

Mobilizing for Medicaid: A Randomized Field Experiment Testing Pocketbook Versus Sociotropic Campaign Appeals

Josh Carpenter and Florian Foos

September 17, 2015

Mobilizing policy targets

"The design of public policies ... are [sic] a key factor in determining who enters the [political] struggle"
(Campbell 2007: 121)

Mobilizing policy targets

"The design of public policies ... are [sic] a key factor in determining who enters the [political] struggle"
(Campbell 2007: 121)

- Examples: Medicare -> mobilizes seniors (Campbell: 2002)
- Why do some target populations mobilize in response to targeted policies and others do not?
- Most common example: Low income citizens
- Two possible explanations:
 - 1 Low-income citizens do not vote out of self-interest
 - 2 Low-income citizens do not understand that they would benefit

Attempt at an explanation

- Medicare yields an unusually clearly-defined political constituency:
 - 1 Universal insurance programme
 - 2 Compulsory for everyone over the age of 65
 - 3 Easy to understand whether someone individually benefits from the program
- Different case for programs that help the poor:

Eligibility is often means-tested

Medicaid Expansion: A difficult case

- It is very hard for an individual to establish whether he/she would benefit from the Expansion of the Medicaid Program under the Affordable Care Act:
 - 1 Medicaid is a needs-based, means-tested program.
 - 2 Eligibility levels are determined at the state level.
 - 3 Eligibility is based on multiple criteria: Income, number of dependent children, disability etc

Example

- Alabama: The lowest Medicaid threshold in the nation. A single parent with one dependent child must make less than 13% of the FPL to receive Medicaid in Alabama < 2,045 USD
- Minnesota: Parents whose income is 200% or less of the FPL < 31,460 dollars.

Research Question - Counterfactual

If low-income citizens knew they were members of a defined policy target population, would they mobilize to vote in their own self-interest?

Experimental Design

- Randomized field experiment supported by the Griffith for Governor Campaign in the two weeks leading up to the 2014 Alabama Gubernatorial Elections.
- Randomly assign whether registered voters who would benefit from Medicaid expansion are contacted by the 'Healthcare for Alabama' campaign.
- Canvassers are randomly assigned to the control group (no contact) or to three different appeals:
 - 1 Pocketbook Appeal
 - 2 Socio-Tropic Appeal
 - 3 Combined Appeal

Experimental Design

- Canvassers hand out one of two cues:
 - 1 Eligibility cue
 - 2 Social Cue

Treatments



Healthcare for Alabama

Voter Contact Script – 1

I. Intro & Rap

Hello, is _____ available?

[If person is available:] Hey, my name is _____ and I am a volunteer with Healthcare for Alabama. We are a grassroots group here in _____ committed to fighting for healthcare access in this year's election. How are you doing today?

[If unavailable:] Is there a good time to come back to talk to _____? It's important that I speak to him/her in person about healthcare.

II. Assessment of Medicaid Support

In recent months, there have been big changes in healthcare, largely due to the Affordable Care Act/Obamacare. One of those big changes is a state's ability to expand coverage for more families as part of the Federal Medicaid Program. Are you in favor of Alabama expanding Medicaid, against it, or are you undecided?

III. Self-Interest Message & Commit to Vote

[If in favor:] I'm really glad you support Medicaid expansion! We count on you in this election.

[If opposed or undecided:] I'm happy I'm able to talk to you then! There are good reasons to support Medicaid expansion.

Under the Affordable Care Act/Obamacare, health insurance through the Medicaid program is now able to include many more families than in the past. Alabama can choose to implement this program to cover 331,000 people, many of whom come from working families. Do you and your family currently have health insurance?

[If No:] I'm really glad we're talking then! Medicaid expansion means that if you are eligible, you could obtain high-quality health care services at free or low cost. Also, if you are eligible Medicaid expansion will eliminate most of your out-of-pocket medical expenses, and provide hospital care for you. Do you want to see if you'd be eligible for Medicaid?

[Show Chart, Have Voter Identify if They Qualify]

A vote for Parker Griffith and the Democratic ticket/ _____ on November 4th is a vote to ensure healthcare access for thousands of people across the state. Can I count on you to support Parker Griffith and Democratic ticket/ _____ on Election Day?

[If Yes, jump directly to:] There are a lot of issues facing Alabama this election year, but few are as important as making sure people have access to life-saving healthcare. A vote for Parker Griffith and the Democratic ticket/ _____ on November 4th is a vote to ensure healthcare access for thousands of people like you and your family across the state. Can I count on you to support Parker Griffith and Democratic ticket/ _____ on Election Day?

Key Elements

- ✓ Ask for the person on the sheet
- ✓ If person is unavailable, ask for a good time to come back.
- ✓ Introduce yourself
- ✓ Keep it local

- ✓ Assess support for Medicaid expansion

- ✓ List benefits of Medicaid Expansion

- ✓ Commit to Vote



Healthcare for Alabama

Voter Contact Script – 2

I. Intro & Rap

Hello, is _____ available?

