NEW VOTERS IN AMERICAN ELECTIONS: PARTICIPATION, PARTISAN MOBILIZATION, AND THE FUTURE OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

DISSERTATION

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By

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Every election witnesses the exit of many habitual voters from the electorate through the natural completion of the life-cycle, making the new voters who fill this electoral void integral to sustaining the democratic system of government. As turnout in American elections dipped to historically (and some say dangerously) low levels in recent decades, a “crisis of democracy” literature emerged to sort out the root causes of this decline and its consequences. Scholars blamed psychological deterrents, institutional barriers, and societal changes for this growing civic disengagement. But one of the biggest culprits became the parallel decline of political party organizations and their mobilizing function in American politics. The modest rebound of voting turnout—and party organizations—in recent years has given political scientists the luxury of diverting their attention to other avenues of inquiry. But this study suggests that, while presently stable, American democracy is not “out of the woods.” Using primary and secondary source data gathered over the 2004-2006-2008 electoral timespan, I compare new voters to more established voters in terms of their demographics, political attitudes, and actual voting behavior. My findings reveal a mixed picture for the future. While turning out to vote in high-stimulus presidential elections does not seem to be a particular problem for new voters, voting in lower-stimulus sub-presidential elections is an activity they more or less leave to others. However, party mobilization drastically reduces the tendency of new voters to abstain;
the same effect is more muted for established voters. This suggests that the political parties have an important role to play in turning today’s new voters into tomorrow’s established voters, thus helping to sustain the democratic system of government.
This study is dedicated to new voters everywhere. Democracy needs them.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: WHY STUDY NEW VOTERS?

I must confess: I am an eavesdropper. This is especially the case when people are talking about politics. I have learned a great deal this way about what the common man knows, and does not know, about his government and those who govern him. Living close to the nearest coffee shop to the two state party headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, I have, on too many occasions to count, casually overheard electoral strategy being formulated and openly debated among party brass. (It is a good thing these party strategists were never spies for the United States, or we never would have won the Cold War). Through my listening in, I also get an anecdotal feel for what ordinary citizens think about various politicians, salient issues of the day, and the general activities of citizens in relation to their government. This includes voting.

Not long after the 2010 midterm election, I was at a campus Starbucks working on another chapter to this very study, when I had occasion to accidentally overhear two nursing students take a break from the exam they were studying for to talk about politics and voting. They both appeared to be in their early-to-mid twenties, and through the course of listening to their conversation, I learned they were both first-time voters in 2008, and voted for the overwhelming favorite of young voters that year—Barack Obama. Invariably, the subject of the recent election came up, and this is where the two students could not have been more different: one of them voted, and the other did not.
The young lady who abstained was very forthright and nonchalant about not bothering to vote. She voted for the president two years ago, and didn’t see the need to vote for people she knew nothing about, especially in the face of more pressing concerns, such as finishing nursing school. Her friend was empathetic and non-judgmental, and went so far as to say, “Yeah, I probably wouldn’t have [voted] either, except they kept calling me.”

The conversation I overheard gets to the very heart of this study. One of the nursing students is the quintessential new voter, while the other is atypical, as far as behavior is concerned. Neither appeared particularly politically engaged; I ascertained that from the remainder of the conversation. And while I could not tell for sure whether they were local or temporary residents, odds are they are probably both registered to vote in their home counties. (I have found this to be the case with the vast majority of my students). In these respects, the two nursing students each resemble the classic new voter—young, mobile, and on the margins of politics. But the student who voted in the midterm election is different. She voted because someone (repeatedly) asked her to. Her comment is so central to the study of new voters in American elections that it bears repeating: “...I probably wouldn’t have [voted] either, except they kept calling me.” She obviously gave out her cell phone number at some point or another in the presidential campaign, and most likely will be reminded of that fact every two years around Election Day. “They” was most likely the Democratic Party, an affiliated group, or some candidate’s organization looking to mobilize potential supporters. What makes this such an important point is that this student was mobilized to vote, while her friend, by way of contrast, made no mention of being encouraged (or pestered) to do the same.
In their seminal study *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*, Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen (1993) suggest that participation in American politics represents “a set of vexing puzzles” (1). The particular questions that vex scholars are varied and many, but essentially boil down to one: why is it that some people participate while others do not? This basic question has kept political scientists occupied (and employed) for decades. And while there are probably just as many answers as there are political scientists looking for them, Rosenstone and Hansen maintain that, “the puzzle of participation in American politics finds its solution in mobilization” (38). Indeed, mobilization appears to be the answer to why one of our nursing students voted in the midterm election, while the other abstained.

This study seeks to investigate the basic puzzle as it pertains to new voters: why do some participate while others do not? We know surprisingly little about new voters in the first place, beyond a few gut hunches made by campaign practitioners and, quite frankly, political scientists with bigger fish to fry. One only needed to periodically browse through the pages of any widely circulated newspaper during the 2008 election to see that newly registered citizens were the subject of much commentary, and a lot of guesswork as to whether they would even show up on Election Day. Media elites and the talking heads assumed they were young, but beyond that, not much was known, and is still not known, about them. A good many of them appeared to have voted—the preferred candidate among this group of voters won, after all. But it was also speculated that they largely sat out the midterm election of 2010, since the political opponents of their first presidential vote won an historic victory at the polls. The basic puzzle of participation persists: why is it that some new voters voted, while others abstained? Just
like an echo from the past, the magisterial words of Rosenstone and Hansen never rang truer: “mobilization is the key that unlocks the puzzle of participation” (161). Our one nursing student knows this first hand: “...I probably wouldn’t have [voted] either, but they kept calling me.”

This study is about new voters—who they are, how they get registered, why they register at all, when they vote and when they do not, whom they vote for, and most importantly, whether they become habitual voters. It is not about our two nursing students and their peers, who registered to vote in 2008. This idea was hatched well before Barack Obama and his throngs of new voters began making waves in the newsrooms of America’s broadcasters and print media outlets. My interest in new voters stems from the time I first moved to Ohio for graduate school in August of 2004. I found my new home to be abuzz with political activity as the presidential election neared, and neither party’s candidate seemed to be a sure bet with likely voters. This was a completely foreign concept to me; I was born and raised in a state where the same party always wins everything, so the other party does not even try. And presidential candidates certainly never bother to visit and campaign. I remember attending the Ohio State Fair that first year of mine in Columbus, and seeing volunteers with both political parties registering new voters. Some of these people filling out registration forms did not strike me as particularly engaged citizens; one might well have wondered if they thought they were registering to win a free Caribbean cruise, or a year of free car washes.

The presidential election came and went, and life as a graduate student continued. But as the midterm election of 2006 neared, I began to wonder what would come about of all these people who registered to vote in 2004. They were registered, but would they
vote this time? Moreover, I was not even sure how many voted in 2004. The existing body of literature on voting behavior provided few clues as to what we could expect from these people who joined the ranks of registered citizens barely two years earlier. Furthermore, data that could help me address this question was scarce to non-existent. The idea of new voters became a new puzzle, and it was time to find some answers.

After the 2006 election, I fielded a survey of registered voters in Ohio (described in greater detail in Chapter 2), stratified into two groups: people who registered to vote for the 2004 election, and people who registered before that. With a generous grant, I was able to make this survey a true panel design, following up with many of the same respondents immediately after the election of 2008. This, along with some other data I encountered, quite by accident, gives the scholarly community a first real look into the demographics, attitudes, and political behavior of new voters over the course of the 2004-2006-2008 election period.

Do I definitively solve the puzzle of new voters with this study? I am not so presumptuous to think so. But I do provide a bevy of answers to some of the most basic questions, referenced above, that have heretofore befuddled campaign practitioners, the punditry, and the scholarly community. Most importantly, this study reaffirms the centrality of mobilization as the key to citizen participation in democratic decision-making. But in a departure from most analyses that attempt to identify the effect of mobilization on turnout, I do not assume its effects are uniform across all individuals. Rather, I show that new voters benefit more from this outreach than established voters,

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1 My sincere thanks to the Alumni Grants for Graduate Research and Scholarship at Ohio State for fully funding the second half of my data collection.
who are already more likely to vote by virtue of their other characteristics that correlate highly with turnout, most notably, an established habit of voting. Should this finding hold up to future scrutiny—and it does warrant further study—it suggests that well-targeted mobilization efforts could reap dividends for not only candidates and their parties, but the future of American democracy itself. In this respect, what our nursing student who voted may well have viewed as harassment (i.e. the repeated phone calls) could be seen as democracy’s saving grace.

CHAPTER PLAN

The second chapter of this study addresses the question of what, exactly, constitutes a new voter, and how, theoretically, we should expect them to differ from established voters. In this chapter, I suggest the various avenues by which citizens may become new voters; some of these are testable with the data at hand, while others are not. In the interest of a holistic look at new voters, it is important to get these ideas on the table, at the very least. This chapter also lays out the basic research design and introduces the two main data sources used throughout this study.

Chapter 3 provides a demographic snapshot of new voters, and how they differ from established voters. This is accomplished by way of simple bivariate comparisons, as well as multivariate settings, to expose spurious or suppressed relationships that can lead interpretations astray. This chapter provides us with some answers to the most basic question, “Who are new voters?”
Perhaps even more important than who new voters are is the question of how they behave. Do they even vote? If so, do they retreat from electoral activity after their initial exposure to politics, never to be heard from again? Or do they cross some threshold from sedentary citizen to super citizen after one election? Chapter 4 attempts to flesh out these questions by examining the conditions under which the newly registered vote. It also addresses the all-important question of how new voters vote, that is, who, on balance, they vote for. Here, it must be stressed that context is important. As described in greater detail in Chapter 2, this study utilizes data from a nationally representative sample of voters from the 2004 presidential election, and a panel of Ohio voters from the 2006 and 2008 elections. While some of the findings in Chapter 4 can, I believe, be generalized to new voters regardless of time or place, others (particularly those that deal with candidate choice) may be more peculiar to the natural ebb and flow of party fortunes that define the time span of this study.

Chapter 5 presents a silver lining to an otherwise cloudy finding of Chapter 4—that new voters incur substantial drop-off after a high-stimulus presidential election, meaning they largely sit out lower-stimulus, lower-visibility “second-order” elections. It is here where I demonstrate that mobilization has a much greater effect in stimulating turnout for new voters than it does for established voters, although this effect is largely confined to second-order elections. First-order (i.e. presidential) elections feature heightened media and public attention, and the perceived significance of the office is greater, so mobilization’s differential effect becomes more muted under these conditions. Paradoxically, parties and other political intermediaries have a habit of mobilizing citizens who least need mobilizing, and passing over those who stand to benefit the most.
(Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 163-69; Beck and Heidemann 2010). So, while mobilization has great potential to sustain and reinvigorate the political system, it requires doing something that the mobilizers are often loath to do—mobilize those who are not already likely to vote—people like new voters.

In the conclusion, I highlight the key findings of this study, its strengths and weaknesses, and outline some research questions for future inquiry. Most importantly, I make the case for why ordinary people should care whether new voters continue to be engaged in democratic decision-making or not. My argument depends on how much of a representative democracy we desire, and how much we value its continuation. To the extent these are both valued ends, “small d” democrats should desire that new voters become regular voters. The political parties, I maintain, are the institutions in the best position to help democracy achieve these ends, although not for altruistic reasons.
CHAPTER 2
WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT NEW VOTERS?

The answer to this question is necessarily succinct: not much. It is somewhat of a curious quality that the political science enterprise has amassed such a voluminous body of literature on voting and political participation, yet devoted so little attention to such a fundamental topic. The topic is fundamental because, at one time or another, we were all new voters. It is fundamental also in that every election witnesses the exit of habitual voters who have completed or nearly completed the life cycle, and who must be replaced for democracy to sustain itself in the long run. This study is pathbreaking then, in that it is the first, insofar as I am aware, to directly study the political creature that is so elemental to the democratic system of government—the new voter.

But what is the best way to explain the political behavior of new voters? Lest we put the cart before the horse, we must first confront the question of why new voters are not voters already. For the very youngest of the new voters, the answer is easy: their age. Since the legal age of suffrage in the United States is eighteen, any voter in his or her first presidential election in 2004 would be between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one. New voters beyond this age range have necessarily declined to vote on at least one earlier occasion. The question, of course, is why?
The answer may be found in what political scientists know about non-voters. There are several well-known correlates of turnout on which voters and non-voters noticeably differ—age, education, social connectedness, strength of party attachment, concern over the election outcome, intensity of candidate preference, interest in politics, internal and external efficacy, a strong sense of civic duty, etc. (for a brief, but good, synopsis of the turnout literature over the last half-century, see Lewis-Beck, et al. 2008, Ch. 3). Decades of research have noted that non-voters are usually lacking on many or all of these factors, when compared with those who routinely exercise the franchise. But Timpone (1998), in a theoretically elegant and statistically innovative study, maintains that many of these variables are more appropriate predictors of registration than turnout, once they are modeled in the context in which elections in America actually occur—that of a two-stage process, in which the act of registration must precede the act of voting, in all but a handful of states. So perhaps instead of asking why non-voters become new voters, the question should be, “Why do non-voters register to vote?” What is the trigger that compels them to surmount the many obstacles to registration (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978; Knack 1995; Franklin and Grier 1997; Highton and Wolfinger 1998; Rhine 1996) and leave the comfortable realm of sedentary citizenship to the active world of electoral politics? There are many possible answers, in addition to those factors mentioned above.

For one, a salient issue could motivate participation. Recall that the threat of terrorism and the Iraq War were dominant issues in the minds of many voters in the 2004 election. A citizen fearful of another terrorist attack on the United States may have felt compelled to register and vote out of the need for personal safety. Conversely, another
citizen angry at the United States’ involvement in Iraq may have registered and voted to signify displeasure with George W. Bush’ foreign policy.

But it may be that an issue is insignificant to motivate participation among chronic non-voters. In such a case, perhaps an attraction or repulsion to a particular candidate is. Lacy and Burden (1999) demonstrate that a non-trivial share of Independent candidate Ross Perot’s vote haul in 1992 was extracted from people who usually do not vote, rather than “stolen” votes from George H.W. Bush, as is commonly assumed. In the context of 2004, a suburban non-voter who felt safe with George W. Bush at our nation’s helm could have registered to vote and signify satisfaction with his decisive leadership. Or a marginally engaged citizen with liberal proclivities could have been so disgusted with the president’s conservative policies that he felt no choice but to register, not to vote for John Kerry, but to vote against George Bush.

What if these reasons alone are insufficient to compel a citizen to register? As with the act of voting itself, perhaps the reason that some people register is because someone asks them to. It seems entirely reasonable that some non-voters who are mobilized to register and then vote are moderately aroused by some other factor that is inadequate to compel registration and participation by itself. For example, a great deal of journalistic ink was spilled obsessing over the supposed role of conservative Christian leaders and their flocks in the reelection of President Bush in 2004. According to the scenario I have laid out, a devout evangelical Christian who never previously bothered to vote could have been stimulated to the polls, at the urging of her church’s pastor, to help reelect George W. Bush, who was admired by many church-going voters as a man of Christian faith and principles. Alternatively, the same evangelical could have been
incited to register and vote against gay marriage (on the ballot in 11 states) after being goaded to do so by leaders of her church, or other national evangelical personalities, such as Pat Robertson or Jerry Falwell. Both sent obvious signals to their followers that Bush was the preferred candidate of God-fearing Christians everywhere. In either case, pastoral urging was the trigger that forced action when neither candidate nor issue attitudes were adequate by themselves.

In sum, citizens who do not vote can be compelled to register and become new voters for many reasons. But I do not plan to formulate or estimate any kind of causal model that would identify which are most prominent. For one, I do not believe the data at my disposal allow me to undertake such an endeavor. Longitudinal data, containing non-registered citizens who become registered and then vote, would seem to be required for this. I do utilize panel data in this study, but the universe is restricted only to citizens who have already registered to vote. Furthermore, I am more concerned with what happens to individuals who have already surmounted the obstacles to registration. As I will show in Chapter 4, registration is a necessary, but insufficient, condition for voting among those who are inexperienced with politics. So the why of registration will have to be tabled indefinitely in this study. I can, however, address how new voters become registered to vote, and I take that up in the first section of the next chapter.

**PARTICIPATION AFTER REGISTRATION**

Once a non-voting citizen has crossed the registration threshold, what are we to expect? Absent the stimulating candidate or issue that possibly motivated his
involvement in the first place, does the new voter retreat from electoral activity and become the casualty of apathy, assuming he even voted in the first place? Will he not vote again of his own volition? Or must he be asked? The limited evidence in the extant literature suggests a less-than-sanguine answer to several of these questions.

A small genre of studies has attempted to estimate the effect of registration drives among minority voters. While minorities are not the focus here per se, these results can be illuminating to new voters writ large. Hamilton (1977) analyzed “new” versus “old” registrants in Harlem and found that the old vote more frequently than the new, but that the new also turn out to vote, albeit in more modest proportions. This makes intuitive sense, since “old[er]” voters are necessarily more experienced voters with a developed habit of voting. Vedlitz (1985) surmised that the effects of some organized registration efforts in the post-civil rights South were rather short-lived; there was substantial attrition among the black registrants in his data, especially with those registered by organized groups, suggesting that these voters need continued urging to remain active participants in the electoral arena. Cain and McCue (1985) reached a similar, yet bleaker, conclusion. They investigated the efficacy of voter registration drives in Hispanic neighborhoods of Los Angeles County, California prior to the 1982 midterm election and found that over 40 percent of those who self-registered before the election did not make it to the polls to vote. The attrition rate for those registered by organized groups was even more astounding—59 percent! This suggests that the real problem may not be whether new voters become repeat voters after their initial exposure to politics, but instead whether they actually vote at all. It also buttresses my contention that mobilization—in this case, registration by organized groups—and candidate or issue factors are for some
inextricably intertwined in motivating participation; it is quite likely (but impossible to test) that Cain and McCue’s new registrants who abstained lacked the extra stimulus of candidate or issue factors to interact with the mobilization and push them “over the edge” and into the voting booth.

Fortunately, for additional help in addressing the what then? question posed above, we can turn to a classic study of electoral behavior. In his famous article “Surge and Decline: A Study of Electoral Change,” Angus Campbell (1960) distinguished between “core” and “peripheral” voters, in attempting to explain why the party of the sitting president almost always loses seats in the midterm congressional elections. According to Campbell, core voters are consistent voters, both Republicans and Democrats, who can be reliably counted upon to turn out on Election Day, even though some may occasionally stray from their partisan moorings to favor the party advantaged by the short-term forces in the electoral environment. Peripheral voters, on the other hand, are less fixed in their partisan attachments, to the degree they have any at all, and are more prone to sit out low stimulus elections, which lack the excitement and perceived salience of a high-stakes presidential contest. These are the same voters, Campbell argues, that disproportionately sided with the president’s party two years prior. By their greater tendency to abstain in midterms, they deprive the president’s party of crucial support on Election Day, thus accounting for the presidential party’s seat loss. The essential characteristic that conditions the differing behavior of each species is political interest; core voters have a time-invariant interest in politics, whereas peripheral voters have only a casual or fleeting interest peculiar to the specific election at hand. High
stimulus elections are usually sufficient to capture the interest of peripheral voters and persuade them to vote, while low stimulus elections are not.¹

The distinction between core and peripheral voters is pertinent to this study in that new voters could well be expected to behave like peripheral voters. Save for the very youngest new voters, extremely eager to participate, it seems reasonable to assume that the political interest of the typical new voter is not especially great, lest they would be a voter already. It also seems plausible to infer that their attachment to either party is weak or ephemeral, or they would likewise already have voted, since strength of partisan attachment is one of the great predictors of turnout (Campbell, et al. 1960). Both of these variables—interest in politics and strength of partisanship—have richer theoretical appeal, and may be more efficiently tested by combining them into a single construct: political engagement. Engagement is a more encompassing notion, and in addition to attitudes or general dispositions like political interest and strength of partisanship, includes actual behaviors such as frequency of political discussion with others, campaign activism (attending meetings or rallies, contributing money to a party or candidate, and volunteering for a political party or candidate), and attention paid to the campaign.

Up to this point, I have in several places made mention of the very youngest new voters, as if they were some sort of exception to the rest of the new voter subpopulation. They are. If new voters beyond twenty-one years of age need some type of external

¹ Important to Campbell’s theory, but not essential here, is his evidence that a high-stimulus election draws both core and peripheral voters to the polls, while low-stimulus elections, such as midterms, draw only core voters, who fall back on their partisan loyalties, to the extent they strayed from them at all. Peripheral voters, who disproportionately supported the candidate favored by the moment in the preceding presidential race, do not bother to vote, and thus deprive the president and his party of the crucial support they enjoyed two years prior. Hence, the president’s party loses seats in the midterm election following his initial electoral success.
“push” (in the form of salient short-term electoral forces, political mobilization, or a combination of the two), to register and vote, then we must address why those aged eighteen to twenty-one, and eligible to vote in their first presidential election, do not. The pioneering political socialization work of M. Kent Jennings and his colleagues can be quite useful here. From this literature, we learned that children raised in “politically” households\(^2\) pick up cues from their parents and mature into adulthood with the understanding that attention to politics and voting are expected behaviors of good citizens (Beck and Jennings 1991). This impression is often reinforced by civic activities in high school that mimic the real world of politics, such as student government elections and leadership positions in after-school social clubs (Beck and Jennings 1982). By the time the young, politicized citizen becomes old enough to vote, he or she can scarcely wait to register and participate for the first time. While they still face additional costs on voting imposed by their greater mobility (Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass 1987), this class of citizens will bear the extra burdens to participate. The key, again, is political engagement. High engagement fuels participation, even in low-stimulus elections, while low engagement invites apathy and abstention.

If mobilization can, as discussed above, convert non-voters into new voters, then it can also assuage the proclivity of low engagement voters to abstain in future elections, especially those of the second-order variety. This proposition is derived from the long-understood relationship between mobilization and turnout. From the early work of Gosnell (1929) and his turnout field experiments in Chicago, to the more recent work of

\(^2\) A household is politicized, to varying degrees, to the extent that the parents vote, read newspapers, are interested in politics and public affairs, engage in non-electoral political behavior, and converse about politics in the home. See Beck and Jennings (1991).
Gerber and Green (2000) and their field experiments in New Haven, Connecticut, scholars have long maintained that mobilization has a decisive, positive impact on turnout. In non-partisan mobilization settings, even the nature of the message does not seem to make a difference; only the act of being asked to vote significantly increases turnout over and above those who are not mobilized (Gerber and Green 2000). Political scientists are less sure of the relationship between type of message and turnout when political parties or other self-interested organizations do the mobilizing, but the important point remains that those who are mobilized are more likely to vote than those who are not, all else being equal. Again, returning to the wisdom of Rosenstone and Hansen (1993):

> Political participation arises from the interaction of citizens and political mobilizers. Few people participate spontaneously in politics. Participation, instead, results when groups, political parties, and activists persuade citizens to take part…Absent mobilization, rational ignorance would defeat much citizen involvement in politics (pp. 36-7).

According to this line of reasoning, voting requires an investment of resources—taking the time to register, gathering information about the candidates and issues, taking time off of work, traveling to the polls, etc. New voters, the young and politicized notwithstanding, have indicated by abstention their previous unwillingness or inability to deal with these costs. Experienced voters, on the other hand, have managed to repeatedly overcome these obstacles and develop a habit of voting. Ingrained habits are hard to change. Mobilization should not have as great an effect on those who, because of their habit, are likely to vote anyway. But it is not a foregone conclusion that new voters, who
have little experience surmounting the hurdles to participation, will be able to surmount them again in the next election (assuming they voted in their first one); their habit is not yet set in stone. It stands to reason therefore, that the reduction in transactional costs that mobilization provides can best be enjoyed by those who have not yet demonstrated a consistent ability to overcome them. Mobilization tells the new voter that his or her vote is valuable enough that someone is willing to knock on their front door, telephone at home, or inundate their mail with flyers to obtain it. It may also serve to rekindle a diminished sense of general political interest and heighten awareness of the candidates and issues, or stoke feelings of party loyalty, however embryonic, that may subsequently be the nudge that overpowers to the inclination to abstain among new voters of low political engagement.

It is useful now to reiterate, from the previous discussion, the theoretical expectations that will guide the remainder of this study. The hypotheses are simple, and are set forth are as follows:

1. New voters, after their initial exposure to voting, will be more likely than established voters to abstain from electoral activity in subsequent, low-stimulus settings.
2. Electoral mobilization from an external force will mitigate this tendency.
3. Young, new voters of high political engagement will be exempt from hypotheses 1 and 2.

In other words, new voters, will, after becoming new voters, act like Campbell’s peripheral voters, save for the young and politicized, but electoral mobilization will reduce the expected “drop-off” quotient arising from any particular low-stimulus election
following a presidential contest. Furthermore, if voting is indeed habit forming, it then follows that new voters who do vote in low-stimulus elections, whether resulting from the extra “push” of electoral mobilization or a general defiance of the expected behavioral pattern, will subsequently need less extrinsic incentive to vote in a subsequent high-stimulus setting.

This theory is parsimonious in that it does not attempt to explain every facet of voting behavior idiosyncratic to the new voter; other chapters in this study will investigate hypotheses geared towards the particulars, such as demographic characteristics, political attitudes, and the like. But noticeably absent from the propositions outlined above is any prediction of how new voters will vote. The central concern of this study is why citizens become new voters, and the extent to which they remain voters. Of course, any thorough study of new voters would necessarily explore support for particular candidates and parties, and this one will, since a ubiquitous concern of politics is the question of who will gain and who will lose. But the general thrust of this theory deals with the decision of whether to vote or abstain, so an analysis of the decision of who to vote for will be taken up in Chapter 4. For now, let us next address the weighty issue of operationalization.

**WHO QUALIFIES AS A NEW VOTER?**

Before getting into the nitty-gritty details of operationalization, allow me to clarify some nomenclature. The terms “new voters” and “newly registered” are used synonymously throughout this study, much like commentators and observers of politics
refer to those on the voter registration list as “registered voters,” even though some on the list rarely or never vote. Likewise, “previously registered voters” and “established voters” refer to the same thing. This practice is undertaken mainly to avoid the irritation of repetition throughout this study.

Now that I have established the terminology, I need to be clear about just what it is I am studying. Are new voters those who have merely registered to vote, with the intention of voting on Election Day? Or can they be episodic voters, who allowed their registration to lapse, only to reregister when their interest in any particular campaign becomes sufficiently aroused? What about the residentially mobile, whose relocation to another county or state necessitates new registration? The three types of hypothetical new voters just mentioned have something in common: 1) they never actually vote, or 2) they are not new to politics and voting at all. A central premise of this study is that new voters are different from more established voters in their attitudes, opinions, and behavior. So in an ideal research setting, a study of new voters and their impact on the political system should study just that—people new to voting. But the real world of social research is not always ideal, and the data used throughout this study pose particular constraints on inference.

