Mobilizing Party Activism:
A Field Experiment with Party Members and Sympathizers

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Abstract:[1]

Electoral mobilization is often characterized as a two-stage process, in which parties mobilize their core supporters, who then mobilize a larger share of the electorate. It is, however, still unclear whether mobilization in the context of electoral campaigns can affect the campaign activism of core supporters. To address this question, we conducted a randomized field experiment in cooperation with the Swiss Social Democratic Party in the context of the 2015 cantonal elections in the Swiss state of Ticino. The experiment consisted in the randomized administration of mobilization telephone calls to a sample of 258 members and sympathizers of the party, while their opinions and self-reported campaign activism were monitored by means of an online panel survey. Against expectations, we find that phone calls appear to have been ineffective -- and at worst -- might have backfired, since we consistently record small, negative effects on different measures of campaign activism including on the mobilization of relatives, and friends. The results raise important questions about omitted variable bias in observational studies of party activism that consistently report significant positive effects of party contact on campaign activism of core voters.

In their mobilization efforts during electoral campaigns, parties are constrained by their resources and can only reach a limited number of voters directly. However, mobilization has been characterized by political scientists as a two-stage process, in which direct contact by the party is only a first step, complemented by a second indirect step in which the party's message is passed on and amplified by its supporters (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). The success of a party therefore depends on its ability to mobilize its core supporters, who can pass on its message to a wider spectrum of the population, thereby magnifying the mobilization of the electorate. Since communication between parties and their core electorate is therefore a central aspect of politics, can parties turn the majority of passive supporters into activists?

In the last decades, a large number of field experiments have been conducted to assess the success of campaign intervention aimed at increasing voter turnout (for a review see Green et al., 2013), but less attention has been dedicated to other forms of political participation. Observational studies have found that party contact increases the likelihood of canvassing votes (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; McClurg, 2004). Moreover, an influential series of field experiments has shown that non-partisan NGOs can mobilize sympathizers to attend meetings or sign petitions (Han 2016, 2014). However, experimental work on the effects of mobilization efforts aimed at incentivizing party supporters to engage in campaign activism is non-existent. To address this gap in the literature, we conduct a randomized field experiment to assess whether phone calls by party representatives in the context of electoral campaigns can affect the opinions and campaign activism of their core supporters.

The embedded field experiment was conducted in cooperation with the Social Democratic Party of the Canton of Ticino, Switzerland, during the April 2015 cantonal elections.

A study population composed by members and sympathizers of the party was randomly assigned into a treatment and a control group. Subjects in the treatment group were called by party representatives, who delivered a message about the importance of their individual contribution to the campaign and encouraged them to take on a more active role. Finally, the opinions and self-reported campaign activism of subjects were monitored by means of an online panel survey. The randomization procedure should ensure that observed post-treatment differences in self-reported activism between the two groups can be attributed to the treatment. Against expectations, the phone calls had a small negative effect on self-reported campaign activism, opinions, and all other outcome measures. The effects, in the majority of tests, do not reach statistical significance and the null hypothesis of no treatment effect cannot be rejected.

This paper is structured in four main sections. In the first section, we review the theory on the mobilization of campaign activists, outline the research question to be addressed, and present the hypothesis. In the second section, we present the research design and in the third section, we report the results of the experiment. We then discuss the results and draw our conclusions.

Electoral Mobilization as a Two-stage Process

One of the main scopes of political parties consists in electoral campaign activities, or in the effort to mobilize support for their candidates in elections (Whiteley and Seyd, 1994; Wielhouwer, 1999). By engaging in electoral campaigns, parties provide information to the electorate and assume an important function as a link between government and population (Wielhouwer, 1999). If we assume that participation is vital to a healthy democracy, the mobilization of voters should be regarded as one of the most beneficial activities undertaken by political parties (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992). Arguably, when parties try to increase voter turnout, they aren't moved by "noble" intents such as increasing the engagement of the population in politics, but by the more prosaic desire to win elections. No matter what the

ultimate goal is, however, the question about the best strategies to reach the electorate and in particular about the extent to which voters can be mobilized or influenced by partisan campaigns is a highly relevant one (Green and Gerber 2008: vii). Although many studies have been dedicated to the topic, the response is still inconclusive (Gerber et al. 2011).

In the last decades, a large number of field experiments has been conducted to assess the success of non-partisan and, more recently, partisan campaigns aimed at increasing turnout. While it is now widely accepted that nonpartisan GOTV campaigns, mainly if carried out face-to-face or in a personalized fashion, can be successful in increasing turnout (Green and Gerber, 2008; Green et al., 2013; John and Brannan 2008), the results are decisively more mixed regarding partisan efforts (Green et al., 2013; Foos and de Rooij, 2013; Foos and John, 2016; Nickerson et al., 2006), in part because the number of studies conducted is much smaller. However, while most of the existing literature has focused on increasing voter turnout, other forms of participation, such as campaign activism, have been granted less attention (Wielhouwer, 1999). In one of the few empirical studies on alternative forms of participation, Wielhouwer analyzed the success of party contact in mobilizing "*campaign activists*, those people who work for a political party or candidate, attend political rallies, try to convince others how they should vote, and display campaign materials" (1999: 177-178). The author found that party contact does have a mobilizing effect on campaign activists. While it is still unclear if parties can be successful in the direct mobilization of voters (Green et al., 2013), Wielhouwer's results seem to suggest that they may be able to mobilize citizens in other forms of participation.

The ability to mobilize campaign activists is particularly relevant if we consider that it is liable to have far-reaching downstream effects. Analyzing the results of an electoral study conducted in 1984 in South Bend, Indiana, Huckfeldt and Sprague (1992) set out to assess the success of political parties in contacting individual citizens during electoral campaigns. They reached the conclusion that party contact acts as a sort of catalyst: "[o]rganizations make contact

with potential activists who, in turn, make contact with the population at large" (1992: 83-84). In other words, "[p]arty organizations mobilize the faithful, and the activity of the faithful sends a message to the rest of the public" (1992: 84). If this is the case, the relation between a party and its "faithful", be it the membership base or the "core supporters" (Holbrook and McClurg, 2005), assumes a fundamental role in the study of electoral campaigns. In their influential *Mobilization, participation, and democracy in America* (1993), Rosenstone and Hansen adopt a theoretical approach similar to what outlined by Huckfeldt and Sprague. They define mobilization as "the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce others to participate" (1993: p. 25), and characterize it as a *two-stage process* composed by *direct mobilization* and *indirect mobilization*. *Direct mobilization* is the process by which parties and leaders "contact citizens personally and encourage them to take action" (1993: p. 26), for instance by means of phone call banks or door-to-door canvassing. Parties are more likely to directly contact people they already know and that are more likely to vote for them: their core supporters. In a second step, *indirect mobilization* takes place when people who have been contacted by the party pass on the message, or "when local activists push their friends to attend meetings and friends ask family to accompany them, when parties contact workers in a plant and the workers ask their co-workers to vote" (1993: p. 26). In sum, "direct mobilization reverberates through indirect mobilization" (1993: p. 28).

Research Question and Hypothesis

The number of citizens parties can directly and meaningfully contact in electoral campaigns are limited by their resources, and parties usually concentrate their efforts on their core constituencies (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). If party activists can act as a catalyst in a two-stage mobilization process, the ability of parties to encourage their core supporters to take on a more active role in election campaigns should be of paramount concern. Core supporters do not necessarily need to be formal members of the party, they can

also be sympathizers. As Fisher and coauthors show, with the steady decline of party membership in the last decades, parties have started relying more on volunteering non-members (Fisher et al., 2014). Can parties push their members and sympathizers to become activists? How can they do so? Building on Rosenstone and Hansen's (as well as Huckfeldt and Sprague's) theoretical approach, while integrating elements of the recent tradition of experimental GOTV research, we propose to address the following general research question:

Can phone calls by political parties in the context of electoral campaigns affect

the opinions and campaign activism of their core supporters?