[If person is available:] Hey, my name is _____ and I am a volunteer with Healthcare for Alabama. We are a grassroots group here in _____ committed to fighting for healthcare access in this year's election. How are you doing today?

[If unavailable:] Is there a good time to come back to talk to _____? It's important that I speak to him/her in person about healthcare.

II. Assessment of Medicaid Support

In recent months, there have been big changes in healthcare, largely due to the Affordable Care Act/Obamacare. One of those big changes is a state's ability to expand coverage for more families as part of the Federal Medicaid Program. Are you in favor of Alabama expanding Medicaid, against it, or are you undecided?

III. Social-Interest Message & Commit to Vote

[If in favor:] I'm really glad you support Medicaid expansion! We count on you in this election.

[If opposed or undecided:] There are good reasons to support Medicaid expansion.

[Display Medicaid expansion fact sheet]

Medicaid expansion would save the state an estimated \$1.8 billion this year, limit personal bankruptcies and boost consumer spending, all while saving an estimated 583 lives.

[Only if voter asks if they are eligible for Medicaid, show them the flowchart but do not leave it.]

There are a lot of issues facing Alabama this election year, but few are as important as making sure people have access to life-saving healthcare. A vote for Parker Griffith and the Democratic ticket/ _____ on November 4th is a vote to ensure healthcare access for thousands of people across the state. Can I count on you to support Parker Griffith and Democratic ticket/ _____ on Election Day?

IV. Get Out the Vote!

Now that you know what's at stake in this election, I need you to go to the polls with me this Tuesday, November 4th and make your voice heard. I have your polling place located at _____ *[Refer to packet for specific polling location]*

- ✓ Do you think you will drive, walk, or catch a ride there?
- ✓ Polls are open from 7am to 7pm that day. What time of day do you think you'll be able to make it to the polls – morning, afternoon, or evening?
- ✓ Will you be coming from home, work, or somewhere else?
- ✓ Do you know what kind of photo ID you need to bring to the polls?

Key Elements

- ✓ Ask for the person on the sheet.
- ✓ If the person is unavailable, ask for a good time to come back.
- ✓ Introduce yourself
- ✓ Keep it local

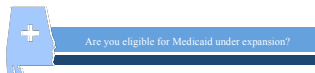
- ✓ Assess support for Medicaid expansion

- ✓ List benefits of Medicaid Expansion

- ✓ Commit to Vote

- ✓ Make a plan!
- ✓ Walk through the voter's schedule with them

Treatments



Are you eligible for Medicaid under expansion?

Do you have health insurance?

Yes!

No, I don't.

Does your employer offer Health Insurance?

Yes.

No

How many people are in your

household?

Number in Household	135% of the FPL
1	\$15,747
2	\$21,235
3	\$26,716
4	\$32,197
5	\$37,678
6	\$43,159
7	\$48,640
8	\$54,121

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,060 to the FPL for each additional person

If you make at or below that level in a year, you would be eligible for Medicaid under Griffith's expansion plan.

If Parker Griffith is elected and you fall into this category, you will receive healthcare.



Healthcare for Alabama

What is Medicaid?

Medicaid is a health insurance program that provides for families who would not be able to afford insurance on their own.

- ✓ It serves low-income parents, children, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- ✓ Provides a range of coverage for most medical expenses all at little or no cost.
- ✓ It is a federal program, but state governments have a lot of authority over how it is implemented.

What is Medicaid Expansion?

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was designed to expand Medicaid and give healthcare access to everyone. Expanding Medicaid would offer coverage to all individuals whose income is below 135% of the Federal Poverty Line.

Medicaid Expansion would:

1. Give over 300,000 Alabamians access to healthcare
2. Keep our local hospitals open
3. Save Alabamians \$5 million a day in taxpayers' money
4. Save over 500 Alabamian lives a year

The Expansion Plan

Governor Bentley has chosen to deny Alabamians Medicaid expansion. He has created a Medicaid Gap for those who make too much to receive Medicaid and don't make quite enough to qualify for tax credits online.

Parker Griffith believes that we should expand Medicaid to give people access to the healthcare they deserve and to compensate hospitals for that treatment.

In this election Alabamians can have their voices heard and demand that Alabama does more to take better care of its people.