The first operational issue, new voters who never actually vote, is a particular challenge. As will be shown in Chapter 4, a non-trivial proportion of new registrants never make it to the polls. Excluding these persons in the tabulation of various demographic and attitudinal statistics would take some of my analyses to dangerously low levels of cases, rendering the main statistical test used throughout this study
unworkable.\(^3\) This, I cannot afford to do. So for the demographic and attitudinal analyses, new voters are operationalized as those citizens of legal age who registered to vote in time for the 2004 election,\(^4\) regardless of whether or not they actually cast a ballot. There is also good theoretical reason to operationalize new voters this way. A stated goal of this study is to make electorates more representative of the policy attitudes of the general public (see the chapter plan of Chapter 1). I do nothing to advance this hope by studying only the attitudes of new registrants who voted. Furthermore, to the degree this study has any usefulness in the practical application of politics, parties, campaign managers, and their candidates cannot better target their mobilization efforts if we only learn about those new voters who actually voted; non-votes are lost votes, in the trenches of political warfare. So for reasons of statistical necessity and theoretical accuracy, the study of “new voters” includes both voters and non-voters (as of their first election) who recently registered to vote.

The second operational issue, those who have voted before but for whatever reason end up in the data as new voters, poses more of a quandary. Because of sample selection and question wording issues, the data sources used in this study cannot preclude the possibility that people who have voted before were inadvertently included in the samples and measured as new voters. Refer to the Appendix for the exact question wordings, sampling methods, and other operational criteria, but for now, suffice it to say

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\(^3\) The Chi-squared (\(\chi^2\)) test of significance is the most commonly used statistical test in social science, and is the one employed for a good deal of the analyses in this study. However, when the expected value of the cells in more than 20 percent of those in the cross-tabulation do not exceed 5 observations, the \(\chi^2\) distribution can no longer be assumed. In this case, the Fisher’s Exact test may be used, but this becomes computationally cumbersome (even for computer programs) for non-square tables, like many featured in this study.

\(^4\) The specifics of each sample are described in greater detail later in this chapter.
that episodic and recently relocated voters could be included in the samples employed here. The random versus systematic extent of this is unknown. At first blush, this would seem to compromise the validity of any findings regarding the differences between new and established voters. But, if indeed the new voter samples are contaminated by the presence of those with at least some electoral experience, then the statistical burden on finding any differences between the two cohorts is actually higher, if the general premise that new voters are different from established voters is correct. In this case, the two sub-samples will appear much more alike than different. This brings us to the data sources used in this study.

THE DATA

Because any particular election dataset, of which there are many, must include some sort of identifier distinguishing new voters from more established voters, the number of usable data sources quickly winnows. The high-quality, face-to-face interviews in the American National Election Studies have long been thought to be the gold standard of survey research when it comes to matters dealing with elections and politics. Unfortunately, recent surveys have been devoid of questions probing the length of one’s registration, or status as a first-time voter. The only way of identifying new voters is from the respondent’s validated date of registration, and 1990 was the last year such attempts at verification were made. Given that scholars and political practitioners are probably more interested in learning about contemporary new voters, it seemed reasonable to look for other sources.
Cross-National Election Project

The Cross-National Election Project (CNEP) is a multi-system series of election surveys gathering data on demographics, political attitudes, communication, and behavior. Begun in 1990 and currently comprised of twenty-one countries, CNEP has provided scholars with longitudinal data from established democracies such as Great Britain, Japan, Germany, and the United States, to name a few, and is the basis for some very comprehensive work on comparative political behavior (e.g. Gunther, Montero, and Puhle 2007), as well as several important studies on political communication and the mediating role of social context in voting (Datlton, Beck, and Huckfeldt 1998; Huckfeldt, Beck, Dalton, and Levine 1995; Beck, Dalton, Greene, and Huckfeldt 2002). The American batteries include cross-sections for the 1992 and 2004 presidential elections, although only the 2004 study is employed here. The American data were collected by Knowledge Networks of Menlo Park, CA using an internet panel pre-recruited by conventional random-digit-dialing means. The data have been post-stratified for gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, region of the country, Metropolitan Statistical Area, and internet access using Current Population Survey estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. Panel participants are provided internet access and web-surfing hardware and compensated for completing surveys on various subjects. A total of 2,344 panelists were

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5 I am able to employ this rich, national data set in the study of new voters through the generosity of my dissertation committee chair, Professor Paul Allen Beck, who is also one of CNEP’s principal investigators. I am grateful to him for sharing his data, and his intimate familiarity of this dataset, with me.
invited to take the 2004 CNEP survey from November 3 to November 11, and a total of 1,816 cases, or 77 percent responded.

To identify new voters, the sample was first subdivided into two groups—those registered to vote, and those not registered. Those who were not registered were excluded from further analysis, since the basic comparisons to be made in this study are between new voters and existing voters; the non-registered are not the subject of inquiry. Next, respondents were partitioned into two groups, new and previous voters, based on responses to the question, “When did you register?” Those who registered before 2004 were coded as previously registered voters. All other responses were coded as new voters. This coding scheme resulted in 234 cases for analysis.

The Ohio Survey of Politics

The Ohio Survey of Politics (OSP) is the only primary data source used throughout this study. It is also the most essential, being designed expressly to longitudinally investigate new voters over the course of two elections—a midterm and a presidential election. It was born out of the premise that those on the margins of politics would be most likely stimulated into electoral activity and register to vote in a competitive political environment, such as what existed in Ohio in 2004. The strength of this study is that I can test whether new voters fit the typical profile of Campbell’s peripheral voter, or whether there is something about the act of voting that entices them to participate in subsequent elections. The sampling frame was every legal-age citizen of

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the state of Ohio registered to vote by the time of the 30-day closing date preceding the 2004 election.\textsuperscript{7} Because I wished to ensure a sufficient number of cases to study, the sampling frame was divided into two strata—new registrants and previous registrants. New registrants were operationalized as those citizens who registered to vote in the six months preceding the closing date to the election (in effect, 7 months before the election).\textsuperscript{8} Previously registered voters are all citizens registered before that. The survey was administered in August and September of 2007 and was conducted using a modified Tailored Design Method (Dillman 2000), which consisted of sending sampled units a pre-notification postcard, a recruitment letter with questionnaire, a reminder postcard for those who did not respond, followed by a “last chance” questionnaire with monetary inducement for those who did not respond after previous solicitations.\textsuperscript{9} Thirteen hundred units were drawn into the sample, and of those, 920 were valid addresses. The response rate was 26 percent, or 239 respondents. A few subjects had to be discarded, as validation against state records revealed that spouses or other household members

\textsuperscript{7} The list was publicly obtained from the Ohio Secretary of State.
\textsuperscript{8} The six-month figure was chosen arbitrarily, and was meant to incorporate all of the mobilization and registration activity that was taking place in Ohio after the nomination of John Kerry was a foregone conclusion. It could be argued that such a coding scheme excludes individuals who registered to vote in the presidential primary, held March 2. However, I do not believe this poses a particular problem. By this time, Wesley Clark and Howard Dean had already withdrawn from the race, and John Edwards was way behind in the delegate count, having won only the South Carolina primary. He ended his candidacy on March 3, the day after Ohio and eight other states voted. By the time of the closing date to vote in the Ohio primary (February 3), John Kerry had won the plurality of delegates in seven states, to John Edwards’ and Wesley Clark’s one. Kerry’s wins included the all-important Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary, which effectively sealed his status as nominee apparent. For comparison’s sake, twice as many votes were cast in the highly competitive 2008 Ohio Democratic primary (where the outcome of the nomination was still up in the air) as in the 2004 race.
\textsuperscript{9} The recruitment letters were printed on university letterhead and stressed the confidentiality of the survey, Institutional Review Board approval of the study, as well as the need for participation, regardless of whether the respondent voted in 2006 or not.
completed the survey intended for the sampled registrant. This left 231 cases, in total, of which 104 are newly registered; 92 of these respondents voted in 2004. Because units were drawn into the sample disproportionately to the population—just under half the sample is comprised of new registrants—a composite probability weight was calculated to bring the within-strata units back into their actual proportion within the population of registered voters, and to adjust for differences in response rates between the two strata. The weight also post-stratifies for gender and age, based on Current Population Survey benchmarks, and validated vote in 2006, since it was the attitudes and political behavior of the 2006 midterm election the survey was designed to measure.

The second wave was fielded in November and December following the 2008 presidential election. Questionnaires were mailed to all first-wave respondents, using the identical procedures outlined above, with the exception that all units were given a monetary inducement to induce cooperation with the second-wave. In several instances, first-wave participants had moved, and reregistered to vote in 2008. Exhaustive efforts were made to track them down, by combing through the voter file, searching by name and date of birth. In some cases, the Postal Service was able to forward questionnaires to new addresses. In other cases, questionnaires were returned with no forwarding address. Several units died or moved out of state. In all, 8 cases out of the original 231 valid first- wave respondents were not able to be contacted.

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10 Proxy reporting was not allowed for this survey, as individuals were the unit of analysis and not households. Technically, proxy reporting violates equal probability of selection methods (epsem), which was employed within each stratum.
11 This figure is based on validated vote, rather than reported vote.
12 Probability weights are calculated as the inverse of the probability of selection into the sample, and have the effect of “deflating” the data contributed by the oversampled subpopulation—in this case, new voters—when the entire sample is analyzed.
13 The small number of non-white respondents in both the previously and newly registered subsamples precluded post-stratification based on race/ethnicity.
wave respondents were unable to be located and resurveyed, but 164 units did return completed questionnaires. However, in the process of validation, it was discovered that 5 of them had been completed by other household members, or could not be verified. This leaves an overall second-wave response rate of 69 percent. Current Population Survey benchmarks from the 2008 election were used for post-stratification weighting purposes on the basis of age and sex, and a weighted class adjustment was made to account for differences in response rates between the two strata, as well as between those who voted in the presidential election and those who abstained.

Mail surveys make easy targets for criticism because of their low response rates, relative to other modes of survey research (Dillman 2000). What really matters however, is that the units that do respond are a representative subset of the entire sample that was mailed questionnaires. The first wave of this panel study had a response rate of 26 percent. For comparison’s sake, *The Columbus Dispatch* averages a 25 percent response rate in its venerable mail survey, and it has proven to be extremely accurate over the years in predicting election outcomes (Visser, et al. 1996). In light of evidence that suggests response rates of all modes of survey research have been gradually falling (Groves 1989; Bradburn 1992; Weisberg 2005, Ch. 8), those reported for the OSP should be considered quite good. As a further check on representativeness, Table 2.1 below compares validated turnout and reported vote of respondents against official records for both the gubernatorial election of 2006 and the presidential election of 2008.
Table 2.1 Population and Sample Differences in the Ohio Survey of Politics, 2006-08 (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample estimate $\hat{p}$</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Population parameter $p$</th>
<th>Difference $(p - \hat{p})$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2006</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackwell-R</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>[24.8, 42.0]</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strickland-D</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>[51.6, 69.1]</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>[47.1, 69.9]</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>-5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2008</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCain-R</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>[28.4, 53.2]</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama-D</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>[36.1, 62.9]</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>[50.1, 84.3]</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The Ohio Survey of Politics (sample estimates); Ohio Secretary of State (population parameters).

Notes: Weighted proportions of reported vote and validated turnout. Registered voters only. Estimates and population parameters for Independent and third-party candidates excluded.

As seen from the table, voters are slightly overrepresented in the wave of the sample dealing with the 2006 election, but are equal to the actual percentage of voters that comprised the 2008 electorate. In terms of reported vote for candidates, both losers in the table are underrepresented among respondents, but in addition to random sampling error, this may partly be explained by the tendency for respondents to underreport voting for the loser (Wright 1990, 1993; Carsey and Jackson 2001). In any case, the actual population parameters—the official results on file with the Secretary of State of Ohio—fall well within the 95 percent confidence intervals constructed from the sample estimates and standard errors. In fact, if even greater precision is desired, the parameter for McCain falls within a 70 percent interval.

To instill even greater confidence in the representativeness of the sample, I have partitioned respondents by their county’s region of the state, as defined by management
districts of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.¹⁴ Table 2.2 below compares the proportion of OSP respondents coming from each region to the proportion of the state’s total registered voters coming from those regions in 2006 (based on county figures provided by the Ohio Secretary of State).

Table 2.2 Population and Sample Differences in Regional Representation within the Ohio Survey of Politics, 2006 (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Sample estimate $\hat{p}$</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Population parameter $p$</th>
<th>Difference $(p - \hat{p})$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>[12.0, 29.2]</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>[2.3, 8.5]</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>+2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>[8.9, 23.7]</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>[11.9, 29.7]</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>+5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>[32.3, 52.9]</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The Ohio Survey of Politics (sample estimates); Ohio Secretary of State (population parameters).
Notes: Weighted proportions of each region’s contribution to the total number of registered voters within the state. Regions determined by counties comprising management districts of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

As indicated by the rightmost column, the differences between the sample estimates and the actual population parameters are modest, and fall well within each estimate’s margin of error (half the width of the confidence interval). All told, the sample is quite representative of the state as a whole; the biggest departure comes from the southwestern area of the state that encompasses Cincinnati and the surrounding counties, and even this “error” is not egregious. (To gauge the sample’s representativeness on demographic indicators, refer to the supplementary tables to Chapter 3 contained in Appendix C).

Needless to say, even though the sample sizes for the two waves of the OSP are small, I am still able to draw fairly precise estimates from them, and make reasonable

¹⁴ I use the county designations of this agency because it is the one department of state government that does not subdivide the state into more than five regions, thereby creating a streamlined way to compare survey estimates with population parameters.
inferences. Even though greater sampling error is the statistical price in accuracy paid for it, a small \( n \) sample, if done right, can still be a pretty good representation of the population.

**CONCLUSION**

I therefore have two representative samples, each containing a subpopulation of new voters—one national sample, and one consisting of Ohioans. They will be used as my particular data needs warrant. Limitations of one sample are generally offset by the strengths of the other. It is not expected that statistically significant findings in one sample will necessarily find replication in the other. First of all, the quirks of chance selection do not rule out that, on the margins, the CNEP and the Ohio sample will contain slight differences with each other, even when measuring the same thing. Secondly, the CNEP sample relies on self-reporting to measure turnout. It is possible that non-voters, posing as voters, could confound a few results.\(^{15}\) The OSP data on the other hand, circumvent this issue by validating reported turnout against government records.\(^{16}\) Third, in some areas, we *should* expect differences between the national and Ohio samples.

\(^{15}\) The proportion of “overreporters” typically hovers around 8-14 percent of the electorate in any given election. See Clausen (1968-69) and Silver, Anderson, and Abramson (1986).

\(^{16}\) Government records, of course, only take into account validly cast ballots. Every election, there are thousands of individuals who either mail in an absentee ballot that is improperly marked, or travel to the polls with the intention of voting, but for whatever reason, are prevented from doing so. The latter are forced to vote via provisional ballot, which was intended to be a “fail safe” mechanism under the Help America Vote Act. Provisional ballots are most often issued when citizens fail to bring identification with them to the polls, try voting in the wrong precinct, or do not appear on the voter rolls due to clerical errors or because they are not registered. Voters who cast a provisional ballot usually have to bring appropriate documentation to their county election board within ten days of the election to have their ballots counted. In 2006, there were over 129,000 provisional ballots (out of 4.2 million votes cast in the election), and 81 percent of them were counted. Of the almost 708,000 absentee ballots processed through the mail, 90 percent were counted. In 2008 (5.8 million votes cast), these figures were 81 and 98 percent, respectively, according to the Ohio Secretary of State.
While fairly representative of the national electorate, the Ohio subelectorate was fiercely competitive in 2004, while many other states—states represented in the CNEP—were not. To that end, the parties, candidate organizations, and myriad interest groups vigorously pursued unregistered citizens thought to be sympathetic to their preferred candidate, and a difference may appear in the kinds of new voters who were registered in Ohio, versus new voters in other, noncompetitive states, where self-initiative may have been more of a driving force behind registration.

With the theoretical expectations established and a sense of the data to be used in the remainder of this study, let us turn to an examination of some basic differences between new and established voters.
CHAPTER 3
WHO ARE NEW VOTERS?

It is fairly common to hear political parties and organized interest groups assert having registered “x” number of voters in this registration drive, or in that period of time. Who has not wandered the booths at a county fair and stumbled onto a party volunteer or some organization activist hawking voter registration forms to passers-by, or at least seen a banner or sign that read, “Register to Vote Here”? New voters enter the political system all the time. Of course, the offices of registrars and county election boards experience more activity as an election nears, due in no small part to the episodic nature of elections in America. But new voters can be found all the time. They exist in one-party states, and in states with vibrant political competition. They are located in northern states, and southern states, in red states and blue states. Simply put, we can find new voters everywhere. This is not to say they are the same everywhere—this chapter will demonstrate quite the opposite is true—or that they blanket the country in equal numbers. And just as sure as new voters are not demographically or geographically identical, they also vary with respect to time, and the election-specific factors that can bring them onto the voter registration rolls in the first place. Just who are these citizens? What do they look like? This chapter aims to sketch a picture of the typical new voter both in the state of Ohio and nationwide in the election of 2004 using the Ohio Survey of Politics (OSP) and the Cross-National Election Project (CNEP), both described in Chapter 2.
But before we can deal with the who, we should establish the how, because as it turns out, the latter can actually inform us about the former. Recall from Chapter 2 that the thorniest question regarding new voters—why non-voters register and become new voters in the first place—is not empirically dealt with because the data at my disposal unfortunately do not allow for such an inquiry. This is an issue that must be left to future research to disentangle. But I am able to address a similar, yet simpler concept—how non-voters register to vote. The stratum of new voters in the first wave of the OSP panel was asked who encouraged them to register to vote in 2004, or whether they registered to vote on their own initiative.¹ Two different cross-sections of new registrants surveyed after the 2008 presidential election, as part of a pilot survey for a different project, were asked the same question, with an extra two options added to the response set.² As is plainly visible from Table 3.1 below, a whopping 96 percent of the OSP’s new voters claimed they registered to vote on their own initiative. This frequency is virtually mirrored by the additional samples of new voters drawn at a later date (for a different project).

¹ The question reads as follows: “Some people register to vote on their own initiative. Others are encouraged to register by civic organizations, their union, or religious organizations, such as their church. Try to think back to how you registered in 2004. Which of the following statements best describes you? 1) I registered to vote on my own initiative, 2) I was encouraged to register by a civic organization, 3) I was encouraged to register by my union, or 4) I was encouraged to register by a religious organization.”

² A glaring deficiency with the question asked in the first wave of the panel was the absence of an option for being encouraged to register by either a political party or a presidential campaign. An option for each of these was added to the response set for the pilot survey referenced in the text above.
Table 3.1 Newly Registered Claiming Self-initiative as Motivation for Registration (percent of cohort)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newly registered in 2004 (OSP)</th>
<th>Newly registered in 2004 (Pilot survey)</th>
<th>Newly registered in 2008 (Pilot survey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newly registered in</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 (OSP)</td>
<td>(104)</td>
<td>(80)</td>
<td>(104)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics, and two sub-samples from a 2008 pilot survey.

Note: Number of cases in parentheses.

At first blush, this seems implausible. Some states keep track of the numbers of voter registrations turned in by each organized group. It is doubtful they would bother with the extra paperwork if upwards of 90 percent of new registrations were by individuals registering on their own initiative. Unfortunately, Ohio law has no such requirement, so it is impossible to check the validity of these survey frequencies against official records. But if it turns out self-initiative is indeed the guiding force behind most new registrations, then we should be weary of the claims by the political parties and various secondary organizations about the number of voters they register each election cycle.

At least two possible explanations likely account for these rather improbable results. First, we could merely be seeing the results of a “primacy effect” (Krosnick 1991; Groves, et al. 2004, 144; Weisberg 2005, 108), or the tendency for people to merely select the first item from a response set, rather than invest the cognitive resources to engage in a memory search that could prolong the average question response time. This hypothesis merits serious consideration, since primacy effects are much more likely in printed questionnaires than in aural surveys (Groves, et al. 2004, 144; Weisberg 2005, 108). And considering that for the respondents in the sampling frame, their actual act of voter registration took place some time before ever reading this survey question, it stands to reason respondents would take this “low road” response strategy (Cannell, Miller, and
Okensberg 1981). Yet I am inclined to discount this hypothesis. The question was only the eighth in the questionnaire, so it is unlikely respondents were suffering from survey fatigue, looking for ways to end the ordeal of participation.

A more likely reason we see such high frequencies of citizens claiming self-initiative as the motivation to register is that the question is not measuring motivation at all. Political scientists have long been aware of the tendency for some non-voters to “misreport” having voted, since voting is seen as socially desirable behavior (Clausen 1968; Traugott and Katosh 1979; Silver, Anderson, and Abramson 1986; Traugott 1989; Burden 2000); every “good” citizen votes, after all. Voting in America is a voluntary act, and registration is a prerequisite to voting. Ergo, good citizens also register, voluntarily. Just as many Americans are willing to admit to survey interviewers that they had been contacted by the political parties and encouraged to vote, few are probably willing to say that the contact was what made them vote. Who, after all, wants to be perceived as being prodded into fulfilling one’s civic duty? In much the same way, the high reporting of self-initiative as the motivation to register is probably attributable, at least in part, to social desirability.

We can draw some support for this hypothesis from a 2004 post-election survey taken to ascertain the extent of potential problems with election administration in Ohio.³

³ Its principal investigator was Associate Professor Dean Lacy of the Political Science Department at Ohio State University, and the study’s purpose was mainly to gather data on election administration in the presidential election of 2004 in the state of Ohio. Surveyed items included voters’ registration status and voting experiences, and questions ranged from type of voting technology used to problems encountered when trying to vote. The study was conducted by the same firm that handled the CNEP study referenced in Chapter 2, using the same internet panel methodology and post-stratification of responses, and was fielded April 15, 2005 to April 22, 2005. A total of 1,870 panelists were invited to take the survey, and 1,293 agreed, for a response rate of 69.1 percent.
Unregistered respondents to the sample were asked, “Has anyone tried to get you to register to vote?” (n=119), to which 47 percent responded affirmatively. This tells us that efforts to get people onto the registration rolls are still actively taking place. In all likelihood, more of the new voters in the OSP were encouraged to register by others than are willing to let on, but registration via self-initiative may be perceived as some higher-order manifestation of civic consciousness, and thus be responsible for the figures in Table 3.1. So our first glimpse at new voters comes by way of personality. It appears they are somewhat socially narcissistic, wishing to be perceived as electoral self-starters, whether they actually are or not.

**HOW DO NEW VOTERS DIFFER FROM ESTABLISHED VOTERS?**

Now that we have an idea of how new voters come to be, it is in order to learn more about them. In the pages that follow, I shall examine some basic demographic differences between new and established voters, then proceed to analysis of other political and social characteristics. I accomplish this by initially comparing these two cohorts along characteristics in which we can intuitively expect to find differences, and then comparing the findings across the two data sets. Length of registration (newly registered versus previously registered) is the dependent variable. The method of analysis here is mostly simple cross-tabulations, using Pearson Chi-squared tests of statistical significance. The Chi-squared test does not make any assumptions about the distribution of the parameters being estimated, which makes it particularly useful here, since several variables (e.g. age) are very unlikely to be normally distributed in the
population. In the tables of reported frequencies to follow, length of registration will be divided into two columns—newly registered and previously registered. All cell entries are weighted percentages, unless otherwise noted. Because most surveys are not simple random samples, but feature more complex designs, it is paramount to employ the appropriate weights to make the resulting statistics more representative of the broader populations (and in this case, subpopulations) they are meant to represent.

After making these basic comparisons, I present a more sophisticated analysis by way of multivariate models that allow me to paint a more holistic portrait of new voters.

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

*Age.* In simple bivariate comparisons, there is no single characteristic that is more reflective of new voters than youth; in both data sets, age is significant at the $p<.001$ level, as seen in Table 3.2. The $\chi^2$ statistics are also the largest for any variable examined, further attesting to the strength of association between registration status and age. In Ohio, over half of new voters in 2004 were under thirty years of age, and the differences between the two samples are striking. The youngest slice of the newly registered cohort in the Ohio sample is over one-and-a-half times the size of its corresponding group in the CNEP sample. In other words, Ohio registered more voters under the age of thirty in 2004 than the nation did as a whole. This may reflect a deliberate mobilization strategy of the parties, or may simply be a statistical artifact of so

---

4 When constructing cross-tabulation tables, the dependent variable is typically assigned to the rows of such tables, but for ease of presentation, it will be located in the columns of the tables presented here. Since the Chi-square test is symmetric, this reorganization of tabular data will cause no problems in estimation or inference.
Table 3.2  Age and Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CNEP $\chi^2$ 13.94

OSP $\chi^2$ 26.47

Weighted n 242 1240

Weighted n 23 211

Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

many of the newly registered being eligible to vote for the first time in a particularly high-stimulus election, and becoming registered as a result. The logic is straightforward: in any given presidential election, so many newly registered voters are under the age of thirty because so many young citizens become eligible to vote for the first time every four years. So any apparent relationship between age and registration status may simply be due to generational replacement—a fresh influx of young voters. Does this relationship hold up in the presence of a control for the newly eligible (18-21 year olds)? Table 3.3 offers such a test.

Newly eligible persons have been removed from the new voter subpopulation, so that only those 22-29 years of age are examined in both data sets. It quickly becomes apparent that, both in Ohio and nationally, a good deal of the newly registered are under
thirty because *they are newly eligible*. This statistical control substantially cuts into the proportion of all new voters made up of the youngest age category. Despite this, the difference between new and established voters is still quite robust. The modal age category is now thirty to forty-four year-olds in the CNEP sample—there was a bimodal age distribution before controlling for the newly eligible in this manner—while the modal age category among new voters in Ohio remains the youngest age grouping.

**Table 3.3 Age and Registration Status (22 and up only)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>CNEP***</th>
<th>OSP**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| CNEP χ²   | 11.70              |
| Weighted n| 226                |
| OSP χ²    | 13.58              |
| Weighted n| 16                 |
|           | 200                |

*Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.*

*p*<.05, **p**<.01, ***p***<.001, one-tailed

Yet no matter how we slice or dice it, what remains abundantly clear is that within each sample, new voters are significantly younger than their more experienced counterparts. This makes intuitive sense, given that all voters are new voters at some time, and for most, the formative years of political life begin at adulthood or in one’s early twenties (Jennings and Niemi 1974; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Beck and Jennings
1991), as young citizens cross the threshold between observer of the political system, to participant in it.

