

The Effects of Campaigns on Young Voter Turnout

By: Shawn McCoy

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Paul Mueller

Submitted: April 23, 2007

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction: Young Voters, Low Turnout, and the Influence of Campaigns	3
Chapter 2 Issue Salience and Turnout by Young Voters	9
Chapter 3 The Effect of Negative Advertising Perception on Different Age-Groups	30
Chapter 4 The Age-Gap in Get-Out-The-Vote Campaigns	49
Chapter 5 Conclusion: How Campaigns Influence Young Voter Turnout	68
References	83

Chapter 1

Introduction: Young Voters, Low Turnout, and the Influence of Campaigns

Young voters are an enigma. They have much to gain or lose based upon the outcome of an election since they will be around much longer to benefit or suffer from the choices of their leaders. Despite this, they are the age group that turns out to vote the least. The explanation that the average observer would use is apathy. This may be true for some young people, but there are more important components. This age group is subject to several forces that can be partially attributed for the low turnout. Young people, to a degree, have low socioeconomic status, which is important in determining whether a person votes. Probably more relevant to why this age group fails to vote is the general detachment they feel from the system. Without much prior experience in the political process, it can be intimidating or just difficult to understand how to become an engaged citizen. As political campaigns are becoming more sophisticated than ever before, it is reasonable to ask what these operations can do to boost young voter turnout and perhaps shift an election in their favor.

Throughout my time working on this project, I spoke with political consultants about whether they believe campaigns can have an influence upon young voter turnout. One person I asked is a well-known political pundit. I specifically discussed with him the areas of study that this thesis examines. His response was that young people simply do not vote. It may be because of socioeconomic status or it may be that they are lazy, but campaigns cannot change that, he

said. While not quite the response I was hoping for, I became more determined because I believe that I am exploring a subject that many people simply dismiss as an unlikely possibility.

Even when I am able to provide some evidence that part of the low turnout for young people could be a result of campaigns not targeting them, it is still hard for people to believe. Talking to a friend at a recent political conference, I began telling her about the results of my thesis and that I believe campaigns can have an influence on the turnout of young voters, perhaps being able to boost turnout enough to change the outcome of an election. Her response was, “That can’t be right. Young people don’t vote!”

I did find one political consultant that found my ideas intriguing. In specifically discussing student voters, he told me that “campaigns see college campuses as two things: a source of volunteers and a source of annoying protesters.” Any ideas that could lead to a “more productive use of their time would be enthusiastically welcomed.” So this is what I set out to do over the course of the past year. I worked to determine what influence campaigns could have upon young voters by looking at several important aspects of campaigning. This introductory chapter will briefly review several better known reasons for low turnout amongst young voters before providing an overview of the chapters to follow.

Turnout of Young People

Young people will be defined throughout this thesis as those within two age groups, 18-24 year-olds and 25-29 year-olds. It is these ages that a voting age-gap is most notable. In the past two elections, 2004 and 2006, these cohorts have turned out at higher rates but are still much less likely to vote than the rest of the population. Most notably, in the 2004 Presidential Election, 18-24 year-olds had a turnout rate of 47%, which is up 11 points over 2000. The 25-29 year-old cohort had a 56% turnout rate, which was up 5 points over 2000. The 2004 election

boosted turnout overall, but it was greatest for these two youngest age groups, only increasing 4%, to 64%, for the population as a whole (Lopez, Kirby, and Sagoff 2005). This is good news for all those who are concerned about the turnout of young voters, but it still does not correct the gap that exists between young and old.

Why is Turnout Low?

Two of the most important factors in determining turnout of older voters are socioeconomic status and party identification. Young people are just getting out on their own or are still dependent on their parents. Also, most have not completed their education. These factors contribute to low socioeconomic status for the age cohort. This, however, is not a completely accurate portrayal of the situation of young people. More young people are going to college than ever before, and while they may not have yet completed their education, this should not entirely detract from the fact that many will and that they do have more education than much of the rest of the population. According to a recent survey by Harvard's Institute of Politics, 83% of 18-24 year-olds, who are not currently enrolled in high school, are enrolled in college, have taken some college courses, or completed another form of secondary degree ("Youth Survey" 2006). Also, while many may not have their own income, most can rely on assistance from parents during these years, which complicates our ability to understand the socioeconomic status of young people.

As for party identification, more young people identify themselves as independents rather than supporters of a particular party. Only 27% of 18-24 year-olds identify strongly with a major party ("Youth Survey" 2006). Without strong party ties, there is likely a lack of motivation to vote. While this may be an important factor, the real answer to why there is an age gap probably comes from asking why there is so little party identification.

David Campbell has an interesting theory to determine why people vote. He explains how communities and schools shape the sense of duty many feel for voting. One reason to explain why voting has declined in America is the state of our civic education in schools. Part of the low turnout amongst both young people and the entire population is likely a result of schools not adequately teaching civic responsibility. This results in declining social capital, which can account for low voter turnout (Campbell 2006). Thus, we can work to improve turnout and create better citizens through the public education system. A theory like Campbell's, which focuses on social capital rather than other factors, is probably best in explaining low turnout amongst young people, but there are likely other variables influencing turnout.

A study in Canada examines what factors may determine the turnout of young Canadians. Canada also suffers from low-turnout by young voters, with a 27.4% gap in 2000. Rubenson, et al. (2004), shows that one third of this can be accounted for by socio-demographics. The gap is further decreased by accounting for party identification, political competitiveness, and party mobilization. This cuts the gap by another 17%. Political knowledge reduces the gap by another 17.9%. Thus, about one-third of the age gap can be accounted for by these factors, one of which, party mobilization, will be explored in chapter 4.

While many of the factors mentioned above contribute significantly to the turnout gap, there are other forces at work, and campaigns can have an influence. Since it is commonly accepted that young people do not vote, there is not a strong effort by campaigns to gain their support. The three chapters that follow, as well as the conclusion, will explore aspects of campaigning that may have an effect on turnout.

Issue Salience

Young people are in a different stage of life than older voters. Most do not yet have children, and many do not yet have a job. According to the rational choice model of voting, the salience of issues will play a role in the decision to vote (Riker and Ordeshook 1968). If young people do not sense importance in the issues that campaigns address, then they are less likely to turnout. This chapter addresses the question of whether young people care about different issues than the rest of the population, and it will then explore whether this impacts turnout.

Negative Advertising

In the academic community, there has been a debate for over a decade as to whether negative political advertising is a mobilizer or demobilizer. Some believe that it causes cynical views of politics and results in decreased turnout. Others favor a theory that negative advertising arouses feelings of duty and increases the value of voting in the rational choice model. Much of the research that has been done on this subject has been experiments with undergraduate students, but they do not look directly at age and turnout. This chapter will address the impact of negative advertising on young voters compared to older voters.

Get-Out-The-Vote

Campaigns drive turnout by encouraging supporters to vote through get-out-the-vote efforts. This includes making phone calls, walking door-to-door, and passing out literature. Especially during the past two presidential elections, get-out-the-vote has become more sophisticated than it was in previous years. Campaigns are able to use digitized voter lists and microtargeting strategies to reach out to past supporters. In doing this, however, young voters are often excluded. I will explore the change of get-out-the-vote over time, the resulting contact rates for different age groups, and whether this has an impact on elections.

The conclusion of this thesis provides a further look at how campaigns could benefit from my findings. I will show that the increased Democratic voting over the course of the past three presidential elections for young voters is likely the result of get-out-the-vote efforts by the parties rather than greater Democratic identification.

Chapter 2

Issue Salience and Turnout by Young Voters

Young people are notoriously apathetic about politics. At least, that is one of the common explanations given for why turnout is low for this age group. It may seem strange that someone will not take only a short amount of time to vote when the future of the country is going to be determined. Why would young people, who are going to take over the country someday, not care enough to exercise this right?

A possible explanation is that, at this point in their lives, they are not impacted by many of the issues that are discussed. Social Security likely seems very distant. Why should a college student worry about the solvency of Social Security, which she is unlikely to collect for at least 45 more years? In reality, the payroll tax is likely to affect her very soon, but is that in the mind of someone who may not even have a job? There is disconnectedness between young people and the rest of the population because most are in very different life situations. While some young people choose to enter the workforce upon graduating high school, most are now choosing to seek a higher education. Many are unemployed while in college, and they have not yet had children. This causes a rift between young and old. It is easy to understand why young voters may not place as much importance on particular problems as older voters.

In this chapter, I will explore the effects of issues on an election. Using survey data from the American National Election Studies, I will analyze whether young people care about different issues than the rest of the population. I will then look at the effects of whether election

issues impact the turnout of young people. I demonstrate that there is a difference between issues that young and old care about, and in some elections, this impacts turnout.

Issues as a Focus of Campaigns

An important feature of campaigns is the issues that they bring to the forefront of public debate. As an observer explains, “One chief function of campaigns is to place issues before voters. Given that most voters are relatively inattentive to politics, campaigns provide a crucial arena for candidates to discuss their views on specific issues” (Sides 2006). Issues mean much more to candidates than just being a way to bring attention to their beliefs. Issues are of great strategic importance to a campaign. Campaigns actively seek to draw attention to issues that will put the candidate in the most favorable light, which in turn will draw support from voters (Abbe et al. 2003; Brasher 2003).

Theories have developed over the years to determine how campaigns use issues to gain the support of voters. Downs (1957) argues that candidates take the position of the median voter. The idea is that if a candidate falls more ideologically close to a voter than other candidates, he will win the voter’s support. The median voter is the strategically correct place to position ideologically because there is no place for the opponent to go that would place him closer to more voters. Another theory is that rather than positioning themselves to appeal to the median voter, candidates try to persuade the median voter to their point of view. This is also quite possible, but a hypothesis that has been more popular in recent years is that of heresthetics. William Riker states that “the point of an heresthetical act is to structure the situation so that the actor wins, regardless of whether or not the other participants are persuaded” (qtd. in Sides 2006, 409). The candidate, in this case, would focus on issues where he is strong and convince voters that these are the important issues.

Focus on an issue in Congress could be one use of the heresthetical strategy. Major legislation passed by Congress has an impact on the campaign agenda. This is an opportunity to claim credit or make an attack on issues that have recently been subject of public debate. An issue from a high profile debate in Congress has a 50% chance of being discussed by candidates. This applies to candidates from both parties, except when the issue is one that is pushed onto the agenda because of election year maneuvering, in which case it would not affect both parties equally (Brasher 2003). By targeting issues that are a candidate's strength, and discussing them enough to make them important, a candidate can gain support.

This is not the only way that campaigns target issues. It would be nearly impossible to get voters to just think about certain issues that portray the candidate favorably. Candidates need to build a coalition of voters to get elected. Constituency has a great influence on what candidates discuss. They must find issues that have salience with voters. Bishin (2000) found that for any roll call vote made by a legislator, a subconstituency could likely be found that the vote was meant to appeal to. While it may be the case that candidates try to build support from subconstituencies, our concern in analyzing young voters needs to be whether this particular subconstituency is excluded and what effect this has on them.

The Theory of Issue Ownership and its Effects on Voters

The precise effects of issues on voters during an election is largely undetermined. The theory of issue ownership attempts to help us partly understand this. This is very similar to heresthetics because it relies on candidates to convince voters that the greatest problems facing the country are those that they and their party can handle best, but it is also based strongly on retrospective voting. Ownership looks at the record of the incumbent and constituencies of the parties. The record of the incumbent may change issue ownership from election to election, but

party constituencies remain rather constant (Petrocik 1996). It is issue ownership that causes many people to identify the Democratic Party with Social Security and Medicare and the Republican Party with taxes and defense.

When candidates campaign, they try to draw attention to the issues on which their party has strength. Brasher (2003) found that, while holding other factors constant, there is a 26% higher likelihood that a candidate will address an issue if that issue is one owned by the candidate's party. Petrocik (1996) studied whether presidential candidates in the 1952-1988 elections emphasize issues that their party owns. He found that this is the case, and if voters believe that the most important problems of a campaign are those that a candidate and/or his party are known for, then they will be more apt to vote for that candidate.

In Petrocik's case study of the 1980 election, he found that both Carter and Reagan focused more on issues owned by their parties, with Reagan drawing less attention to Democratic issues. This made a tremendous difference in the election, with 77% of people who were not Reagan supporters initially but were concerned with Republican-owned issues voting for Reagan. For those who did not initially support Carter, if they were concerned with Democratic-owned issues, 56% decided to give Carter their support.

While we are concerned with Presidential elections, it is still possible to see some applications in Congressional elections. Specifically, one study of Congressional elections raises questions over the theory of issue ownership. Sides (2006) finds that the 1998 Congressional elections do not suggest the issue ownership theory. Both parties focused on issues that were perceived by the public as being important. These issues were Social Security, Medicare, healthcare, crime, and taxes. A majority of these issues are Democratic-owned. Looking at the amount of advertising time the parties spent on particular issues in 1998, Sides finds that issue

ownership does not appear to exist. Republicans devoted 36% of their advertising time to Democratic issues and only 18% to Republican owned issues. In this election, it is clear that Republicans certainly did not follow the issue ownership strategy. Because the issues discussed were those that voters believed were most important, this suggests that politicians were responding to what voters wanted and not to an understanding of the strengths of their parties.

Sides' study may not paint the correct picture of what is happening. Abbe et al. (2003), which also looked at the 1998 elections, found that when voters and the candidate agree on the most important issue of the election, then the voter is more likely to vote for the candidate if that issue is owned by the candidate's party. Partisanship is a stronger predictor of voting behavior, but issue ownership has an important role that is independent of partisanship. The most interesting aspect of the study is that the results of the election could have been altered greatly if Republicans had campaigned on more Republican-owned issues. If they had, they would have fared much better. With an agenda based around issues they own, Republicans could have increased their national vote share by as much as 2.6%. This could have given them a gain of 15 seats rather than a loss of five. Again, this is not a Presidential election, so there may be different findings in the years concerning us, but it is likely that a similar effect would occur. In this case, we see that issues can be very influential to the results of an election.

Issues certainly have an influence on how people vote. This influence is even stronger when a race is competitive. Kahn and Kenney (1997) found that in a low intensity campaign a candidate's one-unit change on an issue scale ranging from -2 to +2 would make a difference of only 2.24 in candidate evaluations from voters. In an intense campaign, however, a one-unit change on the issue scale created a 7-point change on candidate evaluations. When candidates

are at opposite ends of the issue scale in a low-intensity race, it creates a difference of only 11-points in candidate evaluations. In intense races, there is a 35-point difference.

All of this alludes to potential effects that issues in an election may have upon young voters if issues they care about are excluded. It has been found that many demographic variables do not have an effect on what issues are discussed in an election, but age does have an effect. This effect goes the other direction from what we are concerned with, which is that if a constituency is older, candidates will target more election issues that have salience for that population (Sides 2006). I have found no research suggesting that a young constituency has an influence upon the agenda of an election.

If issues have a clear effect on elections, and candidates are not targeting young voters with salient issues, then we must ask what the effect on turnout is.

Issue Saliency and Turnout

While issues affect how people vote in an election, we need to determine whether issues can also affect turnout. Dahl (1961) points out that most people find little necessity in following politics. It is only when politics comes to affect their daily lives that they are given reason to care. Otherwise, they are busy with personal matters that are more salient to them. Therefore, we can assume that if issues actually matter to people, then they will be more likely to care about the outcome of an election.

Considering the rational choice model of voting, issue salience should make a difference in determining whether people vote. In order for voting to be rational, voters must have benefits from voting that outweigh the costs. Because an individual vote rarely has an impact on an election, the benefits of having a favorable outcome must be high to make voting rational. If

issues are salient, then voters should be more apt to vote since the outcome will be more important to them (Riker and Ordeshook 1968). The theory seems to prove true in practice.

In some states, reform movements have aimed to change the year of gubernatorial elections to be a different year than presidential elections. The goal is to limit the influence of the presidential election upon state politics. Boyd (1989) shows that turnout has declined as a result of these changes. These changes in turnout are not observed when looking at senate and presidential elections, because both are focused on the same set of national issues. The added salience of having state issues and national issues involved in the same election improves turnout.

