

**SPORADIC VOTERS: HOW ATTITUDE CHANGE INFLUENCES VOTER
TURNOUT**

A Dissertation

by

CHRISTOPHER T. OWENS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2006

Major Subject: Political Science

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Jan E. Leighley David A.M. Peterson
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ABSTRACT

Sporadic Voters: How Attitude Change Influences Voter Turnout. (August 2006)

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This dissertation investigates the important role attitudes play in determining the participation levels of a large number of Americans. Over the past 30 years the prominent theories in the political participation literature have stressed the importance of socioeconomic status in explaining voter turnout. More recently, some have suggested that voting is a habit that most Americans acquire over their lifetimes. I contend that this previous work is incomplete in that it overlooks a large segment of the public that I describe as *sporadic voters*. Using National Election Study panel data from the early 1970s and 1990s, I find that neither socioeconomic status nor habit explains the voting behavior of sporadic voters. Sporadic voters decide to participate in elections based on their political attitudes at the time of any given election. If they have stronger partisan attachments, greater campaign interest or more external efficacy sporadic voters will be more likely to show up at the polls regardless of changes in education, age or income.

DEDICATION

For my daughter Celia, you endured six schools and six different homes so your dad could chase his dream. I love you.

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Most of the credit for my growth as a scholar and to some extent a person belongs to Jan Leighley. Jan took an unpolished MA student and molded him into, what I think, is a respectable political scholar. Her patience, guidance and friendship is something for which I will always be grateful. Jan, I love you like a sister.

I would like to thank Dave Peterson for both his friendship and guidance throughout my four years at A&M and the completion of this dissertation. I am also grateful for the remaining two members of my committee Kim Hill and Arnold Vedlitz. You challenged me to make the writing of this dissertation a growing process which resulted in not only a better piece of work but also improved my approach to the study of political science.

I am grateful to the Department of Political Science at Texas A&M for the quality of my education and the material support provided to me during my graduate studies. The quality of support provided to me by the department is due, in no small measure, to the efforts of the current department chair, Dr. Patricia Hurley.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study of voter turnout has focused primarily on two questions over the past several decades. First, what are the determinants of who votes? And, second, why has turnout declined? Answers to the first question are generally agreed upon, and point toward socioeconomic status, electoral rules and elite mobilization as primary determinants. Along the way, one notable explanation of voter turnout, political attitudes, has been either discredited or ignored (both theoretically and empirically).

In contrast, the primary discussion regarding the second question has centered on attitudes such as declining partisan strength and political efficacy. Recently, however, McDonald and Popkin (2001) have argued and provide intriguing evidence that in fact turnout has not declined as markedly as had once been believed. Interestingly, this new claim suggests, too, that attitudes do not matter for voter turnout, else how could turnout remain relatively constant at a time when attitudinal measures are becoming more negative?

One possible solution to the puzzle of explaining voter turnout is reflected in Plutzer's introduction of the notion of habitual voting. Plutzer's (2002) habitual voting framework argues that most individuals fall into two categories: habitual voter or habitual nonvoter. He contends that over time habitual nonvoters will transition from the state of nonvoting to one of voting and will continue to vote thereafter. If one is to

This dissertation follows the style of *The American Journal of Political Science*.

subscribe to Plutzer's habitual voting thesis, one must also consider all things equal and accept that variations in attitudes across elections are irrelevant to voter turnout. In other words, citizens who have acquired the habit of voting vote as a "standing decision," while those who do not have the habit of voting, do not vote. Yet Plutzer's thesis, which implies that the electorate consists of habitual voters and habitual non-voters, ignores the question of how voters develop and sustain their habit.

I argue in this dissertation that this approach to voter turnout ignores a key segment of the electorate, sporadic voters, who participate in some elections but abstain in others and therefore a habitual behavior has not been established. The key role of attitudes as predictors of turnout, I argue, is that attitudinal involvement is the mechanism which explains why these less-than-habitual voters participate in some elections and stay home during others. That is, attitudes are the key factor motivating sporadic voters to vote. Further, I argue that integrating political attitudes into models of voter turnout helps explain two common empirical observations: varying levels of turnout in presidential elections and the notably higher level of turnout observed in presidential vs. midterm elections.

Status, Attitudes and Participation

The relationship between socioeconomic status, attitudes and political participation has changed considerably over the last 35 years. One of the early in-depth investigations of the relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation was conducted by Verba and Nie (1972). In *Participation in America* the authors' argue that individuals with higher incomes, greater levels of education, and higher status jobs will

be more likely to participate in politics (Verba and Nie 1972). Yet, as the authors note, socioeconomic status is only the first step in their model: “According to this model, social status determines to a large extent the amount to which they participate. And it does so through the intervening effect of a variety of ‘civic’ attitudes conducive to such participation- attitudes such as a sense of efficacy, of psychological involvement in politics, of an obligation to participate, and so on” (Verba and Nie 1972, 19).

In other words, attitudes in the Verba and Nie (1972) model were the mechanisms that determined if an individual would choose to participate in the electoral process. If an individual feels she has the skills to effectively participate in politics or that elected officials care about the problems facing citizens like themselves, that individual will be more likely to participate in the political process. Additionally, those individuals with strong attachments to the political parties and those who feel participation is an important part of living in a democratic society will also be more likely to participate in politics. Social status is important in that it generates “sets of attitudes conducive or inhibitory of political participation” (Verba and Nie 1972, 19).

Over time social status has become even more central to our understanding of political participation. Theories as to how social status influences participation have changed considerably. This change in conceptualization is perhaps most evident in Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s (1995) *Voice of Equality* in which the authors introduce the Civic Voluntarism Model of participation.

Similar to Verba and Nie (1972), Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) identify the significance of social status in understanding who participates in politics. The works

differ in how social status influences participation. According to the Civic Voluntarism Model, social status increases participation in two ways. First, higher status individuals are better equipped to overcome the costs associated with participation. Higher status individuals are also more likely to live and work among populations that have a greater likelihood of being recruited to participate in politics.

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) do recognize the influence of attitudes with the inclusion of political engagement in the Civic Voluntarism Model. They find that even after controlling for education, income, institutional affiliation and civic skills attitudes, such as, political interest, political efficacy and partisan strength, are robust predictors of political participation. These authors are, however, of the opinion that attitudes are secondary and conceptually distinct from social status. Their view on this issue is evident in the statement: “If wishes were resources, then beggars would participate” (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 355).

The civic voluntarism model represents a major shift in participation theory. In the earlier research political attitudes were pivotal to our understanding of who is likely of participate in the political process (Verba and Nie 1972). Almost 25 years later political attitudes were relegated to the role of control variables of little importance to participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

While more recent political scholars have placed less of an emphasis on the role of attitudes in explaining political participation and focused more on resources and recruitment (mobilization), I argue it is time to reexamine the role of attitudes in participation theory. My assertion is drawn primarily upon the failure of cost reducing

policies to increase turnout. The federal government has reduced the costs associated with casting a ballot, yet we have seen little to no change in participation levels. The same is true of the many state governments that have lessened the expenses of voting. If resources were the primary determinant of political participation, we would expect a reduction in the number of resources required to cast a ballot would result in greater levels of participation, which has not been the case.

A number of important questions need to be addressed as we consider what we know about political attitudes and citizens' likelihood of casting a ballot. Earlier scholars have identified a number of attitudes that influence one's probability of voting: strength of partisanship, importance of voting, campaign interest, political efficacy, and political alienation (Abramson and Aldrich 1982; Brody 1978; Campbell et al. 1960; Verba and Nie 1972; Zipp 1985). These earlier studies have relied on cross-sectional data to investigate attitudes and their relationship to voter turnout, which is problematic. Cross-sectional data may tell us which attitudes matter, but such studies cannot explain how one's attitudes influence the likelihood of casting a ballot. Are attitudes simply by products of greater levels of education, age and income? Are attitudes stable over time? If attitudes change is there a change in political behavior? Such questions cannot be answered with cross-sectional studies.

To gain a greater understanding of the forces that explain participation, we must center our attention on issues related to how attitudes might influence behavior. The following inquiry begins our investigation: Are the attitudes that influence participation rates observed by earlier scholars stable from one election to the next?

While political scientists have shown little interest in the study of attitude change, social psychologists have a long history of studying attitude change, beginning with Hovland et al. (1953). Later such scholars have added greatly to this earlier work (see Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Hastie and Parks 1986; Haugtvedt and Wegener 1994; Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Petty and Wegner 1997). However, most of the work in social psychology has focused on the role of persuasion, stereotypes, racial attitudes, social identities and issue positions. Very few have looked at how such attitude change might influence political behavior and none have looked at how such change might influence the likelihood of voting.

While political participation scholars have shown little interest in attitudes or attitude change, voter choice scholars have continued to focus on the role of political attitudes in determining the candidate or party individuals will support in any given election. Research looking at the role of attitudes and vote choice tends to fall into three categories: issue voting, economic voting and candidate evaluations. Most of the issue voting research has developed from Key's (1966) argument that when given a clear alternative, some voters will make their vote choice based on the issue stances of the parties or candidates. A number of scholars in the 1970s argued that there was little empirical evidence to support issue voting (Page and Brody 1972; Popper 1972; Repass 1971; Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976). More recent scholars contend that issue voting does occur, however, such voting depends on the issues under study and the decision of the candidates and parties to take a stand on such issues (Abramowitz 1995; Alvarez 1997; Carmines and Stimson 1980; MacDonald, Listhau and Rabinowitz 1991; 1995).

The debate in the economic voting literature has revolved around the theme of retrospective versus prospective voting and pocketbook versus sociotropic voting (Alvarez and Nagler 1998; Fiorina 1981; Kinder, Adams and Gronke 1989; Miller and Wattenberg 1985). While these scholars differ as to which theory they think best explains vote choice, they all agree that economic conditions influence vote choice. Those political scientists interested in candidate evaluations assert that some voters make their selections based on perceived personality traits. These authors investigate how attitudes about a candidate's leadership abilities, honesty, decency, and ability to set a good moral example influence individual vote choice (Goren 2003; Kinder 1986; Rahn et al. 1990; Rosenberg and McCafferty 1985).

A second query in our investigation is, if vote choice scholars have continued to study the influence of attitudes, why have participation scholars in more recent years placed attitudes on the "back burner" of research? One reason may be that most scholars believe that the attitudes which influence participation are very stable over time (Huddy 2002). There is very little research to support such a conclusion. For example, party identification has been found to be established early in life and highly resistant to change over the course of one's lifetime (Converse and Markus 1979; Markus 1982). A conclusion of the stability in one's attitudes of voting participation depends on how one defines stability. If, by stability we mean not moving from Democrat to Republican overtime, one can conclude that such attitudes are very stable. Yet, if we were to expand our definition to the likelihood of placing oneself at the same point along the standard

seven point continuum from strong Democrat to strong Republican then partisanship looks much less stable overtime (Krosnick 1991).

Research on other attitudes believed to influence likelihood of voting such as external political efficacy has found little stability overtime (Krosnick 1991; Sears 1980). Research on the stability of campaign interest, voting importance and alienation from one election to the next is non-existent. Considering our lack of empirical understanding as to how voting participation attitudes change from one election to the next, it is not surprising that we know very little about how any changes in attitudes over time such as, partisan strength and political efficacy, might alter one's likelihood of casting a ballot.

If we were to find that attitudes do change from one election to the next and that this change can influence one's likelihood of voting we are left with two more important questions: (1) what causes attitude change and (2) who in the population is influenced by attitude change. Potential answers to the first question will be discussed and partially explored later. The answer to the second question, I will argue, is likely to be found among individuals who move in and out of the voting population.

What about the Sporadic Voters?

As I mention above, participation scholars over the last thirty years have tended to classify individuals as voters or nonvoters. Their primary conclusion has been that social status best differentiates those who are able to cast a ballot from those who cannot overcome the costs associated with voting. While Plutzer (2002) attempts to advance

our understanding of political participation, he, too, only focuses on two categories, habitual voter and habitual nonvoters.

In Figure 1 we see voter turnout for the last 12 presidential elections. The solid bars represent the percentage of eligible voters who cast a ballot in each election, while the striped bars represent the percentage that abstained.¹ Most scholars have focused their attention on differences in the individuals that make up the two respective bars. Resource based models have found that individuals who vote (the solid bar) have greater resources, live in states with less restrictive registration laws and are more likely to have been mobilized to vote (Jackman 1987; Powell 1986; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 2001; Timpone 1998; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Plutzer (2002) argues that once an individual moves from the nonvoting population (the striped bars) to the voting population (the solid bars) she will remain in the voting population in subsequent elections.

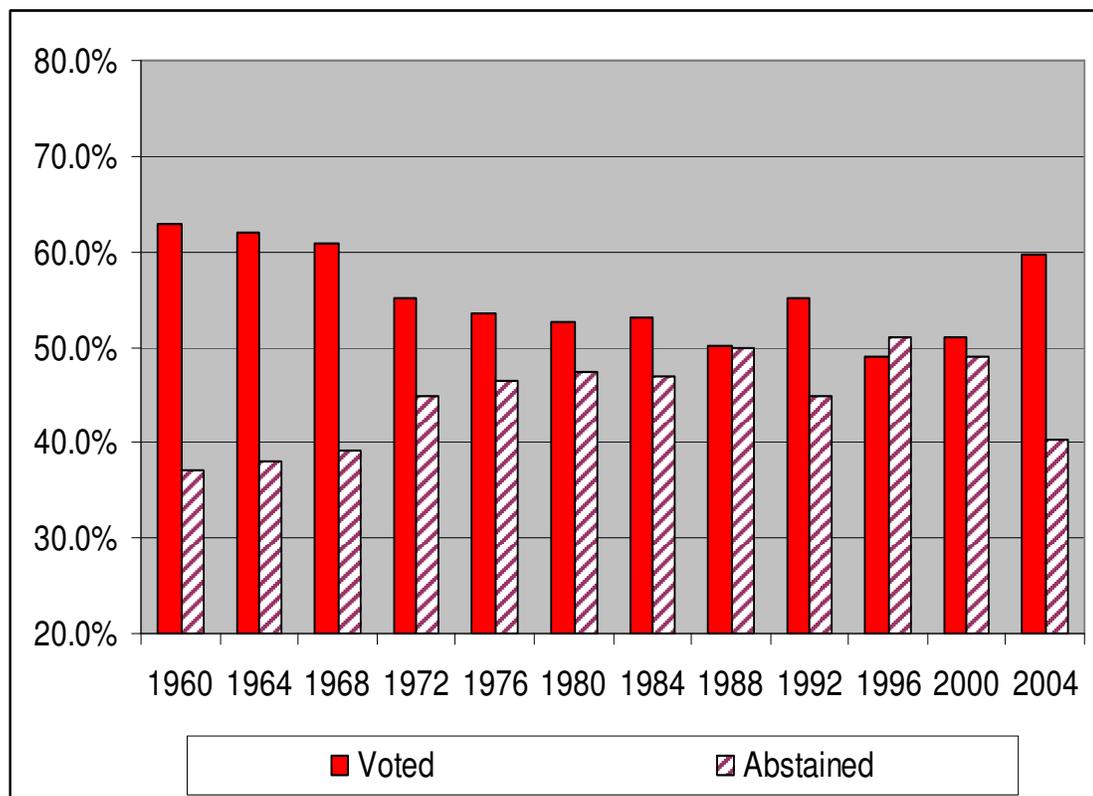
This dissertation differs in that I seek to explain the fluctuation in the height of the bars observed in Figure 1.1 from one election to the next. These fluctuations in turnout suggest that a large number of Americans move in and out of the electorate from one election to the next. For these individuals, voting does not appear to be a habit but instead a sporadic behavior.

I am not the first to recognize these individuals. Campbell (1960) argues that among all eligible voters there is a significant number of peripheral voters who will only

¹ Turnout data were obtained from the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate website (<http://fpc.state.gov/26213.htm>).

cast a ballot in high stimulus elections. Using the 1948 and 1952 elections as an example, Campbell (1960) shows that Eisenhower's 1952 victory was the result of a large number of nonvoters in 1948 turning out in 1952 to support the Republican

Figure 1.1 Presidential Election Turnout 1960-2004



candidate. While Campbell speculates that these new voters in 1952 turned out because of an increase in political interests, he does not empirically test this assumption.

Sigelman et al. (1985), using the five year voting histories of Kentucky voters, point out that a large number of individuals fall into the category of marginal voters. They offer cross-sectional evidence that both sociological and psychological measures explain the number of elections all respondents participated in over the five year period. However, the authors do not attempt to compare marginal voters to other respondents, nor do they posit a theory that might explain why marginal voters decide to participate in some elections and not others. While these scholars have recognized a significant number of Americans are sporadic in their voting behavior, to date, a number of important questions remain unanswered about this group, long overlooked in voter participation literature.

