Subject: ROC Action Results Memo
To: Saru Jayaraman, ROC Action
From: Keira Stearns, Mahelet Fekade, Saul Cunow, and Miya Woolfalk, Analyst Institute
Date: June 27, 2019

Executive Summary

ROC Action is a national organization of more than 100,000 workers, employers, and consumers organizing for better wages and working conditions in the restaurant industry. Through their coworker-to-coworker model they seek to mobilize restaurant workers, millions of whom are women, youth, and people of color, to build long-term, collective power to create change.

In 2018, ROC Action partnered with Analyst Institute to test the effectiveness of their relational voter turnout program as a part of the Directed Research Fund. This Fund was created by Analyst Institute, Civic Innovation Works, and Civic Innovation USA to advance new learning and support groups doing scalable, innovative relational voter contact work.

To build their program, ROC Action used their One Fair Wage campaign to recruit 2,912 champions in Michigan. Using MyRVPList, champions mapped their networks, each listing an average of 5 contacts to build an experimental universe of 14,198 targets. Notably, ROC Action's relational voter turnout program reached a significantly larger scale than any relational voter turnout program studied with a randomized controlled trial prior to the 2018 cycle.

The main results of the test are as follows:

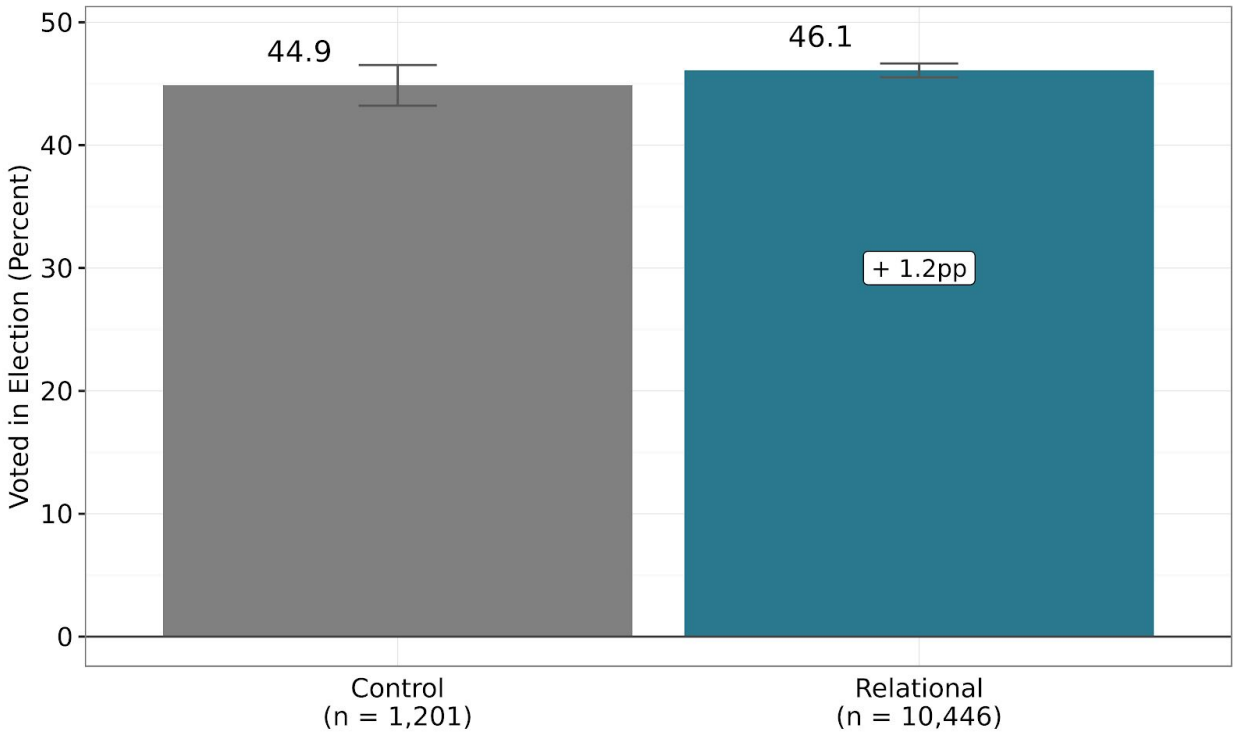
- **The relational voter contact program appears to have had a potent effect on turnout.** Among targets who matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList, relational contact appears to have increased turnout by 1.2 pp (p = 0.3), generating 127 net voters at a rate of 1.4 voters per $1,000 spent (VPK). By comparison this effect size is higher than the average effects of many other modes of GOTV contact modeled in a midterm election. While the effect size and VPK of the program are smaller than those observed *on average* in prior tests of relational voter contact programs, both are consistent with the *range of values* previously seen.

- **Treatment may have been more effective among voters who shared a household with the volunteer delivering the relational contact and among younger voters.** Voters who shared the same household as the volunteer delivering the relational contact appear to have been particularly responsive to treatment (5.1pp, p = 0.03)**.** This suggests that relationship strength may be an important moderator of effect sizes. Relational voter contact also appeared to have a larger effect on 18 to 34 year olds (3.2pp, p = 0.1), a result that is consistent with prior research.

Overall, the results highlight that relational voter contact can be an effective voter engagement tactic, generating effects that outpace that of other contact modes. At the same time, relational voter contact does not appear to be as cost efficient in generating net voters as other modes, such as lighter-touch ones like mail. Of course, there are other unmeasured outcomes associated with

ROC Action's longer-term goals, such as base-building and volunteer leader development, that are not captured by this analysis and cost efficiency assessment.

Voters targeted with relational contact appeared to have turned out at a higher rate than the uncontacted control group



Background

ROC Action is a national organization of more than 100,000 workers, employers, and consumers organizing for better wages and working conditions in the restaurant industry. Through their coworker-to-coworker model they seek to mobilize restaurant workers, millions of whom are women, youth, and people of color, to build long-term, collective power to create change.

