it in the way that you like.

A good story public story is drawn from the series of choice points that have structured the "plot" of your life – the **challenges** you faced, **choices** you made, and **outcomes you experienced.**

> ***Challenge***: Why did you feel it was a challenge? What was so challenging about it? Why was it *your* challenge?
>
> ***Choice***: Why did you make the choice you did? Where did you get the courage – or not? Where did you get the hope – or not? How did it feel?
>
> ***Outcome:*** How did the outcome feel? Why did it feel that way? What did it teach you? What do you want to teach us? How do you want us to feel?

The story you tell of why you have chosen the path you have allows others emotional and intellectual insight into your values, why you have chosen to act on them in this way, what they can expect from you, and what they can learn from you.

story of now

WHAT URGENT "CHALLENGE" MIGHT YOU CALL ON US TO FACE?

WHAT VISION COULD WE ACHIEVE IF WE ACT?

WHAT "ACTION" MIGHT YOU CALL UPON US TO JOIN YOU IN TAKING?

PLEASE RESPOND WITH NO MORE THAN 2-3 SENTENCES.

A "story of now" is urgent, an urgency based on threat, or, equally, on opportunity; it is meant to inspire others to drop other things and pay attention; it is rooted in the values you celebrate in your story of self and us, but poses a challenge to those values. It contrasts a vision of the world as it will be if we fail to act, the world as it could be if we do act, and calls on us to act.

- *Do you value honoring those who sacrifice for their country? Does the care returning veterans receive meet this standard? If not, what are you going to do about it?*

- *Do you value passing on a livable world to the next generation? Do the measures being taken to deal with climate change meet this standard? If not, what are you going to do about it?*

- *Do you value a society in which individuals are only responsible for themselves and their families? Is being undermined by public policies, interest groups and others? What are you going to do about it?*

- *Do you value the principal that powerful institutions, especially If they benefit from public support, have moral responsibilities to the public in how they use their power? Which one's? How? What are you going to do about it?*

- *Do you value marriage as legitimate only between a man and a woman, a value placed at risk as a result of recent court decisions? What are you going to do about it?*

- *Do you value equal treatment under the law for all racial, religious, and cultural groups? Is that the case? If not, what are you going to do about it?*

Leaders who only describe a problem, but fail to inspire us to act together to try to solve the problem, aren't good leaders. Running through a list of "100 things you can do to make the world better" is a "cop-out." It trivializes each action. Suggesting that everyone work at it in their own way, ignores the significance of strategic focus in overcoming resistance to change. If

you are called to face a real challenge, a challenge so urgent that we are motivated to face it as well, you have a responsibility to invite us to join you in plausible action. A 'story of now" is not simply a call to be for or against something – that's "exhortation" – it is a call to take "hopeful" action. This means clarity as to what will happen if we don't act, what could happen if we do, and action each of us could commit to take that could start us in a clear direction right here, now, in this place.

If you ask me to "change a light bulb," for example, to deal with climate change, do you really think it will happen? Especially if it's among 100 other things I might – or might not – do? But if you ask me to join you in persuading the Kennedy School to change all of its light bulbs by signing a student petition, joining you in a delegation to the dean, and, adding my name to a public list of KSG students who have committed to changing the light bulbs where they live, what do you think the odds are of success?

A "story of now" works if people join you in action.

story of us

WHO IS THE "US" YOU WILL CALL UPON TO JOIN YOU?

WHAT MOTIVATING VALUES DO THEY SHARE?

WHAT EXPERIENCES HAVE YOU SHARED?

PLEASE RESPOND WITH NO MORE THAN 2-3 SENTENCES.

We are all part of multiple "us's" – families, faiths, cultures, communities, organizations, and nations in which we participate with others. What community, organization, movement, culture, nation, or other constituency do you consider yourself to be part of, connected with? With whom do you share a common past? With whom do you share a common future? Do you participate in this community as a result of "fate", "choice" or both? How like or unlike the experience of others do you believe your own experience to be? One way we establish an "us" – a shared identity – is through telling of shared stories, stories through which we can articulate the values we share, as well as the particularities that make us an "us."

Your challenge in this course is to inspire an "us" from among your classmates whom you will call upon to join you in action motivated by shared values, which you bring alive through story telling. There are many "us's" among your classmates, as there are in any community. They may think of themselves as an "us" based on enrolling in this class, dealing with the challenge of choosing classes, enrolling the same year, in the same program, dealing with family challenges, experiencing an acceptance letter, finding the money, time, space to be able to come here; experiencing the shock of arrival; sharing aspirations, backgrounds (work experience, religion, generation, ethnicity, culture, nationality, family status, etc.), experiences coming to school here, values commitments, career aspirations, career dilemmas, etc. Your challenge is to think through the "us" whom you can move to join you in action on behalf of a shared purpose.

Some of the "us's" you could invite your classmates to join are larger "us's" in which you may already participate. You may be active in the environmental movement, for example, and may find others among your classmates who are as well. You may be active in a faith community, a human rights organization, a political campaign, a support organization, an immigrant association, a labor union, and alumni group, etc. Some "us's" have been around for literally thousands of years such as faith traditions – some only for a few days. Most "us's" that have been around tell stories about their founding, the challenges founders faced, how they overcame them, who joined with them, and what this teaches us about the values of the organization.

A story of us works if people identify with each other on behalf of values that inspire them to act.

story of self

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF YOUR OWN CALLING?

WHAT CRITICAL CHOICES POINTS CAN YOU RECALL?

WHAT STORIES CAN YOU TELL ABOUT THESE CHOICE POINTS?

PLEASE USE MOST OF YOUR PAPER TO ADDRESS THIS QUESTION

Now reflect on the sources of your motivation, your call to leadership, the values that move you to act. Grab a notebook, a recorder, or a friend who will listen, and describe the milestones and experiences that have brought you to this moment. Go back as far as you can remember.

You might start with your parents. What made them the people they became? How did their choices influence your own? Do you remember "family stories," perhaps told so often you may have gotten tired of hearing them. Why did they tell these stories and not others? What was the moral of these stories? What did they teach? How did they make you feel?

In your own life, consider the purpose for which you are telling your story, focus on challenges you had to face, the choices you made about how to deal with them, and the satisfactions – or frustrations – you experienced. What did you learn from the outcomes and how you feel about them today? What did they teach you about yourself, about your family, about your peers, about your community, about your nation, about the world around you, about people - about what really matters to you? What about these stories was so intriguing? Which elements offered real perspective into your own life?

If you're having trouble, here are some questions to help you begin. This is NOT a questionnaire They are NOT to be answered individually. They are to help you get your memory gears rolling so that you can reflect on your public story and tell it with brevity and intentionality. Don't expect to include the answers to *all* these questions each time you tell your story. They are the

building blocks of many potential stories, and the object right now is to lay them out in a row and see what inspires you.

What memories do you have as a child that link to the people, places, events that you value? What are your favorite memories? What images, sounds or smells in particular come up for you when you recall these memories?

List every job or project that you have ever been involved with that are connected with these values (or not). Be expansive; include things like camping in the wild, serving in a youth group, going to a political rally, organizing a cultural club, experiencing a moment of transcendence. List classes you have taken, projects you have led, and work that you have done that connects with your values. Name the last five books or articles that you have read (by choice) or movies or plays that you have seen. What do you see as a connection or theme that you can see in all of the selections? What did you enjoy about these articles? What does your reading say about you?

Some of the moments you recall may be painful as well as hopeful. Most people who want to make the world a better place have stories of pain, which taught them that the world needs changing, and stories of hope, which persuaded them of the possibility. You may have felt excluded, put down or powerless, as well as courageous, recognized, and inspired. Be sure to attend to the moments of "challenge" as well as to the moments of "hope" – and to learn to be able to articulate these moments in ways that can enable others to understand who you are. It is the combination of "criticality" and "hopefulness" that creates the energy for change.

What was the last time you spent a day doing what you love doing? What in particular made you want to use that day in that way? What was memorable about the day? Is there a specific sight, sound or smell that you think of when you recall this day?

What factors were behind your decision to pursue a career in public work? Was there pressure to make different choices? How did you deal with conflicting influences?

Who in your life was the person who introduced you to your "calling" or who encouraged you to become active? Why do you think that they did this? What did your parents model? What was the role, if any, of a community of faith? Whom did you admire?

Whom do you credit the most with your involvement now in work for your cause? What about their involvement in your life made a difference? Why do you think it was important to them to do so?

In the end you will be asked to **link your story of self, story of us, and story of now into a single public narrative.**

As you will see, however, this is an iterative – and non-linear – process. Each time you tell your story, you will adapt it – to make yourself clearer, to adjust to a different audience, to locate yourself in a different context. As you develop a story of us, you may find you want to alter your story of self, especially as you begin to see the relationship between the two more clearly. Similarly, as you develop a story of now, you may find it affects what went before. And, as you go back to reconsider what went before, you may find it alters your story of now.

You will not leave this class with a final "script" of your public narrative but you will learn a process by which you can generate that narrative over and over and over again when, where, and how you need to.

MOYERS & COMPANY

» How People Power Generates Change

How to Tell Your 'Story of Self'

May 10, 2013
by John Light

Veteran organizer Marshall Ganz is is credited with devising the successful grassroots organizing model and training for Barack Obama's winning 2008 presidential campaign. (AP Photo/Stephan Savoia)

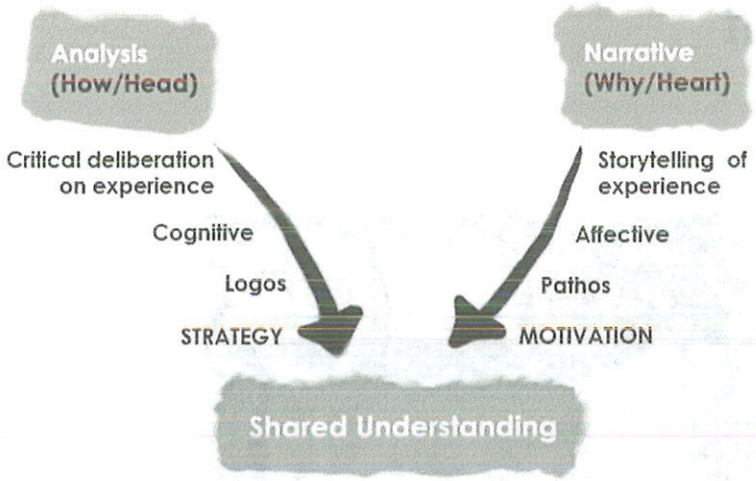
"Movements have narratives. They tell stories, because they are not just about rearranging economics and politics. They also rearrange meaning. And they're not just about redistributing the goods. They're about figuring out what is good." — Marshall Ganz

Why tell stories?

Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools organizers can use to unite a movement. Your story is the "why" of organizing — the art of translating values into action through stories. It is an ongoing discussion process through which individuals, communities and nations construct their identity, make choices and inspire action. Each of us has a compelling story to tell that can move others.

Two ways to engage

Leaders employ both the "head" and the "heart" in order to mobilize others to act effectively on behalf of shared values. In other words, they engage people in interpreting why they should change their world — their motivation — and how they can act to change it — their strategy.



Many leaders are good at the analysis side of public speaking: They focus on presenting a good argument or strategy. Alternatively, other leaders tell their personal story, often a tale of heartbreak that educates us about the challenge but doesn't highlight the potential for successfully realizing the end goal.

An effective story of self has to have elements of both the analytical and the emotional. It is a story that involves the head and the heart — and moves people to use their hands and feet in action.

Action is *inhibited* by inertia, fear, self-doubt, isolation and apathy. Action is *facilitated* by urgency, hope, knowing you can make a difference, solidarity and anger. Stories mobilize emotions that urge us to take action and help us overcome emotions that inhibit us from action.

The key to storytelling is understanding that values inspire action through emotion. We experience our values emotionally — they are what actually move us to act. Because stories allow us to express our values not as abstract principles, but as lived experience, they have the power to move others to action as well.

Finding your story of self's "choice point"

A story of self tells why we have been called to serve. It expresses the values or experiences that call each person to take leadership on a given issue.

The key focus is on choice points: moments in our lives when values are formed because of a need to choose in the face of great uncertainty. When did you first care about being heard, or learn that you were concerned about the issue on which you want to take action? Why? When did you feel you had to do something about it? Why did you feel you could? What were the circumstances? What specific choice did you make?

The three key elements of storytelling structure:
Challenge — Choice — Outcome

A plot begins with an unexpected challenge that confronts a character with an urgent need to pay attention, to make a choice — a choice for which he or she is unprepared. The choice yields an outcome, and the outcome teaches a moral.

Because we can empathetically identify with the character, we can "feel" the moral. We not only hear about someone's courage; we can also be inspired by it.

The story of the character and their effort to engage around values engages the listener in their own challenge, choice and outcome relative to the story. Each story should include all three elements. It's not enough to say, "I was scared." You need to say, "I was very scared, I needed to decide, and when I did, I learned it was possible." Challenge, choice, outcome.

Incorporating challenge, choice and outcome in your own story

There are some key questions you need to answer as you consider the choices you have made and the path you have taken that brought you to this point in time as a leader. Once you identify the specific relevant choice point, dig deeper by answering the following questions.

Challenge: What was the specific challenge you faced? Why did you feel it was a challenge? What was so challenging about it? Why was it your challenge?

Choice: What was the specific choice you made? Why did you make the choice you did? Where did you get the courage (or not)? Where did you get the hope (or not)? How did it feel?

Outcome: What happened as a result of your choice? What hope can it give us? How did the outcome feel? Why did it feel that way? What did it teach you? What do you want to teach

us? How do you want us to feel?

A word about challenge: Sometimes people see the word "challenge" and think that they need to describe the misfortunes of their lives. Keep in mind that a struggle might be one of your own choosing — a high mountain you decided to climb as much as a hole you managed to climb out of. Any number of things may have been a challenge to you and be the source of a good story to inspire others.

Tips

If you're having trouble getting started, here are some factors that may have contributed to your current choice to take leadership on your issue.

Family and childhood: Your parents and family, experiences growing up, the community in which you grew up, your role models, your school

Life choices: Schools you went to, the career you chose, your partner and family, your hobbies, interests and talents, challenges you've overcome

Click to watch activists share their stories of self.

Organizer experiences: Role models, your first experience organizing, your first awareness of the issue on which you want to take action

Focus on one key story — one event or one place or one important relationship. Take some time to think about the elements of your story in the context of the challenge, choice and outcome. In this case, the outcome might also be the thing you learned, in addition to what actually happened.

Remember, the purpose of telling your story of self is to begin to create common ground with your audience by sharing a story that reflects the values that brought you to work on your given issue, and where those values come from.

These tips for constructing your "story of self" are adapted from 350.org's toolkit, which was compiled with help from Marshall Ganz and other organizing experts. This post is published under the Creative Commons license and can be reprinted.

THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

How Stories Connect And Persuade Us: Unleashing The Brain Power Of Narrative

April 11, 2020 · 7:00 AM ET

ELENA RENKEN

When you listen to a story, your brain waves actually start to synchronize with those of the storyteller. And reading a narrative activates brain regions involved in deciphering or imagining a person's motives and perspective, research has found.

aywan88/Getty Images

When you listen to a story, whatever your age, you're transported mentally to another time and place — and who couldn't use that right now?

"We all know this delicious feeling of being swept into a story world," says Liz Neeley, who directs The Story Collider, a nonprofit production company that, in nonpandemic times, stages live events filled with personal stories about science. "You forget about your surroundings," she says, "and you're entirely immersed."

