



PICO National Network
Unlocking the Power of People

Integrated Voter Engagement Research Report

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1. Executive Summary

In 2014 PICO led the largest non-partisan volunteer-driven direct voter contact program in the country. Despite low levels of public interest in the election, and an overall voter turnout rate in the general electorate that was lower than it's been in 70 years, our Let My People Vote program organized over 12,000 volunteers who had over 620,000 live person-to-person conversations with voters, the majority of whom were People of Color and were otherwise not likely to vote in last year's election based on their past voting history. We also won several city and state level ballot initiatives with allies to raise wages and secure earned sick time for all workers, to reform sentencing and capture savings from prisons to invest in education, to redistrict city councils for greater representation and to pave the way for voting rights restoration for citizens returning from incarceration.

We designed Let My People Vote (LMPV) as an Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) program, one that sits at the intersection of voter engagement and issue-based organizing. The goal of IVE programs—and we believe the goal of constituents in any democracy—is not just to win elections, but to build the power to govern between elections and secure policy wins that reflect constituent interests.

In 2014, PICO organized a research committee of practitioners and experts to build a multi-cycle research agenda to study our work in detail in order to learn to do IVE more effectively and to inform the broader field. While IVE is widely practiced by community organizations, interest groups and unions, the majority of the research to date in our field has focused on voter engagement and voter turnout only insofar as it's relevant to election turnout. As a result the knowledge base and core practices of IVE have advanced in only incremental ways in recent cycles as we fine tune tactical-level efforts to eek out marginal turnout increases while millions of people remain on the sidelines of civic life. PICO's research program is intended to add to our understanding of how specific practices effect turnout, especially for low-propensity voters, but also to look at the impact of organizing on voters' and volunteers' sense of agency and political efficacy (which are key determinants of long term civic engagement), how to increase our collective capacity to organize across race, gender and other differences, and how to translate the power built during elections into far-reaching policy change. We want to study the impact of organizing otherwise excluded voters over several cycles, not only on their registration and turnout rates, but also on their civic engagement between elections, their motivation to invite family and friends into the work of democracy, and their capacity to help build organizations through which they can advance their own agendas.

Summary of Findings

The first cycle of our research program produced some clear results, some challenging questions, and some new lessons as we shape our 2015-2016 Integrated Voter Engagement programs.

A new, higher standard: Let My People Vote excelled by traditional voter turnout measures commonly used in the movement. For example, the women we contacted turned out at a rate 13% higher than women in our targeted voter universe as a whole. However, under a precinct-level treatment and control study we found more moderate results, with positive turnout gains among low-propensity voters in 60% of the counties we worked in. This experimental study design will raise the standard for measuring program-level voter turnout impact for us and across the organizing field in ways that challenge us all to a higher standard.

The bright light: In both the standard analysis of voter turnout and the treatment and control study, we found evidence of improved turnout particularly among People of Color and women. This suggests that we are headed

in the right direction but need to continue to drill down in our research to understand and grow these effects over time.

The challenge of reaching our intended voters: We targeted primarily low propensity voters of color, but the people in our universe we were able to contact had higher propensity turnout scores than those in our broader universe, and the people who turned out to vote had even higher propensity turnout scores. We also found we were able to contact African-Americans and women at rates lower than previous cycles as phone contact rates decline, but close to intended rates. Contact rates for Latino, Asian-American and young voters was much lower. The fact that this trend did not hold up across the board leads us to ask what it is about that made some voters harder to reach and then turnout to vote than others? The answer we found is in part about cell phone versus landline use and partly about the integrity of the voter file data for voters likely to move more frequently. It points to the need for further research and more effective voter file data hygiene so that our broader movement can get better at contacting and turning out the voters we want to engage. The consequence if we don't figure this out is that we as a movement reach a smaller and smaller subset of the electorate, especially those more likely to vote, rather than investing in bringing millions of people off the sidelines and into civic life.

Women of color are drivers of equality as voters and volunteers. In our research studies and our efforts to track and assess volunteer leadership in Let My People Vote, we found strong indications that women of color in particular are drivers of increased voter turnout and increased volunteer mobilization. These findings make clear that the leadership of women of color in particular deserves focused investment and research in future cycles.

Social relationships and social networks do matter. Our voter contact and voter turnout data reinforced the existing literature about the value of direct human-to-human contact around voting, and the value of volunteer contact in particular. Our research also studied the congregation as a social network in microcosm. We found that people who signed pledge cards in their congregation were more likely than other pledge card signers to turnout to vote weeks later. We also partnered with the Analyst Institute to study the effectiveness of congregation-based voter registration and GOTV programs for turning out voters. We saw promising signs that an early focus on registration and voting in congregations effectively increases turnout. It is not clear from the results of this first test that voter registration in congregations is effective for registering new voters, but voter registration drives are effective for increasing voter turnout in the congregation.