In 2018, ROC Action partnered with Analyst Institute to test the effectiveness of their relational voter turnout program, which was implemented alongside a larger canvass program targeting 80,000 unlikely voters. In contrast to longer term relational organizing, relational voter turnout focuses on leveraging pre-existing relationships and social networks to engage voters in the context of specific elections.

Relational voter turnout has shown great promise as a voter contact strategy, leading to some of the largest voter mobilization effects observed during the 2016 cycle. However, the largest of the tests were only able to reach several thousand voters. To build on these results, Analyst Institute, Civic Innovation Works, and Civic Innovation USA partnered together in 2018 to create the Directed Research Fund to support groups like ROC Action doing innovative relational voter contact work at a large scale.

This test presents a unique opportunity to understand the effectiveness of relational voter turnout strategies within the context of a long-term relational organizing program.

Research Questions

- What is the impact of ROC Action's relational voter contact program on turnout?
- Which voters are most responsive to ROC Action's relational voter contact program?

Experimental Design and Implementation

Experimental Universe

The universe for this test comprised 14,198 individuals in Michigan. To create this universe, ROC Action recruited 2,912 champions, each of whom listed an average of 5 contacts. Within the experimental universe, 11,647 (82%) matched to the voter file at the start of the experiment, while 2,551(18%) did not.[1]

The universe of targets who matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList comprised slightly more women, with roughly half being people of color. The average age was 47 years old. The average voter turnout score was 36 and targets leaned Democratic. The majority of targets who initially matched to the voter file were added to MyRVPList within two weeks of Election Day (Table 2), with the average being 9 days before the election. Additionally, 22% of volunteers and their relational targets lived in the same household.

Of the universe of targets who did not match to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList, 4% matched to the voter file after the program and 4% were registered to vote.[2] Initially unmatched targets were entered into MyRVPList an average of 5 days before the election.

[1] In the original design in place between August 21 and October 19, 2018, only contacts who matched to the voter file were included in the experiment. If the voter file match step was skipped within the platform, the targets were excluded from the experiment even if they matched to the voter file at a later date. However, the decision was made in October to include all contacts listed by champions in the experiment.

[2] 93% of initially unmatched targets were missing either first name, last name, or city, contributing to the low post-program voter file match rate. Registration rate is based on post-program data.

Table 1: The initially matched universe contained slightly more women and people of color

	Initially matched (N = 11,647)
Women	55%
Black	50%
White	46%
Latinx	3%
Other	2%
Average age	47
Voted in 2016	53%
Voted in 2014	31%
Average 2018 Voter Turnout Score	36
Average Partisanship Score	61
Post-program % registered[3]	97%
Post-program % voter file match	97%
Average days in MyRVPList	9 days
% volunteer/target share household	22%
% volunteer/target share race	55%
% volunteer/ target share gender	44%
Voter average HH size	2

Table 2: Most targets were added to MyRVPList within two weeks of Election Day

	Initially matched	Initially unmatched
0-2 Days	27%	45%
3-5 Days	19%	31%
6-14 Days	38%	16%
15-71 Days	16%	8%

[3] The table reports registration rates post-program rather than pre-program, as pre-program registration rates are not available.

Experimental Conditions

Targets were randomly assigned to one of the following treatment conditions:

- *Relational GOTV contact*: Individuals in this condition were targeted with GOTV outreach from the ROC Action champion who listed them in their network. (N matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList = 10,446; N not matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList = 2,292)
- *Control Group*: Individuals in this condition were not targeted with GOTV contact from ROC Action. (N matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList = 1,201; N not matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList = 259)

Randomization occurred within the MyRVPList platform. See the Technical Appendix for details on post-randomization covariate balance checks.

Experimental Implementation

Beginning in August 2018, ROC Action began training their organizers on MyRVPList, recruiting champions and asking them to map their networks. ROC Action had originally intended to center their relational contact program on the One Fair Wage initiative due to be on the ballot in November 2018. However, in September 2018, the Republican-controlled Michigan legislature adopted the measure with the intention of amending it after the election, removing the initiative from the ballot. To continue to engage their universe, ROC Action shifted their messaging to emphasize the importance of keeping the minimum wage raise that restaurant workers had gained.

Organizers were responsible for recruiting champions through workplace outreach and as a part of a larger door-to-door canvass program targeting unlikely voters. Within MyRVPList, champions were asked to list the first name, last name, and city of their contacts. Optional fields were listed for address and age. Once champions listed targets in the platform, MyRVPList checked the list against the voter file and returned probable matches. Champions then went through and confirmed the match before clicking to save and continue, after which they would see their finalized list. MyRVPList automatically randomized the matched list into treatment and control conditions between saving the VAN match and returning the final list that indicated who was to be contacted and who was in the no-contact control group. Some champions were also recruited through ROC Action's door-to-door canvass program and may not have accessed MyRVPList directly. As the randomization occurred within the platform, it is unclear whether all champions were aware of who was in the control group. This may result in a conservative estimation of the effect of the program.

In addition to on-the-ground organizers, two weeks before the election, ROC Action created an online relational voter contact portal that synced with MyRVPList. The website was advertised through online email blasts and at various events, with volunteers invited to go to the website and fill out their information and the information of targets in their network. This information was directly inputted into MyRVPList, and ROC Action reached out to those who signed up with information about how to log in to the platform [See Materials Appendix]. However, this comprised a small percentage of the total volunteer universe, with most volunteers recruited by on-the-ground organizers.

ROC Action issued a number of calls to action, requesting their champions reach out to their networks. In the lead up to the election, champions were asked to talk with their networks about the One Fair Wage campaign[4], remind them when Election Day was, and ask them if they knew their polling place location. In the week leading up to Election Day, champions were asked to help their

[4] Note that we do not have accurate contact rates, as very few champions recorded contact.

contacts plan how and when they were going to vote, and, on November 5, they were asked to confirm the plan and remind their networks about Election Day.