Ballot initiatives that put important issues before voters can lead to an increase in turnout. Smith (2001) shows that when ballot initiatives are prominent and widely discussed, they have a positive, statistically significant effect during midterm election years. The effect is negated when the measure appears on the ballot in a presidential election year. Increased turnout was also found in another study on ballot initiatives (Southwell and Passo 2001). It seems that the added salience an election has from allowing voters to set policy increases turnout for the election.

Knowing that issues can have an impact on turnout, campaigns will stress issues that play well to certain demographics. To go beyond this, campaigns try to paint a large divide that separates cultures within America with the goal of gaining support from particular social groups. This is why we hear Democrats referring to “the richest one percent” and “greedy pharmaceuticals.” Republicans then talk about “family values” and the liberal counter culture (Leege et al. 2002). This is a popular strategy with campaigns. They try to be divisive as a way to make people feel the importance of their vote in shaping the future of America.

Of course, what is effect of issue salience be upon specific demographics? The effect on age has yet to be determined, but the effect of issue salience on women is clear. Paolino (1995) finds that the 1992 election, commonly referred to as the “year of the woman,” saw an issue focus around the Hill-Thomas hearings, sexual harassment, and women’s representation. This led to much higher turnout for women at the polls. If issues that pertain especially to women are able to increase turnout of their target constituency, then it is possible that the same effect might occur for young voters.

In regard to Paolino’s study, it is pointed out that for group-based political action to occur, there must be objective membership in the group and awareness of the group’s position in society. Age is an interesting case because it is a demographic variable that no member of the demographic will remain in for long, and position in society will likely change as a result. Whether issues affect the turnout of an age group remains to be determined.

Method

In order to analyze what issues young voters care about in relation to the rest of the population, I have used data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) to explore what issues different age groups identify as America’s most important problems. In order to do this, the question “What is the most important problem facing the country?” was used, and I recoded the data to fit responses into specific categories. The ANES survey provides coding for almost all possible mentions of problems, from broad to very specific. It is already divided into categories for ranges of response codes. I coded the data to fit into either the category defined by ANES or into a different one according to the focus of this study. This was done for the years 1992, 1996, and 2000. The other variables explored are age and turnout for respondents in each election.

Findings

Tables 1, 2, and 3 display the results of a cross tabulation of age and most important problem response.

The results for the whole sample did not vary too much over the three elections, although there were clear differences. Social welfare issues received the most mentions in each election, declining in significance over the period being examined. Social welfare was the most important problem for more than one-third of respondents in 1992, but it was only mentioned by 16.5% in 2000. Other top issues in 1992 were the economy and government spending/taxes. The fourth most important problem was social issues. With only 6.0% of responses indicating this choice, this is a breaking point between the most popular issues and those that received few mentions. In 1996, the only difference in the results was that the economy dropped out of the top four, and crime took its place as the second most important problem. The other top issues maintained their previous rankings. There was a small change in 2000, with social welfare on top, followed closely by education, social issues, and the economy. Education was the only issue that had not previously been a top issue. Social issues were a top issue in all three years, and the economy was highly ranked in 1992. These problems, social welfare, government spending/taxes, the economy, and social issues, are perennial election issues that seem to appear in many elections but are sometimes swapped for problems of the moment, like crime and education, which do not maintain their importance from election to election.

The 18-24 year-old age group focused its attention on a few different problems than the older groups. They chose the same top three issues in 1992, with their fourth ranked issue being a tie between social issues and crime. Each of these only represented 5.0% of the selections. One important difference is the emphasis they placed on social welfare issues, which was higher

than older respondents. This will be further discussed later. In 1996, the top four choices in the youngest age group were social welfare, crime, the economy, and education. The top two issues, social welfare and crime, were the same as for all age groups combined, but the bottom two were not. The economy dropped out of the top four issues in this year for the total of all age groups. Education surprisingly had the same level of importance for young people as for all respondents, with 7.7%, but the way responses were distributed for 18-24 year-olds caused it to be one of the top issues for the cohort. The most important problems in 2000 were education, social welfare, crime, and the economy. Education ranked below social welfare for the total of all age groups but was the most important issue in this one. Of the 18-24 year-olds, 28.6% selected education as their top issue, which was 13.4% higher than the rest of the population. This age group also substituted crime for social issues in this year.

The 25-29 year-old cohort does not show nearly as much variation from sample as do 18-24 year-olds. The 25-29 year-old age group is much more consistent in selecting issues that are in tune with the older age cohorts. Comparing the top issues selected in each year, 25-29 year-olds named the same responses for three of the four top issues in 1992, three in 1996, and agreed on all in 2000. It seems that if issue salience is an important factor in determining turnout, it will not matter as much for this age group as it may for 18-24 year-olds. For this reason, I will be focusing most of this analysis on 18-24 year-olds.

While 18-24 year-olds do not agree with the total of all age groups as often as 25-29 year-olds, it seems that the issues they view as important are not indicative of a strong difference from the rest of the population. While the emphasis they placed on certain issues was disparate from the whole sample, they did match three of the four top issues in 1992, two in 1996, and

three in 2000. This shows that they are mostly thinking of similar problems facing the country, but, surprisingly, they place higher importance on these than the rest of the population.

Consistently through these years, the most popular issue was social welfare. The same was true for the 18-24 year-olds, except in 2000 when education was ranked higher, but what is interesting is that social welfare was clearly more important for younger voters than for older voters. In these three years, the results for 18-24 year-olds were 4.8%, 16.1%, and 4.1% higher in the social welfare choice than for all age groups combined. At the same time, while remaining the most important problem every year, its importance declined significantly, from 34.0% in 1992 to less than half eight years later. While most of this decrease came between 1992 and 1996, 18-24 year-olds actually placed more importance on social welfare in 1996 than in 1992. Social welfare is not the only issue that was more important for young voters.

As mentioned before, in 2000, education became the most important issue for 18-24 year-olds, which was named 13.4% more than for the whole sample. This seems to be the most distinct display of an age effect in these three elections. The hypothesis for why this is the case is that the 18-24 year-olds are still in school or have just graduated and, as a result, care more about the issue. The turnout of this age group in 2000 will speak to the plausibility of this hypothesis. Interestingly, the 25-29 year-old age group placed less emphasis on this issue than the total for all respondents. Perhaps this is the result of feeling greater distance between their lives and the influence that this issue once had over them. Since many would still not have children at this age, the importance that older age groups find in education is also missing.

The disconnection that young people may feel as a result of their issue focus compared to the rest of the population in an election could be part of the cause for why young people turnout at low rates. As was discussed earlier, campaigns focus on issues that will yield electoral results.

If this is the case, then there may be a significant difference in turnout between those who care about the same issues as the whole population and those who are focused on other issues.

In 1992, such a theory is not supported. In exploring the turnout rate for the 18-24 year-olds responding similarly to the whole population, they did not turn out at a rate that was much different than all 18-24 year-olds. Table 4 shows the turnout rate for those who identified one of the four main problems for the entire sample. In Table 5, the turnout rate by age group is shown for everyone who identified any problem in the survey. Turnout for the 18-24 year-olds responding similarly to the whole population was 2.0% lower than for all the 18-24 year-olds sampled. It is hard to say what this means, but there are two possibilities. The first is that issue salience does not matter in determining whether someone votes. Another possibility is that since such a vast majority of the respondents in the 18-24 year-old age group responded similarly to the entire sample, the top responses could be viewed as default answers and thus the turnout rates do not vary much. It would be as though they could think of nothing else to say, so they stated something they know others care about.

Table 4: Turnout by Age Group for Identification of Top Four Problems in 1992

			Did R Vote?		Total
			YES	NO	
Age Groups	18-24	Count	67	64	131
		% within Age Groups	51.1%	48.9%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	107	50	157
		% within Age Groups	68.2%	31.8%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	158	52	210
		% within Age Groups	75.2%	24.8%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	148	46	194
		% within Age Groups	76.3%	23.7%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	117	22	139
		% within Age Groups	84.2%	15.8%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	110	20	130
		% within Age Groups	84.6%	15.4%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	89	19	108
		% within Age Groups	82.4%	17.6%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	66	13	79
		% within Age Groups	83.5%	16.5%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	78	15	93
		% within Age Groups	83.9%	16.1%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	93	10	103
		% within Age Groups	90.3%	9.7%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	76	14	90
		% within Age Groups	84.4%	15.6%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	48	12	60
		% within Age Groups	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	80+	Count	42	9	51
		% within Age Groups	82.4%	17.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	1199	346	1545
		% within Age Groups	77.6%	22.4%	100.0%

Chi-Square=86.798 with 12 degrees of freedom
 Source: American National Election Study 1992

Table 5: Turnout by Age Group for All Responses of Most Important Problem in 1992

			Did R Vote?		Total
			YES	NO	
Age Groups	18-24	Count	85	75	160
		% within Age Groups	53.1%	46.9%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	135	61	196
		% within Age Groups	68.9%	31.1%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	192	64	256
		% within Age Groups	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	184	59	243
		% within Age Groups	75.7%	24.3%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	137	32	169
		% within Age Groups	81.1%	18.9%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	126	28	154
		% within Age Groups	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	108	26	134
		% within Age Groups	80.6%	19.4%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	87	16	103
		% within Age Groups	84.5%	15.5%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	84	17	101
		% within Age Groups	83.2%	16.8%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	103	12	115
		% within Age Groups	89.6%	10.4%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	86	18	104
		% within Age Groups	82.7%	17.3%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	54	15	69
		% within Age Groups	78.3%	21.7%	100.0%
	80+	Count	58	13	71
		% within Age Groups	81.7%	18.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	1439	436	1875
		% within Age Groups	76.7%	23.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square=85.745 with 12 degrees of freedom
 Source: American National Election Study 1992

Results in 1996 were much the same as in 1992. There was a 4.8% higher turnout for the entire 18-24 year-old cohort over those who identified one of the same top four problems as the whole sample. Table 6 shows the filtered results for the top four issues in 1996, and Table 7 is the turnout rates for all issues combined. It is interesting that in both these years the turnout rate for the whole population is slightly higher for the filtered group of those who selected one of the top four issues. This is not the case for the 18-24 year-olds.

Table 6: Turnout by Age Group for Identification of Top Four Problems in 1996

			Turnout		Total
			Yes	No	
Age Groups	18-24	Count	13	11	24
		% within Age Groups	54.2%	45.8%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	24	16	40
		% within Age Groups	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	51	20	71
		% within Age Groups	71.8%	28.2%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	53	17	70
		% within Age Groups	75.7%	24.3%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	45	7	52
		% within Age Groups	86.5%	13.5%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	35	6	41
		% within Age Groups	85.4%	14.6%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	18	3	21
		% within Age Groups	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	35	8	43
		% within Age Groups	81.4%	18.6%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	32	3	35
		% within Age Groups	91.4%	8.6%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	27	5	32
		% within Age Groups	84.4%	15.6%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	29	7	36
		% within Age Groups	80.6%	19.4%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	16	2	18
		% within Age Groups	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	80+	Count	18	3	21
		% within Age Groups	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	396	108	504
		% within Age Groups	78.6%	21.4%	100.0%

Chi-Square=28.799 with 12 degrees of freedom
 Source: American National Election Study 1996

Table 7: Turnout by Age Group for All Responses of Most Important Problem in 1996

			Turnout		Total
			Yes	No	
Age Groups	18-24	Count	23	16	39
		% within Age Groups	59.0%	41.0%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	36	28	64
		% within Age Groups	56.3%	43.8%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	66	23	89
		% within Age Groups	74.2%	25.8%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	75	23	98
		% within Age Groups	76.5%	23.5%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	70	18	88
		% within Age Groups	79.5%	20.5%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	54	11	65
		% within Age Groups	83.1%	16.9%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	44	7	51
		% within Age Groups	86.3%	13.7%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	43	9	52
		% within Age Groups	82.7%	17.3%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	50	9	59
		% within Age Groups	84.7%	15.3%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	41	9	50
		% within Age Groups	82.0%	18.0%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	50	8	58
		% within Age Groups	86.2%	13.8%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	24	5	29
		% within Age Groups	82.8%	17.2%	100.0%
	80+	Count	29	5	34
		% within Age Groups	85.3%	14.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	605	171	776
		% within Age Groups	78.0%	22.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square=36.261 with 12 degrees of freedom
 Source: American National Election Study 1996

The year 2000 is an outlier from the previous results. See Table 8 for filtered results of turnout for the top four issues, and see Table 9 for results of turnout for all most important problems. In this year, the 18-24 year-olds who selected the top issues were much more likely to turnout to vote. The turnout rate for those who chose one of the top four issues was 72.4%. This is compared to a turnout of 58.0% for the entire cohort. As in the previous years, a similar effect

was seen in the sample as a whole, but it was only an increase of 1.2%, which is not nearly as notable as the 14.4% increase for the youngest age group.

Table 8: Turnout by Age Group for Identification of Top Four Problems in 2000

			Did R Vote		Total
			Yes	No	
Age Group	18-24	Count	21	8	29
		% within Age Group	72.4%	27.6%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	21	11	32
		% within Age Group	65.6%	34.4%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	31	7	38
		% within Age Group	81.6%	18.4%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	37	12	49
		% within Age Group	75.5%	24.5%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	40	14	54
		% within Age Group	74.1%	25.9%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	41	7	48
		% within Age Group	85.4%	14.6%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	22	4	26
		% within Age Group	84.6%	15.4%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	36	4	40
		% within Age Group	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	16	2	18
		% within Age Group	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	14	4	18
		% within Age Group	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	11	2	13
		% within Age Group	84.6%	15.4%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	12	0	12
		% within Age Group	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	80+	Count	9	5	14
		% within Age Group	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	311	80	391
		% within Age Group	79.5%	20.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square=16.704 with 12 degrees of freedom
 Source: American National Election Study 2000

Table 9: Turnout by Age Group for All Responses of Most Important Problem in 2000

			Did R Vote		Total
			Yes	No	
Age Group	18-24	Count	29	21	50
		% within Age Group	58.0%	42.0%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	33	21	54
		% within Age Group	61.1%	38.9%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	54	16	70
		% within Age Group	77.1%	22.9%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	68	19	87
		% within Age Group	78.2%	21.8%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	73	25	98
		% within Age Group	74.5%	25.5%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	67	13	80
		% within Age Group	83.8%	16.3%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	53	12	65
		% within Age Group	81.5%	18.5%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	63	7	70
		% within Age Group	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	32	9	41
		% within Age Group	78.0%	22.0%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	37	9	46
		% within Age Group	80.4%	19.6%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	33	3	36
		% within Age Group	91.7%	8.3%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	26	1	27
		% within Age Group	96.3%	3.7%	100.0%
	80+	Count	20	7	27
		% within Age Group	74.1%	25.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	588	163	751
		% within Age Group	78.3%	21.7%	100.0%

Chi-Square=39.184 with 12 degrees of freedom
 Source: American National Election Study 2000

A possible explanation for why 2000 is different than other years is the diversity of issues that were important. In 1992, the top four issues for the whole population comprised 82.0% of all responses within the 18-24 year-old age group. In 1996, the top issues accounted for 61.5% of responses in the same age group. The result of this analysis was slightly higher in 2000 with 63.5% choosing a top issue. What is interesting is that the 18-24 year-old cohort favored the top issues more than the rest of the sample. The top issues only comprised 52.8% of the selections

for the whole sample in 2000. In 1992 and 1996, the entire sample was more likely to select top issues by 0.3% and 3.5%, respectively. It seems that 2000 is much different than the other years. The greater diversity in most important problem selection decreases the likelihood of issues being mentioned by default. In other words, they name issues that would otherwise be odd to mention as the most important problem in previous elections because, in 2000, the population was more diverse in determining what the problems were.

It is also possible that 2000 was the first election that issue salience was important. Education is an issue that tends to directly affect the lives of young voters, or at the very least, it recently had a direct effect on their lives. The lack of a relationship between issue salience and turnout in 1992 and 1996 shows that the most important problems mentioned were not truly salient to the 18-24 year-olds. In 2000, we see an election where the most important problems had high salience with this age group. Therefore, this led to the strong increase in turnout.

Conclusion

Young people find salience in different issues than older voters. They may agree on some big issues, but there is definitely a divide between 18-24 year-olds and the rest of the population. There is most likely a greater distance between young and old than this data allows us to see. The question I am using for this study asks for the most important problem facing the country. This is likely to elicit responses that are not quite as telling as a question asking what problems the nation needs to address. For example, young people may want to have help from the government to pay for college, but it is unlikely anyone would consider that the “most important problem” facing the country. This is likely the reason that there is not a strong correlation between what is viewed as an important problem and turnout in an election. If young people felt that voting could lead to a positive outcome in their lives, they would probably be

more likely to vote, but the most important problems named in the survey may not have as direct an impact on them.