While most GOTV experiments have been carried out in the US or in the UK, we address the question by means of an embedded field experiment carried out in the Canton of Ticino, Switzerland. Since phone calls are not commonplace in Swiss electoral campaigns, this setting has the additional advantage of providing a different context in which the effect of phone calls can be tested.

Using data from the National Election Studies from 1956 to 1988, Rosenstone and Hansen find that "people the Democrats and Republicans mobilize in the course of a presidential election campaign are […] 11.8 percent more likely to try to persuade others" (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993: pp. 170-172). For midterm elections, they find an effect of the same size. There are two main problems that could cast doubt on their results. First, the independent variable, party contact, is self-reported by voters in the National Election Studies data. Secondly, as the authors readily admit, the study unavoidably fails "to include an unobserved variable – the parties' estimates of the likelihood that each person will participate if asked" (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993: p. 172). A randomized experiment would overcome this problem and allow to establish the existence of a causal link more clearly, as well as produce a more reliable estimate of the size of the effect. Nevertheless, the authors' covariate adjustment is robust and their

findings still provide convincing evidence that party contact increases the likelihood of party activism.

Using data from the same South Bend study analyzed by Huckfeldt and Sprague (1992), McClurg set out to clarify the mechanisms in Rosenstone and Hansen's theory of direct and indirect mobilization, and he concluded that

> Whereas contacts had no discernible effect on the frequency of political conversation, they do have a statistically significant and positive effect on the likelihood of trying to influence the voting behavior of others. Simply put, people who are contacted are more likely to engage in interpersonal mobilization. (2004: p. 418)

More specifically, he found an effect of party contact on the probability of interpersonal persuasion of 15%, with a 95% confidence interval between 3% and 27%. The author finds that the *content*, and not the *volume* of conversations is affected by party contacts, which raises the question whether it is possible for parties to *determine* the content by affecting the opinions of voters, for instance with targeted phone calls campaigns. Most studies on electoral phone calls have been dedicated to non-partisan GOTV campaigns and focus on turnout rather than opinions, but in 2001 Kendall and coauthors randomly assigned *partisan* phone messages in the context of an Italian mayoral election and observed that factual and verifiable phone messages by the party had an effect on the *opinions* of voters regarding the candidates (Kendall et al., 2013).

In conclusion, the existing literature, although relying on observational studies, uniformly suggests that party contact increases the likelihood of trying to convince others to vote for the party. Drawing on these findings, *we hypothesize that phone messages administered by representatives of the Social Democratic Party of the Canton of Ticino will increase the campaign activism of their members and supporters and affect their political opinions.*

Research Design

We set out to test our hypothesis by means of an *embedded field experiment*. The experiment took place in the Canton of Ticino, Switzerland, during the electoral campaign leading up to the cantonal elections of April 2015, and was conducted in cooperation with the Social Democratic Party of the Canton of Ticino (SP), a cantonal section of the Swiss Social Democratic Party. We first got in contact with a senior party member via common acquaintances and then pitched our study to the political secretary, who expressed interest in the idea of cooperating. After a second meeting with a member of the party leadership, the party agreed to cooperate and we signed an agreement establishing the respective responsibilities (Appendix A[2]). The agreement stated that the SP agreed to cooperate in an embedded field experiment, in which pre-approved electoral messages would be administered by phone to randomly chosen members and sympathizers of the party in the context of the electoral campaign. The study was approved by the IRB of the University of Zurich, and pre-registered with the University of Zurich.

The experiment took place in the April 2015 Cantonal Election, in which citizens from the Canton of Ticino, a Swiss federal state with an electorate of 220,864 voters, elected the ninety members of the state legislature and the five members of the state executive proportionally via party-lists. Cantonal legislatives and executives have a very prominent role in the strongly federalist Swiss political system, and cantonal elections in Ticino are highly salient. Participation in the election reached 62%, which is very high for Swiss standards. The SP list received 14.81% of the votes for the executive and 14.64% for the legislature, down from 16.27% and 15.07% in 2011 (Repubblica e Cantone Ticino, 2015). The party kept its seat in the five-people executive, but lost one seat in the legislature going from fourteen to thirteen elected representatives. Considering the small size of the treatment group (N=148), downstream effects would have to be unrealistically large for the experiment to affect the outcome of the election.

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[2] All documents provided as appendices are translated from Italian.

Study Population and Experimental Assignment

The study was aimed at assessing the effects of communication between party representatives and the party's core electorate, party supporters that could become campaign activists. The study population was therefore composed of members and sympathizers of the Social Democratic Party of Ticino. The outcomes of interest are the opinions and campaign behavior of party sympathizers. Since the party lacked the financial resources and willingness to engage in a telephone survey, the next best solution was to carry out an online survey. On 18 March, a month prior to the election date, the SP secretariat sent an email to all members and sympathizers of the party for whom an email address was available in the party database, inviting them to take part in an online survey[3] (Appendix B). The email explained that the survey was structured in two waves, provided a link to the first wave of the survey, and informed the recipients that they would be invited to take part in the second wave after the elections. The purpose of the first wave of the survey was twofold: to recruit a panel for the field experiment, and to collect background information and baseline data on opinions. Informed consent was obtained from participants before they began the survey (see Appendix C). Outcome measures were collected in the second wave of the survey.

The invitation email was sent to about 2,000 members and sympathizers of the party. The first round of the survey was open until March 25 and resulted in a total of 331 respondents, a response rate of 17%. In order to track the respondents in the party database and match them to an available telephone number, they were asked at the beginning of the survey to sign in with the email address that was used in the email invitation. Except for a few cases, the respondents complied with this request. Since the email was sent to all contacts listed in the party's database, before experimental assignment, the sample had to be cleaned by removing undesired

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[3] A first email sent on April 17 unfortunately contained a non-functioning link to the survey, so the email had to be re-sent the following day. A reminder email was sent on April 23.

participants. After removing members of the leadership, individuals that knew about the experiment, and candidates running for election, a study population of N=296 subjects was left.

Once we had determined the study population, we employed *complete random assignment* to allocate half of the respondents to the control group and half to the treatment group, which resulted in two equal-sized experimental arms (N=148)[4]. The randomization procedure was carried out using the "complete_ra" command of the "randomizr" package in the statistical computing software R (Coppock, 2015). Random assignment assures that, in expectation, there should be no systematic differences between treatment group and control group besides the treatment itself (Gerber and Green, 2012). This means that the difference in average outcomes between treatment and control groups should, ex-ante, provide an unbiased estimate of the average treatment effect, or ATE (Gerber and Green, 2012).

To assess the soundness of the randomization procedure, we used answers to the pre-treatment survey to carry out a covariate balance check using randomization inference. The purpose of the randomization-inference-based balance check is "to assess whether the degree of covariate balance is in line with what one would expect to see given the use of random assignment" (Gerber and Green, 2012: 431). The covariates we used to test for balance between the two experimental groups were sex, age, and answers to five pre-treatment questions regarding the electoral campaign (see Appendix C). The balance test we performed consists in "a regression of the assigned treatment on all of the covariates and calculation of the F-statistic" (Gerber and Green, 2012: p. 107). We then compared the F-statistic to the mean of all F-statistics that we received over 10,000 simulated random assignments under the assumption of no treatment effect for any subject (see Gerber and Green, 2012). The p-value of 0.24 suggests that

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[4] After the experiment had already been carried out, I realized that the sample still included four subjects who had answered the survey twice. I employed a Qualtrics function that prevents the same IP address from taking the survey more than once, but the check is bypassed if participants access from different locations. The actual initial sample therefore consisted of 148 subjects assigned to treatment and 144 subjects assigned to control, as seen in table 1.

any imbalances between the treatment group and the control group are no larger than what one would expect based on random sampling variation.