In this dissertation I will expand upon this earlier work by developing a theory to explain the behavior of sporadic voters. I use this theory to explain fluctuations in both presidential and congressional elections. Finally, I attempt to take an initial step in understanding the mechanisms that facilitate attitude change as it relates to voter turnout. If attitude change over time influences participation levels, identifying the forces behind that change is essential if we are to accurately explain and predict the electoral process.

Chapter Structure, Data and Findings

In Chapter II, I will review the literature on political participation and further develop a theory to explain the behavior of sporadic voters. This chapter also posits a number of testable hypotheses. In Chapter III I address two important questions. First, are attitudes stable from one presidential election to the next? Second, do changes in political

attitudes influence sporadic voters differently than habitual and nonvoters? To answer these questions, I utilize data from the 72-76 NES Panel Study and the NES 90-92 Panel Study. The findings in this chapter advance our understanding of the connection between political attitudes and their influence on voting behavior. Although a number of these attitudes do change from one election to the next, these changes do not have the same effect on all potential voters: only among sporadic voters does attitude change influence their likelihood of showing up at the polls.

In Chapter IV I expand the study of sporadic voters to congressional elections. This chapter asks the question: Can the surge and decline in voter turnout observed between presidential and congressional elections be explained by the behavior of sporadic voters? To answer this question, I use panel data from the 1972 and 1974 elections. The results in this chapter, though not as definitive as those in Chapter III, do reveal some interesting findings. Campaign interest appears to have the same influence on congressional election turnout for all voters. On the other hand, as in Chapter II, changes in attitudes such as voting importance, political efficacy and alienation, influence the decision to vote only for sporadic voters.

The final empirical chapter deviates from the previous chapters in that the focus is not on sporadic voters, but voters in general. At the heart of this dissertation is the argument that attitude change is important to our understanding of political participation. Such a statement begs the question, what factors induce attitude change? While socioeconomic status is fairly stable over time, political context is not. Issues, candidates, media coverage and the behavior of political parties all change from one

election to the next making them likely areas of interest in the study of attitude change. In the final chapter of this dissertation I attempt to link one of the likely contextual forces that influences attitude change.

Chapter V addresses two questions: (1) Do attitudes have the same influence on behavior in more recent elections as were found in earlier studies and (2) What influence does elite mobilization have on political attitudes? To answer the questions raised in this chapter I examine NES data from the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections. The findings in this chapter suggest that political attitudes remain a significant and substantive influence on voter turnout in present day presidential elections. More importantly is the finding that the influence of elite mobilization is mediated by political attitudes, which suggests that one of the factors that explains attitudes in any given election is that of political mobilization.

CHAPTER II

EXPLAINING VOTER TURNOUT

In *Polyarchy*, Robert Dahl (1971) describes three necessary conditions under which all citizens must live for a nation to be considered a democracy. First, citizens must be allowed to determine their governmental preferences. This includes the right to join organizations and the opportunity to seek out alternative sources of information. Second, they must be allowed to let their opinions be known to either the government or other citizens. To do so, there must be free and fair elections with all full citizens allowed participation. Finally, the preferences of all citizens must be of equal weight. To achieve this, political leaders must be allowed to compete for the support of all citizens and the votes and opinions of the citizenry must in some way determine the institutions responsible for making public policy (Dahl 1971, 2-4).

Given the importance of citizen participation in a democratic system a dominant topic in political science literature is the question of why some individuals choose to cast a ballot and others do not. As noted in the previous chapter, studies of voter turnout tend to emphasize the legal context, individual attributes, and the character of the choice situation.

Resource Based Models

The backbone of resource based models is rational choice theory. Introduced by Anthony Downs (1957) and further developed by Riker and Ordeshook (1973), rational choice theory stresses the costs and benefits associated with political participation. Like

buying a new car or deciding where to go for vacation, individuals calculate the costs and benefits associated with political participation when determining their behavior. If an individual perceives that the costs are greater than the benefits she will abstain from casting a ballot.

The costs associated with voting are fairly straightforward. At a minimum a voter must register, find their poll's location, take the time to visit the poll on election day and cast a ballot. Other potential costs related to voting include following the campaign, learning about the issues and where the candidates and parties stand on those issues. Finally, the individual must determine which of the candidates hold issue stances closest to that of his or her own issue positions.²

The benefits associated with voting are less clear and more difficult to empirically test. As previous authors have noted, the expected benefit of casting the deciding ballot in the election is highly unlikely and therefore not a reasonable benefit to expect. Because of this shortcoming in the theory Riker and Ordeshook (1968) introduce the "D" term to the standard rational choice equation. This additive term represents personal benefits one might receive from the act of voting. For example, voting in elections may provide internal or symbolic rewards. Some may see voting as a civic duty or be motivated by their strong support for a candidate or party. Yet, such factors are hard to quantify and can be endogenous (Leighley 1991). Therefore most participation scholars have focused their research on the costs associated with casting a ballot and the factors that help individuals overcome those costs.

² Aldrich (1993) challenges the primus that voting is costly. He suggests that in most cases voting is both low in cost and low in benefit.

The prevailing theory in the participation literature is the standard socioeconomic model (SES). This theory stresses the individual's socioeconomic status and civic orientations to explain political participation. In their classic *Participation in America*, Verba and Nie (1972) argue that individuals are more likely to participate if they have the resources (time, money and skills) and civic orientations to do so. The higher a person's status, they argue, the more likely the individual to work and live in an environment that stresses participation and positive attitudes toward politics in general.

Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) argue that education is the single most important determinant of voting. They suggest increased education improves participation in three ways. First, education increases cognitive skills. Higher education levels give individuals the ability to understand more complex ideas and handle subjects that are more abstract in nature, both of which are common to the political process. Second, education leads to greater gratification when one participates in politics. Educated citizens are more likely to be aware that voting is their civic duty, which results in greater moral pressure to cast their ballot. Third, education gives one experience in dealing with situations common to the bureaucratic process.

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) suggest that SES explains individuals' decisions to participate because it reflects the resources acquired through the individual's life cycle. Though they do not deny the influence of education, they point out that it is just one of many factors such as church attendance, job type, and organizational membership that determine the skills individuals possess. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady argue that an understanding of how political skills are developed is important because

citizens may choose not to participate “because they can’t, because they don’t want to, or because nobody asked” (1995, 15).

A second area of research that focuses on the costs associated with voting are studies that examine the role legal context plays in determining participation rates. The legal context includes laws regarding voter registration, ballot design, and voting systems. These vary by state, and therefore vary among individuals. As Rusk (1974) argues, such environmental factors can “have important effects in influencing and shaping voting behavior” (1044).

Registration laws are the most studied of the legal contexts. Research has shown that states with more restrictive registration policies tend to have lower levels of voter turnout (Jackman 1987; Powell 1986; Timpone 1998; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) argue that if states would eliminate registration-closing dates, make registration easier and relax absentee registration requirements, voter turnout could increase by about 10 percent.

Like SES, such studies are anchored in the rational choice tradition (Aldrich 1993; Downs 1957; Jackman 1992). Institutional rules impose a cost on voting. If their costs are reduced, individuals are expected to be more willing and able cast their ballot on election day. Unfortunately, though many steps have been taken to reduce the cost of voting (i.e. motor-voter, early voting, voting by mail and election day registration) little evidence has been found to suggest that more citizens are casting ballots (Berinsky, Burns and Traugott 2001; Erikson 1981; Knack 1995; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Rhine 1995).

The influence of elite mobilization on participation levels is well documented in the literature. Research has shown that when parties and candidates canvass the electorate, voter turnout levels increase (Adams and Smith 1980; Gerber and Green 2000; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Wielhouwer and Lockerbie 1994). Others have found that individuals are more likely to participate in politics when asked to vote by a candidate, political party, or friend (Leighley 2001; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Calhoun-Brown (1996) found that the relationship between black turnout and church attendance can best be explained by the mobilization efforts of African-American clergy and other church leaders.

In their extensive study of turnout trends over a 36 year period, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) conclude that variations in mobilization efforts of elites explain over 50% of the decrease in self reported voter turnout witnessed since 1960. They argue that variations in mobilization efforts were caused by changes in campaign strategies by candidates and parties, fewer competitive elections, contested presidential primaries, and the decline of social movement activity (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 218).

Like the previous two models discussed above the most prominent explanation as to why mobilization increases turnout relates to lowering the costs of voting. The mobilization efforts of parties, candidates and interest groups lower the cost of voting by providing information about registration, voting locations and absentee ballots or providing travel to and from the polling place (Adams and Smith 1980; Gerber and Green 2000; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 2001).

Though resource based models do a good job of explaining who is likely to participate in politics, as Leighley (2002) points out, they give us little leverage on the question of why individuals are willing to do so. A person may possess the skills to perform multiple tasks, but the decision of which tasks are worth the time or effort is determined by one's attitudes about the options available. In other words, if we want to explain why individuals choose to participate in politics, we must not only consider the skills and resources individuals bring to political arena, but also determine their attitudes about the options available once they arrive.

Attitude Based Models

At one time the role of attitudes in explaining behavior was prominent in the literature. By far the most investigated topic was political efficacy (Abramson and Aldrich 1982; Ashenfelter and Kelly 1975; Cassel and Hill 1981; Citrin 1974; Craig 1979; Shaffer 1981). Though opinions differed as to the questions used and the modeling techniques utilized to measure internal and external efficacy, most find that individuals possessing low levels of internal and external efficacy were less likely to participate in politics.

Later scholars have pointed to potential problems with using attitude measures like political efficacy as independent variables to explain voter turnout (Finkel 1985; Leighley 1995; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). As Leighley (1995) explains, measures of an individual's attitudes often do not take into consideration the influence participation can have on attitudes under study. If participation enhances feelings of efficacy, then estimates of the effect of efficacy on participation will be inflated.

“Hence, evidence regarding the centrality of attitudes to participation must be interpreted with this in mind” (186).

When attitude measures are used to predict voting there is a potential for problems of endogeneity. There are often reciprocal effects associated with political participation. For instance, one’s partisan strength and political alienation not only influences her likelihood of voting; consequently, the act of voting can influence one’s level of partisan strength and political alienation. Ignoring this reciprocal relationship can inflate the predicted influence of attitudes on one’s decision to participate in the political process.

A second, and often overlooked, area of the attitudes literature relates not *feelings* of one’s political abilities or government’s responsiveness to one’s needs (i.e. internal and external efficacy) but instead focuses on the options available in any given election. Reiter (1979) suggested that perhaps one reason lower status whites participate less in elections is the lack of a viable socialist party in the ballot. Zipp and Smith (1982) found that lower class Canadians were more likely to vote when the “mildly socialist party” was running a candidate in their district.

Campbell et al. (1960) found that turnout increased when there were perceived attractive alternatives between the parties in any given election. Beck and Jennings (1979) suggest that the variations in political participation, by both young and old, can be explained by the issue stances taken by political leaders. Hill and Leighley (1993) found that as the ideological differences between political parties within a state increased, participation within that state also increased.

Such findings point to the importance of measuring what Brody (1978) describes as alienation and indifference. Alienation describes how negatively or positively an individual feels toward offered alternatives. If the individual has a negative attitude toward the parties and candidates in any given election, then she is considered alienated and therefore less likely to participate.³

Indifference describes the amount of contrast the individual perceives in the political environment. This differs from alienation in that the attitudes need not be negative. A citizen can hold positive evaluations of all viable parties and candidates. If the evaluations are so close that the individual sees no difference between the candidates or parties, the individual is indifferent as to the outcome of the election, making him or her less likely to cast a ballot.

Though most recent studies of individual turnout have ignored attitudes of alienation and indifference, earlier studies suggest that the inclusion of such measures could be beneficial. Brody and Page (1973), in their study of the 1968 presidential election, found that respondents who summarized both candidates and parties negatively were less likely to cast a ballot. They also found that those respondents who evaluated both candidates and parties the same were also more likely not to participate

Zipp (1985) took a different approach to the study of indifference and alienation. Instead of asking respondents directly about the candidates or parties, he used issue questions to construct his measures. Respondents who perceived their own issue stances and those of both presidential candidates to be the same were considered to be

³ For an alternative conceptualization of political alienation see Chen (1992).

indifferent. Respondents who perceived their issue stances and those of both presidential candidates to be different were considered to be alienated. Applying these measures to four presidential elections, Zipp (1985) found that in every election respondents displaying attitudes of indifference and alienation were less likely to participate.

Voting as a Habit

Recent research has attempted to move in a new direction by recasting political participation as a habit-forming endeavor (Green and Shachar 2000; Plutzer 2002; Gerber, Green and Schachar, 2003). These authors argue that regardless of the legal barriers and individual attributes, a large number of citizens eventually move from being habitual nonvoters to habitual voters. Plutzer (2002) argues that the individual factors suggested by earlier authors attempting to explain political participation are incomplete. Plutzer 2002 notes:

The twin foci of resources and costs have yielded a large number of research findings but not a good sense of how the many factors fit together or when and where variables will matter most. That is, the many findings do not yield a set of conditions and qualification that marks a mature theory (41).

Using Jennings and Niemi's three-wave Student-Parent Socialization Study (Jennings 1972; Jennings and Niemi 1991; Jennings, Markus and Niemi 1991), Plutzer takes a closer look at the factors that influence the probability of voting over time. Using latent growth curve models, he tracks respondents' voting patterns in the 1968, 1972, 1976, and 1980 elections.

Plutzer (2002) finds that individual factors such as education and income explain when habitual nonvoters will become habitual voters. However, such factors tell us little about why voters continue to vote. In fact, characteristics such as education, political knowledge and income become less important as individuals advance in age. For example, among those who were first eligible to vote in 1968, college graduates had around a .58 probability of voting, while those who had never attended college had about a .41 probability of casting a ballot. By 1980, not only had all respondents in the cohort become much more likely to vote, the gap had narrowed significantly, with college graduates having a .90 probability of voting and those with no college having a .85 probability (Plutzer 2002, 52).

By following respondents' voting patterns over time Plutzer (2002) also finds that once an individual decides to vote for the first time, she usually moves from being a habitual nonvoter to a habitual voter. Plutzer concludes that voting can best be understood through a developmental framework. In this framework traditional measures of social background and SES explain when an individual will likely enter the voting population followed by a second set of forces, which he describes as inertia keep a voter repeating the behavior.

As Plutzer recognizes, the data set he uses has two potentially serious flaws. First, the cohort under examination came of age during one of the most politically volatile periods in this country's history. Events like the war in Vietnam and the Civil Rights movement may have shaped the cohort's political behavior in a way as to make them distinct from subsequent cohorts.

Second, and what I would argue is potentially the most damaging shortcoming is that those conducting the survey dropped a significant number of respondents. The first wave of the panel was taken in 1965 when the respondents were students in high school. In the second wave of the study in 1973 all the students who had dropped out of school were removed from the study, which resulted in 27 percent of the initial cohort being excluded from the study. Considering the likely social and racial make up of those dropped from the study, the ability to generalize the results reported by Plutzer (2002) is almost certainly limited. Before we can determine the validity of the habitual voter framework a test on a more representative sample is needed.

Sporadic Voters

How might we define sporadic voters? The broadest definition of a sporadic voter would be one who votes in some, but not all, elections including federal and local elections. However, a lack of data across all such elections over time makes empirical examination impossible. If we limit our definition of sporadic voters to observed behavior in presidential and congressional elections the ability to examine the behavior of these individuals becomes promising. For the purposes of this research I define sporadic voters as individuals who have voted in some but not all federal elections for which they are eligible. In other words these are individuals that do not fall neatly into Plutzer's (2002) habitual voter or nonvoter categorizes.

While Plutzer recognizes habitual voters may miss an election from time to time, he suggests that it is due to factors outside their control. He writes: "Of course, habitual

voters are *thwarted* from voting in a particular election” (Plutzer 2002, 42). Yet he does not entertain the theoretic possibility that some individuals may abstain do to their personal decision to do so and not by forces beyond their control.

Using more established political participation theories to explain the behavior of sporadic voters is difficult. Resource based theories are impractical because such factors tend to be stable and are unlikely to change a great deal from one election to the next. For example, education level, the most prominent resource measure in the literature, rarely changes beyond one’s early twenties. Also, the voting rates of those individuals most likely to have their education level change over a four year period (i.e. 18-30 year olds) have consistently been the least likely individuals participate in elections. Considering education’s stability, it is unlikely that fluctuations in voter turnout could be explained by changes in the electorate’s education level from one election to the next.