Voter engagement through organizing correlates with an increase in participants' sense of personal agency and political efficacy, both drivers for increasing civic participation over time. PICO's civic engagement program is one of the largest training grounds for the development of civic leadership among People of Color, women and young people in the country. This cycle we focused our research not only on voters and their behavior, but also on volunteers and their development. For volunteer leaders, motivation and relationships are the currency of organizing, the fuel that keeps people engaged in public civic life over time. Our research showed that engagement in PICO over time can increase an individual's sense of personal power and impact. In a regression analysis, both of these emotional factors explained increased civic participation over time more than the demographic indicators like race or education that are more often used to explain gaps in civic engagement.

Voter engagement builds the power of constituent organizations, especially when connected to ballot measures. Consistent with the IVE model, voter contact work increased the power of our constituencies in key places. In the absence of bold policy proposals from candidates, Let My People Vote's volunteer-focused program was largest and most successful in places where ballot initiatives created the possibility for concrete and positive change. Organizations that contributed significantly to ballot initiatives in 2012 or 2014 are now leading more significantly in their states. For example, POWER in Pennsylvania, the Massachusetts Community

Action Network, the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, PICO California and CAFÉ in Las Cruces, New Mexico demonstrated an impressive capacity to move people into action at election time. As a result these groups have all emerged from their ballot measure cycle in stronger positions to shape statewide debates and to lead both legislative and ballot initiative policy campaigns in 2015 and 2016.

Key Takeaways

For Organizing: Significant changes to the electorate are difficult to achieve in one cycle. The driving principle of Integrated Voter Engagement is that investment in the same constituencies and precincts year after year – at election time and through year-round issue work – can accumulate effects over time. These effects can be measured in three ways: 1) the standard measures of voter engagement such as increased registration and turnout rates, 2) the expanded human capacity of an organization’s members and leaders in their sense of personal power and impact and their ability to work across race, gender and other differences, and 3) the organization’s capacity to win policy changes that meet the interests of their constituents. We are committed to a multi-cycle research program that helps us and others understand and increase these outcomes.

In particular, we learned that our investment in 2015 and 2016 needs to focus on developing new and better ways to reach young people, African Americans, Latinos and Asian-Americans who wouldn’t otherwise vote, that we need to invest significantly in the leadership of women of color as both volunteers and voters, and that we need to improve our capacity to build person to person relationships at scale through door to door canvassing and stronger congregation-based organizing.

For Funding: The strength of an IVE program rests largely on a city or state-based organization’s ability to recruit, organize and train a large base of supporters who will lead the IVE work before the height of the voter engagement season. In 2014 the majority of our funding came through during the late summer and early fall, which made recruitment and training to scale very difficult. Receiving funding earlier in the cycle would allow us and others to build the base for future elections further in advance. Since this case has been made in several cycles, another possibility would be for voter engagement funders to collaborate to a greater extent with issue-focused funders on a more integrated year-to-year voter engagement platform. The goal would be to give more money in off-cycle years to issue work that explicitly includes investment in the kind of leadership development necessary to run an IVE program at scale. For example, it would be helpful if immigration funders included in their 2015 grants outcomes around training and preparing constituents for strong voter engagement programs in 2016. However, this could be advised for any issue funder. The less we treat building power through voting and building power through advocacy as separate phenomena the more likely we are to build the powerful constituent-based organizations that integrate both year to year.



2. What is Integrated Voter Engagement?

Multi-issue broad-based community organizations have been practicing various forms of integrated voter engagement for years, but there is not yet a standard frame or theory of IVE, and the practice-based research connecting electoral engagement to subsequent advocacy and other forms of civic engagement is limited. This paper reflects an effort in PICO to put forward an explicit theory of IVE to be tested over time. We also seek to redefine return on investment in electoral programs. We want to consider returns that start with voter turnout measures but move beyond those measures to evaluate the impact of voter engagement work on organization and power-building necessary to grow the capacity to govern and achieve policy changes between elections.