After the treatment had been administered, an email was sent to the study population to invite subjects to take part in the second wave of the online survey (Appendix B). 258 1st round respondents participated, which represents a test-retest rate of 88%. Since outcome measures were collected by means of this survey, the study population was reduced by attrition. Before dropping non-respondents to the second wave of the survey, to ensure that attrition did not occur as a function of treatment assignment, we regressed non-response on treatment assignment, calculated the F-statistic, and estimated the p-value using the standard randomization inference-procedure outlined in Gerber and Green (2012) with 10,000 simulated random assignments. The resulting p-value of 0.21, confirms that attrition was not a function of treatment assignment. Finally, we used the same procedure detailed above to assess covariate balance between treatment group and control group in the sample resulting after attrition, finding a p-value of 0.23. The mean values of some covariates in the two groups, before and after deleting non-respondents to the 2nd survey wave, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Means of covariates in treatment and control groups, before and after attrition

	N	Gender (% male)	Age (category)
First Round			
Treatment	148	66.9%	5.02
Control	144	67.4%	4.85
Second Round			
Treatment	135	64.4%	5.02
Control	123	67.5%	4.90

Treatment

The treatment consisted in a phone message delivered to subjects in the treatment group during the period from March 26 to April 4 (2-3 weeks before the election date). Subjects in the control group were not contacted. Since the callers were instructed to check the identity of the person they were calling and the sample was checked to prevent people from the same household being in the survey population, the non-interference assumption should not be infringed upon.

The calls were carried out on top of the usual electoral campaign of the party consisting of mail flyers, television appearances (but no TV spots), rallies, and posters in the streets. There were in total three callers, who were volunteers known to and approved by the party leadership but recruited and instructed by us. They called between 18:30 and 20:30 on four different days[5] from the SP secretariat, using party landlines. A maximum of three attempts were made for each phone number, after which a message was left on the answering machine or an attempt was made to reach the cell phone, if available. The entire list was called a first time before proceeding with a second attempt to those that had not answered, and then the same for the third one. The callers were instructed not to mention the panel survey or the fact that the call was part of an experiment in general. Since research has shown that more personal forms of contact are more successful in GOTV efforts (Green and Gerber, 2008; Green et al., 2013; John and Brannan 2008), the message was delivered in a conversational tone, avoiding just reading the script out loud and allowing for follow up discussion with subjects. Volunteers were instructed to deliver three main messages in their phone call, and they were provided with a script. As long as the main topics were covered, they were however free to only loosely stick to the script, in order to have a more genuine conversation. The three main messages of the phone calls were the following:

- Your personal contribution to the campaign is very important.

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[5] Except in some cases, in which they were instructed by the respondents to call back at a specific time. Some respondents called back themselves, in which cases the party office secretary was instructed to deliver the message.

- Go vote for the Social Democratic Party.

- Try to convince your relatives, friends and acquaintances to go vote for the Social Democratic Party.

The suggested script for the phone calls was the following:

Good evening, my name is [name of the volunteer] and I am calling from the Social Democratic Party. I am looking for Mr./Ms. [name of the sympathizer]. We are carrying out a round of phone calls to our members and sympathizers to remind you that in about 3 weeks the Cantonal elections will be held. The result is still very uncertain and the contribution of every single one is fundamental! We would like to invite you not only to go out and vote for the SP, but also to try and convince family, friends and acquaintances to vote for the SP list. Many have lost faith in elections and don't vote anymore, they need to be convinced! Speak about the elections and their importance to your friends, family, and acquaintances, or invite them to go to the poll with you, for instance. In conclusion, vote and have your friends, family, and acquaintances vote for the SP list!

Since an effort was made to keep the tone conversational and have an exchange with the sympathizer, there were often a couple of minutes of follow-up conversation, mainly about the context of the election. In these conversations, the callers tried to keep underlining how the elections were going to be close and the contribution of the single individual important. The content of the phone message (1) underlined how important the contribution of the single party supporter can be for the campaign and (2) encouraged members and sympathizers to take on an active role in the campaign. These are the outcomes that were then measured on the post-treatment survey.

The callers were instructed to record whether: (1) the phone number was functioning; (2) someone picked up the phone; (3) it was possible to speak to the targeted person; (4) it was possible to deliver the entire message; (5) the message was left on the answering machine. They also recorded their general impressions about the phone calls in a journal (Appendix F). The message was delivered in its entirety to 126 individuals out of 148 in the treatment group. It was delivered to the answering machine twice, to a different member of the household once, and only partly delivered once. These few cases were conservatively coded as "message delivered". In the remaining 18 cases, no one could be reached. This is therefore a case of one-sided noncompliance, which will be accounted for in the analysis of the results. However, even counting only the cases in which the targeted person was reached and the message fully delivered, this represents a delivery rate of 85%, much higher than what is usual in non-partisan or partisan GOTV studies in the U.S. (Green and Gerber, 2008; Nickerson, 2006) or in the UK (John and Brannan, 2008; Foos and de Rooij, 2014). This high rate is probably due to the fact that the small sample made it possible to carry out three calling attempts, but the scarcity of commercial phone banks and GOTV campaigns in Switzerland may also have played a role. Since phone marketing is way less usual in Switzerland than in the US, people may be less saturated (John and Brannan, 2008). Moreover, the sample is composed of party sympathizers, who have given their phone numbers to the party personally and are expected to be more responsive to contact by the party than the average person. Some subjects even recognized the phone number of the party secretariat and called back.

Dependent Variables

The outcome measures were collected by means of a two-rounds online panel survey conducted using the March-May 2015 version of the online platform Qualtrics (Qualtrics, 2015). The first round was carried out between March 18 and March 25, 3-4 weeks prior to the election. Since the purpose of this round was mainly to recruit a panel population for the experiment, the survey

was kept very short in order to maximize the response rate. The survey (Appendix C) included five covariate items, one about the perceived closeness of the race, three about the management of the electoral campaign by the SP[6], and an item about the importance of the subject's personal contribution to the campaign (measured on a 7-points scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree). The latter item was related to the phone message that was delivered to the treatment group. The item was repeated in the second round of the survey[7], in order to measure the *change* in opinion as a consequence of the phone call.

On April 23, four days after the election and 3-4 weeks after the phone calls were delivered, an email was sent from the party secretariat to the entire study population (treatment and control groups), inviting them to take part in the second round of the survey. The purpose of this second round was to collect the two main outcome measures: (1) opinion on the importance of the subject's individual contribution to the electoral campaign; (2) self-reported campaign activism. We also included two questions to assess whether phone calls had a socializing effect. Since the phone message also encouraged the subjects to cast their votes for the SP, questions on voting behavior were also included. However, these were only of marginal interest, since the participants are active supporters of the party and we expect almost all of them to vote for the SP, regardless of treatment assignment. The entire survey is presented in Appendix C.

The following items were used to measure the self-reported campaign activism:

During the electoral campaign, did you talk to any family members about the election?

How many family members did you talk to?

Did you talk to any friends or acquaintances about the election?

How many friends or acquaintances did you talk to?