Implementation Issues

The test faced the following implementation issues:

- There was a glitch in the MyRVPList workflow that resulted in volunteers not being able to log in to the mobile app. Efforts were made to address this issue, although it continued sporadically through the cycle.
- Some volunteers were hesitant to use the MyRVPList platform. Given this, paper lists were sometimes used to map networks, creating additional data entry needs.
- There were also unanticipated challenges with matching targets to the voter file due to a functionality that allowed volunteers to skip the VAN match stage within the platform. Skipping the VAN match step, whether intentionally or not, resulted in the exclusion of some potential targets from the experiment, even if the volunteer went back into the platform to match their targets to the voter file at a later date.[5]

Outcome Measurement

The primary outcome in this test was voter turnout in the 2018 November general election. Analyst Institute measured this outcome post-election using the official voter file provided by Catalist.

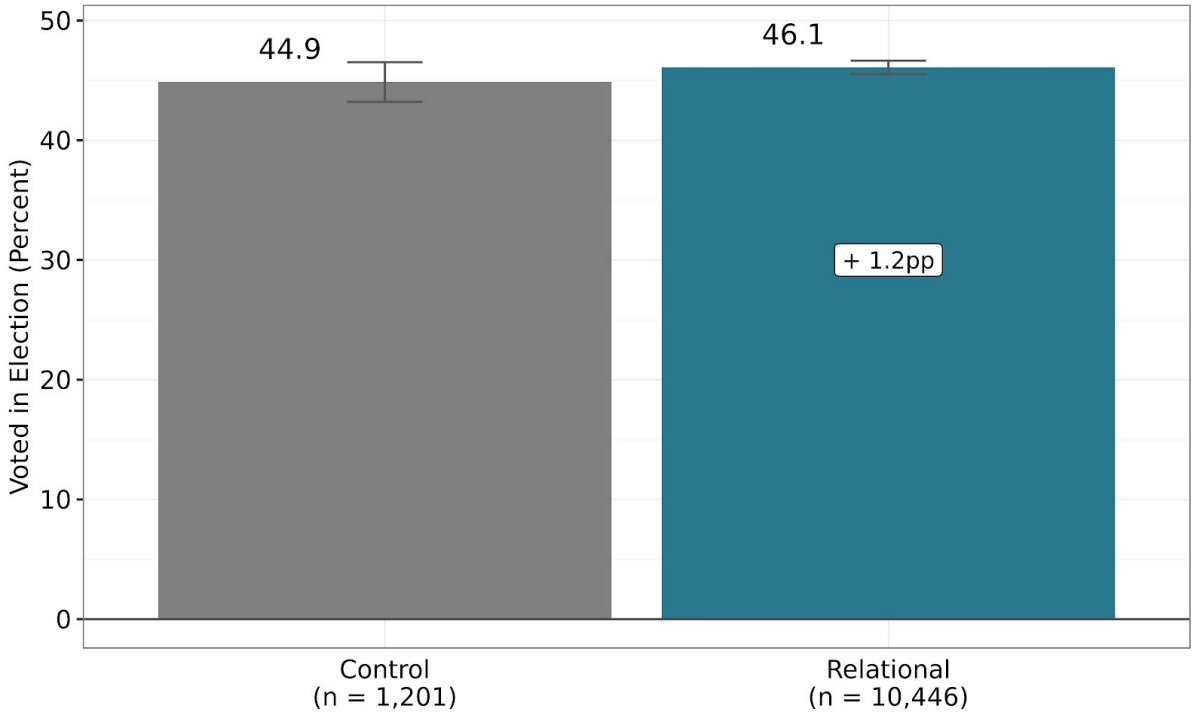
Results

Main Results

Overall, relational voter contact appears to have increased turnout. Of those who matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList, being targeted with relational contact likely increased turnout by 1.2 percentage points (pp) over the uncontacted baseline control group (p = 0.3). Turnout in the uncontacted control group was 44.9%, while turnout in the relational contact condition was 46.1% (Graph 1). These results are in line with past results that suggest that relational voter contact can be an effective way to mobilize voters.

[5] After October 19, 2018, all contacts uploaded to MyRVPList were included in the experiment regardless of voter file match status.

Graph 1: Among those who initially matched to the voter file, treatment likely increased turnout