*Education.* Nationwide, newly registered voters are generally less educated than established voters (Table 3.4). The CNEP data show a modest, but significant, relationship between education and length of registration. The typical American new voter has only a high school education, although it is worth noting that half of the cohort has at least some college. There is a bit less dispersion in educational attainment among the previously registered; here, the typical voter is just as likely to have a high school diploma as some college, or a college degree. The bulk of the differences between the cohorts however can be found in those who have less than a high school diploma—these persons are less likely to be registered already.

**Table 3.4 Education and Registration Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CNEP</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than HS</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS graduate</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA+</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OSP†</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than HS</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS graduate</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA+</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CNEP χ²**

Weighted n: 241

**OSP χ²**

Weighted n: 23

*Notes:* Cell entries represent weighted percentages.

†2 cases imputed with the mean value from their respective registration cohorts.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed
Although there are notable differences in education between the cohorts of Ohio voters, they do not meet the standard threshold for statistical significance. While it appears that more of Ohio’s newly registered have at least some college, compared to the same class of respondents in the CNEP sample, chance alone could have produced these differences, so commenting any further would be imprudent. The more relevant question is why the previously registered are more educated than the newly registered. While this will be fully fleshed out in the multivariate models to follow these bivariate analyses, the most credible scenario for this is that voters are more likely to have resources, such as education, than non-voters (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rostenstone and Hansen 1993). This wealth of resources is likely what compelled established voters to register in the first place.

Race. America is becoming more racially heterogeneous (U.S. Census Bureau 2008), and so too, are the new voters entering the political system. In 2004, nearly one-third of new voters nationwide were non-white, compared to one-quarter of previously registered voters, as noted in Table 3.5.

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5 Because the cases of Hispanics, Asians, and “other” in these data are limited, all the comparisons have been dichotomized into white and non-white to give the statistical tests greater power.
Table 3.5 Race and Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP†</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white†</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 \]
| Weighted n  | 242                | 1240                    |

\[ \chi^2 \]
| Weighted n  | 23                 | 210                     |

Notes: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.
†The OSP sample contains only 14 un-weighted cases on non-whites.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

Nationally however, should the proportion of non-whites voting for the first time continue to grow, as it did in 2004, there will likely be consequential ramifications for the party system, given the tilt of non-whites to the Democratic Party. Indeed, 70 percent of black new voters thought of themselves as Democrats in 2004 (data not shown)—a finding that should not be too surprising, given the historic attachment of blacks to the Democratic Party (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, Chp. 11). But not all non-whites in this cohort were so monolithically Democratic. New voters belonging to the fastest-growing segment of the American population, those of Hispanic decent (U.S. Census Bureau 2007), were more evenly split in 2004 when it comes to party identification: 38 percent Democrat to 31 percent Republican, with the rest claiming political independence or affiliation with a third party. The higher-than-usual rate of Republican identification among this racial group may speak to the attention paid to it by President Bush and the Republican party, both of which tried to emphasize “family values” issues, such as opposition to abortion and gay marriage, that characterized the campaign (Green, Rozell,
and Wilcox 2006). But perhaps just as notable is that Hispanics lagged behind blacks, and in some cases, “other,” in the proportion of non-whites joining the ranks of the voting public. The Census Bureau pegged Hispanics at 14 percent of the citizen adult population in 2004, but exit polls showed them only at 8 percent of the voting population, suggesting the presence of a sleeping giant, should they ever realize their potential power and be mobilized en masse. Indeed, the racial dynamics of the party system appear to be changing within the short time span encompassed by this study. While George W. Bush and the Republicans came close to winning the growing Hispanic vote in 2004 (44%), according to exit polls, the same polls in 2008 show a decided shift toward the Democrats in 2008, with two-thirds of this voting bloc having supported Barack Obama over his Republican rival John McCain.

*Income.* Investigating this social characteristic across data sets is somewhat problematic, since the income categories in the CNEP and the OSP are not directly comparable (see Appendix for the exact categorizations). Additionally, U.S. Census data (not shown) indicate that median family income in Ohio is about 8 percent less (roughly $4,300) than the national median household income. Whereas categories of the other variables heretofore examined are geographically uniform—18-29 year olds in Ohio are the same age as 18-29 year olds elsewhere in the nation—a middle-class income in Ohio can be different from a middle-class income in say, the South, since a middle-class Ohioan is more likely to be in a labor union, with a higher wage than her southern counterpart. So to standardize the data, and allow more of an apples-to-apples comparison, I have divided each sample’s income distribution into three percentiles. Assuming the sample data were randomly drawn from their respective populations, this
allows us to compare lower, middle, and upper income registered voters in Ohio to lower, middle, and upper income registered voters in America.

What becomes evident from Table 3.6 is that new voters are not drawn from the upper crust of society, if we characterize income as an indicator of class, as is standard practice in the social sciences. While the Ohio data are conclusive only at a more charitable level of significance ($p<.10$), nationally, twice as many of the newly registered have incomes in the lowest percentile as do in the highest percentile. This is sufficiently different from the previously registered, who are predominantly drawn from the middle and upper strata of society. As with education, individuals with resources are more likely to be registered already, compared to those who lack them, so these results fall in line with expectations.

**Table 3.6 Income and Registration Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower third</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle third</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper third</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP†</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower third</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle third</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper third</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CNEP $\chi^2$ 4.29*  
*OSD $\chi^2$ 1.75*  
*Weighted $n$ 243 1240*  
*Weighted $n$ 23 210*  

**Notes:** Cell entries represent weighted percentages. In CNEP, the percentiles are defined as follows: 1) less than $30,000, 2) $30,000-$59,999, and 3) $60,000 and above. In the OSP, the percentiles are defined as 1) less than $50,000, 2) $50,000-$89,999, and 3) $90,000 and above.

4 NR and 11 PR cases imputed with the mean value from their respective registration cohort.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed*
Union Households. The diligent political activity of labor unions has been well documented over the years (see, for example Asher, et al. 2001). It is not surprising then, that unions were heavily involved in the 2004 presidential campaign, nor is it surprising that over one-quarter of established voters in Ohio are from union households (see Table 3.7); Ohio is a “rust belt” industrial state with a heavy union presence. What does seem surprising is that 15 percent of new voters came from union households. Given their high rates of participation in the political arena, one would think it odd there were any remaining, unregistered individuals from union households to become new voters in the first place. A closer look at the data though (not shown), reveals that about half of these new registrants are young persons under the age of 30—probably college-age children of union shop members. But this also means that the other half of this subgroup is over the age of 30. Being a union member, or living with a partner or spouse who is, in and of itself does not guarantee one will be politically active, but according to these data, a hotly contested presidential election winnows the pool of the unregistered with union ties.

Table 3.7 Union Households and Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP Union household</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEP Non-union household</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP* Union household</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP* Non-union household</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weighted n</th>
<th></th>
<th>Weighted n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP $\chi^2$</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td></td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP $\chi^2$</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td></td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed
The most curious quality of Table 3.7 though, is the compositional difference in union households between the national and Ohio data. There is a greater union household presence within both of the Ohio registration cohorts than there is in the rest of the United States. As mentioned above, Ohio is a manufacturing state with a large union population, so this discrepancy should not be unexpected. But what is more puzzling about the CNEP data is the overall low level of union affiliation. Eleven percent of the full sample (data not shown) reported being from a union household. A 2005 report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that, nationally, the rate of union membership was 12.5 percent of the adult workforce. This would mean that we would expect a greater presence of union *households*, since most union members cohabitate with someone *not* in a bargaining unit. To be sure, the data represented in Table 3.6 are registered voters only, and do not represent the entire population. But, as described above, given the high level of union political activity in the United States, it would appear that union households are somewhat underrepresented in the CNEP data.

I suspect this is attributable to the question wording: “Does any family member in your household belong to a *trade* union?” The word “trade” evokes the image of a craft, such as pipefitting, machining, or electrical work. This representation does not quite conform to that of the typical, modern union member. According to the same Bureau of Labor Statistics report, public-sector union membership (police officers, firefighters, teachers, bureaucrats, etc.) is almost *five times* the size of private-sector membership—36.4 percent to 7.9 percent, respectively. To the extent the CNEP question taps membership in unions where an apprenticed craft is practiced, the lower rate of union households in Table 3.7 make sense. The OSP question, on the other hand, uses
the more general nomenclature of “labor union” when asking about organized labor affiliation in the household. Twenty-six percent of the OSP’s full sample of registered voters came from unionized households. This is higher than the 17 percent of the state’s population that belonged to a union shop in 2004, for reasons mentioned above, but better reflects the true level of organized labor’s presence among registered households in the state. Whatever the reason for the lower rate of union households in the CNEP data, we should not make too much of it, as the two cohorts fail to register significant differences.

Gender. Table 3.8 contains distributions of Ohio and United States voters by gender and registration status. Two things stand out. The first is that among established voters, Ohio mirrors the United States—women outnumber men in the existing registration rolls by 9 percent. Second, there are gender differences between Ohio and the rest of the country in the new voters that were added to these rolls; more new voters were men in Ohio, while the opposite is true nationwide. These differences though, do not come close to reaching statistical significance, so any attempt at explanation would merely be a shot in the dark.
Table 3.8 Gender and Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP Male</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEP Female</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP Male</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP Female</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CNEP χ²</th>
<th>Weighted n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weighted n</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP χ²</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

Religion. It is fairly easy to derive appropriate research hypotheses for the relationships we should see between registration status and the variables age, education, race, and income. Decades of voting behavior research tell us that the young vote less frequently than the old, the educated and wealthy vote more than the uneducated and the poor, and white citizens typically vote at higher rates than minorities, although this is slowly changing. Religious identity is not so easy to pin down. There is no a priori reason to expect one religion to be any more likely, proportionately speaking, among the voter rolls than any other, unless said religion eschews participation in politics and the public sphere. Nonetheless, we are not totally devoid of expectations for this variable. Recall that the new voters under examination in this study registered to vote in 2004. In this same election, constitutional amendments to ban gay marriage were on the ballots of eleven states, including Ohio’s. George W. Bush’s narrow victory in several of these states, but especially in Ohio, was attributed to evangelical Christians being enticed to the polls with these amendments. While voting to ban gay marriage, the narrative goes, these
heretofore politically dormant citizens also cast a vote to reelect President Bush, seen as a
God-fearing, Christian man (e.g. Cooperman and Edsall 2004).

**Table 3.9** Importance of Religion/Protestant Status and Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP</td>
<td>Religious, Protestant 40.4</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious, non-Protestant 21.9</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-religious 37.7</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| OSP          | Religious, Protestant -- | -- |
|              | Religious, non-Protestant -- | -- |
|              | Non-religious -- | -- |

CNEP $\chi^2$ 0.85

*Weighted n* 241 1221

OSP $\chi^2$ --

*Weighted n* --

*Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.*

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed*

We might therefore expect new voters to be disproportionately Protestant compared to voters of existing stock. The optimal way to test the “gay marriage” hypothesis would be to identify those respondents in each cohort who claim to be “evangelical” or “born-again” Christians and compare them to the new and established voters who are not evangelical or born-again. Unfortunately, neither survey used here makes such a distinction. We can however, interact a question in the CNEP that asks respondents whether they consider themselves religious with a Protestant/non-Protestant binary designation, and compare the two cohorts on this new dimension.6 As can be seen

6 The survey item which allows this comparison is only available in the CNEP.
in Table 3.9, doing this yields little support for the prevailing narrative—the proportion of religious Protestants are essentially equal among both cohorts, and the non-religious are only slightly more prevalent among new voters than the established. In any event, the differences among all the categories represented in the table are negligible.

### Table 3.10 Religion and Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something Else</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP***†</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something Else</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|              | Weighted n         |                         |
| CNEP         | 1.44               |                         |
| OSP          | 7.87               |                         |

*Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.†4 missing cases.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

If the results in Table 3.9 cast doubt on the gay marriage hypothesis, then the statistical examination in the table above should lay waste to it altogether. Table 3.10 reveals that, while slightly more than half of newly registered voters identify as Protestant, this is less than we see in the existing supply of voters. Furthermore, the proportion of new voters that is Protestant is virtually identical in each sample—52 percent in Ohio and 51 percent nationwide. This is important, as we would expect
greater numbers of Protestants among the ranks of the newly registered in electorally important states like Ohio than we would nationwide, where most states were not in contention and most states did not have gay marriage on their ballots. In Ohio, a must-win for the victor, there were five times as many new voters as established voters claiming a “something else” brand of religion (such as Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism), and five times as many claiming no religion at all. These data simply do not support the contention that legions of new Christian voters gave George Bush a new lease on the presidency. In what will be the final word on this (in this study anyway), a survey question in the OSP asked respondents who voted in 2004 about their primary motivation for doing so. A mere 7 percent of new voters claimed it was the gay marriage amendment, compared to 3 percent of established voters. The overwhelming majority in each group indicated that the presidential election was what primarily brought them to the polls.

POLITICAL EFFICACY AND ENGAGEMENT

Efficacy. Because new voters are just that—new to electoral politics—it stands to reason that their lack of prior experience with the political system will leave them more doubtful of their ability to understand politics, as well as to make a difference through it. External efficacy, or the degree to which individuals think their actions are consequential to political decisions, and internal efficacy, or how well individuals feel they are equipped to make sense of politics, are known correlates of political activity, both in the voting booth and in interactions with social contacts that are likely to result in others
voting (Conway 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 144-45). Since new voters have not already joined the community of voters—this is especially true for those who have been eligible to vote for some time, but have not—it is reasonable to expect them to score less on measures of external and internal efficacy. Fortunately, the CNEP and OSP provide measures for both efficacy constructs. Two questions are used to extract feelings of external efficacy, each from a five-point scale: 1) “People like me do not have any influence over what the government does,” and 2) “Politicians do not worry much about what people like me think.” Internal efficacy, also a five-point scale, is measured by the question, “Generally, politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening.” These are almost word-for-word replications of the American National Election Studies questions that have been used to ascertain political efficacy for years.\(^7\) The two external questions measure the same underlying construct (CNEP \(\alpha=.74\), OSP \(\alpha=.76\)), so were summed and then rescaled so that smaller numbers representing lower feelings of efficacy and higher numbers greater feelings of efficacy.\(^8\) Internal efficacy was coded in the same direction. Table 3.11 displays the means of each

---

\(^7\) The OSP uses the exact question wordings from the American National Election Studies, which for external efficacy are as follows (differences with the CNEP wording are italicized): 1) “People like me do not have any say over what the government does,” and 2) “Public officials do not care much about what people like me think.” The question for internal efficacy reads: “Sometimes, politics seems so complicated that people like me can’t really understand what’s going on.”

\(^8\) Because the efficacy questions were measured on different scales in the two surveys—a 1-4 point scale in the CNEP, and a 1-5 point scale in the OSP—both measures of efficacy used here were rescaled between 0 and 1 to allow for comparisons between the collections of data.
### Table 3.11 Political Efficacy and Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Mean score, newly registered</th>
<th>Mean score, previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CNEP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External efficacy*</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal efficacy**</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 22 and up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External efficacy*</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal efficacy**</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OSP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External efficacy</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal efficacy</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 22 and up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External efficacy</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal efficacy</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Cell entries represent weighted mean group values obtained from a difference of means t-test. Because the data are ordinal, statistical significance is assessed via the results of a Mann-Whitney non-parametric test. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

Looking at the CNEP data, the first notable observation is that neither group of voters has a great deal of faith in the responsiveness of the political system, on average. But established voters, as hypothesized, have a bit more faith than those new to the system. Established voters also have greater confidence in their ability to comprehend politics; this is greater than their faith in the system itself. Notice that identical results obtain when controlling for newly *eligible* voters by removing them from analysis and re-

---

9 Because the efficacy scales are ordinal in nature, and I wish to test for statistical significance between newly and previously registered voters, a t-test is not appropriate to employ here. I instead compute a Mann-Whitney U-test, the nonparametric equivalent of the t-test, and one suitable for ordinal data (that also does not assume normality).
running the test. Taken together, these findings suggest that new voters, regardless of age, think their participation is more futile than do veteran electors, when it comes to producing government outcomes consistent with their preferences. Likewise, they feel less confident than experienced voters in their ability to understand politics and government. It is no wonder that they are not voters already.

Political engagement. Fortunately, both the CNEP and the OSP allow a test of the hypothesis that new voters are less politically engaged than the established. Recall from Chapter 2 that this hypothesis is a major part of the theory in this study. To this end, I have identified several variables that previous research and accumulated wisdom suggest reflect such a broad construct. These include *interest in politics*, *frequency of political discussion with others*, *strength of partisanship*, *activism* (attending meetings or rallies, contributing money to a party or candidate, and volunteering for a political party or candidate), and *attention paid to the electoral campaign*. See the Appendix for coding of these variables. A principal components analysis of these variables in each data set revealed that these factors are indeed reflective of a unidimensional structure of political engagement. After factor scores were computed (using the regression method), a difference of means t-test in both data sets revealed the political engagement scores of 10

---

10 We can effectively discount the rather counterintuitive results from the Ohio data, in which new voters appear to be more efficacious than established voters, because the differences do not attain conventional thresholds of statistical significance.

11 In both data sets, the five items loaded onto a single factor (so rotation was unnecessary). The CNEP eigenvalue was equal to 2.53 and accounted for 50.61 percent of the interitem variance. The loadings of the five items ranged from .45 to .82, and the standardized alpha coefficient (because not all variables were measured on the same scale) for the index equals .70, considered acceptable by social science standards (Cronbach 1951). The OSP eigenvalue equaled 2.45 and accounted for 48.98 percent of the interitem variance. The loadings ranged from .54 to .84, and the standardized alpha coefficient equaled .72.

12 The regression method computes factor scores with a mean of 0 and a variance of 1. This produces negative scores. Because all variables in this analysis have been rescaled between 0 and 1, the factor scores were also rescaled between 0 and 1 with the following formula: NewScore=(OldScore – Min)/(Max – Min). This produces only positive scores.
new voters to be significantly lower, on average, than established voters (p<.001, one-tailed). Apparently, voting is not the only form of political activity with which most new voters are inexperienced. The new voter may eventually become more engaged with the political system, but, upon introduction to the political world of electoral politics, he or she is not.

**SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT**

If new voters are, as noted above, less politically engaged, then it stands to reason that they are also less engaged socially, since this form of interaction is an antecedent of political behavior (Putnam 2000). Unfortunately, variables to quantify this construct are limited in the forms of data utilized in this study. But three stand out as useful yardsticks of how engaged one is with his or her community—length of residence, frequency of religious attendance, and organizational memberships.13

*Length of residence.* Mobility, it is thought, is one of the greatest inhibitors to turnout among young people (Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass 1987), and new voters, as has been demonstrated in this chapter, tend to be young. A length of residence variable in both the CNEP and the OSP, coded so that smaller values indicate greater mobility, allows us a glimpse into the relationship between mobility and length of registration.14

---

13 The OSP does not contain a measure of the number of organizational memberships to which respondents might belong, so this part of the analysis is limited to the CNEP data.
14 Because the categories of one’s length of residence are not identical in both data sets, the scales have been collapsed to less than 5 years, and greater than 5 years, to allow for cross-survey comparison.
Table 3.12 Length of Residence in Community and Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CNEP $\chi^2$ 82.41
Weighted n 243
OSP $\chi^2$ 14.92
Weighted n 23

Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

New voters, as expected, are highly mobile—over half of new voters nationwide have lived in their city, town, or village for five years or less, compared to only 20 percent of previously registered voters. This relationship should not be surprising, given that in nearly every state, moving requires re-registration as a prerequisite for voting in the next election (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978). New voters in the OSP data are also mobile, but to a much lesser extent than in the CNEP data. Why this is so is not immediately clear. Part of the discrepancy may be attributable to the fairly strict registration regime in Ohio, compared to many of the other states in the CNEP sample, some of which offer the luxury of shorter residency requirements, more generous closing dates, or Election Day Registration. This could have the effect of blocking the most mobile of Ohio citizens from getting onto the registration rolls in the first place, and thus

---

15 Ohio imposes a residency requirement of 30 days and a closing date, or the administrative deadline to register to vote, of 30 days—the maximum allowable under the National Voter Registration Act. Most states no longer have a durational registration requirement and instead regard meeting the registration deadline an effective check on residency. In 2004, the mean closing date in the United States was 21 days. Election Day Registration (EDR) refers to the process whereby citizens can register at the polls the day of the election. In 2004, six states offered their citizens EDR, and North Dakota does not require voter registration.
preclude them from having been drawn into the OSP sample. Another possible explanation for the higher mobility in the CNEP data could be the coding scheme used to identify new voters. The reader will recall from Chapter 2 that the question format of the CNEP survey does not exclude the possibility of previous voters, who moved and had to reregister, from being included as “new” voters. The question does not ask whether they were *first-time* voters, only when they registered to vote. Since this was a survey about the 2004 election, an individual who moved and reregistered as the election neared would be well within reason to report “after Labor Day” to the question, “When did you register to vote?” Whereas the OSP went through great effort to mitigate the possibility of the “newly re-registered” from being drawn into the newly registered stratum, there is no way of knowing how many of CNEP’s new voters fit this description. Inter-sample differences aside, we should not lose sight of the broader point—new voters have less stable ties to their communities because of greater mobility.

*Frequency of religious attendance.* Frequency of religious attendance is another strand in the web of social integration within one’s community. Attending services exposes one to a social environment in which political cues may be explicit, implicit, or non-existent, depending on the individual’s religion, denomination or sect, fellow parishioners or congregants, and religious leader(s). But beyond providing political cues, increased religious attendance affords citizens more opportunities to become involved with their communities. Churches, temples, and mosques conduct food drives for the poor, help victims of local natural disasters, and provide assistance to the needy. One would be hard-pressed to find a Habitat for Humanity project that did not feature the volunteer work of some church group or religious organization. Involvement with one’s
community is usually an antecedent to involvement in politics and public affairs (Putnam 2000). So we would naturally expect new voters, by definition, uninvolved in politics, to be less involved on measures of social integration, such as attendance at religious services. In Table 3.13, that is exactly what we find. New voters attended religious services significantly less frequently than more established voters—this is a statistically significant relationship in Ohio—if they attended at all. The modal category of attendance, a few times a year, is the same for both cohorts, but the percentage of new voters with this distinction is almost 15 percent higher than the percentage of established voters who attend services with the same frequency. And whereas the smallest category among the previously registered is those who never attend (16 percent), the smallest category among the newly registered is those who attend weekly (10 percent).

**Table 3.13 Frequency of Religious Attendance and Registration Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CNEP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a month</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OSP</strong>†</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a month</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CNEP $\chi^2$ 0.81  

*Weighted n* 243 1229

OSP $\chi^2$ 2.84  

*Weighted n* 23 209

*Note: cell entries represent weighted percentages. †2 cases imputed with the mean value from their respective registration cohorts. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed*
Organizational memberships. A third and obvious channel for the social flow of political information is the organizations with which an individual is affiliated. The CNEP study contains a rich battery of questions probing the depth of social involvement via organizations. Be it the PTA or local neighborhood watch, or national organization such as the AARP or Sierra Club, citizens can and do receive information of a political nature from their association with organized groups in society (Beck et al. 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). A simple additive count of respondents’ membership in any of these groups or organizations results in a distribution of organization membership ranging from 0 to 12. The distributions for both new and established voters are heavily right skewed—the majority of voters in both cohorts claim no membership in any organized group—so another Mann-Whitney nonparametric test, which does not assume a normal distribution, was employed to test for differences. The newly registered belong to an average of .73 organizations, while the previously registered belong to an average of 1.16—not substantively meaningful per se, but statistically different ($p<.001$, one-tailed). Here it is the case, as with political engagement, that new voters are not as socially connected as their more experienced counterparts. Some of this may be attributed to the lower age of the typical new voter; young people who have not established ties to their community are also much less likely to join local clubs and organizations. But membership in a national group follows one no matter where relocation occurs, so I am hesitant to suggest that all

---

16 The list encompasses a broad array of vocational, civic, and leisure activities, and includes: trade unions; professional or business associations; religious groups; political parties or groups; educational, artistic, or cultural groups; environmental groups; youth, women’s or senior citizens’ social groups; sports clubs; feminist organizations; neighborhood associations; parents’ organizations; ethnic associations; farmers’ organizations; veterans associations; fraternal and service organizations, and an “other” category, for which the respondent can supply the name. Unfortunately however, the OSP does not contain any measure of organizational memberships.
or most of the difference in group memberships can be explained by the age gap alone. There seems to be a definite, real difference between new and established voters when it comes to social engagement.

The broader issue is whether or not this lack of engagement, a known predictor of electoral participation, will hinder future involvement in politics. A voter who may have been spurred into the voting booth because of an extreme dislike for President Bush, or conversely, a fear of terrorism, will not receive the same kind of political information and interaction that flows from membership in social and civic groups and organizations, and that results from a connectedness in the community, as will someone who is socially connected and the recipient of messages that are likely to stimulate sufficient interest in elections.

PARTISANSHIP AND IDEOLOGY

That partisanship, and to a lesser extent, ideology, serve as anchors of political life in America is well-established in the annals of the voting behavior literature, and is not in question here. Nor should it be inferred that because discussion of these orientations (especially partisanship) is relegated to a small section at the end of this chapter that they somehow occupy a lowly place in the hierarchy of factors related to political behavior, when quite the opposite has been shown to be the case.  

17 Campbell et al. (1960) introduced the concept of the “funnel of causality,” in which demographics influence the structure of one’s partisanship, which in turn colors the candidate perceptions, issue positions, and even conversations the citizen has with others leading up to the vote on Election Day. Nearly fifty years later, Lewis-Beck et al. (2008) found strong support for this theoretical model.
Table 3.14 Partisanship and Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP Democrat</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEP Independent</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEP Republican</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEP</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP Democrat</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP Independent</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP Republican</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEP $\chi^2$</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted n</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP $\chi^2$</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted n</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Cell entries represent weighted percentages. Independents leaning to one party have been coded as partisans.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

Partisanship. Table 3.14 displays partisan differences between new and established voters in the 2004 election. Independents leaning to one party are coded as partisans, since these “closet partisans” typically behave in a partisan-like fashion (Keith, et al. 1992). In the CNEP data, the distribution of partisans among new voters basically equaled that of established voters. State-to-state differences can be expected, depending on targeting by the parties and campaigns, but wash out when aggregated to the national level. We do notice a larger share of Democrats than Republicans among the ranks of new voters in Ohio, although the evidence in Table 3.14 is far from definitive, owing to

---

18 Inconsistencies in the coding structure from dataset to dataset make cross-survey comparison difficult. In the CNEP, partisanship is surveyed in a cross-national format, where the concept of political independence is vague to non-existent (especially in multi-party systems) outside of the United States. Essentially, there is a series of eight questions attempting to separate supporters of a political party from non-supporters and determine the relative degree of strength among supporters, as well as the closeness felt toward each party by supporters and non-supporters alike. Great effort was expended to adapt the CNEP data to the Michigan 7-point party identification format of strong partisans, weak partisans, Independent “leaners,” and pure Independents. Refer to the Appendix for the exact details on coding. Recoding these data in this fashion does not quite approximate the distribution of partisans that can be found in the 2004 American National Election Study—CNEP includes slightly more Independents and fewer Republicans—but was the best that could be accomplished.
the lack of statistical significance from the Chi-squared test. All told, the newly registered, both in Ohio and in the rest of the United States, do not look much different from the previously registered, as far as partisanship is concerned. This gives the disinterested observer cause to wonder about the legitimacy of all the fuss by partisan lawmakers in many states over who is allowed to register to vote, when, and where.