A Framework for IVE

The goal of Integrated Voter Engagement is to build powerful year-round organizations in key cities and states that have an organized and growing constituency of people who register to vote, turnout to vote, mobilize others into political activity, and hold their elected officials accountable through issue campaigns and public action between elections. This constituency is the source of the organization's power to expand the electorate, to move bold issue agendas, to shape a humanized values-based public narrative, and to ultimately build the power to change the rules of our democracy in ways that deliver maximum benefits to working people. In most states there are a handful of constituent-based political organizations responsible for the majority of the voter engagement, issue campaigns, democracy reform and earned media work across a whole range of economic and social equality issues, from raising the minimum wage and winning paid sick time for workers, to fighting for immigration reform and sentencing reform, to pushing back budget cuts and generating new sources of revenue.



Fundamentally, integrated voter engagement is:

1. **Organizing a deep base of constituents into year-round power organizations:** through institutional and neighborhood recruitment, trainings, relational work, leadership development and public action
2. **Leading that base to engage, motivate and mobilize the broader electorate:** through voter registration, petition/signature gathering, conversations with voters, voter turnout efforts and mass public meetings with public officials
3. **Shifting the public narrative:** by creating values-driven moral narratives, developing authentic local spokespeople, and moving those narratives through direct voter engagement, earned and paid media, as well as grasstops and elite organizing strategies
4. **Leading strategic issue campaigns:** in ways that create new precedent, embolden elected leaders to strive for a higher standard, create a motivational issue environment that incentivizes voting, and deliver concrete and substantive improvements in constituents' lives
5. **Shaping the rules of the game:** the ultimate goal of constituent power organizations is democracy reform that ensures equality of voice in both voting and governance so that future issue wins that benefit large numbers of people are easier to achieve.

The key to successful IVE is investing in growing the underlying constituency of an organization on which its power and capacity to turnout voters and to lead successful issue campaigns rests. This foundational work of moving people into well-run organizations requires trained organizers who recruit social networks through faith congregations, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, training leaders in those networks to lead teams of volunteers, and coaching them in an ongoing basis to develop their political acumen, their ability to build and move their own base, and their skill at moving issue campaigns. This work of building an organized constituency is often underfinanced. The result is that organizations can end up expanding rapidly at key election and issue campaign moments and then quickly losing that capacity when the election or campaign is over and staff are let go. Without funding for constituency building, organizations can end up bouncing from issue to issue without growing the infrastructure and organizational capacity to win the next fight. The goal of IVE is build a dense network of volunteers, organized by skilled staff, who identify with the organization and are involved as members throughout the year and across multiple cycles.

Our research seeks to identify the best strategies and tactics for growing the capacity of our own and others' organizations to do IVE effectively year in and year out.

Return on Investment

The value of investing in IVE in independent constituent power organizations is that they can hold, nurture and deploy the deep social networks that determine political behavior, whether that results in voting, or calling a legislator, or engaging in a public mass meeting with an elected official. For example, in 2012 PICO's Missouri federation in Kansas City, Communities Creating Opportunity, collected petition signatures to put minimum wage and a cap on payday lending on the ballot. In 2013 CCO called people who had signed those petitions the year before and asked them to call their legislators to support Medicaid expansion. The response rate of people calling their legislators far exceeded typical phone banks. Similarly in 2014, CAFÉ in Las Cruces, New Mexico collected petitions to put an increased minimum wage on the city ballot. Since the number of petitions they collected was larger than the Mayor's margin of victory, or the entire votes garnered by any one city councilor, those elected officials sat up, took notice, and decided to legislate a minimum wage increase themselves that was large enough for all Las Cruces workers to be able to rent what HUD would consider affordable housing—a

key indicator of decreased poverty.¹ In the first three months after the election, 248 out of 6000 petition signers joined CAFÉ trainings and actions who had never before participated in CAFÉ, and CAFÉ organizers have been calling and engaging the other signers to develop their capacity to take action themselves, and to move their social networks into action on future issue campaigns. This is the goal of IVE—to mobilize voters through elections who are moved to greater and greater levels of civic participation through constituent power-based organizations who follow up with them after the election to secure wins that directly improve their lives.