Depending on the story you're reading, watching or listening to, your palms may start to sweat, scientists find. You'll blink faster, and your heart might flutter or skip. Your facial expressions shift, and the muscles above your eyebrows will react to the words — another sign that you're engaged.

A growing body of brain science offers even more insight into what's behind these experiences.

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PHOTOS: Life And Work Amid The Outbreak

SHOTS - HEALTH NEWS

Storytelling Helps Hospital Staff Discover The Person Within The Patient

On functional MRI scans, many different areas of the brain light up when someone is listening to a narrative, Neeley says — not only the networks involved in language processing, but other neural circuits, too. One study of listeners found that the brain networks that process emotions arising from sounds — along with areas involved in movement — were activated, especially during the emotional parts of the story.

As you hear a story unfold, your brain waves actually start to synchronize with those of the storyteller, says Uri Hasson, professor of psychology and neuroscience at Princeton University. When he and his research team recorded the brain activity in two people as one person told a story and the other listened, they found that the

greater the listener's comprehension, the more closely the brain wave patterns mirrored those of the storyteller.

Brain regions that do complex information processing seem to be engaged, Hasson explains: It's as though, "I'm trying to make your brain similar to mine in areas that really capture the meaning, the situation, the schema — the context of the world."

Other scientists turned up interesting activity in the parts of the brain engaged in making predictions. When we read, brain networks involved in deciphering — or imagining — another person's motives, and the areas involved in guessing what will happen next are activated, Neeley says. Imagining what drives other people — which feeds into our predictions — helps us see a situation from different perspectives. It can even shift our core beliefs, Neeley says, when we "come back out of the story world into regular life."

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SHORT WAVE

Your Brain On Storytelling

Listeners, in turn, may keep thinking about the story and talk to others about it, she says, which reinforces the memory and, over time, can drive a broader change in attitudes.

Different formats of information — lists of facts, say, or charts — may be better suited to different situations, researchers say, but stories wield a particularly strong influence over our attitudes and behavior.

In health care contexts, for example, people are more likely to change their lifestyles when they see a character they identify with making the same change, notes Melanie Green, a communication professor at the University at Buffalo who studies the power of narrative, including in doctor-patient communication. Anecdotes can make health advice personally important to a patient, she finds. When you hear or read about someone you identify with who has taken up meditation, for example, you might be more likely to stick with it yourself.

Stories can alter broader attitudes as well, Green says — like our views on relationships, politics or the environment. Messages that feel like commands — even good advice coming from a friend — aren't always received well. If you feel like you're being pushed into a corner, you're more likely to push back. But if someone tells you a story about the time they, too, had to end a painful relationship, for example, the information will likely come across less like a lecture and more like a personal truth.

Neeley has been taking advantage of these effects to shift perceptions about science and scientists in her work with Story Collider. "We try and take everybody — all different people and perspectives — put them onstage, and hear what a life in science is really like," she says.

Solid information in any form is good, Green says. "But that's not necessarily enough." A vivid, emotional story "can give that extra push to make it feel more real or more important." If you look at the times somebody's beliefs have been changed, she says, it's often because of a story that "hits them in the heart."

This story adapted from an episode of NPR's weekday science podcast Short Wave.

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Storytelling That Moves People

by Bronwyn Fryer

From the Magazine (June 2003)

Persuasion is the centerpiece of business activity. Customers must be convinced to buy your company's products or services, employees and colleagues to go along with a new strategic plan or reorganization, investors to buy (or not to sell) your stock, and partners to sign the next deal. But despite the critical importance of persuasion, most executives struggle to communicate, let alone inspire. Too often, they get lost in the accoutrements of companyspeak: PowerPoint slides, dry memos, and hyperbolic missives from the corporate communications department. Even the most carefully researched and considered efforts are routinely greeted with cynicism, lassitude, or outright dismissal.

Why is persuasion so difficult, and what can you do to set people on fire? In search of answers to those questions, HBR senior editor Bronwyn Fryer paid a visit to Robert McKee, the world's best-known and most respected screenwriting lecturer, at his home in Los Angeles. An award-winning writer and director, McKee moved to California after studying for his Ph.D. in cinema arts at the University of Michigan. He then taught at the University of Southern California's School of Cinema and Television before forming his own company, Two-Arts, to take his lectures on the art of storytelling worldwide to an audience of writers, directors, producers, actors, and entertainment executives.

McKee's students have written, directed, and produced hundreds of hit films, including *Forrest Gump, Erin Brockovich, The Color Purple, Gandhi, Monty Python and the Holy Grail, Sleepless in Seattle, Toy Story*, and *Nixon*. They have won 18 Academy Awards, 109 Emmy Awards, 19 Writers Guild Awards, and 16 Directors Guild of America Awards. Emmy Award winner Brian Cox portrays McKee in the 2002 film *Adaptation*, which follows the life of a screenwriter trying to adapt the book *The Orchid Thief*. McKee also serves as a project consultant to film and television production companies such as Disney, Pixar, and Paramount as well as major corporations, including Microsoft, which regularly send their entire creative staffs to his lectures.

McKee believes that executives can engage listeners on a whole new level if they toss their PowerPoint slides and learn to tell good stories instead. In his best-selling book *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting*, published in 1997 by Harper-Collins, McKee argues that stories "fulfill a profound human need to grasp the patterns of living—not merely as an intellectual exercise, but within a very personal, emotional experience." What follows is an edited and abridged transcript of McKee's conversation with HBR.

Why should a CEO or a manager pay attention to a screenwriter?

A big part of a CEO's job is to motivate people to reach certain goals. To do that, he or she must engage their emotions, and the key to their hearts is story. There are two ways to persuade people. The first is by using conventional rhetoric, which is what most executives are trained in. It's an intellectual process, and in the business world it usually consists of a PowerPoint slide presentation in which you say, "Here is our company's biggest challenge, and here is what we need to do to prosper." And you build your case by giving statistics and facts and quotes from authorities. But there are two problems with rhetoric. First, the people you're talking to have their own set of authorities, statistics, and experiences. While you're trying to persuade them,

they are arguing with you in their heads. Second, if you do succeed in persuading them, you've done so only on an intellectual basis. That's not good enough, because people are not inspired to act by reason alone.

The other way to persuade people—and ultimately a much more powerful way—is by uniting an idea with an emotion. The best way to do that is by telling a compelling story. In a story, you not only weave a lot of information into the telling but you also arouse your listener's emotions and energy. Persuading with a story is hard. Any intelligent person can sit down and make lists. It takes rationality but little creativity to design an argument using conventional rhetoric. But it demands vivid insight and storytelling skill to present an idea that packs enough emotional power to be memorable. If you can harness imagination and the principles of a well-told story, then you get people rising to their feet amid thunderous applause instead of yawning and ignoring you.

So What is a story?

Essentially, a story expresses how and why life changes. It begins with a situation in which life is relatively in balance: You come to work day after day, week after week, and everything's fine. You expect it will go on that way. But then there's an event—in screenwriting, we call it the "inciting incident"—that throws life out of balance. You get a new job, or the boss dies of a heart attack, or a big customer threatens to leave. The story goes on to describe how, in an effort to restore balance, the protagonist's subjective expectations crash into an uncooperative objective reality. A good storyteller describes what it's like to deal with these opposing forces, calling on the protagonist to dig deeper, work with scarce resources, make difficult decisions, take action despite risks, and ultimately discover the truth. All great storytellers since the dawn of time—from the ancient Greeks through Shakespeare and up to the present day—have dealt with this fundamental conflict between subjective expectation and cruel reality.

How would an executive learn to tell stories?

Stories have been implanted in you thousands of times since your mother took you on her knee. You've read good books, seen movies, attended plays. What's more, human beings naturally *want* to work through stories. Cognitive psychologists describe how the human mind, in its attempt to understand and remember, assembles the bits and pieces of experience into a story, beginning with a personal desire, a life objective, and then portraying the struggle against the forces that block that desire. Stories are how we remember; we tend to forget lists and bullet points.

Businesspeople not only have to understand their companies' past, but then they must project the future. And how do you imagine the future? As a story. You create scenarios in your head of possible future events to try to anticipate the life of your company or your own personal life. So, if a businessperson understands that his or her own mind naturally wants to frame experience in a story, the key to moving an audience is not to resist this impulse but to embrace it by telling a good story.

What makes a good story?

You emphatically do not want to tell a beginning-to-end tale describing how results meet expectations. This is boring and banal. Instead, you want to display the struggle between expectation and reality in all its nastiness.

For example, let's imagine the story of a biotech start-up we'll call Chemcorp, whose CEO has to persuade some Wall Street bankers to invest in the company. He could tell them that Chemcorp has discovered a chemical compound that prevents heart attacks and offer up a lot of slides showing them the size of the market, the business plan, the organizational chart, and so on. The bankers would nod politely and stifle yawns while thinking of all the other companies better positioned in Chemcorp's market.

Alternatively, the CEO could turn his pitch into a story, beginning with someone close to him—say, his father—who died of a heart attack. So nature itself is the first antagonist that the CEO-as-protagonist must overcome. The story might unfold like this: In his grief, he realizes that if there had been some chemical indication of heart disease, his father's death could have been prevented. His company discovers a protein that's present in the blood just before heart attacks and develops an easy-to-administer, low-cost test.

But now it faces a new antagonist: the FDA. The approval process is fraught with risks and dangers. The FDA turns down the first application, but new research reveals that the test performs even better than anyone had expected, so the agency approves a second application. Meanwhile, Chemcorp is running out of money, and a key partner drops out and goes off to start his own company. Now Chemcorp is in a fight-to-the-finish patent race.

This accumulation of antagonists creates great suspense. The protagonist has raised the idea in the bankers' heads that the story might not have a happy ending. By now, he has them on the edges of their seats, and he says, "We won the race, we got the patent, we're poised to go public and save a quarter-million lives a year." And the bankers just throw money at him.

> **"If you can harness imagination and the principles of a well-told story, then you get people rising to their feet amid thunderous applause instead of yawning and ignoring you."**

Aren't you really talking about exaggeration and manipulation?

No. Although businesspeople are often suspicious of stories for the reasons you suggest, the fact is that statistics are used to tell lies and damn lies, while accounting reports are often BS in a ball gown—witness Enron and WorldCom.

When people ask me to help them turn their presentations into stories, I begin by asking questions. I kind of psychoanalyze their companies, and amazing dramas pour out. But most companies and executives sweep the dirty laundry, the difficulties, the antagonists, and the struggle under the carpet. They prefer to present a rosy—and boring—picture to the world. But as a storyteller, you want to position the problems in the foreground and then show how you've overcome them. When you tell the story of your struggles against real antagonists, your audience sees you as an exciting, dynamic person. And I know that the storytelling method works, because after I consulted with a dozen corporations whose principals told exciting stories to Wall Street, they all got their money.

What's wrong with painting a positive picture?

It doesn't ring true. You can send out a press release talking about increased sales and a bright future, but your audience knows it's never that easy. They know you're not spotless; they know your competitor doesn't wear a black hat. They know you've slanted your statement to make your company look good. Positive, hypothetical pictures and boilerplate press releases actually work against you because they foment distrust among the people you're trying to convince. I suspect that most CEOs do not believe their own spin doctors—and if they don't believe the hype, why should the public?

The great irony of existence is that what makes life worth living does not come from the rosy side. We would all rather be lotus-eaters, but life will not allow it. The energy to live comes from the

dark side. It comes from everything that makes us suffer. As we struggle against these negative powers, we're forced to live more deeply, more fully.

So acknowledging this dark side makes you more convincing?

Of course. Because you're more truthful. One of the principles of good storytelling is the understanding that we all live in dread. Fear is when you don't know what's going to happen. Dread is when you know what's going to happen and there's nothing you can do to stop it. Death is the great dread; we all live in an ever shrinking shadow of time, and between now and then all kinds of bad things could happen.

Most of us repress this dread. We get rid of it by inflicting it on other people through sarcasm, cheating, abuse, indifference—cruelties great and small. We all commit those little evils that relieve the pressure and make us feel better. Then we rationalize our bad behavior and convince ourselves we're good people. Institutions do the same thing: They deny the existence of the negative while inflicting their dread on other institutions or their employees.

If you're a realist, you know that this is human nature; in fact, you realize that this behavior is the foundation of all nature. The imperative in nature is to follow the golden rule of survival: Do unto others what they do unto you. In nature, if you offer cooperation and get cooperation back, you get along. But if you offer cooperation and get antagonism back, then you give antagonism in return—in spades.

Ever since human beings sat around the fire in caves, we've told stories to help us deal with the dread of life and the struggle to survive. All great stories illuminate the dark side. I'm not talking about so-called "pure" evil, because there is no such thing. We are

all evil and good, and these sides do continual battle. Kenneth Lay says wiping out people's jobs and life savings was unintentional. Hannibal Lecter is witty, charming, and brilliant, and he eats people's livers. Audiences appreciate the truthfulness of a storyteller who acknowledges the dark side of human beings and deals honestly with antagonistic events. The story engenders a positive but realistic energy in the people who hear it.

Does this mean you have to be a pessimist?

It's not a question of whether you're optimistic or pessimistic. It seems to me that the civilized human being is a skeptic—someone who believes nothing at face value. Skepticism is another principle of the storyteller. The skeptic understands the difference between text and subtext and always seeks what's really going on. The skeptic hunts for the truth beneath the surface of life, knowing that the real thoughts and feelings of institutions or individuals are unconscious and unexpressed. The skeptic is always looking behind the mask. Street kids, for example, with their tattoos, piercings, chains, and leather, wear amazing masks, but the skeptic knows the mask is only a persona. Inside anyone working that hard to look fierce is a marshmallow. Genuinely hard people make no effort.

So, a story that embraces darkness produces a positive energy in listeners?

Absolutely. We follow people in whom we believe. The best leaders I've dealt with—producers and directors—have come to terms with dark reality. Instead of communicating via spin doctors, they lead their actors and crews through the antagonism of a world in which the odds of getting the film made, distributed, and sold to millions of moviegoers are a thousand to one. They appreciate that the people who work for them love the work and live for the small triumphs that contribute to the final triumph.

CEOs, likewise, have to sit at the head of the table or in front of the microphone and navigate their companies through the storms of bad economies and tough competition. If you look your audience in the eye, lay out your really scary challenges, and say, "We'll be lucky as hell if we get through this, but here's what I think we should do," they will listen to you.

To get people behind you, you can tell a truthful story. The story of General Electric is wonderful and has nothing to do with Jack Welch's cult of celebrity. If you have a grand view of life, you can see it on all its complex levels and celebrate it in a story. A great CEO is someone who has come to terms with his or her own mortality and, as a result, has compassion for others. This compassion is expressed in stories.

Take the love of work, for example. Years ago, when I was in graduate school, I worked as an insurance fraud investigator. The claimant in one case was an immigrant who'd suffered a terrible head injury on a carmaker's assembly line. He'd been the fastest window assembler on the line and took great pride in his work. When I spoke to him, he was waiting to have a titanium plate inserted into his head.

The man had been grievously injured, but the company thought he was a fraud. In spite of that, he remained incredibly dedicated. All he wanted was to get back to work. He knew the value of work, no matter how repetitive. He took pride in it and even in the company that had falsely accused him. How wonderful it would have been for the CEO of that car company to tell the tale of how his managers recognized the falseness of their accusation and then rewarded the employee for his dedication. The company, in turn, would have been rewarded with redoubled effort from all the employees who heard that story.

How do storytellers discover and unearth the stories that want to be told?