*Ideology.* Much like partisanship (see fn 19), measurement of this construct is not consistent across the data sets employed here. The CNEP question scales ideology from 1 to 10 (liberal to conservative), with a “don’t know” option for individuals who have either no conception of their own ideology, or ideology in the abstract. The OSP, on the other hand, measures ideology using the traditional 7-point “Michigan” scale, used in the American National Election Studies since 1972, where strong ideologues anchor both the left and right ends of the scale, and movement towards the middle indicates greater weakening of ideological strength; there is also a “Haven’t thought much about it” option. To make the CNEP data conform to the OSP’s format, the 10-point scale was recoded into a four-point liberal/moderate/conservative categorization with a “don’t know” option.¹⁹

As with partisanship, nationally, there are no differences between newly and previously registered voters along ideological lines, either by accounting for the “don’t knows” (see Table 3.15) or ignoring them (data not shown). About all that can be said of the CNEP data is that the typical new voter in 2004 was slightly right of center, but that this does not statistically differ from the existing electorate to a significant degree.

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¹⁹ Values of 1-4 were recoded into “liberal,” values of 5-6 into “moderate,” and values of 7-10 into “conservative.”
Probably the only interesting finding is that, as with the previously registered, a fifth of new voters do not know how they would describe themselves ideologically.

The Ohio data, on the other hand, display a different pattern. New voters in Ohio appear to be significantly more polarized than their previously registered counterparts. Both liberals and conservatives each claim nearly a third of the newly registered among their ranks; moderates are in shorter supply among new voters as well. Even though the ideological sophistication of voters has long been questioned (e.g. Converse 1964), this finding in the Ohio data is consistent with the general, long-term polarizing trend of ideology in American politics (Abramowitz 2010). More interesting perhaps, and more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.15 Ideology and Registration Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data source:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CNEP $\chi^2 = 0.69$

| Weighted n | 243 | 1236 |

OSP $\chi^2 = 3.78$

| Weighted n | 22 | 210 |

Notes: Cell entries represent weighted percentages. In CNEP, respondents are given a scale of 1-10 and asked to place themselves (1=most liberal, 10=most conservative). The modal response was 5, probably from respondents erroneously thinking 5 is the midpoint of a 1-10 scale. So responses 1-4 were coded as liberal, 5-6 were coded as moderate, and 7-10 were coded as conservative.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed
supportive of those who suggest the American voter is still ideologically rather innocent, is the nearly one-quarter of Ohio new voters in 2004 who claimed no ideology at all, because they had not given the matter much thought. This, when contrasted with the roughly 10 percent of established voters who “haven’t thought much about it,” provides much of the mathematical justification for the higher Chi-squared statistic reported in Table 3.15.

These differences beg for explanation. Are the figures describing new voters the result of the political parties and independent interest groups having actively registered fierce ideologues in the battle to win Ohio in 2004? Or is it more likely that the fairly polarized makeup of the new voter cohort stems from citizens who either liked the president or, conversely, hated him and registered to vote on their own volition? A look at the unpackaged distribution of ideology (the full Michigan 7-point left/right scale) in the histograms below sheds a little more light on the data in Table 3.15.

**Figure 3.1 Distribution of Ideology by Registration Status**

![Distribution of Ideology by Registration Status](image)

*Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics*

The polarity of the newly registered cohort in the Ohio data seems, in part, to be a function of the coding scheme, where extreme liberals, liberals, and slight liberals (codes
1, 2, and 3, respectively, on the x-axis of the histograms) are simply collapsed into “liberal,” and extreme conservatives, conservatives, and slight conservatives (codes 5, 6, and 7) are collapsed into “conservative.” Among new voters, the frequencies of liberals, slight liberals, slight conservatives, and conservatives are very close to being equal. So when collapsed into a liberal/moderate/conservative format (as in Table 3.15), this gives more of an appearance of polarity than there actually is. It is undeniable, however, that there are fewer conservatives (6 on the x-axis) and more liberals (2 on the x-axis) among the new voter cohort than among existing voters.

The beginning of this chapter argued that many more new voters are probably mobilized to register than they are willing to admit, but it is likely an exaggeration to say that the frequencies reported in the lower half of Table 3.15 came about from the streets of cities, towns, and villages throughout Ohio being combed for unregistered liberals and conservatives in 2004. The high-stimulus nature of the presidential election and the polarizing essence of the two candidates probably drove many to take matters into their own hands.

The bigger question is why we see statistically significant differences in Ohio and not in the rest of the nation. As with so many of the other bivariate findings reported in this chapter, these differences most likely exist because the presidential campaign is not waged nationwide, but in only a handful of competitive states, such as Ohio. It simply stands to reason therefore, that many campaign effects will be more evident in these battlegrounds than in the vast hinterland of electoral landscape written-off by the parties and campaigns as either “un-winnable” or “in-the-bag” for their side.
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Thus far, I have examined a host of bivariate relationships between length of voter registration (newly registered versus previously registered) and several demographic, political, and social variables. Bivariate relationships are good starting points in painting a descriptive picture of the new voter, but cannot be the final word. A multivariate model is needed to control for the simultaneous influence of all the various characteristics examined thus far. A regression analysis will not only root out spurious relationships, but also allow us to see which variables have the most explanatory power. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 below present graphical representations of two logistic regression models, one for each data set examined here. The dependent variable for each model is the probability of being a new voter. Ordinal-level categorical variables, such as age group, education, and income percentile have been recoded such that higher codes represent higher values of the predictor. Nominal-level categorical variables have been dummied out with one category excluded from each model as a reference. All dummy variables have been coded 1=the characteristic, 0=does not. Variables that remain statistically significant even when accounting for the influence of other variables in the model are identified with asterisks. The size of each bar represents its standardized regression coefficient, or how much explanatory power the independent variable has on the likelihood of being a new voter. The larger the bar, the more important it is as a characteristic of new voters. Bars to the right of zero indicate that higher values of that factor make one more likely to be a new voter; bars to the left of zero indicate the opposite. The model coefficients, standard errors, and goodness-of-fit statistics can be found in the Appendix C.
Figure 3.2 Multivariate Model of New Voters, United States (2004)

Determinants of New Voters (CNEP)

*New voters are significantly younger, less educated, and more racially diverse than established voters; mobility has the greatest effect.*


Notes: Entries are standardized regression coefficients from a logistic regression analysis; each bar represents the magnitude and direction of the predictor's effect on the probability of being a new voter. For partisanship and ideology, Independents and "Don't Know/Haven't Thought About It" are the reference categories, respectively.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

What becomes clear after inspection of the results for both samples is that the new voters of 2004 were young, racially diverse, and mobile. Nationwide, they had the added characteristic of being less educated, on average, than established voters. In Ohio, the newly registered were also less politically engaged and attended church less frequently. Ideologically speaking, they were less likely to be moderate or liberal as they were unsure of their ideology (since the “Haven’t thought much about it” option was excluded as the reference category).
Figure 3.3 Multivariate Model of New Voters, Ohio (2004)

Determinants of New Voters (OSP)

New voters are more racially diverse, more mobile, less politically engaged, attend church less regularly, and are less ideologically grounded than established voters; youth has the greatest effect.

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics

Notes: Entries are standardized regression coefficients from a logistic regression analysis; each bar represents the magnitude and direction of the predictor’s effect on the probability of being a new voter. For partisanship and ideology, Independents and "Don't Know/Haven't Thought About It" are the reference categories, respectively.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

If we are willing to accept a more generous level of significance (p<.10, one-tailed), then the internal efficacy variable suggests another point of divergence between new and established voters—lower self-confidence in their ability to comprehend the complexities of politics.

An interesting observation about Figures 3.2 and 3.3 is that, despite there being no significant partisan implications of electoral novices entering the political system per se—the standard errors for the partisanship dummy variables are too high—the picture of the new participant that emerges from these models does not fit the description of the
average George W. Bush voter that scholars have come to accept, but instead seems
closer to an archetypal Kerry voter—young, non-white, less educated, and in Ohio, fairly
un-churched. But a modification to the coding structure of the partisan dummy variables
changes this, and sheds a different light on the story of the Ohio new voter of 2004.

“Leaners,” or respondents at first claiming independence from a political party,
but upon further probing confess leaning to either the Republicans or Democrats, are
coded as partisans in this study, in line with an influential strain of research (mentioned
earlier in this chapter) that claims these “closet partisans” often behave as admitted
partisans. But recoding them as Independents, and making the Democrat and Republican
dummies in the models represent only strong and weak partisans makes the Republican
coefficient, still negative, significant \(p<.01\). Everything else in the model remains the
same, save for the political engagement variable, which remains significantly different
from zero only at \(p<.10\). All of the other signs and relationships remain unchanged.
Since Independents are the reference category, these modified results suggest that new
voters are significantly less likely to be Republicans as they are Independents, all else
being equal. This adds a partisan hue to the portrait of the Ohio new voter of 2004, and
suggests that, whether they were mobilized by anti-Bush or pro-Kerry forces, or
registered to vote on their own initiative, new voters in the Buckeye state were not so
much aligned with the Democrats as they were against the Republicans. An even better
way to describe them would be voters with weak partisan attachments. This squares with
decades of literature, going back to the holy scriptures of the voting behavior field itself,
*The American Voter*, that suggest citizens with the strongest partisan ties are most likely
to vote. New voters’ weaker party attachments correspond to their status, by definition, as heretofore uninvolved in the world of electoral politics.20

A few of the significant bivariate relationships examined earlier in this chapter washed out when examined in a multivariate context, meaning that these apparent associations were really driven by some other factor or factors. In the national data, these included income and political efficacy (both internal and external), while the union household and Protestant dummies were the two variables in the Ohio data fitting this description. The spurious nature of income and efficacy can largely be explained away by age—younger people earn less, on average, than those with established careers, and younger people, with their electoral innocence, do not have sufficient experience with the political system to instill the requisite confidence in government responsiveness to elections or in their individual capacities to understand politics.

It is unclear what factor is the driving force behind the association between union households and length of registration in Ohio however. Earlier in this chapter, it was speculated that there was a lower union household presence among new voters because they tend to be younger and not in unionized occupations. But when age was removed from the model and the model was re-estimated, nothing changed. That is, union household affiliation did not “become” significant. Whatever the real cause of the original bivariate association in Table 3.7, union household affiliation is not a characteristic we would strongly associate with new voters in any case. The spurious relationship with the Protestant variable is easier to explain though. While Table 3.10

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20 This change in the coding structure of the partisan dummy variables produces no differences in the CNEP model, only the OSP data are affected.
indicates a rather robust relationship between religion and length of registration (p<.001), the Protestant variable in the models of Figures 3.2 and 3.3 is actually a dichotomization of the religion variable. A good deal of the differences in Table 3.10 are between new and previously registered Catholics, Jews, those of miscellaneous religions, and those with no religion whatsoever. To keep the regressions pictured in Figures 3.2 and 3.3 as parsimonious as possible, I recoded religion into a binary Protestant/non-Protestant variable. When examined against length of registration in a simple cross-tabulation (not shown), there are no significant differences between Protestants and non-Protestants among new and established voters. So it should come as no surprise that the same dummy variable fails to attain statistical significance when examined in a multivariate context.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began by examining possible relationships between length of registration and an array of demographic, political, and social variables, first in bivariate investigations, and then in a multivariate context. Some of these variables, such as age, race, and length of residence, revealed significant differences between the two cohorts of voters across both data sets. It was also the case that I uncovered differences between the newly and previously registered in one data set and not the other. This tells us that the characteristics of new voters are not geographically universal. State-to-state variation of new voter characteristics is to be expected. Voters are not the same in each state; new voters should not be any different. So it should not be alarming that, new voters in the nationwide data are less educated than established voters, but there are no educational
differences between them in the Ohio sample. In the same vein, religious attendance was negatively associated with new voters in Ohio, yet the same variable did not seem to make a difference in the nationwide sample. The populations are different, so one would expect the samples to differ accordingly. What can be said of new voters across the board is that they are younger, more racially diverse, and more mobile than their previously registered peers. This can be stated with great confidence. In Ohio, the new voters of 2004 were also less politically engaged, ideologically grounded and, depending on how we operationalize partisans, not as strongly tied to a party (especially the Republican Party) as established voters. This may be peculiar only to Ohio, the mother of all battleground states, or it may have been a pattern that existed in other competitive states for the Bush-Kerry election. The limitations of the data employed in this study preclude a more definitive answer. With a demographic, political, and social profile of the newly registered voter now in hand, the obvious question remains, “How do new voters vote, or do they?” It is to this question I now turn.
CHAPTER 4

HOW DO NEW VOTERS VOTE? OR DO THEY?

Now that a demographic sketch of new voters has been established, it is in order to consider just how new voters behave in the electoral arena. Several questions merit attention. First, how many of those who register to vote for the first time, actually make it to the polls to vote? All the talk of registering people to vote means very little if the newly registered are nowhere to be found on Election Day. Second, how do new voters vote? We have already seen evidence that new voters enter the electorate as a bloc no more predisposed to be Republicans than Democrats (depending on how we operationalize partisanship). This would suggest that, much like Campbell’s peripheral voters, new voters have a tendency to support the candidate most favored by the political winds. Third, and most importantly, do new voters keep voting? A large drop-off after an initial exposure to politics, such as a hotly contested presidential election, potentially reflects a failure of the political system to keep these voters engaged in democratic decision-making. Worse yet, a permanent lapse in participation can be a troubling sign for the future of democracy. Our system of government cannot sustain itself if voters who exit the electorate are not replaced with new voters who become regular voters. Each of these questions is difficult to answer in isolation. For example, the winning candidate’s margin of victory is often a product of turnout, rates of party loyalty, or a
product of the two, among other factors. It is easier and more fruitful to explore these questions in the context of individual elections, as the “story” of new voters evolves. In the sections below, I follow such a path, attempting to bring clarity to this story with an examination of data from the Cross-National Election Project and the Ohio Survey of Politics.


It may seem improbable that such a hotly contested election in such a polarized political atmosphere would see any newly registered voters missing in action on Election Day. But recall from Cain and McCue’s research (1983), cited earlier in this study, that the attrition from the time of initial registration to the time of the election can be considerable. Table 4.1 addresses this phenomenon by displaying the percentages of registrants in each cohort who voted in the election of 2004, for both data sources. Looking at the top half of the table, we can see that about 9 percent of the newly registered nationwide never actually voted in 2004. The good news is, 91 percent did. While statistically different from the proportion of the previously registered that voted, the substantive difference is not as great; over 90 percent of both cohorts voted in the high-stimulus election of 2004. But, as expected, those with more experience in electoral politics voted at slightly higher rates.
Table 4.1  Turnout by Registration Status (2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP*</td>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>90.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not vote</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP**</td>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not vote</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEP $\chi^2$ Cases</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP $\chi^2$ Cases</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages of reported turnout.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

Recall, though, that these data are reported turnout, and reported turnout is almost always overstated in surveys of voting behavior. It is tempting to use this as an explanation for the difference in attrition between the national and Ohio data. But the actual rate of over-reporting in the OSP (for the 2004 election, anyhow) is less than 2 percent, with a few more previously registered respondents doing so than new registrants. Since that explanation is insufficient, the next logical culprit would naturally be the higher sampling error in the OSP, resulting from its smaller sample size; the “real” population value of non-voters might be closer to the 9.3 percent figure cited by the CNEP. But according to the aggregate data contained in the Ohio voter file, the figures for new voters represented in the bottom half of Table 4.1 are quite accurate.1 Probably

1From the aggregate data in the Ohio voter file, I was able to ascertain that 19.7 percent of the newly registered abstained in 2004 (versus 17.1 percent in Table 4.1), compared to 17.7 percent of the previously registered (versus 4.4 percent in Table 4.1). There will always be more “dead weight” among the previously registered, as some of these citizens no doubt moved out of state or recently died, and at the time the sample was drawn, were simply not removed from the registration rolls, due to the systematic and time-consuming process for purging placed on elections officials by the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.
the best explanation for the inter-survey difference is the competitive nature of Ohio in 2004, relative to most other states, many of which are represented in the CNEP. The flurry of registration activity by parties and interest groups in such an environment is bound to sweep up many new registrants who are well-meaning, but for whatever reason, never make it to vote. There are also those who will sign a voter registration card just to get some volunteer out of their face. No matter the reason, the conclusion to be drawn is that in the presidential election of 2004, nearly one out of every five Ohioans who registered to vote did not make it to the polls.

These statistics can be contemplated as sobering or salubrious, depending upon one’s outlook. On the face of it, something would seem to be wrong if 20 percent of new registrants are falling through the cracks and not making it into the voting booth. This could indicate a lack of follow-up from the parties or groups who may have registered these individuals in the first place. For the apolitical citizen, unschooled in the procedures of electoral participation, knowing what to do after getting past the registration hurdle (especially if someone else helps him overcome this hurdle) could seem rather bewildering. The would-be voter may well wonder, “What do I do now? Where do I go? What do I need to bring with me?” Such attrition may also point to the most mobile among us becoming ensnared in the re-registration trap (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass 1987) if a move happens to take place just after getting registered.
On the other hand, eight out of every ten new registrants actually voting sounds quite acceptable. There are many things in our society for which a rate or score of 80 percent is “above average.” Many college students, for instance, are quite happy to receive a “B-” on an exam; while not an “A,” it is better than a “C.” In the context of survey research, any social scientist would be thrilled to receive an 80 percent response rate to a panel survey (the first wave being akin to the act of registration itself, and the second wave response being equivalent to participation in the election). Or, to use an analogy from the world of sports, a football quarterback with an 80 percent pass completion rate would be considered a star quarterback. Considering how difficult it is to get young people and those with limited interest in politics to vote in the first place, advocates of voting should be so lucky that such a large number of new registrants actually vote at all. The correlates of turnout versus abstention will be examined in the next chapter. For now, let us next proceed the important matter of electoral choice for those who actually turn out to vote.

Turning our attention now to candidate choice, the question of whom candidates support is perhaps the question of greatest interest to political scientists and observers of politics alike. It stands to reason that new voters will not necessarily swing the weight of their support behind the same party’s candidate election after election. To the extent they vote as a bloc at all, a more reasonable hypothesis would suggest that new voters disproportionately support the candidate most favored by the short-term political forces of the immediate campaign. This would be keeping in line with the theoretical expectation that they are like Campbell’s peripheral voters, lacking firm party
attachments and possessing a more modest interest in politics than core voters, thus making them susceptible to the general political winds of the times.

In 2004, the political winds were with the incumbent president, George W. Bush, although these winds were not exactly gale force. The public gave him high marks on his handling of terrorism and viewed him as a strong leader, while John Kerry’s most admired quality was that he was not George Bush (Lewis-Beck, et al. 2008, Ch. 3). In what was a hard-fought campaign, in an increasingly polarized environment, the issue of terrorism and national security helped Bush eek out a narrow victory. But in a bit of a departure from the traditional campaign mentality, Bush’s reelection team focused on mobilizing his conservative base first, giving only ancillary concern to swaying Independents and “undecideds” (Shaw 2006). Indeed, data from the 2004 American National Election Study indicate that it was actually John Kerry who won Independents—by a convincing 58 percent.\(^2\) This is relevant in that the Independent citizen more closely resembles the new voter more than those who more readily concede they are either Republicans or Democrats. Independents are not especially politically engaged, have somewhat lower education levels, and have little in the way of ideological grounding—classic elements of the typical new voter. So if Independents were not particularly wooed by the candidate with the political wind at his back, and did not so accordingly act, perhaps we should not expect new voters, who are akin to (but not the same as) Independents, to behave in a similar fashion. This would give us reason to expect new voters to side with Kerry, just like the Independents. On the other hand, mobilizing unregistered weekly churchgoers would be keeping in line with the “base

\(^2\) “Pure” independents, or those totally devoid of any party attachments.
first” strategy of Bush’s team, if indeed reality lived up to the hype of the mobilization efforts targeted at that constituency. This would give us reason to expect new voters to side with Bush. But as we saw in Chapter 3, the new voters of 2004 were not an especially church-going lot, casting doubt on this hypothesis. Recall though, the theoretical avenues laid out in Chapter 2 by which one could become a new voter—concern over a salient political issue, such as terrorism. This is an instance in which we would expect new voters to side with Bush. Essentially, we have several valid reasons to expect new voters to have swung either way in 2004. This presents the classic rationale for using a two-tailed test of statistical significance. Table 4.2 below presents the results of such a test, for both the CNEP and the OSP.

**Table 4.2 Two-Party Presidential Vote and Registration Status (2004)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source:</th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNEP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush-R</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry-D</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush-R</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry-D</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEP $\chi^2$</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP $\chi^2$</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Cell entries represent weighted percentages of reported vote. Validated voters only.

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$, two-tailed

Looking first at the national data, new voters supported Democrat John Kerry a full 12 percentage points more than Republican George W. Bush. In Ohio, the difference
was about half that—6 percent. As in the discussion on turnout above, Ohio was a fiercely competitive political environment in 2004, and both parties sought to register voters thought to be sympathetic to their candidates, so this closer distribution seems plausible, on its face. There is a much greater inference to be drawn from these data though: in neither instance were the frequencies for new and established voters significantly different from each other. This is important, as it means new voters entered the electorate in 2004 as statistical clones of existing voters on the registration rolls, at least when it came to candidate preference. The large differences between the newly and previously registered in the bottom half of Table 4.2 would lead the untrained observer to conclude that new voters were lopsidedly pro-Kerry and existing voters were lopsidedly pro-Bush. But not reported in the table is the probability that we could expect these differences due to the chance vagaries of random sampling error ($p=0.13$). This is well beyond the conventional standards of significance testing accepted by the scientific community. The substantive conclusion to be drawn from these data is that any claims of “this” constituency or “that” constituency of theretofore unmobilized voters having been brought into the electorate to swing the election of 2004 should be looked upon with great skepticism.

To explain the voting behavior of new versus established voters, I have estimated a very simple model of vote choice, using the CNEP data. I am unable to do this with the OSP for 2004, since the attitudes in that survey were measured in 2006. I have heretofore

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3 In the CNEP data, an inescapable conclusion is that both cohorts of registered voters supported the Democratic challenger by a majority. Even though the Knowledge Networks survey organization post-stratified these data on a number of population benchmarks (see Chapter 2), Kerry voters are somewhat overrepresented in the sample, and the actual popular vote election results fall slightly outside of the survey’s 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate.
been able to discuss only the actual choice (Bush versus Kerry) with OSP data since an item in the questionnaire asked respondents whom they voted for in 2004, to the extent they voted at all. The model below is theoretically well specified, despite its parsimony. It embodies the “holy trinity” familiar to students of voting behavior research—partisan orientations, candidate evaluations, and issue importance. These three variables, as it turns out, explain an overwhelming amount of the variation in candidate choice.

Table 4.3 displays the logistic regression coefficients and linearized standard errors for the probability of voting Democratic in 2004. Partisanship is represented by dichotomous variables for Republican identification (1=Republican, 0=not Republican) and Democratic identification (1=Democrat, 0=not Democrat), while Independents serve as the reference category. Candidate attitudes are represented by a four-point ordinal scale that measures respondents’ feelings toward President Bush, ranging from “angry” to “enthusiastic,” such that higher values represent greater affect. Finally, the issue dimension of the holy trinity is captured by the modal “most important issue” to all respondents who voted—the economy. It too, is a dichotomous variable that takes on the value of 1 if respondents thought the economy was the most important issue, and 0 otherwise. To the right of each column of coefficients is the simulated change in

---

4 This variable is a rescaled version of the original CNEP item, which amounts to a “feeling thermometer” ranging from 0 to 10, with higher values representing “warmer” feelings. To comport to the Likert scales in the OSP for comparison with later elections, values of 0 to 1 were recoded as “angry,” 2-4 as “dissatisfied, but not angry,” 6-8 “satisfied, but not enthusiastic,” and 9-10 “enthusiastic.” Cases selecting the middle category of 5 were deleted from analysis, since there is no middle category in the OSP.

5 Michael Lewis-Beck and his colleagues (2008, Chp. 3) demonstrate through analysis of responses to open-ended questions in the 2004 American National Election Study that terrorism was the most prominent concern among voters, although the war in Iraq was a very close second. Generally, voters concerned with terrorism voted for Bush, while voters with Iraq at the “top of their head” preferred Kerry. In the CNEP sample, the economy, the war on terror, and the war in Iraq were the top three issues, but in the interest of avoiding a “kitchen sink” regression, I model only the modal issue.
probability \((Y=1)\) going from the minimum to the maximum value of the independent variable, holding all covariates at their means.

**Table 4.3 Model of Vote Choice (2004)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor:</th>
<th>Newly registered</th>
<th></th>
<th>Previously registered</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>First Difference</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>First Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>-1.41</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-3.07***</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.50)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>3.64**</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.61***</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.15)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush approval</td>
<td>-2.18***</td>
<td>-0.90</td>
<td>-3.15***</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.40)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy most important issue</td>
<td>2.97*</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.18*</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.32)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.60)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.75**</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.80***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.32)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.87)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-2Log-Likelihood          | 50.22            | 176.09                |
Nagelkerke R²              | 0.90             | 0.94                  |
Cases                      | 192              | 1025                  |

*Source: Cross-National Election Project.*

*Notes: Entries in the left column of each cohort represent weighted logistic regression coefficients for the probability of voting Democratic, linearized standard errors in parentheses. The right column of each cohort displays the simulated changes in probability of voting Democratic going from the minimum value of the predictor to its maximum value, while holding all other predictors at their means. Independents are the reference category. Two-party vote only.*

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed*

The direction of the coefficients, their significance, and the associated first differences tell an interesting story. First of all, partisanship has more explanatory power for established voters. Even though newly registered voters enter the electorate no more Republican or Democratic than the previously registered (see Chapter 3), Republicans and Democrats who have experience in electoral politics are both significantly more likely to vote how we expect them to, than are Independent voters of their cohort. Only Democratic-identifying new voters were significantly more likely to vote for Kerry than
Independents. The negative sign affixed to the Republican coefficient means Republican new voters were no less likely to vote for Kerry (meaning more likely to vote for Bush) than were Independent new voters, controlling for the other dimensions of the holy trinity. This suggests that in the face of the economy and general attitudes about Bush, it was actually the Democrats who enjoyed greater party loyalty among voters entering the electorate.