The investment in civic engagement carried out through independent organizations also pays dividends in the organization's capacity to move public officials to legislate more bold policy solutions. One goal of IVE is to make elected officials accountable to their local constituency. It is a self-reinforcing cycle. When elected officials are held accountable to deliver on what they campaign on, voters keep coming back because they see they have a real voice and real choice. Alternatively, when elected officials fail to deliver meaningful progress on key issues voters get disenchanted and stay home. In a successful IVE program there is a self-reinforcing cycle between voter engagement, the power to legislate, and subsequent voter turnout. In Minnesota in 2012, for example, the success of voter engagement programs by ISAIAH, Take Action Minnesota and their allies helped pave the way for big legislative victories in 2013 when the Governor and state legislature passed a progressive tax increase that resulted in a \$1billion surplus in 2014. This win was followed by a minimum wage increase in 2014, which independent organizations worked to strengthen, moving Minnesota from one of the lowest wages in the country to a trendsetter in the Midwest. And in the 2014 election Minnesota voters were one of the few states to hold the majority of their progressive legislative and statewide offices. Importantly, elected officials did not just decide to pass these reforms; they were held accountable by constituent power based organizations who had engaged significantly in the 2012 election and who kept up the heat through legislative visits, mass public meetings, earned media and negotiations during the 2013 and 2014 legislative cycles.

Organizations working to support IVE in states in a way that builds power to move issue agendas and democracy reform include the major national organizing networks and their city and state partners: the PICO National Network, the Center for Popular Democracy, the Center for Community Change, National People's Action, the Partnership for Working Families, and National Domestic Workers Alliance among others.

¹ Weitzel, 2015

3. PICO's IVE Program, Research Agenda and Methodology

The PICO Network first conducted voter engagement at a significant scale in 2012, when we held 654,000 live conversations with voters and helped lead successful ballot campaigns to raise revenue for education in California, to stop the Taxpayers Bill of Rights from passing in Florida and stop Voter ID from passing in Minnesota. The 2012 program targeted voters of color who were less likely to turnout and also included a persuasion universe in ballot measure states like MN and FL targeting more broadly across race to people of faith who were likely to vote and persuadable on Voter ID and Tabor.

With growing leadership from immigrant congregations and Black clergy, in 2013 and 2014 PICO leaned much more directly into issues impacting communities of color, particularly the national immigration reform fight (for which we turned out over 100,000 clergy and congregational leaders in public meetings with and actions on their Members of Congress), deportation, mass incarceration, over policing and collateral sanctions for those returning from incarceration. We also committed at a network-wide convening of city and state Directors, Board Chairs and clergy in February 2014 that we would put race at the center of our work moving forward.

Last fall the importance of this commitment became clearer as public debate surrounding the 2014 election almost completely ignored the issues of most concern to people struggling to get by in America, especially People of Color. We saw this from the failure of immigration reform efforts in Congress and the President's delay of executive action, to the militarized response to peaceful protest in Ferguson, the refusal of candidates across the political spectrum to campaign on proposals for meaningful social or economic change, and the dominant narrative around the election that delivered a simple message to voters of color and working families: "stay home." This political environment was coupled with a decreased capacity across our movement to engage African-American and low-income voters in particular since the demise of ACORN in 2009.²

In this context, community organizations who work with the PICO network launched Let My People Vote, a voter engagement program dedicated to developing the civic engagement of volunteers and turning out new and infrequent voters especially in communities of color. We made an uncommon but intentional choice in the midterms to focus on people who were otherwise unlikely to vote, and that risk paid off. Through Let My People Vote, we empowered over 12,000 volunteers to evangelize a prophetic narrative to members of their congregations and communities: "We matter. Our voices matter. Our votes matter!" Drawing on PICO's grassroots base in 11 states, Let My People Vote became the largest non-partisan volunteer-driven live voter engagement program in the country. The program generated 621,840 direct, live conversations with voters, and equipped hundreds of congregations to boost turnout among their members. Let My People Vote adopted an innovative set of practices and created a foundation for sustained work to make voting a habit in key communities through 2020 and beyond.