Target Population and Sample

- Target population: We use the SmartVan database to predict whether a registered voter falls in the Medicaid Gap: Is currently uneligible but would be eligible under the Griffith Expansion plan.
- We focus on 4 metropolitan areas: Birmingham, Mobile, Huntsville and Montgomery.
- Sample: 16,248 households who would benefit from Medicaid expansion. We randomly choose one person per household to be contacted by canvassers.
- 74 canvassing turfs (blocks): Block-random assignment to 1 of 3 treatment groups or 1 control group (no attempted contact): Probabilities: .325 (control), .225 (treatments)

Outcome Measures

- Post-Treatment Telephone Survey (November 2014) with 6 items, conducted by an independent polling company.
 - 1 Voting Intention
 - 2 Approval of Medicaid Expansion
 - 3 Knowledge of Correct Candidate Positions on Expansion
 - 4 Perceived Individual Benefits of Expansion
 - 5 Perceived Social Benefits of Expansion
 - 6 Did someone speak to you about Medicaid expansion during the campaign?

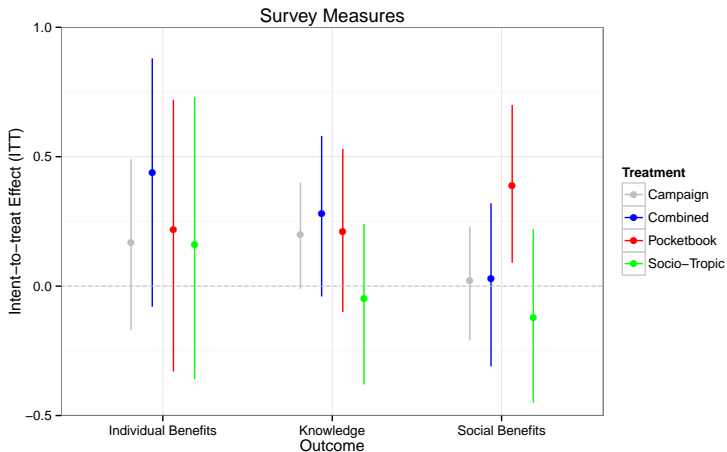
- Matching turnout data from the official voter file.

Manipulation Check: ITT on Recalled Medicaid Conversation

	Self-Interest	Social-Interest	Combined
ITT vs Control	9.9*	7.2 ⁺	18.2**
covariate-adjusted	[-.04, 21.1]	[-2.8, 17.2]	[6.2, 31.5]
N	175	189	173

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$ (based on one-tailed test of sharp null hypothesis), randomization inference-based 95%-CIs in brackets.

Post-Treatment Survey: ITT vs control



Turnout by experimental group and ITT

	Control	Pocketbook	Sociotropic	Combined
Turnout in %	41.1	42.6	40.3	39.8
Contact in %	0.01	22.4	26.2	26.3
ITT vs control unadjusted		1.5 [-1.4, 4.5]	-0.7 [-3.9, 2.4]	-1.3 [-4.4, 1.8]
CACE vs control unadjusted		8.0 [-8.4, 24.3]	-3.1 [-17.8, 11.6]	-6.2 [-20.9, 8.5]
ITT vs control covariate-adjusted		1.8 ⁺ [-0.5, 4.4]	-0.2 [-0.3, 0.2]	-1.6 [-4.2, 0.9]
CACE vs control covariate-adjusted		9.9 ⁺ [-3.2, 23.0]	-0.5 [-12.3, 11.2]	-7.2 [-19.0, 4.7]
N	2331	1779	1681	1659

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$ (based on one-tailed hypothesis tests), 95%-Confidence Intervals in brackets.

ITT Treatment vs Treatment

	Unadjusted	Covariate-Adjusted	N
Pocketbook vs Sociotropic	2.4 [-1.1, 5.7]	2.0 ⁺ [-0.6, 4.8]	3460
Pocketbook vs Combined	3.1 ⁺ [-0.0, 6.5]	3.3* [0.6, 6.0]	3438

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$ (based on two-tailed test of sharp null hypothesis), randomization inference-based 95%-CIs in brackets.

Conclusion

- Eligibility combined with self-interest cue was most effective at mobilizing low-income citizens to vote for the candidate who promises to expand Medicaid.
- Socio-tropic appeal was ineffective, even if combined with eligibility cue.
- It is possible to mobilize low-income, ethnic-minority populations (Garcia Bedolla and Michelson: 2012).

Thank you for your attention.

Post-Treatment Survey: ITT vs control

Pocketbook	Sociotropic	Combined	Campaign effect
Individual Benefits			
.22	.16	.44*	.17
[-.33, .72]	[-.36, .73]	[-.08, .88]	[-.17, .49]
Social Benefits			
.39*	-.12	.03	.02
[.09, .70]	[-.45, .22]	[-.31, .32]	[-.21, .23]
Knowledge of Candidate Positions			
.21	-.05	.28*	.20*
[-.10, .53]	[-.38, .24]	[-.04, .58]	[-.01, .40]
Vote Griffith (DEM)			
.08	.11	.08	.07
[-.13, .31]	[-.15, .32]	[-.13, .31]	[-.07, .21]

Balance Check: Turnout

Sampling distribution of simulated log likelihoods