But contrary to expectations, partisanship was not the variable with the most explanatory power, even though the first difference for Democratic identification is twice the size of the same for established voters. Attitudes toward Bush did a great deal of the talking, once the impact of partisanship and issue attitudes is controlled. The typical new voter was 90 percent less likely to vote Democratic if she strongly approved of George W. Bush as opposed to strongly disapproving of him, ceteris paribus. This figure balloons to 98 percent among the previously registered, suggesting he was an even more polarizing figure among this cohort. And even though the coefficients for both Republican and Democratic identification are significant for these voters, their impacts on the probability of voting Democratic are the exact reverse what they were for the newly registered, suggesting that among established voters, it was Republican voters who were more loyal.

The economy was more blunted in its impact on the vote. Generally speaking, an individual, regardless of cohort, who thought the economy was the paramount issue in the election was more likely to vote Democratic, controlling for partisanship and attitudes toward Bush. But for new voters, the first difference is almost twice what it is for established voters, suggesting not only that issues perhaps play a greater role for them
than they do for their more established peers, but also that in line with the theory laid out in Chapter 2, issues play a role in bringing them to the polls in the first place.

THE MIDTERM ELECTION OF 2006: THE DROP-OFF PROBLEM

Read any standard textbook on political behavior, and the section on voter turnout is sure to display a chart depicting a familiar pattern to students of American elections: a longitudinal “zig-zag” line of alternating higher and lower turnout, the former representing presidential elections, and the latter, midterms. Some Americans only vote every four years, and call it good. This sub-presidential election “drop-off” averages about 15 percent, according to the American National Election Studies. Who exactly these voters are has been the subject of surprisingly little inquiry by political scientists, but what research has been done (Campbell 1960; Wolfinger, Rosenstone, McIntosh 1981) suggests that midterm electorates are essentially subsets of presidential ones, with two caveats: interest in politics and age. To this, I add another: length of registration. If data from the OSP are any indication, it turns out that voting in midterm elections is a job for established voters only; new voters need not apply.

Table 4.4 below displays the turnout among new and established voters for the midterm election of 2006, aggregated by cohort. An alternative way of presenting these data would be to report the turnout of 2004 voters only, since a few individuals failed to vote in 2004, but voted in 2006. One can virtually count these people on one hand though, so in the interest of preserving cases, the turnout figures, aggregated by cohort are presented in Table 4.4.

Recall that slightly over 80 percent of the newly registered voted in 2004, while roughly 90 percent of the previously registered did the same (Table 4.1). In 2006 that figure plummets to 30 percent for new voters,
representing a cohort drop-off of some 50 percent. Meanwhile, the drop-off among established voters hovers around a much less-shocking 30 percent.

**Table 4.4** Validated Turnout (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not vote</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = 15.53^{***} \)

| Cases | 104 | 127 |

*Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages of reported turnout.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

Whereas Table 4.1 (turnout in the presidential election of 2004) displayed reported turnout, since there was only a miniscule difference between reported and validated turnout in that election, the table above displays validated turnout. In the 2006 election, misreporting was a problem. Established voters misreported at a rate of about 7 percent, which is nothing atypical in a normal election, although vote validation studies tend to concentrate on misreporting in presidential contests (Clausen 1968; Silver, Anderson, and Abramson 1986; Traugott 1989; Burden 2000). New voters, by way of contrast, misreported at double that—14 percent. The higher level of misreporting likely had little to do with the question format, since the OSP utilized the experimental turnout question used in the 2004 American National Election Study,\(^7\) which has been shown to reduce the incidence of misreporting (Lewis-Beck, et al. 2008, 89). Additionally, the OSP is a mail survey, and mail surveys tend to elicit higher truthfulness from

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\(^7\) This question has a response set that offers respondents several opportunities to admit not voting in a more socially acceptable way. The question read as follows: “In talking to people about elections, we have found it is the case where people were not able to vote because they didn’t think they were registered, they were sick, or they just didn’t have the time. In terms of the election last November, which of the following statements best describes you? 1) I did not vote in the election; 2) I thought about voting, but didn’t; 3) I usually vote, but didn’t this time; 4) I don’t remember whether I voted or not; and 5) I am sure I voted.
respondents, since there is no interviewer to impress (Weisberg 2005, Chap. 3). New voters most likely misreported at twice the rate of established voters because they knew they *should* have voted, but did not.

The incredible drop-off of new voters, following a high-stimulus electoral affair such as the presidential election of 2004, is one of the most striking observations in this entire study. One does not have to think too hard to figure out why there is such sub-presidential abstention by new voters—they are predominantly young, and less politically engaged. Recall though the third hypothesis from Chapter 2: the very youngest, most politically engaged new voters will be exempt from the drop-off problem. Unfortunately, this cannot be tested, as the OSP contains only 3 cases of new voters aged 18-21 that score above the mean in political engagement. The hard statistical facts that remain though square with previous research on midterm “drop-outs” mentioned at the beginning of this section and serve as the basis for the all-important question to be addressed in the next chapter: what can and/or *should* be done about it? For now though, let us address the issue of what this abstention has on the voting choice of the new voters who actually make it to the polls.

Because we have at least an idea of the voting proclivity of citizens who the electorate in 2004 (even though they did not differ significantly from established voters in a partisan sense), one might think there is less uncertainty when it comes to how we might expect them to have voted in the midterm election of 2006. But uncertainty can manifest itself in many ways. On the one hand, we would expect the new voters who voted in 2006 to carry their slight Democratic bent with them. If Republicans and Democrats abstained in equal proportions, this is probably what we would find. But
decades of data from the American National Election Studies have taught scholars that abstention is not uniform across the partisan spectrum. Indeed, in every year of the election time-series, save for 1992, a higher percentage of Democrats than Republicans failed to vote. Democrats, it seems, have a chronic abstention problem. So in this regard, we could rightly expect this inertia to take its toll on the new voters who identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, and be reflected in the support evinced for the party’s gubernatorial candidate. Here again, these dueling expectations warrant the use of a two-tailed statistical test to determine significance.

Table 4.5 demonstrates that the 6 percentage-point difference in support for the Republican and Democratic candidates among new voters in the 2004 Ohio election ballooned to an astounding 44 percent in 2006! This is still not significantly different from the behavior of established voters, who were also lopsided in their support for the Democratic candidate for governor. Such a lurch to the Democrats could be due to several factors, each plausible in its own right. First of all, new voters could have changed the party allegiances they had when they entered the electorate in 2004. Although individual wholesale partisan change is rare in American politics (Sears and Funk 1999; Jennings 2007), it is more likely to occur proximate to the time of party identification formation (Converse 1976). Secondly, a drop-off in turnout from one or two of the three partisan groups could have accounted for this increased support for the Democrats, assuming party loyalty remained fairly constant from 2004 to 2006. The

---

8 All of the analysis for the 2006 midterm election will be on the gubernatorial race, since many respondents in both cohorts either did not bother to vote for a congressional candidate in their district, or were indifferent. Analyzing the governor’s race allows me to make the most of the cases I have.
third explanation does not presume constancy in party loyalty, but suggests instead that a
number of Republicans simply defected from their party’s candidate.

Table 4.5 Ohio Two-Party Gubernatorial Vote by Registration Status (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackwell-R</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strickland-D</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = 0.92 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, two-tailed

Unfortunately, this first hypothesis is untestable with the data at hand; partisanship was measured after the 2006 election, and not after the Bush-Kerry contest of 2004. Data from both time points are needed to properly investigate this causal explanation. The second and third hypotheses can be investigated with the OSP data however, and such analyses are undertaken below.

Table 4.6 presents the rates of turnout among newly and previously registered voters for both 2004 and 2006. Because the OSP’s sample size is relatively small, the confidence intervals surrounding the estimates are rather high. Because of this, and the fact that some cells contain fewer than 30 cases, we can only interpret these figures in terms of vague generalities, rather than as precise estimates of the population. Nevertheless, we can draw three basic conclusions from Table 4.6. First, as discussed at the beginning of this section, previously registered voters experienced less drop-off among all three groups of partisans. This is consistent with theoretical expectations that they are more akin to Campbell’s “core” voters, while the newly registered behave most
Table 4.6  Ohio Turnout and Partisanship, by year (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NRV</td>
<td>PRV</td>
<td>NRV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(49)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Cell entries represent weighted percentages of validated turnout. Columns do not total to 100. “NRV” and “PRV” represent “Newly Registered Voters” and “Previously Registered Voters,” respectively. Cases in parentheses.

like “peripheral” voters in midterm elections. Second, the greatest drop-off occurs among Independent new voters, although it is doubtful that the difference in turnout from one election to the next was almost 79 points. It is also not likely that previously registered Independents saw an increase in turnout from 2004 to 2006; this is almost assuredly the product of sampling error. Third, and most important to the hypothesis under consideration, the greatest drop-off among new voters came from Republicans. The drop-off among previously registered Republicans and Democrats was essentially the same though, suggesting that perhaps the new voters of the disadvantaged party in the midterm will suffer from greater rates of abstention. The Republican Party, both nationally and in Ohio, was scandal-plagued in 2006. Public dissatisfaction with the war in Iraq was mounting, and George W. Bush’s popularity was lower than Richard Nixon’s when he left the White House in disgrace (Sabato 2008). It does not strain credulity a great deal to imagine how a general partisan malaise can take hold and deter novice voters who affiliate with the party of public scorn from bothering to vote in an election they are predicted to badly lose. Established voters, by virtue of their greater experience
with the political system, as well as their more-developed habit of voting, are likely better able to repel the urge to abstain under such conditions.

To examine the third hypothesis—that of partisan defection—we need to compare the percentage of partisans supporting their party’s candidate for both cohorts of voters, for both elections. Table 4.7 presents the relationship between party identification and vote choice for both newly and previously registered voters, for the elections of 2004 and 2006. Because the number of cases in the cells containing Independent voters is woefully insufficient, I am unable to make any real inferences about them. And as noted in the discussion of the turnout hypothesis, survey error is undoubtedly responsible for the lack of variation in some cells, so caution is warranted in the interpretation of these data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newly Registered</th>
<th></th>
<th>Previously Registered</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bush-R</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry-D</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(48)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(34)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackwell-R</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strickland-D</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(33)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(47)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: Cell entries represent weighted percentages. Number of cases in parentheses.*

Focusing first on the Democrats and Republicans in 2004, the data in Table 4.7 conform to previous expectations—partisans were highly loyal to their parties, and this bivariate relationship did not vary by length of registration. Fewer than 10 percent of

---

9 For instance, neither previously nor newly registered Democratic voters in the election of 2006 claimed to have voted for the Republican gubernatorial candidate, Ken Blackwell. Ohio Democrats were unusually party loyal in that election, but not that party loyal. For this reason, and the small number of cases in several of the cells, the \( \chi^2 \) statistic is not displayed, since it runs into computational difficulties in scenarios such as this.
both Democrats and Republicans, irrespective of their status as new or established voters, defected to the other side.\textsuperscript{10} Two years later, in the midterm election of 2006, there was a clear difference between the parties, however. Roughly a quarter of Republicans in both registration cohorts defected to the Democratic Party’s candidate. Democrats, on the other hand, exhibited uncharacteristically high rates of loyalty,\textsuperscript{11} although survey error accounts for the total absence of either newly or previously registered Democrats defecting to the Republican candidate. To make sense of the frequencies in Table 4.7 above (the two-party share of the vote by registration cohort), it is unnecessary to show that defection was substantial, only that enough of it took place that, when combined with the lower turnout for Republican new voters relative to their Democratic counterparts, such broad support for the Democratic candidate becomes understandable.

The defection story is buttressed by Table 4.8 below, which is the same multivariate model estimating the impact of the “holy trinity” on vote choice that I presented to explain the election of 2004, but for the midterm election in 2006 instead.\textsuperscript{12} What is different about Tables 4.7 and 4.8 is the more revealing picture we get from the controlled nature of the data in the multivariate model. While the midterm Republican voters in each cohort defected at about the same rate, the defection was for different

\textsuperscript{10} Recall, however, from the multivariate model in Table 4.3 above, that once other factors such as attitudes toward Bush and the importance of the economy as an issue were controlled, Republicans were not significantly more loyal to their party, while the Democrats were to theirs.

\textsuperscript{11} As with turnout, American National Election Study time-series data show that, with the exception of 1964 and 1992, Democrats also have a loyalty problem when it comes to the percentage of Democrats who defect from their party, relative to the percentage of Republicans who do the same.

\textsuperscript{12} Because no Democrats in the survey, either newly or previously registered, claimed to have voted for Ken Blackwell, the Republican, one observation in each cohort had to be arbitrarily changed to a Republican vote, just to provide some kind of variation for analysis. Otherwise, the Democrat dummy variable perfectly predicted the outcome variable.
reasons. Established Republican voters were still more likely to vote for the Republican candidate than were Independent voters from their cohort. But nothing else significantly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor:</th>
<th>Newly registered</th>
<th></th>
<th>Previously registered</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>-1.62</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-3.37**</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>2.44*</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.46)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush approval</td>
<td>-1.13*</td>
<td>-0.53</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy most</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important issue</td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.83)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.20*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.81*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.81)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.47)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-2Log-Likelihood    28.54          | 68.81          |
Nagelkerke $R^2$     0.71           | 0.65           |
Cases                56             | 104            |

Source: Ohio Survey of Politics.
Note: entries in the left column of each cohort represent weighted logistic regression coefficients for the probability of voting Democratic, linearised standard errors in parentheses. The right column of each cohort displays the simulated changes in probability of voting Democratic going from the minimum value of the predictor to its maximum value, while holding all other predictors at their means. Independents are the reference category. Two-party vote only.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

explains the vote of established voters. Both Democratic partisanship and attitudes toward Bush made new voters less likely to vote for the Republican running for governor. There is a slim chance this stems from the controversial role Ken Blackwell played as Ohio’s Secretary of State and simultaneous chairman of the Ohio Bush-Cheney reelection committee, but the overwhelming odds favor the real reason being the foul mood of the electorate toward Bush as the incumbent president, and new voters taking out this
aggression on candidates of his party, as previous research predicts (Tufts 1975; Piereson 1975; Abramowitz 1985; Campbell 1986; Erikson 1988; Sabato 2008).

The story of new voters for the election of 2006 is one of abstention and defection by identifiers of the party bucking the political winds. What I cannot say for sure, but strongly suspect, is that this is a general pattern among new voters in election cycles—a time of excitement for and loyalty to one’s party when brought into the electoral system in a presidential year, followed by a period of lackluster enthusiasm that inhibits turnout and somewhat retards loyalty in the next midterm. The dearth of excitement by adherents to the disadvantaged party—almost always the party who won the presidency two years prior—may not even stem from the predictions of electoral doom that trickle from media elites down to the masses. The abstention probably has more to do with new voters simply not having the experience in the political system to make the connection that second-order elections are important too. It may also be that the habit of voting (Plutzer 2002; Nickerson 2004) has not quite taken hold. Alternatively, since political parties have a great tendency to mobilize regular over infrequent voters (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Beck and Heidemann 2010), new voters may merely be getting “passed over.” As the next chapter will demonstrate, there is probably something to this idea. Of course, the pattern we saw in 2006 may have simply been a function of the candidates themselves. The Republicans nominated a candidate for governor in Ken Blackwell, who was seen as far to the right of the median Ohio voter, while the Democrats picked a fairly centrist congressman from the economically progressive, socially conservative region of southeastern Ohio. Given though, that most midterm elections are referenda on the sitting president, it would be unwise to overemphasize the above explanation as a causal
factor in presidential party midterm loss. The first difference for new voters associated with the Bush approval independent variable speaks volumes: once partisanship and the importance attached to the economy are controlled, a new voter dissatisfied with President Bush was 53 percent less likely to vote for Ken Blackwell than the voter’s statistical twin who was enthusiastic about the president. This is “presidential punishment” (Erikson 1988) in action. Why we do not see the same level of retribution among established voters is not entirely clear, but like so many of the other findings in this chapter, probably stems from the lack of experience new voters have with the political system. Perhaps their naïveté makes them simply more eager to “lash out” at unpopular politicians...when they bother to vote.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2008: RETURN OF THE ABSTAINERS

If I were to leave the subject of new voters at the 2006 midterm election, we would not walk away with a very sanguine outlook as to their future participation in democratic decision-making. New voters experienced a substantial drop-off in the midterm following the high-stakes presidential election of 2004. The main question to be addressed in this section is whether the significant drop-off of new voters—it was three times the average, system-wide figure of 15 percent—following a presidential election manifests itself into a permanent state of abstention, or whether another high-stakes presidential campaign can re-stimulate the politically dormant newly registered voter back into electoral activity. Let us first examine turnout in the 2008 presidential election.
Table 4.9 below presents the results of a simple longitudinal cohort analysis of turnout from 2004 to 2008. (The frequencies for 2004 and 2006 have been heretofore presented in the discussions above). Directing our attention toward 2008, it becomes clear that, as has been the case all along, the previously registered out-voted the newly registered, and these differences are large enough to be statistically significant. But those who lament the long-term decline in electoral turnout (Teixeira 1992; Putnam 2000; Patterson 2002; Wattenberg 2002; 2008) should be heartened. The good news is that cohort turnout is little changed from 2004 to 2008. That is, there appears to be no high-stimulus to high-stimulus election drop-off; the only significant drop-off takes place going from high-to-low stimulus elections.

**Table 4.9 Ohio Validated Turnout by Registration Status and by year (in percent)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004**</th>
<th></th>
<th>2006***</th>
<th></th>
<th>2008**</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NRV</td>
<td>PRV</td>
<td>NRV</td>
<td>PRV</td>
<td>NRV</td>
<td>PRV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not vote</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td><strong>9.9</strong></td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td><strong>37.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.9</strong></td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>15.53</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Cell entries represent weighted percentages of validated turnout.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

The data in Table 4.8 are aggregated by cohort though. The strength of the OSP is its panel design, whereby I can examine the voting behavior of individuals over time. Table 4.10 below displays the proportion of registrants in each cohort who voted in none of the three elections, only one of them, two of them, or in all.
Table 4.10 Cumulative Electoral Participation by Registration Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 2</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 3</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2=10.97^{***}$
Fisher’s exact***
Cases 97 119

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics.
Note: cell entries represent weighted percentages of validated turnout from cases where turnout could be ascertained over all three elections.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

These data paint a clearer picture of the long-term behavior of new voters. Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that nearly one in five new voters registered to vote, but did not cast a ballot in their first election after having registered. From the frequencies above, it becomes clear that eventually, some of these voters do vote. A newly registered voter who missed his first presidential election, was not interested enough to vote in the following midterm, but became drawn in to the excitement of the next high-stimulus electoral affair will find it easier to vote because he has already cleared the biggest hurdle to participation—registration. All of this assumes he stays in a fixed state of residence from one presidential election to the next. If not, he will likely become ensnared in the re-registration trap that devours so many citizens of low political engagement.

From Table 4.10 above, we can see that only 30 percent of new voters managed to vote in all three federal elections, while twice that many established voters did the same. In this sense, there is a large participation gap. And whereas only 5 percent of established voters missed two or three of the elections, the identical statistic was almost 30 percent among new voters. If the frequency of voting is any indication of the health of
democratic citizenship, then it could be said a good deal of new voters are on life support. Recall that only federal, general elections are discussed here. If one were to take stock of all of the second-order elections (primaries, mayor, city council, school levies, etc.), it is almost certain this participation gap would become a chasm.

These data appear to be very consistent with those who advocate a “life-cycle theory” of voter turnout (Converse and Niemi 1971). As this theory goes, young people—recall that anywhere from one-third to three-fifths of new voters are under the age of thirty—are less likely to vote than middle-aged and older citizens because they are in education, transient, preoccupied with finding a mate, establishing their careers, etc. Once into their thirties, they socially stabilize and develop roots in their communities and come to take greater part in the rituals of citizenship, including voting. Because of their lower average age, high rates of mobility, and lower political engagement—all significant correlates of length of registration—new voters do not become habitual voters overnight. It appears that people do not vote merely because they are registered (Erikson 1981).

On the other hand, if this theory is true, then the figures in Table 4.9 look much more hopeful to advocates of voting. New voters, in first-order elections at least, appear to have consistent rates of turnout—in the aggregate. But for those who doubt that such a life-cycle phenomenon exist—and the theory is not without its fair share of detractors (Highton and Wolfinger 2001; Wattenberg 2008)—the cohort differences in Table 4.10 are quite sobering. I will discuss the consequences of and ways to combat this apparent civic indifference among new voters (if indeed, that is the goal) in the next chapter. But for now, let us turn to a brief examination of the voting behaviors of the two cohorts in 2008, and the forces behind them.
Because we saw how new voters voted with a slight Democratic tilt in 2004, and because Table 4.9 above shows that the turnout of the newly registered cohort in 2008 was especially close to what it was in 2004, we expect new voters in 2008 to have voted for the Democrat, Barack Obama. That is precisely what we see in Table 4.11 below, although the margin by which new voters went Democratic is remarkable, and quite different from the way these voters acted when they entered the electorate in 2004. Some

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McCain-R</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama-D</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11 Ohio Two-Party Presidential Vote and Registration Status (2008)

Note: Cell entries represent weighted percentages.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

of this is doubtless due to some response bias in the second wave. In both cohorts, Democrats seemed more eager to respond, although the differences from $t_1$ to $t_2$ were not enormous. There were also a few more newly registered Independents. But the biggest differences by far were among Republicans—whereas GOP identifiers were at a 15 percent disadvantage in their contribution to the 2006 sample (data not shown), that deficit expanded to some 39 percent in the 2008 wave. It stands to reason that individuals might not be as eager to participate in a survey on voting when their party took a beating for the second election cycle in a row. The composite weight used in all analysis of 2008 data helps to correct somewhat for this overrepresentation of Democrats, but mostly when looking at election statistics aggregated across both cohorts (see Table

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13 See Appendix D.

98
Likewise, Obama’s lopsided margin cannot be attributed to Republicans from 2006 converting to the Democratic Party in 2008; the continuity coefficients for the 7-point scale and 3-point scale are $t_6=0.84$ and $t_6=.93$, respectively.

Doubtless, this response bias accounts for some of Obama’s disproportionate support among new voters, but not all of it. It is worth noting (data not shown) that 15 percent of Bush voters from 2004 switched sides in 2008, while only 5 percent of Kerry’s voters did the same ($\chi^2=59.51$, $p<.001$). Whatever partisan bias does exist in unit response, I am not ready to invalidate the estimates reported in Table 4.10. Barack Obama did exceedingly well among young voters nationwide, and youth is the biggest identifying characteristic of new voters.

To understand the vote choices of 2008, let us examine the now-familiar table below. The most surprising detail immediately gleaned from the model is that the economy had no independent effect on vote choice. This is surprising, given that citizens were repeatedly reminded that we were amidst the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. But voters in 2008 were confronted with no shortage of problems, and there was actually a fair amount of variation in the OSP when it came to the issue that matters most to citizens in the election. The downside of modeling the perception of the economy

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14 Because there was less variation in the two-party vote among new voters (partially caused by fewer respondents), 0 failures and 5 successes were perfectly defined by the model. That is, the covariate pattern (the three variables of the holy trinity) for these observations had only one possible outcome for 5 cases. I first attempted dropping the offending observations, but this left the Republican dummy variable perfectly collinear, which caused it to be dropped from the model. So to the cohort of new voters, I added four statistical “twins,” or cases with the same offending covariate pattern, but with a different outcome. (Two of the successes had the same covariate pattern and outcome, so adding one twin provided sufficient variation for estimation). The twins were weighted the same as the original observations. This statistical sleight of hand allows the model to be properly estimated. The only downside to this approach is that it neutralizes the effect of the original four cases on the outcome variable, by essentially canceling them out, thus increasing the risk of Type II error.
Table 4.12 Model of Vote Choice (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor:</th>
<th>Newly registered</th>
<th></th>
<th>Previously registered</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>First Difference</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>First Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>-3.33**</td>
<td>-0.68</td>
<td>-2.96**</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.34)</td>
<td>(1.34)</td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>2.75*</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>1.81*</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.31)</td>
<td>(1.31)</td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush approval</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-1.12*</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy most important issue</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.42)</td>
<td>(1.42)</td>
<td>(0.98)</td>
<td>(0.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>3.07*</td>
<td>3.07*</td>
<td>3.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.41)</td>
<td>(1.41)</td>
<td>(1.55)</td>
<td>(1.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2Log-Likelihood</td>
<td>35.26</td>
<td>45.03</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ohio Survey of Politics.

Note: entries in the left column of each cohort represent weighted logistic regression coefficients for the probability of voting Democratic, linearised standard errors in parentheses. The right column of each cohort displays the simulated changes in probability of voting Democratic going from the minimum value of the predictor to its maximum value, while holding all other predictors at their means. Independents are the reference category. Two-party vote only.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

As the most important issue in the election is that these other issues get subsumed as zeroes in a binary variable. Partisanship, though, emerged as a significant predictor of the vote, as we would expect in a presidential election, for both Republicans and Democrats. The large first differences for the Republican dummy variable suggests that the Republicans left in the sample were an especially partisan lot. Strangely for new voters, affect toward President Bush had no significant effect on the likelihood of voting for Obama, as it did for established voters. It is probably a stretch to suggest that new voters, with their youth and electoral innocence, may be more prospective in their voting than retrospective, as established voters appear to be. This interpretation is not totally
without merit though—scholars have found that incumbents are judged more retrospectively, while challengers tend to be judged prospectively (Nadeau and Lewis-Beck 2001). A term measuring affect towards Obama would likely capture such an effect, if it exists, but unfortunately, the OSP did not include such a variable on Obama. Future investigation can possibly shed greater light on this prospect.

An alternative explanation is that new voters, as infrequent voters and those on the periphery of political engagement, are forced to rely more on their partisanship in voting, whereas established voters and their greater experience with the political system are more cognitively equipped to allow other factors to enter into the electoral decision, although I lack the data to test this any further. At a bare minimum, the fact that only the partisanship coefficients are significant for new voters most likely speaks to the construct’s place near the mouth of the “funnel of causality,” (Campbell, et al. 1960), and its influence in shaping attitudes towards candidates and issue orientations. After enduring a bevy of challenges from a “revisionist” school of party identification, most notably The Changing American Voter (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1976), the primacy of party identification as the central explanatory factor in electoral decision-making has been reaffirmed, subject to a few minor alternations, over the past twenty years (Miller and Shanks 1996; Bartels 2000; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Lewis-Beck, et al. 2008). This appears to be what we see with new voters in this model.