The storyteller discovers a story by asking certain key questions. First, what does my protagonist want in order to restore balance in his or her life? Desire is the blood of a story. Desire is not a shopping list but a core need that, if satisfied, would stop the story in its tracks. Next, what is keeping my protagonist from achieving his or her desire? Forces within? Doubt? Fear? Confusion? Personal conflicts with friends, family, lovers? Social conflicts arising in the various institutions in society? Physical conflicts? The forces of Mother Nature? Lethal diseases in the air? Not enough time to get things done? The damned automobile that won't start? Antagonists come from people, society, time, space, and every object in it, or any combination of these forces at once. Then, how would my protagonist decide to act in order to achieve his or her desire in the face of these antagonistic forces? It's in the answer to that question that storytellers discover the truth of their characters, because the heart of a human being is revealed in the choices he or she makes under pressure. Finally, the storyteller leans back from the design of events he or she has created and asks, "Do I believe this? Is it neither an exaggeration nor a soft-soaping of the struggle? Is this an honest telling, though heaven may fall?"

Does being a good storyteller make you a good leader?

Not necessarily, but if you understand the principles of storytelling, you probably have a good understanding of yourself and of human nature, and that tilts the odds in your favor. I can teach the formal principles of stories, but not to a person who hasn't really lived. The art of storytelling takes intelligence, but it also demands a life experience that I've noted in gifted film directors: the pain of childhood. Childhood trauma forces you into a kind of mild schizophrenia that makes you see life simultaneously in two ways: First, it's direct, real-time experience, but at the same moment, your brain records it as

material—material out of which you will create business ideas, science, or art. Like a double-edged knife, the creative mind cuts to the truth of self and the humanity of others.

Self-knowledge is the root of all great storytelling. A storyteller creates all characters from the self by asking the question, "If I were this character in these circumstances, what would I do?" The more you understand your own humanity, the more you can appreciate the humanity of others in all their good-versus-evil struggles. I would argue that the great leaders Jim Collins describes are people with enormous self-knowledge. They have self-insight and self-respect balanced by skepticism. Great storytellers—and, I suspect, great leaders—are skeptics who understand their own masks as well as the masks of life, and this understanding makes them humble. They see the humanity in others and deal with them in a compassionate yet realistic way. That duality makes for a wonderful leader.

A version of this article appeared in the June 2003 issue of *Harvard Business Review*.

BF

Bronwyn Fryer is a contributing editor to HBR.org.

Session 4:
The Advocacy Toolbox

Getting Out the Vote in Local Elections: Results from Six Door-to-Door Canvassing Experiments

Donald P. Green
Alan S. Gerber
David W. Nickerson
Yale University

Prior to the November 6, 2001 elections, randomized voter mobilization experiments were conducted in Bridgeport, Columbus, Detroit, Minneapolis, Raleigh, and St. Paul. Names appearing on official lists of registered voters were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. A few days before Election Day, the treatment group received a face-to-face contact from a coalition of nonpartisan student and community organizations, encouraging them to vote. After the election, voter turnout records were used to compare turnout rates among people assigned to treatment and control groups. Consistent with the recent experimental results reported by Gerber and Green (2000b), the findings here indicate that face-to-face voter mobilization was effective in stimulating voter turnout across a wide spectrum of local elections.

Among the many distinctive attributes of American federalism is the frequency with which elections are held. Due to a profusion of state, municipal, and primary elections, the American voter has more opportunities to cast ballots than citizens of any other country. However, few Americans avail themselves of these abundant opportunities. Voter turnout slumps from presidential election years to even-numbered midterm elections. And in off-years, during which many local and some state elections are held, turnout levels fall even lower (Morlan 1984). Despite the immediate relevance of local issues to voters' lives, the typical U.S. municipal election draws between one-fifth and one-half of the *registered* electorate.

As Harold Gosnell (1927) noted in his path-breaking study of voter mobilization in Chicago during the 1924 and 1925 elections, the quiescence of local elections makes them ideal laboratories for studying methods for increasing voter turnout. Amid limited campaigning and few newsworthy political events, the effects of interventions designed to increase turnout are more readily detected. In addition, low voter turnout rates reduce statistical uncertainty, which is maximal when half of the sample casts ballots. Despite these advantages, local elections tend to attract little attention from students of politics, except insofar

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as they involve heated racial politics or other circumstances that make them atypical.

In recent years, the study of electoral turnout has increasingly focused on the subject of voter mobilization. Building on the early works of Gosnell (1927) and Eldersveld (1956), the recent scholarship of Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), and Putnam (2000) has emphasized the responsiveness of voters to their social and political environments. A citizen's level of electoral participation and civic engagement more generally is said to respond to blandishments from family members, political parties, and social networks. By implication, a dearth of mobilization activities may account for the low voter turnout rates typical of local elections.

The present study is patterned after the recent field experimental work of Gerber and Green (2000b). Examining the effects of nonpartisan get-out-the-vote (GOTV) drives on voter turnout in the 1998 midterm elections in New Haven, Gerber and Green found that face-to-face canvassing raised turnout rates from approximately 44% in the control group to 53% among those canvassed. This randomized experiment, which involved tens of thousands of registered voters, provides the clearest indication to date of the effectiveness of face-to-face mobilization, although the authors point out that one must be cautious about drawing generalizations based on a single study.

This essay provides six replications of the Gerber and Green (2000b) experiments, spanning a range of competitive and uncompetitive local elections. During the months leading up to the November 6, 2001 election, we collaborated with a variety of nonpartisan organizations to examine the effectiveness of door-to-door canvassing. Names appearing on lists of registered voters were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Treatment groups were visited during the days leading up to the election. Control groups were not contacted. After the election, we obtained voter turnout records from each county and calculated the turnout rates in each control and treatment group. It should be stressed that in contrast to most survey-based analyses of voter mobilization, our study does not rely on voters' self-reported turnout or self-reported contact with GOTV campaigns.

This essay begins with a brief overview of our statistical model and estimation procedure. Next, we describe the experiments conducted at each of the face-to-face canvassing sites. We then analyze the effectiveness of the get-out-the-vote campaign in each site and for the sample as a whole. The results indicate that canvassing significantly increases voter turnout across a range of political and social environments. These mobilization effects are significant, both substantively and statistically, and similar in magnitude to other recent experiments (Gerber and Green 2000b; Michelson 2003).

Research Design and Statistical Model

Unlike observational studies of voter mobilization, which examine the correlation between voting and contact with campaigns, experimental studies ran-

domly manipulate whether voters are approached by campaigns. Experimental control eliminates two problems associated with observational data. First, if campaigns target voters who are especially likely to go to the polls, the observed correlation between contact and voter turnout may be spurious. We might observe a strong correlation even if GOTV campaigns were ineffective. Second, if respondents' recollections of whether they were contacted is vague or distorted, the correlation between self-reported contact and turnout will misrepresent the true causal influence of contact.

The principal complication that arises in experimental studies of voter mobilization is that some citizens assigned to the treatment group cannot be reached. We must therefore distinguish between the intent-to-treat effect and the effects of actual contact. The intent-to-treat effect is simply the observed difference in voter turnout between those assigned to the treatment and control groups. If everyone in the treatment group is actually contacted, the intent-to-treat effect is identical to the actual treatment effect. In practice, however, contact rates are lower than 100% because target voters are often unavailable when canvassers visit their residences.

Consider the linear probability model,

$$Y = a + bX + u, \tag{1}$$

where Y is a dichotomous $\{0,1\}$ variable indicating whether a citizen cast a vote, and $X \in \{0,1\}$ represents whether he or she was actually contacted by a canvassing campaign. The coefficient b is the treatment effect, the boost in turnout caused by contact with the mobilization campaign. Contact is itself a function of whether a person was assigned to the treatment or control condition of the experiment. Let the variable Z, also a dichotomous $\{0,1\}$ variable, represent the random assignment to one of these experimental groups, such that

$$X = cZ + e. \tag{2}$$

To estimate the actual treatment effect (b) given a contact rate (c), we must adjust the intent-to-treat effect (t) as follows:

$$t/c \Rightarrow b. \tag{3}$$

In other words, to estimate the actual treatment effect, we take the intent-to-treat estimate and divide it by the observed contact rate. This estimator is equivalent to performing a two-stage least-squares regression of vote (Y) on actual contact (X) using randomization (Z) as an instrumental variable (Angrist, Imbens, and Rubin 1996; Gerber and Green 2000b). So long as we have information about the rate at which subjects assigned to the treatment group are actually contacted by the canvassers, we can accurately estimate the effects of contact.

A similar approach may be used for nonlinear probability models. One complication in studying local elections is that voter turnout tends to be very low, particularly among certain subgroups such as registered voters who did not vote in a previous national election. OLS may produce inadmissible predictions that

voting will occur with less than zero probability. Rivers and Vuong (1988) propose a two-stage conditional probit estimator that parallels the instrumental variables estimator described above.[1] The probit transformation ensures that predicted vote probabilities are confined to the range between 0 and 1.

Door-to-Door Canvassing Sites

Using official lists of voters gathered immediately after the close of registration, we compiled a database of registered voters' names and addresses. Names of individuals residing at the same address were grouped into households, which were in turn grouped geographically into walk lists. We restricted our attention to households with fewer than five registered voters, and in two sites, Raleigh and St. Paul, the population was restricted to households with at least two voters. One registered voter from each household was selected for study, and these voters were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. The walk lists given to canvassers contained the names and addresses of people in the treatment group, and they were instructed to approach only these residences.

Although the canvassing sites cannot be construed as a random sample of municipal elections occurring nationwide, our study is strengthened by the fact that the get-out-the-vote campaigns took place in very different political and demographic settings. Some elections were tightly contested; others were devoid of meaningful competition. Some sites have large populations of racial and ethnic minorities; others are predominantly white. Our aims in drawing from such a diverse collection of sites are twofold: to better gauge the average treatment effect of canvassing and to examine whether the treatment effects vary systematically with electoral competitiveness or other characteristics of the sites.

Site 1: Bridgeport, Connecticut. Bridgeport is a racially diverse, low-income urban area that votes overwhelmingly Democratic. The November 6 election featured a local school board election and local city council races. Due to the city's lopsided Democratic majority, all but one of these races were uncompetitive, and the remaining election occurred in a district that was outside the area we canvassed. Turnout, as expected, was low.

ACORN, a community organization championing the interests of low- and moderate-income families, conducted a door-to-door campaign in hopes of generating sufficient support among voters for a "living wage" ordinance (raising the minimum wage to $11.08 per hour) that had been introduced in the city council earlier in the year. Beginning on October 20th and each weekend thereafter, ACORN volunteers followed walk lists urging every treatment household to vote in the upcoming election.

ACORN did not field many volunteers, but those who participated were experienced and well trained. These volunteers, a diverse group of African Americans

[1] Estimates produced by the Rivers and Vuong method turn out to be almost identical to those obtained using maximum likelihood.

and Latinos, were largely female high-school graduates in their 30s and 40s. Some but not all of the canvassers spoke Spanish.

Site 2: Columbus, Ohio. The neighborhoods canvassed in Columbus were near The Ohio State University campus and tended to be heavily populated by students. Since the Franklin County Clerk only recently began collecting data on birth dates, the age of the voters contacted cannot be determined from voter registration records. Based on the observations of those who conducted the canvassing, it appears that the majority of those canvassed were 25 years old or younger. The only election on the slate was for City Council. Despite the at-large format of the city council election, the races were not competitive, and turnout was expected to be low.

Canvassing occurred during the weekend prior to the election. The canvassers were recruited from the local Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) chapter and volunteers from around campus. Unlike the canvassers in Bridgeport, the Columbus canvassers had little political experience. Only one of the volunteers had ever gone door-to-door for any purpose.

Site 3: Detroit, Michigan. With a closely contested mayoral race, the Detroit elections were among the most interesting in 2001. As in Bridgeport, canvassing was conducted under the auspices of ACORN. However, the crew of canvassers, who were predominantly young, African American, and female, had no previous political experience. After receiving a half-hour training session, the canvassers took to the streets during the weekend prior to Election Day, canvassing all day Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

Site 4: Minneapolis, Minnesota. Minneapolis elected a wide array of officials in 2001: mayor, city council, school board, and the boards governing city parks, library, and taxation. Turnout was expected to be moderate by local election standards. The neighborhood canvassed was racially mixed and working class. Canvassing was conducted on the Saturday before Election Day by the Twin Cities PIRG chapter. Most canvassers were white college students with no previous experience with door-to-door activity.

Site 5: St. Paul, Minnesota. This election focused solely on the mayor's office, and the race was expected to be very close. As it happened, only 400 votes eventually separated the winner and the loser—a mere 0.6%. Two neighborhoods were canvassed, a poor racially mixed neighborhood and a predominantly white working-class neighborhood.

The local PIRG chapter again organized the canvassing effort with a slightly broader range of volunteers drawn from both colleges and community organizations. The canvassers were inexperienced but received a brief training session before venturing into the field during the Sunday before Election Day.

Site 6: Raleigh, North Carolina. In Raleigh, our canvassing experiment focused on a municipal run-off election. Rather than holding conventional municipal primary elections, Raleigh conducts an all-comers election the first Tuesday of October. In the event that no candidate receives an outright majority, the two top

candidates advance to an Election Day run-off. Both the mayoral and the city council elections featured closely contested races.

Canvassing focused on two neighborhoods, one racially mixed and the other predominantly white. Raleigh was the only site where canvassers were paid an hourly wage ($10 an hour). Half of the canvassers assembled by the local PIRG group were students (mostly North Carolina State University), and half were members of the community. One-third of the canvassers were African American. Only 20% of the canvassers had any experience in canvassing, and the overwhelming majority responded to a precanvassing survey by indicating that their principal motive for canvassing was to earn money. On the Saturday before Election Day, the canvassers received twenty minutes of instruction before heading into the field.[2]

An overview of the six sites is presented in Table 1. Looking solely at the regions within each site that were targeted for canvassing, one sees that the variation across sites is considerable. Data from the 2000 Census indicate that the region canvassed in Detroit is 94% black, whereas Columbus is 82% white. Hispanics account for nearly half of the population in the canvassed regions of Bridgeport. St. Paul has a large Asian population. Home-ownership rates vary widely as well. The large student population in Columbus makes for a low median age and 9% rate of home ownership. St. Paul and Raleigh have higher median ages and home ownership rates of nearly 50%. While not a random sample of cities or elections, the sites in this study span a wide array of urban profiles.

Canvassing Scripts

Although the characteristics of the sites and canvassers varied, they tended to follow similar procedures when going door-to-door. Each canvasser was equipped a clipboard, a map, and a target list of names and addresses. The scripts used in Columbus were broadly representative of the kind of scripts used in other sites:

> Hi, how are you? I'm _____ with Ohio Youth Vote. We're reminding people that there's an election this Tuesday. Are you [Name]? [If yes:] Hi! I'd just like to give you this little reminder about voting this Tuesday. [Hand reminder sheet and check "reached" on disposition sheet.] [If no:] Oh, may I please speak with [Name]? And by the way, are you registered to vote? [When Name appears, repeat script with person listed on sheet. Check 'reached" if they are there, and record the number of voting age people you spoke with in "other."] Have a nice day!

[2] In contrast to the other sites, where canvassing occurred without incident, the canvassing effort in Raleigh encountered problems. Some white residents refused to open their doors to black canvassers. Two black canvassers were accosted by white residents and expelled from the neighborhood. A coincidental canvassing effort by white supremacists seeking to deport Arabs raised residents' general level of hostility to canvassers; indeed, the local police stopped and questioned some of the white canvassers in the PIRG campaign, thinking that they were white supremacists. Whether these events altered the effectiveness of the canvassing effort is a matter of speculation.