Our 2014 Let My People Vote Program

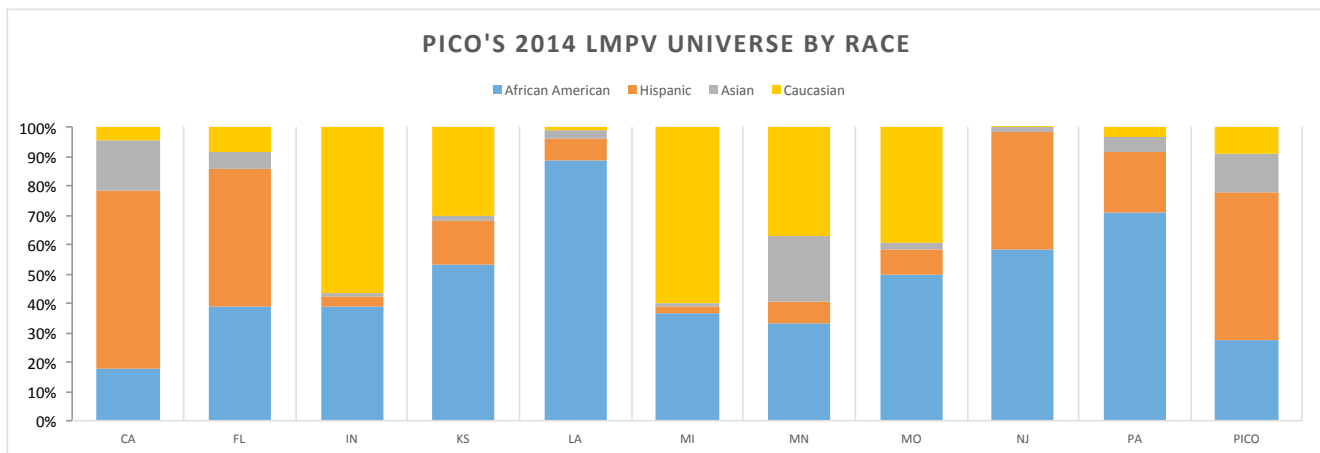
As we shaped our 2014 election cycle program we made a few critical choices as a network:

Put race at the center. The implications of this commitment meant that in our 2014 Let My People Vote program 88% of our targeted voters were People of Color. We also decided to focus not on likely voters, but

² New Organizing Institute, Independent Voter Registration Report, 2011.

instead on those less likely to turnout in a midterm election—those who had voted in 2012 but not in 2010 or had registered to vote since 2012. These are voters most likely to be excluded by the election industry’s targeting in a midterm, but who are most central to PICO’s calling as an organization. Our supplemental voter universe included White people of faith who had voter file scores suggesting they supported revenue measures (in the Midwest and Northeast) or immigration reform (in the Southwest and Florida) and who met the same vote history criteria. In some cases, universes were still not large enough for the geographies in which we concentrated. In those cases, single women and white voters under the age of 35 were added. Altogether our voter universe was 40% African American, 37% Latino, 11% Asian American and 12% White voters.

Chart 3.1 PICO’s 2014 Let My People Vote Universe by Race



Our results show that Let My People Vote succeeded in reaching a significant number of voters of color, women, and others who are not traditionally mobilized in midterm elections. Across 12 states, we reached 109,393 Black voters, 129,369 Hispanic voters, 26,167 Asian voters, and 201,260 women just during GOTV.

Drive proactive ballot initiatives that heal families and communities. In 2012 we learned that PICO federations who engaged in ballot initiatives were able to recruit more volunteers, reach more voters and build more power for their organizations than those who did not. However we were largely reacting to the ballot agendas set by allies or opponents. In 2014 we had a renewed effort across the network to lead and join in proactive ballot measures at the city and state level that would heal families and communities through sentencing reform, raising wages and securing earned sick time for all workers, and restoring voting rights to citizens returning from incarceration. Some key ballot wins included:

- ✓ PICO California co-led the campaign for ballot measure Prop 47, which will capture over \$1 billion in the next 5 years from reducing the number of people in prison and investing these savings in schools and mental health services³.
- ✓ PICO federation Massachusetts Communities Action Network co-chaired the coalition that won by ballot measure earned sick time for 1 million workers in the state⁴. MCAN and the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition also used a ballot measure to push the legislature to set the highest state minimum wage in the country at \$11/hour⁵.