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[6] Q3-Q5 were mainly of interest for the SP to collect feedback on the perception of their campaign, but they were also included as covariates.

[7] Since the second round of the survey was conducted *after* the election, the item was proposed in a slightly different (generalized) version. This should not have an influence on the measured dimension.

How many family members, friends, or acquaintances do you think you convinced to go vote for the PS?

- *Family members:* ____
- *Friends and acquaintances:* ____

The main dependent variables are therefore the answers to the above items.

Analysis and Results

As reported in the previous section, a number of outcome measures were collected in the post-treatment survey. To address the fact that the response rates differed for the questions, we created a different subsample for each outcome variable by dropping subjects for whom the specific measure was missing. Before creating the subsamples, to ensure that attrition and treatment assignment were not strongly correlated, we performed F-tests of missing answers on treatment assignment for each one of the outcome variables[8]. No resulting p-value was below the conventional significance level of 0.05 (see Table D.2, Appendix D). The sample sizes, treatment group sizes, and contact rates for each outcome are displayed in Table D.3, Appendix D. In the following sections, we will first explain the adopted analytical procedure in general terms, and then present the results for different outcomes individually.

Results

Before analyzing the results of the experiment with regards to the outcomes of interest, it is informative to consider the question of whether subjects in the treatment group *recalled* the treatment. To this end, the survey included the following manipulation check:

During the last few weeks, did you receive a phone call from the Social Democratic Party?

In order not to affect the answers to other questions, this manipulation check was the last question of the survey. As displayed in Table 2, close to 74% of the subjects in the treatment

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[8] I used the same procedure detailed in the section on survey population.

group reported having received a phone call from the party, while less than 3% did so in the control group. This implies an ITT effect of 71%, which increases to an effect of 81% among compliers (CACE). The estimates are statistically highly significant and robust to covariate adjustment. While these estimates do not say anything with regards to the *effect* of the phone calls, they provide strong evidence that the phone calls left a lasting impression with subjects in the treatment group. This ensures that the phone calls were not lost in an information overload during the electoral campaign and that no other phone calls by the party threatened the applicability of the exclusion restriction.

Table 2: Proportions reporting party contact in treatment and control groups, Intent-to-Treat effect, and Complier Average Causal Effect (with and without covariates)

	Treatment	Control
N	133	115
Report phone call	73.68%	2.61%

	Estimated effects (% points):	
	ITT	CACE
No covariates	71.08*** [62.65; 79.29]	81.49*** [73.72; 89.26]
Covariate adjusted	70.84*** [62.20; 79.76]	81.01*** [72.86; 89.29]

Notes: *** < 0.001, ** < 0.01, * < 0.05, † < 0.10 (two-tailed test of the sharp null hypothesis), 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Included covariates: age category, gender, and answers to four pre-treatment questions on the elections.

Perceived Contribution to the Election Campaign

The first outcome of interest was whether campaign phone calls could affect the opinion of subjects regarding the importance of their individual contribution to the success of the election campaign as measured on a 7-points scale. on which, after recoding, higher values represent more positive opinions. *A*s shown in Table 3, the average outcome in the control group was 5.7, somewhat closer to "Agree" than to "Partially agree", while the average in the treatment group was 5.5, almost exactly between the two options. The difference-in-means resulted in an estimated ITT of -0.21, which translates into a CACE of -0.24 when divided by the contact rate. Adjusting by covariates does not change the estimates dramatically, yielding an ITT of -0.18 and a CACE of -0.21. Since these values are not expressed in absolute values or percentage points, they are somewhat difficult to interpret. A useful approach is to calculate the *standardized effect size*, which "compares the estimated effect to the naturally occurring degree of variation in outcomes by dividing the estimated ATE by the standard deviation in the control group" (Gerber and Green, 2012: p. 70). Dividing the covariate-adjusted CACE by the standard deviation yields a standardized effect size of -0.208 / 1.098 = -0.189. Some researchers suggest that effects of less than 0.3 should be considered small, but Gerber and Green warn that the strength of the effect should be assessed on how "hard-to-move" the variable is (Gerber and Green, 2012: p. 70). Anyway, none of the estimates reaches statistical significance.

Having collected pre-treatment opinions, we then used the difference-in-differences estimator to assess the effect on *opinion change* (Table 3). The observed average change was towards a more negative opinion in both cases, of -0.12 in the control group and -.20 in the treatment group. This implies an ITT of -0.08 and a CACE of -0.09, which shrink to -0.01 and -0.02 adjusting by covariates. Considering the size of the 95% confidence intervals, which range between -0.27 and 0.24 for the covariate-adjusted ITT and between -0.32 and 0.29 for the

covariate-adjusted CACE, the small and statistically insignificant effect is just as likely to be due to chance as to the treatment.

Table 3: Average opinion and change in opinion in treatment and control groups, Intent-to-Treat effect, and Complier Average Causal Effect (with and without covariates)

	Outcome Variable	
	Opinion	**Change in opinion**
N$_{total}$ (N$_{treatment}$)	253 (135)	251 (134)
Average outcome (SD):		
Control	5.69 (1.10)	-0.12 (1.08)
Treatment	5.48 (1.29)	-0.20 (0.98)
ITT:		
Without covariates	-0.21 [-0.51; 0.08]	-0.08 [-0.33; 0.17]
Covariate adjusted	-0.21 [-0.49; 0.07]	-0.01 [-0.27; 0.24]
CACE:		
Without covariates	-0.24 [-0.59; 0.10]	-0.09 [-0.38; 0.20]
Covariate adjusted	-.24 [-0.56; 0.09]	0.02 [-0.32; 0.29]

Notes: *** < 0.001, ** < 0.01, * < 0.05, † < 0.10 (two-tailed tests), 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Opinion on a (1; 7) scale, opinion change on a (-6; 6) scale. (SD): standard deviation of the outcome. Included covariates: age category, gender, and answers to four pre-treatment questions on the elections.

Self-Reported Campaign Activism

The second question we addressed was whether the *campaign activism* of subjects could be affected by campaign phone calls administered by the party. A very high proportion of subjects talked to relatives in both the control group (99.16%) and the treatment group (98.50%), resulting in an ITT of -0.66 percentage points (Table 4).

The proportions are slightly lower regarding friends, with 97%% in the control group and 94% in the treatment group having talked about the elections with friends, resulting in an ITT of -3 percentage points. Dividing by the contact rate and adjusting by covariates, we obtain an CACE of -2 percentage points for the contact of relatives and an adjusted CACE of -3 percentage points for contact with friends. Even though the effects are relatively small and do not reach statistical significance at conventional levels, these results are interesting, as subjects who received the phone calls appear, on average, *less* likely to talk to friends or relatives than subjects in the treatment group.

Table 4: Proportions who talked to relatives and friends in treatment and control groups, Intent-to-Treat effect, and Complier Average Causal Effect (with and without covariate-adjustment)

	Outcome Variable	
	Talked to relatives	**Talked to friends**
N_{total} ($N_{treatment}$)	252 (133)	252 (133)
Proportion:		
Control (%)	99.16	96.64
Treatment (%)	98.50	93.98
ITT (% points):		
Without covariates	-0.66 [-2.95; 1.89]	-2.65 [-7.43; 2.65]
Covariate adjusted	-1.23 [-3.80; 1.54]	-2.42 [-7.78; 3.06]
CACE (% points):		
Without covariates	-0.76 [-3.85; 2.33]	-3.04 [-9.11; 3.03]
Covariate adjusted	-1.49 [-4.80; 1.83]	-2.75 [-9.15; 3.65]

Notes: *** < 0.001, ** < 0.01, * < 0.05, † < 0.10 (two-tailed tests), 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Included covariates: age category, gender, and answers to four pre-treatment questions on the elections.