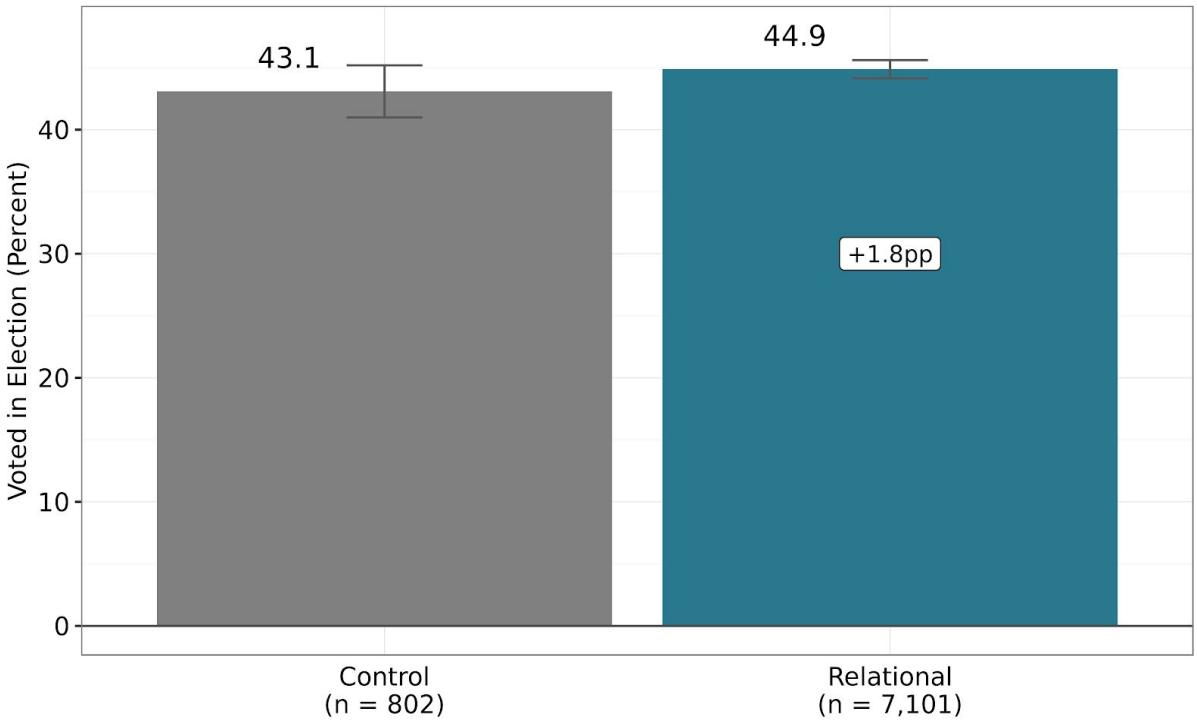


Only 4% of the 2,551 initially unmatched targets were successfully matched to the voter file at the end of the experiment, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the impact of the relational voter contact program on the initially unmatched universe. Given this, it appears that receiving relational voter contact did not impact voter turnout among those who did not match to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList. Turnout in the relational treatment group was lower by 1pp than in the control group but this difference is not statistically significant (p = 0.4) and is very likely attributable to statistical noise. We believe this finding is in part due to challenges presented by matching initially unmatched targets in MyRVPList to voter file data post-program, leading to a high degree of missing voter turnout data and underscoring the inconclusive results about the impact of the relational voter contact program on the initially unmatched universe.

In addition to exploring the effectiveness of relational voter contact on turnout, Analyst Institute also looked at whether there was a spillover effect on the household members of initially matched voters targeted with relational contact. Shared household was defined as sharing the same voter registration address as an experimental target, with analysis restricted to households with 5 or fewer people.[6] Overall, the analysis reveals possible evidence of a spillover effect of relational voter contact, with a 1.8pp increase in turnout among individuals sharing a household with targets in the relational condition who matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList (p = 0.2). This result suggests that the relational content may have generated additional voters beyond those targeted by the program. We believe that this result warrants additional testing to better understand the magnitude of any spillover effects of relational voter contact.

[6] Households containing targets assigned to different treatment conditions were excluded from the analysis.

Graph 2: Turnout may have been higher among household members of initially matched targets in the relational condition



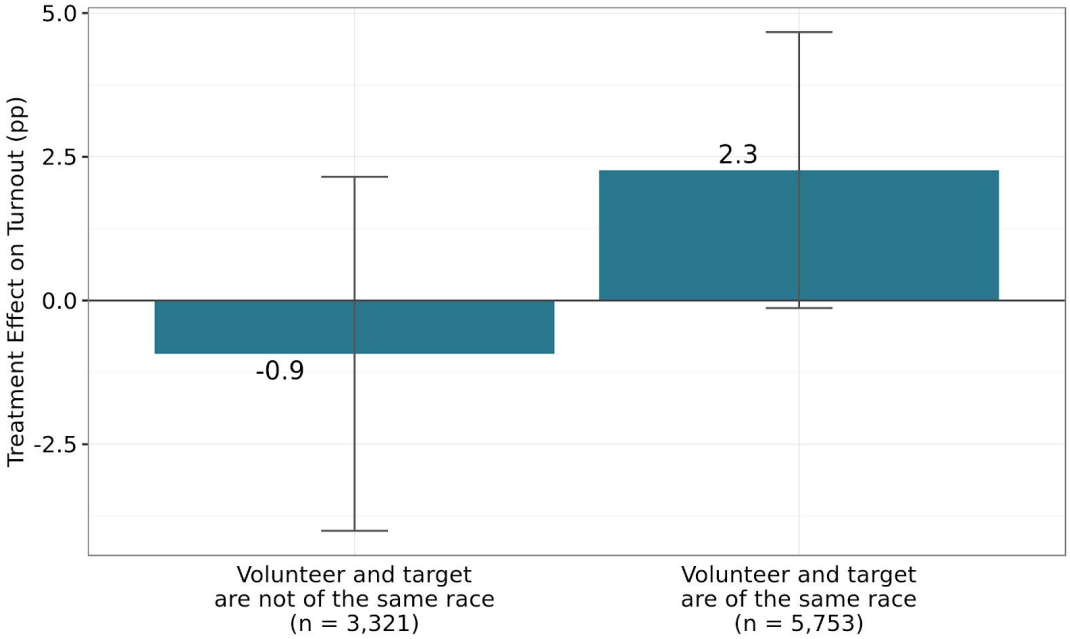
Variation in Treatment Effects

We then examined if certain voters were more responsive to relational voter contact.[7] The results suggest that among those who matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList, relational voter contact was more effective among voters who shared the same race as the volunteer delivering the relational contact or lived in the same household.[8] Among voters who shared the same race as the volunteer engaging in relational contact, turnout may have been 2.3pp higher than in the control group (p = 0.1). Likewise, among voters who shared a household with the volunteer engaging in relational contact, turnout appears to have been 5.1pp higher than in the control group (p = 0.03). With relatively few voters in this group, the magnitude of this effect is somewhat imprecisely estimated but strongly suggests that relational contact was most effective when volunteers and their targets shared a household. The strength of the relationship between the volunteer and the voter is likely an important moderator of effect sizes.