³ Gutierrez, Melody. 2015

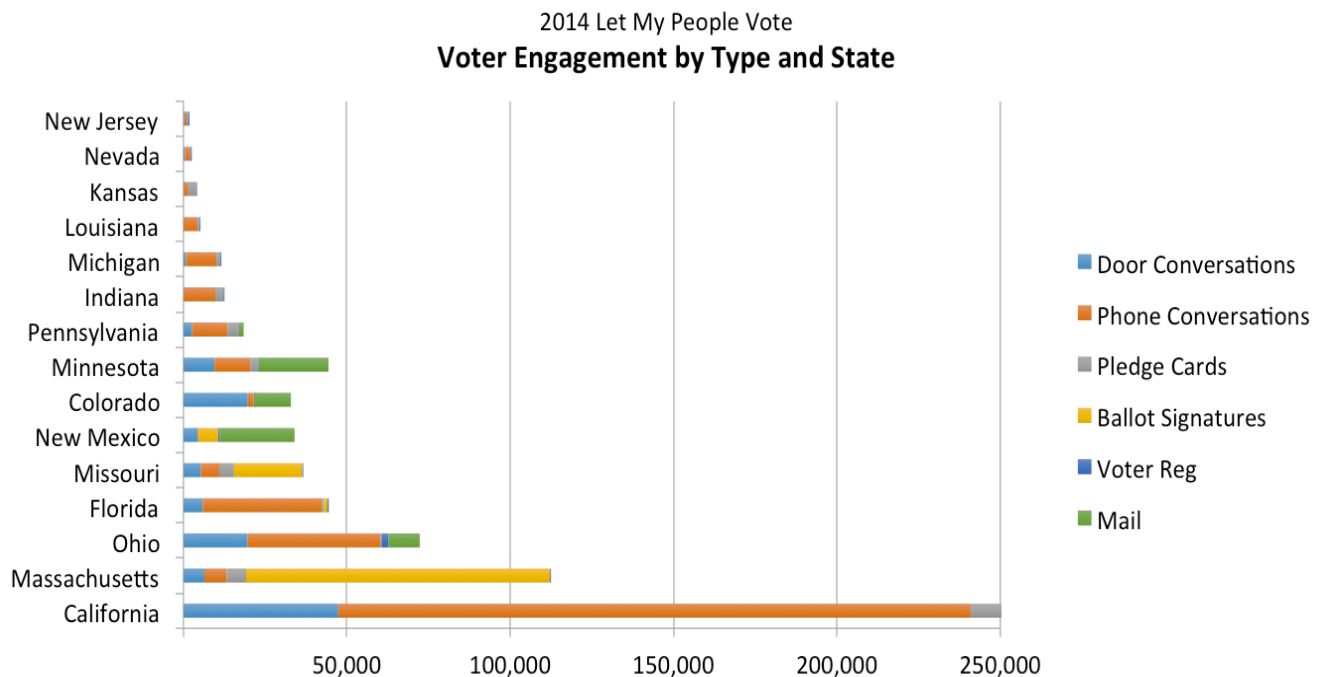
⁴ Johnson, 2014

⁵ CNN Money

- ✓ Las Cruces, NM: CAFÉ led a ballot drive that prompted the city council to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10/hour.
- ✓ Philadelphia, PA: POWER worked with SEIU, UNITE HERE and other allies to increase Philadelphia’s living wage to \$12.00 in January of 2015, and to extend that wage plus health care to employees of City contractors and subcontractors, including thousands of workers at Philadelphia airport⁶.

About 75% of the contacts in this cycle were made in states working on ballot initiatives through signature collection and direct voter engagement in CA, PA, MA, MO, NM and FL.

Chart 3.2 PICO’s 2014 Let My People Vote Voter Contacts by Type and State



Integrate our Voter Engagement work with Organizing. Our purpose as a network is to organize with faith congregations to ensure that every person in America is seen as a child of God, and to dismantle the policies and structures that fuel racial and economic inequality. In 2014 we committed to integrate voter engagement with our broader organizing work, focusing on leadership development of the over 12,000 volunteers engaged in the program, talking with voters about concerns in their communities, and reaching out to voters after the election to engage them in advocating on their own behalf in key legislative campaigns.

Build a research program to study our IVE work. In 2014, PICO as a network fully embraced Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) -- an approach that, in contrast to traditional civic engagement programs that spring up sporadically in the weeks before an election, builds power and impact over multiple election cycles. We invested heavily to give the organizations we work with access to training, voter targeting, data management, and the messaging/communications resources necessary to implement this approach effectively. We also made a commitment in 2014 to our network organizations, staff and leaders, and also to the broader movement that we would launch a research program to study our voter engagement work with the goal of getting better over time

⁶ POWER website

and contributing new knowledge to the field of organizing and voter engagement. We designed Let My People Vote to build on long-standing and emerging research on voting behavior, and convened a research committee of experts and practitioners, including PICO federations POWER in Pennsylvania and Communities Creating Opportunity in Missouri, together with the Analyst Institute, Dr. Hahrie Han from Wellesley College and UC Santa Barbara, and Dr. Paul Speer from Vanderbilt University.

The result of these choices was a program that had over 621,000 live conversations with voters, supplemented by 66,281 pieces of mail, the majority of which were pledge cards being returned to voters right before Election Day to remind them to vote.