Institutional structures, a second factor scholars have found to explain participation rates, are another area unlikely to be helpful in explaining fluctuations in voter turnout. Eligibility requirements and registration closing dates tend to be very stable from one election to the next. As noted earlier, the few institutional changes that have taken place at the federal and state level have had little influence on participation rates (Berinsky, Burns and Traugott 2001; Erikson 1981; Knack 1995; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Rhine 1995).

Changes in mobilization strategies are another unlikely candidate. Though mobilization is effective, it is not universal and is often conditioned on who initiates the contact. Political elites strategically target mobilization efforts, primarily focusing effort

on partisans who have shown a propensity to vote in the past (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 2001).

If parties and candidates focus their mobilization efforts on previous voters, it is unlikely their behavior would bring a large number of individuals in or out of the electorate unless the intensity of their efforts varies greatly from one election to the next. However, the percentage of respondents reporting contact in the National Election Study (NES) has been very stable in recent presidential elections. Between 1984 and 2000 the mean number of respondents reporting party contact prior to each presidential election was 10% with a standard deviation of 1%.⁴ For a more specific example let's compare the 1992 and 1996 elections. In 1992 55% of eligible citizens chose to cast a ballot. In that same year 9.5% of NES respondents reported being contacted prior to the election. In the 1996 presidential election turnout dropped 6% to 49%, while the percentage of NES respondents reporting contact only dropped .4% to 9.1%.

Finally, the habitual voting framework does a poor job of explaining changes in voter turnout from one election to the next. If nonvoters transitioned to being habitual voters, we would expect the number of voters to increase from one election or at a minimum remain stable unless there was a drop in the number of eligible voters. Yet, between the 1992 and the 1996 presidential elections we observed a decrease in turnout of 11.7 million voters and a 6.9 million increase in the number of eligible voters.⁵ These would mean that, assuming none of the 6.9 million new eligible voters abstained, at a

⁴ Information taken from the cumulative American National Election Study available at <http://www.umich.edu/~nes/>.

⁵ Data was obtained from the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate website <http://fpc.state.gov/26213.htm>.

minimum 11.7 million individuals that cast a ballot in the 1992 election had not acquired the habit of voting.

Because traditional and more recent theories of political participation are unlikely to explain the behavior of sporadic voters, I argue the answer can be found in changing attitudes. Elections do not occur in a vacuum. Citizens are exposed to media coverage and conversations with friends and family. This exposure shapes their attitudes, about themselves and their place within the political sphere. This exposure can also change from election to election. Individuals move. They get promotions and lose their jobs. The parties change candidates and issues. All of these changes could lead to a change in one's attitudes toward her political environment and the environment's orientation to the individual.

As noted above, attitudes have been found to influence the likelihood an individual will cast a ballot (Abramson and Aldrich 1982; Ashenfelter and Kelly 1975; Brody and Page 1973; Campbell et al. 1960; Cassel and Hill 1981; Citrin 1974; Craig 1979; Shaffer 1981; Zipp 1985). Such studies have been limited to cross-sectional data and have treated the influences of attitudes as universal across all potential voters.

Furthermore, more recent research has no role for attitudes in the theoretical explanation of voter turnout. The habitual voter framework suggests that "inertia" explains why individuals move from a state of habitual nonvoting to a state of habitual voting (Plutzer 2002).⁶ If an individual's behavior is a habit, it implies she will repeat this behavior regardless of her attitude about the behavior.

⁶ Plutzer (2002, 43) acknowledges he has no theoretical explanation of the nature of inertia.

Though, as noted earlier, turnout patterns suggest that a large number of Americans display behavior inconsistent with the habitual voter framework. These individuals appear to be sporadic voters because they move in and out of the political arena. Since sporadic voters do not habitually vote or habitually not vote, if one were to expect to find the influence of attitudes on the likelihood of casting a ballot, it would be among sporadic voters.

Therefore, I argue that sporadic voters' attitudes about themselves and their political environment influence their decision to participate in any given election. Sporadic voters whose attitudes become more positive will be more likely to vote. Because habitual voters and nonvoters are predisposed to repeat the same behavior attitudes will not influence their likelihood of voting. Consequently, I have two testable hypotheses:

H1: Sporadic voters with "positive" attitude changes from one election to the next are more likely to vote than sporadic voters with no or negative changes.

H2: Changes in attitudes between elections will not influence the likelihood a habitual voter or habitual nonvoter will cast a ballot.

Sporadic Voters and Surge and Decline

Looking at the figure on page 31 we see voter turnout in presidential and midterm elections from 1980 through 2004. In the previous section, I discussed the fluctuations in voter turnout from one presidential election to the next. It is evident that there are

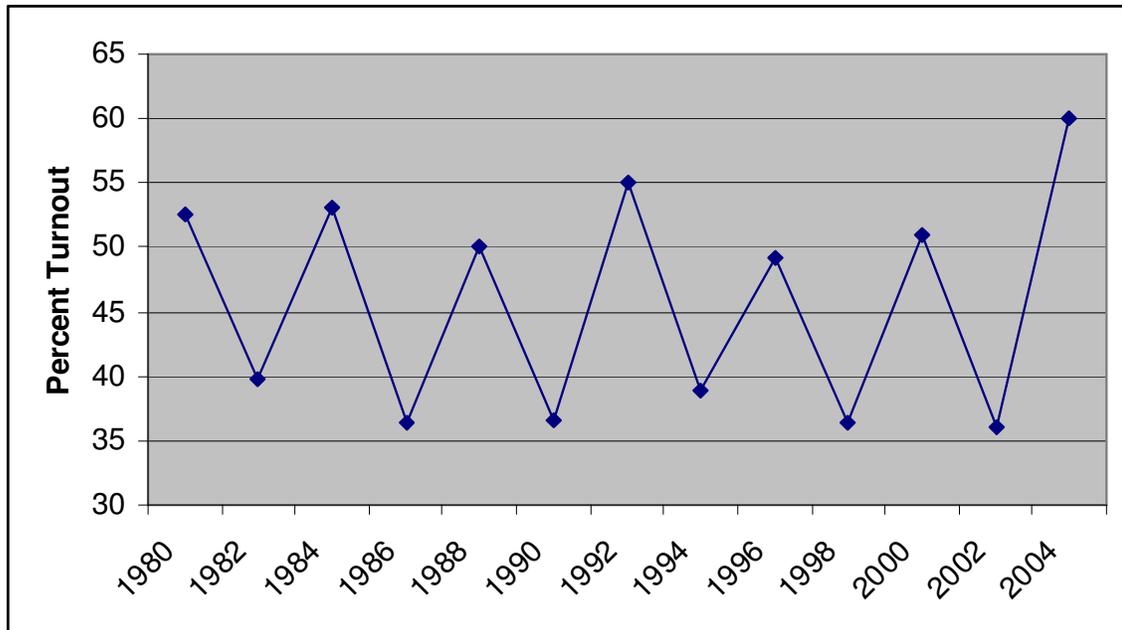
even greater fluctuations between presidential and midterm elections. Over that 24 year period, presidential election turnout averaged 53% while midterm election turnout averaged 37%. These drops in turnout in midterm elections are known in the literature as the surge and decline phenomena (Campbell 1960; 1966). Campbell's (1960; 1966) original theory of surge and decline was an attempt to explain why the president's party tended to lose seats in midterm elections. He argued that because presidential elections are high profile events a large number of peripheral partisans and independents surge to the polls in support of the winning candidate. Two years later in the low profile midterm elections these peripheral voters do not turnout out to vote, which results in the president's party receiving considerably less support and a loss in congressional seats (Campbell 1960; 1966).

A number of scholars over the years have found support for Campbell's original theory of surge and decline (Bron 1990; Campbell 1987; 1991; 1997; Cover 1985; DeNardo 1980). Campbell (1987) revised the theory to include the influence of partisans from the losing presidential candidate's party that abstain during the presidential and then return to voting in the midterm election. Examining presidential elections from 1956 to 1980, Campbell (1987) finds a strong negative correlation between Democratic vote share and the percentage of Republicans that turnout to support their candidate. He concludes that such a relationship supports the idea that when short-term forces are against one party in presidential elections it will have a damping effect on that party's turnout. However, two years later when those forces are not present, partisans from the losing party in the previous presidential election return to the polls (Campbell 1987).

Work on surge and decline has been primarily dependent on aggregate or cross-sectional data. While assumptions are made about the influence short-term forces have on such attitudes as partisan strength and campaign interest, attempts to empirically test these assumptions are non-existent. Other than Campbell (1960), scholars have ignored fluctuations in presidential elections or attempted to determine if the forces influencing the variation in presidential elections are the same as those influencing congressional elections.

Congressional scholars have found that district level turnout can be influenced by such factors as campaign spending and challenger quality (Cox and Munger 1989; Jackson 1996; Jacobson 1978; 1990; 1992; Gilliam 1985). Such findings suggest that high profile congressional elections can draw individuals to the polls that would not normally participate in midterm elections. Yet, as Jackson (1996) points out, over time fewer and fewer congressional districts are competitive, which would imply that the number of individuals on a national level likely to be drawn to the polls would be small. Such an assumption is supported by the much smaller variation in midterm election turnout, when compared to that of presidential elections (see Figure 2.1).

We have a well developed theory of surge and decline to explain why turnout in congressional elections is much lower than that in presidential elections. Though to date, we have little empirical evidence at the individual level to support the assumptions put forth by the theory. Because peripheral, or as I have labeled them, sporadic voters are influenced to participate by short-term forces such as increased party mobilization and media coverage in high profile elections and because most midterm elections are low

Figure 2.1 General Election Turnout 1980-2004

profile, we would expect sporadic voters to make up the majority of those individuals that abstain in midterm elections.

I argue in the previous section that sporadic voters are influenced to participate in presidential elections by changes in their attitudes from one election to the next. If attitude change drives their behavior in presidential elections I would also contend that the same factors will explain their decision to participate in midterm elections. Also, as argued earlier, habitual voters and nonvoters are not expected to be influenced by attitude change. Therefore, we would not expect attitude change to influence habitual voter and habitual nonvoter behavior in midterm elections.

H3: Sporadic voters with “positive” attitude changes from one election to the next are more likely to vote than sporadic voters with no or negative changes.

H4: Attitude changes from one election to the next will have no influence on habitual voter and nonvoter behavior.

Elite Mobilization and Political Attitudes

Politicians and academics alike have expressed concern about the low levels of political participation in the United States and how participation disparities can lead to inequality. As Lijphart (1997, 1) points out, “unequal participation spells unequal influence....” Yet, such assertions are not new to our discourse. In the late 1940s V.O. Key posited, “The blunt truth is that politicians and officials are under no compulsion to pay much heed to classes and groups of citizens that do not vote” (Key 1949, 527).

Because of such concerns in recent years both federal and state legislators have enacted electoral reforms with a goal to increase overall participation rates. These reforms have attempted to lower what political scholars have described as the costs associated with participation (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). The most current evidence of this at the federal level is the National Voter Registration Act (Motor Voter), which President Clinton signed into law on May 20, 1993.

While this legislation had a number of provisions, the core of the law made it easier for individuals to register for elections by requiring that all states offer citizens the

opportunity to register when renewing or acquiring a driver's license or picture identification. It also required that state aid offices such as AFDC, WIC and the VA provide clients with registration opportunities and to assist them in properly filling out forms (PL 103-31, 1993). By making registration easier, policy makers were heeding the advice of academics whose research had suggested that lowering the costs of registration would increase voter turnout (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Powell 1986; Teixeira 1992).

Some states have taken their own measures to lower the costs of voting. In 1991 Texas became the first of 15 states to establish mandatory early voting (Hansen 2001). Early voting attempts to lower the cost of participation by allowing citizens to cast their ballots up to three weeks prior to Election Day at numerous satellite polling stations in their community. These polling stations can be at more traditional locations, like the county courthouse or more public friendly locations such as shopping malls or grocery stores.

A second trend among some states has been to liberalize restrictions on absentee voting. In the last fifteen years, 22 states have begun to allow all their citizens to request an absentee ballot without a need to prove cause (Hansen 2001). In 1995 Oregon took absentee voting to new heights by implementing voting by mail in statewide elections. This was first attempted in primary elections where all registered voters were mailed a ballot, which could be either mailed in or dropped off at local polling stations if they wanted to save the cost of a stamp. This new policy was so popular among Oregonians

that in 1998 they approved an initiative that would establish vote by mail in all statewide elections (Berinsky, Burns and Traugott 2001).

While the costs associated with voting have been dramatically lowered for a large number of Americans, research has found that it has had little to effect on participation levels (Berinsky, Burns and Traugott 2001; Erikson 1981; Knack 1995; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Rhine 1995). Because lowering voting costs has proven to be ineffective, perhaps we should turn our attention to potential alternative ways of increasing turnout. If attitude change can bring large numbers of individuals into the voting pool, I contend that identifying factors that could change attitudes will lead us closer to understanding effective ways of increasing turnout.

In their extensive study of turnout trends over a 36 year period, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) conclude that variations in mobilization efforts of elites explain over 50% of the decrease in voter turnout witnessed since 1960. They argue that variations in mobilization efforts were caused by changes in campaign strategies by candidates and parties, fewer competitive elections, contested presidential primaries, and the decline of social movement activity (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 218).

Though our understanding of the importance of elite mobilization is quite clear, how mobilization produces this effect is a much cloudier picture. The most prominent explanation is that mobilization increases turnout because it lowers the cost of voting by providing information about registration, voting locations, and absentee ballots or providing travel to and from the polling palace (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 2001).

On the other hand, as Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) acknowledge:

Contact with party workers perhaps, reshapes people's perception and changes people's attitudes about the parties, the candidates, the election and the efficacy of political action (174).⁷

What if mobilization does more than lower the cost of voting? As discussed earlier, turnout can be explained by more than simply skill and resource levels. Individuals often respond to changes in the political environment (Beck and Jennings 1979; Campbell et al. 1960; Hill and Leighley 1993). They are also influenced by their attitudes toward the offered alternatives in any given election (Brody 1979; Bordy and Page 1973; Zipp 1985).

If the political environment and attitudes about that environment influence an individual's decision to participate in politics, then mobilization may also influence individual perceptions. Contact from candidates and parties may reaffirm party and group attachments (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Uhlaner 1989). By providing voters with information about party and candidate issue positions, mobilization may allow individuals to better differentiate between the options available. In other words, mobilization may influence such attitudes as low political efficacy, indifference and alienation. If so, we have the following testable hypothesis:

⁷ Though they acknowledge mobilization could have such an impact on individuals, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) suggest that their findings only marginally support such claims. However, these findings are relegated to a footnote and not reported in any extensive manner (see footnote 17, p. 174).

H5: Individuals who have been contacted by either the candidates or parties will display greater feelings of political efficacy and will be less likely to have feeling of indifference and alienation.

If the above hypothesis is correct, elite mobilization could increase turnout if elites focused their efforts on sporadic voters. As I have argued earlier, sporadic voters are individuals for whom attitude change matters in their decision to participate in any given election. Unfortunately, as also noted earlier, political elites strategically target mobilization efforts, primarily focusing effort on partisans who have shown a propensity to vote in the past (i.e. habitual voters).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced the concept of the sporadic voter. I have demonstrated how socioeconomic and habitual voting theories of political participation cannot explain the behavior of sporadic voters. I argue that a more appropriate theory is one that takes into consideration attitude change from one election to the next. Such a theory will lead to a greater understanding of why we observe significant fluctuations across presidential elections and why we observe large drops in turnout during midterm elections.

Finally, under the umbrella of understanding political participation and the role attitudes play in determining voter turnout I agree that we should turn our attention to elite mobilization. By turning our attention to factors that can shape political attitudes we can begin to develop more accurate models of the factors that, if changed, would result in greater levels of political participation.

CHAPTER III

SPORADIC VOTERS: EXPLAINING CHANGES IN VOTER TURNOUT

As noted in Chapter II, one of the dominant topics in the behavior literature revolves around the question of voter turnout and the factors that explain why some individuals choose to cast a ballot and others do not. Studies on voter turnout tend to emphasize the legal context, individual attributes, and attitudes related to the political environment.. The most popular approach over the last 20 years has stressed the important role socioeconomic status (SES) plays in explaining political participation (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Better educated and more wealthy individuals are expected to be better equipped to participate in politics and are more likely to be mobilized by others.