Two of the issues that were included when recoding the most important problem data were for old age and young age issues. Old age issues are concerns for Social Security, Medicare, veterans' benefits, and similar social welfare concerns for the older population. Young age issues were concerns over the solvency of Social Security and societal problems concerning young people. Young age issues never received much mention from any age group, but old age issues were very popular in 2000. As one would expect, young voters did not care much about this issue. None of the 18-24 year-olds surveyed mentioned this as the most important problem. On the other hand, it was the most important problem for 8.4% of the sample as a whole. For both 65-69 year-olds and 70-74 year-olds, it was the most important problem that needs to be addressed. The 2000 election focused a lot of attention on old age issues, so in cases like this, it might be possible that turnout is slightly depressed by campaigns focusing on issues that young people do not care about.

While the findings in this study do not indicate a strong correlation in two of the years between important problem choice and turnout for young voters, this certainly does not rule out a very strong possibility that the two are related. In 2000, there was clearly evidence for such a relationship. Stating what a person believes is the most important problem facing the nation and actually caring about an issue are two very different things. This study shows that the relationship between the two is likely more difficult to understand than we can know through the survey data that has been used. In order for a better understanding of what effect issue salience has upon young voters, there needs to be a survey analyzing what issues young voters want to

see government address. If such issues are subsequently and substantially discussed in a campaign, then an analysis of turnout would be very relevant.

For now, the answer must be that young people find some issues to be of different salience than older age cohorts; however, this did not have a strong effect in determining turnout in two of the three elections that were studied. This study should not be viewed as any kind of indication to the real answer on this question but should be guidance to future exploration of the topic.

Chapter 3

The Effect of Negative Advertising Perception on Different Age Groups

During the last congressional election, I volunteered at a phone bank for a highly contested seat. Television ads had been running constantly for several months, and they were all distinctly negative in tone. The list of people that I was calling had all been identified as supporters of the candidate I worked for, and the calls I placed were to encourage these supporters to go vote. Aside from those who were angry I was interrupting their favorite sitcom or those who decided to support the other candidate, many were infuriated with the tone of the campaign. “I really want Mr. X to win, but with all these attack ads, I don’t know that I can support him.”

This effect went two ways. The first effect was clear when supporters would ask me if he really supported that bill they heard about in the commercial. “I don’t know if I can support him if he wanted to give tax breaks to big oil.” The other effect was clear when supporters threatened to not vote. “You tell Mr. X that if he doesn’t cut these attack ads, I will not be voting for him.” While these are the feelings people expressed, I question what feelings they had when Election Day came.

Debate over the effects of negative advertising has been waged for several decades and even more so since a vast literature started to appear in the mid-1990s. Scholars cannot agree on what the effects are. Some believe it demobilizes as is described above. Others think it

mobilizes because of the emotions it stirs in voters. And still others think it simply does not make a difference whether the ads are positive or negative. Much of the current literature tends to point to a mobilization effect. The question that I will explore in this chapter is how negative advertising affects young voters.

This chapter will begin by answering the question of why campaigns go negative. To unpack this puzzle, I will explore the literature on the efficacy of negative advertising. I will conclude with an analysis of polling data from *CBS/New York Times* to determine if and how younger voters react to negative ads compared to more senior counterparts.

The Choice to Go Negative

We are all familiar with the advertisements that candidates air leading up to an election. Some are positive, talking about a candidate's positions and why she should be elected. Others are negative, attacking the opponent for supporting an unpopular bill or questioning his integrity. A third type of ad exists which attempts to combine both of these positive and negative features.

Which of these is most common?

West (2001) finds that negative advertising has been on the rise over the past 50 years. In the 1952 election, only 25% of the ads were characterized as negative. In 1964, however, 50% were negative. This was the year of the Johnson-Goldwater race, when ads such as "Daisy Girl" set a very negative tone. The campaign in 1968 had 69% negative ads, and after a lull through the 1970s, there was an increase in the 1980s, reaching what seemed like a peak of 83% negative ads in 1988. This was the highest until 2000. In this election, the breakdown of negative advertising was 100% of Gore's ads were negative, 91% of Bush's, and 60% by outside groups, for a total of 87% negative. With such an increase in negative advertising over the past 50 years, one could assume campaigns must have good reason to use this strategy.

The negative tone of contemporary campaigning is a common complaint about our political system, but such ads permeate the airwaves. If they are so strongly disliked, then why are they consistently used? The casual observer may think that negative ads could be a threat to the candidate who is airing them since these ads are unpopular. Political consultants and journalists, however, believe that they are a very effective weapon in the arsenal of a campaign (Perloff and Kinsey 1990). This is not to say that going negative is what a campaign wants to do. Conveying a positive message about a candidate's personal life and policies is probably the ideal way to campaign. This could effectively build support for a candidate without hurting anyone else and keeping the electorate informed of current issues; however, campaigns often believe this is not the most effective method to win an election.

This ideal situation for a campaign occurs when the competition is not very strong. If the other candidates are not a threat to win the election, then the incumbent or frontrunner will most likely stay positive. The attack will probably be from a candidate who is trailing, be it incumbent or challenger, in order to catch up in the polls. If the race is close, then there will be a significant amount of negative advertising mixed with some positive. Of course, one attack will warrant a counter attack in campaigns that are relatively close. The best way to explain the decision to go negative is that if the election is not going to be a landslide, then attacks will likely be made (Skaperdas and Grofman 1995; Damore 2002). In an exploration of how political consultants analyze the decision to go negative, Theilmann and Wilhite (1998) find that consultants think as was predicted in the advertising analyses. If the race is close or if a candidate thinks it is possible to make the race close through going negative, then that is the strategy used.

In a spatial model developed by Harrington and Hess (1996), the position of a candidate in the polls is the result of other variables that are more likely to influence the decision to go negative. The most prominent of these variables are personality and position on valence issues. Theilmann and Wilhite believe that their study contradicts this theory, but the thought experiments they conduct do not sufficiently disprove such a hypothesis. It is a strong possibility that many factors besides standing in polls go into the decision to go negative. One factor that is difficult to account for in a model or the thought processes of a consultant is what effect the negative advertisement will have. Most argue that negative ads work, but we cannot be certain whether this is true and what effect they have.

Table 1: Campaign situations and the Decision to Go Negative

Campaign Situation	Decision to Go Negative
A candidate is expected to win in a landslide	Campaign will stay positive
A candidate trailing in the polls has reason to believe he could catch up	Trailing candidate will go negative
Candidates are close in the polls	Primarily negative campaigning mixed with some positive
Trailing candidate attacks and the race becomes close	The leading candidate launches a counterattack

Based upon Skaperdas and Grofman 1995; Damore 2002; Theilman and Wilhite 1998

Is Negative Advertising Successful?

As previously mentioned, consultants and journalists both believe that negative advertising can help to win an election; however, this claim is difficult to prove. It is possible that the claim that negative advertising is successful is self-perpetuating and biased. In

campaigns fueled by negative advertising, winners can claim their strategy was best and losers can blame their loss on the attacks. This does not mean that the negative ads won or lost the election. It may be that they are a simple explanation for the loss, even though both sides likely used them (Lau, et al., 1999). Lau and his colleagues also point out that there is possibly a failure to properly consider races where negativity did not succeed. In this case, people think negative ads are effective, so they look for examples to prove their point. In 1988, Bush was more negative than Dukakis, and Bush won. This is a common example that is used, but to extend the analysis to the next two elections, Bush and Dole were more negative than Clinton and lost (Lau, et al., 860).

The meta-analysis that was conducted in the study by Lau and his colleagues concluded that there is no evidence to support a theory that negative advertising is any more effective than positive advertising. In fact, evidence shows that the effect may go the other way, with no change in attitude about the opponent and a backlash against the sponsor. This study suggests that, except in very close races where even a statistically insignificant effect could make a difference, negative advertising is not very effective or efficient. There are other opinions on effectiveness, and for the purposes of this paper, which is most concerned with age, two other studies are just as relevant.

In an experiment with undergraduate students, Garramone et al. (1990) show that negative advertising can be more informative than positive advertising, especially when the two types of ads are run against each other. Positive ads, the study found, are of little real informational value to voters. There was also not a significant effect on turnout. Despite this finding, it may be that negative advertising is a demobilizer to some and mobilizer to others,

making the actual effect on turnout unclear. These effects are specific to undergraduate students in this study, so we do not know what the results would be for the full population.

Another, more recent, survey of undergraduates had very similar results. Meffert et al. (2006) also found a strong tendency toward negativity bias, which is putting greater weight on negative information over equally relevant and likely positive information. The survey showed that voters are attracted to negative information, and more interesting is that those with strong candidate preferences are attracted to negative information about that candidate. This negative information is somehow converted to give the preferred candidate a stronger evaluation than before viewing the negative information about him. This suggests that “the average negative campaign may not work as intended, that is, to lower the target candidate’s evaluations. Among voters who are politically sophisticated and strongly committed to the candidate, it might strengthen the evaluation of the candidate who is the target of a negative campaign” (45).

Clearly, the discussion of whether negative advertising is effective is far from conclusive. It is quite possible that negativity creates different feelings within the population, which means there may not be a determination of its effectiveness. The question of whether mobilization is a mobilizer or demobilizer is equally inconclusive.

Demobilizing with Negative Advertisements

The idea of negative advertising demobilizing the electorate is common to hear in the media, and springs from a wealth of research that helps form such a conclusion. Voters do not enjoy seeing politicians attacked for frivolous personal faults and issue positions that are often unjustly described. Those who think negative ads demobilize believe this is the case because voters will either decide they cannot support either candidate or they lose faith in government and see no reason to vote.

Ansolabehere et al. (1994) was one of the first academic studies to cause great concern about the effects of negative advertising. This study was done as a laboratory experiment in which people were shown television commercials from California campaigns. Voting intention for the people who were exposed to negative advertisements dropped 5% compared to those who were shown positive advertisements. This led the team to conclude that “candidates with sufficient resources can, through the use of negative messages, keep voters away from the polls. Campaigns are not inherently mobilizing forces, and the secular decline in presidential and midterm voter turnout since 1960 may be attributed, in part, to the increasingly negative tone of national campaigns” (835). This original study inspired Ansolabehere and Iyengar to write their book *Going Negative*, which became a very influential study in this field. One of their findings was that negative ads mostly demobilize non-partisan voters. Amongst partisans, voting dropped 3%, but negative ads caused non-partisan voting to decrease by 11% (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995, 111). Independents are important to determining the outcome of many elections, and if their turnout is so severely affected by negative advertising, then there could surely be implications to election results.

This demobilization opinion has been the pervading opinion in the media. In a *New York Times* article discussing the negative tone of the 2006 elections, mobilizing effects were not mentioned. Negative ads were strictly viewed as informative demobilizers (Nagourney 2006). Such a view is very disconcerting for those concerned with the undemocratic nature of low turnout, although for campaigns, it is helpful for those trying to understand how negative ads work. By running a negative ad, it may be possible to depress the turnout of the opposition.

A more recent study also found a similar demobilization effect from negative news coverage. Min (2004), in a survey of undergraduates, found demobilization to be a factor when

attacks were personal in nature. When a campaign is negative, the news media will likely feed off of the negativity. Min believes that “since people may expect the news media to convey more useful information in a significantly less biased way than does political advertising, the news media’s emphasis on negativity, coupled with a focus on personality, may depress citizen’s democratic attitudes more than does the advertising media’s emphasis on such matters” (106).

While these two studies found demobilization as a result of negativity, this may not be the true effect of negativity. The Min study also found a mobilization effect when attacks were focused on issues. The work of Ansolbehere and Iyengar is often called into question, and one study using the same data achieves different results (Brooks 2006). Evidence of demobilization is surprisingly weak considering the context through which it is obtained. The evidence that supports the demobilization hypothesis is obtained primarily through experimental research, and the evidence that supports mobilization is obtained through survey research. This makes it seem “citizens believe that they are less likely to vote because of negative campaigning, but nonetheless act in the opposite manner” (Martin 2004, 546).

Mobilizing with Negative Advertisements

Martin (2004) examines the possibility that negative ads are a mobilizing force for three possible reasons. First, they stir feelings of republican duty. Second, negative ads create public anxiety. Finally, negative ads add value to the vote in the rational choice model. Negative ads proved to increase perception of public problems that were not perceived in areas without negative ads. In the 1996 Presidential race, Clinton’s ads were successfully able to stir anxiety. Democrats and Independents who feared having Dole as President were more likely to turn out to vote. Some partisans also perceived a closer race as a result of the ads, and thus were more likely to vote because of the possibility of their vote making a difference.

In a survey of undergraduates, it was found that “some negative feelings about politics serve to heighten, rather than dampen, young voters’ intent to participate in the elective process. It appears that the voters who believe they can see through the lies they think they are being told by politicians via the media are more apt to think their participation can make a difference” (Austin and Pinkleton 1995, 215). This seems very similar to the republican duty effect seen in Martin’s study.

Contrary to both the mobilization and demobilization hypotheses, much of the literature shows that negative ads really do not make a difference. Finkel and Geer (1998) found no effect of negative ads on turnout. One interesting point that they make is that those who follow the campaign closely, and thus see more negative advertisements, are more likely to vote. There was no effect found in other studies, as well (Lau et al. 1999; Clinton and Lapinski 2004). It is possible, however, that campaigns can target subpopulations in such a way that negative advertisements can make more of a difference than some studies show (Clinton and Lapinski 2004).

Method

Considering that much of the research on negative advertising is a result of surveys of undergraduate students, it is possible to predict that negativity could potentially raise the turnout of young voters; however, this could also go the other way. In order to answer this question, I use data from a *CBS News/New York Times* Poll conducted in the state of New York in September of 2000 with 1,611 respondents. The poll asked questions about the United States Senate race between Hillary Rodham Clinton and Rick Lazio. The race received much national attention because Clinton, who was then First Lady, was running despite never having lived in New York. Originally, her opponent was Rudy Giuliani, the Mayor of New York, who dropped

out of the race due to health problems. Representative Rick Lazio then entered. The survey asks respondents whether they intended to vote in November of 2000 and their impressions of whether this Senate race was more negative than in 1998. This data is analyzed according to the age of respondents, divided into age cohorts. The analysis begins by looking at whether young people perceive negativity differently than older voters. Following this, I explore whether negativity has an effect upon vote intent, and I investigate whether age has an effect when campaign tone is taken into account.

Findings

The first question to explore is whether there is a relationship between perception of the negativity in campaigns and age. Table 2 displays the results of a cross tabulation of age and perceived tone of the 2000 New York Senate Campaign compared to the 1998 campaign. This shows there is very little, if any, relationship. The 18-24 year-old age group was more likely to find the campaign more positive and more negative than the rest of the population by 6.1% and 3.7%, respectively. In the 25-29 year-old cohort, 31.1% believed the campaign was more positive, compared to 25.4% for the whole sample. Both age groups were 6-9% less likely to choose “about the same.” An appropriate chi-square test suggests that there is no statistical difference between expected values and observed values in the table. Young people seem to simply be naïve of what to expect in a campaign since the 18-24 year-olds were more likely to select both “more positive” and “more negative” than the other age groups. It is reasonable to postulate that older age cohorts, with more political experience, are more aware of campaign tone from the past. New voters are unaware of what to expect. There is probably some truth to this. Interestingly, older voters are more likely to respond with “about the same.” Perhaps because they become used to campaigns and notice little difference from year to year. The best

conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that young voters are most likely affected by inexperience in perceptions of campaigns.