TABLE 1

Characteristics of Canvassing Sites, Focusing only on Regions of Each Site that Were Actually Canvassed

	Bridgeport	Columbus	Detroit	Minneapolis	Raleigh	St. Paul
Total City Population	139,529	771,470	951,270	382,618	276,093	287,151
Population in Canvassed Areas	19,115	8,222	17,412	12,177	43,030	17,904
White	37%	82%	4%	36%	70%	54%
Black	28%	5%	94%	26%	22%	20%
Asian	4%	9%	0%	6%	2%	17%
Hispanic	47%	3%	1%	23%	6%	7%
Median Age	26	24	35	26	37	29
Owners	20%	9%	28%	20%	49%	48%
Type of Election	School Board	City Council	Mayoral	Mayoral	Mayoral/City Council	Mayoral
Competitiveness	Low	Low	High	Medium	High	High
Voter Turnout Rate among Subjects in the Control Group	9.9%	8.2%	43.3%	25.0%	29.4%	37.6%
N of Subjects in the Control Group	911	1,322	2,482	1,418	2,975	1,104
N of Subjects in the Treatment Group	895	1,156	2,472	1,409	1,685	1,104

Source for Demographic Profile: 2000 Census.

Canvassers were thus responsible for conveying a brief reminder about the upcoming election, in some cases distributing a flyer, and recording the disposition of each visit.[3]

Data and Design Issues

The procedures by which subjects were assigned at random to treatment and control groups varied slightly across sites. Subjects in Detroit, Minneapolis, and St. Paul were stratified into walk lists before random assignment, while Bridgeport and Columbus were not, but in each of these sites subjects were assigned the same probability of receiving a treatment. In Raleigh, the proportion of subjects assigned to the treatment condition varied across walk lists.[4] This across-list variation means that the multivariate analyses that follow include dummy variables for each walk list. These walk-list dummy variables are useful for the other sites as well, since they absorb some intra-site variability in turnout rates.[5]

After the election, we obtained voting histories and registration lists from local registrars. These lists were merged with names in the treatment and control groups in order to calculate voter turnout rates. Since both the registration lists and the voter turnout lists came from the same sources, we experienced no difficulties merging the two lists into a unified database. We also obtained information about whether each citizen participated in the 2000 presidential election. This information enables us to check whether random assignment to treatment and control groups was indeed uncorrelated with past voting behavior. It also provides a useful covariate in a multivariate analysis, as past behavior helps reduce the disturbance variance in models predicting voting in 2001.

Results

Randomization Check

Randomization procedures are designed to create treatment and control groups with equivalent pretreatment vote propensities. In order to check that random

[3] The treatment thus comprises both a personal appeal and distribution of a leaflet. Other experimental evidence seems to show that leaflets alone have minimal effects on turnout (Gerber and Green 2000a). Not reported here are embedded experiments in which the content of the leaflet was varied randomly, sometimes urging subjects to vote and in other cases presenting them with a voter guide culled from a local newspaper. Varying the content of the flyer had small and statistically insignificant effects.

[4] This variation was introduced to enable us to study the interaction between the treatment given to any single individual and the quantity of treatment given to a particular block. In the end, this study proved too small to detect this interaction with any statistical power.

[5] Random assignment within walk lists give us the luxury of being able to discard walk lists (including both treatment and control subjects) when we suspected that canvassers had falsified their records of whom they contacted. In Raleigh, we discarded one walk list because a canvasser implausibly claimed to have contacted every other house in a rigid sequence. In Detroit, we discarded three lists from one canvasser whose records involved an implausible sequence of contacts and noncontacts. These lists were discarded before we gathered data on voter turnout in 2001.

assignment performed this function, we calculated voter turnout rates for treatment and control groups in the 2000 elections, a year before canvassing occurred. In five of the six sites, pretreatment differences are negligible. In three cases, the treatment group voted at slightly lower rates than the control group, and in two cases, slightly higher. In St. Paul, the treatment group voted at rates that were noticeably higher, with a two-tailed p value of .052. We checked the integrity of the randomization procedures used in St. Paul and found them to be sound. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to analyze the St. Paul results in two ways, one based on a simple comparison of treatment and control and the other using past voting behavior as a covariate.[6]

Intent-to-Treat Effects

The intent-to-treat effects of face-to-face canvassing can be calculated by examining the turnout rates among those assigned to the treatment and control groups, making no allowance for the fact that only some of those assigned to the treatment groups were actually contacted. Column two of Table 2 presents these turnout rates for treatment and control groups in each city. In every site, the treatment group turned out at a higher rate than the control group. For example, in Detroit, where over 40% of registered voters cast ballots, turnout in the treatment group was 2.4 percentage points higher than in the control group. In Bridgeport, where turnout in the control group was an abysmal 9.9%, turnout in the treatment group was 4.0 percentage points higher. The outlier in this set of experiments was Raleigh, where turnout was negligibly higher in the treatment group.

Taking all of the experiments into account, face-to-face canvassing has an intent-to-treat effect of 2.1 percentage points. This estimate is statistically significant at the .01 level using a one-tailed test. These intent-to-treat estimates give some indication of how much get-out-the-vote drives like the ones studied here tend to raise aggregate levels of turnout. As we note below, more intensive GOTV campaigns, which contact much higher proportions of the subjects in the treatment group (e.g., Michelson 2003), can be expected to have much larger intent-to-treat effects.

The Effects of Actual Contact

In order to estimate the mobilizing effect of canvassing among those who are contacted, one must make a statistical adjustment for the fact that many people in the treatment group were never contacted. As shown in Table 2, the limiting factor in these GOTV campaigns is the fact that they contact less than half of

[6] An additional test of randomization examined the joint significance of age, race, gender, party, and past voting history as predictors of assignment to treatment and control groups. Dummy variables were used to mark missing values in order to avoid deleting observations. Both the null and alternative models included dummy variables for walk lists. As expected, the test statistic is nonsignificant, $F(12,18729) = .66$, $p = .80$.

TABLE 2

Treatment Effects, by Site

	Pre-Treatment Difference in Voting Rates, 2000 Election	Post-Treatment Difference in Voting Rates, 2001 Election	Percentage of Treatment Group Actually Contacted	Effects of Actual Treatment on Voting in 2001
Bridgeport (n = 1,806)	−.3 (2.3)	4.0*** (1.5)	28.1	14.4*** (5.3)
Columbus (n = 2,478)	−.4 (2.0)	1.4 (1.1)	14.3	9.7 (7.9)
Detroit (n = 4,954)	.2 (1.4)	2.4** (1.4)	30.9	7.8** (4.5)
Minneapolis (n = 2,827)	−.4 (1.8)	1.9 (1.6)	18.5	10.1 (8.7)
Raleigh (n = 4,660)	.4 (1.4)	.1 (1.4)	44.6	.2 (3.2)
St. Paul (n = 2,208)	3.2* (1.6)	4.6*** (2.1)	32.1	14.4*** (6.4)
All Sites (n = 18,933)	.4 (.7)	2.1*** (.6)	29.6	7.1*** (2.2)

*$p < .10$, two-tailed test. **$p < .05$, one-tailed test. ***$p < .01$, one-tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Notes: Differences between treatment and control groups were calculated from OLS regressions of voting in 2000 or 2001 on a dummy variable for experimental treatment, with dummy variables for each walk list as covariates. Contact rates (column 3) were calculated from an OLS regression of actual contact on a dummy variable for experimental treatment, with dummy variables for each walk list as covariates. Actual treatment effects (column 4) were estimated from a 2SLS regression of voting in 2001 on contact, with the experimental treatment as an excluded instrumental variable. Both stages of the 2SLS regression included covariates for each walk list.

their walk lists; indeed, in two of the sites, fewer than one citizen in five was actually contacted. It should be emphasized that for purposes of this calculation, contact is defined quite conservatively to include GOTV conversations with intended subjects or their housemates.[7] Excluded from the definition of contact are instances where canvassers found no one at home, could not locate the address, discovered that they had the wrong address, or were told to go away before making their GOTV appeal.

The rightmost column of Table 2 reports the actual contact effects. The influence of actual contact in Bridgeport, for example, is estimated to be a 14.4

[7] Of the 8,721 subjects assigned to the treatment group, 18% were contacted directly, and another 11% were contacted indirectly insofar as canvassers spoke with another voting-age member of the household. If one assumes that only direct conversations with canvassers influence turnout, the effects of actual treatment will be larger than what we report in Tables 2 and 3 because the estimated intent-to-treat effects are divided by .18 instead of .29.

percentage-point jump in the probability of voting. Four of the six estimates exceed the estimate of 8.7 percentage points reported by Gerber and Green (2000b), although the standard errors associated with the estimates for Columbus and Minneapolis are quite high. Combining all of the sites (but controlling for walk lists and therefore for inter- and intrasite variation), we find an average treatment effect of 7.1 percentage points. This estimate is statistically significant at the .01 level using a one-tailed test. This estimate also falls within one standard error of the Gerber and Green findings (2000b, 659).

In sum, the experimental results reaffirm the effectiveness of face-to-face canvassing as a means of mobilizing voters. Across a wide range of electoral settings, ranging from the sleepy local election in Bridgeport to the closely contested mayoral race in St. Paul, canvassing had a profound effect on voter participation. This effect turns up in places as different economically and demographically as Columbus and Detroit. Although Raleigh appears to be an outlier ex post, we cannot reject the null hypothesis of homogeneous treatment effects across the six sites [$F(5,18737) = 1.06$, $p = .38$]. Moreover, the findings square with the results of other experiments, such as Gerber and Green's (2000b) study of voter mobilization in New Haven's 1998 elections and Michelson's (2003) study of mobilization prior to a local election in a rural town with a large Latino population.

Multivariate and Nonlinear Models

These findings are underscored by a two-stage probit analysis, which is presented in Table 3. We report two versions of this analysis. The first model includes actual contact as a regressor and intended contact as an instrument. Dummy variables marking each walk list in each site are included as covariates at both stages

TABLE 3

Two-Stage Probit Coefficients, with and without Covariates

	Probit Estimates	Standard Errors
Model Without Covariates		
Canvassing	.211**	.069
Model Including Covariates		
Canvassing	.217**	.076
Voting in 2000	1.571**	.030
1 Registered Voter in the Household	.143*	.053
2 Registered Voters in the Household	.192*	.049
3 Registered Voters in the Household	.018	.053

Note: $^{**}p < .01$, one-tailed test. $^{*}p < .01$, two-tailed test. Both specifications include dummy variables (not shown) marking each walk list in each site. The dummy variables for the number of registered voters in each household treats four voter households as the base category. Estimation method is 2-stage conditional maximum likelihood, see Rivers and Vuong (1988).

of the regression. In the second model, we also control for a set of covariates that predict voter turnout in 2001: voting in 2000 and dummy variables marking whether a household contained one, two, three, or four registered voters.

The two models provide nearly identical estimates of the effectiveness of canvassing. The two probit coefficients are .211 and .217. These estimates imply that a person who would otherwise have a 50% chance of voting would vote with approximately a 58.5% probability after being canvassed face-to-face. Ordinarily, the inclusion of covariates reduces the standard errors associated with an experimental treatment by reducing the disturbance variance. Here, the standard error increases slightly, reflecting an unexpected correlation between voting in 2000 and the treatment for one of the sites (St. Paul). Nevertheless, the probit coefficients in both specifications suggest that contact with canvassers raises turnout by a statistically significant margin ($p < .01$, one-tailed test).

Conclusion

Building upon previous results, these experimental findings demonstrate that mobilization campaigns have the potential to increase turnout substantially in local elections. Each successful contact with a registered citizen raises that individual's probability of voting by approximately 7 percentage points, which is considerable given the fact that local elections often attract only 25% of the electorate to the polls. This figure, moreover, is a conservative estimate. When calculating the effects of actual treatment, we regarded any conversation with a member of the household as a "contact." Only about half of these conversations occurred directly with the subject in the treatment group; the remainder involved urging a housemate to vote and requesting that this message be passed along to the intended subject. Had we restricted the definition of contact to direct conversations with the subject, the apparent effects of canvassing would have been much greater.

The success with which these door-to-door campaigns mobilized voters is especially impressive given the meager budgets on which these campaigns operated. Our experimental results suggest that 12 successful face-to-face contacts translated into one additional vote. Consider what this finding implies for a large scale GOTV campaign. Suppose one were to hire campaign workers at a rate of $10 per hour. According to our records for Bridgeport and Columbus, where canvassers traveled in pairs but approached different doors, canvassers contacted eight voters per hour. In Raleigh and St. Paul, the rate was five contacts per hour, but this figure reflects the fact that in these sites canvassers not only traveled in pairs but also went in pairs up to every door. Had the teams of canvassers split up, the contacts per hour would presumably have doubled. If we imagine that the average canvasser makes eight contacts per hour, the cost per vote would be $15. This figure is quite similar to those reported in previous experimental studies using face-to-face canvassing and notably smaller than comparable cost-per-vote

figures associated with commercial phone banks or direct mail (Gerber and Green 2000b, 2001).[8]

One of the paradoxes of local elections is that individual votes have a greater likelihood of affecting the outcome, yet fewer eligible voters participate. The same logic applies to arguments based on the indirect effects that voters can have on elections by mobilizing their friends and neighbors (Shachar and Nalebuff 1999). With such small numbers of voters casting ballots, mobilization campaigns would seem to be a promising strategy for influencing an election. And yet, the overall level of GOTV activity tends to be low in local elections. In lopsided contests, campaigns have little incentive to do this type of work; in competitive contests, campaigns seem content to focus their energies on persuading voters who regularly vote in local elections. This pattern tends to leave undisturbed the massive age and socioeconomic disparities between voters and nonvoters that have long been the focus of scholarship on local voter turnout (Hamilton 1971; Oliver 1999). The present study suggests that nonpartisan groups, as well as partisan groups that choose to use nonpartisan appeals, have the potential to alter this pattern through face-to-face contact with potential voters. Even in settings where the election outcome seems to be a foregone conclusion, this type of personal contact has a marked effect on voter participation.

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[8] Naturally, a complete accounting of costs must take into account the fixed costs of sustaining organizations that can recruit and inspire canvassers. The canvassing campaigns studied here were put together with only a few weeks' preparation. Better organization and training could improve the hourly productivity of canvassers.

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POLITICS

With Democrats at home, a conservative super PAC comes knocking

By David Weigel

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RICHMOND — Tim Phillips, the president of Americans for Prosperity, was meticulous about the new rules of canvassing. Step one: Knock on the door. Step two: Turn and walk six feet away. Step three: Wait for a voter to reach the door and make the sale to them behind the mutual safety of a mask.

"You're just the person I want to talk to!" Phillips told Laura Fultz, 34, on Monday, as he brandished literature for Republican congressional candidate Nick Freitas. "I can tell you, health care's a big issue for us, and Nick Freitas really tried to open up access through telemedicine, with licensing reforms. I hope you consider him."

More than two dozen organizers for Americans for Prosperity Action, the AFP's super PAC, were doing the same thing across Virginia's 7th District on Monday, introducing the Republican who's trying to win the district back from Democratic Rep. Abigail Spanberger. They were part of a distributed army around the country, focusing on a few key candidates in a few key states and contacting voters through AFP Action.

Phillips's group has done this for a decade, growing from semi-obscurity into the best-organized, and best-funded, organ of what became the tea party movement. David Koch, whose donations created and grew AFP, died last year, but in 2018, the group spent $10 million through the PAC, and door-to-door canvassing is one of its specialties. It boosted campaigns to prevent state legislatures from expanding Medicaid, to persuade voters not to fund more public transportation, and to elect the right kind of candidates, who happen to be mostly conservative Republicans.