Recent research in this area has attempted to move in a new direction by recasting political participation as a habit-forming endeavor (Green and Shachar 2000; Plutzer 2002; Gerber, Green and Schachar, 2003). These authors argue that regardless of the legal barriers and individual attributes, a large number of citizens eventually move from being habitual nonvoters to habitual voters. In the habitual framework, SES may explain how fast one will move from being a nonvoter to a voter; however, SES has little influence on why individuals continue to participate in subsequent elections (Plutzer 2002).

Yet, the habitual voting framework is inconsistent with established voting patterns. As the figure in the previous chapter demonstrates, turnout in presidential elections over the last 44 years has fluctuated greatly. This pattern is more consistent

with Campbell's (1960) argument that among all eligible voters, there are a significant number of peripheral voters who will only cast a ballot in high stimulus elections.

A second established pattern in the literature, inconsistent with the habitual voting framework, is the surge and decline in turnout observed between presidential and congressional elections (Bron 1990; Campbell 1987; 1991; 1997; Cover 1985; DeNardo 1980). If voting is a habit, why do millions of Americans vote in presidential elections and abstain in congressional elections (see Figure 2.1 in previous chapter).

In this chapter, I address the first inconsistent pattern, why we observe fluctuations in voter turnout from one presidential election to the next. I challenge the habitual voter framework in that I argue a significant number of Americans are better classified as "sporadic voters." Sporadic voters differ from their habitual counterparts because such factors as their attitudes toward the political parties and their interest in the campaign will determine if they participate in any given election. Using NES panel data, I present evidence that sporadic voters are influenced by political attitude changes such as partisan strength, external efficacy and campaign interest from one election to the next. The evidence suggests that sporadic voters will change their behavior, if between elections their attitudes change. My findings also support the argument that the influence of attitude change on sporadic voters' behavior differentiates them from individuals classified as habitual voters and habitual nonvoters in that change in attitudes has no influence on the political behavior of the latter.

Voting as a Habit: Recent Theoretical Advances

Plutzer (2002) argues that the individual factors suggested by earlier authors attempting to explain political participation are incomplete. Using panel data, Plutzer takes a closer look at the factors that influence the probability of voting over time. He tracks respondents' voting patterns in the 1968, 1972, 1976 and 1980 elections. Using a latent growth curve model which as Plutzer (2002) explains:

Each respondent's first eligible election is coded as ELECTION -0, so the intercept, β_0 , indicates the individual's starting level and the slope β_1 , estimates the *growth* in the latent probability of voting – hence, the characterization of a “latent growth curve (45).

Plutzer argues that voting can best be understood through a developmental framework. In this framework, traditional measures of social background and SES explain when an individual will likely enter the voting population followed by a second set of forces that keep a voter repeating the behavior.

These second set of forces is very vague. Plutzer (2002) posits that perhaps by aging most individuals “outgrow” nonvoting, or life events such as marriage or home ownership play a role. Plutzer writes: “Unfortunately, the nature of inertia is undertheorized. ...I only offer some speculation, the specifics of which will remain for future research to fill in” (2002, 43).

Plutzer (2002) finds that individual factors such as education and income explain when habitual nonvoters will become habitual voters; however, he argues such factors tell us little about why voters continue to vote. In fact, characteristics such as education,

political knowledge, and income become less important as individuals advance in age. For example, among those who were first eligible to vote in 1968, college graduates had around a .58 probability of voting, while those that had never attended college had about a .41 probability of casting a ballot. By 1980, not only had all respondents in the cohort become much more likely to vote, the gap had narrowed significantly, with college graduates having a .90 probability of voting and those with no college having a .85 probability (Plutzer 2002, 52). Because all respondents were more likely to vote, the relative impact of education was substantially reduced. He also finds that once an individual decides to vote for the first time, she usually moves from being a habitual nonvoter to a habitual voter.

As Plutzer recognizes, the data set he uses has two potentially serious flaws. First, the cohort under examination came of age during one of the most politically volatile periods in this country's history. Events like the war in Vietnam and the civil rights movement may have shaped the cohort's political behavior in a way as to make them distinct from subsequent cohorts. The *Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study* (Jennings, Markus and Niemi 1991) surveyed both high school students and their parents in 1965, and in two more waves late in 1973 and 1982. The surveys consisted of questions related to political participation, group evaluations, civic orientations and partisanship.

Second, those conducting the survey dropped respondents who did not complete high school, which resulted in 27 percent of the initial cohort being excluded from the study. Considering the likely social and racial make-up of those dropped from the study,

it limits our ability to generalize the results reported by Plutzer (2002) to the American electorate. Research has found that most high school dropouts come from low income and minority populations (Meier, Stewart and Stewart 1989). Because dropout rates are so skewed, the 73% from the initial 1965 survey that participated in the other two waves of the study are likely from white, wealthier and better educated families.

I argue that the habitual voter framework overlooks a significant number of citizens. For example, of the individuals that participated in the National Election Study (NES) 1972-1976 and 1990-1992 panel studies, over 20% exhibited behavior inconsistent with the habitual voting framework. Some voted in 1968 but did not cast a ballot in 1972 and 1976. Others voted in 1988 and 1990 but failed to vote in 1992.

These numbers are interesting because the habitual voting framework cannot explain why over 20% of former voters do not cast a ballot in subsequent elections. Once a person has transitioned from being a nonvoter to a voter, she should continue to repeat the behavior. Yet, when such a large number of former voters do not vote they have either *not acquired a habit* or forces outside of their control have prevented them from casting a ballot (e.g. illness, family emergency). If the former is true, a theory to explain a population that I term *sporadic voters* adds to our understanding of why some citizens choose to participate in politics and why that number fluctuates from election to election. If the latter were true, any effort to distinguish sporadic voters from the general population would fail.

The Sporadic Voter

Elections do not occur in a vacuum. Citizens are exposed to media coverage, conversations with friends and family and the mobilization efforts of political parties. This exposure shapes their attitudes about themselves and their place within the political sphere, which can also change from election to election. Individuals move. They get promotions and lose their jobs. The parties change candidates and issues. All of these changes could lead to changes in one's attitudes toward his or her political environment and the environment's orientation to the individual. Also, scholars have noted that what determines who will vote can vary across elections (Jennings and Markus 1988). If the factors that determine voting change over time it would suggest that individual attitudes are changing over time as well.

A number of scholars have pointed to attitudinal or contextual factors that influence individual behavior. At one time, the role of attitudes in explaining behavior was prominent in the literature. Though opinions differed as to the effectiveness of such measures, most find that individuals possessing low levels of internal and external efficacy were less likely to participate in politics (Abramson and Aldrich 1982; Ashenfelter and Kelly 1975; Cassel and Hill 1981; Citrin 1974; Craig 1979; Shaffer 1981).

A second and often overlooked area of the attitudes literature focuses on individuals' perceptions of the options available in any given election. Campbell et al. (1960) found that turnout increased with the perceived attractiveness of alternatives between the parties in any given election. Similarly, Reiter (1979) suggested that

perhaps one reason lower-status whites participate less in elections is the lack of a viable socialist party on the ballot. Such suggestions are supported by findings that lower-class Canadians were more likely to vote when the “mildly socialist party” was running a candidate in their district (Zipp and Smith 1982). We also know that political participation by both young and old can be explained by the issue stances taken by political leaders (Beck and Jennings 1979). Others have found that as the ideological differences between political parties within a state increased, participation within that state also increased (Hill and Leighley 1993).

Another example is Brody (1978), who suggests the importance alienation and indifference can play in an individual’s decision to participate. Alienation describes how negatively or positively an individual feels toward offered alternatives. If the individual has a negative attitude toward the parties and candidates in any given election, then she is considered alienated and, therefore, less likely to participate.

Indifference describes the amount of contrast the individual perceives in the political environment. This differs from alienation in that the attitudes need not be negative. A citizen can hold positive evaluations of all viable parties and candidates. If the evaluations are so close that the individual sees no difference between the candidates or parties, the individual is indifferent as to the outcome of the election, making him or her less likely to cast a ballot.

Although most recent studies of individual turnout have ignored attitudes of alienation and indifference, earlier studies suggest that the inclusion of such measures could be beneficial. Brody and Page’s (1973) study of the 1968 presidential election

found that respondents who summarized both candidates and parties negatively (i.e. were alienated) were less likely to cast a ballot. They also found that those respondents who evaluated both candidates and parties the same (i.e. were indifferent) were also less likely to participate. Zipp (1885) later found stronger evidence that indifference and alienation can influence participation rates.

Though we have ample evidence that attitudes do influence one's decision to participate in the political process, previous studies have been limited to cross-sectional studies of single or multiple elections. Such studies are limited in their ability to explain how attitudes influence behavior and if variation in attitudes over time will result in behavioral changes. Also, earlier cross-sectional studies did not address the potential problem of endogeneity (see, Finkel 1985, 1987; Junn 1991; Leighley 1991; Madsen 1987 and Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Ignoring the chance there is a reciprocal relationship between one's attitudes and the act of political participation can result in an inflation of the direct impact of attitudes on political participation.

The habitual voting framework minimizes (or ignores entirely) the influence of factors such as changes in political context and attitudes on one's decision to participate. However, as earlier research suggests, a significant number of individuals do not display habitual voting behavior (Campbell 1960: 1964; Sigelman et al. 1985). It is among these sporadic voters that I argue, we should expect to find changes in attitudes from one election to the next influencing one's decision to cast a ballot. Consequently, I propose two testable hypotheses:

H1: Changes in attitudes between elections will influence the likelihood a sporadic voter will cast a ballot.

H2: Changes in attitudes between elections will not influence the likelihood a habitual voter or habitual nonvoter will cast a ballot.

Identifying Sporadic Voters

To test these hypotheses, I had to first develop a way of identifying conceptually citizens on the basis of the reported voting behavior. Following Plutzer (2002), a habitual voter would be one who, after deciding to vote, continues the behavior in subsequent elections, while nonvoters are those citizens who choose to abstain from voting in all elections. Sporadic voters, on the other hand, would be those individuals who choose to vote in some elections but abstain in others.

Identifying these three types of voters requires panel data. Panel data contain interviews of the same individuals over a series of elections. This is important for two reasons, first it allows for the documentation of reported behavior over a series of elections. Second, it also allows for measurement of individual characteristics such as economic situations and political attitudes in different electoral contexts.

The National Election Study 1972-1976 and 1990-1992 panel studies allow for respondents to be placed in one of the three categories above.⁸ The 1972-1976 NES panel study consisted of three waves. Pre election and post election surveys were conducted in 1972, 1974 and 1976. Of the 2100 interviews conducted in 1972, 1495

⁸ The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies. The NES is supported by the National Science Foundation, under grant numbers SBR-9707741, SBR-9317631, SES-9209410, SES-9009379, SES-8808361, SES-8341310, SES-8207580, and SOC77-08885, as well as the Russell Sage Foundation under grant number 82-00-01, and the University of Michigan. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this dissertation are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the funding agencies.

respondents participated in all three waves of the study. The 1990-1992 NES panel study consisted of three waves. Pre and post election surveys were conducted in 1990 and 1992. Of the 1991 interviews conducted in 1990, 1359 respondents participated in both waves of the study. Utilizing two panel studies improves the reliability of any findings because it replicates the study with two separate populations about 20 years apart.

Respondents were asked if they had voted in the current election and if they had voted in the previous election. Those individuals who reported voting in the 1968 and 1972 elections from the 72-76 panel were classified as habitual voters. Respondents who reported voting in 1968 but not voting in 1972 were classified as sporadic voters and those who abstained in 1968 and 1972 were classified as nonvoters.

Table 3.1 Types of Voters in the 1972-1976 Panel Study

Habitual Voters (Voted in 1968 and 1972)	Sporadic Voters (Voted in 1968 or 1972)	Nonvoters (Abstained in 1968 and 1972)
782 Respondents (64%)	307 Respondents (26%)	127 Respondents (10%)

Source: 1972-1976 NES Panel Study.

In Table 3.1 we see that 64 percent of the respondents reported voting in both the 1968 and 1972 elections and 10 percent reported abstaining in both elections. However, a significant number, 26% reported voting in one of the elections and abstaining in the other.

The same coding scheme was used for the 1990-1992 panel study. Those who reported voting in the 1988 and 1992 election were classified as habitual voters.

Nonvoters are those individuals who reported not voting in any of the elections under study. Respondents who reported only voting in 1988 or 1990 were categorized as sporadic voters.

Table 3.2 displays the number of respondents that fell into each category for the 1990-1992 panel study. Like Table 3.1, the largest category is that of habitual voter, with 50 percent of the respondents voting in both elections. Yet, again we see a significant number of respondents, 20 percent, falling into the category of sporadic voters.

Table 3.2 Types of Voters in the 1990-1992 Panel Study

Habitual Voters (Voted in 1988 and 1990)	Sporadic Voters (Voted in 1988 or 1990)	Nonvoters (Abstained in 1988 and 1990)
552 Respondents (50%)	217 Respondents (20%)	332 Respondents (30%)

One clear difference is the 20 percent increase in nonvoters. The election of 1988 had one of the lowest levels of voter turnout in the past 40 years (see Figure 1.1). With historically low presidential voter turnout, coupled with the expected drop in turnout for off year elections (see Bron 1990; Campbell 1987; 1991; 1997; Cover 1985; DeNardo 1980), it is not unexpected that we would see a large number of nonvoters in this time series.

The results in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 are initial evidence that the habitual voter framework (Plutzer 2002) may be an oversimplification of the electoral process. I have identified a sizeable portion of the American electorate that does not fit neatly into the habitual or nonvoter categories. These individuals have chosen to participate in one

election, but in the following election chose to stay home. Suggesting that a habit had been acquired is thus dubious.

If sporadic voters have not acquired a habit, what explains why they chose to vote in some election and abstain in other? As discussed in the earlier, I contend that changing attitudes over time will explain this behavior. Electoral environments change from one election to the next which I posit can strengthen or weaken partisan attachment, campaign interest and other attitudes like political efficacy and alienation. The decision to cast a ballot for a sporadic voter will depend on their attitude levels at the time of the election.

Developing Measures

Any model of political participation must account for resource based factors that previous scholars identified to play a significant role in predicting voter turnout (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Education and income are argued to be important measures that represent the skill levels individuals bring to the political arena. I measure education on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 representing individuals with less than a eighth grade education and 10 being those who hold advanced degrees. Income is measured on a scale from 1 to 19. Respondents reporting no family income were coded 1, and those who reported family incomes over 35,000 were coded 19 (over 90,000 in the 1990-1992 NES Panel).

Age is another important factor often identified to influence skill levels (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Verba, Scholzman). As individuals age they have

more opportunities to interact with governmental agencies. Such interaction allows them to develop the skills necessary to participate in a democratic society. To account for the influence of age on voter turnout, I include a measure of the respondent's age in the analysis.

The attitudes recognized earlier in the study of political behavior to influence the likelihood of voting were partisan strength, campaign interest and one's feeling about the importance of voting (Campball et al. 1960). Partisan strength is measured as the folded seven-point party identification scale. The scale ranges from independents coded 0 through strong partisans coded 3. The campaign interest measure ranges from 0 to 2 with 0 being those individuals who responded she had no interest in the upcoming campaign and 2 are those who were very interested. The importance of voting measure also ranges from 0 to 2. Respondents who reported she thought voting was not important were coded 0 and those who stated voting was very important were coded 2.⁹

Political efficacy has long been an important concept in the study of political participation (Fraser, 1970; Hawkins, Marando, & Taylor, 1971; Langton & Karns, 1969; White, 1968). Most scholars agree that political efficacy is best conceptualized as two components internal and external efficacy (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972; Craig, 1979; Craig & Maggiotto, 1982; Morrell, 2003; Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). Internal refers to a citizen's feelings of effectiveness in dealing with government. Does she feel she is smart enough and understands politics well enough to participate. External efficacy refers to a citizen's feelings that government cares about her problems.

⁹ The voting importance question was not included in the 1990-192 panel study, therefore the measure is omitted from the analysis of those years.

I measure external efficacy on a scale with an agree/disagree response to three questions: (1) “I don’t think public officials care much what people like me think,” (2) “Generally speaking, those we elect to Congress lose touch with the people pretty quickly,” (3) “Parties are interested only in people’s votes, not their opinions” (1972, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .79$; 1976 Cronbach’s $\alpha = .76$; 1990, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .80$; 1992, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$).¹⁰ This scale runs from 0 to 3, with those scoring 0 representing the lowest level of external efficacy and 3 representing those with the highest.