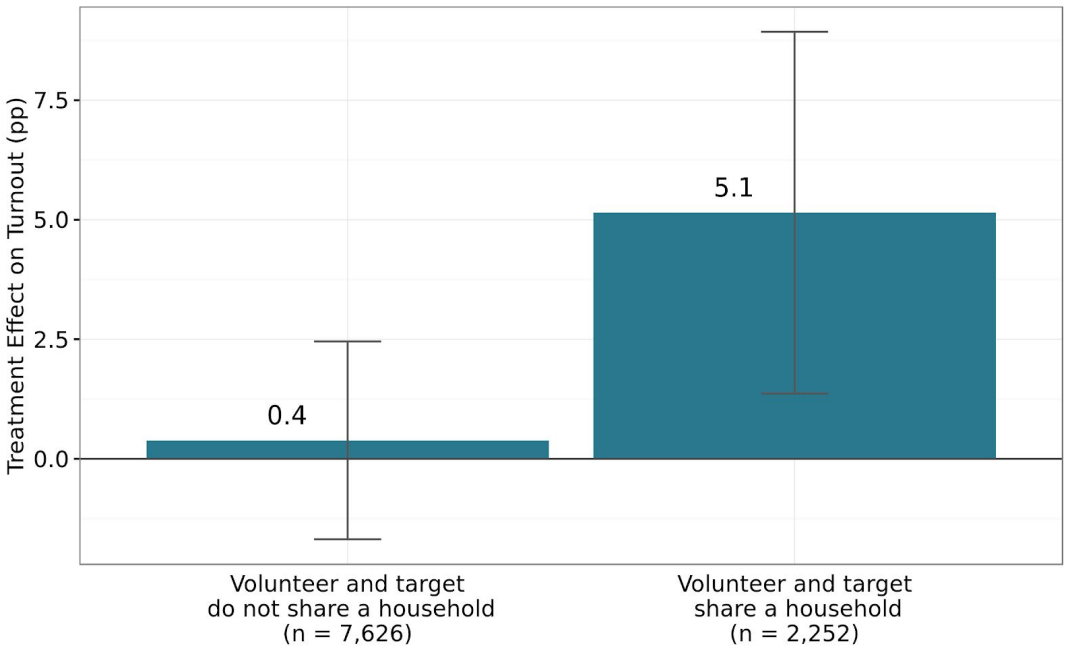
[7] Subgroup analyses were only conducted on targets who matched to the voter file at the beginning of treatment due to concerns about post-treatment bias.

[8] Note that the shared household subgroup analysis is distinct from the spillover analysis reported above. The shared household subgroup result explores the effect of relational voter contact when a volunteer targets a voter in their household. The spillover analysis explores whether being targeted by relational contact also increases the turnout of a voter's household members who were not *specifically targeted*.

Graph 3: Initially matched voters who shared the same race with the volunteer engaging in relational contact may have been more responsive to treatment



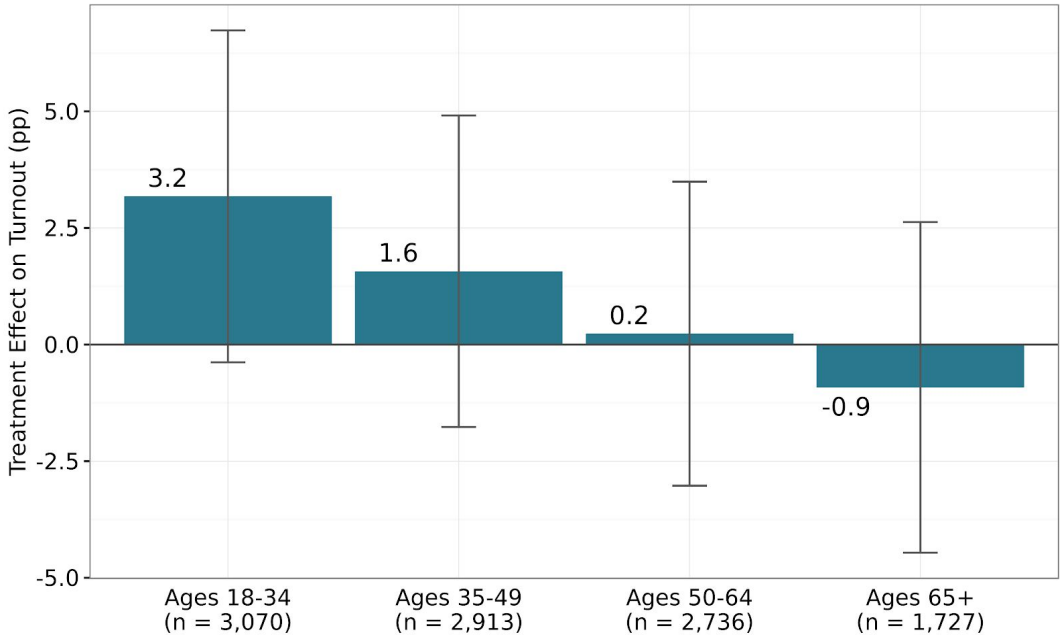
Graph 4: Voters who shared a household with the volunteer engaging in relational contact were likely more responsive to treatment[9]



[9] Note the graph does not include targets with missing shared household data.

We also found some evidence that among initially matched targets, younger voters may have been more responsive to treatment. Relational voter contact appeared to have the largest impact on 18 to 34 year olds, with effect sizes decreasing as targets' age increased (Graph 5). This finding is in line with previous tests on relational voter contact. There did not appear to be any meaningful differences in the effect of treatment by race or vote propensity.

Graph 5: Younger voters may have been more responsive to treatment



Cost efficiency analysis

Among those who matched to the voter file when they were entered into MyRVPList, this program may have generated 127 net voters at a rate of approximately 1.4 voters per $1,000 spent. If we add the voters potentially generated from the spillover effect to the cost efficiency calculated above, this program may have generated a total of 254 net voters, at a rate of approximately 2.7 voters per $1,000 spent.