Table 5: Averages, Intent-to-Treat effect and Complier Average Causal Effect for count variables on campaign activism (with and without covariates)

	Outcome Variable			
	N° Relatives contacted	N° Relatives persuaded	N° Friends contacted	N° Friends persuaded
N_total (N_treatment)	250 (131)	224 (119)	246 (130)	206 (111)
Average outcome (SD):				
Control	4.83 (3.75)	3.64 (3.78)	22.74 (24.06)	8.04 (11.98)
Treatment	4.41 (3.24)	2.605 (2.54)	20.35 (31.16)	7.05 (17.75)
ITT:				
Without covariates	-0.42 [-1.29; 0.44]	-1.03* [-1.87; -0.21]	-2.40 [-9.29; 4.52]	-1.00 [-5.17; 3.03]
Covariate adjusted	-0.31 [-1.20; 0.58]	-0.90* [-1.74; -0.07]	-2.69 [-8.97; 5.40]	-1.47 [-5.82; 2.76]
CACE:				
Without covariates	-0.48 [-1.48; 0.52]	-1.19* [-2.17; -0.22]	-2.76 [-10.84; 5.33]	-1.15 [-6.02; 3.72]
Covariate adjusted	-0.36 [-1.39; 0.68]	-0.93* [-2.03; -0.05]	-3.19 [-11.50; 5.13]	-1.71 [-6.69; 3.27]

Notes: *** < 0.001, ** < 0.01, * < 0.05, † < 0.10 (two-tailed tests), 95% confidence intervals in brackets. The variables represent the self-reported number of contacted/persuaded individuals.. Included covariates: age category, gender, and answers to four pre-treatment questions on the elections.

Table 5 displays the average number of relatives subjects talked to in the first column, the average number of relatives they thought to have convinced in the second column, and the same variables for the number of friends in the third and fourth columns. As one would expect, since people generally have more friends or acquaintances than family members, subjects report having talked to more friends (23 in the control group and 20 in the treatment group) than relatives (5 in the control group and 4 in the treatment group). The same holds for the number of convinced friends and relatives, and, coherently, subjects report having *convinced* significantly

less friends or relatives than the ones they report having talked to. What is really interesting, however, is that for all four outcomes, phone calls by the party seem to have had a negative effect. If we take the number of friends contacted, for instance, the estimated covariate-adjusted CACE is -2. This means that subjects that were reached by the phone call, on average, reported having talked to two less people than subjects in the control group did. For the number of persuaded relatives, the effect is statistically significant based on a two-tailed test, albeit in the opposite direction than expected.

Socializing effect

To assess the socializing effect of conversational phone calls to members and sympathizers during the electoral campaign, two items were included in the post-treatment survey:

> *As a member/sympathizer, do you feel valued by the SP? (*1 absolutely yes – 5 absolutely no)

> *Will you take part in events organized by the SP in the context of the upcoming campaign for the election of the National Council (Fall 2015)? (*1 highly likely – 2 highly unlikely)

Both scales were then reversed to provide a more intuitive measure with higher values reflecting higher levels of agreement. The means and treatment effects are shown in Table 6. For the first question, the mean in the control group (3.49) falls almost exactly between "Yes" and "Partially", while the mean in the treatment is slightly closer to "Partially" (3.37). The difference-in-means estimator yields an ITT of -0.12; dividing it by the contact rate produces a CACE estimate of -0.14. Dividing the CACE by the standard deviation in the control group yields a standardized effect size of -0.16.

Table 6: Average, Intent-to-Treat effect and Complier Average Causal Effect for socialization variables (with and without covariates)

	Outcome Variable	
	Feel valued by the party	**Future participation**
N_{total} (N_{treatment})	244 (131)	248 (133)
Average outcome (SD):		
Control	3.49 (0.85)	3.67 (1.07)
Treatment	3.37 (0.86)	3.41 (1.09)
ITT:		
Without covariates	-0.12 [-0.33; 0.09]	-0.26† [-0.53; 0.09]
Covariate adjusted	-0.13 [-0.33; 0.08]	-0.28* [-0.55; -0.09]
CACE:		
Without covariates	-0.14 [-0.39; 0.11]	-0.30† [-0.61; 0.09]
Covariate adjusted	-0.15 [-0.39; 0.09]	-0.32* [-0.63; -0.04]

Notes: *** < 0.001, ** < 0.01, * < 0.05, † < 0.10 (two-tailed tests), 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Both outcomes measured on a 1-5 scale. The variables represent the self-reported number of contacted/persuaded individuals.. Included covariates: age category, gender, and answers to four pre-treatment questions on the elections.

For the second question, the mean in control lies somewhat closer to "Likely" than "I don't know" (3.7), the other way around for the mean in the treatment group (3.4). The CACE amounts to -0.30 with a standardized effect of the CACE of -0.28. Once again, the estimates for both outcomes show a negative effect of the phone calls; contacted subjects, on average, report feeling less valued by the party and less likely to take part in party-sponsored events. Moreover,

while the effect on the first outcome is hardly distinguishable from zero, the second is significant with an alpha of 0.05 (again, in the direction opposed to what expected).

Vote

The last set of outcomes relate to voting behavior, measured by following items of the survey:

What list did you vote for in the election of the legislative?

What list did you vote for in the election of the executive?

Did your partner vote?

Subjects that reported voting for the SP in both in the legislative and the executive elections were coded as "1". The subjects were also asked whether they had voted, but since hardly anyone reported not having voted, we do not report the analysis here. As expected from core supporters of the party, almost all subjects in both experimental conditions reported having voted for the SP both in the legislative and the executive (Table 7). Calculating the difference-in-proportions yields a small negative ITT effect of -0.9 percentage points that gets even smaller when adjusted by covariates (-0.3 percentage points). Faced with 95% confidence intervals that span almost uniformly from negative to positive values, the estimates are not very informative with regards to the direction of the effect. The same holds for the voting behavior of the partner.

Table 7: Proportions on vote, Intent-to-Treat effect and Complier Average Causal Effect for socialization variables (with and without covariates)

	Outcome Variable	
	Voted SP	**Partner voted**
N$_{total}$ (N$_{treatment}$)	252 (132)	213 (112)
Proportion:		
Control (%)	93.33	94.06
Treatment (%)	92.42	93.75
ITT (% points):		
Without covariates	-0.91 [-6.67; 6.06]	-0.31 [-6.29; 6.86]
Covariate adjusted	-0.25 [-6.74; 6.24]	-0.70 [-7.16; 5.83]
CACE (% points):		
Without covariates	-1.04 [-8.38; 6.29]	-0.34 [-7.44; 6.76]
Covariate adjusted	-0.35 [-7.88; 7.18]	-0.72 [-8.00; 6.56]

Notes: *** < 0.001, ** < 0.01, * < 0.05, [†] < 0.10 (two-tailed tests), 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Included covariates: age category, gender, and answers to four pre-treatment questions on the elections.