Internal efficacy was not included for both measurement and theoretical reasons. The traditional questions the used to measure internal efficacy are: (1) “Is voting the only way people like you have a say,” (2) “Is politics to complicated for you to understand,” (3) “Do people like you have any say in what the government does?” These questions scale poorly (1972 Cronbach’s $\alpha = .51$; 1976 Cronbach’s $\alpha = .53$). More importantly, internal efficacy has been found to be fairly stable over time (Clarke and Acock 1989). On the other hand, external efficacy has been found to respond to changes in the political environment (Clarke and Acock, 1989; Gurin and Brim, 1984).

Like Zipp (1985), I used party thermometer scales to create measures of indifference and alienation. Respondents were asked to place the Democrat (*pdD*) and Republican (*pdR*) parties on a scale ranging from 0 to 100 with 0 being coldest and 100 being warmest.¹¹ To construct a measure of party alienation, I added the Democratic party’s position on the thermometer scale to that of the Republican party and then

¹⁰ Cronbach’s α score are for the three questions used to measure external and internal efficacy for each year of the panels.

¹¹ The appendix contains a discussion about using thermometer scales in survey data analysis.

reversed the scoring $((200 - (pdD + pdR))$). The resulting measure ranges from 0-200 where a score of 200 represents those respondents who gave both parties a score 0 and are, therefore, extremely alienated from both parties. To create a measure of party indifference, I took the absolute value of the difference between the Democrat party thermometer score (pdD) and that of the Republican party (pdR) and reversed the scoring $((100 - \text{abs}(pdD - pdR))$). As a respondent's score moves closer to 100, the less of a difference she perceived between the two parties.

Respondents were also asked to place the Democrat candidate ($pdDC$) and Republican Candidate ($pdRC$) on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. To construct a measure of candidate alienation, I added the Democratic candidate's position to that of the Republican candidate and then reversed the scoring $((200 - (pdDC + pdRC))$. The resulting measure ranges from 0-200 where a score of 200 represents those respondents who gave both candidates a score 0 and are, therefore, extremely alienated from both candidates. To create a measure of candidate indifference I took the absolute value of the difference between the Democrat candidate thermometer score ($pdDC$) and that of the Republican candidate ($pdRC$) and reversed the scoring $((100 - \text{abs}(pdDC - pdRC))$. As a respondent's score moves closer to 100, the less of a difference she perceived between the two parties.

Methods and Results

The heart of my argument is that sporadic voters differ from habitual and nonvoters. For an initial test of this argument, I compare the mean values of the independent variables

in the two panels. In Table 3.3 I report the mean values for the 1972-1976 panel, and in Table 3.4 I report the mean values for the 1990-1992 panel.

Table 3.3 Mean Values on Independent Variables for Respondents in the 1972-1976 NES Panel

Variables (Range)	Habitual Voters	Sporadic Voters	Non-Voters
Party ID Strength (0-3)	1.88	1.66*	1.39
Education (1-10)	6.2	5.27*	4.04
Income (1-19)	12.30	10.27*	8.03
Age (18-89)	46.6	44.34	44.65
Campaign Interest (0-2)	1.34	1.07*	.76
Importance of Voting (0-2)	1.94	1.77*	1.38
External Efficacy (0-3)	1.42	1.03*	.58
Candidate Indifference (0-100)	70.10	71.33	71.14
Party Indifference (0-100)	82.74	83.96*	85.02
Candidate Alienation (0-200)	75.55	74.73	74.23
Party Alienation (0-100)	74.16	78.91*	75.76
N	782	307	127

$P < .05$ Source: 1972-1976 NES Panel Study.

Looking at Table 3.3, we see that sporadic voters differ significantly from habitual voters and habitual nonvoters on almost every independent variable. For all but three of the independent variables, the difference in means between sporadic voters and the other categories is statistically significant. Only the measures of age, candidate indifference and candidate alienation were sporadic voters not distinguishable from habitual and nonvoters.

In Table 3.4 we find similar results to those in Table 3.3. For all but four of the measures, the mean value of sporadic voters differs significantly from habitual and

Table 3.4 Mean Values on Independent Variables for Respondents in the 1990-1992 NES Panel

Variables (Range)	Habitual Voters	Sporadic Voters	Non-Voters
Party ID Strength (0-3)	1.75	1.61*	1.31
Education (1-10)	7.2	6.63	5.13
Income (1-19)	12.33	11.47*	8.42
Age (18-89)	45.2	44.56	44.2
Campaign Interest (0-2)	1.55	1.13*	.81
External Efficacy (0-3)	1.37	1.11*	.70
Candidate Indifference (0-100)	71.88	71.72	70.58
Party Indifference (0-100)	81.19	83.30*	85.11
Candidate Alienation (0-100)	75.55	74.73	74.23
Party Alienation (0-100)	71.32	77.71*	72.36
N	552	217	332

* $P < .05$ Source: 1990-1992 NES Panel Study.

nonvoters. These results suggest that sporadic voters are not merely habitual voters who, for random reasons, could not vote in the given election.

Had this been the case, we would have observed little to no difference between the two groups in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. Instead for most of the independent variables, it appears that sporadic voters are unique. Had sporadic voters actually been habitual voters that for some reason could not make it to the polls on election day, we would expect their mean values on the independent variables to be similar to that of habitual voters. Yet in both panels studies sporadic voters mean values on the independent variables are statistically different. Though sporadic voters seem to have statistically different responses to the survey questions under study, this is only the first step in determining if these observed differences result in variations in behavior.

One of my key hypotheses is that sporadic voters are influenced by changes in their attitudes from one election to the next. This would mean that if their attitudes

change I would expect to see a change in their behavior. For example, if a sporadic voter increased in her level of partisan attachment between the 1972 and 1976 election I would expect her to be more likely to cast a ballot in 1976. On the other hand, if there is a decrease in her level of partisan attachment I would expect her to abstain. To test for this, I computed the change in independent variable values for the elections under study. For the 1972-1976 panels I subtracted the values on the independent variables for the 1972 survey from those of the 1976 survey. For the 1990-1992 panels I subtracted the values on the independent variables for the 1990 survey from those of the 1992 survey. Next, I compared the mean change for the independent variables for those sporadic voters who chose to cast a ballot in 1976 and 1992 to the mean values for those sporadic voters who abstained.

Table 3.5 Change in Values of the Independent Variables for Sporadic Voters Between 1972 and 1976

Variables (Range)	Sporadic Voters Who Voted in 1976	Sporadic Voters Who Did Not Vote in 1976
Party ID Strength (0-3)	.17	-.16*
Education (1-10)	.18	.18
Income (1-19)	1.53	.63*
Campaign Interest (0-2)	.33	.03*
Importance of Voting (0-2)	.07	-.06*
External Efficacy (0-3)	.07	-.07*
Party Indifference (0-100)	2.39	.97
Party Alienation (0-100)	4.33	9.98*
N	139	168

* $P < .05$ Source: 1972-1976 NES Panel Study.

In Table 3.5 we see that of the 307 sporadic voters in the sample, 139 chose to cast a ballot in the 1976 presidential election.¹² Those who chose to vote increased in partisan strength, income, importance of voting, and external efficacy from 1972 to 1976. Those who chose not to vote decreased in partisan strength, the importance of voting and external efficacy. They also had much smaller increases in income, campaign interest and a larger increase in party alienation. For all but three of the independent variables, education and party indifference, the difference in attitude change is statistically significant.

Table 3.6 Change in Values of the Independent Variables for Sporadic Voters Between 1990 and 1992

Variables (Range)	Sporadic Voters Who Voted in 1992	Sporadic Voters Who Did Not Vote in 1992
Party ID Strength (0-3)	.17	.01*
Income (1-19)	1.42	.51*
Campaign Interest (0-2)	.41	-.07*
External Efficacy (0-3)	.14	-.04*
Party Indifference (0-100)	1.33	1.10
Party Alienation (0-100)	3.45	12.15*
N	135	82

* P <.05 *Source:* 1990-1992 NES Panel Study.

Table 3.6 results are similar to those of Table 3.5. Of the 217 sporadic voters in the sample, 135 chose to cast a ballot in the 1992 presidential election. Those who chose to vote increased in partisan strength, income, campaign interest and external efficacy from 1990 to 1992. They also had larger increases in income and much smaller

¹² In the bivariate analysis I only include those measures that sporadic voters differed from habitual voters and habitual nonvoters in the previous analysis.

increases in party alienation. For all but one of the independent variables, party indifference, the difference in change is statistically significant.

The bivariate analysis in the previous tables gives some preliminary support to the hypothesis that sporadic voters' decisions to participate in elections are influenced by changes in their political attitudes from one election to the next. In summary, sporadic voters who cast a ballot in 1976 and 1992 had increases in their partisan attachments, campaign interest and external efficacy since the last election. Sporadic voters who did not cast a ballot in 1976 and 1992 either had decreases in those attitudes or much smaller increases.

For a more rigorous test of this hypothesis, I use a binary logit model where sporadic voters who chose not to vote in 1976 and 1992 are coded 0 and those who voted are coded 1. The independent variables in this model are those variables in Tables 3.5 and 3.6 that were significant at a bivariate level.

As we consider Table 3.7, we see that changes in partisan strength, income, campaign interest and party alienation were statistically significant predictors of sporadic voters choosing to vote or not vote in the 1976 election. In more substantive terms a sporadic voter has a 47% (+/- .03) likelihood of voting in 1976 when all of the independent variables are at their mean value.¹³ A one standard deviation increase in the partisan strength from 1972 to 1976 increases the likelihood of voting to 55% (+/- .02) with all other variables at their mean. A one standard deviation increase for income and

¹³ Predicted probabilities were estimated using *Clarify*, developed by Gary King, Michael Tomz and Jason Wittenberg (Tomz et al. 1999 and King et al. 2000). The 95% confidence intervals in parentheses.

Table 3.7 Logit Coefficients for Sporadic Voters Casting a Ballot in 1976

	1976 Presidential Election
Constant	.21 (.21)
Change in Partisan Strength	.30** (.16)
Change in Income	.07** (.03)
Change in Campaign Interest	.34** (.19)
Change in Voting Importance	.21 (.24)
Change in External Efficacy	.24 (.19)
Change in Party Alienation	-.009* (.005)
Pseudo R ²	.126
N	307
Wald Chi ²	40.02

*P < .1, **P<.05 one-tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1972-1976 NES Panel Study.

campaign interest changes the likelihood of voting to 56% (+/- .04) and 54% (+/- .03) respectively. A one standard deviation increase in party alienation reduces the likelihood of voting to 43% (+/- .02).

The coefficients in the binary logit model reported in Table 3.8 suggest that attitude change also influenced sporadic voters' likelihood of casting a ballot in the 1992 election. Like the 1976 election, changes in partisan strength, campaign interest and party alienation were all in the expected direction and statistically significant. When all independent variables are held at their mean value a sporadic voter had a 57% (+/- .04) likelihood of casting a ballot in 1992. A standard deviation increase in partisan strength change elevates the likelihood of voting to 64% (+/- .02). A similar deviation change in

campaign interest increased the likelihood of voting to 62% (+/- .03). A one standard deviation increase in party alienation reduces the likelihood to casting a ballot in 1992 to 49% (+/- 4).

Table 3.8 Logit Coefficients for Sporadic Voters Casting a Ballot in 1992

	1992 Presidential Election
Constant	1.12** (.31)
Change in Partisan Strength	.41** (.12)
Change in Income	.10 (.09)
Change in Campaign Interest	.21** (.07)
Change in External Efficacy	.44 (.26)
Change in Party Alienation	-.022* (.003)
Pseudo R ²	.133
N	189
Wald Chi ²	37.29

*P < .1, **P < .05 one-tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1990-1992 NES Panel Study.

The results reported in Tables 3.7 and 3.8 are important for two reasons. First, they present strong evidence that a significant number of citizens is influenced by changes in their perceptions of the political environment and changes in the environment's relationship to them. Second, standard deviation changes in the independent variables not only substantively changed the likelihood of voting in 1976, for most cases it moved the likelihood above the 50% threshold.

While the logit models reported above suggest that we can accept the first hypothesis (which states that sporadic voters are influenced by changes in their political attitudes from one election to the next), the second hypothesis asserts that this type of behavior is unique to sporadic voters. To test this hypothesis, I ran two binary logit models for each panel. In both models, I include all panel respondents so that I am no longer simply examining individuals classified as sporadic voters.

In the first model, for the 1976 and 1992 elections, I included all of the change variables from Tables 3.7 and 3.8. In the 1976 model I include measures of respondents change in partisan strength, change in income, change in campaign interest, change in voting importance, change in external efficacy and change in party alienation. In the 1992 model I include measure of respondents change in partisan strength, change in income, change in campaign interest, change in external efficacy and change in party alienation.

In the new analysis I added a measure of residential stability. Verba and Nie (1972) identified the importance of stability of residence in explaining voter turnout. Mobility increases the cost associated with voting. When a person moves, she must reregister to vote and determine local polling places. Those who moved between the two elections were coded 0 and those who had the same residence were coded 1.

To compare the behavior of sporadic voters to that of habitual voters and habitual nonvoters, I had to run an interactive model for both elections. I interacted a dummy variable, representing sporadic voters, with all of the change in attitude measures to run the interactive models. This allowed me to statistically differentiate how these changes influenced the sporadic voters' behavior compared to individuals who voted in the

previous two elections (Habitual Voters) and those who did not vote in either election (nonvoters). The dependent variable in both models for each year is coded 1 for those respondents who voted in 1976 or 1992 and 0 for those who did not cast a ballot.

If my second hypothesis is correct, I would expect the results in the first model for 1976 and 1992 to look like earlier cross-sectional studies examining attitudes and voter turnout (Abramson and Aldrich 1982; Ashenfelter and Kelly 1975; Cassel and Hill 1981; Citrin 1974; Craig 1979; Shaffer 1981). Similar to those studies, the measure of attitude change should be significant predictors of voter turnout. However, in the second model when I differentiate sporadic voters, I expect the coefficients on the attitude measures to only remain significant for sporadic voters.¹⁴

Looking at the first model in Table 3.9 we see that several of the attitudinal measures behave as earlier literature would suggest. Those individuals who increased in their attachment to the parties and their external efficacy from the 1972 election to the 1976 election were more likely to cast a ballot. Those respondents whose feeling of alienation had increased were, on the other hand, less likely to vote in the 1976 election.

By interacting a dummy variable representing sporadic voters with all the independent variables I am able to compare the influence of the independent variables on sporadic voters to that of habitual voter and habitual nonvoters. In the second model of Table 3.9 we see considerable differences. The change in attitude measures no longer explain the voting behavior of non-sporadic voters, yet when we look at the interaction terms, which represent the influence of these variables for sporadic voters, four of the

¹⁴ A discussion of the problem of endogeneity in models of participation and steps taken to reduce its likelihood in this dissertation is reported in the appendix.

Table 3.9 Logit Coefficients for All Respondents Casting a Ballot in 1976

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	1.7** (.11)	1.7** (.12)
Change in Partisan Strength	.17** (.09)	-.002 (.11)
Change in Income	.04** (.02)	.04* (.02)
Change in Campaign Interest	.07 (.10)	.12 (.13)
Change in Voting Importance	-.06 (.17)	-.11 (.30)
Change in External Efficacy	.14* (.10)	.02 (.11)
Change in Party Alienation	-.005** (.002)	-.004 (.006)
Moved	-1.03** (.16)	-1.05** (.19)
Sporadic * Change in Partisan Strength	—	.60** (.21)
Sporadic * Change in Income	—	-.006 (.05)
Sporadic * Change in Campaign Interest	—	-.21 (.25)
Sporadic * Change in Voting Importance	—	.27 (.36)
Sporadic * Change in External Efficacy	—	.47** (.24)
Sporadic * Change in Party Alienation	—	-.006** (.003)
Sporadic * Moved	—	.04 (.28)
Pseudo R ²	.056	.061
N	1007	1007
Wald Chi ²	51.38	63.66

*P < .1, **P < .05 one-tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1972-1976 NES Panel Study.

five are statistically significant and in the expected direction. . The sum of the change in partisan strength and the change in partisan strength * sporadic- change in partisan strength is significantly different than zero value = $6.75 \sim \chi^2$, with one degree of freedom; $p < 0.05$. The sum of the change in external efficacy and the change in external efficacy * sporadic- change in external efficacy is significantly different than zero value = $3.08 \sim \chi^2$, with one degree of freedom; $p < 0.1$. The sum of the change in party alienation and the change in party alienation * sporadic- change in party alienation is significantly different than zero value = $11.39 \sim \chi^2$, with one degree of freedom; $p < 0.05$. Such results lend strong support to the second hypothesis. Changes in attitudes from one election to the next do influence the behavior of sporadic voters; however, they do not explain why non-sporadic voters choose to vote or abstain from one election to the next.