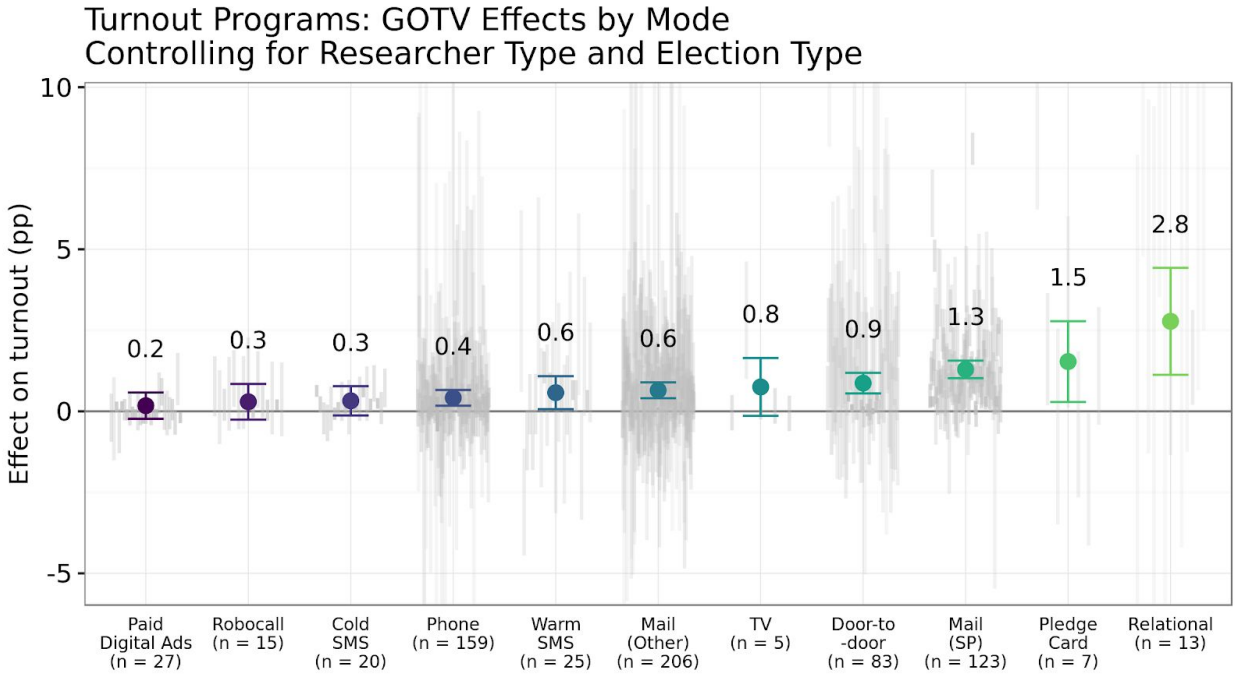
This analysis of cost efficiency is based on a program cost of $140,962.20, approximately two-thirds of which can be attributed to the matched treatment universe in the test. This cost is quite comprehensive and includes those related to hiring temporary organizing staff, technological costs, training costs, staff time, and other miscellaneous overhead costs.

Discussion

Turnout in the 2018 midterm elections reached historic highs nationwide, approaching presidential election levels. In Michigan, facing a crowded political environment, more than 4.3 million people cast a ballot, far surpassing previous midterm election turnout rates. Despite the difficulty in breaking through the noise, ROC Action's relational voter contact program appears to have increased turnout among those who matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList. While the program effect size on initially matched targets (i.e., 1.2pp) and number of net voters generated per $1,000 spent (i.e., 127) are smaller than the corresponding *averages* for relational voter contact programs in our meta-analysis, both estimates in this test are consistent with the *range of values*

observed in previous tests.[10] Furthermore, ROC Action's relational program generated an effect on turnout that outpaces the average modeled midterm effect of many other contact modes, including paid digital ads, cold SMS, phone-banking and door-to-door canvass (Graph 6).

Graph 6: ROC Action's relational program outpaced many of the average midterm effects of other modes of GOTV contact



These results highlight that leveraging individual relationships can play an important role in turning people out to vote. At the same time, the number of net voters generated per $1,000 spent in this test confirms that relational voter contact can be more costly and labor-intensive than other lighter touch contact modes, such as mail. Of course, it is important to bear in mind that estimates of cost efficiency reported here only consider returns in terms of the number of voters generated in the 2018 election. It does not take into account possible program effects on other outcomes related to ROC Action's long-term strategic goals, including base-building and volunteer leadership development, which can be leveraged in subsequent electoral and issue campaigns.

Overall, ROC Action's relational voter turnout program reached a significantly larger scale than any relational voter program studied prior to the 2018 election cycle. This points to the value of ROC Action's long-term organizing model that invests in engaging restaurant workers year round, creating authentic long-term relationships between the organization and its constituents that can be activated and leveraged during election cycles. ROC Action targeted a specific population with whom

[10] The average effect and VPK for relational voter turnout programs conducted prior to 2018 based on our meta-analysis are 2.5pp and 4 VPK, respectively. The 90% confidence intervals for these estimates are [0.8pp, 4.2pp] and [1.3 VPK, 6.7 VPK].

they had an existing organizing relationship, allowing them to recruit more volunteers into the program than they had initially anticipated. The types of connection with volunteers built by organizations like ROC Action may be particularly effective because they are created with the goal of developing citizens who are broadly engaged in the political process. With a national reach of over 100,000 workers, ROC Action may want to consider implementing an even larger scale relational voter contact program in subsequent election cycles.