Table 2: Perception of Campaign Tone by Age Group

			Senator Campaign Tone			Total
			More positive	More negative	About the same	
Age Group	18-24	Count	18	13	28	59
		% within Age Group	30.5%	22.0%	47.5%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	23	14	37	74
		% within Age Group	31.1%	18.9%	50.0%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	14	19	47	80
		% within Age Group	17.5%	23.8%	58.8%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	34	11	54	99
		% within Age Group	34.3%	11.1%	54.5%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	31	17	61	109
		% within Age Group	28.4%	15.6%	56.0%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	38	28	71	137
		% within Age Group	27.7%	20.4%	51.8%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	29	24	73	126
		% within Age Group	23.0%	19.0%	57.9%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	20	13	39	72
		% within Age Group	27.8%	18.1%	54.2%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	20	11	37	68
		% within Age Group	29.4%	16.2%	54.4%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	16	15	48	79
		% within Age Group	20.3%	19.0%	60.8%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	12	14	47	73
		% within Age Group	16.4%	19.2%	64.4%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	10	8	31	49
		% within Age Group	20.4%	16.3%	63.3%	100.0%
	80+	Count	16	16	50	82
		% within Age Group	19.5%	19.5%	61.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	281	203	623	1107
		% within Age Group	25.4%	18.3%	56.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square=22.687 with 24 degrees of freedom

Source: CBS News/New York Times; New York State Poll September 2000

While young voters do not perceive campaigns as distinctly more positive or more negative than the rest of the population, there may still be a difference in the turnout based upon the perceived tone of the campaign. This survey was conducted a little less than two months

prior to the election, so this analysis is based upon whether respondents thought they would vote. When we analyze the entire sample, we find little relationship between campaign tone and vote intent (Table 3). There is a 2.2% increase for those who respond they will definitely vote when campaign tone is perceived as positive compared to the average for all perceptions, but the results are not statistically significant. Statistically, campaign tone does not affect turnout intent when viewing the results with all ages combined.

Table 3: Campaign Tone and Vote Intent

			Vote Intent			Total
			Definitely vote	Probably vote	Probably not vote/Definitely not vote	
Senator Campaign Tone	More positive	Count	244	29	7	280
		% within Senator Campaign Tone	87.1%	10.4%	2.5%	100.0%
	More negative	Count	171	25	6	202
		% within Senator Campaign Tone	84.7%	12.4%	3.0%	100.0%
	About the same	Count	519	80	19	618
		% within Senator Campaign Tone	84.0%	12.9%	3.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	934	134	32	1100
		% within Senator Campaign Tone	84.9%	12.2%	2.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square=1.518 with 4 degrees of freedom

Source: CBS News/New York Times; New York State Poll September 2000

Even though there is not a relationship seen when all age groups are combined, we find different results when we examine vote intent by age group and filter results by the perception of campaign tone. Table 4 displays vote intent by age group for those who believed the 2000 campaign was more positive. Table 5 displays vote intent by age group for those who believed the 2000 campaign was more negative. Table 6 displays vote intent by age group for those who believed the 2000 campaign about the same as the 1998 campaign.

Table 4: Vote Intent by Age Group (More Positive)

			Vote Intent			Total
			Definitely vote	Probably vote	Probably not vote/Definitely not vote	
Age Group	18-24	Count	12	4	2	18
		% within Age Group	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	16	4	3	23
		% within Age Group	69.6%	17.4%	13.0%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	10	3	1	14
		% within Age Group	71.4%	21.4%	7.1%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	28	6	0	34
		% within Age Group	82.4%	17.6%	.0%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	27	3	1	31
		% within Age Group	87.1%	9.7%	3.2%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	37	0	0	37
		% within Age Group	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	25	4	0	29
		% within Age Group	86.2%	13.8%	.0%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	20	0	0	20
		% within Age Group	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	18	2	0	20
		% within Age Group	90.0%	10.0%	.0%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	16	0	0	16
		% within Age Group	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	12	0	0	12
		% within Age Group	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	9	1	0	10
		% within Age Group	90.0%	10.0%	.0%	100.0%
	80+	Count	14	2	0	16
		% within Age Group	87.5%	12.5%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	244	29	7	280
		% within Age Group	87.1%	10.4%	2.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square=41.669 with 24 degrees of freedom

Source: CBS News/New York Times; New York State Poll September 2000

Table 5: Vote Intent by Age Group (More Negative)

			Vote Intent			
			Definitely vote	Probably vote	Probably not vote/Definitely not vote	Total
Age Group	18-24	Count	9	3	1	13
		% within Age Group	69.2%	23.1%	7.7%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	11	2	1	14
		% within Age Group	78.6%	14.3%	7.1%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	16	3	0	19
		% within Age Group	84.2%	15.8%	.0%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	9	2	0	11
		% within Age Group	81.8%	18.2%	.0%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	14	2	1	17
		% within Age Group	82.4%	11.8%	5.9%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	22	5	1	28
		% within Age Group	78.6%	17.9%	3.6%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	22	1	1	24
		% within Age Group	91.7%	4.2%	4.2%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	10	3	0	13
		% within Age Group	76.9%	23.1%	.0%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	9	2	0	11
		% within Age Group	81.8%	18.2%	.0%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	13	1	0	14
		% within Age Group	92.9%	7.1%	.0%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	13	1	0	14
		% within Age Group	92.9%	7.1%	.0%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	8	0	0	8
		% within Age Group	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	80+	Count	15	0	1	16
		% within Age Group	93.8%	.0%	6.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	171	25	6	202
		% within Age Group	84.7%	12.4%	3.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square=15.904 with 24 degrees of freedom

Source: CBS News/New York Times; New York State Poll September 2000

Table 6: Vote Intent by Age Group (About the Same)

			Vote Intent			Total
			Definitely vote	Probably vote	Probably not vote/Definitely not vote	
Age Group	18-24	Count	18	10	0	28
		% within Age Group	64.3%	35.7%	.0%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	25	8	3	36
		% within Age Group	69.4%	22.2%	8.3%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	33	11	2	46
		% within Age Group	71.7%	23.9%	4.3%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	43	10	1	54
		% within Age Group	79.6%	18.5%	1.9%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	52	7	2	61
		% within Age Group	85.2%	11.5%	3.3%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	62	6	3	71
		% within Age Group	87.3%	8.5%	4.2%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	65	7	1	73
		% within Age Group	89.0%	9.6%	1.4%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	35	2	1	38
		% within Age Group	92.1%	5.3%	2.6%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	33	3	1	37
		% within Age Group	89.2%	8.1%	2.7%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	42	5	1	48
		% within Age Group	87.5%	10.4%	2.1%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	41	5	1	47
		% within Age Group	87.2%	10.6%	2.1%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	27	3	0	30
		% within Age Group	90.0%	10.0%	.0%	100.0%
	80+	Count	43	3	3	49
		% within Age Group	87.8%	6.1%	6.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	519	80	19	618
		% within Age Group	84.0%	12.9%	3.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square=38.391 with 24 degrees of freedom

Source: CBS News/New York Times; New York State Poll September 2000

In this analysis, there is a difference between age groups and intent to vote. While the total in each table corresponds to the values in Table 3, comparing intent to vote between age groups in these three tables shows that negativity can have an impact upon intent to vote for young voters. The tables show that older voters are generally more likely to vote when they perceive a positive campaign. Young voters, on the other hand, are more likely to vote when

they perceive a negative campaign. When 18-24 year-olds perceive a negative campaign, 69.2% respond that they will definitely vote. For positive campaigns and those that are about the same, 66.7% and 64.3%, respectively, respond they would definitely vote, which represents a small increase in vote intent for negativity. For 25-29 year-olds, the difference is much stronger, with 9.0% more saying they will definitely vote when a negative campaign is perceived over when a positive campaign is perceived. For most other age groups, the opposite is the case, with a belief that the campaign is more positive eliciting more definitely vote responses. Also, the total for all age groups has a higher percentage of definitely votes when the perception is of a positive campaign. Positive campaigning, therefore, most likely would raise turnout in an election for most ages. Interestingly, there are four other age groups, besides 18-24 and 25-29 year-olds, for which negativity increases vote intent. One is the 30-34 year-old cohort, which indicates we may still be looking at an age-based effect. Two more are the oldest age groups, again showing that there may be a link between age, perception of negativity, and voting intent. There is likely a relationship when age is a factor that is not seen if age is ignored.

It is difficult to guess why this is the case for young voters, but it may be related to the perceived importance of the election when campaign tone is negative. Older voters with more political experience likely see less difference from election to election, which explains why older voters are more likely to say the election is about the same in tone as 1998. As a result, any perceived importance from negative campaign tone is negated by political experience.

If we are to recreate the above analyses but now breakdown the ages into what appears to be an age-based effect for young and old voters as compared to middle-aged voters, we see there is a significant difference in the effect of campaign tone. Table 7 displays vote intent by age group for those who believed the 2000 campaign was more positive. Table 8 displays vote intent

by age group for those who believed the 2000 campaign was more negative. Table 9 displays vote intent by age group for those who believed the 2000 campaign about the same as the 1998 campaign.

Table 7: Vote Intent by Age Group (More Positive)

			Vote Intent		Total
			Definitely Vote	Probably Vote/ Probably Not Vote	
Age Effect Age Groups	18-34 and 75+	Count	61	20	81
		% within Age Effect Age Groups	75.3%	24.7%	100.0%
	35-74	Count	183	16	199
		% within Age Effect Age Groups	92.0%	8.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	244	36	280
		% within Age Effect Age Groups	87.1%	12.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square=14.246 with 1 degree of freedom

Source: CBS News/New York Times; New York State Poll September 2000

Table 8: Vote Intent by Age Group (More Negative)

			Vote Intent		Total
			Definitely Vote	Probably Vote/ Probably Not Vote	
Age Effect Age Groups	18-34 and 75+	Count	59	11	70
		% within Age Effect Age Groups	84.3%	15.7%	100.0%
	35-74	Count	112	19	131
		% within Age Effect Age Groups	85.5%	14.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	171	30	201
		% within Age Effect Age Groups	85.1%	14.9%	100.0%

Chi Square=.053 with 1 degree of freedom

Source: CBS News/New York Times; New York State Poll September 2000

Table 9: Vote Intent by Age Group (About the Same)

			Vote Intent		Total
			Definitely Vote	Probably Vote/ Probably Not Vote	
Age Effect Age Groups	18-34 and 75+	Count	146	43	189
		% within Age Effect Age Groups	77.2%	22.8%	100.0%
	35-74	Count	373	54	427
		% within Age Effect Age Groups	87.4%	12.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	519	97	616
		% within Age Effect Age Groups	84.3%	15.7%	100.0%

Chi-Square=10.083 with 1 degree of freedom

Source: CBS News/New York Times; New York State Poll September 2000

Tables 7 and 9 show that there is a tremendous difference in vote intent when exploring the age-based hypothesis. Specifically, this occurs when positive and same campaign tone perceptions are felt by respondents. This result is mostly expected because of the life-cycle effect on voting. There should be a large gap in voting intent since voting increases as voters grow older and then declines in later years. Because I combined the three youngest and two oldest age groups, these two tables are what should be expected. Table 8 presents a very different situation. There is not a statistically significant relationship even though we would expect there to be one. The life-cycle effect should still apply, but negative advertising mobilized the youngest and oldest voters and demobilized the middle-aged voters enough that the life-cycle effect disappears. We have gone from a sizable difference in vote intent to no difference simply as a result of campaign tone. This is certainly different than actually exploring turnout, but it indicates there is a relationship much stronger than we would have anticipated.

While some effect was expected to occur, for it to be this large is very surprising. There is no easy explanation for it either. It seems that negative campaigning attracts those who

normally may not vote and turns away those who normally would. Further testing will be needed to ascertain whether any other factors are at work besides campaign tone. Ideally, future studies will look at whether vote intent can actually be indicative of real turnout levels.

Conclusion

At first, the results of this study seemed far from conclusive, but by reanalyzing trends in the data to look at the possibility of the life-cycle effect on turnout, we can see there is a correlation between age, campaign tone, and vote intent. Much more work must be done on this matter to ascertain what causes this and whether the effect is only on vote intent or voting itself. Regardless, we can see that negative tone is able to mobilize those who are normally unlikely to vote and demobilize those who are likely to vote. The findings from this survey tend to contradict much of the research mentioned earlier in this chapter. That is, when looking at the whole sample, I have found no statistically significant link between perceived negativity and demobilization or mobilization. Statistical significance only occurred when age was a factor in the analysis. Age should be strongly considered as scholars work to further our knowledge of the effects of negativity in campaigning.

Chapter 4

The Age-Gap in Get-Out-The-Vote Campaigns

Last November, I attended the kickoff event for the final week of a campaign. The candidate, encouraging supporters to volunteer in get-out-the-vote efforts, quipped, “I could be wrong, but I think that if we get more people to the polls than they do, we win.” This is the idea behind get-out-the-vote. The party that has the most supporters who vote will win the election; however, voters do not always show up at the polls. They may forget it is Election Day, think it is not important, or just not feel like the candidate cares enough about their vote. Whatever their reason may be, many people end up deciding not to vote. Therefore, parties must try to encourage their supporters as much as possible to turnout on Election Day.

Get-out-the-vote efforts are the tactics used to accomplish the mobilization of supporters. There are a variety of methods used to this end, many of which are successful in accomplishing their objective. The problem that I see, though, is that they could be more effective. I argue that young people are significantly less likely to be targeted by partisan mobilization efforts than those who are older. I demonstrate, through analyses of the 1984, 2000, and 2004 elections, that targeting this age group could yield greater success than targeting the older population.

The Effectiveness of Mobilization

The success of get-out-the-vote efforts is relatively clear: they lead to increased turnout. Campaign consultants and political scientists agree that a good mobilization effort can increase

turnout from 1-4% (Goldstein and Ridout 2002, 9). This can make the difference between winning and losing in close elections and those with low turnout. Local elections are an example of such low turnout elections. Get-out-the-vote efforts in local elections are often very modest, but they can make a significant difference at a low cost for campaigns operating on a tight budget (Gerber, Green, and Nickerson 2003). Get-out-the-vote efforts come in a variety of different forms, each with its own relative level of effectiveness.

The most effective means of mobilization is face-to-face contact. Volunteers or party workers perform this task by going door-to-door and speaking with residents about the upcoming election and the importance of voting. Face-to-face get-out-the-vote efforts increase turnout by 7% to 10% among those contacted (Gerber, Green, and Nickerson 2003; Niven 2004). The difficulty with face-to-face mobilization is the time commitment it takes to make one additional contact. It can take between one and eight hours of work to find one additional voter, depending on how often the person normally votes. Niven (2004) calculates that the average cost of finding one new voter is \$32.

Volunteer phone banks, another method commonly used in get-out-the-vote efforts, have also been a successful tactic for get-out-the-vote campaigns. Accounting for whether the call was completed, partisan volunteer phone banks can increase turnout of those contacted by 3.2%. Nickerson (2005) shows that this is a very promising method considering it is more cost effective than face-to-face contact, with a cost per vote increase of around \$26.

Partisan door hangers can also be effective, but not in the same way that the above strategies are. Door hangers can only increase turnout by approximately 1.2% for those contacted. The strength, though, is in the rate at which voters can be contacted by this method (Nickerson 2005). While face-to-face is very time consuming and phone banks are unable to get

a voter on the line for nearly half their calls, door hangers are easy to place and are always seen by someone in the household. Door hangers are also very cheap to make. Nickerson (2005) demonstrates that the contact rate, combined with the low cost, produces a cost per vote increase of around \$23.

Clearly, a number of get-out-the-vote tactics are successful, but some do not see the same level of success. Professional phone banks are not nearly as successful as volunteer phone banks. Studies have not been able to precisely identify why this is the case, but a common thought is that the professional feel of the caller may make this type of contact less persuasive. Possibly, people receiving the calls appreciate hearing someone who is genuinely concerned with the election rather than someone who is being paid for the service. Studies demonstrate that this type of mobilization is not effective (Gerber and Green 2000; Gerber and Green 2005; Cardy 2005).

One study, looking at a gubernatorial primary, found no statistically significant impact of partisan professional phone banks. To give an idea of just how ineffective this is, the study points out that had the results been statistically significant, the cost of the effort for an increase of one additional voter would have been \$107 per vote (Cardy 2005). In order to manage a successful get-out-the-vote effort, a campaign would need to limit use of professional phone banks.

While professional phone banks are very ineffective, direct mail is worse. Direct mail, like professional phone banks, is a modern campaign phenomenon, which entails sending mass mailings to voters. The purpose of direct mail is often more than just mobilization. It is frequently intended to help raise money, with mobilization as a secondary goal. Direct mail, despite its great popularity in campaigns, has little or no effect, and at times can have a negative

impact on turnout. In a field experiment of Connecticut and New Jersey municipal elections, direct mail failed to show a significant impact. Also, if the campaign had a negative tone, direct mail caused a decrease in turnout in the contact group (Gerber, Green, and Green 2002). This failure to have an impact has been confirmed in a gubernatorial election, as well (Cardy 2005).