Looking at the first model in Table 3.10, we see that increasing family income from 1990 to 1992 had a positive and statistically significant relationship, with the likelihood a respondent chose to cast a ballot in 1992. In the same model, increases in party alienation and moving between the two elections had a negative and statistically significant relationship with the likelihood a respondent chose to cast a ballot in 1992.

In Model 2 of Table 7, we see the same pattern in the 1992 data that we observed in the 1976 data reported in Table 5. Once sporadic voters are differentiated from habitual and nonvoters, three of the four change in attitude measures become significant and are in the expected direction. Changes in one's attitudes from 1990 to 1992 about

the political parties and the campaigns influenced the likelihood that a sporadic voter would cast a ballot but had no significant influence on habitual or nonvoters.

Looking at the first model in Table 3.10, we see that increasing partisan strength, external efficacy and family income from 1990 to 1992 have positive and statistically significant effects on the likelihood a respondent chose to cast a ballot in 1992. In the same model, increasing in party alienation and moving between the two elections had a negative and statistically significant relationship with the likelihood a respondent chose to cast a ballot in 1992.

In Model 2 of Table 3.10, we see the same pattern in the 1992 data we observed in the 1976 data reported in Table 3.9. Once sporadic voters are differentiated from other citizens, changes in partisan strength, external efficacy and party alienation are no longer significant for non-sporadic voters. Yet, the same measures of attitude change remain in the expected direction and remain statistically significant. . The sum of the change in partisan strength and the change in partisan strength * sporadic- change in partisan strength is significantly different than zero value = $3.23 \sim \chi^2$, with one degree of freedom; $p < 0.1$. The sum of the change in campaign interest and the change in campaign interest * sporadic- change in campaign interest is significantly different than zero value = $2.87 \sim \chi^2$, with one degree of freedom; $p < 0.1$. The sum of the change in party alienation and the change in party alienation * sporadic- change in party alienation is significantly different than zero value = $4.52 \sim \chi^2$, with one degree of freedom; $p < 0.05$.

Table 3.10 Logit Coefficients for All Respondents Casting a Ballot in 1992

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	1.5** (.12)	1.4** (.11)
Change in Partisan Strength	.05 (.09)	-.02 (.10)
Change in Income	.04** (.02)	.02 (.02)
Change in Campaign Interest	.02 (.10)	-.08 (.02)
Change in External Efficacy	.03 (.04)	.03 (.04)
Change in Party Alienation	-.005** (.002)	-.004 (.003)
Moved	-.61** (.16)	-.81** (.20)
Sporadic * Change in Partisan Strength	—	.43** (.25)
Sporadic * Change in Income	—	.05 (.06)
Sporadic * Change in Campaign Interest	—	.52** (.27)
Sporadic * Change in External Efficacy	—	.02 (.09)
Sporadic * Change in Party Alienation	—	-.01* (.007)
Sporadic * Moved	—	.53 (.45)
Pseudo R ²	.023	.037
N	969	969
Wald Chi ²	24.03	36.79

*P < .1, **P < .05 one-tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1990-1992 NES Panel Study.

The results in Tables 3.9 and 3.10 lend strong support to my second hypothesis, that the influence of attitude change on political behavior is unique to sporadic voters. A second and unexpected result is how the influence of residential stability differed for sporadic voters when compared to the other respondents. In the first model of Tables 3.9 and 3.10 the coefficients for those who moved is negative and significant, which is what previous research would suggest (Verba and Nie 1972).

In the second model of both tables the effect of moving remains negative and significant for habitual voters and habitual nonvoters. Yet, the coefficient for sporadic voters is not only insignificant, it is in the opposite direction. This finding suggests that sporadic voters are willing to overcome the increased cost associated with moving (ie. reregistering and liking the polling location) because they are motivated to vote. Habitual voters and habitual nonvoters appear to lack the motivation to take the steps need to vote soon after a move.

Conclusion

The results in this chapter merit attention for three reasons. First, I find evidence that supports the habitual voting framework for a large number of Americans. A majority of the respondents who voted in 1968 and 1988 continued to vote in the subsequent elections. They also continued to display this behavior regardless of changes from one election cycle to the next. In fact, as in Plutzer's (2002) work I find many of the factors earlier scholars have suggested to explain political participation do not influence why habitual voters cast a ballot in the elections under study. Measures of political attitudes

like strength of partisanship, campaign interest and external efficacy did not influence the participation decisions of individuals who voted in all previous elections or those who abstained in the same elections.

The second and most important contribution of this chapter is its recognition of a significant number of respondents who do not appear to fit this habitual voting framework.¹⁵ Though this population has voted in previous elections, their decision to vote in future elections is contingent on changes in their perceptions of the political environment and the environment's orientation toward them. For these citizens, voting is not a habit, instead a decision that is made from one election to the next.

Finally, this chapter adds to our understating of how political attitudes influence voter turnout. As previously noted, earlier research looking at political attitudes has almost exclusively relied on cross-sectional studies. In this chapter, I study political attitudes over time and find evidence that attitude change between elections can determine when a significant number of Americans will chose to cast a ballot. Such findings suggest that the role of attitudes is perhaps more complex than we had previously thought and that further investigation into the mechanisms that influence attitude change could be beneficial.

¹⁵ I would argue that the number of sporadic voters is likely higher in the general public, especially when we consider the mobilizing influence participation in a three-wave panel study can have on individuals (Kraut and McConahay 1973; Yalch 1976).

CHAPTER IV

SURGE AND DECLINE AND ATTITUDE CHANGE

In the previous chapter, I focused on two presidential elections. In this chapter I turn my attention to congressional elections. As noted previously, one established pattern inconsistent with the habitual voter framework is that of “surge and decline.” Turnout in presidential elections is historically much higher than that of midterm congressional elections. Figure 2.1 in Chapter II presents voter turnout in presidential and midterm elections from 1980 through 2004. Over that 24 year period, presidential election turnout averaged 53%, while midterm election turnout averaged 37%.

If voting is habitual, why does almost 20% of the presidential electorate abstain every two years? In this chapter I attempt to answer this question. Building on the theoretical background provided by Campbell (1960, 1964, 1966), I examine how attitude change between presidential and congressional elections influences individual turnout. I begin with a short discussion of the surge and decline literature highlighting how theoretically scholars have argued that political attitudes are an important factor in explaining surge and decline, yet these assumptions have not been empirically tested. Hypotheses derived from this discussion are then empirically tested and the results discussed.

Surge and Decline

Campbell (1960;1964;1966) developed the first theory to explain why we observe such large fluctuations in turnout in presidential and midterm elections and why the President's party tends to lose seats in Congress in midterm elections. Campbell posits that surge and decline is best explained by two key factors: (1) high stimulus elections versus low stimulus elections, (2) core voters versus peripheral voters.

High stimulus elections are those in which the public places a greater importance on the outcome of the election (Campbell 1966, 41). Campbell states, "off-year congressional contests must always present the electorate with a less intensely charged situation than the presidential elections which precede and follow" (52). Consequently, we observe greater turnout in high stimulus elections followed by a drop in turnout on low stimulus congressional elections.

The key factor argued by Campbell (1966) to differentiate core and peripheral voters is their level of political interest. Core voters have such a high level of political interest that they are drawn to the polls in all national elections. On occasion core voters are joined at the ballot box by peripheral voters, "whose level of political interest is lower but whose motivation to vote has been sufficiently increased by the stimulation of the election situation to carry them to the polls" (42).

Another thesis offered to explain the surge and decline phenomena comes from Kernell (1977), who offered the "negative voting" view as an alternative to Campbell's (1966) proposal. The negative voting thesis contends that the winning presidential candidate attracts a number of voters for his party who would generally vote for the

opposing party. These new voters, as party supporters, tend to help the party of the new president do well in congressional elections further down the ballot. In midterm elections the forces that explain the outcome are completely different.

As Bron (1990) points out, “for negative voting advocates midterm elections by themselves are the focus of attention” (616). Negative voting scholars argue that midterm elections are referenda on the president and the president’s party. However, regardless of the president’s popularity, the president’s party tends to lose seats in Congress because positive sentiment is less likely than negative sentiment to draw voters to the polls.

For a short period of time, the negative voting thesis gained a large degree of attention in the behavior literature (Abramowitz, Cover and Norpoth 1986; Lewis-Beck and Rice 1984; Ophenheimer, Stimson, and Waterman 1986 and Tufte 1978). Yet, later scholars tended to find minimal support for the negative voting thesis and they began to gravitate back to Campbell’s (1966) surge and decline theory (Bron 1990; Campbell 1987, 1991, 1997; DeNardo 1980).

A common premise both the theories discussed above share is that the differing political environments of presidential and congressional elections results in changes in the attitudes of the electorate. In the surge and decline literature it is the interest in the campaign and the perceived importance of the election determine the fluctuation in voter turnout. The negative voting thesis contends it is the negative or positive appraisal of the president and the president’s party that explains turnout differences.

A key shortcoming of the previous work examining the surge and decline trend is that the research has been primarily dependent on aggregate or cross-sectional data. For example, Bron (1990) examined turnout difference between presidential and congressional election with National Election Surveys from 1972 to 1992. Campbell (1987, 1991, 1997) relied on aggregate turnout results in his study of surge and decline. While assumptions are made about the influence short-term forces have on political attitudes, attempts to empirically test these assumptions are non-existent. To properly determine if attitude change is responsible for fluctuations in turnout between presidential and congressional elections panel data is needed.

In the previous chapter, I present evidence that sporadic voters are influenced to participate in presidential elections by changes in their attitudes from one election to the next. If attitude change drives their behavior in presidential elections, I would also contend that the same factors will explain their decision to participate in midterm elections. Also, as argued earlier, habitual voters and nonvoters are not expected to be influenced by attitude change. Therefore, we would not expect attitude change to influence habitual voters' and nonvoters' behavior in midterm elections.

H3: Sporadic voters with “positive” attitude changes from one election to the next are more likely to vote than sporadic voters with no or negative changes.

H4: Attitude changes from one election to the next will have no influence on habitual votes and nonvoter behavior.

Developing Measures

To test these hypotheses for midterm elections I followed the same coding pattern as the previous chapter. I first categorize respondents according to their voting behavior in the 1968 and 1972 presidential elections. Those classified as habitual voters (N=782) are respondents that voted in both 1968 and 1972. Sporadic voters (N=307) are those respondents who voted in the 1968 or 1972 election but did not vote in both elections. Nonvoters (N=127) are those respondents who failed to vote in both elections.¹⁶

To account for the role of resources in one's likelihood of casting a ballot I have included a number resource measures (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Education and income are argued to be important measures that represent the skill levels individuals bring to the political arena. I measure education on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing individuals with less than an eighth grade education and 10 being those who hold advanced degrees. Income is measured on a scale from 1 to 19 with respondents reporting no family income were coded 1, and those who reported family incomes over 35,000 were coded 19.

As an individual's age they have more opportunities to interact with governmental agencies (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Such interaction allows them to develop the skills necessary to participate in a democratic society. To account for age's influence on voter turnout, I include a measure of the respondent's age in the analysis.

¹⁶ I used the same method to identify sporadic voters as in the previous chapter. A detailed discussion of the coding scheme is reported in Chapter III

Partisan strength is measured as the folded seven-point party identification scale. The scale ranges from independents coded 0 through strong partisans coded 3. The campaign interest measure ranges from 0 to 2, with 0 being those individuals who responded they had no interest in the upcoming campaign and 2 are those who were very interested. The importance of voting measure also ranges from 0 to 2. Respondents who reported they thought voting was not important were coded 0 and those who stated voting was very important were coded 2.

Most scholars agree that political efficacy is best conceptualized as two components, internal and external efficacy (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972; Craig, 1979; Craig & Maggiotto, 1982; Morrell, 2003; Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). I measure external efficacy on a scale with an agree/disagree response to three questions: (1) “I don’t think public officials care much what people like me think,” (2) “Generally speaking, those we elect to Congress lose touch with the people pretty quickly,” (3) “Parties are interested only in people’s votes, not their opinions” (1972, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .79$; 1974 Cronbach’s $\alpha = .82$). This scale runs from 0 to 3, with those scoring 0 representing the lowest level of external efficacy and 3 representing those with the highest.¹⁷

I used party thermometer scales to create measures of indifference and alienation. Respondents were asked to place the Democrat (*pdD*) and Republican (*pdR*) parties on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. To construct a measure of party alienation, I added the Democratic party’s position to that of the Republican party and then reversed

¹⁷ As in Chapter III, the internal efficacy scaled poorly (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .49$) and was therefore not included in the model.

the scoring $((200 - (pdD + pdR)))$. The resulting measure ranges from 0-200 where a score of 200 represents those respondents who gave both parties a score 0 and are, therefore, extremely alienated from both parties. To create a measure of party indifference, I took the absolute value of the difference between the Democrat party thermometer score (pdD) and that of the Republican party (pdR) and reversed the scoring $((100 - \text{abs}(pdD - pdR)))$. As a respondent's score moves closer to 100, the less of a difference she perceived between the two parties.¹⁸

Methods and Results

As in Chapter III, the heart of my argument is that sporadic voters differ from habitual and nonvoters. For an initial test of this argument, I compare the mean values of the independent variables in the two panels. In Table 4.1, I report the mean values for the 1972-1974 panel.

Looking at Table 4.1, we see that sporadic voters differ significantly from habitual voters and habitual nonvoters on almost every independent variable. For all but three of the independent variables, the difference in means between sporadic voters and the other categories is statistically significant. Only the measures of age, candidate indifference and candidate alienation were sporadic voters not distinguishable from habitual and nonvoters. These results suggest that sporadic voters are not merely habitual voters who, for random reasons, could not vote in the given election because if

¹⁸ Because the 1972-1976 panel study did not ask thermometer rating questions or like/dislike questions about candidates for congress I could not develop a measure of candidate alienation as in Chapter III.

this were the case difference in means between sporadic voters and the other categories not be statistically significant

Had this been the case, we would have observed little to no difference between the two groups. Instead for most of the independent variables, it appears that sporadic voters are unique. Though sporadic voters seem to have statistically different responses to the survey questions under study, this is only the first step in determining if these observed differences result in variations in behavior.

Table 4.1 Mean Values on Independent Variables for Respondents in the 1972-1974 NES Panel

Variables (Range)	Habitual Voters	Sporadic Voters	Non-Voters
Party ID Strength (0-3)	1.79	1.63*	1.28
Education (1-10)	5.93	5.24*	3.94
Income (1-19)	12.43	10.11*	8.22
Age (18-89)	44.8	42.21	42.41
Campaign Interest (0-2)	1.48	1.02*	.67
Importance of Voting (0-2)	1.92	1.73*	1.31
External Efficacy (0-3)	1.39	1.12*	.51
Party Indifference (0-100)	81.33	81.92	84.22
Party Alienation (0-100)	76.66	79.33*	75.83
N	765	302	125

* $P < .05$ Source: 1972-1974 NES Panel Study.

My hypothesis suggests that sporadic voters' decisions to vote in the congressional election will be determined by their attitude change from the last election. To test for this, I was required to compute the change in independent variable values for the election. I subtracted the values on the independent variables for the 1972 survey from those of the 1974 survey. Next, I compared the mean change for the independent

variables for those sporadic voters who chose to cast a ballot in 1972 to the mean values for those sporadic voters who abstained.

In Table 4.2, we see that of the 307 sporadic voters in the sample, 125 chose to cast a ballot in the 1974 congressional election.¹⁹ Those sporadic voters who chose to vote had significant increases in campaign interest between the 1972 and 1974 elections. Those who chose not to vote had significant decreases in the feeling about the importance of voting and their levels of external efficacy. Sporadic voters who chose to abstain in 1974 also had significant increases in their levels of party alienation.

Table 4.2 Change in Values of the Independent Variables for Sporadic Voters Between 1972 and 1974

Variables (Range)	Sporadic Voters Who Voted in 1974	Sporadic Voters Who Did Not Vote in 1974
Party ID Strength (0-3)	.04	-.04
Education (1-10)	.06	.07
Income (1-19)	1.11	.91
Campaign Interest (0-2)	.33	.03*
Importance of Voting (0-2)	.12	-.09*
External Efficacy (0-3)	.09	-.10*
Party Indifference (0-100)	1.11	1.02
Party Alienation (0-200)	3.13	8.87*
N	125	177

* $P < .05$ Source: 1972-1976 NES Panel Study.