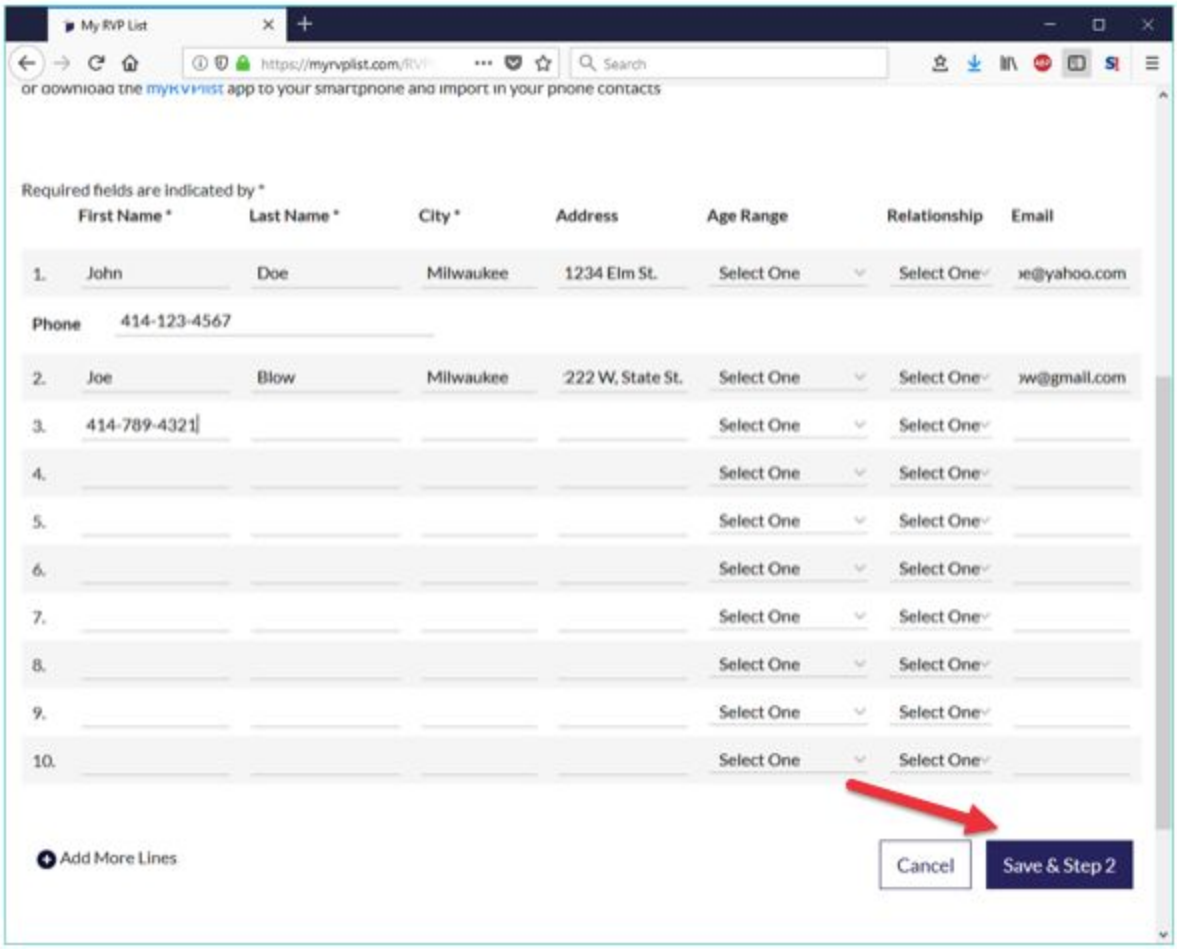
Not only did ROC Action implement a large scale program, ROC Action was able to reach promising turnout targets. Many targets in the initially matched universe were less engaged voters, with only 52% voting in 2016 and 31% voting in 2014. Moreover, only about 45% of the initially matched uncontacted control group turned out in 2018. At the same time, given that approximately 25% of the universe had a partisanship score of less than 50, ROC Action may want to consider setting some restrictions on partisanship score in future relational voter turnout programs if they are interested in mobilizing voters who are more likely to support Democratic candidates and progressive causes.

Having volunteers engage their social networks is an important part of GOTV campaigns, warranting additional experimental evaluation. One important finding that deserves further evaluation is the observation that relational voter contact appears to have been particularly effective on targets who shared a household with the volunteer delivering the contact. This suggests that the strength of the relationship between a volunteer and a voter matters in relational voter programs. High-quality outreach from trusted messengers is a key driver of relational effects, which is likely amplified in stronger relationship contexts. Future tests could include explicit instructions to track the relationship between a volunteer and their relational target to better understand how relationship strength conditions the effect of relational contact. Other tests could explore the optimal length of time for volunteers to be contacting voters in their networks. By tracking contact rates over time, future tests could add additional clarity to the role that frequency of contact and timing play in effective relational voter contact programs. Finally, future tests could continue to investigate the spillover effects of relational voter contact programs to understand their full impact and reach.

We thank ROC Action for partnering with Analyst Institute on this test, which has broken new ground in our understanding of how to effectively scale relational voter turnout programs. We look forward to continued learning around these exciting voter turnout strategies.

Materials Appendix

Screenshot of Contact Entry Page in MyRVPList



Screenshot of Control Group Instructions in MyRVPList

Please don't contact the people below as part of this activity.

People may be on the 'do not contact' list below for various reasons including our targeting may indicate they may already be a strong voter and may not need the extra push, t issues so your time is better spent talking to others on your list, or, a very small number of people are also being held out as a control group in a field test experiment to confirm method can be. If you do accidentally end up talking to them about this activity, please indicate that below so we can update our records to account for that.

	First Name	Last Name	Action
1.	Eric	Peterson	Edit
2.	Michelle	Finkle	Edit
3.	Melissa	Pfohl	Edit
4.	Nathan	Schwantes	Edit
5.	Jeffrey	Smith	Edit
6.	Gabriel	Green	Edit

October Event Recruitment Email

Dear << Test First Name >>,
Michigan One Fair Wage GOTV events with Black Lives Matter Co-founder Patrisse Cullors, Taraji Henson, and Jane Fonda and Relational Voter Program One Fair Wage was adopted by the Legislature on Sept. 5, putting in motion incremental increases in the minimum wage to $12 an hour by 2022. The policy also phases out the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers, raising wages to $12 by 2024.

However, the Legislature adopted One Fair Wage with plans to alter it after the election, undermining the democratic process. Voting is a tried-and-true way of holding your local legislators accountable for how they vote and what they stand for. A strong showing at the polls will send a message to lawmakers that voters are engaged and watching what they are doing.