Chart 3.3 PICO’s 2014 Let My People Vote Total Contacts by Type and State

State / Organization	Total Contacts	Total Attempts	Live Convos at the Doors	Live Convos by Phone	Pledge Cards	Ballot Signatures	VRs	Mail
CA: PICO CA	256,593	3,581,846	47,392	193,571	15,458	-	172	-
CO: Together CO	32,877	123,204	19,709	1,826	86	-	9	11,247
FL: Faith in FL	44,461	760,402	5,929	36,532	568	1,053	379	-
IN: IndyCAN	12,286	71,087		9,769	2,491	-	26	-
KS: CCO	3,845	12,037	96	1,402	2,347	-	-	-
LA: MICAH	4,869	42,474	32	4,314	515	-	8	-
MA: MCAN	112,347	40,685	6,426	6,857	5,894	93,000	170	-
MI: FACT	11,405	113,889	750	9,362	1,201	-	92	-
MN: ISIAH	44,374	224,372	10,938	9,886	2,694	-	-	21,235
MO: CCO	34,812	63,468	4,233	5,190	4,492	20,897	92	-
MO: Ferguson	1,562	2,161	1,132	430	-	-	-	-
NJ: PICO NJ	1,567	9,116	277	669	599	-	22	-
NM: CAFÉ	34,003	40,481	4,415	209	-	6,000	447	22,932
NV: ACTIONN	2,288	7,779	480	1,628	134	-	46	-
OH: OOC	72,304	592,567	19,620	40,752	-	-	2,194	9,500
PA: POWER	18,435	181,690	2,576	10,938	3,551	-	3	1,367
Total	688,121	5,867,258	122,573	334,387	40,268	120,950	3,662	66,281

Our Multi-Cycle Research Agenda

In designing Let My People Vote, we drew on a growing body of research that suggests that the assumptions driving many modern campaigns are flawed, even from the perspective of short-term political goals, and unnecessarily exclude people who are not already part of the electorate. We are interested in tactical level questions that are answerable in one cycle, but we also wanted a research platform that would allow us to question some of the major assumptions underlying the voting industry as it has evolved in the last 30 years, since it has evolved in ways that have marginalized communities of color, many women and underpaid workers, and decreased turnout and engagement in our democracy across the board. We believe that for our democracy to heal and thrive we need to question the assumptions underlying the growth of the election industry and identify new practices that bring more people into civic life in effective ways that restore their belief in the power of our democracy to address their core interests.

Question 1: Are voters motivated only by a cost/benefit analysis alone or also by social relationships and values? The existing literature on civic engagement until recently argued that individuals made decisions about whether or not to vote or engage in other civic activity primarily on a cost/benefit analysis. The conclusion from this research is that the main reason more privileged white and higher income communities vote and advocate is because they have more resources with which to engage in public life. The challenging implication of that assumption is that without more material resources communities of color and underpaid workers will always be chronically underrepresented in our democracy. While we certainly believe in and organize toward increasing resources to these communities through raising wages and revenue, improving education and other means, we also want to identify the other motivations that lead communities of color and working families to engage in civic life so that those motivations can be studied and cultivated more broadly in organizing practice. Our experience in faith-based organizing is that individuals and communities are moved to action by morally framed values-based campaigns. We aim for our research to document and help us understand these sources of motivation as well. Our theory is that if we can truly understand the way social relationships and values contribute to motivation around civic engagement, then we can build organizing programs that counter the impact of an imbalance of economic resources.

Question 2: Is mobilizing alone, or organizing combined with mobilizing more effective for turning out voters and for building the power to govern between elections? Another way to put this is what are the specific value adds of organizing for elections and advocacy? The predominant question of voting research to date is “how do we most cost effectively turnout to vote the highest volume of people?” For the candidates and political parties who most shape the election industry, this question makes sense. However, for organizations like ours interested not just in winning elections, but also in governing and moving an agenda that reflects our constituents’ interests, our central question is different. The return on investment we’re looking for is how to register and turnout more voters more effectively, but also how to do this in a way that makes it possible to engage those voters between elections in ways that result in policies and changes that improve their own lives. Through our research program we seek to identify the specific ways organizing can add value to the effort to move citizens from the polls to advocacy and campaigns on behalf of their own agenda between elections.

Question 3: How can we talk about and organize around race explicitly in ways that win? The predominant norm for both partisan and independent voting campaigns is not to talk about race explicitly for fear that it alienates the white “middle” necessary to win statewide and federal elections. Indeed, some studies have found that identifying an issue like incarceration or voting rights with African American or Latino communities can drive down support among white voters. Rather than assuming this is the way things have to be, we want to understand how perceptions of race and politics are shaped, and learn how to talk about race explicitly in ways that neutralize or even improve the impact on white voters while at the same time motivating and being true to the experiences of communities of color.