The bivariate analysis in the Table 4.2 gives some preliminary support to the hypothesis that sporadic voters' decisions to participate in congressional elections are influenced by changes in their political attitudes from one election to the next. For a

¹⁹ In the bivariate analysis I only include those measures in which sporadic voters differed from habitual voters and habitual nonvoters in the previous analysis.

more rigorous test of this hypothesis, I use a binary logit model where sporadic voters who chose not to vote in 1974 are coded 0 and those who voted are coded 1. The independent variables in this model are those variables in Tables 4.2 that were significant at the bivariate level.

Four of the coefficients in Table 4.3 are statistically significant and in the expected direction. Sporadic voters who reported they had increases in campaign interest, their feeling that voting was important and external efficacy between 1972 and 1974 were more likely to cast a ballot in the 1974 congressional election. Increases in party alienation, over the same time period, reduced the likelihood sporadic voter would show up on Election Day.⁷

Table 4.3 Logit Coefficients for Sporadic Voters Casting a Ballot in 1974

	1976 Presidential Election
Constant	.41 (.35)
Change in Partisan Strength	.08 (.16)
Change in Income	.04 (.03)
Change in Campaign Interest	.34** (.19)
Change in Voting Importance	.09* (.05)
Change in External Efficacy	.18** (.06)
Change in Party Alienation	-.011* (.005)
Pseudo R ²	.132
N	224
Wald Chi ²	33.62

*P < .1, **P < .05 one-tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1972-1976 NES Panel Study.

Four of the coefficients in Table 4.3 are statistically significant and in the expected direction. Sporadic voters who reported they had increases in campaign interest, their feeling that voting was important and external efficacy between 1972 and 1974 were more likely to cast a ballot in the 1974 congressional election. Increases in party alienation, over the same time period, reduced the likelihood sporadic voter would show up on Election Day.

On a substantive level only two of the variables in Table 4.3 are of importance. A one standard deviation increase in one's campaign interest results in a 12% (+/- .03) increase in the likelihood of voting.²⁰ The same rise between 1972 and 1974 in one's external efficacy resulted in an 8% (+/- .02) increase in the probability of tuning out in the 1974 election.

The impact of voting importance and party alienation were substantively insignificant. A one standard deviation increase in one's feeling that voting was important only increased the likelihood of voting by 4% (+/- .04). The same increase in party alienation reduces one's likelihood of casting a ballot by 3% (+/- .03). Not only are these increases minimal, both of the 95% confidence intervals are as large or larger than the predicted probability suggesting that we cannot be confident that the change is different than zero.

Though the results in Table 4.3 for the 1974 congressional election are not as robust as those in the previous chapter for the 1976 and 1992 presidential elections, my

²⁰ Predicted probabilities were estimated using *Clarify*, developed by Gary King, Michael Tomz and Jason Wittenberg (Tomz et al. 1999 and King et al. 2000). The 95% confidence intervals in parentheses.

first hypothesis is supported. Change in two of the attitude measures did explain why sporadic voters chose to participate or abstain in the 1974 election. Individuals who were classified as sporadic voters were more likely to vote if they felt the election was important or they displayed greater levels of external efficacy.

While the logit model reported in Table 4.3 suggests that we can accept the first hypothesis (which states that sporadic voters are influenced by changes in their political attitudes from one election to the next), the second hypothesis asserts that this type of behavior is unique to sporadic voters. To test this hypothesis, I ran two binary logit models. In both models, I add all of the respondents from the 1972-1976 panel study so that I am no longer simply examining individuals classified as sporadic voters.

In the first model of Table 4.4, I included all of the change variables from Table on page 81. To compare the behavior of sporadic voters to that of habitual and nonvoters, I had to run an interactive model for both elections. I interacted a dummy variable, representing sporadic voters, with all of the change in attitude measures to run the interactive models. This allowed me to statistically differentiate how these changes influenced the sporadic voters' behavior compared to individuals who voted in the previous two elections (Habitual Voters) and those who did not vote in either election (nonvoters). The dependent variable in both models for each year is coded 1 for those respondents who voted in 1974 and 0 for those who did not cast a ballot.²¹

²¹ The lowest response an individual could give to the time of residency question in the 1972-1976 panel study was less than 4 years. Because I am investigating elections two years apart I could not include a control of residential stability as I did in Chapter III.

If my second hypothesis is correct, I would expect the results in the first model for 1974 to look like earlier cross-sectional studies examining attitudes and voter turnout (Abramson and Aldrich 1982; Ashenfelter and Kelly 1975; Cassel and Hill 1981; Citrin 1974; Craig 1979; Shaffer 1981). Similar to those studies, the measure of attitude change should be significant predictors of voter turnout. However, in the second model when I differentiate sporadic voters, I expect the coefficients on the attitude measures to only remain significant for sporadic voters.

Looking at the first model in Table 4.4, we see that several of the attitudinal measures behave as earlier literature would suggest. Those respondents who had increases in their feelings of alienation were less likely to vote in the 1974 election. Also, those with increases in campaign interest, voting importance and external efficacy resulted in one being more likely to cast a ballot in 1976.

In the second model we see considerable differences. All but one of the changes in attitude measures no longer explain the voting behavior of non-sporadic voters, yet when we look at the interaction terms, which represent the influence of these variables for sporadic voters, four of the five are statistically significant and in the expected direction. Such results support to the second hypothesis. The sum of the change in campaign interest and the change in campaign interest * sporadic- change in campaign interest is significantly different than zero value = 4.40~ χ^2 , with one degree of freedom; $p < 0.05$. The sum of the change in external efficacy and the change in external efficacy * sporadic- change in external efficacy is significantly different than zero value = 2.95 ~ χ^2 , with one degree of freedom; $p < 0.1$. The sum of the change in party alienation and

the change in party alienation * sporadic- change in party alienation is significantly different than zero value = 8.50 $\sim \chi^2$, with one degree of freedom; $p < 0.05$. Changes in attitudes from 1972 to 1972 did influence the behavior of sporadic voters; however, all of the measures except campaign interest do not explain why non-sporadic voters choose to vote or abstain in 1974.

Results in this chapter differ for those in Chapter III in two ways. First, one attitude measure, campaign interest, influenced the behavior of habitual voters and nonvoters as well as sporadic voters. Yet, substantively the attitude change influences each group differently. When all variables are held at their mean value, a one standard deviation increase in campaign interest resulted in a 7% (+/- .03) increase in the likelihood of voting for habitual voter and habitual nonvoters. For sporadic voters, the same increase in campaign interest raises the likelihood of voting by 15% (+/- .02).

While campaign interest does influence all voters, it has more of a substantive impact on sporadic voters. A second difference in this chapter is that other than campaign interest, only changes in external efficacy between the two elections appear to influence the behavior of sporadic voters.

Conclusion

Though we have a rich theoretical foundation for the surge and decline phenomena observed between presidential and congressional elections, our empirical evidence has been limited due to the use of aggregate data. Using individual panel data in this chapter, I have considered two questions: (1) Does attitude change between presidential and congressional elections influence voter turnout in midterm elections? (2) Are

sporadic voters influenced by attitude change differently than habitual voters and nonvoters?

Table 4.4 Logit Coefficients for All Respondents Casting a Ballot in 1974

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	1.2** (.06)	1.2** (.05)
Change in Partisan Strength	.05 (.09)	-.03 (.11)
Change in Income	.01 (.02)	.03 (.02)
Change in Campaign Interest	.39** (.08)	.16** (.05)
Change in Voting Importance	.05** (.02)	.03 (.24)
Change in External Efficacy	.10** (.04)	-.003 (.05)
Change in Party Alienation	-.007** (.002)	.01 (.03)
Sporadic * Change in Partisan Strength	—	.09 (.16)
Sporadic * Change in Income	—	.04 (.10)
Sporadic * Change in Campaign Interest	—	.55** (.20)
Sporadic * Change in Voting Importance	—	.06** (.03)
Sporadic * Change in External Efficacy	—	.18** (.05)
Sporadic * Change in Party Alienation	—	-.008** (.002)
Pseudo R ²	.044	.082
N	985	985
Wald Chi ²	47.81	64.79

*P < .1, **P < .05 one-tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1972-1976 NES Panel Study.

The results in this chapter suggest that the answer to the first question is yes. All respondents in the 1974 election were influenced by their interest in the campaign. Those individuals who had an increase in campaign interest between the 1972 and 1974 election were more likely cast a ballot in the 1974 midterm election. This finding differs from that in Chapter III in that attitude change had no impact on the behavior of habitual voters and nonvoters. While changes in campaign interest affected the behavior of all voters, its substantive impact differed among the population. Changes in campaign interest had over twice the influence on the behavior of sporadic voters as it did on the behavior of habitual voters and nonvoters.

The findings in this chapter also support the argument, from the previous chapter, that attitude change influences sporadic voters differently than it affects habitual voters and nonvoters. Not only did changes in campaign interest have greater influence over the behavior of sporadic voters, other change in attitude measures only involved sporadic voters. Increases in external efficacy and to a lesser degree changes in voting importance and party alienation, influenced the likelihood sporadic voters cast a ballot on 1974.

Though investigating the debate in the literature between the surge and decline theory and the negative voting theory was not an initial aspiration of this chapter, my results do speak to the debate. As Campbell (1966) argues, my findings suggest that the primary factor explaining turnout in the 1974 congressional election was interest in the campaign. Change in partisan strength and party alienation had either no influence or minimal influence on the behavior of voters.

Finally, while the results in this chapter support my hypotheses, there are a couple of reasons the questions deserves further inquiry. First, I only examine one congressional election. More studies of congressional elections using panel data replicating these findings are needed. Second, the 1974 election is unique in that it followed the Watergate scandal. Congressional scholars have noted that most strong Republican candidates chose not to run in 1974 resulting in a lower number of competitive contests (Jacobson and Kernell 1983). If the political environment was significantly different in 1974, the behavior of voters may differ in other congressional elections, suggesting that further research could be valuable.

CHAPTER V

THE INFLUENCE OF ELITE MOBILIZATION ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES

In the previous two chapters I have demonstrated how changes in political attitudes between elections can influence an individual's decision to participate from one election to the next. Yet, as noted in Chapter I, political attitudes have been relegated to minor control variables in most contemporary research. The primary measures of interest in the participation literature over the past 20 years have been related to socioeconomic status and how such factors enable voters to overcome the cost associated with political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980).

However, despite efforts to reduce the cost of voting carried out by the federal government and a number of states (i.e. Motor Voter, voter by mail, early voting and relaxed absentee ballot restrictions), empirical evidence suggests these policies have had little, if any, influence on voter turnout (Berinsky, Burns and Traugott 2001; Erikson 1981; Knack 1995; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Rhine 1995). Such results, I would argue, indicate that participation theory might benefit from returning to the investigation of attitudes' role in motivating behavior and the mechanisms behind attitude change.

Though there are likely a number of factors that influence attitude change, to date we have little empirical evidence in the participation literature, merely speculation (Campbell 1960; 1964). One possible influence on political attitudes is elite mobilization. Contact by parties and candidates could strengthen partisan attachments and cultivate an interest in the campaign.

While we know that mobilization is important in our understanding of political participation, we know little about how and why mobilization is effective. As Leighley (2002) writes: “assorted approaches to studying political mobilization suggest that we have in some senses danced around the issues of how individuals are mobilized and for whom mobilization makes a difference” (10). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) suggest that mobilization primarily provides information about voting and produces selective social incentives while only marginally increasing efficacy and party attachments. However, the methods used to come to such a conclusion are relegated to a footnote (174) and raise questions of model specification. Moreover, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) ignore political indifference and alienation and the influence of mobilization on such attitudes.

This chapter progresses in stages, I first replicate participation models that were common in the 1970s and early 1980s. Using contemporary data I compare the influence of political attitudes to that of more popular measures of skill levels (i.e. education, income and age). I next dissect the first model to examine how mobilization influences attitudes that effect voter turnout. Finally, I use a technique introduced by Bron and Kenny (1986) to determine if political attitudes are mediated by party and candidate mobilization.

Using survey data from the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections, I develop and test a model of political participation that supports the findings in the previous two chapters, which point to the need to look beyond traditional SES explanations of

individual turnout. Like earlier research, I find that attitudes not only continue to influence political participation, several are more influential than SES measures.

I also show that one's attitudes can be influenced by the actions of political elites. These findings suggest that mobilization efforts by political elites can help individuals to differentiate between parties and candidates by reducing levels of alienation and indifference. Mobilization can also strengthen party attachments, increase campaign interest and levels of external efficacy.

Attitudes and Participation

Social psychologists have a long history of studying attitudes, beginning with Hovland et al. (1953). Later, such scholars have added greatly to this earlier work (see Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Hasste and Parks 1986; Haugtvedt and Wegener 1994; Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Petty and Wegner 1997). However, most of the work in social psychology has focused on the role of persuasion, stereotypes, racial attitudes, social identities and issue positions. Very few social psychologists have looked at how such attitudes might influence political behavior and none have looked at how attitudes might influence the likelihood of voting.

While political participation scholars have shown little interest in attitudes or attitude change, voter choice scholars have continued to focus on the role of political attitudes in determining the candidate or party individuals will support in any given election. Research which investigates the role of attitudes and vote choice tends to fall into three categories; issue voting, economic voting and candidate evaluations. Most of

the issue voting research has developed from Key's (1966) argument which states that when given a clear alternative some voters will make their vote choice based on the issue stances of the parties or candidates. A number of scholars in the 1970s argued that there was little empirical evidence to support issue voting (Page and Brody 1972; Poper 1972; Repass 1971; Nie, Verba and Petrocik 1976). More recent scholars contend that issue voting occurs, however, such voting depends on the issues under study and the decision of the candidates and parties to take a stand on such issues (Abramowitz 1995; Alvarez 1997; Carmines and Stimson 1980; MacDonald, Listhau and Rabinowitz 1991; 1995).

Retrospective versus prospective voting and pocketbook versus sociotropic voting have been the primary topics of debate among political scholars in economic voting literature (Alvarez and Nagler 1998; Fiorina 1981; Kinder, Adams and Gronke 1989; Miller and Wattenberg 1985). While these scholars differ as to which theory they believe to be correct, they all agree that economic conditions influence vote choice. Those political scientists interested in candidate evaluations contend that some voters make their selections based on perceived personality traits. These researchers investigate how attitudes about a candidate's leadership abilities, honesty, decency, and their ability to set a good moral example influence individual vote choice (Goren 2003; Kinder 1986; Rahn et al. 1990; Rosenberg and McCafferty 1987).

If vote choice scholars have continued to study the influence of attitudes, why have participation scholars, in more recent years, placed attitudes on the "back burner" of research? One reason may be that most scholars believe the attitudes that influence participation are very stable over time (Huddy 2002). However, there is little research to

support such a conclusion. For example, party identification has been found to be established early in life and highly resistant to change over the course of one's lifetime (Converse and Markus 1979; Markus 1982). A conclusion of the stability in one's attitudes of voting participation depends on how one defines stability. If, by stability we mean not moving from Democrat to Republican overtime, one can conclude that such attitudes are very stable. Yet, if we were to expand our definition to the likelihood of placing oneself at the same point along the standard seven point continuum from strong Democrat to strong Republican then partisanship looks much less stable overtime (Krosnick 1991).

In fact, results in Chapter III and Chapter IV indicate that attitudes can change significantly over just one election cycle. Considering these earlier chapters and previous scholarship, I would argue that evaluating attitudes could advance our understanding of current participation levels. Consequently I hypothesize:

Even after controlling for standard measures of SES, measure of individual attitudes will influence one's likelihood of casting a ballot.

Why Is Mobilization Effective?

The influence of elite mobilization on participation levels is well documented in the literature. Research has shown that when parties and candidates initiate personal canvassing activities political participation within those areas will increase (Adams and Smith 1980; Gerber and Green 2000; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Wielhouwer and Lockerbie 1994). Others have found that individuals are more likely to participate in politics when asked to vote by a candidate, political party or friend (Leighley 2001;

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Calhoun-Brown (1996) found that the relationship between black turnout and church attendance can best be explained by the mobilization efforts of African-American clergy and other church leaders.

In their extensive study of turnout trends over a 36 year period, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) conclude that variations in mobilization efforts of elites explain over 50% of the decrease in voter turnout witnessed since 1960. They argue that variations in mobilization efforts were caused by changes in campaign strategies by candidates and parties, fewer competitive elections, contested presidential primaries and the decline of social movement activity (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 218).