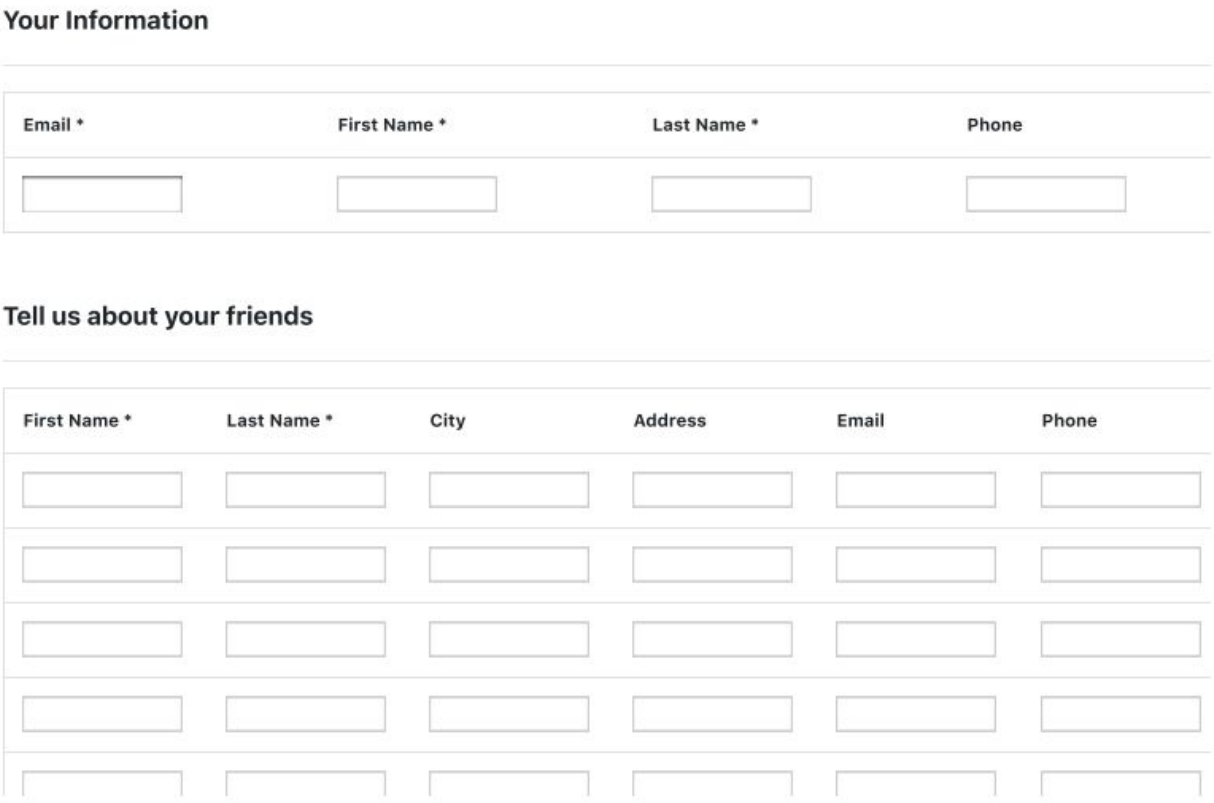
We recently launched a relational voter program designed to use personal connections to drive people to the polls. Join our Voter Program TODAY and encourage your friends and family members to head to the polls on Nov. 6. This weekend we are hosting several free GOTV events in locations across the state and we hope you can attend. We will be joined by activist and actress Jane Fonda, Patrisse Cullors cofounder of Black Lives Matter, and actress and activist Taraji P. Henson. Please find a list of the weekend's activities below.
Grand Rapids on October 26 with Jane Fonda
Flint on October 27 with Patrisse Cullors and Jane Fonda
Lansing on October 27 with Patrisse Cullors and Jane Fonda
Benton Harbor on October 27 with Patrisse Cullors and Jane Fonda River Rouge on October 28 with Patrisse Cullors, Taraji Henson, and Jane Fonda

If we work together, we can have the largest voter turnout in Michigan history. Let's all do our part to make this happen!
Sincerely, Workers and Advocates for One Fair Wage

Online Recruitment Page Linked in Email

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO #PROTECTMIRAISE
Join More Than 400,000 Voters!
The Relational Voter Program (RVP) is an innovative voter outreach tool that relies on personal connections to drive civic engagement. Research shows people are more likely to be moved to action by someone they know. That means we all hold the power to make change and increase involvement simply by encouraging those around us to vote. The goal of the RVP is to help people identify their shared values instead of focusing on differences. Public polling shows that Michiganders support raising the wages of sub-minimum wage workers because it will have a positive impact on our state. More than 400,000 Michiganders signed the One Fair Wage petition to support giving these workers a raise. One Fair Wage will lift working families, especially women, out of poverty and move families off public assistance so they can be more independent.

Join our Relational Voter Program TODAY and encourage your friends and family members to get out to the polls on Nov. 6. All you have to do is add the names of your friends and loved ones to the form below and one of our organizers will take it from there. Together, we can send a strong message to those seeking elected office that the people of Michigan support One Fair Wage!



Technical Appendix

Main Effects Table Among Initial Matchers

Treatment Group	*Predicted Level*	*Difference from Control*	*Standard Error of Difference*
Control	44.8	-	-
Relational Contact	46.1	+1.2	1.1

Logistic regressions were used to generate these results. Race, age, gender, 2018 vote propensity score, partisanship score, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016 vote history, ZIP code, and days in MyRVPList before the election were included in the model as covariates.

Main Effects Table Among Initial Unmatchers

Treatment Group	*Predicted Level*	*Difference from Control*	*Standard Error of Difference*
Control	3.8	-	-
Relational Contact	2.8	-1.0	1.2

Logistic regressions were used to generate these results. Days in MyRVPList before the election was included in the model as a covariate.

Statistical Power

As designed, this test was able to reliably detect a minimum effect of 2.6pp when comparing the treatment condition to the control condition. This estimate was based on a sample size of 20,000 and a baseline turnout rate of 40%. As implemented, we had the same power we expected for targets who matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList, but we were unlikely to detect a statistically significant effect as the effect of the relational contact was smaller than 2.6pp.

For targets who did not match to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList, we had slightly less power. This test was able to reliably detect a minimum effect of 3.1pp based on a sample size of 2,551 and a baseline turnout rate of 3.8%. Because the effects of the program ended up being smaller than these estimates, it was not likely that the test would have shown these effects to be statistically significant.

Balance Checks

Among those who matched to the voter file when entered into MyRVPList, experimental conditions were generally balanced across a range of covariates, including age, race/ethnicity, gender, vote history, 2018 vote propensity score, partisanship score, and days in MyRVPList before the election. Our analyses control for any variables that were not balanced.

Graph 7: Balance between treatment and control conditions