In time, as they gain more experience with the political system (if they do), these new voters may psychologically expand their repertoire of evaluative capacities to include greater weight given to issues and candidate perceptions. This idea could quickly get out of hand though, morphing into an investigation of political sophistication, which
the OSP did not measure. The above model is merely a rudimentary explanation, across elections, of the most theoretically popular elements that enter into the voting calculus. Let us also not forget that we are dealing with a perilously low number of observations in both models, stretching the limits of these data. Trying to get any more mileage out of the limited sub-samples herein would be tantamount to data torture. Besides, the take-away point from this discussion of new voters in the 2008 election is not their voting behavior, but the fact that they returned to the voting booth in the first place. This finding should bring some measure of comfort to those who wonder about the future of electoral democracy, in the face of declining turnout, modest increases in the last several presidential elections notwithstanding. I take up this discussion, including its caveats, in greater detail in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began by asking three questions about new voters: 1) how many actually vote after registering?, 2) how do they vote?, and 3) do they keep voting? By examining data from the Cross-National Election Project and the Ohio Survey of Politics over the course of three elections, we finally have some answers. The overwhelming majority of new voters who register to vote cast a ballot in the first election after registering, but about one-fifth do not. The panel data used here show that eventually though, about half of that one-fifth vote at some point or another. As to how new voters vote, in the election of 2004, they had a slight disposition to the Democratic candidate, John Kerry, although this was statistically indistinguishable from established voters
nationwide. In addition, the multivariate model seemed to show a particular hostility toward President Bush as a causal motivation of new voters in their support of John Kerry. Ohio new voters slightly leaned toward Kerry, while established voters were more supportive of President Bush. Only a modest gap in turnout distinguished new from established voters in 2004. The election of 2006 was clearly different though. The Democratic candidate for governor enjoyed broad support from new and established voters alike, but especially new voters. The higher rate of abstention and defection among Republican new voters had a something to do with this. As a cohort, new voters suffered a cataclysmic drop-off from the high turnout election of two years prior. Whereas 6 in 10 established voters cast a ballot in 2006, 7 in 10 new voters did not. Many of these no-shows did return to the voting booth two years later in the high-stimulus presidential election of 2008, leading to a more optimistic, but guarded, conclusion as to their future in electoral decision-making. As with the midterm election, new voters voted overwhelmingly Democratic. However, this may simply be a function of the nature of the times, rather than some ironclad law of the newly registered and their voting proclivities. From the data examined in this chapter though, the linchpin to participation among new voters seems to be the nature of the election itself. High-stimulus elections draw new voters into participation, while low-stimulus affairs keep them away. I now turn to how this relationship is mediated by electoral mobilization.
CHAPTER 5

WANT NEW VOTERS TO VOTE? JUST ASK.

The premise of this chapter is simply that mobilization helps new voters overcome the powerful impulse to abstain from voting, while established voters receive less benefit because they are in possession of characteristics which already make them more likely to vote. One of the major findings presented in this study so far (in Chap. 4) is the large drop-off in turnout by new voters witnessed in the 2006 midterm election. Their participation in party primaries is even more abysmal.¹ When viewed from the perspective of the new voter, sitting out these kinds of low-stimulus elections seems fairly reasonable. Whereas presidential contests feature the prominence of one office, assumed to be of great importance in our system of government, and occur in an information-rich setting, second-order elections, by way of contrast, are characterized by a cacophony of lesser-known candidates vying for offices perceived to be of lesser importance. All of this occurs in an environment of decreased media attention and hype. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 4, most new voters in 2004 supported John Kerry for president, and he lost in a bitterly fought nailbiter to a polarizing incumbent. An electoral

¹ Only 3.2 percent of the new voter subsample (a mere 7 cases) voted in either the Republican or Democratic 2006 Ohio primary, compared to 17.1 percent of established voters (27 cases) who did the same—a five-fold difference ($\chi^2=14.54, p<.001$, one-tailed). In 2008, despite more participation from both cohorts (as could be expected when presidential nominations are at stake), there was still a gap, although not as proportionately large: 31.7 percent of new voters (28 cases), and 67.3 percent (67 cases) of established voters voted in a party primary ($\chi^2=12.45, p<.001$, one-tailed).
baptism of this nature does not exactly cultivate enthusiastic fealty to the idea that voting is worth the time and effort.

MOBILIZING NEW VOTERS

It is fair to wonder whether parties bother contacting new voters in the first place. After all, parties must strategically allocate their scarce resources when mobilizing potential supporters, and new voters are a rather unknown quantity. They may be registered to vote, but new voters certainly do not have an established voting history for parties to ascertain the likely payoffs of contact. Furthermore, in a modified party registration state like Ohio, the parties do not even know from the registration rolls where the partisan sympathies of new voters lie, absent a previously cast vote in a party’s primary. A reasonable hypothesis then, would suggest that the parties will focus their resources on voters who have been registered longer, rather than with those who are new to voting. This hypothesis is in line with previous work in this area (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992), and is tested in Table 5.1 below.

The frequencies are reported telephone and face-to-face contacts. In addition to ascertaining party contact by these two forms, the OSP also asks respondents if they received contact of a political nature from either or both of the parties by post or email.

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2 As opposed to states that require declaration of one’s party affiliation as a precondition to voting in a primary election (“closed” primary states), versus states that require no legal declaration of affiliation to vote in a primary (“open” primary states) “modified” party states denote the voter’s party affiliation by the most recently cast partisan ballot in a primary. Voters wishing to vote in a party’s primary opposite that stated in the public record usually have to fill out some “change of party” form. All of the new voters in the OSP’s subsample registered to vote after the requisite closing date to have been eligible to vote in the March 2004 presidential primary. All of them were eligible to vote in the May 2006 primary, however.
(see Appendix B for exact question wording). But the ensuing analysis in the body of this chapter operationalizes party mobilization as telephone and/or face-to-face contact by either or both of the political parties. There are several reasons for using this coding scheme. For one, this is how the American National Election Studies define partisan mobilization,³ so it makes sense to follow this same approach, in order to provide the most comparability to other studies. Secondly, these modes of political contact require real effort by the parties. Filling mailboxes with partisan junk mail is relatively easy; all that is needed is the voter registration list and a bulk mail permit. Targeting may be involved, but it is far easier to simply carpetbomb an entire zip code with one or more mailings, especially if they are negative towards the opposition.⁴ Indeed, most registered voters at some point or another receive political contact through the mail.⁵ But telephoning a potential supporter, or appearing on his doorstep requires labor-intensive resources that must be strategically allocated because they are scarce (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 210). A personal call or front door visit signifies to the new voter that his vote is valuable enough that a political party is willing to personally ask for it. Even though numerous studies have shown mail literature to be effective at increasing turnout

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³ ANES Question wording: “The political parties try to talk to as many people as they can to get them to vote for their candidates. Did anyone from one of the political parties call you up or come around and talk to you about the campaign? Which party was that?”

⁴ If a registered supporter of the other party receives a flyer that is negative in tone, it may have a demobilizing effect (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995). It may also invigorate or mobilize the opposition, as well as the intended recipients of the advert (Wattenberg and Brians 1999). Whether negative advertising has a demobilizing or mobilizing effect is a fairly contentious area of literature. Without directly wading into this debate, it is probably not a stretch to say that party strategists see no consequences of going negative in any medium—print, “robocalls,” websites, or television—or they wouldn’t do so much of it.

⁵ About 75 percent of all registered voters received mail from either or both of the parties in 2006, with the previously registered receiving 23 percent more than the newly registered, as we would expect ($\chi^2=7.43, p<.01$, one-tailed). The frequency with which registered voters received partisan mail increased to 82 percent in 2008, but with no difference between the two cohorts, suggesting the parties are more strategic in midterm elections.
(most notably, Gerber and Green 2000), nearly all of these studies use non-partisan appeals as the experimental manipulation; they also show mail to be the least effective form of contact. Mostly, though, it is face-to-face and telephone contact that we typically associate with the concept of partisan mobilization—the precinct captain of yesteryear crisscrossing the neighborhood, or teams of volunteers working the phones down at party headquarters, making sure all the sympathetic voters on some list not only vote in the election, but support the party’s slate of candidates. In all of these respects, it makes sense to operationalize partisan mobilization this way.

Looking at Table 5.1, we see that about two-thirds of the newly registered were not contacted, while close to three-quarters of the previously registered were. This is a significant difference, and when examined with turnout in a bivariate relationship, accounts for a great deal of the discrepancy in the turnout of new versus established voters (see Table 1 in Appendix E).

| Table 5.1 Percentage of Respondents Contacted by Registration Cohort (2006) |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Contacted by:                  | Newly registered | Previously registered | Total |
| No contact                     | 65.7             | 31.1              | 34.6            |
| One form                       | 25.6             | 60.0              | 56.5            |
| Two forms                      | 8.8              | 8.9               | 8.9             |
|                                 | 100.1            | 100.0             | 100.0           |

$\chi^2=12.60$

$p=.000$

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics.

Notes: Cell entries represent the weighted percentages of respondents receiving interpersonal contact from either party, among those that reported receiving any party contact.

Number of cases in parentheses.
The visceral feeling one gets from the column marked “Total” is that these rates of contact seem suspiciously high. After all, the 2008 Ohio survey of voters as they exit randomly selected polling precincts, conducted by Mitofsky-Edison Research for the major news networks and the Associated Press, reports a 54 percent rate of contact—in a high-stimulus presidential election year, no less. When compared to the 65 percent of the full OSP sample claiming to have received contact in a lower-stimulus midterm, something seems to be amiss. There are some reasonable explanations for this discrepancy, however.

First of all, exit poll respondents are only those citizens who have voted. Not everyone who reported contact in Table 5.1 voted, meaning these frequencies will necessarily be higher than in the 2008 exit poll, in which non-voters who were also contacted have been winnowed out. Secondly, the exit poll question reads, “Did any campaign contact you personally?” This means either the Obama or the McCain campaign organizations, and would exclude canvassing or telephone calls from the Republican or Democratic National Committees or the two state parties, if respondents are able to make the distinction between campaigns and political parties. It is doubtful many can do this, but I cannot discount out-of-hand the possibility that some party contact (which is what the OSP ascertains) was not reported to exit pollsters. Third, Ohio, as a highly competitive state with strong and well-funded party organizations, was a hotbed of mobilization activity in 2006, just as it was in 2008 (comparable exit poll frequencies for 2006 are not available). In order for the Democrats to win control of the U.S. Senate, Representative Sherrod Brown had to defeat the Republican incumbent, Senator Michael DeWine, which he eventually did. Furthermore, several congressional
seats were considered “toss-ups,” and featured well-funded challengers bankrolled by the campaign arm of the House Democratic Caucus and Democratic National Committee. The Republican National Committee activated its vaunted “72-hour plan” to mobilize last minute support via phone contacts; the Democrats responded in 2006 with a similar plan, although on a smaller scale. In light of these explanations then, the high frequencies in Table 5.1 do not seem that far-fetched.

It is important to point out that most of the contacts reported in Table 5.1 were made via telephone; the direct canvass was much more infrequent, and the previously registered were contacted at twice the rate of the newly registered (see Table 1 in Appendix E). These data support the hypothesis that parties will direct scarce resources towards those with the proven voting history. Face-to-face mobilization is the most labor-intensive form of political communication, and since manpower is the scarcest resource in either party, it is unsurprising that so few people are contacted via this route. What is surprising is that any new voters were contacted this way at all.

On the face of it, it appears the political parties in Ohio made some effort at bringing new voters into the midterm electorate of 2006. Whether this was part of a deliberate strategy, or an artifact of the often-disjointed and haphazard way mobilization efforts are carried out by party volunteers (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, 234-39) is up for debate. The parties did, after all, concentrate the overwhelming force of their labor-intensive resources on those who had lengthier histories as registered voters, suggesting this was the plan. But do these figures, aggregated across the two parties, conceal a more strategic game plan by either the Democrats or the Republicans? Put another way, was
one party more likely to concentrate on mobilizing new voters than the other? Table 5.2 answers that question with an unequivocal “no.”

Table 5.2 Distribution of Partisan Contact by Registration Cohort (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contacted by:</th>
<th>Newly registered</th>
<th>Previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats only</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans only</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parties</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 0.11

*p = .90

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics.
Notes: Cell entries represent the weighted percentages of respondents receiving interpersonal contact by one party or both parties, among those that reported receiving any party contact. Number of cases in parentheses.

As with the rest of the statistics reported in this chapter, the frequencies reported in the table above are a rigid definition of mobilization—telephone and face-to-face contact only. But liberalizing the definition beyond interpersonal communication to all modes does not change anything—approximately 75 percent of contactees in both cohorts were contacted by both political parties (χ² = 1.23, *p = .29). Neither party appears to have placed any extra or special effort on new voters in 2006. Table 5.3 further confirms this in a controlled setting, by modeling party contact according to the only information we can be certain parties have at their disposal—that which is contained in the voter registration list.
Table 5.3  Model of Party Contact (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors:</th>
<th>Standardized coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (4 categories)</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party identifier* (listed registration records)</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New voter**</td>
<td>-.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R²</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics.

Notes: Entries represent standardized logistic regression coefficients.
*\(p<.05\), **\(p<.01\), ***\(p<.001\), one-tailed

The inference thus far is clear: the Republicans and Democrats placed their bets on established voters and the party faithful, and left new voters on the table. The standardized regression coefficients suggest that participation in a party primary (how one becomes legally identified as affiliating with a political party in Ohio) is the most powerful predictor of party contact, followed by a lengthier history of voter registration, that presumably includes more participation in elections.\(^6\) In short, the parties stuck to the time-honored strategy of mobilizing those who are most likely to vote in the first place (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 210). It is now time to demonstrate the missed opportunities of this approach.

PARTISAN MOBILIZATION AND NEW VOTERS IN SECOND-ORDER ELECTIONS

In Chapter 2, I hypothesized that new voters would be more prone to sit out low-stimulus elections, following the high-stimulus election in which they registered to vote. Chapter 4 demonstrated strong support for this hypothesis. I further went on to suggest

\(^6\) Cumulative voting history was not included as a predictor because such a variable and length of registration essentially measure the same thing (Cramer’s \(V=.84\)).
that mobilization will assuage this general tendency to retreat from participation. I test this assertion with a simple “civic voluntarism” model (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), which suggests that people participate in politics because they have the resources, political attitudes, and group influences that encourage participation. **Resources**, such as age, education, and income give citizens the experience, cognitive and bureaucratic skills, and time to participate. **Attitudes**, like political efficacy, partisanship, and assessments about the president’s performance in office motivate political activity. **Group influences** on participation can be brought to bear when citizens are put into contact with other like-minded individuals. Frequency of church attendance, formal group or organizational memberships, and mobilization by political parties are all direct or proxy measurements of group influence on political behavior.

The beauty of the civic voluntarism model is its simplicity. It uses only three broad concepts to explain citizen participation, and within each concept, I test my mobilization hypothesis using only three predictors (if external and internal efficacy are together construed as political efficacy, more broadly) to estimate the likelihood of voting in 2006, because that is really all that are needed. Party mobilization is the variable of utmost interest in this model, and as with the rest of the analysis in this chapter, is operationalized as interpersonal contact by either or both of the political parties.

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7 A previous version of this model was presented in a paper at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association. The model had several more demographic control variables, but resulted in the same general findings as those I present in this chapter.
**Figure 5.1** Mobilization’s Effect on Turnout (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Voters</th>
<th>Established Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Efficacy</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Efficacy</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Approval</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of PID</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Influence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Attendance</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Memberships</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Mobilization</td>
<td>.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Efficacy</td>
<td>.39**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Efficacy</td>
<td>.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Approval</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of PID</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Influence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Attendance</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Memberships</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Mobilization</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics.*

*Notes: Entries represent standardized logistic regression coefficients. Refer to Appendix E for full model. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed
Figure 5.1 displays the standardized logistic regression coefficients of the civic voluntarism model, estimated for both new and established voters. (Refer to Table 4 in Appendix E for model coefficients, standard errors, and variable coding). As we would expect, increased age leads to a higher likelihood of voting for new voters, but a greater belief that government is responsive to citizens does not. I will come back to this somewhat counterintuitive finding momentarily. For the present, the most important coefficient in the upper half of Figure 5.1 is the one associated with party mobilization. It is large and significant. But glancing further down the figure to the identical model estimated for established voters, we see that mobilization’s effect is somewhat smaller. Even more importantly, it is *not* significant. This tells us that when parties mobilize new voters, they are more likely to vote, all else being equal. When parties mobilize established voters by contrast, it does not seem to matter as much. A look at Table 5.4 shows the reason why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.4</th>
<th>Mobilization’s Change in Predicted Probability of Voting (2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Going from:</td>
<td>Newly registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact to 1 contact (either phone or face-to-face)</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact to 2 contacts (both phone and face-to-face)</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Pr(Y=1) when mobilization held at 0</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics.*

*Notes:* All other variables held at their means. The base probability represents a randomly selected individual’s probability of voting absent any mobilization. Each cell in the table represents the marginal increase in probability over and above the base probability.
The table displays the change in the predicted probability of voting, for both cohorts, when party mobilization is varied and all other predictors are held at their means. In the absence of mobilization, the typical new voter is about half as likely to vote as he is to abstain. The average established voter, by contrast, has a 90 percent chance of voting, by virtue of her other characteristics as represented in the model. At first blush, this may seem rather high. But bear in mind what distinguishes the two cohorts—experience with the electoral system. Newly registered voters, to the extent that they have voted at all, have one presidential election under their belts, and that is the depth of their experience. The previously registered voters in this study though have been registered for anywhere from eight months to decades, with experience that ranges from a few elections to a lifetime of voting. In any standard model of voting for the electorate at large, the base probability would not be this high, because the electorate at large in any given election is an aggregation of electoral experience, containing new voters and established voters alike. Moreover, most models of turnout also incorporate non-registered citizens into the dependent variable (e.g. 1=registered, voted; 0=registered and unregistered, abstained). Registered citizens already have a higher base probability of voting, and since election officials are generally interested in keeping the voter rolls clean, chronic non-voters have their registrations purged after a period of inactivity. All of this has the effect of giving the typical established voter in this subsample a higher base probability of voting. Figure 5.2 graphically illustrates what Table 5.4 statistically reveals—the slope of the line is rather flat for established voters, indicating that increases

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8 This practice is circumscribed by the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, which stipulates election authorities can purge registered citizens from the rolls only after failing to vote in two, consecutive federal elections, and only then after appropriate notification giving the citizen the opportunity to remain registered.
in mobilization have only a marginal effect on the probability of turnout. The line for new voters features a bigger slope, meaning that the same increases in mobilization lead to a substantial increase in the probability new voters will vote.

**Figure 5.2** Mobilization’s Change in Probability of Voting (2006)

![Graph showing the change in probability of voting with changes in mobilization.](image)

*Source:* The Ohio Survey of Politics.

*Notes:* Lines represent the change in predicted probabilities of voting with changes in mobilization. All other variables held at their means.

What Table 5.4 and Figure 5.2 make clear is that established voters do not benefit from mobilization to the extent that new voters do because established voters are already very likely to vote, mobilization or not. Their increases in the likelihood of voting with one form or two forms of party contact are miniscule at best, while an average new voter that is contacted both by telephone and face-to-face sees his probability of turnout jump from a coin toss to over 80 percent! This finding buttresses controlled field experimental work by David Niven (2002, 2004) that found registered voters in Florida who had only an intermittent history of voting benefited most from mobilization, as opposed to frequent
voters who were also contacted, suggesting that mobilization has limits in encouraging citizen participation.

The finding in Figure 5.1 that new voters with higher external efficacy are less likely to vote merits some discussion, as does the strange result for strength of partisanship among established voters. The coefficients are saying that increases in efficacy and strength of attachment to political party make the average registrant less likely to vote, \textit{ceteris paribus}, for new and established voters, respectively. Put differently, controlling for resources and group influence, attitudes which typically encourage participation in this case discourage it. Why would someone having stronger confidence in the political system, or a stauncher identification with their party be less likely to vote? My suspicion is that what is driving these results in this model is something that is not represented in it, and that is a sense of civic duty.

Unfortunately, there is no question in the OSP that taps a citizen’s sense of civic duty, so I cannot directly test this hypothesis. But another way to think of these vexing negative coefficients is that attitudes such as weak to non-existent party ties and low efficacy can be thought of as costs—they are certainly not assets—making voting a more prohibitive activity, in line with rational choice theory (Downs 1957). As we saw in Chapter 4, established voters in 2006 voted in relatively high numbers. The Cramer’s V correlation between turnout and strength of party attachment is a modest .21 for this cohort, suggesting the influence of partisan intensity on turnout was more muted than what we typically see in first-order elections. This makes sense, considering what kind of people comprise this cohort—voters with an engrained habit of voting, who are likely to vote, regardless of their partisan intensity. Adding a sense of civic duty to the model
would reverse this negative coefficient, I suspect, and possibly reduce it to statistical insignificance. In a similar fashion, new voters who are unconvinced that elections make a difference in elite behavior, yet who have been politically socialized to believe that good citizens vote, will likely do so. Considering all the discouraging factors new voters have going against them—youth, high mobility, lower political engagement—it is surprising that as many voted in 2006 as did. But because I have no measurement of duty, these explanations are only conjecture, but reasonable conjecture, I believe.

These results should not detract from the overall point of this section: when political parties bother to contact new voters, there is a payoff, and it is larger than what can be expected for contacting established voters, since they are quite likely to vote anyway. As seen in Chapter 3, they are older, more politically engaged, have more stable living situations, and attend church more frequently, thus exposing themselves to group influences that encourage voting (even though frequency of religious attendance is not significant in the Figure 5.1). Most importantly, they have experience with the political system and an established habit of voting. The relevant question becomes whether this same conditional effect of mobilization can be found in a high-stimulus first-order electoral environment. For an answer, let us turn to a comparative examination of mobilization and length of registration in a presidential election.

PARTISAN MOBILIZATION AND NEW VOTERS IN FIRST-ORDER ELECTIONS

If new voters are more prone to sit-out second-order elections because such elections lack the excitement, visibility, and abundance of information that characterize
presidential campaigns, then it stands to reason that first-order elections will not impose such a psychological handicap. To the extent they have not dropped out of the political system altogether, new voters will begin the campaign season with a higher base probability of participation. This should make mobilization weaker at predicting turnout. Moreover, because some new voters voted in 2006, this makes the overall cohort slightly more experienced in elections than it was before. New voters still cannot hold a candle to the electoral experience of their established peers, but they start out in a better position to vote than when they entered politics in 2004, even though many voted for the loser in that extremely close contest. Mobilization should therefore have less of a conditional effect on turnout than in 2006.

On the other hand, we know from the American National Election Studies that the parties always engage in more party contact in a presidential year than in a midterm. It is possible the registered voters in the OSP could have been hounded to death in 2008, thus reducing mobilization’s variation in the sample and watering down its influence on the dependent variable. While a valid concern, Table 5.5 shows this was not the case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contacted by:</th>
<th>Newly registered</th>
<th>Previously registered</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No contact</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One form</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two forms</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 = 1.60 \)

\( p = .20 \)

| Total | (60) | (99) | (159) |

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics.
Notes: Cell entries represent the weighted percentages of respondents receiving interpersonal contact from either party, among those that reported receiving any party contact. Number of cases in parentheses.
The total frequencies are virtually unchanged from what they were in the midterm two years earlier (see Table 5.1). What is different about Table 5.5 is the parties have expanded their mobilization repertoire to include more new voters in their calculi of contact. (Although the differences above are do not meet the standard threshold for statistical significance, the differences in the proportion of new voters receiving any contact between 2006 and 2008 are noteworthy). Whereas two out of three new voters were not mobilized in the midterm election, three out of five were contacted to vote in the presidential election. The proportions of established voters receiving party contact are nearly identical to what they were in 2006. Of course, the second-wave sample size is smaller, and the error surrounding these estimates is necessarily larger, reflecting their higher standard errors. But assuming these figures bear some resemblance to reality—and I believe they do—it is remarkable there was not a huge uptick in total party contacting in 2008. It could be that Ohio, ever the bellwether state, was so competitive in both of these elections (albeit for different offices) that the parties and their candidates fanned out across the state in their respective targeted locations to drum up support wherever they could find it.

Table 5.6 demonstrates that there appeared to be a greater semblance of party strategy behind contacting, with new voters receiving more sole contact from the Republican party. But this is probably a function of Republicans, having generally the more disciplined organizational apparatus of the two parties, making sure to contact the new voters they had registered in 2004. I am hesitant to make too much of these figures
though, as the overwhelming proportion of respondents in each cohort were contacted by both parties. Rather than the “microtargeting” that has become a part of campaign lore (Balz 2006), these data point to the more solid conclusion that the Republicans and the Democrats prefer not to chance it, and each cast a relatively wide net.

Table 5.6 Distribution of Partisan Contact by Registration Cohort (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contacted by:</th>
<th>Newly registered</th>
<th>Previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats only</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans only</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parties</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ²=3.65
p=.03, one-tailed

Total (38) (74)

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics.
Notes: Cell entries represent the weighted percentages of respondents receiving interpersonal contact by one party or both parties, among those that reported receiving any party contact.
Number of cases in parentheses.

As to the increase in the mobilization of new voters (Table 5.5), it is possible this is less a function of their status as new voters than it is of other characteristics, such as age. Recall that new voters skew undeniably young, and the Democratic candidate Barack Obama was the overwhelming favorite of young voters in 2008. He was also very adept at mobilization. It is very likely that our nursing student, featured in the Introduction to this study, who was repeatedly called in 2010 and encouraged to vote, was also contacted via cell phone in 2008 by the Obama campaign or the Democratic party.