The most successful get-out-the-vote tactics are face-to-face, volunteer phone banks, and door hangers. These efforts show that get-out-the-vote efforts can be successful in getting new voters to turnout, but have these efforts been targeted at the right people? Also, the question remains as to whether such tactics have remained as popular with campaigns since the rise of professional phone banks and direct mail.

Who Is Targeted by Mobilization?

Knowing the potential success of get-out-the-vote efforts, we must consider who is targeted by campaigns. It may come as a surprise that mobilization is targeted at those who need to be mobilized the least—those who are already likely to vote. Those with high socioeconomic status, the educated and wealthy, along with strong party identifiers, are those who are the most likely to be contacted through partisan mobilization efforts. One possible explanation could be that campaigns use past voter lists for their mobilization efforts (Goldstein and Ridout 2002; Wielhouwer 2003). Thus, mobilization as it occurs in modern campaigns seems nearly pointless. Common sense indicates that mobilization needs to be targeted at those who are less likely to vote; however, campaigns worry about problems that could occur from inadvertently encouraging the opposition to vote.

The fear of campaigns on the question of mobilization is twofold: they do not want to risk that their supporters will not show up and they do not want to accidentally mobilize the opposition (Goldstein and Ridout 2002). These fears are legitimate, but they also serve to

reinforce the status quo. Those that are contacted would probably have voted regardless, and those that are not contacted will continue to not vote.

We arrived at today's dismal mobilization efforts after decades of change. For the past 50 years, there has been a decline in party loyalty, which led to a decrease in the more personalized form of mobilization and an increase in professional mobilization (efforts coordinated by political consultants and entailing primarily professional phone banks and direct mail). Not surprisingly, this gradual change runs parallel to the decline in voter turnout (Green and Smith 2003). Some believe, however, that mobilization activity and effectiveness of contact have remained stable over time (Goldstein and Ridout 2002). The efforts and their effectiveness make little difference, though, if the campaigns have come to target the wrong people as a result of the increased professionalization.

These "professional" campaigns are not finding the new voters who are out there and in need of contact, specifically, young voters. Young voters fit the exact description of those who are not contacted by campaigns. They are not wealthy, have not yet completed their education, and do not have strong party identification ("Redefining Political Attitudes and Activism" 2006). Combine this with the fact that they have not previously voted, and the conclusion is that young people are much less likely to receive contact from campaigns than older citizens. Research confirms this hypothesis, showing that age has increasingly become a factor in predicting grassroots contact (Wielhouwer 2003).

Who Should Campaigns Target?

Niven (2004) points to psychological research and suggests that those most likely to be affected by mobilization are those who are neither entirely disengaged from politics, nor those who are already very active. Niven's study of mobilization confirms this evidence, showing that

occasional voters, followed by new voters, and finally infrequent voters are the most likely to respond to campaign contact. This would suggest that campaign get-out-the-vote strategy is inefficient in its targeting since it typically only contacts frequent voters.

Successful mobilization should encompass a focus on occasional and new voters. These individuals are the most likely to be mobilized by contact, and once they have been mobilized for one election, they are more likely to vote in the future (Gerber, Green, and Shachar 2003). Thus, it is possible that parties, who can target voters that may be influenced by mobilization, could see a permanent increase in turnout.

Perhaps the greatest potential target for such a strategy would be young voters (18-29 year-olds). Young is a large demographic characteristic of people who are unlikely to vote, but it is a very consistent fact that they fail to turnout. Young people have, for years, been known as unlikely voters. As they get older, though, they become likely voters. The young are not chronically disengaged; they just have not become engaged yet. This is the type of voter that campaigns could find to be an asset. If they could get them to turn out for one election, they would most likely continue to turn out in the future. The task for mobilizers is to end the inefficient get-out-the-vote methods and begin to construct a framework of outreach to young voters.

Do Young People Respond to Mobilization?

Several studies (Gerber, Green, and Nickerson 2003; Nickerson 2006) have been done that have not specifically examined whether the age of those contacted has an effect on mobilization, but they have been fixed around college campuses. If we look at these studies, we will see that mobilization has a similar effect regardless of age.

In one study that looked at mobilization in six cities, one target area was around Ohio State University, where the median age in the area was 24. The increased likelihood of voting for those contacted increased by 9.7%, which is comparable to most of the other areas. The average for all of the cities was a 7.1% increase in likelihood of turnout (Gerber, Green, and Nickerson 2003).

The other study of relevance examined eight field experiments with phone banks. Six of the eight experiments were focused on and around college campuses. While the effect of age is not specifically analyzed, the age of the targets was expected to be between 18 and 30. The results of the experiment showed consistency with other research (Nickerson 2006). These studies would lead one to think that it is likely that young people would respond in a manner very similar to older voters in get-out-the-vote efforts.

The Election Surveys

In order to determine the effect of get-out-the-vote efforts, this paper will look at surveys taken after the 1984, 2000, and 2004 elections. These three elections, which will be discussed in detail below, should provide a good look at whether young people receive mobilization contact from campaigns and whether it has an effect.

The 1984 Campaign

The 1984 Election is much different than the other two elections that this study examines. This election was a landslide for Reagan, which is in contrast to the other contests because of their perceived closeness. The turnout rate for young people (18-29 years old) in this presidential election was 49%, which is much lower than for all other age groups. Other ages ranged from 72-80% turnout (“The Youth Vote 2004” 2004, Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde

1986). Also of importance is that increases in turnout because of any perceived closeness of the election were minimal.

Newspaper reports from the 1984 campaign suggest that mobilization efforts were reasonably strong. It was estimated in late August of 1984 that Democrats were going to spend \$15 million (approximately \$27 million adjusted for inflation)¹ on mobilization efforts and Republicans between three and four times as much (Gerth 1984). This would suggest similar GOP mobilization funding as the other elections that will be discussed. Democrats spent much less in this year, especially as compared to 2004. This election provides a chance to examine how get-out-the-vote has changed over time.

The 2000 Campaign

The 2000 campaign did not have very high turnout, with approximately 60% of all citizens voting (Lopez, Kirby, and Sagoff 2005). In what was already a low turnout election, youth turnout was twenty points lower than the national rate (“The Youth Vote 2004” 2004). With so many voters choosing to stay home, it is reasonable to think that, had they voted, the outcome could have been much different. One poll conducted after the election by CBS showed that those who regretted not voting favored Gore by 53% to 33% over Bush. The accuracy of this result is questionable (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 2006). It is also quite possible that get-out-the-vote activities, because of the closeness of the election, could have thrown the election in Bush’s favor.

The Republican Party, in 2000, dedicated significant resources to get-out-the-vote efforts. Around \$100 million was spent by the GOP on the ground war, and it is possible that these tactics may have differed from past efforts that focused too heavily on loyal supporters. Karl Rove, the top strategist for the Bush campaign, was committed to strong grassroots efforts since

¹ Based on Consumer Price Index inflation rate of 1.818 for 1984 to 2004.

long before the 2000 election. In 1994, for the Texas gubernatorial election, Rove targeted undecided voters in mobilization efforts as an important part of the campaign strategy. Turnout jumped significantly for those contacted, which helped the Bush-Rove team win (Broder 2000). This election will be interesting to look at because of the differences that we are likely to see between well-organized GOP mobilization and a not-so-organized Democratic effort.

The 2004 Campaign

The 2004 campaign was very unique in comparison to the other two that have been examined. This election was highly contested, and a winner was nearly impossible to predict until all the polls were closed on Election Day. Turnout was very high in 2004, with 64% of the eligible population voting and 49% of 18-29 year-olds voting, which was quite an increase over 2000 and was the same young voter turnout as 1984 (“The 2004 Youth Vote” 2004). This campaign had a very high level of mobilization, with 38% of the electorate reporting that they had been contacted (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 2006). More importantly, they received the right kind of mobilization. In a 2005 PBS interview, Matthew Dowd, a strategist with the Bush/Cheney 2004 campaign, said that there was a major shift from campaigns of the past because there was:

“Much more person-on-person contact in individual communities. So much more building it up, having an infrastructure where somebody could call into a neighborhood or precinct, to call up voters that they knew. A different kind of mail. There would have been a lot in the past that the mail was not as emotional as it should have been, so the mail was more emotional. More actual, real phone calls, as opposed to what they call robo-phone calls, which are sort of robotic phone calls where you say, “Go vote, go vote.” These were more people in a community that might know a list of 100 people that they could call—stuff like that.” (qtd. in Bergan et al. 2005)

The number of volunteer phone contacts from the campaigns was very high, with Republicans making 27.2 million calls and Democrats making 23.5 million. This, of course, leaves out the

countless other organizations that helped out, including the AFL/CIO, which claims to have made 100 million phone calls (Bergan et al. 2005).

There was a tremendous increase in the number of votes cast in 2004, approximately 17 million more than 2000. It is estimated that most of this increase came from a combination of an increasing population, closeness of the election, and perceived importance of the election. Still, close to one third of this increase is likely attributable to mobilization efforts (Bergan et al. 2005). A key interest in this election is the increased attention that was paid to infrequent and new voters. This change in strategy was true for both parties, and some experts estimated that the cost for mobilization efforts in 2004 was around \$200 million (Cummings and Calmes 2004). This is a tremendous increase over the cost of past efforts.

Findings

Data from the American National Election Studies was used to analyze the get-out-the-vote contact in the 1984, 2000, and 2004 elections. These surveys provide a large, nationwide sample of the electorate. The results were analyzed by age for those reporting that they were contacted by a party worker. An additional analysis was performed to see the effect, by age, of contact influencing the decision to vote. Table 1 shows the likelihood of contact based upon age.

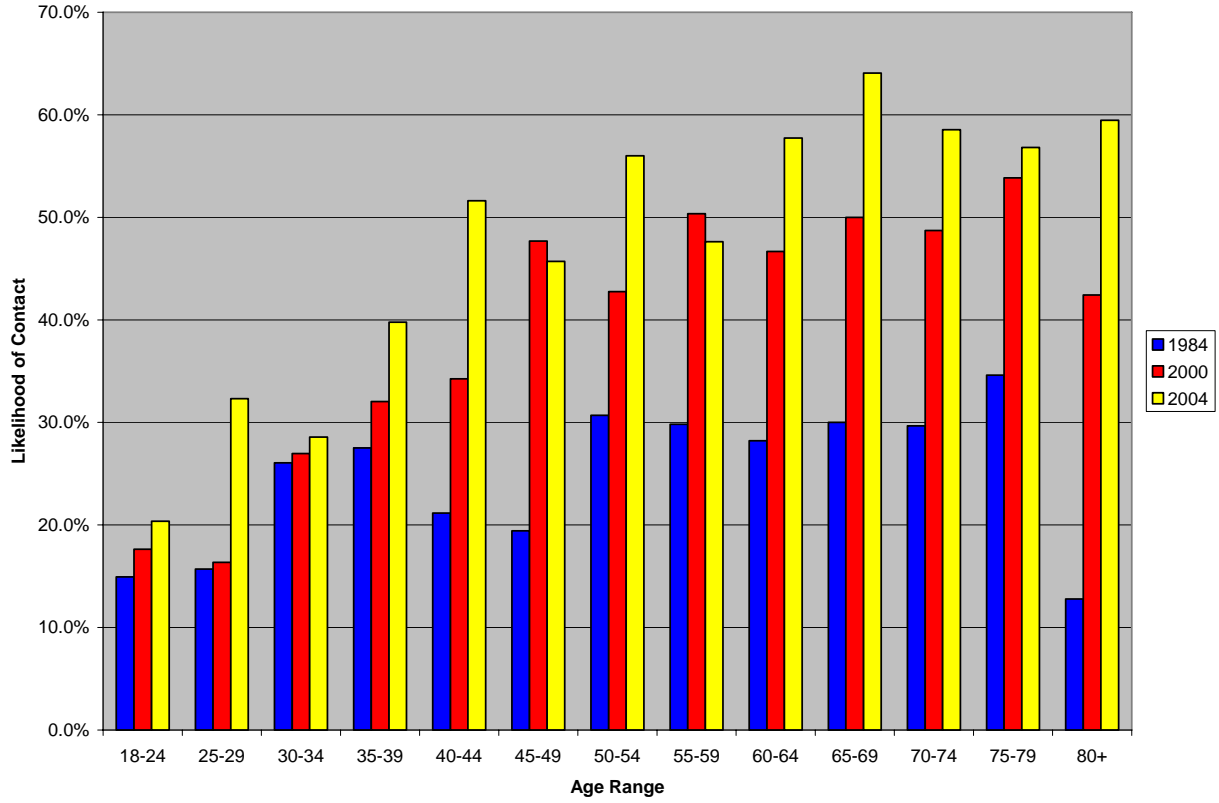
Table 1: Likelihood of Campaign Contact by Age Group

Age Range	Likelihood of Contact (1984)	Likelihood of Contact (2000)	Likelihood of Contact (2004)
18-24	0.149	0.176	0.204
25-29	0.157	0.164	0.323
30-34	0.261	0.270	0.286
35-39	0.275	0.320	0.398
40-44	0.212	0.343	0.516
45-49	0.194	0.477	0.457
50-54	0.307	0.428	0.560
55-59	0.298	0.503	0.476
60-64	0.282	0.467	0.577
65-69	0.300	0.500	0.641
70-74	0.297	0.487	0.585
75-79	0.346	0.538	0.568
80+	0.128	0.424	0.595

Source: American National Election Studies

In all three elections, 1984, 2000, and 2004, those below the age of 30 were much less likely to receive get-out-the-vote contact from campaigns. The likelihood of 18-25 year-olds receiving contact varies between 14.9% in 1984 and 20.4% in 2004. These numbers rise rapidly after the 25-29 year-old age group. In 2004, the peak in likelihood of contact was for 65-69 year-olds. This age range, with a 64.1% contact rate, was more than three times as likely to be contacted than 18-24 year-olds. The age gap is easy to see in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Likelihood of Campaign Contact by Age Group



Source: American National Election Studies

While an age gap is clear in all three of the elections that were analyzed, as campaigns have become more and more sophisticated in their get-out-the-vote efforts, the age gap has grown much larger. In the 1984 campaign, the group that was most likely to be contacted was 75-79 year-olds. Their contact rate was 34.6%. The contact rate for 65-69 year-olds in the 2004 election was 64.1%, which is nearly double the peak contact rate of 1984. If we look at the difference between each age group in 1984 and the equivalent age group 20 years later, we find an average 25.0% increase in likelihood of contact. During the same time period, 18-24 year-olds only saw a 5.5% increase in likelihood of contact. The 25-29 year-old age range did better with a 16.6% increase. The 2004 election proved to be a very strong election in terms of contact

for this age group, making a jump of 15.9% over the 2000 election. If we compare the likelihood of contact for the 1984 and 2000 elections, we only find a 0.7% increase.

While 30-34 year-olds are typically more likely to be contacted than the younger age groups, this did not prove to be true in 2004. In 1984, this group was not much less likely to receive contact than the older age groups, but in 2004, it became less likely to be contacted than 25-29 year-olds. Every age group both older and younger saw a larger increase in contact in the course of these three elections, but the increase for 30-34 year-olds was only 2.5%, about one-tenth of the average increase for all groups.