AFP usually had more competition. With Democrats wary of traditional door-to-door canvassing in the pandemic, and with the Biden-Harris campaign discouraging it, conservatives have less competition. The surge of in-person volunteers that helped defeat Spanberger's predecessor, Rep. David Brat, isn't happening, and may not happen unless Democrats revisit their pandemic campaign plan.

"The Democrats are in a bind, and they can't knock on doors, because their whole thing is to stoke fears about covid-19," said John Fredericks, a radio host and co-chair of the Trump campaign in Virginia. (Fredericks hosted his show from AFP's Richmond-area office on Monday.) "That's a huge disadvantage for them right now. Republicans understand they can put a mask on, do social distancing and reach people at home. They're going to answer the door, and you're going to be able to have a safe conversation with them." In 2018, Fredericks said, Spanberger had "buses of volunteers coming in from two or three states away," and in 2020, she wouldn't.

Democrats dispute that theory, arguing that their shift to a virtual outreach campaign has paid off. "As of August 7 we've made 550,688 total calls across the coordinated campaign, local campaigns and congressionals this year, sent 2,225,962 total texts, and held over 2,000 virtual events," said Virginia Democratic Party spokesman Grant Fox. "It really seems like Republicans in Virginia are trying to live in a fantasy world where the virus doesn't exist and they can campaign like normal."

The Trump campaign and GOP were already at the doors. The AFP Action operation had started up again weeks ago, at an initial cost of nearly $900,000 across the country. Their targets included Senate races in Colorado, Georgia, Montana, North Carolina and Texas, as well as a few House races, like Freitas's. Since kicking off, they'd contacted 6 million voters, but unlike the GOP, they were not mentioning the president in their messaging or surveys.

"The only presidential we've ever done was Romney in 2012," Phillips said. "And that was obviously a bitter experience and defeat."

In Virginia, canvassers began the process by walking into an office building, getting their temperature taken with an external thermometer, and, if there was space inside, sitting in for a quick training on how to use AFP Action's canvassing app. Chairs were spaced out, but to avoid crowding, some canvassers went under a tent in the parking lot. After a phone-in to another group canvassing in the district, Phillips brought everyone outside.

"Just a couple of things are different than a lot of the operations that we've done in the past," Phillips told the canvassers when they had all gathered outside. "We want to make sure that we're keeping the voter safe, and also yourself. So please step back, and make sure you have your mask on."

Canvassers agreed to the rules, and some of them had already been knocking on doors under the new, standoffish conditions. "I haven't had that much experience of people having super negative reactions," said Aaron Kubat, 22. "Most of the negative reactions just come from the fact that, you know, people want privacy. That's understandable. You're walking onto someone's property, knocking on the door and asking them questions about politics here. That makes you persona non grata for some people. But for the most part, people are polite."

There were just two questions on AFP Action's voter script. One asked if voters were more or less likely to support Freitas once they knew he "supported legislation that made access to health care easier and more affordable" as a Virginia state legislator. Another asked the same support question after informing the voter that Freitas "has voted to remove red tape to help small businesses rebuild and cutting government spending to save taxpayer dollars." The repeal of the Affordable Care Act, a central cause for AFP for most of the organization's life, was not among the issues.

"I think that moment, in all candor, has passed, and Republicans failed miserably," Phillips said. "So, no, that's not what we're calling for. It's a combination of things. One is that this pandemic has shown us the foibles of one-size-fits-all government medicine, socialized medicine. Let's not go that direction. Two, there's a false choice right now that some have put forward that says if you don't want a full shutdown, then you're not really for good health care. That's the silliest argument I've seen in a while."

The message was a reflection of how much politics had shifted during the Trump presidency, shifting faster during the pandemic. The president had dropped the Obamacare repeal from his list of 2020 promises, even pledging an executive order on something that the ACA made law in 2010, protections for people with preexisting conditions. Republicans were hitting the doors to pitch an economic comeback in a second Trump term, and to warn against the dangers posed by Joe Biden.

"It doesn't mean on some particular race they don't have a favorite candidate," Phillips said, explaining that the group's algorithm caught plenty of voters who were set in their opinions on races up the ballot. "A House race is more scrambled."

The canvassers fanned out, with apps that displayed their walk routes, and colors (green for a successful contact, black for a hard no) that tracked their progress. Over two hours, the voters who opened their doors or politely said they were not interested were White, most in modest homes. One block contained two Trump flags and two Confederate flags; one contained Spanberger signs. Until the door opened, there was mostly no hint of what the voter might say.

"At my first house, the look on his face was like: Get out of here," said Jacob Fish, 27, working through his walk sheet before a brief storm blew through the area. "I thought to myself, let me get through kind of the initial sentence, but he was like: Man, enough. I wanted to go ahead and at least get a chance to read the literature."

Fish had much more luck at other homes. The value of pandemic-era door-knocks, as some campaigns were finding, was that voters were almost always home. If someone came to pitch a candidate and nobody came to pitch the opponent, that was a gift, which overwhelmed the risks of finding the occasional voter who resented the interruption.

If a conversation seemed to be going well, Phillips added a question of his own. Did the voter want to open up schools again? One of his theories about the race was that more than any partisan goal, voters pined for the return of normalcy.

"Hey, we're going to help you get your life back to normal," Phillips said. "Part of that is getting health care to a point where we can handle this pandemic so that we can get kids back in school. And we want to make sure you can see your mom or dad who might be at an assisted-living facility. It is a fight. I'm not disputing that. But I do think that approach gives us a shot on that issue to make a difference."

By the end of the day, across the country, AFP Action claimed to have contacted 11,000 voters in the district, knocking on around 1,000 doors and making 10,000 phone calls.

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Is Voting Contagious? Evidence from Two Field Experiments

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Members of the same household share similar voting behaviors on average, but how much of this correlation can be attributed to the behavior of the other person in the household? Disentangling and isolating the unique effects of peer behavior, selection processes, and congruent interests is a challenge for all studies of interpersonal influence. This study proposes and utilizes a carefully designed placebo-controlled experimental protocol to overcome this identification problem. During a face-to-face canvassing experiment targeting households with two registered voters, residents who answered the door were exposed to either a Get Out the Vote message (treatment) or a recycling pitch (placebo). The turnout of the person in the household not answering the door allows for contagion to be measured. Both experiments find that 60% of the propensity to vote is passed onto the other member of the household. This finding suggests a mechanism by which civic participation norms are adopted and couples grow more similar over time.

The entire act of voting appears to be assisted by interactions with friends, neighbors, and family members. Voters rely on one another to become informed about elections (Robinson 1976). Friends and neighbors encourage one another to go to the polls on Election Day (McClurg 2004). People in social networks encourage one another to support particular candidates (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1991). Unfortunately, an inability to disentangle influence from other factors places the entire literature on a shaky empirical foundation. Likeminded individuals with similar habits, customs, and stations in life gravitate toward one another to populate neighborhoods and social networks (Mutz and Martin 2001). Once individuals are located in a network, members of the network are often exposed to identical outside pressures that alter behaviors and beliefs. Using observational data, there is no method of separating the unique effect of contagion from selection processes, congruence of material interests, or exposure to external forces without making nontrivial assumptions. Thus, the magnitude of contagion effects in voting behavior is uncertain.

This identification problem is not limited to voting behavior and permeates nearly every study invoking interpersonal processes. Whether one is studying civic engagement (Putnam 2000), criminal activity (Anderson 1990), volunteerism (Wilson and Musick 1997), protests (Lohman 1994), riots (Myers 1997), revolutions (Tilly 1978), or even suicide (Pickering and Walford 2000), distinguishing the unique roles played by the personality who selected into the social network, the social setting surrounding the events acting on all actors, and the effect of the social network on individuals requires simplifying assumptions that may not approximate reality. Selection and omitted variables are ubiquitous in social processes and make the effect of social networks on individual behaviors difficult to measure accurately.

The deficiencies in the empirical evidence marshaled on behalf of social networks in no way justifies ignoring interpersonal influence as a phenomenon. Most studies of voting assume an atomistic voter with weak ties to other members of a social network (e.g., Campbell et al. 1964; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Much of the variance in voting behavior may be best explained by peer effects, but studies focused on isolated individuals are incapable of detecting the influence. Experimental studies of voter mobilization systematically understate the cost-effectiveness of get out the vote (GOTV) campaigns by ignoring people who interact with the contacted voter (e.g., Gerber and Green 2000; Green, Gerber, and Nickerson 2003). Atomism is a convenient simplifying assumption, but evidence of voter contagion would cast doubt on both the assumption itself and the results that follow from atomistic analysis.

This paper surmounts the problem of isolating and measuring interpersonal influence by analyzing two placebo-controlled experiments conducted in Denver, CO, and Minneapolis, MN, during the 2002 Congressional primaries. Face-to-face blandishments to vote were provided to one person in households containing two registered voters, increasing her likelihood of voting. A parallel canvassing effort encouraging recycling was conducted to provide a comparison group to serve as a baseline. Voter turnout records were then consulted to determine the turnout of both members of the household. The boost in turnout among uncontacted persons in households assigned to the GOTV condition is directly attributable to behavioral contagion, net sampling error.

The carefully controlled design of the experiments isolates the effect of interpersonal influence by eliminating confounding factors such as selection processes, structural congruence, and exposure to external factors. The experiment also measures the effect of a single political event (i.e., the knock on the door) on behavior, rather than discovering broad similarities that have developed over time. The downside of the strategy is that external validity is a major concern. The

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limitations of the study are discussed at length in the conclusion. However, the uniqueness of this field experimental approach to social networks makes the study a helpful addition to the literature on interpersonal influence.

INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCE AND THE FAMILY

The similarity between people who live together is inescapable and has been noted throughout history. That said, the extent to which cohabitants are similar on average varies across topics, and scholars have attempted to correctly categorize these attitudes and behaviors. Once the commonality is noticed, the fundamental question researchers address is the degree to which interpersonal influence is the cause of the similarity between cohabitants.

Niemi, Hedges, and Jennings (1977) find that spouses have very similar political profiles (but see Zuckerman and Kolter-Berkowitz 1998 for evidence that politically apathetic households are heterogeneous in preferences). Hayes and Bean (1992) analyze the South Bend snowball survey to conclude that the background characteristics of family members predict of a person's attitudes well. Kenny (1994) concludes that even party identification, an attribute often viewed as fixed (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002), is influenced by spouses. Thus, politics is definitely a trait where congruence between cohabitants is observed.

A possible causal mechanism for the correlation in spousal behavior is the intimacy and frequency of interactions within the household. People may not talk about politics frequently, but when they do so it tends to be within the household. When asked to name political discussion partners, survey respondents are most likely to provide the name of a spouse (Beck 1991). In every year the question has been asked, the National Election Study finds that family members are the most frequent targets of attempts at political persuasion. Clearly, the high level of interaction, familiarity, respect, and trust among cohabitants facilitates an open discussion of politics and convergence in political views is a likely outcome. Thus, it is not surprising that longitudinal analysis finds agreement among married couples increases over time (Zuckerman, Fitzgerald, and Dasovic 2005; Stoker and Jennings 2005).

The quantity of discussion within the household, high correlation in attitudes, and behaviors between partners—even after controlling for partisanship and ideology—and convergence over time have led scholars to conclude that interpersonal influence is the major driver of similarity between spouses. Huckfeldt and Sprague declare spouses to be three times as influential as other relationships (1995, 169). More directly relevant to the current study, Zuckerman, Dasovic and Fitzgerald (2007, chapter 6) concludes the frequency of political discussion with a spouse increases voter turnout. Fowler uses the Watts-Strogatz model to capture the small-world properties of large-scale networks and suggests "a single person's decision to vote affects the turnout decision of at least four people on average in a 'turnout cascade'" (2005, 286). Although the scholars have undoubtedly uncovered an interesting and informative correlation, one should be hesitant to draw the conclusion that the attitudes and behaviors of one cohabitant *cause* the attitudes and behaviors of the other cohabitant for at least two reasons.

First, studies of interpersonal influence, like those cited previously, convincingly demonstrate that cohabitating couples share a host of views and habits, but do not demonstrate a mechanism or precipitating event for the convergence. Many studies focus on background characteristics of partners (e.g., Hays and Bean 1992). Scholars of social networks examine the strength and density of ties within social networks (e.g., Knoke 1990). Although studies often measure the frequency or type of discussion among partners over a period, none consider the effect of a particular conversation (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mutz 1998; Zuckerman, Dasovic and Fitzgerald 2007). Perhaps interpersonal influence is a gradual process where partners take subtle clues from one another over time, but the case for causality would be stronger if the effect of a single precipitating event was measured. Studies that examine specific turnout decisions (e.g., Fowler 2005) most closely approximate this goal, but inertia (e.g., past turnout behavior) or an external force (e.g., the closeness of the election, campaign contact, the importance of a particular issue) could be acting on both the ego and the alter. A distinct event affecting only one member of the network would be maximally convincing.

Second, omitted variables and selection processes could account for the similarity between spouses. Although all of the analyses discussed earlier include important control variables in the analysis, roommates are so similar to one another (relative to other pairs of individuals) that it may not be possible to adequately account for the similarity of people who live with one another. Chief among these potentially omitted variables are material congruence between cohabitants, similar exposure to outside factors, and the selection process that brought the housemates together.

Material Congruence

Statistical analyses of political behavior use control variables to obtain the hallowed condition of "all else being equal." Cohabitants represent an unmatched degree of equality: subjects not only live in the same city but also share living quarters; housing expenses are not roughly the same, but exactly the same; children are not only present, but also are the same children; and so forth. Housemates are similar to a degree that cannot be captured in social science databases. Thus, it is possible that the congruent behaviors and beliefs among couples are not due to influence, so much as having identical material interests and any correlation is an artifact of omitted variable bias.

Exposure to Outside Factors

Because the lives of cohabitants are so intertwined, they are exposed to the same outside factors affecting behavior and beliefs more often than individuals in a randomly sampled survey. The parallel exposure to external influences occurs on every level. The exposure to mass media, such as newspapers, magazines, and television programs, are likely to be similar. Common political experiences need not be national like the Kennedy assassination or the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, but could be more local such as a corrupt mayor or encounters with neighborhood activists. Most contact from political campaigns reaches more than one member of a household. Cohabitants can share even the most idiosyncratic political events such as court cases, dinner with an elected official, or negotiating government bureaucracies. Thus, it is possible that the similarity in political behaviors between two-voter households is due to innumerable shared experiences rather than interpersonal influence.

Selection

Housemates are not randomly paired together (but see Sacerdote 2001 or Klofstad 2007 for studies of first-year college roommates). Although most individuals do not select a person to live with based on explicitly political criteria, it is not unusual to find someone who shares fundamental values and worldview. These ineffable, deep-seated value structures inform and shape a person's ideological structure, which in turn shapes political decisions. Therefore, partisan homogeneity among cohabitants is not the overt purpose of the selection process, but the pairing of two very similar individuals is a reasonable outcome. It is important to note that although many manifestations of this shared core belief system can be measured (e.g., partisanship or placement on a 7-point liberal/conservative scale), the true preexisting commonality is something that cannot be measured. Thus, the correlation between attitudes and actions among couples may be the result of careful selection rather than interpersonal influence.

This short list of alternative explanations for the high correlation of behaviors within a household is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, it is indicative of the complexity and hurdles facing scholars of interpersonal influence. Disentangling the overspecified web of causes to isolate the effect of interpersonal influence alone is nontrivial, especially because the full extent of the processes cannot be measured.