Question 4: How can we most effectively reclaim the power of faith and religion from the radical right? For forty years the radical right has reshaped the role of faith in politics in ways that have narrowed the moral narrative in our country, driven elected officials to radical definitions of faith, and alienated many voters across race. PICO is faith based and we believe the role of congregations and leaders of faith is to hold a prophetic standard that is beyond partisan politics, and that clarifies as moral choices the public decisions we make in our country about political priorities, money and human rights. Through our research, PICO wants to lead the way with our allies at Faith in Public Life and PRRI in helping the broader movement fighting inequality to learn to embrace faith boldly.

2014 Research Studies and Methodology

In 2014 our research program had two goals: establish the baseline for a multi-cycle treatment and control study of our network-wide voter engagement program, and develop individual research projects that would begin to answer the questions above and point the way toward future research. With our academic partners we developed a series of unique projects to advance these goals.

Creating a Treatment/Control Study Baseline for Voter Turnout and Future Research

With Hahrie Han's leadership we developed a treatment and control protocol to measure the impact of our IVE program over time. PICO withheld a randomly selected 20% of our universe from voter contact to compare the effectiveness of the Let My People Vote program to a control group that had no contact. Randomization was conducted at the precinct level, so we measured program impact by comparing treatment and control precincts. Nine separate states (CA, FL, IN, KS, LA, MI, MO, MN, and PA) participated in this study with 18,339 treatment precincts and 4,564 control precincts in 100 counties.⁷ No voter contact or mobilization activity by PICO federations took place in the control precincts. This study enabled us to establish a baseline for the impact of our program on voter turnout in this first cycle of study. Since the theory of Integrated Voter Engagement is that program effects accumulate over time we did not expect to see significant results in the first cycle. We will continue to measure outcomes during post-election activity.

Studying the Impact of Social Relationships and Social Networks on Voter Engagement

We had two sources of data to study the question of voter motivation and the impact of social relationships and networks. The first is our own program data, collected in the VAN through our voter contact program that allowed us to measure turnout outcomes across race, gender and age by type of contact.

We also worked with Analyst Institute to design a test to study the effectiveness of voter registration campaigns within religious congregations as the primary form of social network through which we organize. In this study we asked: Do registration programs in religious congregations increase voter registration rates? And do registration programs in religious congregations increase turnout? The experimental universe consisted of unregistered individuals who appeared on the member list of a PICO congregation and who could be matched to VAN. This test included two experimental conditions:

- *Treatment Registration:* Congregations in this group attempted to register unregistered, eligible congregation members to vote.
- *Control:* Congregations in this group did not attempt to register congregation members to vote.

Similar congregations were matched into pairs and then paired congregations were randomly assigned to treatment and control. All individuals in a congregation were assigned to the same experimental condition. Individuals who appeared on more than one congregation list were excluded from the experiment. Thirty-six congregations in California, Florida, Indiana, Massachusetts, Missouri and New Jersey participated in the experiment.

Studying the Added Value of Organizing over Mobilizing Alone

⁷ Ohio Organizing Collaborative also worked with Hahrie Han to conduct parallel research project in Ohio with Center for Community Change

A core assumption of our IVE program is that it builds capacity within the congregations and communities we work in by developing the leadership of volunteer leaders who in turn engage others and advocate for issues that represent their interests between elections. In this study, led by Paul Speer of Vanderbilt University, PICO volunteers engaged in the 2014 voter engagement program completed 571 surveys. While not a systematic sample of the over 12,000 volunteers engaged in our program, respondents generally reflect PICO membership. They were predominantly women (58%), altogether the majority were People of Color—African-American (32%), Latino (25%) and Asian-American (1%)—and the minority of respondents were under 30 (26%). The survey questions were designed to measure cognitive understandings of power, sense of personal agency, understandings of race, orientations to political activity, orientations to PICO and their local federation, personal efficacy, and personal political goals.

Studying the Intersection of Race and Politics

In 2014 we did not have a lead researcher driving the research on race and voting so the sources of our data and lessons are varied. They include our own program data, key questions and findings from Paul Speer’s study, and polling done in Florida in preparation for a ballot initiative to restore voting rights to citizens returning from incarceration. Nevertheless we have some initial findings that point us toward new research in 2015 and 2016. We have secured funding for Dr. John Powell of the Haas Institute at Berkeley Law to conduct research with us in the coming cycle and we are working to identify another senior researcher to lead this work on our research committee moving forward.

All of these research projects were supplemented by one to one post-election interviews Kristee Paschall, PICO’s Political Director, conducted with the campaign managers of the Let My People Vote program in each state.



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