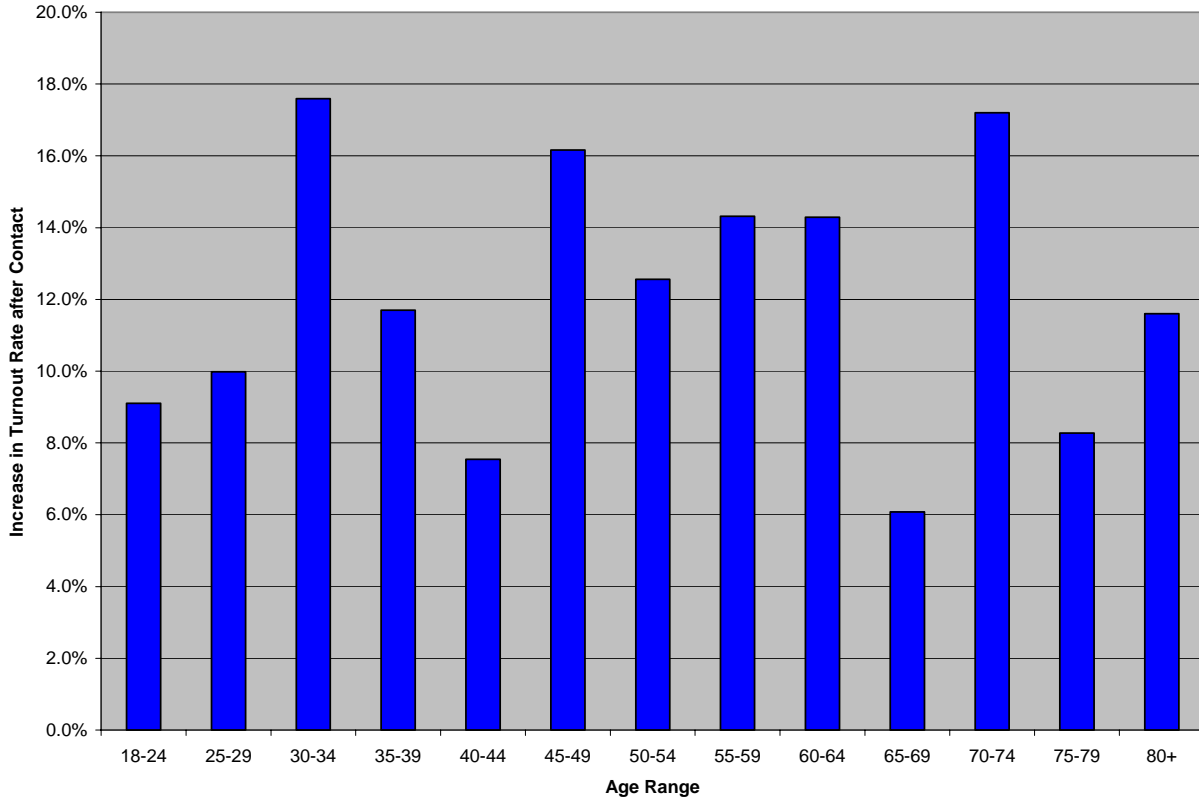
A possible concern for campaigns in targeting young voters could be that the campaign's resources are wasted on a group that will most likely not vote regardless of get-out-the-vote contact. The data from this study indicates that this assumption is incorrect. In fact, young voters show comparable results to older voters for increased turnout rate after get-out-the-vote contact in 1984. In 2000 and 2004, turnout rate increases were much stronger for young voters than for older voters.

Table 2: Likelihood of Turnout (1984)

Age Range	Likelihood of Turnout	Likelihood if Mobilized
18-24	0.504	0.595
25-29	0.643	0.743
30-34	0.749	0.925
35-39	0.800	0.917
40-44	0.774	0.849
45-49	0.801	0.963
50-54	0.817	0.943
55-59	0.828	0.971
60-64	0.828	0.971
65-69	0.848	0.909
70-74	0.828	1.000
75-79	0.658	0.741
80+	0.717	0.833

Source: American National Election Study 1984

Figure 2: Increase in Turnout Rate after Get-out-the-Vote Contact (1984)



Source: American National Election Study 1984

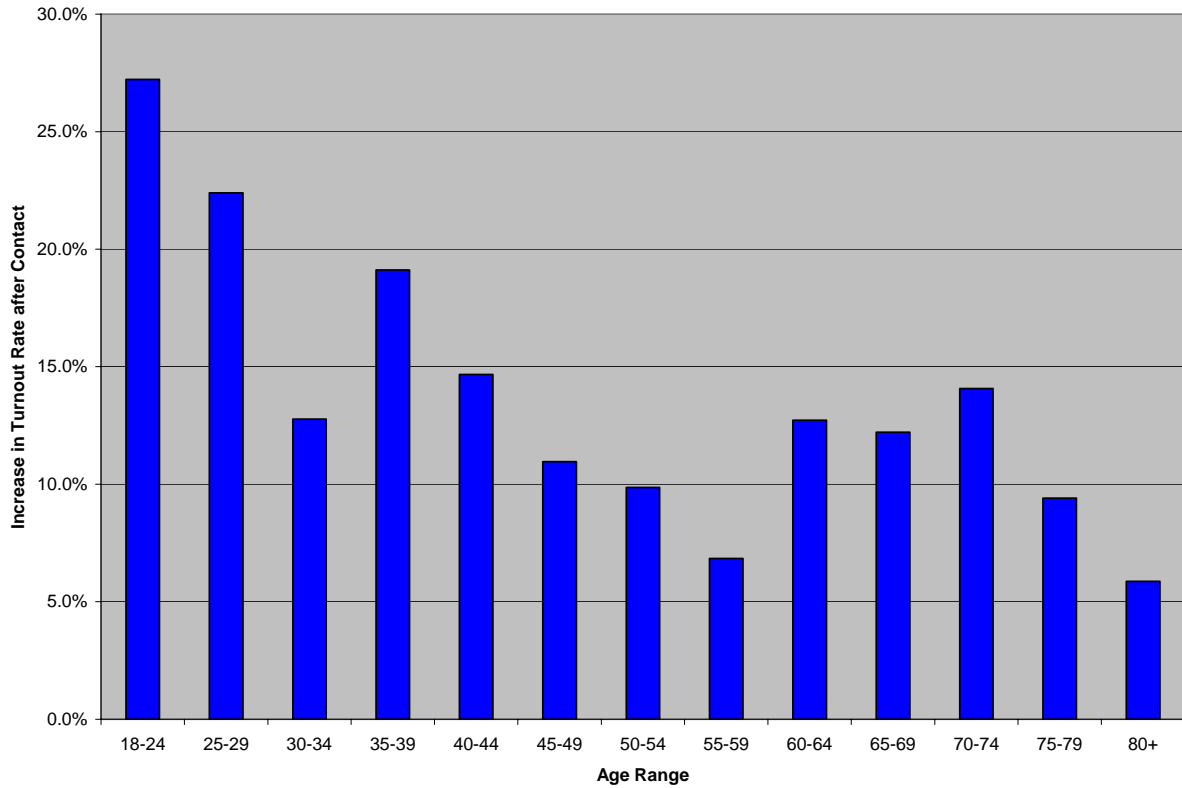
The data for 1984 indicates a much greater likelihood of voting for those who were contacted by a campaign. The average turnout rate for the age ranges in the sample was 75.4%, but the average turnout of those receiving get-out-the-vote contact was 12.0% greater. For those in the 18-24 age group, there was a 9.1% increase in turnout if contacted, and for the 25-29 age group, there was a 10.0% increase in turnout rate. While these may be less than the average, it indicates that get-out-the-vote contact in 1984 was successful with increasing turnout for young people. Even though this turnout rate was not as high as the average for all age groups, 2000 and 2004 produced much different results.

Table 3: Likelihood of Turnout (2000)

Age Range	Likelihood of Turnout	Likelihood if Mobilized
18-24	0.538	0.810
25-29	0.609	0.833
30-34	0.714	0.842
35-39	0.757	0.948
40-44	0.740	0.887
45-49	0.834	0.944
50-54	0.833	0.932
55-59	0.890	0.958
60-64	0.778	0.905
65-69	0.805	0.927
70-74	0.833	0.974
75-79	0.877	0.971
80+	0.727	0.786

Source: American National Election Study 2000

Figure 3: Increase in Turnout Rate after Get-out-the-Vote Contact (2000)



Source: American National Election Study 2000

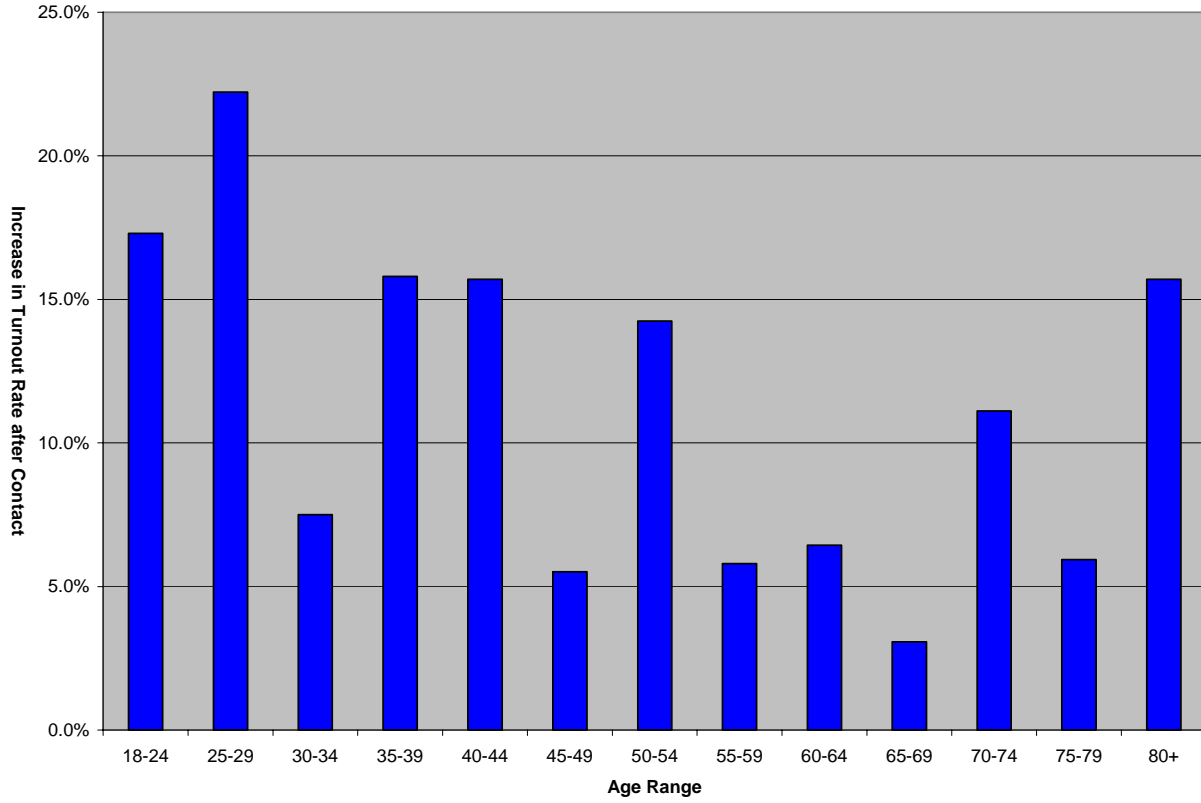
In 2000, younger voters proved to be more likely to react positively to get-out-the-vote contact than older age groups. The average turnout rate for all age groups in the sample was 76.4%, and the turnout rate for those contacted was 90.1%, an increase of 13.7%. While younger voters were still less likely to vote than older age groups, the increase in turnout for those receiving get-out-the-vote contact was greater than the average increase for all age groups. The 18-24 year-old age group had a jump in turnout of 27.2% if contacted, and the 25-29 year-old age group had a 22.4% increase. This indicates that targeting young voters in get-out-the-vote campaigns can produce very strong results.

Table 4: Likelihood of Turnout (2004)

Age Range	Likelihood of Turnout	Likelihood if Mobilized
18-24	0.660	0.833
25-29	0.778	1.000
30-34	0.925	1.000
35-39	0.800	0.958
40-44	0.800	0.957
45-49	0.815	0.870
50-54	0.824	0.966
55-59	0.900	0.958
60-64	0.906	0.970
65-69	0.833	0.864
70-74	0.889	1.000
75-79	0.864	0.923
80+	0.700	0.857

Source: American National Election Study 2004

Figure 4: Increase in Turnout Rate after Get-out-the-Vote Contact (2004)



Source: American National Election Study 2004

The 2004 election showed similar results to that of 2000. The average rate of turnout for each age group in the sample was 82.3%, and the increase in turnout after contact was 11.2%, on average. As with 2000, the results in 2004 indicate that young voters are more likely to turnout after receiving get-out-the-vote contact than older age groups. The 18-24 year-old cohort had an increase of 17.3% for those contacted. The 25-29 year-old age group had a 22.2% increase, with all those receiving contact choosing to vote.

Looking back at the increase that was seen in likelihood of contact for 2004 in the 25-29 year-old age group, there is an interesting point to consider. This age group in 2004 saw an unusually high 32.3% likelihood of contact. With this increase in likelihood of contact also came a 22.2% increase in likelihood of turnout after receiving get-out-the-vote contact, the

highest of any age group. The broadening of efforts in this age group showed that it is possible to have great success with getting young voters to the polls when they are heavily targeted.

These results indicate that campaigns are making a mistake by not targeting young voters. It is certainly true that 18-29 year-olds vote at significantly lower rates than the general population, but this does not mean that they should not be targeted. On the contrary, the turnout rate for young voters who were contacted actually indicates that they are more likely to react positively to contact. Campaigns could expect stronger turnout results by focusing more attention on young voters.

A possible conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that part of the reason for low voter turnout amongst young voters is the failure of campaigns to target them in get-out-the-vote efforts. I am not arguing that this is the entire reason for poor turnout, but it is most likely a piece of the puzzle in determining how to improve turnout amongst younger voters. While contact for all other age groups has increased significantly over time, it has not for the younger age groups. Contact remains very low but is actually more effective at improving turnout than for older ages. If the contact rate were to improve as it has for all other ages, then we could expect a higher turnout for young voters.

Some could argue that, while contact rates have drastically increased over time, turnout has trended downwards. If this is the case for other age groups, it could be said that increasing get-out-the-vote contact of young voters would not significantly improve turnout. I believe the data indicates that this belief is not true. It is true that the age gap in get-out-the-vote contact cannot account for the age gap in turnout, but the results indicate significantly higher turnout after contact as compared with other age groups.

Conclusion

This chapter has found that there is an increasing trend towards ignoring young people in favor of older groups of voters. Low youth contact is not new, but the gap between younger and older voters is getting much larger. Political campaigns are ignoring a large demographic that could prove to be an important target.

The data proves that get-out-the-vote contact is more effective with young voters than with older voters. This would indicate that young people may not be as entirely apathetic towards voting as it sometimes seems. With a little encouragement, they are willing to turn out to vote. This very well could be a part of the reason for low turnout amongst young voters. Perhaps if campaigns paid more attention to this demographic in get-out-the-vote efforts, young voters would begin turning out at a higher rate.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: How Campaigns Influence Young Voter Turnout

My goal in writing this thesis has been to further our understanding of why young people vote less than the rest of the population. While there are factors, such as socioeconomic status, party identification, political knowledge, and social capital, that account for a significant portion of the age gap, this thesis has provided evidence that the behavior of campaigns has an effect upon the turnout of young voters. In this chapter, I will review my findings from previous chapters and discuss their implications. I conclude with an examination of the current behavior of young voters and how some of my earlier findings explain the increase in Democratic voting during recent elections.

Issue Salience

The salience of issues is an important aspect in whether people choose to vote. If campaigns do not get voters interested in the issues they are discussing, then turnout should be affected. I tested to see whether young voters differed significantly from the rest of the population when asked about the most important problems facing the country. Those in the 18-24 year-old cohort differed in both the choice of problems and the emphasis placed on popular problems. To test whether this difference accounted for lower turnout amongst young voters, I looked at turnout rates for those who had similar responses to the rest of the population and those who did not. A significant difference was only seen in 2000, when agreement with the entire

sample resulted in a 14.4% increase in turnout. We may speculate that this is the result of the importance of education as a theme during this particular election. Young voters, many of whom are still completing their formal education, may feel this issue resonates more strongly than with issues addressed in previous elections.

While 1992 and 1996 did not demonstrate the effect of issue salience on young voters, I believe that the 2000 election shows this is a factor in determining turnout. The two earlier years likely face complications from default answers being given. This chapter is best considered as a starting point for further study on this matter. Ideally, this topic will be explored from the perspective of what issues young voters want government to address and not what issues they consider to be the most important problems. Even when a problem is considered important, that does not mean it is salient enough to cause them to vote. Social welfare issues may be important problems to young voters, but they do not directly affect many of them, which may mean that issues need to directly affect their lives in order to be salient. This would explain why the year with education as the top issue displayed an increase in turnout.