Additional robustness checks

Since we performed a large number of tests, there is one last issue that should be addressed: "the more significance tests one performs, the greater the likelihood of falsely rejecting the null hypothesis at least once" (Gerber and Green, 2012: 300). This is not a primary concern for this study, since no estimate went in the expected direction. However, based on a two-tailed test, the estimated effects of phone calls on the number of persuaded relatives and on the likelihood of

future participation were statistically significant in the direction opposite to what expected. We therefore performed the Benjamini-Hochberg correction of the randomization-inference-based p-values to account for the *false discovery rate* (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995). Table D5 on page 14 of the Appendix shows, that after the correction, only the manipulation check is still statistically significant.[9]

Discussion and conclusion

For all outcome measures, with no exception, the estimated effects of the treatment go in the opposite direction than what expected. We find a small negative effect of phone calls on the opinion of supporters regarding their importance in the electoral campaign, on the number of friends and relatives they talked to, and on the likelihood of participation in future party-sponsored events, among other measures. The estimated effects range from small to very small and all but a few fail to reach statistical significance at any conventional level. The few statistically significant estimates might be a function of the multiple hypothesis tests employed in this study. There is therefore not enough evidence to discard the null hypothesis of no treatment effect, neither in the positive nor in the negative direction. However, the fact that the produced estimates are *consistently* negative warrants some considerations; is it possible that the intervention actually backfired? Keeping the uncertainty surrounding the results in mind, we offer two perspectives for their qualitative interpretation.

A first possibility is that the phone calls did indeed have a negative effect. Even though the vast majority of research has found positive effects of phone calls, backfiring is not unheard of. A 2013 experimental study by Bailey and coauthors found that a pro-Obama canvass effort during the 2008 presidential election had the effect of decreasing support for Obama, concluding that "persuasive canvassing can generate a backlash" (Bailey et al., 2013: p. 4). Even though the

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[9] The test was performed using the online calculator provided by the SDM Project at http://www.sdmproject.com/utilities/?show=FDR (SDM Project, 2015).

study was carried out in a very different context and targeted at a different population (general electorate v. core supporters), the findings suggest that unintended negative effects should not be ruled out a priori. In Switzerland, and in particular in the Canton of Ticino, electoral campaign phone calls are not a common praxis. The volunteers carrying out the phone calls reported that several recipients were surprised to be called and asked if the party was afraid of losing the election (Appendix F). Even though the general feedback was perceived as positive by the callers, it is possible that the unexpected phone calls were perceived negatively, as pushy or desperate. Traditionally, in Ticino, the party often negatively associated with pushy canvassing techniques is the Christian Democrat Party, a conservative party. Indeed, one of the few negative comments recorded by the callers was "I thought only the Christian Democrats did these things" (see Appendix F). There is the possibility that members and sympathizers did not appreciate the use of techniques that they perceived to be at odds with their ideology.

A second approach that could be used to make sense of the results is related to the fact that outcome measures were self-reported. It is possible that phone calls made recipients more conscious of their campaign activism and therefore prone to providing more reliable answers. If we consider the question on the number of contacted friends, it is possible that subjects that were asked to talk about the election to friends did so more consciously, remembered the instances more clearly and therefore provided a more precise (and smaller) number. For another outcome measure, the change in opinion on the importance of the individual contribution to the campaign, answers were more negative in the post-treatment survey for both treatment and control group. It is highly likely that this change was related to the bad result of the SP in the election, but how come the opinion deteriorated more in the treatment group? A possibility is that treated subjects were more conscious about their participation in the campaign and were therefore more likely to conclude their efforts had been useless after the party lost one seat in the election anyway.

However, it should be noted that this study was characterized by several limitations. First of all, the study population was self-selected. This does not have implications for causal inference, but it implies that the sample was composed of very active members and sympathizers of the party, the few that take part in a survey when asked to do so. We do not know if the results would apply to party supporters in general. Given the high contact rate for phone calls, it might be worth checking of telephone surveys achieve better response rates in the Swiss case. A third problem is that outcome measures were self-reported. Although for some types of outcomes, such as opinions, there is no other way, forms of campaign activism may be found for which it is possible to collect outcomes independently (sharing social media content or taking part to events, for instance).

In conclusion, the limitations discussed above emphasize that this paper only constitutes a first attempt at the experimental study of party activism. The study, due to the limited sample size and the small, observed effect sizes, did not produce statistically significant results and the observed but small negative effects might therefore be due to chance. However, the fact that the direction of the effects for every single outcome measure were at odds with our hypothesis derived from the observational literature on party activism does raise questions. Were previous observational results due to omitted variable bias or reverse causation? It is well conceivable that party supporters are more likely to mobilize relatives and friends, but not because they are *asked* to do so, but because they differ on many observable and unobservable characteristics from individuals who are not strongly supporting a political party. We believe that this question warrants further research.

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Mobilizing Party Activism:

A Field Experiment with Party Members and Sympathizers

Appendices

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Appendix

Appendix A: Agreement between the researchers and the Partito Socialista Ticino

In the context of a research project developed by Giordano Neuenschwander and Florian Foos of the political Science Institute of the University of Zurich, a field experiment will be carried out in collaboration with the Partito Socialista Ticino in the period immediately before and after the cantonal elections 2015. The experiment is aimed at assessing the efficacy of electoral phone-calls. The participants are sympathizers of the party who have accepted to take part in it.

As part of the experiment, part of the participants will be contacted per telephone and invited to convince their friends and acquaintances to vote for the PS list in the cantonal elections that will be held on the 19th of April 2015. The phone-calls follow a predetermined script approved by the Partito Socialista (see attachment) and are carried out by volunteers recruited by Giordano Neuenschwander and approved by the Party. The phone-calls are supervised by Giordano Neuenschwander and by [blinded] for the Partito Socialista.

The Partito Socialista Ticino assumes the responsibility for the political act of contacting sympathizers of the Party itself in order to invite them to convince their friends and sympathizers to vote for the PS list in the 2015 cantonal elections. These phone-calls take place in the context of the electoral campaign of the Partito Socialista.

For the research team:

    Name: _____

    Date and signature: _____

For the Partito Socialista Ticino:

    Name: _____

    Date and signature: _____

Appendix B: invitation emails sent to members and sympathizers

Pre-treatment survey invitation email

SUBJECT: Your opinion is important

Dear member, dear sympathizer,

In the context of a research project that the Socialist Party of Ticino is conducting in cooperation with two researchers of the University of Zurich (Giordano Neuenschwander and Florian Foos), we invite you to take part in a **very short online survey**. The survey aims at assessing the opinion of members and sympathizers of the party regarding the current electoral campaign, in order to improve the management of future campaigns.

The survey is divided in two phases, each of which consists of **literally 5 questions**. Click here to take part to the first round!

The task will take **about 5 minutes** and your participation means a lot to us, **your opinion is important!**

We thank you for your attention. With kind regards,

On behalf of the
Socialist Party
Ticino Section of the SSP
[blinded]
Vice Presidents

Appendix

Post-treatment survey invitation email

SUBJECT: Online survey – second phase

Dear member, dear sympathizer,

A few weeks ago, you have accepted our invitation to take part in an **online enquiry** regarding the electoral campaign. Thank you very much! As anticipated, the enquiry consists of two phases, and now you may take part in the second phase of the enquiry by <u>clicking here</u>!

As with the first phase, the task will take **about 5 minutes** and your participation is of **great importance**! We will provide a feedback on the results of the enquiry to all participants during the month of June.

We thank you for your attention. With kind regards,

On behalf of the
Socialist Party
Ticino Section of the SSP
[blinded]
Vice Presidents

Appendix C : English translation of the complete pre- and post-treatment surveys

Pre-treatment survey (phase 1)

Declaration of Informed Consent

Purpose of participation: This study is of use to the Socialist Party and to researchers of Zurich University (Florian Foos and Giordano Neuenschwander) in order to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies of electoral communication. By participating in this study, you agree to the use of your answers exclusively for research purposes and in a completely anonymized form. Furthermore, you declare your consent to take part in an online survey in two phases. Each phase shall take about five minutes; the first one shall take place immediately, the second in about one month. During this study, you might be contacted telephonically by party activists.