The next section describes a randomized experimental protocol for detecting behavioral contagion that surmounts both challenges faced by the extant literature. An external stimulus is applied to a social network and its effect traced. The imposition of a single stimulus and the randomized application allows causal inferences to be made. That is, the experiment possesses internal validity. However, there are legitimate concerns regarding the external validity of the study, and these are discussed at length in the conclusion of the paper.

EXPERIMENTAL STRATEGY

Influence, material congruence, outside experiences, and selection reach an unknowable balance of political behaviors and habits in a household. In order to detect and isolate influence, a controlled exogenous shock can create a disturbance in the pattern of behaviors. The shock can then be traced through the two-voter system. Figure 1 offers a graphic illustration of the logic.

$$P_1 \Leftrightarrow P_2 \qquad \begin{array}{l} \textit{Treatment} \\ \downarrow^{T} \\ P_1 \overset{S}{\rightarrow} P_2 \end{array}$$

Prior experiments have demonstrated that face-to-face canvassing can be an effective means of increasing voter turnout (Gerber and Green 2000; Green, Gerber, and Nickerson 2003). By encouraging one member of the household to vote, it should be possible to measure the boost in turnout that a person receives, T, and then measure the indirect boost in turnout for the other person in the household, S. The contagion effect, α, is then the percentage of the direct treatment effect passed onto the other member of the household. That is,

$$\alpha = \frac{S}{T} \tag{1}$$

The key to this straightforward idea is isolating and accurately measuring both T and S. The experimental protocol described next accomplishes both tasks.

Prior to the 2002 Congressional Primaries households in Denver, CO, and Minneapolis, MN, with two registered persons were culled from the official voter rolls and randomly assigned to three conditions: (1) receive a GOTV appeal; (2) receive encouragement to recycle; (3) receive no contact from the campaign. Each appeal was delivered door-to-door the weekend prior to the Tuesday primary by a group of paid workers. The labor pool consisted of area college students, who typically had little experience in canvassing but were carefully trained. Canvassers were instructed to:

1. Provide the correct appeal at the correct household (designated by "V" for voting and "R" for recycling);
2. Give the pitch to whichever person of voting age answered the door;
3. Ask the name of the individual and record the person directly contacted.

Execution of the protocol went well in both Minneapolis and Denver. Volunteers reported no trouble delivering the correct script at each household since the walk between doors afforded sufficient time for canvassers to double-check the assignment (see Appendix B for the scripts). Conversations were very brief, and subjects contacted about recycling were left with a flyer. Flyers in support of voting were printed, but canvassers were given very few and instructed to hand-out flyers only when specifically requested by the person at the door (see Appendix A). In all, 486 households received the

TABLE 1. Possible Outcomes under placebo protocol

		Probability of Event Occurring	Voting Rate of Answerer	Voting Rate of Person Who Did Not Answer Door
GOTV	Door Answered	π	$\mu_1 + T$	$\mu_2 + S$
	No Answer	$1 - \pi$	N.A.[a]	μ_3
Recycling	Door Answered	π	μ_1	μ_2
	No Answer	$1 - \pi$	N.A.	μ_3

[a] N.A. = Not applicable.

GOTV treatment and 470 received the recycling treatment.[1]

Both Minneapolis and Denver are large cities with a majority white population. Neighborhoods with a high density of two-voter households were targeted to facilitate efficient door-knocking campaigns. These neighborhoods exhibited a higher rate of home ownership and slightly higher levels of education and income than the national average, but are typical of many communities.

Two key features make the experimental protocol a convincing test for contagion. First, only two voter households are considered, so the network is manageable. Second, the appropriate treatment is administered to the first person who answers the door. These two details tell the researcher where to look for the direct treatment effect, T, and the secondary treatment effect, S. Table 1 helps to illustrate how the experimental protocol isolates contagion within the household.

Once a canvasser knocks on a door, two outcomes are possible: the door is answered, occurring with probability π, or not, occurring with probability $1 - \pi$. The person answering the door has an average baseline propensity to vote, μ_1. In the recycling condition, the observed rate of voter turnout among people who answer the door, $\overline{V}_{Ra}$, is a function solely of the baseline propensity to turnout having received no encouragement to vote from the campaign. This assumption can be checked empirically by comparing the rate of turnout in the recycling condition, which is intended as a placebo intervention, to turnout in the control condition where no contact whatsoever was attempted. However, in the GOTV condition, the observed rate of voter turnout among door answerers, $\overline{V}_{Ga}$, is a function of the baseline plus the average effect of the treatment, $\mu_1 + T$. Thus, the direct mobilization effect of the GOTV treatment can be calculated by subtracting the rate of turnout among people who answered the door in recycling group from the rate of turnout among people who answered the door in the GOTV condition.

$$T = \overline{V}_{Ga} - \overline{V}_{Ra} \tag{2}$$

An identical strategy can be used when calculating the secondary mobilization of the person in the household not directly spoken to. The person not answering the door potentially has a different baseline propensity to vote from the person answering the door, μ_2. However, the random assignment of the delivered message assures that μ_2 will be the same in both the GOTV and recycling conditions. Thus, one can calculate the secondary mobilization effect, S, by subtracting the average turnout among nonanswering residents of households where the recycling message was delivered, $\overline{V}_{R\sim a}$, from the turnout among nonanswering residents of households where the GOTV message was delivered, $\overline{V}_{G\sim a}$.

$$S = \overline{V}_{G\sim a} - \overline{V}_{R\sim a} \tag{3}$$

Estimating T and S is straightforward because of the care in the design of the placebo protocol. This conceptual clarity makes the calculation of voter contagion, α, possible. Furthermore, contact rates are not a concern since the only households considered are those where a treatment was successfully applied (see Nickerson 2005). Ultimately, the placebo assures a perfectly comparable set of subjects from which to establish a baseline level of voting.

This estimation process makes no assumptions about the baseline rate of voting between the two people in the household (see Table 1). In the analysis, the two individuals in the household are permitted to have separate predictive models of voter turnout. It is unlikely that members of the same household possess radically divergent patterns of voting behavior, but the placebo-controlled design frees the researcher from guessing either way.

Good placebos possess two properties: (1) the compliance profile of the placebo is exactly the same as the treatment; (2) the placebo is not causally related to the dependent variable. In the current setting, application of the treatment (i.e., GOTV message) and the placebo (i.e., recycling message) means a registered voter was contacted at the door and the appropriate message was given. The canvassers were asked to record what occurred at each door attempted. The GOTV and recycling messages featured nearly identical application

[1] Nearly every recycling household received a flyer encouraging recycling. In contrast, all but 14 of the voting flyers returned with the canvassers. Given such a small number of voting flyers distributed, there is no reason to believe the flyers caused the contagion within the household. Even if every household in the voting condition received a flyer, the empirical results would still suggest voting is highly contagious. Leaflets have been shown to increase voter turnout by 1 percentage point (Nickerson, Friedrichs, and King 2006). Adjusting the results in Table 3 for this percentage point, the direct mobilization effect would be estimated to be 8.8 and the indirect mobilization effect would be 5. Thus, the estimated contagion would be 57%.

TABLE 2. Balance of Observable Traits by Treatment Assignment

		Denver			Minneapolis		
Stage	Category	GOTV	Recycling	Control	GOTV	Recycling	Control
Assignment	Age	56.1	55.5	56.1	46.6	47.9	45.9
	Votes cast in past five elections	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.6	2.6
Application	House Contacted	33.2%	32.8%		46.2%	43.5%	
	Go Away	2.5%	4.1%		1.8%	1.1%	
	Moved	0.9%	0.6%		1.4%	0.7%	
	Can't Attempt	5.4%	4.2%		6.6%	6.4%	
	No Answer	58.0%	58.3%		44.0%	48.3%	
	Number Contacted	283	279		203	191	
Contacted	Age	55.9	56.0		47.7	48.5	
	Votes cast in past five elections	2.9	2.9		2.7	2.7	

Note. Age and vote history were taken from county voter files. Canvassers were asked to record the disposition of each door knock.

TABLE 3. Treatment Effect among Contacted Households

	Denver		Minneapolis		Pooled	
	Direct	Secondary	Direct	Secondary	Direct	Secondary
Percent Voting in	47.7%	42.4%	27.1%	23.6%		
GOTV Group	(3.0)	(2.9)	(3.1)	(3.0)		
Percent Voting in	39.1%	36.9%	16.2%	17.3%		
Recycling Group	(2.9)	(2.9)	(2.7)	(2.7)		
Estimated Treatment	**8.6%**	**5.5%**	**10.9%**	**6.4%**	**9.8%**	**6.0%**
Effect	**(4.2)**	**(4.1)**	**(4.1)**	**(4.1)**	**(2.9)**	**(2.9)**
P-Value	0.02	0.09	<0.01	0.06	<0.01	0.02

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors. P-values test the one-tailed hypothesis. Pooled estimates are weighted averages of results for both cities.

profiles across every event category (e.g., "Contacted," "Not Home," or "Go Away; see Table 2, middle panel). Furthermore, the people exposed to the GOTV and recycling messages were identical across every observable trait (see Table 2, lower panel). Thus, there is no reason to believe that the subjects exposed to the treatment differed in any way from the subjects exposed to the placebo. The placebo also exhibited no ability to motivate voters to the polls on Election Day (38.9% vs. 38.4% in Denver and 17.8% vs. 17.2% in Minneapolis). So the two criteria for an effective placebo are satisfied and the assumptions behind Table 1 hold.

Since the estimates for T and S rely only on the contrasting voting rates of the treatment and placebo conditions, the reader might wonder why subjects were also placed into a control group that received no contact from the campaign. The control group is unnecessary to derive the estimates, but it does provide a useful check on the implementation of the protocol. The two treatment conditions were assigned randomly prior to the canvassing, and the analysis relies on the assignment, so volunteers could not manipulate the pitch a household received. Yet, a skeptical reader might note that since the estimator is based on contact, perhaps volunteers selectively decided to contact households. For instance, rogue volunteers could avoid low voting households in the GOTV condition and, conversely, eschew high voting households in the recycling condition. If such selection occurred successfully, then those contacted by the GOTV campaign would turnout at higher rates than those contacted in the recycling condition—even if the treatment had no effect. However, the selective process described previously would do nothing to increase the turnout rate of the GOTV campaign over that of the control group.[2] There is no reason to believe that volunteers behaved in an untoward manner, but the control group offers a method of detecting problems in the implementation and provides assurance that the results are not epiphenomenal.

RESULTS

The first thing to check for is a direct mobilization effect from the GOTV intervention, T. If the exogenous shock does not boost the rate of turnout of the subject treated, then the boost cannot be passed onto the other person in the household. Table 3 presents the rates of turnout among the 956 households contacted in the experiment (562 in Denver and 394 in Minneapolis).

[2] Drawing on the terminology developed in Table 1, the exact quantity to be estimated can be calculated as follows. Subtract the rate of turnout of subjects assigned to the control group, $V_C = \pi(\mu_1 + \mu_2) + (1 - \pi)\mu_3$, from the rate of turnout among subjects assigned to the GOTV condition, $V_G = \pi(\mu_1 + T + \mu_2 + S) + (1 - \pi)\mu_3$. The direct and indirect mobilization from campaign contact is thus $T + S = \frac{V_G - V_C}{\pi}$.

Each city experienced a statistically and substantively significant rise in turnout from the GOTV campaign. The effect sizes (8.6% and 10.9%) are well within the range expected from the 1998 New Haven and 2001 YouthVote experiments (Gerber and Green 2000; Gerber, Green, and Nickerson 2003). To double-check the veracity of the mobilization effect, the households assigned to the GOTV condition were compared to the households assigned to the control condition using a two-stage least-squares estimator (Angrist, Imbens, and Rubin 1996). The results (not presented) confirm that the canvas caused a rise in turnout in the vicinity of 8% regardless of the control variables included (e.g., age, vote history, neighborhood dummies). Thus, the exogenous shock appears to have altered the behavior of the person treated.

The next step is to look for a mobilization effect among the untreated persons in contacted households, *S*. Table 3 estimates the indirect mobilization effect from the GOTV campaign to be 5.5% in Denver and 6.4% in Minneapolis. Individually, neither of these estimates crosses the traditional 0.05 level of statistical significance, but the null hypothesis that there is no secondary effect is unlikely to be true since both cross $p < 0.1$ levels of significance. Given that identical protocols were used and the settings were very similar, results the two experimental results can be pooled together to estimate a secondary effect of 5.8%, which surpasses the 0.05 threshold using a one-tailed test.

From Table 3 the contagion effect, α, can be estimated for both cities. The treated person passed on 64% and 59% of the increased propensity to vote in Denver and Minneapolis, respectively. That is, a person who might be 25% likely to vote in the primary would become 85% likely to vote as a direct result of a cohabitant deciding to vote. The magnitude of the contagion effect is remarkable when compared to other well studied predictors of voting such as education, income, and age. Examining reported turnout levels in the 2004 American National Election Study: the difference in turnout between people with an eighth-grade education or less (39%) is 47 percentage points lower than people with an advanced degree (86%); turnout in households with less than $10,000 income (42%) is only 30 percentage points lower than households earning more than $60,000; and, turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds (42%) lags that of respondents in their 60s (77%) by only 26 percentage points. This sizable experimental estimate of contagion is actually conservative, since some households contained people who planned to vote already and, therefore, would not be susceptible to contagion effects. The unavoidable conclusion is that voting is a highly contagious behavior and an important determinant of turnout.

A subtle point of interpretation deserves attention. If the recycling message has no effect on voter turnout, the control group should vote in the 2002 Congressional primary at roughly the same rate as those people treated with the placebo. This expectation is largely borne out since both the directly contacted persons in the recycling condition and the other members of the household vote near the rates of the control group for each city (38.3% in Denver and 17.2% in Minneapolis). The observed deviations are well within the bounds of sampling error and not particularly notable. However, even if the placebo condition does not mobilize voters, there is good reason to believe that persons contacted by the campaign will vote at higher rates than the control group. Being contacted by the campaign means that the person has neither moved nor died, both of which decrease the likelihood of voting from a particular address. It is somewhat surprising that the recycling group does not vote at a higher rate than the control group. This parity between the placebo and control groups is probably the result of canvassing in neighborhoods with high residential stability. Volunteers found that the people listed had moved at only 1% of the homes (see Table 2). The placebo-controlled protocol was designed to sidestep these problems and in the process demonstrated that, in this particular sample, households contacted differ little from households not contacted.

DISCUSSION

Political scientists study people embedded within families, neighborhoods, and social networks rather than hermits living on desert islands. The Minneapolis and Denver experiments provide strong evidence that interpersonal influence shapes the behaviors of people living within the same household, thereby contradicting the atomistic assumptions underlying much survey based research. Unlike past studies of interpersonal influence, the placebo-controlled experiments isolate peer effects from selection processes and omitted variables to provide an unbiased estimate of the contagiousness of voter turnout within these households.

Despite these virtues of the design, external validity is a major concern of these experimental findings for five reasons. First, the exogenous shock may create an atmosphere within the household that does not resemble daily life. It is possible that the turnout behavior of one person matters less in normal circumstances and that campaign contact triggers or enhances interpersonal influence. Thus, the experiment may overstate the degree by which voting is a contagious behavior and measures only the extent to which campaign contact spills over. Given the frequency of campaign contact in elections at all levels of government, this quantity is also of substantive interest, but it may not measure voter contagion in the absence of contact.