Negative Advertising

Negative advertising is one of the few things that campaigns do right in terms of mobilizing young voters. I was unable to find a statistically significant relationship between campaign tone perception and intent to vote when looking at the whole population; however, by breaking down the population into age cohorts, there is a definitive impact of tone upon vote intent. While not intentional, negative advertising demobilizes middle-aged voters and mobilizes young and old voters (ages 18-34 and 75+). The perception of a positive campaign tone and an average campaign tone both show the expected life-cycle effect in voter turnout, when exploring the link between age, turnout, and negativity, the life-cycle effect was negated, leading to a

statistically insignificant difference in turnout. This finding is very surprising. While further research will be needed before any definite conclusions can be drawn, it seems that the future starting point of research on negative campaigning will need to be taking age into account. Without accounting for age in this study, there would have not been any relationship found, but the effects of a negative perception of campaigning proved to have the opposite effect on different age groups.

Get-Out-The-Vote

Of the possible influences campaigns have upon young voters, most notable is get-out-the-vote contact. Parties overwhelmingly target older voters, but they could potentially have more success in turning out supporters by focusing on young people. Contact rates for some age groups may be as high as 64.1% of the sample being contacted by a party; however, the contact rate for young voters is only about one-third of this.

Young voters are much more likely to vote as a response to the contact than older voters. Young voter turnout in the two most recent presidential elections increased between 17.3% and 27.2% if contacted by a party. The greatest increase for the rest of the sample was 13.7% in the 2000 election. This indicates that parties should consider changing their strategy. If parties want to get supporters to turnout to vote, they should be focusing on those unlikely to vote without contact, which they currently fail to do. As this is one of the most significant findings of this thesis, the next section will discuss the impact that get-out-the-vote contact has upon our elections.

Increasing Democratic Voting Amongst Young Voters

An interesting application of my study on get-out-the-vote efforts is seen by looking at party identification and voting behavior. Conventional wisdom perpetuated by the news media

suggests that younger voters tend to cast ballots for more liberal candidates than older voters. The media repeated this common claim during the 2004 election. Young people were supposedly much more likely to support John Kerry than his opponent George W. Bush. I will assess the accuracy of these claims; that young voters are more liberal than older voters. To do this, I will examine data collected by the American National Election Studies during the past three presidential elections to analyze the behavior of young voters compared to older voters.

In the 1996 election, young voters were more likely than other age groups to support someone outside of the two major parties (Table 1). This phenomenon is partly the result of Ross Perot's candidacy in this year, but this pattern occurs in other years with less prominent third party candidates. As a result of the strong support for Ross Perot, 1996 actually provides us with a look at a year in which Democratic support amongst 18-24 year-olds was lower than Democratic support for the total vote of all age groups. This is a rather unique occurrence, which does not happen in the other years that will be discussed. The 25-29 year-olds, however, showed very strong Democratic support. The general trend with age groups in this election was that, as voters get older, they become increasingly less likely to vote Democratic until they hit the 65-69 year-old age group, when the trend reverses.

Table 1: Presidential Vote by Age Group in 1996

			Presidential Vote				Total
			Democrat	Republican	Other	RF	
Age Group	18-24	Count	21	15	7	1	44
		% within Age Group	47.7%	34.1%	15.9%	2.3%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	45	20	10	1	76
		% within Age Group	59.2%	26.3%	13.2%	1.3%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	58	41	15	3	117
		% within Age Group	49.6%	35.0%	12.8%	2.6%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	69	69	14	1	153
		% within Age Group	45.1%	45.1%	9.2%	.7%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	69	46	15	3	133
		% within Age Group	51.9%	34.6%	11.3%	2.3%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	68	38	13	1	120
		% within Age Group	56.7%	31.7%	10.8%	.8%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	42	32	7	1	82
		% within Age Group	51.2%	39.0%	8.5%	1.2%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	44	37	3	5	89
		% within Age Group	49.4%	41.6%	3.4%	5.6%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	36	34	2	5	77
		% within Age Group	46.8%	44.2%	2.6%	6.5%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	36	31	5	1	73
		% within Age Group	49.3%	42.5%	6.8%	1.4%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	47	28	4	2	81
		% within Age Group	58.0%	34.6%	4.9%	2.5%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	28	19	4	1	52
		% within Age Group	53.8%	36.5%	7.7%	1.9%	100.0%
	80+	Count	37	24	1	0	62
		% within Age Group	59.7%	38.7%	1.6%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	600	434	100	25	1159
		% within Age Group	51.8%	37.4%	8.6%	2.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square=50.014 with 36 degrees of freedom
Source: American National Election Study 1996

In 2000, we observe stronger third party support from young voters than from older voters, but it is only about half the level it was in 1996 (Table 2). The strongest level of Democratic support is in the 18-24 year-old age group, which is a change from 1996 when it is not as strong as the total level of Democratic support. In the 25-29 year-old age group, we can

see that the level of Democratic support is only 2.0% higher than the total level of Democratic support for all age groups. This is not as high as we might expect if young voters are strongly Democratic, but it is above average. While 1996 demonstrated a clear effect for age upon the vote, this is not as much the case in 2000, with support for a particular party varying greatly from one age cohort to the next. Except for the high Democratic support from 75-79 year-olds, likely a result of coming of age during the New Deal and World War II, young voters showed higher Democratic support than older age groups.

Table 2: Presidential Vote by Age Group in 2000

			Presidential Vote				Total
			Democrat	Republican	Other	DK/RF	
Age Group	18-24	Count	39	19	5	0	63
		% within Age Group	61.9%	30.2%	7.9%	.0%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	35	26	5	1	67
		% within Age Group	52.2%	38.8%	7.5%	1.5%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	40	55	4	0	99
		% within Age Group	40.4%	55.6%	4.0%	.0%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	65	64	6	2	137
		% within Age Group	47.4%	46.7%	4.4%	1.5%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	64	66	3	1	134
		% within Age Group	47.8%	49.3%	2.2%	.7%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	63	54	8	1	126
		% within Age Group	50.0%	42.9%	6.3%	.8%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	60	49	5	1	115
		% within Age Group	52.2%	42.6%	4.3%	.9%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	71	54	2	2	129
		% within Age Group	55.0%	41.9%	1.6%	1.6%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	32	33	1	3	69
		% within Age Group	46.4%	47.8%	1.4%	4.3%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	30	34	1	0	65
		% within Age Group	46.2%	52.3%	1.5%	.0%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	31	31	2	1	65
		% within Age Group	47.7%	47.7%	3.1%	1.5%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	35	20	1	1	57
		% within Age Group	61.4%	35.1%	1.8%	1.8%	100.0%
	80+	Count	24	23	1	0	48
		% within Age Group	50.0%	47.9%	2.1%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	589	528	44	13	1174
		% within Age Group	50.2%	45.0%	3.7%	1.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square=40.296 with 36 degrees of freedom

Source: American National Election Studies 2000

The 2004 election was a unique election for young voters (Table 3). While the level of Republican support in 2000 was very low amongst young voters, 2004 created a larger divide between young voters and the rest of the population. The strongest Democratic support came from the two youngest age groups. Beyond the influence that age appears to have on young

voters, other age groups tend to be much more varied in their support in 2004, switching between Democratic and Republican support from one age cohort to the next.

Table 3: Presidential Vote by Age Group in 2004

		Presidential Vote			Total	
		Democrat	Republican	Other		
Age Group	18-24	Count	40	24	3	67
		% within Respondent Age	59.7%	35.8%	4.5%	100.0%
	25-29	Count	46	27	2	75
		% within Respondent Age	61.3%	36.0%	2.7%	100.0%
	30-34	Count	29	33	1	63
		% within Respondent Age	46.0%	52.4%	1.6%	100.0%
	35-39	Count	24	38	1	63
		% within Respondent Age	38.1%	60.3%	1.6%	100.0%
	40-44	Count	35	37	1	73
		% within Respondent Age	47.9%	50.7%	1.4%	100.0%
	45-49	Count	38	46	2	86
		% within Respondent Age	44.2%	53.5%	2.3%	100.0%
	50-54	Count	41	39	1	81
		% within Respondent Age	50.6%	48.1%	1.2%	100.0%
	55-59	Count	33	54	0	87
		% within Respondent Age	37.9%	62.1%	.0%	100.0%
	60-64	Count	37	44	0	81
		% within Respondent Age	45.7%	54.3%	.0%	100.0%
	65-69	Count	20	30	0	50
		% within Respondent Age	40.0%	60.0%	.0%	100.0%
	70-74	Count	22	15	0	37
		% within Respondent Age	59.5%	40.5%	.0%	100.0%
	75-79	Count	20	15	0	35
		% within Respondent Age	57.1%	42.9%	.0%	100.0%
	80+	Count	14	10	1	25
		% within Respondent Age	56.0%	40.0%	4.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	399	412	12	823
		% within Respondent Age	48.5%	50.1%	1.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square=34.242 with 24 degrees of freedom
 Source: American National Election Studies 2004

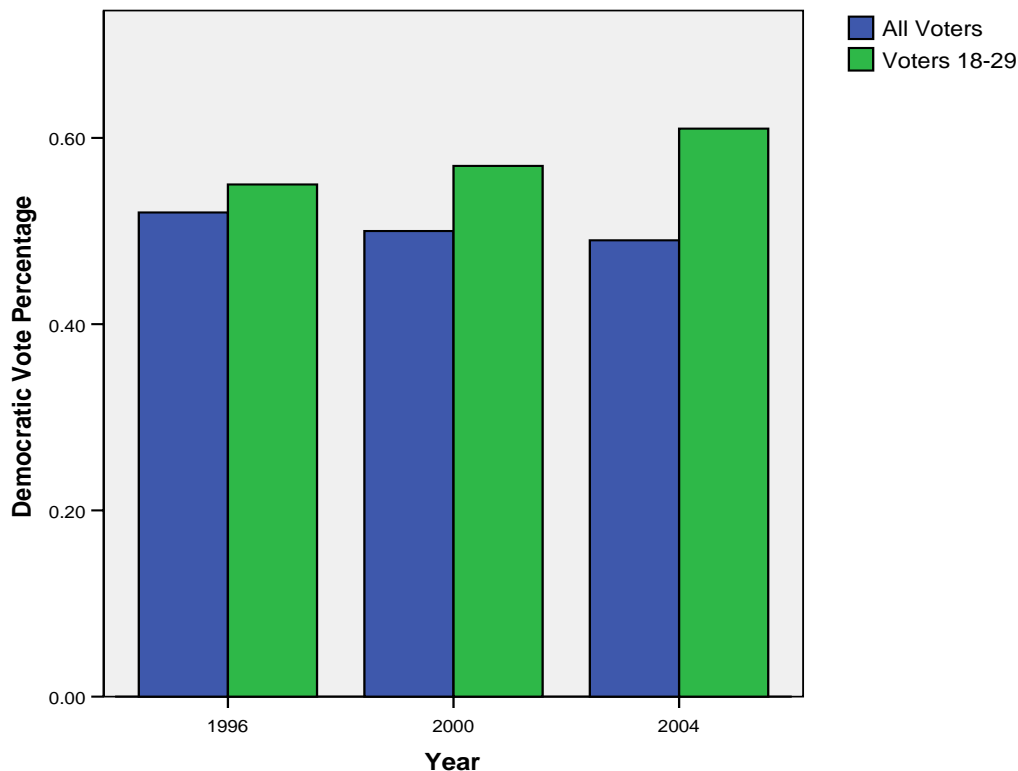
This analysis shows that age has a strong effect upon the way people vote when of certain ages. This points to a life-cycle effect in voting. We particularly see strong consistency in Democratic support amongst young voters and those 70 and above. Voters in the middle age

groups are much more varied in their support. We can see over time that electoral support is most likely not a generational effect. Looking at the 1996 elections, young voters showed very low levels of Republican support and 60-64 and 65-69 year-olds were comparatively strong Republican supporters. Eight years later, the levels of support have remained similar within the age groups, but if we consider the possibility for a generational effect rather than an age-based, life-cycle effect, we see that this is not a likely possibility. The low support for Republicans in 1996 from young voters had changed as the age cohort grew older, with 30-34 and 35-39 year-olds showing strong Republican support in the later elections. At the same time, those who would have fallen within the 60-64 and 65-69 year-olds in 1996 became firmly Democratic in 2004, which is what would be expected for the 70-74 and 75-79 year-old age groups.

This study shows that being young tends to cause higher levels of Democratic support.² The interesting aspect of this data is that there is a growing gap between young voters and the population as a whole in terms of partisan support in elections. Figure 1 shows that the entire electorate has become increasingly less likely to support a Democratic presidential candidate. On the other hand, young voters have become increasingly more likely to support a Democratic presidential candidate.

² The only exception is 18-24 year-olds in 1996, which is likely a result of the Perot candidacy.

Figure 1: Democratic Vote Percentages for Young Voters and All Voters in 1996, 2000, and 2004



Source: American National Election Studies 1996, 2000, and 2004

Knowing that young voters are becoming increasingly more likely to vote Democratic, we would expect a reasonably strong correlation between the vote and party identification. The American National Election Studies rates the party identification of respondents on a scale from 0 (Strong Democrat) to 6 (Strong Republican). It also provides the option to choose apolitical, other, and to refuse; however, these cases are excluded from this analysis. While Table 4 shows that party identification does not vary greatly over time, it is less stable for the population as a whole than it is for young voters. While both the entire population and young voters remain within the range of Independent-Democrat to Independent-Independent, the population as a whole has trended more towards Independent-Independent. Young voters are much more stable

in their party identification, with it remaining the same in 1996 and 2000 and getting slightly more Democratic in 2004. The responses for young voters are more tightly clustered around the mean than with the entire population, which would point towards the hypothesis of an age-based effect on voting.

Table 4: Mean Party ID for Young People and the Entire Population

Year	Mean Party ID (All)	Standard Deviation (All)	Mean Party ID (18-29)	Standard Deviation (18-29)
1996	2.68	2.11	2.64	1.86
2000	2.73	2.06	2.64	1.73
2004	2.87	2.09	2.60	1.89

Source: American National Election Studies 1996, 2000, and 2004

What is interesting about this is that, as expected, the mean party identification of the entire population has become increasingly more Republican as the population has voted more for Republicans in presidential elections. It is reasonable to expect to see the same trend in the opposite direction for young people, but there is little change at all in either party identification or standard deviation.

Party identification should remain relatively stable over time, but the years in this study show a change for the whole sample. On the other hand, party identification for young people was stable. This is surprising, though, because if party identification is shifting for older voters as they vote more Republican, it would make sense to see the opposite trend in young people. Because the party identification for 18-29 year-olds has not changed much, the other possibility is that Democrats are turning out at higher rates than Republicans. To analyze this, non-voters were filtered from the data. Table 5 shows these results. The entire population of voters shows a similar trend to the previous analysis, but voters tend to be more Republican than the population as a whole. For young voters, on the other hand, the 1996 mean is similar to the mean for all young people in 1996. In 2000, the young voters are more Democratic than in 1996, but then 2004 shows that young voters are more conservative than they were in the two previous

elections. This seems to be an odd result if we consider that 2004 was the year that young voters voted more for the Democratic candidate than in other years. There is, however, an increase in standard deviation, which indicates that young voters were becoming more polarized. This could account for the change in party identification despite the level of Democratic support within the age group. Regardless, young voter party identification remained relatively stable compared to the whole population.

Table 5: Mean Party ID for Young Voters and All Voters

Year	Mean Party ID (All)	Standard Deviation (All)	Mean Party ID (18-29)	Standard Deviation (18-29)
1996	2.76	2.24	2.61	2.06
2000	2.81	2.18	2.51	1.88
2004	3.03	2.22	2.71	2.12

Source: American National Election Studies 1996, 2000, and 2004

If the party identification of young people is not changing much over time, but the Democratic presidential vote is increasing, there is a possibility that the explanation lies in the get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts of the parties. Karl Rove is often credited with taking Republican GOTV efforts to a new level with voter databases and microtargeting strategies. This has sometimes been considered the reason for Republican wins in 2000 and 2004, but Democrats are beginning to catch up with new technology. In the previous chapter, I show that while more and more people are being targeted by GOTV, young people are left out, and they are the ones most likely to vote as a result of this contact. With more efficient GOTV, it is possible that Republicans have excluded young voters, while Democrats, with inferior methods, have not been as successful with turning out older voters but still reached more young Democrats. This could be the reason for the increased Democratic voting trend.