Risks of participation: We do not foresee any risk, nor any unpleasant consequence related to the participation in the present study.

Participation on a voluntary basis: Participation in the present study is on a voluntary basis; it may be interrupted at any moment, without presenting reasons and without resulting disadvantages.

Protection of data: Your personal data will be handled in a confidential manner, will not be transmitted to third parties and will exclusively be used in a totally anonymized format for the purpose of research.

Questions: For further questions please contact Giordano Neuenschwander (giordano.neuenschwander@uzh.ch). For complaints, please refer to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Zurich (Ethikkommission für psychologische und verwandte Forschung) at following contact:

Appendix

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You can print this informed consent form using the File > Print option in your browser window.

Participation can be resumed by clicking the link in the email again.

I have read and understood the points above and I consent to participate in this study.

- Accept
- Refuse

[If refused] If you are convinced of refusing the informed consent declaration and conclude the survey, choose the option below. Otherwise, go back to the previous question and accept to continue. In case of further doubts, please contact giordano.neuenschwander@uzh.ch.

- Exit survey

Participant's General Information

V1. Email address (please provide the email address to which the invitation to the survey was sent)

V2. Gender

- Male
- Female

V3. Age
- <18 years
- 18 – 25 years
- 26 – 35 years

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- 36 – 50 years
- 51 – 65 years
- >65 years

Questions

Q1. I think that the result of the Cantonal elections that will be held on the 19th of April is uncertain and that every single vote is important

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Partially agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q2. I think that my personal contribution to the electoral campaign, by word of mouth or other means, is important for the success of the Socialist Party.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Partially agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q3. I think that the Socialist Party is handling the campaign well.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Partially agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

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- Strongly disagree

Q4. If you had to choose one topic to which the Socialist Party should dedicate more space in the electoral campaign, which of the following would it be?

- Labor and occupation policies
- Environment and territory policies
- Social and sanitary policies
- Education and formation policies

Q5. In your opinion, how should the Socialist Party improve its communication?
- More contacts with the population
- More press announcements and presence in the media
- More debates organized on the territory
- The communication of the Socialist Party is optimal

Post-treatment survey (phase 2)

Purpose of participation: This is the second phase of the online survey to which you kindly agree to participate some weeks ago. This second round will take about 5 minutes, after which the survey will be concluded. We remind you that the study is conducted by the Socialist Party in cooperation with researchers of the University of Zurich (Florian Foos and Giordano Neuenschwander).

Protection of data: Your personal data will be handled in a confidential manner, will not be transmitted to third parties and will exclusively be used in a **totally anonymized** format for the purpose of research. Not even the party will have access to your individual answers. **We therefore ask you to answer the question as honestly as possible.**

Appendix

Questions: For further questions please contact Giordano Neuenschwander (giordano.neuenschwander@uzh.ch).

V1. Email address (please provide the email address to which the invitation to the survey was sent)

Questions

Q6. I think that my personal contribution to electoral campaigns, by word of mouth or other means, is important for the success of the Socialist Party.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Partially agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q7. Did you vote in the April 19 2015 Cantonal election?
- Yes, I voted.
- No, I did not vote.
- I usually vote, but this time I did not have the time/occasion.

Q7.1 Did you vote by mail or did you go to the polling station?
- Mail
- Polling station

Q7.2 What list did you vote for the in the legislative election?
- Socialist Party
- Other party
- Non-partisan list
- I would rather not say

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Q7.2 What list did you vote for the in the executive election?

- Socialist Party

- Other party

- Non-partisan list

- I would rather not say

Q8. Did your spouse/partner vote in the Cantonal election?

- Yes

- No

- Does not apply / Don't know

Q9. During the electoral campaign, did you talk to any family members about the election?

- Yes

- No

Q9.1 How many family members did you talk to?

Q10. Did you talk to any friends or acquaintances about the election?

- Yes

- No

Q10.1 How many friends or acquaintances did you talk to?

Q11. How many family members, friends, or acquaintances do you think you convinced to go

vote for the PS?

- Family members: ____

- Friends and acquaintances: ____

V4. Are you a member of the Socialist Party?

- Yes

- No

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V4.1 Since when (years)?

[If member] Q12. As a member of the Socialist Party, do you feel valued by the party?

- Absolutely yes
- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Absolutely not

[If not member] Q12. As a sympathizer of the Socialist Party, do you feel valued by the party?

- Absolutely yes
- Yes
- Partially
- No
- Absolutely not

Q13. During the upcoming campaign for the national elections (Fall 2015), will you take part in events organized by the Socialist Party?

- Highly likely
- Likely
- I don't know / Maybe
- Unlikely
- Highly unlikely

Q14. During the last few weeks, did you receive a phone call from the Socialist Party?

Appendix D : Additional tables

Table D1: Balance of pre-treatment questions

	N	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
First Round						
Treatment	148	1.69	2.31	2.83	1.91	1.66
Control	144	1.86	2.22	2.87	2.15	1.62
Second Round						
Treatment	135	1.69	2.31	2.87	1.94	1.69
Control	123	1.86	2.20	2.82	2.22	1.63

Table D2: P-values resulting from attrition tests, for each outcome variable

Variable	p-value
Manipulation check	0.062
Opinion (Q6)	0.103
Change in opinion (Q6-Q2)	0.104
Voted SP (Q7)	0.806
Partner voted (Q8)	0.106
Talked to relatives (Q9)	0.506
N Relatives contacted (Q9.1)	0.972
N Relatives persuaded (Q11.1)	0.743
Talked to friends (Q10)	0.505
N Friends contacted (Q10.1)	0.943
N Friends persuaded (Q11.2)	0.594
Feel valued by the party (Q12)	0.253
Future participation (Q13)	0.067

Appendix

Table D3: Sample sizes, treatment group sizes, contact rates, for each outcome variable

Variable	N	Assigned to treatment	Contact rate
Manipulation check	248	133	87.22%
Opinion (Q6)	253	135	87.41%
Change in opinion (Q6-Q2)	251	134	87.31%
Voted SP (Q7)	252	132	87.12%
Partner voted (Q8)	213	112	91.07%
Talked to relatives (Q9)	252	133	87.22%
N Relatives contacted (Q9.1)	250	131	87.02%
N Relatives persuaded (Q11.1)	224	119	86.55%
Talked to friends (Q10)	252	133	87.22%
N Friends contacted (Q10.1)	246	130	86.92%
N Friends persuaded (Q11.2)	206	111	86.49%
Feel valued by the party (Q12)	244	131	87.02%
Future participation (Q13)	248	133	87.22%

Table D4: Covariate adjusted Intent-to-Treat effect resulting from negative binomial regression, for count variables

Variable	ITT
N Relatives contacted (Q9.1)	-0.091
N Relatives persuaded (Q11.1)	-0.334
N Friends contacted (Q10.1)	-0.121
N Friends persuaded (Q11.2)	-0.132

Appendix

Table D5: p-values resulting from randomization inference with and without

Benjamini-Hochberg correction

	Randomization inference	
Variable	**Uncorrected**	**Corrected**
Manipulation check	0.000	0.000
Opinion (Q6)	0.185	0.577
Change in opinion (Q6-Q2)	0.533	0.770
Voted SP (Q7)	0.811	0.958
Partner voted (Q8)	1.000	1
Talked to relatives (Q9)	1.000	1
N Relatives contacted (Q9.1)	0.349	0.708
N Relatives persuaded (Q11.1)	0.016	0.104
Talked to friends (Q10)	0.381	0.708
N Friends contacted (Q10.1)	0.506	0.770
N Friends persuaded (Q11.2)	0.670	0.871
Feel valued by the party (Q12)	0.222	0.577
Future participation (Q13)	0.061	0.264

Appendix

Appendix E : Power Analysis

Non-partisan phone messages in the United States usually have a completion rate of about 0.5 (Green and Gerber 2008). That is, out of 100 called voters, only 50 receive the message; the rest hangs up or doesn't answer. In this case however, the sample is composed of party sympathizers, who have given their phone numbers to the party personally and are expected to be more responsive to contact by the party than the average person. Moreover, phone marketing is way less usual in Switzerland than in the US, and people should be less saturated (John and Brannan 2008). Therefore, we are expecting a call completion rate of at least 0.75.