Second, the results from two-voter households may not be applicable to broader social networks. Given the high degree of trust, intimacy, and interactions, it is likely that voting is far less contagious in other social settings. Although the household is an important political network, it is hardly exhaustive of social settings. Ironically, the experiment's isolation of households may cause it to understate spillover from campaign contact since friends and neighbors may have been affected by the campaign. Detecting contagion in other settings is an empirical question that requires separate experiments.

Third, even within households there is no guarantee contagion will be consistent for households in other settings. To facilitate efficient canvassing, neighborhoods with a high density of households with two registered voters were selected. A wide range of racial and income levels were included in the sample, but the neighborhoods exhibited higher residential stability and marriage rates than average. Two-voter households in other areas may feature a greater number of roommates and intergenerational pairings than the neighborhoods sampled here. Thus, the strength of the bond between cohabitants and contagion effects may vary across settings. The neighborhoods contained in the experiments are representative of a large number of communities, but by no means encompass the full breadth and depth of the diversity across the United States.

Fourth, the election considered in the experiment is a low-salience primary election and voter contagion may be heterogeneous across elections. A low-salience election was selected to reduce background noise (i.e., competing contacts from political campaigns) and provide an opportunity to detect contagion effect cleanly. Increased activity from campaigns in competitive elections may obscure contagion effects by contacting each member of the household and possibly drowning out the experimental treatment. The marginal effect of one knock on the door is likely to be zero when both subjects have already received 20 knocks on the door. One might imagine that voting is more contagious in high salience elections because people are more likely to discuss the election and barriers to participation are lower, but identifying a strategy to reliably measure contagion in high salience elections is difficult. The two experiments contained in this paper certainly do nothing to speak to heterogeneity across elections.

Finally, other behaviors or attitudes may not be as contagious as voter turnout. One advantage of observational, survey based strategies of detecting behavioral contagion is that it is possible to measure a range of behaviors and attitudes. In contrast, the exogenous shocks utilized in these experiments are only designed to affect turnout. The contagiousness of vote choice, attitudes about democracy, campaign donations, volunteerism, and other interesting behaviors are beyond the scope of this inquiry. Extrapolating the 60% contagion of voter turnout within the households to other behaviors is not possible.

Each of these concerns about external validity is an empirical question and answerable through further experiments. Fortunately, the placebo-controlled protocol utilized in this paper is extremely flexible and could be used in a wide variety of settings to study contagion through social networks. The challenge is to find valid placebos and unobtrusive means of accurately measuring the outcome variable of interest throughout the network. The very intimacy that makes interpersonal influence within households so difficult to isolate for observational studies provides an ideal conditions for the experiment. Conversely, observational techniques may prove more useful in broader social networks where researchers lack sufficient control to conduct experiments. Voting is very contagious within households; the challenge is to devise creative means to measure contagion of other behaviors in other settings.

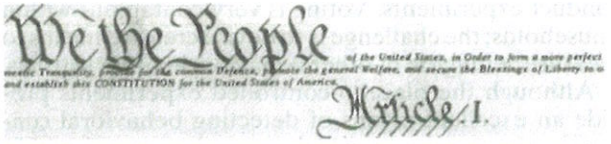
Although the placebo-controlled experiments provide an excellent means of detecting behavioral contagion, the process by which contagion occurs within the household remain unknown. It is possible that intrahousehold voter contagion is the result of lowered costs of voting (i.e., one person is driving to the polls already and the second person catches a ride). Another hypothesis is that social pressure to vote is the motivating agent. One could formulate other hypotheses, but there is no way to distinguish between them given the data from the experiments conducted in Denver and Minneapolis. Exogenous shock strategies are useful for detecting an effect, but not useful for testing the process that transmits the effect.

Although the experiments cannot provide a mechanism for the contagion itself, the contagiousness of voting behavior provides a mechanism for broad changes in political culture. Rates of voter turnout may have remained relatively stable since the 1970s (McDonald and Popkin 2001), but electoral participation has declined since the 1960s (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Patterson 2002; Putnam 2000). Since voting is a highly contagious behavior, self-reinforcing cycles of turnout and abstention are to be expected. As turnout declines, a person encounters fewer people who vote and the social pressure to vote declines. As aggregate turnout increases, an individual interacts with a larger number of voters and the propensity to vote increases (Fowler 2005). Evidence of behavioral contagion provides a micro-level process for macro-social forces.

Contagion also implies prior voter mobilization experiments (e.g., Gerber and Green 2000; Michelson 2003; Nickerson 2006; Nickerson 2007) were not justified in invoking the stable unit treatment value assumption (SUTVA). By focusing only on one individual in a household these experiments consistently underestimate the number of votes created from campaign contact of households. If a campaign contacted 100 people in households with multiple registered voters, the direct effect of the contact generates nine votes. This placebo-controlled experiment suggests that the contact also generates six votes through behavioral contagion—a 60% increase in efficiency.

These results highlight the degree to which contagion effects can alter the world. To accurately measure causal effects, researchers need to account for influence through social networks. Even in settings characterized by extreme selection processes, congruent material interests, and similar exposure to outside factors—such as the households studied in the Minnesota and Denver experiments—there is room for powerful interpersonal influence. The behaviors and beliefs between husbands and wives are extremely similar, but the relationships between husbands and wives are still dynamic and evolving. The challenge is to design careful studies to successfully isolate the roles played by friends and family members.

APPENDIX A



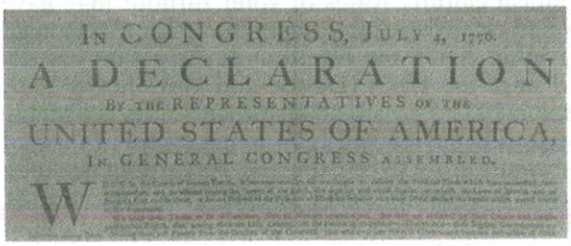
Women waited 144 years for the right to vote.

African-Americans waited 94 years for the right to vote and another 94 years to make that right meaningful.

All you had to do was turn 18.

Make your voice heard.

Vote Tuesday, September 10th.



APPENDIX B

GOTV Script

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm with the Center for Environmental Citizenship. How are you today?

I don't want to take up much of your time, but we'd like to remind you that the primary election is occurring this Tuesday and that voting is an important duty. We don't care for whom you vote, we just like to see you at the polls this Tuesday.

For our records, could you please tell me whether you are _____ or _____?

Thanks and have a nice day.

Recycling Script

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm with the Center for Environmental Citizenship. How are you today?

I don't want to take up much of your time and we're not asking for money. We'd just like to remind you that recycling is only effective if everyone participates. Does your household recycle?

<If yes> Great. Please keep up the good work.

<If no> It is very easy to do and doesn't take up much time. We hope that you start recycling soon.

For our records, could you please tell me whether you are _____ or _____?

Thanks and have a nice day.

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Session 5:

Impacting Your Elected Official

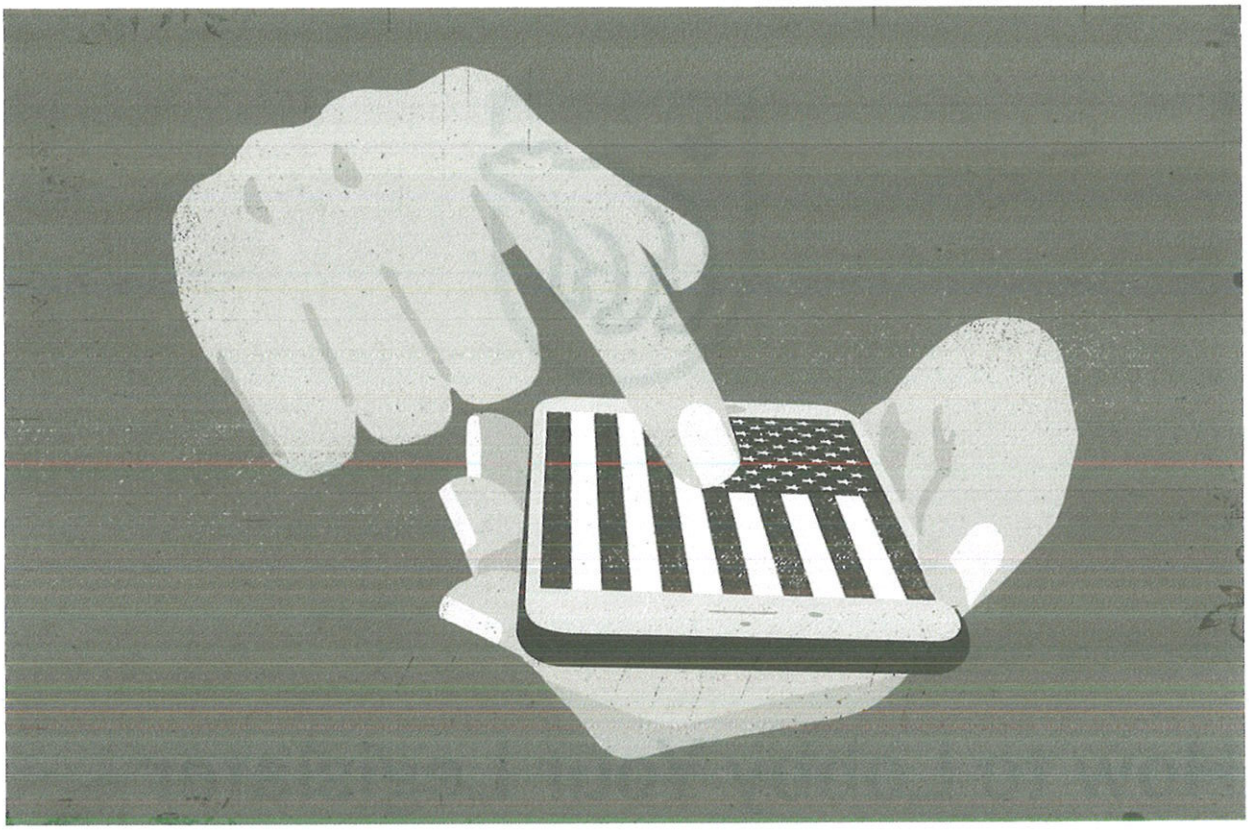
OUR STORIES › HOW-TO

How to Lobby Your Legislator

Follow these steps to arrange your meeting, craft your elevator pitch, and ensure your legislators understand why their vote on an issue matters to you and your community.

April 15, 2021

Lauren Evans



Richard Mia

Having direct access to our elected officials is a cornerstone of democracy. Even so, the idea of lobbying your legislator can feel daunting. Isn't that best left to big organizations and slick Washington power brokers?

Not at all, actually. The First Amendment specifically protects the rights of all people to make their voices heard by those who represent them. In the past, this usually meant making an in-person appointment with your legislator—a challenging time commitment for many. Thankfully, the recent rise of video conferencing apps has made public officials more accessible to their constituents than ever before.

"I think it's easier and less intimidating these days," says Tim Edland, national deputy campaigns director of NRDC's Center for Policy Advocacy, explaining that even as in-person visits resume, the array of digital alternatives that cropped up during the COVID-19 pandemic are unlikely to disappear. "You may be surprised how receptive [legislators] are to your reaching out about an issue that matters to you."

Figure out your legislative priority.

Lobbying is typically done with the goal of influencing lawmakers on specific policies. Before making an initial call or sending an e-mail, confirm that the person you're trying to meet with can actually help you achieve what you want.

Ultimately, as Edland notes, you're making "an actual ask for a vote." So familiarize yourself with the current legislation. Is there a vote approaching on a bill you want to see passed? Pin your meeting to that and be ready to explain why its passage is important to you and your community. You can also ask them to commit to taking a certain position on an issue, or agree to introduce or cosponsor legislation. Either way, make sure your request is concrete and actionable.

Pay attention to timing.

If you're tracking the status of a bill, make contact well before it moves to the floor, particularly if your legislator is on a committee that will hear it first. "Don't wait until you hear news to reach out," Edland advises.

But if time isn't on your side (and the bill is already under active debate), all is not lost —contacting your legislator quickly by phone or e-mail can still be effective.

Craft your elevator pitch.

Assuming you'll only have a brief window to make your case, it's important to have your talking points down. Edland suggests preparing a 30- to 90-second pitch, which includes an introduction (be sure to mention that you're a constituent and regular voter) and a reference to the name of the upcoming bill you want to discuss. You'll want to point to any previous votes the legislator has made that support your issue and to common values that you share (social media can tell you a lot about your legislator's values, and some environmental organizations and grassroots social justice groups put out scorecards that track officials' records of action). Also be sure to jot down a few details on how the issue affects you personally. From there, conclude with your request

on the position you'd like them to take or how you hope they'll vote on upcoming legislation.

Consider making it a group meeting.

You can plan to request a one-on-one meeting or ask to attend with a small group; either way is effective. If you have friends with lobbying experience or a personal connection to the legislator, it's a good idea to include them. NRDC also schedules lobby days in some states, which can help ease you into the process—join our community to receive e-mails or text messages about these opportunities.

Make contact.

You can find the contact information for your representative on their website. In some states, a scheduler might take your call and arrange the next steps. But in others, you might be connected directly.

"There are states with only one support staff for the entire caucus," Edland says. That means the person who answers the phone may well be your actual representative. "If you call that number, it goes to their legislative desk for real."

Be prepared to succinctly explain what your issue is about and that you want to arrange a time to discuss it (unless you're given the opportunity to do so right then and there). If you're bringing any friends along, mention that; also ask how many minutes of face time you can expect. Legislators are busy people, Edland explains, often balancing many different responsibilities at one time with very few staff (especially on the state level). But, for the most part, they do want to hear from their constituents. So if you leave a message and no one gets back to you, wait a few days and call again. If you still don't hear back—there are certainly some legislators who have no appetite for public discourse—seize the opportunity to state your case at a town hall or public hearing.

Expect a dialogue.

"The more specifics you provide about how [a bill] affects you and other constituents, the more follow-up questions they may have," Edland says. When it's time for your meeting, come as prepared as you can be, but if you don't know an answer, promise you'll find out—and make good on your word.

You might find that your representative disagrees with you, and that's okay. Be firm in your position but always be polite. After all, this is your opportunity to change their mind. If they have yet to take a position, it's unlikely they'll do it in the middle of the meeting. Having an ask—and a time frame in which you want it achieved—makes it harder to push you off indefinitely.

Follow up.

Once you've left the meeting, follow up with an e-mail thanking your representative for their time and letting them know that if they have any questions, they're welcome to get in touch. You can also provide any additional information you think will help bolster your argument or reiterate any key points from your face time.

If you use social media, let your representative know that you'll be following the actions they're taking on your issue and tagging them accordingly. "Legislators and politicians generally really care about their image and how they're perceived," Edland says. "With social media, you have the ability to influence the discussion around these members."

Of course, you'll be paying attention to any forward motion on the bill or issue you discussed. If they end up supporting it, thank them again and recognize their good work publicly.