Figures 2-4 show the GOTV contact made by parties in the 1996, 2000, and 2004 elections. Republicans had low contact in 1996, but low Democratic voting can partly be

attributed to Ross Perot's candidacy in this year. In 2000, Republicans had comparatively high contact levels for young voters, with very low Democratic contact. In 2004, however, Democratic contact was much higher than Republican contact. This could possibly explain why Democratic voting was higher despite little shift in party identification.

Figure 2: GOTV Contact by Age and Party 1996

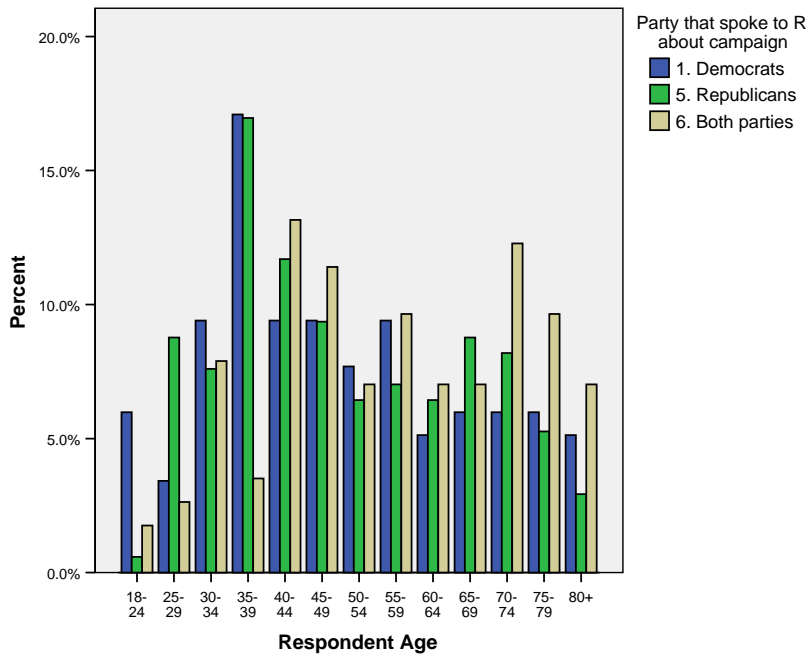


Figure 3: GOTV Contact by Age and Party 2000

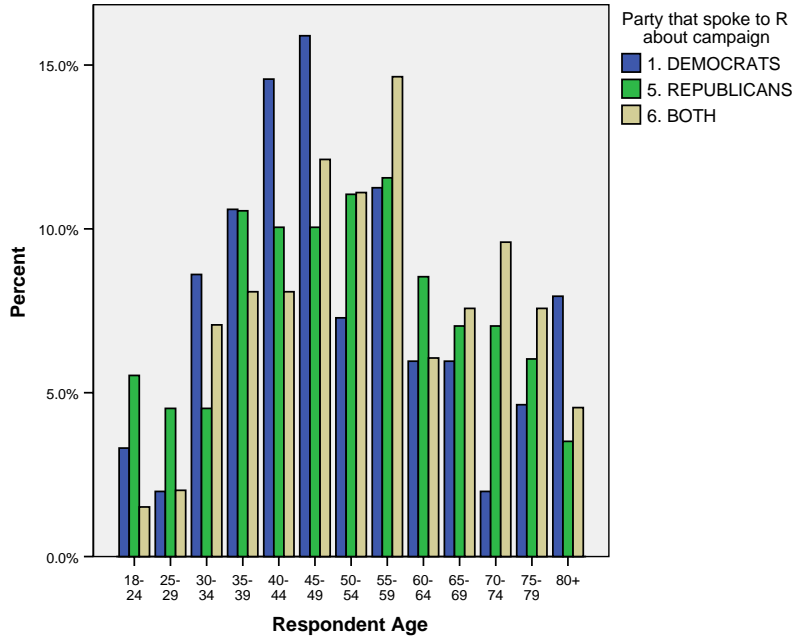
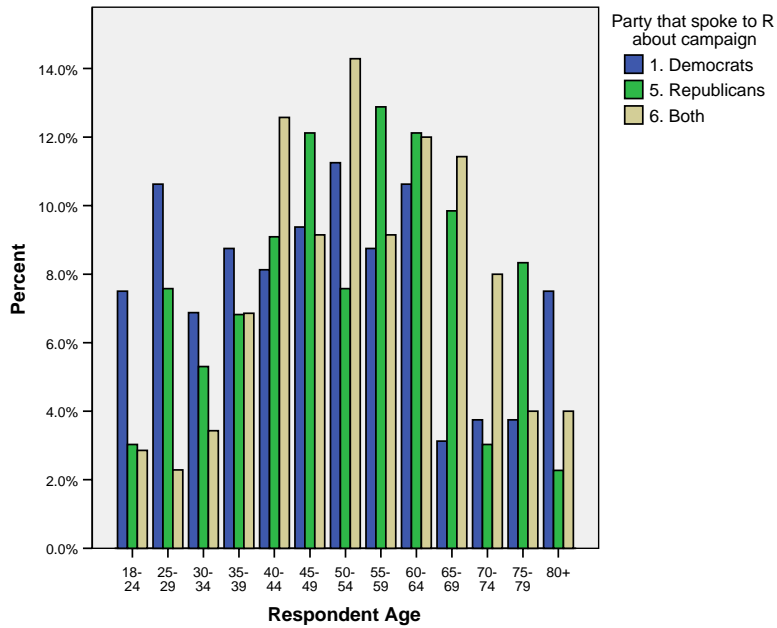


Figure 4: GOTV Contact by Age and Party 2004



Source: American National Election Studies 1996, 2000, and 2004

This analysis demonstrates that Democratic voting is a trend amongst young voters, and has increased over the past three presidential election cycles. Despite this, party identification has remained mostly stable. It is difficult to find a clear explanation for why this is happening, but GOTV contact may be a likely explanation. If this is the case, then the Republican Party will need to work much harder to increase the turnout of its supporters. If it does so, long term effects will be minimal. Even if we favor a generational effect in voting, the current trend can be corrected. As noted earlier, the party identification for young people has not changed much. It is the party identification of young voters that is varying, and if the Republican Party works to turnout their young supporters, then the current trend will not have a lasting impact.

This look at party identification can also be useful in indicating where the electorate really stands. While the entire population became more Republican through the course of the three elections discussed, the party identification of voters was the stronger change. This would indicate that any gains made by Republicans in recent elections are only temporary. Democrats, with better get-out-the-vote efforts, could find their fortunes reversed in future elections.

References

Introduction

Campbell, David. 2006. *Why We Vote*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lopez, Mark H., Emily Kirby, and Jared Sagoff. 2005. "The Youth Vote 2004." College Park, MD: CIRCLE.

Riker, W. H., and P. C. Ordeshook. 1968. The Theory of the Calculus of Voting. *American Political Science Review* 62 (1):25-42.

Rubenson, Daniel, Andre Blais, Patrick Fournier, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte. 2004. Accounting for the Age Gap in Turnout. *Acta Politica* 39: 407-421.

"The Eleventh Biannual Youth Survey on Politics and Public Service." 2006. Cambridge, MA: Institute of Politics.

Chapter 2: Issue Salience and Turnout by Young Voters

Abbe, O. G., J. Goodliffe, P. S. Herson, and K. D. Patterson. 2003. Agenda Setting in Congressional Elections: The Impact of Issues and Campaigns on Voting Behavior. *Political Research Quarterly* 56 (4):419-430.

Bishin, B. G. 2000. Constituency Influence in Congress: Does Subconstituency Matter? *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25 (3):389-415.

Boyd, R. W. 1989. The Effects of Primaries and Statewide Races on Voter Turnout. *Journal of Politics* 51 (3):730-739.

Brasher, H. 2003. Capitalizing on Contention: Issue Agendas in U.S. Senate Campaigns. *Political Communication* 20 (4):453-471.

Dahl, Robert Alan. 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. Yale Studies in Political Science; 4. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper.

Epstein, L., and J. A. Segal. 2000. Measuring Issue Salience. *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (1):66-83.

Kahn, K. F., and P. J. Kenney. 1997. A Model of Candidate Evaluations in Senate Elections: The Impact of Campaign Intensity. *Journal of Politics* 59 (4):1173-1205.

Leege, David C., Brian Krueger, Kenneth Wald, and Paul Mueller. 2002. *The Politics of Cultural Differences: Social Change and Voter Mobilization Strategies in the Post-New Deal Period*. Princeton, N.J.: Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Paolino, P. 1995. Group-Salient Issues and Group Representation: Support for Women Candidates in the 1992 Senate Elections. *American Journal of Political Science* 39 (2):294-313.

Petrocik, J. R. 1996. Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study. *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (3):825-850.

Riker, W. H., and P. C. Ordeshook. 1968. *The Theory of the Calculus of Voting*. *American Political Science Review* 62 (1):25-42.

Sides, J. 2006. The Origins of Campaign Agendas. *British Journal of Political Science* 36:407-436.

Smith, M. A. 2001. The Contingent Effects of Ballot Initiatives and Candidate Races on Turnout. *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (3):700-706.

Southwell, P. L., and P. S. Passo. 2001. The Relationship Between Voter Turnout and Ballot Measures: A Research Note. *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 29 (2):275-281.

Chapter 3: The Effect of Negative Advertising Perception on Different Age Groups

Ansolabehere, S., S. Iyengar, A. Simon, and N. Valentino. 1994. Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate. *American Political Science Review* 88 (4):829-838.

Ansolabehere, Stephen Shanto Iyengar. 1995. *Going Negative: How Attack Ads Shrink and Polarize the Electorate*. New York: Free Press.

Austin, E. W., and B. E. Pinkleton. 1995. Positive and Negative Effects of Political Disaffection on the Less Experienced Voter. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 39 (2):215-235.

Brooks, D. J. 2006. The Resilient Voter: Moving Toward Closure in the Debate over Negative Campaigning and Turnout. *Journal of Politics* 68 (3):684-696.

Clinton, J. D., and J. S. Lapinski. 2004. "Targeted" Advertising and Voter Turnout: An Experimental Study of the 2000 Presidential Election. *Journal of Politics* 66 (1):69-96.

Damore, D. F. 2002. Candidate Strategy and the Decision to Go Negative. *Political Research Quarterly* 55 (3):669-685.

Finkel, S. E., and J. G. Geer. 1998. A Spot Check: Casting Doubt on the Demobilizing Effect of Attack Advertising. *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (2):573-595.

- Garramone, G. M., C. K. Atkin, B. E. Pinkleton, and R. T. Cole. 1990. Effects of Negative Political Advertising on the Political-Process. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 34 (3):299-311.
- Harrington, J. E., and G. D. Hess. 1996. A Spatial Theory of Positive and Negative Campaigning. *Games and Economic Behavior* 17 (2):209-229.
- Lau, R. R., L. Sigelman, C. Heldman, and P. Babbitt. 1999. The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements: A Meta-Analytic Assessment. *American Political Science Review* 93 (4):851-875.
- Martin, P. S. 2004. Inside the Black Box of Negative Campaign Effects: Three Reasons Why Negative Campaigns Mobilize. *Political Psychology* 25 (4):545-562.
- Meffert, M. F., S. Chung, A. J. Joiner, L. Waks, and J. Garst. 2006. The Effects of Negativity and Motivated Information Processing During a Political Campaign. *Journal of Communication* 56 (1):27-51.
- Min, Y. 2004. News Coverage of Negative Political Campaigns: An Experiment of Negative Campaign Effects on Turnout and Candidate Preference. *Harvard International Journal of Press-Politics* 9 (4):95-111.
- Nagourney, Adam. 2006. New Campaign Ads Have a Theme: Don't Be Nice. *New York Times*, September 26.
- Perloff, R. M., and D. Kinsey. 1992. Political Advertising as Seen by Consultants and Journalists. *Journal of Advertising Research* 32 (3):53-60.
- Pinkleton, B. E., N. H. Um, and E. W. Austin. 2002. An Exploration of the Effects of Negative Political Advertising on Political Decision Making. *Journal of Advertising* 31 (1):13-25.
- Skaperdas, S., and B. Grofman. 1995. Modeling Negative Campaigning. *American Political Science Review* 89 (1):49-61.
- Theilmann, J., and A. Wilhite. 1998. Campaign Tactics and the Decision to Attack. *Journal of Politics* 60 (4):1050-1062.
- West, Darrell M. 2001. *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952-2000*. 3rd ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Chapter 4: The Age-Gap in Get-Out-The-Vote Campaigns

- "The 2004 Youth Vote." 2004. College Park, MD: CIRCLE: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

- Bergan, D. E., A. S. Gerber, D. P. Green, and C. Panagopoulos. 2005. "Grassroots Mobilization and Voter Turnout in 2004." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (5):760-77.
- Broder, David S. 2000. "GOP to Spend \$100 Million to Boost Turnout; Effort Will Target Wavering Voters and Weak Partisans." *Washington Post*, 7 August.
- Calmes, Jeanne and Jackie Cummings. 2004. "Raising the Volume: In Final Showdown, Getting Voters to go to the Polls is Key; To Boost Turnout, Both Sides Make Calls, Visit Homes; A Pep Talk to Volunteers; Knocking on 800,000 Doors." *Wall Street Journal*, 1 November.
- Cardy, E. A. 2005. "An Experimental Field Study of Persuasion Effects of Partisan Direct Mail and Phone Calls." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 601:28-40.
- Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 1999. "Does Canvassing Increase Voter Turnout? A Field Experiment." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 96 (19):10939-42.
- Gerber, A. S., and D. P. Green. 2001. "Do Phone Calls Increase Voter Turnout? A Field Experiment." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 65 (1):75-85.
- . 2005. "Correction to Gerber and Green (2000), Replication of Disputed Findings, and Reply to Imai (2005) (vol 99, pg 301, 2005)." *American Political Science Review* 99 (2):301-13.
- . 2005. "Do Phone Calls Increase Voter Turnout? An Update." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 601:142-54.
- Gerber, A. S., D. P. Green, and M. Green. 2003. "Partisan Mail and Voter Turnout: Results from Randomized Field Experiments." *Electoral Studies* 22 (4):563-79.
- Gerber, A. S., D. P. Green, and R. Shachar. 2003. "Voting May Be Habit-Forming: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (3):540-50.
- Gerth, Jeff. 1984. "Democrats set up \$27 million drive." *New York Times*, 29 August.
- Goldstein, K. M., and T. N. Ridout. 2002. "The Politics of Participation: Mobilization and Turnout over Time." *Political Behavior* 24 (1):3-29.
- Green, D. P., A. S. Gerber, and D. W. Nickerson. 2003. "Getting Out the Vote in Local Elections: Results from Six Door-to-Door Canvassing Experiments." *Journal of Politics* 65 (4):1083-96.

- Green, D. P., and J. K. Smith. 2003. "Professionalization of Campaigns and the Secret History of Collective Action Problems." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15 (3):321-39.
- Mark H Lopez, Emily Kirby, and Jared Sagoff. 2005. "The Youth Vote 2004." College Park, MD: CIRCLE.
- Nickerson, D. W. 2005. "Partisan Mobilization Using Volunteer Phone Banks and Door Hangers." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 601:10-27.
- . 2006. "Volunteer Phone Calls Can Increase Turnout - Evidence from Eight Field Experiments." *American Politics Research* 34 (3):271-92.
- Niven, D. 2001. "The Limits of Mobilization: Turnout Evidence from State House Primaries." *Political Behavior* 23 (4):335-50.
- . 2004. "The Mobilization Solution? Face-to-Face Contact and Voter Turnout in a Municipal Election." *Journal of Politics* 66 (3):868-84.
- Paul R Abramson, John H Aldrich, and David W Rohde. 1986. *Change and Continuity in the 1984 Elections*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- . 2006. *Change and Continuity in the 2004 Elections*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- "Refining Political Attitudes and Activism: a Poll by Harvard's Institute of Politics." 2006. Cambridge, MA: Institute of Politics.
- Wielhouwer, P. W. 2003. "In Search of Lincoln's Perfect List: Targeting in Grassroots Campaigns." *American Politics Research* 31 (6):632-69.