In their experiment in the 2011 mayoral election in Arezzo, Kendall and his coauthors found phone messages to produce a shift in opinions of about "5 percent with respect to the average" (Kendall et al. 2013: 24). Even though their results are somewhat difficult to interpret, we could not find other experiments on the effect of phone calls on opinions, so we based our estimations on their findings. However, their phone message was directed at the general population and not at party sympathizers. If we assume that sympathizers of a party are more responsive to it than the average person, it is therefore reasonable to expect a bigger effect in this case. Moreover, the more personal the contact is, the more likely it is to have an effect (Green and Gerber 2008). In our case, phone calls are made by volunteers to a small group of sympathizers, so the effect should be more consistent. For these reasons, we assume a complier average causal effect (CACE) of about 10% (0.1). Correcting the expected CACE by the expected completion rate provides an estimated Intent-to-treat effect of ITT = 0.1 x 0.75 = 0.075.

In order to estimate a standard deviation, we will assume the distribution of the outcome variables to be close to a binomial distribution and use the formula for the standard deviation of binomial distributions: $SD = \sqrt{\mu * (1 - \mu)}$. Therefore, assuming that 10% of the sympathizers in the control group already participate actively in the electoral campaign (answering "yes" to the

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survey questions), the estimated standard deviation would be:

$$SD = \sqrt{0.175 * (1 - 0.175)} \cong 0.3800.$$

Summing up these considerations, with an assumed Intent-to-treat effect of 0.075 and an assumed 0.38 standard deviation, the sample size required to reach a power of 70% at a significance level of alpha = 0.05 would be of 634 subjects. At a significance level of alpha = 0.1, the required sample size would be 484 subjects (see figure 1).[1]

Figure 1: Power Analysis (http://egap.org/resources/tools/power-calculator/)

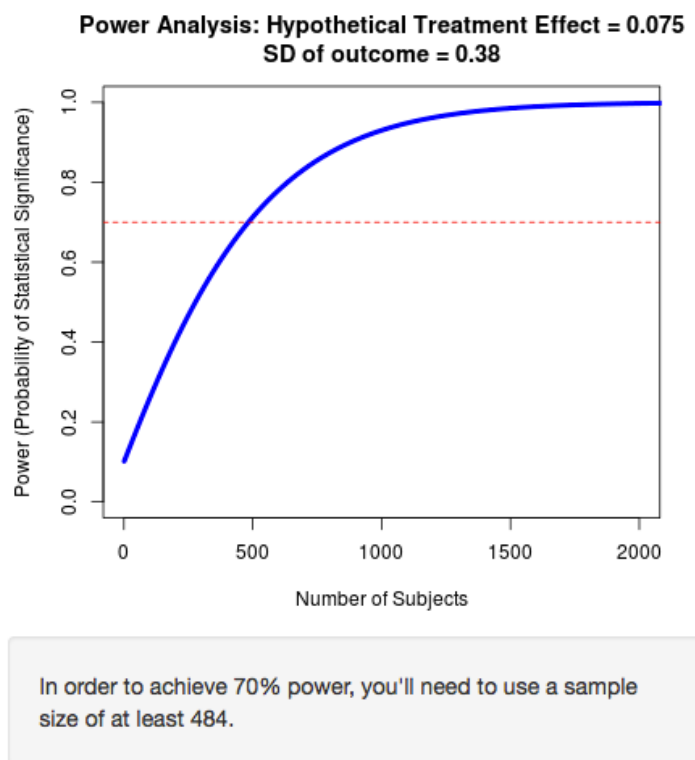In order to achieve 70% power, you'll need to use a sample size of at least 484.

Table 1 summarizes the resulting power for different sample sizes and significance levels, keeping the previously assumed effect and standard deviation.

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[1] We calculated the resulting power using the calculator provided by Alex Coppock at http://egap.org/resources/tools/power-calculator/ (Coppock, 2015)

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Table 1: Approximate power estimation for different sample sizes at different significance levels, with an assumed effect of 0.075 and an assumed SD of 0.38

	N=250	N = 300	N = 375	N = 500
α = 0.05	35%	40%	46%	60%
α = 0.10	47%	52%	60%	71%

The table shows that while it would be difficult to reach sufficient power at a significance level of 0.05, at a significance level of 0.10 it would be possible to reach a significance level of over 50% even with a sample of 300 participants.

References

Coppock, Alex (2015): Egap Tool: Power Calculator for Simple and Clustered Designs. (http://egap.org/resources/tools/power-calculator/ [February 2015])

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Kendall, Chad, Tommaso Nannicini, and Francesco Trebbi (2013): How do voters respond to information? Evidence from a randomized campaign. *Available at: http://www.nber.org/papers/w18986*.

Appendix F : Phone Calls Journal

Notes to the attention of Giordano Neuenschwander and of the Socialist Party of Ticino on the phone calls made from March, 27, 2015 to April, 4, 2015

April 5, 2015

Database

Of 146 addressees, there were 20 with wrong or missing phone numbers. For most of these we have found correct numbers and transmitted these to the party secretariat.

Procedure

We carried out a maximum of three attempts on different days over the landline (where available), and immediately after the third unsuccessful attempts a fourth call to the cell phone (where available), as per instructions received.

Time

On the whole we invested 24 hours in the task, of which 6 for the preparation and update of the listings, and 18 for the phone calls. This equals approx. 7 minutes per addressee for the phone calls (a maximum of 3 calls per addressee) and 3 minutes for updates at the computer.

We feel that the time for preparation and update of the listings can certainly be optimized, while the mean time per addressee for the phone calls appears plausible.

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Reactions

On the whole, the addressees reacted positively to the calls.

Various persons gave the impression of feeling appreciated.

Some persons were surprised by the calls and asked if we were that worried about the result of the elections.

Some persons, mostly people who hold public or party offices, noted from the start that they were already active, but in the end appreciated the telephone exchange (of opinions), and in several cases thanked us for what we were doing.

A part of the persons reached listened without commenting, and the call was concluded in little time.

To the invitation to convince others to vote the socialist ticket, several persons replied that this was not easy. On the other hand, several others said that they were doing precisely this, some also with details (phone calls, etc.).

Several calls revealed a wish to share, like for instance: "I have voted for the women", or "I told everybody to vote whoever they wanted but not outside the party list". The impression was that they wished to share their choice (with a certain pride) and to receive confirmation to have done the right thing. The only slightly negative comment was: "I thought only the Christian Democrats did these things" A couple of persons made positive allusions to the presence of the Young Socialists in the campaign.

Time for the calls:

We called between 18:30 and 20:30. This is generally a good time slot, in particular between 19:00 and 20:30.

Appendix

Other considerations

Calling from the Party headquarters was useful, because we were identified with the party (by who recognized the phone number), and because several people we did not reach called back the next day. Most certainly a 0800xx number would have been less successful.