How to Get Your Lawmakers to Listen

In our final installment of the User's Guide to Democracy, we asked a live panel of congressional experts to help you stay engaged in politics after the midterms have ended.

by Cynthia Gordy Giwa, Nov. 28, 2018, 11 a.m. EST

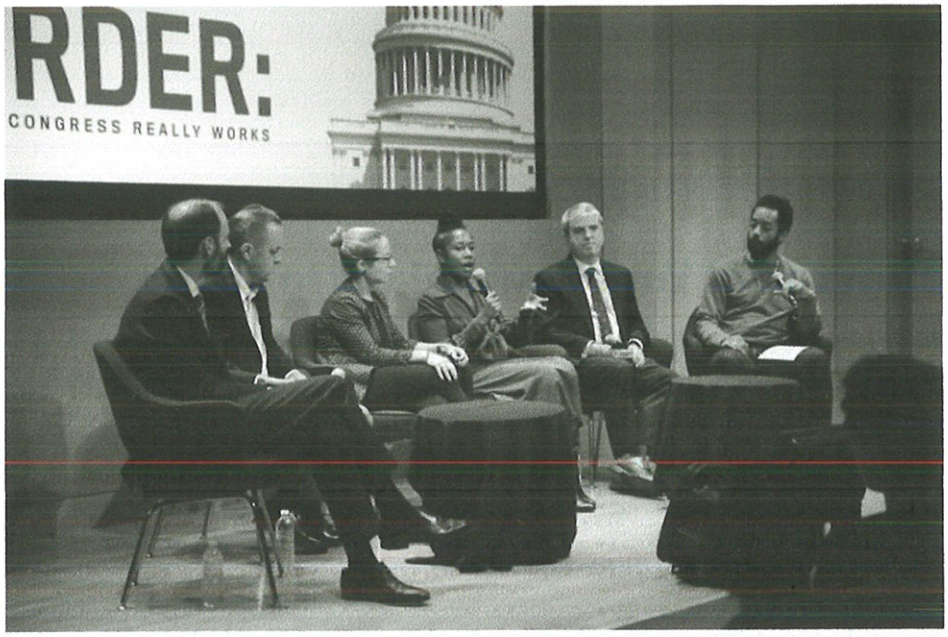
Hello from the otherrr siiiiide...

You did it! In this month's midterm election, you and a whole lot of your fellow voters turned out to the polls to make your voices heard. But you're not done yet. Voting is just the beginning!

The User's Guide to Democracy has always wanted to help you become not only a more informed voter, but also a more engaged citizen. So, with the winners declared, how do you get your elected representatives in Washington to listen to your voice *now?*

At a live event on Nov. 13 with the New York Public Library, Derek Willis (my colleague here at ProPublica) and Paul Kane (an ace Congressional reporter for The Washington Post) tackled this question with the help of a panel of Capitol Hill insiders. The event, called "Irregular Order: How Congress Really Works," was moderated by comedian/actor/writer **Wyatt Cenac**.

James Wallner, senior fellow for the think tank R Street (and a former Republican Senate staff member); **Lindsey Cormack**, Stevens Institute of Technology assistant professor of political science; and **Stephanie L. Young**, communications director for When We All Vote (also a former Democratic House staffer); explained how to get lawmakers to listen to you and act on the issues you care about.



Courtesy of The New York Public Library

Even as Congress seems stuck, there are still things that you can do to influence your lawmakers. Here are a few suggestions from the panel:

- **Vote. Often.** "We literally have the power," Young said of the clout that comes with voting. "I think we forget that, and sometimes you feel powerless. ... This is one opportunity for you to go out and make your voices heard, but you have to do it *every time*, and you have to encourage those that you care about, and the people who are influenced by you, to do the exact same. There's no one who has greater influence than you do."

  Even if voting sometimes feels like shouting into the void, the panel also stressed that your elected officials are actually paying attention to who their voting constituents are. "If you email or write something, and they have your address and your name, they're going to look up your voter file," Willis said. "The fact that they're tracking that information should tell you that they're concerned about hearing from their constituents, and that you're important."

- **Visit your district office.** Young continued by emphasizing that every member of Congress has a district office you can go to. "There are staff that are there to hear from you. You can write letters. They actually read them; there is someone who is assigned just to do that, and they have to respond to you. I worked for members who were very keen on knowing their constituents — how they felt, what they thought, and they want to read those letters. ... Don't miss those opportunities that we all have because they actually matter. They actually work."

> Town halls were raised as another opportunity where you can talk to your legislators in person. Kane recounted the example of Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who was moved by individual interaction with her constituents during the "repeal Obamacare" period of 2017. "She described how, throughout that spring and summer, she would have town halls when she got back to Alaska. Over and over again, people would tell their stories about a pre-existing condition they feared they were going to lose [coverage for], or a husband or wife battling cancer who was afraid to lose health care," Kane said. "By the end, that won her over, and she voted no."

> want their press releases to land. They want that space, and if they have constituents within their own district saying they have a problem with that, that's a really big red flag for them that they need to come back to the district and figure it out, or they're going to need to focus on whatever that issue is a lot more, or address it differently."

- **Work with advocacy groups you agree with.** Traveling all the way to D.C., possibly taking time off from work, or putting in the time to write and pitch a newspaper op-ed might feel like a daunting amount of investment to be heard by people who are supposed to work for you. Wallner recommended making use of advocacy groups (i.e. organizations like the Sierra Club or the National Federation of Independent Business).

"We talk about advocacy groups like they're a bad thing, but it's usually just the ones we disagree with," he said. "They have people who care about the same issues, who focus [on them] and are paid to go down to D.C. They make life difficult for members; sometimes they help members. ... See what they're doing and try to participate with them. Their voice is going to amplify your voice, and it's going to make it harder for Congress to ignore the issues that you care about."

One thing many advocacy groups do is lobby Congress, both by encouraging members to visit their representatives and by hiring their own lobbyists. You can find advocacy organizations working on issues you're interested in using Represent's database of lobbying arrangements.

You can watch the full discussion here, thanks to the New York Public Library, or listen to it on NYPL's Library Talks podcast. I promise, not only will you learn something, you'll laugh too.

We've come to the end of the User's Guide to Democracy — but, hopefully, this marks the start of your increased participation in our system of government. From Represent to the Facebook Political Ad Collector, you have tools to track what your representatives are actually doing, as well as tactics to hold them accountable. Don't hesitate to use them. And, remember: Congress works for *you*.

Filed under: Politics

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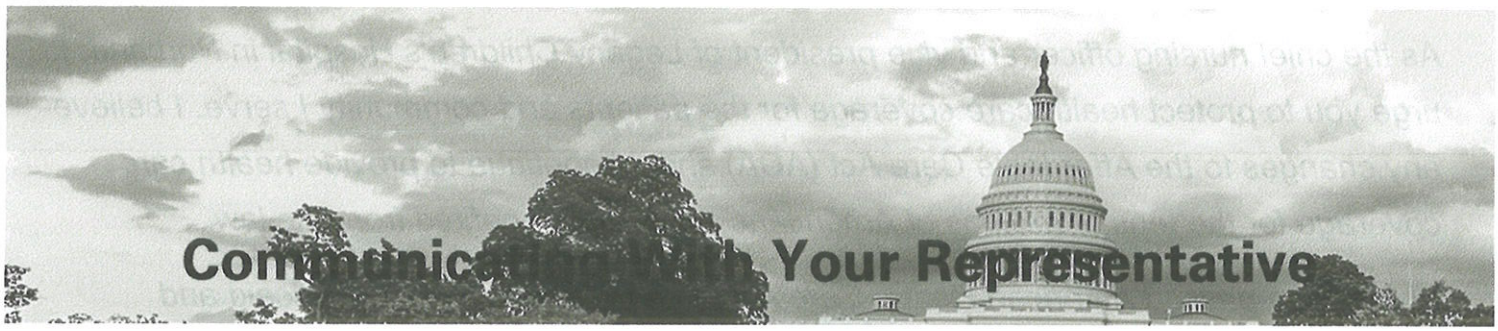
American Hospital Association™

(https://www.aha.org)

AONL | American Organization for Nursing Leadership™

(/)



While a legislator may be an expert on one or two issues, it is impossible for every lawmaker to master every issue likely to come before Congress. Elected officials rely on staff, outside expertise and constituent input to effectively represent the people of their district or state.

An ongoing dialogue with your elected officials is the best way to ensure they understand how their decisions will impact their constituents back home. No one can better explain the complexities of health care delivery and the impact policy changes would have on your organization's ability to continue delivering care than people like you on the front line.

It is important to build a relationship with your legislators not just contact them when legislation is pending.

Email Tips

PERSONALIZE THE MESSAGE

Remind the legislator or staff member of your most recent meeting or interaction. Personalization may mean your message is given closer attention.

GET TO THE POINT

Staffers deal with a large volume of email.

CONFINE YOURSELF TO ONE OR TWO ISSUES

Explain your position as clearly and concisely. Provide your contact information so the staff can reach you if additional information is needed.

PROVIDE A STORY

Share a personal story that relates to the issue.

Example:

Dear Senator Merkley,

As the chief nursing officer and vice president of Legacy Children's Hospital in Portland, I urge you to protect health care coverage for the patients and community I serve. I believe any changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) should continue to provide health care coverage for the tens of millions of Americans who have benefited from the law.

The House-passed American Health Care Act would significantly cut Medicaid and eliminate essential protections for older and sicker patients, including those with pre-existing conditions such as cancer patients and the chronically ill. This would adversely affect the population I have served as a registered nurse - children. Currently, Medicaid covers more than 50% of the children we serve in our community. The cuts in Medicaid would take us back to a time when families waited to get treatment for their child's illness until they were gravely ill because they had no medical coverage.

It is the right of every American to receive high-quality health care and the responsibility of health care providers to ensure they receive it. As the Senate looks to repeal and replace the ACA, I urge you to protect health care coverage, particularly for our most vulnerable. Please do not support any legislation that would harm patients' ability to access the care they need.

Respectfully,

Jane Smit

Social Media Tips

Nearly all members of Congress have Facebook and Twitter accounts. Follow your senators and representative to see what issues are most important to them and share your views with them. Conversations about what is happening in your community are happening online. Social media provide an opportunity to participate in the dialogue to make sure

your voice is heard.

Example:

> *We need a strong investment in nursing research and workforce development @SenatorDurbin. #NoMoreCuts to these vital programs.*

Phone Call Tips

IS THE ISSUE IS URGENT?

Call rather than email if the issue is urgent.

GET TO THE POINT

Explain who you are and why you are calling.

BE PREPARED.

Have your facts straight and your talking points ready. You only have a few minutes to get your point across.

BE READY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Anticipate questions your legislator or the staff member could ask you and have answers. If you are asked a question to which you do not know the answer, say you don't know but offer to follow up when you have an answer.

FOLLOW UP

Send an email referencing your conversation. Reiterate your points and provide any additional information you'd promised.

An important note: Under federal tax law, 501(c)(3) organizations, like hospitals, can, within permissible limits, engage in lobbying about issues, including communicating with any legislator or legislative staff member, where the principal purpose is to influence legislation. However, there is an absolute prohibition on 501(c)(3) organizations participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for public office.

If you have questions about what is or is not permissible, please consult with your lawyers.

REPRESENTATION & LEADERSHIP (HTTPS://WWW.LEGBRANCH.ORG/CATEGORY/REPRESENTATION-LEADERSHIP/)

Do constituents influence the work of legislators?

by LegBranch Team (https://www.legbranch.org/author/legbranch/)

April 3, 2018

Image source: NYT

Image source: NYT

By Philip D. Waggoner

Decades of normative (https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/rethinking-representation/608152BA9E3A0D9B0EC01CE4063B9FB3) and empirical (https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/role-of-the-representative-some-empirical-observations-on-the-theory-of-edmund-burke/4EAF05F537C2716FD122C6648762F979) research on American representation has taken up the question of whether the represented actually influence the representatives, and thus whether the representatives are listening to the represented. Some suggest legislators operate as "delegates," directly reflecting the desires of their constituents, while others expect legislators to act as "trustees," aiming for more opaque alignment with constituents' preferences. Either way, there is an expectation of constituents' influence to be seen in their representatives' work, as representatives are elected to be the voice of their constituents in a crowded, competitive government. But while constituents technically retain this power to influence, do they actually impact the work of their representatives? It turns out, the answer is *not really*.

I systematically take up this question in my recently published paper (http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1532673X18759644?journalCode=aprb) in *American Politics Research*, and add a few updates to this longstanding query. First, regarding the behavior of legislators, I look to a relatively underappreciated form of legislative behavior in the empirical study of Congress: bill sponsorship. This is a valuable place to begin from the elite side of the equation, given American legislators' mostly uninhibited ability to sponsor as many bills on any issues they wish. It follows that their policy priorities should be visible to some extent in their bill sponsorship behavior. Studying this form of behavior also has the added value of being mostly uninfluenced by party, in contrast to roll call voting or votes in committee, for example. And second, I offer a new way of measuring and mapping the policy preferences of constituents at the granular district level. Pairing these "calls" and "responses" across numerous issues, I am able to gain new leverage on the question of constituent representation.

In measuring constituents' preferences, I take a slightly different approach and focus on specific issues. Other approaches tend to make inferences about constituents' "ideologies" based on their responses to position-specific questions, such as "Do you favor or oppose legalization of marijuana?" Ideological preferences of constituents are then determined by aggregating a battery of responses to similar questions. While valuable, there are numerous

assumptions built in to such approaches, including whether or not ideology as a concept even exists (much less whether or not constituents possess it), and whether responses to inherently *non*-ideological questions (e.g., "favor or oppose") actually reveal *ideological* information. With such approaches, the result is the researcher placing constituents in *ideological* space.

My approach avoids these assumptions by allowing constituents to place themselves in *policy* space, based on aggregation and stratification of their responses to the "most important problem" question, which has been asked of numerous nationally representative samples over many decades. The product is a measure of constituents' policy preferences on specific issues in relation to many other issues, resulting in a map of stated issue preferences, and assumes nothing of ideology.

Consider Figure 1, which includes maps of the distribution of average constituent preferences by state based on my measurement strategy across four issues considered as the "most important problem" facing the country in 2008: immigration (upper left), environment (upper right), gay marriage (lower left), and the economy (lower right).

Figure 1: Constituent Preferences based on Average Multilevel Regression with Poststratification (MRP) Estimates by State

Note the variance in responses across geographic pockets in line with what we know about these regions. For example, regarding the economy (lower right map), 2008 is when the Great Recession began, and was felt most (http://time.com/4133963/us-census-poverty-income-great-recession/) by the Midwest and Northeast (darker shades of gray). Or consider immigration (upper left map), which shows highest average rates of selecting immigration as "most important" along the Mexican border states.

Returning to the question of constituent representation, my approach was twofold. First, I used rates of employment in every congressional district in specific industries as proxies for preferences of constituents. The idea here is that employment should reflect a prioritization of that same issue (e.g., farmers should prioritize agriculture over most other issues). In this first stage, I find mostly strong results, suggesting legislators are aware of the employment patterns in their districts, and they too make the same assumption of employment in a specific industry reflecting the preferences of their constituents.

The problem with this approach, though, is that employment patterns are mere *proxies* for preferences. Indeed, the assumption of employment reflecting preferences could be wrong. In the second stage of the analysis, then, I used the individual *direct* issue measures to see whether fluctuations in these measures correlate with fluctuations in legislators' sponsorship on the same issues. In other words, does an increase in constituents citing the environment as the "most important problem" influence legislators to focus more of their bill sponsorship efforts on the environment?

Surprisingly, I find that the effects from the proxy tests in stage one disappear, suggesting legislators are *not* looking to the specific policy problems constituents highlight, at least insofar as their bill sponsorship fails to reflect these preferences. Rather, legislators appear to be most influenced by their committee assignments and employment patterns in their districts.

Stepping back, these results suggest that legislators are mostly unconcerned with listening to the issue-specific preferences of their constituents. However, though based on the assumption that employment reflects preferences, legislators are at least attempting to reflect the interests of their districts with their sponsorship decisions. While not altogether ignoring their districts with their work, they are certainly not responding directly to the specific policy preferences of their constituencies either.

In sum, my study calls into question the expectations of the delegate model of representation, and finds that legislators act more as trustees. They are given power through election to office by constituents, but voting may be the extent of constituents' *direct* influence.

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