But Table 5.7 below, which replicates an earlier analysis for the 2008 presidential election, belies such an explanation. First of all, whereas having a record of voting in a
party primary and being an established voter each independently predicted the probability of contact in 2006, the same variables in the model predict nothing for 2008. The threshold for obtaining a statistically significant result increased, as more registered voters opted to cast a ballot in the primary immediately preceding the election in question—the high-stakes 2008 presidential primary—which under Ohio law, becomes the new gauge of one’s legal partisan affiliation. Secondly, there is no difference between the young and the old in who is contacted and who is not. The dependent variable in Table 5.7 is contact by either the Republicans, the Democrats, or both. Barack Obama and the Democrats may have paid more attention to young voters, but McCain and the Republicans went after the old. Any effects unique to each party likely washed out in this model. The new voter fixation of 2008 was on those who registered in 2008, especially those who participated in primaries and caucuses for the first time, helping candidate Barack Obama clinch the Democratic nomination. Lastly, the Nagelkerke pseudo-R^2 statistic for 2006 is almost five times greater than it is for 2008, suggesting that party mobilization strategies in midterms depend more heavily on information contained in the voter list than they do for presidential elections, where the resources of powerful candidate organizations are brought to bear.
Table 5.7 Model of Party Contact (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Standardized coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (4 categories)</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in 2008 presidential primary (listed registration records)</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New voter</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R²</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics
Notes: Entries represent standardized logistic regression coefficients.
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed

The real test of mobilization’s effect on turnout is seen in Figure 5.3 below. This graph, just like Figure 5.2, shows the conditional change in the probability of voting with changes in mobilization based on the civic voluntarism model, but re-estimated for 2008. In several respects, it is not as “exciting” as Figure 5.2. The figure below shows that new voters have a higher probability of voting (p=.741) than do established voters (p=.604) when political contact is held to zero, although the confidence intervals for each estimate (not shown) overlap. This runs contrary to expectations and previous findings in this study. Additionally, once contacted at all (either by telephone or face-to-face), the value of Y for both cohorts increases to nearly 1, which is implausible in the real world, even considering these are registered voters, from a sampling frame of citizens already predisposed to vote, in a high-stimulus presidential election in the mother of all battleground states.
Figure 5.3 Mobilization’s Change in Probability of Voting (2008)

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics.
Notes: Lines represent the change in predicted probabilities of voting with changes in mobilization. All other variables held at their means.

I believe these values on the y-axis reflect the somewhat large number of voters responding to the 2008 wave of the OSP. Even though a post-stratification weight for the differential response rates of voters and non-voters was built into the composite weight, essentially deflating the values of voters and inflating the values of non-voters, in the presence of many independent variables, lack of variation can become an estimation issue. The entire second wave sample of 159 validated cases is sufficient for reasonably precise estimates of turnout and candidate choice (see Table 2.1) or any other number of bivariate statistics, but each additional independent variable adds another dimension to the regression, necessitating the need for sufficient variation in the covariate pattern. With 231 cases to analyze in the first wave, this was not a problem. With 159 cases in
the second wave, this became more so. But I believe the general point can still be made—in high-stakes, high-visibility, high-information presidential campaigns, like that which existed in Ohio in 2008, mobilization does not have the same kind of impact it does in second-order elections, such as the midterm of 2006. Moreover, this impact is more uniformly distributed across the types of voters examined here.

**CONCLUSION**

I began this study by confessing my habit of eavesdropping on conversations of a political nature. I recall a particular episode that took place shortly before the 2010 midterm election at the coffee shop in my neighborhood (the one close to the two state party headquarters) where I had occasion to listen in to another interesting conversation. A casually dressed man and woman were sitting at the table next to me, with laptops open, running some kind of spreadsheet program. They were employees of the Democratic Party. I ascertained this because I vaguely knew of the gentleman—in fact he is now a fairly high ranking official within the party hierarchy. And while I could not hear their entire conversation—it was obvious they were plotting some sort of mobilization strategy for the upcoming election—several times I heard them say the

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9 In fact, the equation for Figure 5.3 is one equation, rather than two separate equations, as presented in Figure 5.1. Because of the lack of variation in some variables, it became necessary for me to model turnout in 2008 as a function of mobilization, conditional on one’s status as a new or established voter. I included the constitutive variable length of registration in with the civic voluntarism model, and added a multiplicative term interacting length of registration and mobilization. This is essentially the same thing I do in Figure 5.1, which also shows a conditional relationship—mobilization’s (X) effect on turnout (Y) varies depending on length of registration (Z). Interactions can be tricky to interpret though, so for ease of presentation, I modeled mobilization’s effect on voting separately for new and established voters. See the single equation for Figure 5.3 in Appendix E.

10 To protect his anonymity, I will refrain from saying what office he holds, or in which party organization (state or county) he holds it.
words “new voters.” I gradually inched my chair closer and closer so I could better hear the conversation. And while I never did catch all of it—eavesdropping is rude, after all, and I did not want to seem untoward—I got the distinct impression these strategists were looking to mobilize new voters who had registered to vote in the presidential election of 2008. I do not know if they ever decided to go forward with this plan. But the results of this chapter show that, if not, they should have.

While new voters are extremely prone to sit out second-order elections, such as midterms and primaries, this tendency is mitigated when political parties ask for their votes. In a model that predicts turnout as a function of an individual’s resources, political attitudes, and group influences, I have demonstrated that mobilization had a greater impact on encouraging new voters to vote in 2006 than it did for established voters, who were quite likely to vote already. Although limitations in my data impose particular constraints on inference, I believe this conditional effect washes out in first-order elections, where the excitement, media attention, and perceived significance of the office of the presidency hit a fever pitch, and level the political field, so to speak.

Whatever the stimulus level of the election, no other institution in American politics can match forces of mobilization that the two political parties can bring to bear. From the cadre of professionals that make up the organizational structures and decide whom to pursue, to the thousands of volunteers who work the phone banks and canvass neighborhoods when the days begin to get shorter, political parties get citizens to vote, simply by asking them. Of course this is not done out of sheer democratic idealism. Parties mobilize people into action to win (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 232). But the results of this chapter suggest that if mobilizing potential support is the goal, then
political parties might wish to devote fewer resources to those for whom mobilization does little, instead redirecting those resources to those for whom mobilization does a great deal.
CHAPTER 6


This study began with an anecdotal account of two nursing students who were both emblematic of the typical new voter. But they differed in one key respect: one of them voted in the midterm election of 2010, and the other did not. This difference in behavior, and the explanation for it, are the very crux of this study. Using survey sample data from a nationally representative cross-section and a two-wave panel of registered Ohio voters, I examined both established voters and those who registered to vote in 2004. My analysis has made some important contributions to our understanding of political participation by being the first, insofar as I am aware, to study individuals who have recently crossed the threshold from nonvoter to registered voter, whether through their own volition or through the mobilization efforts of others. I have revealed that fundamental differences exist between new and established voters, and these differences serve to condition their respective behaviors in the political system. The key lessons of new voters—lessons that can be generalized beyond the short-term forces of any one particular election—can be distilled to three “Ws”: who new voters are, when they vote and when they abstain, and why they choose either path.
New voters unquestionably skew young and mobile; these are their most defining characteristics. If there really is some “life cycle” to voting, as some political scientists have proposed (Converse and Niemi 1971), the predominance of these two traits among new voters would seem to offer *prima facie* support for such an idea. Recall that this theory suggests lower turnout among young adults is due to their place in the life cycle. Many are in the process of obtaining an education, establishing a career, finding a mate, etc., and the greater mobility associated with such activities prevents them from establishing roots in their communities. At this point in their lives, and under these circumstances, politics and voting is a remote concern. But upon becoming more settled and more established in life, the decisions of political leaders assume greater relevance. Increasing residential stability (buying a home, starting a family, etc.) makes surmounting the obstacles to registration easier, leading to greater participation in elections. As documented by the samples in this study, the vast majority of new voters are not newly eligible to vote, meaning they have declined to vote on at least one previous occasion. But most are at the point in their lives where they begin casting a ballot here and there, a practice that will eventually blossom into a fairly routinized custom of voting, if such a life cycle to electoral participation actually exists.¹

¹ The life-cycle theory is not a significant part of the arguments I advance in this study, and I do not wade into this scholarly debate. That said, the concern raised here—whether new voters become established voters—has a more positive outlook, to the extent the young become regular voters with advances in age.
Beyond youth and mobility, new voters (nationwide) are less educated than experienced voters. This is a relationship that exists even after controlling for age, and should not be too surprising, given that education is one of the strongest predictors of turnout. New voters are also less likely to be white, which may stem from deliberate mobilization strategies of the parties—Democrats mobilizing all races (but especially blacks), and Republicans focusing on Hispanics, a racial minority seen as more amenable to the conservative social policies of George W. Bush. The greater racial diversity of new voters may also be explained, in part, by the lower social class of many non-whites, although the association between length of registration and race remained in the presence of controls for education and income, key indicators of class.

On social and political dimensions, new voters are less frequent attenders of religious services (Ohio), and are less ideologically rigid (Ohio and other battleground states) than established voters. They are also located on the margins of politics; this is especially the case in Ohio and other hotly contested states (when examined with CNEP data), which is significant, since I hypothesized that new voters would be more akin to Campbell’s (1960) “peripheral” voters than their established peers. Peripheral voters lack an enduring interest in politics, a major component of political engagement (see Appendix for construction of the engagement index), which itself is a strong predictor of turnout.
When Do New Voters Vote (or Not)?

Upon becoming fully eligible to legally cast a ballot, most newly registered citizens opt to do so. But a significant number (almost one in five in Ohio, in 2004) do not. The majority of these registrants do however, eventually vote at some later point. Even if some unusual circumstance keeps a new registrant from the polls, he remains on the registration rolls (assuming he has not moved), making participation at a later time far easier, given that the largest obstacle to voting, registration, has already been overcome.

The transition from new voter to established voter is not so simple though. A startling finding of this study is the frequency with which new voters dropped out of the midterm election of 2006. Participation in the presidential primaries two years later was no better. Simply put, many new voters sit out second-order elections. The sparser media coverage, lesser-known candidates, and perceived lower significance of the offices on the ballot no doubt contribute to the truancy of new voters at the polls. Established voters with a developed habit of participation by contrast, are far likelier to vote in these types of elections. So in this sense too, new voters exemplify the classic peripheral voter—they stick to presidential elections.

Despite their poor showing in the 2006 midterm and 2008 primary, most new voters did return to the polls to vote in the 2008 presidential election. Because a new voter missed one midterm election does not mean he is completely lost to the political system, but it suggests he is not an especially active participant in it either. Again, the
peripheral voter comparison is most illuminating to this turnout discrepancy. As I have shown in Chapter 3, new voters lack the political engagement of established voters, and political engagement is the implement that separates the wheat from the chaff of electoral participation.

Why Do New Voters Vote (or Not)?

If most new voters lack the political engagement of their established peers, which contributes to their greater rates of abstention in second-order elections, why then, do those who actually vote in these types of elections do so? Much like the nursing student at the very beginning of this study, they participate because they are asked. In Chapter 5, I demonstrated that established voters were mobilized by the political parties in 2006 at twice the rate of new voters—69 percent to 34 percent, respectively (see Table 1 in Appendix E). It should not be too surprising then that in the same election, established voters voted at twice the rate of new voters.2

As mentioned above, the turnout gap between cohorts, while still significant, is not as great in first-order as in second-order elections. Again, this is likely due to the stimulus level of the elections themselves, and the engagement level of the voters in question. The most significant finding of this study, I contend, is that while new voters

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2 This does not imply that only those who were mobilized voted. Some registrants in each cohort were contacted by a party (or both parties), but did not vote. Mobilization had a 22 percent effect ($\chi^2=5.52, p=.01$, one-tailed), and a 13 percent effect ($\chi^2=0.88, p=.35$, one-tailed). In this simple bivariate controlled comparison (see Table 5.2A), the effect of mobilization is significant for new, but not for established, voters. This result holds up in a multivariate model (see Figure 5.1).
are more likely to abstain in a second-order election, following a high-interest, high-information, high-stakes electoral contest, this tendency is mitigated by partisan mobilization. Indeed, I have shown that in this context, party contact has a greater effect on the probability of turnout for new voters than for established voters, who are much more likely to vote already. I further show that the effects of mobilization are more subdued in high-stimulus, first-order elections. This is a slight departure from much of the existing literature, which assumes the effects of mobilization are uniform across individuals. But overall, my findings square with the conclusions of the landmark study on mobilization in America: “People participate in electoral politics in all its forms when they are mobilized to do so. When political mobilization fails, so does the propensity of people to take part” (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 227).

**SOME CAVEATS**

Despite all we have learned from this study, some of the results should nonetheless be viewed cautiously. This study’s great strength is the longitudinal quality of the Ohio data and its voter validation (for a more accurate reading of voting activity). But admittedly, it is a small sample size, and the second-wave $n$ is even smaller than the first. Even though nearly 70 percent of the original panel responded to the follow-up survey, this left only 159 cases for analysis—which is a bit too restricting for some of the fine-grained analysis I had wished to pursue regarding the 2008 election. Additionally,
voters were somewhat overrepresented in the second wave. While this weakness is partially remedied by the composite survey weight (which accounts for the higher response rate of these units and deflates their data contributions), having so few non-voters in the sample makes greater statistical demands on those that exist, and substantially increases the error surrounding any estimates derived. While sample size is not the be-all and end-all of social science—the famous Literary Digest polling debacle of the 1936 presidential election proved this—the more cases available, the more confident we can be in our results.

Furthermore, a good deal of this study relies on data collected from one battleground state, which can be somewhat limiting, in that it risks reducing the applicability of any findings to that particular state’s electorate. This validity concern has been somewhat assuaged though by inclusion of data from the Cross-National Election Project (CNEP), which echoed many of the results I unearthed in the Ohio data. This is especially the case for the demographic, social, and political characteristics of new voters. Additionally, as a check on validity to the bivariate tables of Ohio data in Chapter 3, when the CNEP data is further broken down into estimates for battleground states (as defined by Shaw 2006), the substantive conclusions remain the same. This demonstrates that the old political axiom, “As Ohio goes, so goes the nation” still has a kernel of truth to it.³ That Ohio’s partisan balance more or less mirrors the nation’s—this is also true for

³ The state has sided with all but two winners of every presidential election since 1900; 1944 and 1960 are the exceptions. Only Missouri comes close to that distinction, and it has thrice “errated,” most recently in 2008, when the state narrowly went for Senator John McCain.
the social, demographic, and economic characteristics of its citizens (see Appendix F)—most likely accounts for the state’s perennial bellwether status in presidential and midterm elections. This was the major reason why the authors of the landmark study *The People’s Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948) chose to research the residents of Erie County, Ohio during the 1944 presidential election campaign. So, while in a technical sense, some of the findings in this study can really be generalized only to new voters in Ohio, I do believe Ohio’s status as an “indicator” state gives the consumer of these data some level of comfort in their applicability to new voters writ large.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

At the outset to this study, I was cautious enough to concede that I would likely not "solve" the puzzle of participation for new voters in any definitive way. While I do believe I have provided some important insights into this heretofore understudied political organism, in many ways this study has provoked more questions than it has answered. For instance, the limited time-span of this study does not provide us with any long-term trends. What ever becomes of these new voters? Does some sort of "life-cycle" aspect to political participation eventually set in, as my data seem to foreshadow? Do the parties and their candidates ever realize the potential of new voters for their electoral fortunes and mobilize them such that they become habitual voters? Or do they drop out of

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4 The pattern of presidential midterm loss in 2006 was felt by Republicans at the state level as well; the party lost all but one of the statewide offices on the ballot (and held onto that only narrowly), several congressional seats, and only barely retained control of the state House of Representatives.
politics altogether, in the absence of some super-charged election, such as what existed in 2004 or 2008? A return to a more politically quiescent time like the Eisenhower years (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979) could well tempt apathy and invite a return to sedentary citizenship. If this turns out to be the case, then perhaps the best preventive medicine for our political system may be, paradoxically, the polarized environment in which recent elections have been conducted, to the extent they have fueled interest and participation, the likes of which our democracy has not seen for twenty years or more.

There are other questions which future research should attempt to address. Most vexing is the question I was forced to table in this study: What, beyond a basic desire to participate, makes a citizen register to vote? Is it some salient issue? Or are candidate factors the likely cause? Could it be a combination of the two? And how does mobilization factor into this equation? I am convinced there is some important work still to be done on this subject, though only if the right kind of data can be acquired. I suspect this question would best be addressed with longitudinal survey data of non-voters who eventually register and become voters, although the thorny issue of validity—did an interviewer asking questions about why a citizen is not registered stimulate his registration?—will always be problematic. My best guess at this point is that political parties and other intermediaries play a larger role in underwriting the costs of registration for many citizens than is currently believed to be the case. These organizations played an enormous role in registering African American voters after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 188-96). But now that this law has
become an institutionalized part of our political culture and African-Americans vote at rates almost equal to whites, the conventional wisdom seems to be that mass voter registration has been pretty well taken care of; not much more to do. Certainly, we no longer have registration drives of the sheer scope that existed upon passage of the Act, but every major election the political parties face three competing choices: 1) mobilize existing registered voters who have supported them in the past, 2) persuade existing registered voters, who may be sympathetic to their candidate(s), or 3) register new voters who are both malleable enough to be persuaded and can be called upon again in future elections. Though parties engage in all three of these activities, the third one might well be the most rational of all, although as I have shown earlier in this study, simply registering new voters does not guarantee that they will turn out in an election; follow-up is often required. At any rate, there is good reason to believe parties and other intermediaries still play a substantial role in registering voters, although more research is needed to determine how substantial that role is. Individuals in my data were quick to claim personal initiative as the driving force behind their registration, rather than acknowledge the organizational influences of others. Disentangling partisan mobilization efforts from the tendency to give a socially desirable response in survey questions such as these will be required before a more valid assessment of party efforts at registration can be made.

Another vital question pertains to second-order elections. What is the extent of the new voters' involvement in second-order elections beyond the federal level? This study only scratched the surface of electoral participation in American politics—a
presidential and midterm election, and even then the analysis was limited to participation in the high-stimulus component of the typical second-order election: a gubernatorial contest. Do new voters ever take part in lesser-known statewide and local elections? This question is important, as the case can be made that the decisions of school boards, village and city councils, and county commissions are more proximately felt and more readily visible than many policies that are wrangled over in Washington, D.C. Will property taxes be raised to pay for a desperately needed new school? When is this crumbling highway going to be replaced? Will reductions in state aid to local municipalities force the closure of recreation centers and the downsizing of police and fire departments? Will city swimming pools have the budget to open this summer? Why does it take so long to clear the roads of snow? What is the county going to do about the foul odor coming from the pulp and paper mill outside of town? All of these questions, and many more, are handled at the sub-presidential level.

In his famous collection of essays on democracy in early America, Alexis de Tocqueville (1945) was most impressed by the breadth of communal decision-making he observed at the local level. There is much to be impressed with, as the overwhelming majority of “government” decisions in America are made not in the halls of Congress, but in the temples of democracy that are our county courthouses, our city halls, our village or town council chambers, our high school auditoriums, and even our library board rooms. But it is a curious quality of our political system that those elections which affect so many facets of our day-to-day lives are the elections with the lowest level of citizen
participation. If and when new voters ever vote in local elections is not just a matter concerning the future of democracy in America, but also its quality.

Future research should also examine (and re-examine) the role that family influences and schooling play in getting citizens registered to vote. The association between marriage and turnout was established early on (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954), and has been subsequently reaffirmed (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, Chap. 3), even in a cross-national context (Magalhães 2010), where it was found that spousal influence is the greatest determinant of turnout in the democratized world. But only one major study (Stoker and Jennings 1995) has taken advantage of long-term panel data (partly due to its scarcity) to demonstrate the social influences of marriage and cohabitation in motivating political participation where none previously existed. There is much more reassessing to be done on parental and education system socialization. For example, we know from earlier work (Beck and Jennings 1982) that parental political engagement and active involvement in high school civic affairs both separately and jointly affect post-adolescent political activity. But nearly thirty years later, it is worth revisiting how these forces influence registration. It is easy to imagine how active high school students from politicized households, coming of age, register and vote. But what about the time lag between first eligibility and eventual participation that was found in this study to be a frequent occurrence? What accounts for this lag? Additionally, it is worth delving into the question of what, exactly, in one’s high school education compels a young adult to register upon turning eighteen, if education can be
isolated as the causal factor.

Classroom discussions with my own students have led me to the conclusion that a variety of education-related factors could account for eventual registration and participation in the political system as new voters. Some students of mine have been required to register to vote for their high school government class. Others have received course credit for working as poll workers, receiving the benefit of seeing democracy in action. Others yet belonged to after-school clubs such as the Young Republicans or Young Democrats. My own high school civics course some fifteen years ago began each period with twenty minutes of reading the national and local sections of the daily newspaper, making students more aware of prominent political figures, salient issues of the day, and the stakes involved in upcoming elections. (Incidentally, daily newspaper reading is a habit I maintain to this day).

I frequently pose the following question to my students when we discuss voting and young people: “What can be done to improve turnout among your peers?” As frequently as I pose the question, I without fail get variants of the same answer: “Improve the civics education system in the schools.” Admittedly, this is easier said than done; if it was easy to do, we would have already done it. The point remains that there are any number of ways the education system can motivate adolescents into registration and participation, including some we may have not previously considered. But a good starting place is knowing which contemporary practices work to stimulate registration and participation among adolescents, and which practices are not as, or are no longer,
WHY WE SHOULD CARE ABOUT NEW VOTERS

At the beginning of this study, I confessed my nasty little habit of eavesdropping. It is time for another confession of sorts, although this one does not carry a pejorative connotation per se: I am one of the “small d” democrats I mentioned in the Introduction. I value living in a democracy, and I cherish the associated freedoms it provides. As a democratic citizen, I can criticize political authorities without fear of state reprisal. I can travel where I want, when I want, without notifying or seeking the permission of the government. I am able to affiliate with the political party of my choice. I am free to pursue to the acquisition of wealth and property, if I so desire these things. I can worship whatever god I choose, or no god at all. But above all, I have the right to take part in the collective decision-making process that commands the ship of state.

As of this writing, thousands of citizens half a world away are rising up in angry protest and armed rebellion against oppressive sultanates in the so-called “Arab Spring.” Dictatorial strongmen have been toppled in Egypt and Tunisia, and the governments of Syria, Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen seem on the verge of collapse any day. The demands of these citizens are fairly basic: economic opportunity and the right to chart their own destinies. They are no longer satisfied dutifully obeying the dictates of monarchs and clerics, who decide what is best for them. Rather, they want the right to express their
views, join political parties, and vote in free and fair elections. Observing this third wave of democratization—the first being the decolonization that followed World War II, and the second, that which swept over Eastern Europe and Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union—has given me pause to reflect on the state of our own democracy, and whether we take it for granted. To be sure, I was interested in the future of American democracy well before the uprisings in the Middle East. But they have given me a renewed sense of purpose in this scholarly investigation—a strong feeling that this study is more than some academic exercise to fulfill an intellectual curiosity.

All of my inquiry has been undertaken with an overarching interest in whether the newly registered become established voters. To be sure, the electoral timeline of this study is far too limited to shed a definitive light on this prospect, but the question is an important one to the future of American democracy. I do not believe it is a stretch to say that the future, if not the quality, of republican government depends, at least in part, on whether new voters indeed become regular participants in the electoral system.

The voting behavior literature features a rich lineage of studies that attempt to explain why citizens cease to participate in elections, or worse yet, never become voters in the first place. From psychological deterrents, such as declining trust in government and other political institutions (e.g. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995; Nye, Zelikow, and King 1997; Dalton 2004; Hetherington 2005) or altered conceptions of citizenship (Inglehart 1990, 1997; Zukin, et al. 2006; Dalton 2008), to sociological transformations, like changing media consumption habits (Wattenberg 2008) or declining social capital
(Putnam 2000), to institutional barriers that make participation burdensome, such as the complexities of voter registration and re-registration, (e.g. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass 1987), it is unquestionably the case that a good many *potential* voters never actually surmount the greatest obstacle to participation besides citizenship—registration.

The units of analysis in this study all have one thing in common however—they have either overcome the registration hurdle themselves, or someone has helped them do so. In this regard, *the political system already has these citizens in its grip*. What a setback it would be for future democratic decision-making to let them fall through the cracks and out of electoral politics. Of course, the particular new voters in this study could always be replaced by others, in some other election. But I assert that a political system which does little to facilitate the continued involvement of those who are already participants in it, let alone bring in new voices, is a political system that is setting itself up to wither on the vine. After all, while the “crisis of democracy” literature (Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki 1975; Lijphart 1997; Putnam 2000; Gans 2001; Franklin 2004; Macedo et al. 2005; Wolfe 2006; Wattenberg 2006, 2008) lamenting the long-term decline in electoral participation has somewhat abated, we cannot guarantee that our system will always have sufficient turnout to give our elections an air of legitimacy. Nor can we be certain that we will not enter another period of mass detachment from politics and voting, such as we experienced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In short, despite America’s past success with electoral democracy, we cannot rest on our laurels and always assume that if we hold
an election, voters will simply show up. So while democracy is being born overseas, we ought to be concerned with keeping it vibrant here in America. Such a concern elevates the importance of the new voter to our political system’s well-being, and it is a major contention of this study that parties have an important role to play in facilitating this well-being.

POLITICAL PARTIES, NEW VOTERS, AND THE FUTURE OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

In laying out his *Theory of the Political Party*, Samuel Eldersveld (1964, 2) asserted that, “parties are merely a particular structural response...to the needs of a social and political system in a particular milieu.” As long as we continue to reconcile competing public preferences by the vote—I have yet to encounter anyone with a better way—the political system will need voters. Enter the political parties.

Whereas previous generations (e.g. the Progressives) viewed them as sores upon the body politic, parties today could arguably be viewed as the saviors of democracy, or in the very least, facilitators of its robust continuation. There are simply no other institutions as capable of the mass mobilization of ordinary citizens as the Republican and Democratic parties. Political parties are well-positioned then, to ensure American democracy’s future vibrancy through this mobilizing function.

This role has been well-documented in the annals of political science (Eldersveld
1956, 1964; Kramer 1970; Caldeira, Patterson, and Markko 1985; Krassa 1988; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1992; Sabato 1992; Wielhouwer and Lockerbie 1994; Wielhouwer 1995; Gershtenson 2003; Beck and Heidemann 2010), but as suggested in many of these same works, and as demonstrated in this study, the parties have a habit of mobilizing those who least need mobilizing, on the face of it, anyway. Some scholars have pointed out though, that while the direct effects of these efforts appear to be an inefficient use of resources, there are indirect effects to mobilization. Political parties contact those who are well-positioned to mobilize others, with the goal of creating a cascading effect (Rosenstone and Hansen 1992, Chap. 6; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992). In this respect, the overemphasis on contacting individuals already quite likely to vote seems more understandable. But it cannot be denied that often parties are afraid to take a chance on voters with a new, unproven track record. I have shown though, that whey they do, there are electoral dividends to be reaped. Simply put, new voters behave like Campbell’s “peripheral voters,” but it does not have to be this way.

Despite this study’s limited scope in time and place, based on my findings, I believe it is within reason to assert that political parties, new voters, and democracy’s future find each other intertwined in a symbiotic relationship. When the parties mobilize new voters, the political system is served by greater participation in it. Higher electoral turnout—not just in presidential elections—will prevent the publication of more books with foreboding titles like *Democracy at Risk* (Macedo, et al. 2005), *The Disappearing American Voter* (Teixiera 1992), and *Where Have All the Voters Gone?* (Wattenberg
Wrongly or rightly, the standard yardstick used to measure a polity’s health is electoral turnout (Rimmerman 2010). Furthermore, when mobilized by political parties, new voters have a say in collective decision-making, which is important, since the very idea of representative democracy becomes compromised in the presence of unequal participation (Lijphart 1997). Political newcomers who are cajoled into participating also inch ever so closer to developing a life-long habit of voting, which political scientists have long contended (Birch 1950; Brody and Sniderman 1977), but only recently empirically verified (Plutzer 2002; Gerber, Green, and Schacar 2003) is a psychological byproduct of some initial behavior, several times repeated. The final strand in this web of interconnectivity is the “vote dividend” that parties can reap when they bother to include new voters in their mobilization calculus. Though it requires taking a bold chance on citizens without a history of reliable turnout, by mobilizing new voters, political parties not only help themselves, but perform a subsidiary service to democracy—a very important one at that. I believe it is a chance worth taking.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

QUESTION WORDING AND CODING OF CROSS-NATIONAL ELECTION PROJECT VARIABLES

REGISTRATION STATUS
Q65b: (for those who reported being registered to vote) “When did you register?”
Coding:
1. before 2004
2. in 2004, before Labor Day
3. in 2004, between Labor Day and Election Day
4. on Election Day
RECODED into:
0. Previously registered (1)
1. Newly registered (2, 3, & 4)

AGE (ppage)
Coding: AGE, IN YEARS

AGE-4 CATEGORIES (ppagect4)
Coding:
RECODE of AGE into:
1. 18-29
2. 30-44
3. 45-59
4. 60+

EDUCATION (ppeducat)
Coding:
1. Less than High School
2. High School Graduate
3. Some College
4. BA+

RACE (ppeth)
Coding:
1. White, non-Hispanic
2. Black, non-Hispanic
3. Other, non-Hispanic
4. Hispanic
RECODED into:
0. Non-white
1. White

INCOME (ppincimp)
RECODED into:
1. Bottom third (<$30,000)
2. Middle third ($30,000-$59,000)
3. Upper third ($60,000 and above)

UNION HOUSEHOLDS
Q44a: “Does any family member in your household belong to a trade union?”
Combined with Q39_a01: “Please provide us with the names of organizations you belong to (Trade Unions).”
RECODED into:
0. Non-union household
1. Union household

GENDER (ppgender)
Coding:
0. Female
1. Male

RELIGION
Q84-q97: “What is your religious preference?”
RECODED into:
1. Protestant
2. Catholic
3. Jewish
4. Something Else
5. None

EXTERNAL EFFICACY
Q73_1: “People like me do not have any influence over what the government does.”
Q73_4: “Politicians do not worry much about what people like me think.”
Coding:
1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
Summed, and then RESCALED from:
0. Lowest efficacy
to
1. Highest efficacy
INTERNAL EFFICACY
Q73_3: “Generally, politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening.”
Coding:
1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
RESCALED from:
0. Lowest efficacy
to
1. Highest efficacy

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Coding:
Engagement is composed of a principal components analysis factor score computed using the regression method from responses to questions measuring the following 5 constructs. Scores were RESCALED from 0 to 1, such that higher values mean more political engagement.

1. INTEREST IN POLITICS
Q3: “More generally, would you say that you are very, somewhat, not very, or not at all interested in politics?”
Coding:
1. Not at all interested
2. Not very interested
3. Somewhat interested
4. Very interested

2. ATTENTION PAID TO CAMPAIGN
Q2: “To what extent were you interested in the presidential campaign of 2004?”
Coding:
1. Not at all interested
2. Not very interested
3. Somewhat interested
4. Very interested

3. FREQUENCY OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION
Q32: “During the presidential election campaign, how frequently (if at all) did you talk about any of the candidates, parties, or issues with: a) your family, b) your friends, c) your neighbors, d) your coworkers, or e) people at your church?”
Coding:
Discussion scores were computed as a standardized fraction of actual discussion divided by eligible discussion networks. (Responses that were marked “does not
apply” were not calculated into the discussion score). For example, a respondent that discussed the campaign *sometimes* with family, *often* with friends, *rarely* with neighbors, *often* with coworkers, but does not go to church would be given a score of 9/12, or 0.75 [(2+3+1+3=9)/ (3+3+3+3=12)].

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
10. Does not apply

4. STRENGTH OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION
Coding: “folded” 7-point partisanship scale
1. Independent
2. Independent, but lean to one party
3. Weak partisan
4. Strong partisan

5. ACTIVISM
Coding:
An additive index was computed based on yes/no responses to the following four questions. Range: 0 (none) to 3 (all).

-MEETINGS/RALLIES
Q60: “Did you attend any party meetings or rallies during the election campaign and for which party (check all that apply)?”
0. No
1. Yes

-VOLUNTEER WORK
Q61: “Did you work for any party or presidential candidate during the election campaign?”
0. No
1. Yes

-MONEY TO PARTY/CAMPAIGN
Q62: “Did you contribute money to a party or presidential candidate during the campaign?”
0. No
1. Yes

LENGTH OF RESIDENCE
Q83: “How long have you been living in this city/town/village?”
Coding:
1. Less than a year
2. 1 to 5 years
3. 5 to 10 years
4. 10 to 20 years
5. Over 20 years
RECODED into:
1. Less than 5 years
2. More than 5 years

FREQUENCY OF RELIGIOUS ATTENDANCE
Q99: “Apart from the occasional wedding, baptism, or funeral, how often do you usually attend religious services?”
Coding:
1. Every week or more
2. Almost every week
3. Once or twice a month
4. A few times a year
5. Never

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIPS
Q38: “Please indicate which types of organizations you belong to from the list below.”
A. Trade Unions
B. Professional or business associations
C. Religious groups
D. Political parties or groups
E. Educational, artistic or cultural groups
F. Environmental groups
G. Youth, women's or senior citizens' social groups
H. Sports clubs
I. Feminist organizations
J. Neighborhood associations
K. Parents' organizations
L. Ethnic associations
M. Farmers' organizations
(continued)
N. Veterans' associations
O. Fraternal and service organizations
P. Other
Q. Don’t belong to any organizations

Q39: “Please provide us with the names of the organizations you belong to. Please enter up to three names for each category.”
Coding: (an additive count of the number of organizations provided by R)

PARTISANSHIP
Q49-Q53b_2
RECODED into:
1. Democrat
2. Independent
3. Republican
IDEOLOGY
Q47: “Many people, when they think about politics, use the words "liberal" and "conservative". According to your own political opinions, where would you place yourself on this scale, or do you not normally use these terms?” 1(liberal) to 10(conservative)
RECODED into:
1-4 Liberal
5-6 Moderate
7-10 Conservative

REPORTED VOTER TUROUT
Q66a: “Did you vote in the recent presidential election?”
Coding:
1. Yes, I voted in person
2. Yes, I voted absentee (either by mail or electronically)
3. No, I did not vote
RECODED into:
0. Abstained (3)
1. Voted (1, 2)

VOTE CHOICE
Q67a: (if R reported voting) “For which presidential candidate did you vote?”
Coding:
1. George W. Bush
2. John F. Kerry
3. Ralph Nader
4. Other [Specify]
RECODED into:
0. Bush
1. Kerry

BUSH APPROVAL
Q54.1: “We would like to know your feelings towards some political figures on a scale from 0-10. If you feel very favorable towards this person, you can give him the highest score of 10; if you feel very unfavorable towards this person you can give him a 0 (zero); if you feel absolutely neutral towards this person, you can give him a 5. If you have not heard enough about this person to have an opinion, feel free to say so.”
George W. Bush
RECODED into:
1. Angry (0-1)
2. Dissatisfied, but not angry (2-4)
3. Satisfied, but not enthusiastic (6-8)
4. Enthusiastic (9-10)
(5 deleted from analysis)
ECONOMY MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE
Q29a: “During the presidential campaign, the candidates and parties discussed many different issues. For you personally, which of the following issues was the most important issue in the recent presidential election campaign?”
Coding:
A. Abortion
B. Budget Deficits
C. The Economy and Jobs
D. Education
E. Environment
F. Gay Marriage
G. Healthcare
H. The War in Iraq
I. Medicare
J. Prescription Drugs
K. Social Security
L. Tax Cuts
M. The War on Terrorism
N. Judges appointed to federal courts

RECODED into:
0. Not the economy and jobs
1. The economy and jobs

PARTY MOBILIZATION
Q56: “Please tell me whether any of the political parties or presidential candidates or their representative contacted you during the recent election campaign (check all that apply)?”
Q57a (if R received contact by the Democrats): “Concerning the Democrats: Was that contact with you in person, on the telephone, by mail, or by email (check all that apply)?”
Q58a (if R received contact by the Republicans): “Concerning the Republicans: Was that contact with you in person, on the telephone, by mail, or by email (check all that apply)?”
Coding (from either party):
1. Yes, by mail
2. Yes, by phone
3. Yes, by email
4. Yes, face-to-face
5. No contact by either party
APPENDIX B

QUESTION WORDING AND CODING OF OHIO SURVEY OF POLITICS VARIABLES

AGE
Coding: AGE, IN YEARS

AGE-4 CATEGORIES
Coding:
RECODE of AGE into:
1. 18-29
2. 30-44
3. 45-59
4. 60+

EDUCATION
“What is the highest level of education you have completed?”
Coding:
1. Less than High School
2. High School Graduate
3. Some College
4. BA+

RACE
“What racial or ethnic group best describes you?”
Coding:
1. White/Caucasian
2. Black/African American
3. Hispanic/Latino
4. Asian/Pacific Islander
5. Native American
6. Other (please specify)
RECODED into:
0. Non-white
1. White
INCOME
“What is your BEST ESTIMATE of your 2005 (2007) household income? This includes the salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest income, and all other income of all persons aged 18 and over living in your household. Here also, remember that your response is STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.”
RECODED into:
1. Bottom third (<$50,000)
2. Middle third ($50,000-$89,000)
3. Upper third ($90,000 and above)

UNION HOUSEHOLDS
“Is anyone living in your household (including yourself) a current or retired member of a labor union?”
Coding:
1. Yes, current
2. Yes, retired
3. Yes, both current and retired
4. No
RECODED into:
0. Non-union household
1. Union household

GENDER
“What is your gender?”
Coding:
0. Female
1. Male

RELIGION
“Do you consider yourself to be Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Agnostic or Atheist, or something else?”
Coding:
1. Protestant
2. Roman Catholic
3. Jewish
4. Agnostic or Atheist
5. Other (please specify)
RECODED into:
1. Protestant
2. Catholic
3. Jewish
4. Something Else
5. None
EXTERNAL EFFICACY
“People like me don’t have any say about what the government does,” and
“Public officials do not care much what people like me think.”
Coding:
1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
Summed, and then RESCALED from:
0. Lowest efficacy
to
1. Highest efficacy

INTERNAL EFFICACY
“Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.”
Coding:
1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
RESCALED from:
0. Lowest efficacy
to
1. Highest efficacy

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT
Coding:
Engagement is composed of a principal components analysis factor score computed using the regression method from responses to questions measuring the following 5 constructs. Scores were RESCALED from 0 to 1, such that higher values mean more political engagement.

1. INTEREST IN POLITICS
“Some people seem to follow what’s going on in GOVERNMENT and PUBLIC AFFAIRS most of the time, whether there’s an election going on or not. Others aren’t that interested. Would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs MOST OF THE TIME, SOME OF THE TIME, ONLY NOW AND THEN, or HARDLY AT ALL?
1. Hardly at all
2. Only now and then
3. Some of the time
4. Most of the time
2. ATTENTION PAID TO CAMPAIGN
“Some people don’t pay much attention to POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS. How about you? Would you say that you were VERY MUCH interested, SOMewhat interested, NOT VERY interested, or NOT AT ALL interested in the midterm campaigns last November?”
1. Not at all interested
2. Not very interested
3. Somewhat interested
4. Very much interested

3. FREQUENCY OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION
“During the 2006 midterm election campaign, how frequently (if at all) did you talk about any of the candidates, parties, or issues with: a) your family, b) your friends, c) your neighbors, d) your coworkers, or e) people at your church?”

Coding:
Discussion scores were computed as a standardized fraction of actual discussion divided by eligible discussion networks. (Responses that were marked “does not apply” were not calculated into the discussion score). For example, a respondent that discussed the campaign sometimes with family, often with friends, rarely with neighbors, often with coworkers, but does not go to church would be given a score of 9/12, or 0.75 \([2+3+1+3=9]/(3+3+3+3=12)\].
1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
10. Does not apply

4. STRENGTH OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION
Coding: “folded” 7-point partisanship scale
1. Independent
2. Independent, but lean to one party
3. Weak partisan
4. Strong partisan

5. ACTIVISM
Coding:
An additive index was computed based on yes/no responses to the following four questions. Range: 0 (none) to 4 (all).

-MEETINGS/RALLIES
“In 2006, did you go to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate or party?”
0. No
1. Yes
-VOLUNTEER WORK
“Did you do any paid or volunteer work for one of the parties or candidates during last year’s campaign?”
0. No
1. Yes

-MONEY TO PARTY/CAMPAIGN
“During an election year, people are often asked to make a contribution to support campaigns. Last year, did you give money to an INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATE running for public office?”
0. No
1. Yes
“Did you give money to a POLITICAL PARTY during this past election campaign?”
0. No
1. Yes

LENGTH OF RESIDENCE
“How long have you been living in your present city, town, or township?”
Coding:
1. Less than 1 year
2. 1 to 2 years
3. 2 to 5 years
4. 5 to 10 years
5. 11 years or longer
RECODED into:
1. Less than 5 years
2. More than 5 years

FREQUENCY OF RELIGIOUS ATTENDANCE
“Would you say you attend religious services every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?”
Coding:
1. Every week or more
2. Almost every week
3. Once or twice a month
4. A few times a year
5. Never
RECODED into:
1. Never
2. A few times a year
3. A few times a month (Almost every week/Once or twice a month)
4. Every week
PARTISANSHIP
“Below is a 7-point scale that shows whether people see themselves as Republicans or Democrats, with various points in between. Generally speaking, where would you place yourself on this scale?”
Coding:
1. Democrat (strong)
2. Democrat (not-very-strong)
3. Independent (but lean Democrat)
4. Independent
5. Independent (but lean Republican)
6. Republican (not-very-strong)
7. Republican (strong)

STRENGTH OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION
Coding: “folded” partisanship scale
1. Independent
2. Independent, but lean to one party
3. Weak partisan
4. Strong partisan

IDEOLOGY
“We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or have you not thought much about this?”
Coding:
1. Extremely liberal
2. Liberal
3. Slightly liberal
4. Moderate, middle-of-the-road
5. Slightly conservative
6. Conservative
7. Extremely conservative
8. Have not thought much about it

REPORTED VOTER TURNOUT (2004)
[see VOTE CHOICE (2004) below]
Coding:
0. VOTE CHOICE (2004) code of 5
1. VOTE CHOICE (2004) codes of 1-4
VOTE CHOICE (2004)
“Do you recall which presidential candidate you voted for in the presidential election of 2004, or didn’t you vote in 2004?”
Coding:
1. George W. Bush, the Republican
2. John Kerry, the Democrat
3. Other (please specify)
4. I can’t remember
5. I did not vote in 2004
(if validated voter) RECODED into:
0. Bush
1. Kerry

REPORTED VOTER TURNOUT (2006 & 2008)
“In talking to people about elections, we have found it is the case where people were not able to vote because they didn’t think they were registered, they were sick, or they just didn’t have time. In terms of the election last November, which of the following statements best describes you?”
Coding:
1. I did not vote in the election
2. I thought about voting, but didn’t
3. I usually vote, but didn’t this time
4. I don’t remember whether I voted or not
5. I am sure I voted
RECODED into:
0. Did not vote/unsure (1-4)
1. Voted (1)

VOTE CHOICE (2006)
“In the following races for public office, please indicate the candidate you voted for. If you did not vote, or are unsure if you voted, indicate the candidate you most preferred, or check the box indicating no preference.”
a. Governor...
1. J. Kenneth Blackwell (Republican)
2. Ted Strickland (Democrat)
3. Other (please specify)
4. No preference
(if validated voter) RECODED into:
0. Blackwell
1. Strickland
BUSH APPROVAL (2006)
“Now, on to a different subject. We’d like to ask a few questions now on how you felt before the 2006 election. Even though this was a while ago, please do your best to try and remember what you were feeling AT THAT TIME, NOT AS OF NOW.”
“Which came closest to your feelings about the Bush Administration in general?”
Coding:
1. Angry
2. Dissatisfied, but not angry
3. Satisfied, but not enthusiastic
4. Enthusiastic

ECONOMY MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE (2006)
“Which one issue mattered most in how you decided to vote? If you did not vote, or are unsure if you voted, select the item that would have mattered most to you.”
Coding:
1. Taxes
2. Education
3. Economy/Jobs
4. National Security/Terrorism
5. Health Care/Medicare
6. The War in Iraq
7. Corruption/Scandal
RECODED into:
0. Not Economy/Jobs
1. Economy/Jobs

VOTE CHOICE (2008)
“In the following races for public office, please indicate the candidate you voted for. If you did not vote, or are unsure if you voted, indicate the candidate you most preferred, or check the box indicating no preference.”
b. President...
1. John McCain, the Republican
2. Barack Obama, the Democrat
3. Cynthia McKinney, Green Party candidate
4. Bob Barr, Libertarian Party candidate
5. Ralph Nader, Independent candidate
6. Other (please specify)
7. No preference
(if validated voter) RECODED into:
0. McCain
1. Obama
ECONOMY MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE (2008)
“In this election, which ONE issue mattered most in how you decided to vote? If you did not vote, or are unsure if you voted, select the item that would have mattered most to you. (Select only ONE issue).”
Coding (rotated):
1. Taxes
2. Education
3. Economy/Jobs
4. National Security/Terrorism
5. Health Care
6. The War in Iraq
7. Energy/Gas prices
8. Other (please specify)
RECODED into:
0. Not Economy/Jobs
1. Economy/Jobs

GROUP MEMBERSHIPS
“Just like candidates and campaigns try to contact you to influence how you vote, GROUPS and ORGANIZATIONS you are affiliated with do the same thing. They send flyers or letters in the mail, call by phone, email (if you have internet access), or contact you directly (face-to-face). Thinking back to before the election, did you receive contact or information of a political nature from any of the organizations you belong to? (For the purposes of this question, do not consider a political party an organization) (Check all that apply).”
Coding:
1. Yes, by mail
2. Yes, by phone
3. Yes, by email
4. Yes, face-to-face
5. No (Skip to Question 24).
RECODED into:
0. Not affiliated with a group (no contact whatsoever) and NOT a labor union household
1. Affiliated with a group (as indicated by any contact) OR a labor union household (from the Union Household variable described above)
PARTY MOBILIZATION

“Much the same way that campaigns, groups, and organizations try to influence your vote, the POLITICAL PARTIES try to contact as many people as they can to get them to vote for their candidate. Did anyone from either of the POLITICAL PARTIES contact you or provide you with information during the campaign last year? (Check all that apply).”

Coding:
1. Yes, by mail
2. Yes, by phone
3. Yes, by email
4. Yes, face-to-face
5. No one from either party contacted me or gave me information (Skip to Question 29).

“Which party was that?”

Coding:
1. Democrats
2. Republicans
3. Both
4. Other (please specify)

RECODED into:
0. Did not receive contact from either party
1. Received contact by either telephone or face-to-face
2. Received contact by both telephone or face-to-face
## APPENDIX C

### Logistic Regression Models in Chapter 3 (Figs. 3.2 and 3.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>CNEP Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coeff.</th>
<th>OSP Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coeff.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age (4 categories)</td>
<td>-1.46*** (.25)</td>
<td>35.42</td>
<td>-3.90*** (.98)</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>-.93** (.27)</td>
<td>11.73</td>
<td>-.19 (.123)</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td>-.48* (.19)</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>-1.78 (.121)</td>
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<td>.31 (.70)</td>
<td>.20</td>
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<td>Union household</td>
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<td>.11</td>
<td>-.44 (.76)</td>
<td>.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.10 (.16)</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>-.06 (.62)</td>
<td>.09</td>
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<td>Protestant</td>
<td>.07 (.17)</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.14 (.61)</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<td>External Efficacy</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>-.02 (1.08)</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Efficacy</td>
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<td>.64</td>
<td>-1.27 (1.06)</td>
<td>1.42</td>
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<td>1.59</td>
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<td>Length of Residence</td>
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<td>72.24</td>
<td>-1.91* (.80)</td>
<td>5.75</td>
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<td>Religious Attendance</td>
<td>-.24 (.24)</td>
<td>.99</td>
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<td>Republican</td>
<td>-.18 (.30)</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>-3.35 (1.23)</td>
<td>.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>1.04 (1.11)</td>
<td>.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>.31 (.25)</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>-1.16 (1.15)</td>
<td>.02</td>
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(continued)
<p>| | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>-1.59</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(.26)</td>
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<td>(1.02)</td>
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<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>(1.13)</td>
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<td>(2.09)</td>
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<td>-2Log-Likelihood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
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<td>231</td>
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</table>

Sources: The Cross-National Election Project and The Ohio Survey of Politics (1st wave).
Notes: Entries represented weighted logistic regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.
APPENDIX D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% newly registered</th>
<th>% previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>58.1 (+7)</td>
<td>49.7 (+10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>22.8 (+10)</td>
<td>8.1 (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>19.2 (-17)</td>
<td>42.2 (-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Cases | 60 | 98 |

*Note: Entries are percentages of respondents to the second wave of the OSP. Differences between the first and second wave response rates in parentheses.*
APPENDIX E

TABLES AND MODELS FOR CHAPTER 5

Table 1 Partisan Mobilization and Turnout by Cohort (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Not contacted</th>
<th>Contacted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newly registered</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not vote</td>
<td>77.3 (31)</td>
<td>55.3 (14)</td>
<td>69.7 (45)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>100.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>22.7 (24)</td>
<td>44.7 (35)</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0 (55)</td>
<td>100.0 (49)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previously registered</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not vote</td>
<td>47.0 (6)</td>
<td>33.7 (9)</td>
<td>37.9 (15)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>66.3</td>
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<td>Voted</td>
<td>53.0 (29)</td>
<td>61.3 (83)</td>
<td>62.2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>73.5</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>Newly registered</td>
<td>( \chi^2 = 5.52 )</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previously registered</td>
<td>( \chi^2 = 0.88 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics

Notes: Cell entries represent weighted percentages. Column percentages are denoted by the top figures in each cell; row percentages are the bolded entries, displayed beneath column percentages. Number of cases in parentheses.

*\( p<.05 \), **\( p<.01 \), ***\( p<.001 \), one-tailed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party contact by:</th>
<th>Newly registered</th>
<th>Previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mail**</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2=7.43$</td>
<td>(69)</td>
<td>(106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone**</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2=10.22$</td>
<td>(45)</td>
<td>(85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email* (if internet access)</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2=3.27$</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face†</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2=2.70$</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(104)</td>
<td>(127)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries represent the weighted percentage of respondents in each strata who reported receiving contact of the particular nature depicted in the rows of the table. Respondents may report receiving more than one kind of contact. Email data are based on the 87 newly registered and 97 previously registered respondents in the sample with internet access. Number of cases in parentheses.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed
†p=.05, one-tailed
Table 3 Percentage of Respondents Receiving Party Contact, by Type (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party contact by:</th>
<th>Newly registered</th>
<th>Previously registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mail**</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$=6.14</td>
<td>(29)</td>
<td>(64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$=0.04</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email* (if internet access)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$=3.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>†</td>
<td>†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>(99)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries represent the weighted percentage of respondents in each strata who reported receiving contact of the particular nature depicted in the rows of the table. Respondents may report receiving more than one kind of contact. Email data are based on the 87 newly registered and 97 previously registered respondents in the sample with internet access. Number of cases in parentheses.

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, one-tailed
† too few cases to analyze; only 4.2 percent of the entire sample reported contact of this type.
Table 4  Logistic Regression Model of Mobilization’s Effect on Turnout in 2006  
(Figs. 5.1 and 5.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>New Voters</th>
<th>Established Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Standardized Coeff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (4 categories)</td>
<td>1.47* (.80)</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.59 (1.07)</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-.41 (.63)</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Efficacy</td>
<td>1.24 (.85)</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Efficacy</td>
<td>-1.96* (1.06)</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Approval</td>
<td>-.14 (.26)</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of PID</td>
<td>.45 (.66)</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Influence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Attendance</td>
<td>.22 (.69)</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Memberships</td>
<td>.67 (.53)</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Mobilization</td>
<td>1.41* (.75)</td>
<td>.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.56 (1.14)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-2Log-Likelihood     | 117.99     | 68.91              |
Nagelkerke R²          | .27        | .34                |
Cases                  | 104        | 127                |

*Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics, 1st wave
Notes: Entries represented weighted logistic regression coefficients. Linearized standard errors in parentheses.
Table 5 Logistic Regression Model of Mobilization’s Effect on Turnout in 2008 (Figure 5.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coeff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Age)</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age²</td>
<td>-0.00**</td>
<td>-1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Age²)</td>
<td>(.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8.29***</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Education)</td>
<td>(2.39)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-1.34</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Income)</td>
<td>(.99)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Efficacy</td>
<td>-1.55</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Internal Efficacy)</td>
<td>(1.45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Efficacy</td>
<td>-3.14*</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(External Efficacy)</td>
<td>(1.59)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Approval</td>
<td>-1.18*</td>
<td>-.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Bush Approval)</td>
<td>(.59)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of PID</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Strength of PID)</td>
<td>(1.19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Influence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Attendance</td>
<td>2.51*</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Church Attendance)</td>
<td>(1.30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Memberships</td>
<td>-.97</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Group Memberships)</td>
<td>(.96)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Mobilization</td>
<td>3.39**</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Party Mobilization)</td>
<td>(1.19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Voter</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(New Voter)</td>
<td>(2.59)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Mobilization*New Voter</td>
<td>-3.67*</td>
<td>-.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Party Mobilization*New Voter)</td>
<td>(1.70)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-6.30</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>(3.25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continued)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(continued)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2Log-Likelihood</td>
<td>73.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R²</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: The Ohio Survey of Politics, 2nd wave
Notes: Entries represented weighted logistic regression coefficients. Linearlized standard errors in parentheses.
## APPENDIX F

Social, Demographic, and Economic Similarities of Ohio and the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average family size (in units)</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Bachelor’s degree or higher</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Home ownership</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age (in years)</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% White</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2009 inflation-adjusted dollars)</td>
<td>47,144</td>
<td>51,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Individuals below poverty level</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of workforce in management and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional positions</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of workforce in manufacturing</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of workforce in service sector</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of workforce in government employment</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2005-2009 estimates from The American Community Survey.
Available at [http://factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov)

Notes: Workforce percentages do not total 100% since not all categories were included in table.