Though our understanding of the importance of elite mobilization is quite clear, the mechanisms behind mobilization's influence on turnout is a much cloudier picture. The most prominent explanation is that mobilization increases turnout because it lowers the cost of voting by providing information about registration, voting locations and absentee ballots or providing travel to and from the polling place (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 2001).

On the other hand, as Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) acknowledge:

Contact with party workers perhaps, reshapes people's perception and changes people's attitudes about the parties, the candidates, the election and the efficacy of political action (174).

What if mobilization does more than lower the cost of voting? As discussed earlier, turnout can be explained by more than simply skill and resource levels. Individuals often respond to changes in the political environment, such as the closeness of elections or the dominating ideology of state parties (Beck and Jennings 1979; Campbell et al.

1960; Hill and Leighley 1993). They are also influenced by their attitudes toward the alternatives offered in any given election, such as the campaign messages of parties and candidates (Brody 1979; Bordy and Page 1973; Zipp 1985).

If the political environment and attitudes about that environment influence individual decisions to participate in politics, then mobilization may also influence individual perceptions. Contact from candidates and parties may reaffirm party and group attachments (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Uhlaner 1989). By providing voters with information about party and candidate issue positions, mobilization may allow individuals to better differentiate between the options available. In other words, mobilization may strengthen partisan attachments, increase external political efficacy and decrease indifference and alienation. If so, we have the following testable hypothesis:

Individuals who have been contacted by either the candidates or parties will display greater feelings of political efficacy, partisanship and campaign interest and will be less likely to have feelings of indifference and alienation.

To test my hypotheses I utilized survey data from National Election Studies for the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections. These surveys consist of national random samples of approximately 2000 respondents conducted in the weeks prior to and after the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections. These surveys were selected for two reasons. First, they are two recent elections, which allows me to observe if the attitude measures found to be important to our understanding participation 1970's are good predictors of behavior 30 years later. Second these surveys contain in depth questions about party

mobilization, which will allow me to determine if mobilization influences political attitudes and how that influence in turn impacts voter turnout.

The analyses progress in three stages. The first phase develops and test models of individual voter turnout for both elections to determine if political attitudes contribute to our understanding of political participation in the current political climate. In the next phase I explore the influence mobilization had on the attitude measure found to be relevant in the stage of analysis. Finally, I test for the mediating effect of mobilization suggested in the third hypothesis.

Developing Measures

External Efficacy is measured the same for both elections. I measure external efficacy on a scale with an agree/disagree response to two questions: (1) “Public officials don't care much what people like me think.,” (2) “People like me don't have any say about what the government does.,” (1996, Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$; 2000 Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$).²² The external efficacy measure ranges from 0 to 2, with 0 representing those possessing the lowest levels and 2 representing those with the highest.

As in previous chapters, I used party thermometer scales to create measures of indifference and alienation. Respondents were asked to place the Democrat (*pdD*) and Republican (*pdR*) parties on a scale ranging from 0 to 100.²³ To construct a measure of party alienation, I added the Democratic party's position to that of the Republican party

²² The questions scaled in this chapter to measure external efficacy differ from those in previous chapters due to changes in the questions asked in later versions of the NES.

²³ The appendix contains a discussion about using thermometer scales in survey data analysis.

and then reversed the scoring $((200 - (pdD + pdR)))$. The resulting measure ranges from 0-200 where a score of 200 represents those respondents who gave both parties a score 0 and are, therefore, extremely alienated from both parties. To create a measure of party indifference, I took the absolute value of the difference between the Democrat party thermometer score (pdD) and that of the Republican party (pdR) and reversed the scoring $((100 - \text{abs}(pdD - pdR)))$. As a respondent's score moves closer to 100, the less of a difference she perceived between the two parties.

Respondents were also asked to place the Democrat candidate $(pdDC)$ and Republican Candidate $(pdRC)$ on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. To construct a measure of candidate alienation, I added the Democratic candidate's position to that of the Republican candidate and then reversed the scoring $((200 - (pdDC + pdRC)))$. The resulting measure ranges from 0-200 where a score of 200 represents those respondents who gave both candidates a score 0 and are, therefore, extremely alienated from both candidates. To create a measure of candidate indifference I took the absolute value of the difference between the Democrat candidate thermometer score $(pdDC)$ and that of the Republican candidate $(pdRC)$ and reversed the scoring $((100 - \text{abs}(pdDC - pdRC)))$. As a respondent's score moves closer to 100, the less of a difference she perceived between the two parties.²⁴

²⁴ In both the 1996 and 2000 elections there were prominent third party candidates. Unfortunately, the NES only included a few questions about these candidates and none about their respective parties. However, omitting such measures from the models only make it more difficult to find the relationships predicted in the hypotheses. If a large number of respondents that I have coded as alienated and indifferent actually support third party candidates or parties, there will be a large number of voters where I expect nonvoters, resulting in weaker or no findings.

Another set of attitudinal factors common to the participation literature are measures of motivation such as partisanship and campaign interest (Campbell et al. 1960; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Strength of partisanship is measured with the standard folded 7 point party id scale, where 0 represents no partisanship and 3 represents strong partisanship. I expect strong partisans and individuals with high levels of campaign interest to be more likely to cast a ballot.

Except for the measure of mobilization, the same control variables were used in both models. Standard SES measures were included to account for difference in resources and skills (Verba and Nie 1972; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Age was recorded as the respondent's age in years. Education is a categorical variable ranging from 1 for respondents with less than an 8th grade education to 8 for respondents with advanced degrees. Family income is also categorical in nature where 1 represents respondents whose household income is less than \$2,999 and 24 for those \$105,000 and greater. I expect all SES measures to have a positive relationship with the dependent variable.

The final control variable in each model is a measure of party mobilization. In the 1996 model, mobilization is coded 0 for those respondents who report not being contacted prior to the election and 1 for those that report being contacted in person or by phone before the election to support either a party or candidate. The 2000 National Election Study survey included questions about contact both in person/phone and by mail. Consequently in the 2000 model, I include a third category to my measure of mobilization in which respondents coded 0 had no contact prior to the election, coded 1

if they were either contacted in person/phone or by mail and coded 2 if contacted in person/phone and received contact by mail. This is an improvement over the dummy variable used in the 1996 model because it allows for greater variation on the independent variable. Like the other controls in the model, I expect mobilization to have a positive influence on the likelihood of voting.

Methods and Findings

The dependent variable in both turnout models are dichotomous measures coded 1 if the respondent voted and 0 if the respondent did not vote. Because the dependent variable is binary in nature, logistic estimation techniques will be used for both models.

The results of the logit estimates for individual voter turnout in the 1996 and 2000 elections are reported in Table 5.1. The results demonstrated in this table illustrate that all of the SES coefficients are in the expected direction and statistically significant. Strong partisanship, age and family income all have a positive influence on the likelihood an individual voted in the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections.

In the 1996 model, all of the attitudinal measures are in the expected direction, with four reaching acceptable levels of statistical significance. In 1996 respondents with higher levels of partisan strength and campaign interest were more likely to cast a ballot. Higher levels of party alienation and candidate indifference increased the likelihood one would abstain.

Table 5.1. Logit Estimates for Individual Voter Turnout in the 1996 and 2000 Elections

	1996	2000
Constant	-2.29*** (.83)	-2.36*** (1.01)
Age	.02*** (.002)	.01** (.003)
Education	.23*** (.08)	.21*** (.06)
Family Income	.04*** (.006)	.05** (.003)
External Efficacy	.04 (.03)	.15** (.08)
Strength of Party ID	.29*** (.07)	.26** (.05)
Mobilized	.79*** (.12)	.82*** (.20)
Campaign Interest	.24*** (.08)	.32*** (.10)
Party Indifference	-.04 (.06)	-.08 (.05)
Party Alienation	-.39** (.12)	-.02 (.02)
Candidate Indifference	-.07* (.03)	-.01** (.006)
Candidate Alienation	-.02 (.03)	-.36** (.11)
Log Likelihood	-542.169	-490.303
Wald Chi ²	275.39	279.64
N	1363	1270

*p<.1 **p<.05, ***p<.01 two tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1996 and 2000 NES Studies.

Again, in the 2000 model all attitudinal variables are in the expected direction and this time five are statistically significant. Individuals with higher levels of external efficacy, partisan strength and campaign interest were more likely to vote in the 2000 election. Higher levels of candidate indifference and alienation reduced one's likelihood of voting.

Mobilization also has the influence of participation that previous research suggests. Individuals who were contacted by one or more of the political parties were more likely to vote in both 1996 and 2000.

The results in Table 5.1 are of value for two reasons. First, they suggest that in the present political climate individual attitudes influence citizen's decisions to participate in elections, even after controlling for SES factors. Second, they support the argument that concepts like alienation and indifference can be of value in current participation studies.

While the statistical significance of the coefficients can be used to test my hypotheses, logit coefficients are not easily interpreted. The substantive impact of the independent variables on the likelihood of voting can be seen in Tables 5.2.²⁵ In this table we see the change in probability of voting when a respondent moves from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean for each independent variable, while holding all others variables at their mean value.

²⁵ Predicted probabilities were estimated using *Clarify*, developed by Gary King, Michael Tomz and Jason Wittenberg (Tomz et al. 1999 and King et al. 2000).

Table 5.2 Change in Probability of Voting in 1996 & 2000 From One Std. Above and Below Mean For Selected Independent Variables.

	Change in Probability 1996	Change in Probability 2000
Age	.08 (+/- .02)	.06 (+/- .03)
Education	.08 (+/- .02)	.08 (+/- .03)
Income	.06 (+/- .02)	.05 (+/- .03)
External Efficacy	.02 (+/- .03)	.06 (+/- .03)
Strength of Party ID	.06 (+/- .03)	.04 (+/- .03)
Mobilized	.07 (+/- .03)	.21 (+/- .02)
Campaign Interest	.08 (+/- .04)	.12 (+/- .04)
Party Indifference	-.02 (+/- .03)	-.02 (+/- .03)
Party Alienation	-.06 (+/- .02)	-.02 (+/- .03)
Candidate Indifference	-.05 (+/- .03)	-.06 (+/- .03)
Candidate Alienation	-.02 (+/- .03)	-.08 (+/- .03)

Probabilities generated from logit estimates in Table 5.1, 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. Change in probability was calculated for each independent variable with all others held at their mean value.

In both 1996 and 2000, a number of the attitude measures have a substantive impact on one's likelihood of casting a ballot.²⁶ More importantly, several of the attitude measures have as much or more influence on increasing or reducing one's probability of voting as more prominent measures like education and age. Such findings imply that not only is my first hypothesis supported, it suggests including measures of political

²⁶ Tests for potential endogeneity problems can be found in the appendix.

attitudes in our participation models is as important to our understanding of political participation as the more contemporary SES measures.

Mobilization's Influence on Attitudes

To test the relationship suggested in the third hypothesis I must first determine if mobilization has any influence on the attitudinal measures found to be significant in the previous section. To accomplish this I ran four ordered logit models for 1996 and five for 2000. In each model the dependent variable is one of the attitudinal measures.

Table 5.3 Ordered Logit Estimates for Partisan Strength, Indifference and Alienation in 1996

	Partisan Strength	Party Alienation	Candidate Indifference	Campaign Interest
Mobilization	.14** (.06)	-.26** (.07)	.02 (.03)	.18** (.07)
Education	.06* (.04)	-.12** (.05)	.05 (.04)	.04** (.01)
Income	.06 (.08)	.13 (.14)	.08 (.06)	.03 (.05)
Age	.06** (.02)	.002 (.005)	-.001 (.01)	.02 (.03)
Log Likelihood	-433.32	-804.16	-387.92	-693.98
Wald Chi ²	198.39	301.35	225.21	325.13
N	1363	1363	1363	1363

* $p < .1$ ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$ one tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1996 and 2000 NES Studies.

The independent variable of interest in each model is the measure of mobilization. This variable is coded the same as before. Controls were also included for SES factors that

the literature suggests will also influence political attitudes (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). These measures include levels of education, age and income. All control variables are coded the same as discussed in the previous section.

Looking at Table 5.3 we see that of the mobilization has a negative and statistically significant effect on party alienation. Mobilization has a positive and significant influence on partisan strength and campaign interest. More substantively, when the coefficients in the party alienation model are converted to predicted probabilities, the substantive impact of mobilization is quite large. When a respondent was contacted prior to the election, the probability of feeling alienated decreases by .08 (+/- .3). When we compare this change to that of education, a respondent would need to go from being a high school dropout to graduating college before a similar decrease in alienation is observed.

In Table 5.4 we see even stronger results. In three of the four attitudinal models mobilization has a statistically significant influence, increasing internal and external efficacy and reducing alienation. The magnitude of mobilization's influence is even larger than that observed in the 1996 model. Respondents who were contacted in person and received contact by mail increased their likelihood of displaying feelings of partisan strength and external efficacy by .22 (+/- .04) and .10 (+/- .03) respectively. Similarly, contact by the parties and candidates reduce the likelihood of candidate alienation by .08 (+/- .03).

Table 5.4 Ordered Logit Estimates for Partisan Strength, External Efficacy, Candidate Indifference, Candidate Alienation and Campaign Interest in 2000

	Candidate Indifference	Candidate Alienation	External Efficacy	Partisan Strength	Campaign Interest
Mobilization	.08 (.06)	-.23* (.12)	.15* (.08)	.19** (.08)	.22** (.12)
Strength of PiD	-.47*** (.11)	-.32*** (.09)	.12* (.06)	.06* (.04)	.06* (.04)
Education	.05 (.05)	-.27** (.11)	.20*** (.04)	.06 (.08)	.06 (.08)
Income	.03 (.04)	.09 (.11)	.07 (.06)	.06 (.04)	.08* (.05)
Age	-.003 (.002)	-.01** (.005)	-.004 (.003)	.09** (.03)	.05 (.07)
Log Likelihood	-1867.351	-258.803	-899.421	-346.19	-396.23
Wald Chi ²	40.46	43.72	29.13	56.02	21.69
N	1270	1270	1270	1270	1270

* $p < .1$ ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$ one tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1996 and 2000 NES Studies.

The Mediating Effect of Mobilization

The results in Tables 5.3 and 5.4 suggest that mobilization can have statistical and substantive impact on individual attitudes. However, as of yet, we have no evidence of a mediating relationship between mobilization, attitudes and political participation influence on one's decision to participate in politics. Before this can be established, we must compare the change in magnitude of mobilization's influence in the model including the attitudinal variables to that of a model with the attitudinal variables removed (Bron and Kenny 1986; Miller and Peterson 2003).

If mobilization has the mediating effect, we would expect to see the substantive impact of mobilization on the likelihood of voting increase once the attitudinal variables are removed from the model. To test this I replicated the models on page 95 in Table 5.5, removing the attitude measures. I then compared the substantive impact of mobilization on the dependent variable in the model with the attitudes removed to the results observed in the complete model (Table 5.1). If the influence of mobilization increased it would suggest a mediating relationship (Bron and Kenny 1986; Miller and Peterson 2003).

Table 5.5. Logit Estimates for Voting Without Attitudinal Variables

	1996	2000
Constant	-4.03*** (1.35)	-2.83*** (1.33)
Age	.02*** (.002)	.01** (.005)
Education	.25*** (.10)	.16*** (.07)
Family Income	.04*** (.01)	.01** (.004)
Mobilized	.76*** (.28)	1.21*** (.43)
Log Likelihood	-561.898	-602.032
Wald Chi ²	256.42	344.94
N	1363	1270

***p<.01 two tailed test. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: 1996 and 2000 NES Studies.

In Table 5.6 we see that all of the controls for socioeconomic status behave as expected. Respondents with higher levels of education and family incomes were more likely to cast a ballot in 1996 and in 2000. Older Americans were also more likely to

participate in both elections. Finally, those individuals who were contacted (mobilized) by the political parties or candidates were more likely to cast a ballot.

Table 5.6 Change in Mobilization’s Substantive Impact When Attitudinal Variables are Removed from Model.

	All Variables in Model	Attitudinal Variables Removed
Mobilization 1996	.07 (+/- .03)	.20 (+/- .03)
Mobilization 2000	.21 (+/- .02)	.45 (+/- .02)

Change in probability of voting when individual has been mobilized. Probabilities in the first column generated from logit coefficients in Table 5.1. Probabilities in second column generated from logit coefficients in Table 5.6.

Source: 1996 and 2000 NES Studies.

In Table 5.6 are the changes in the probability of voting for mobilized individuals in 1996 and 2000, when all other variables are held at their mean value. In the first row we see that in the 1996 full model, party contact increased the likelihood of voting by about .07. When the attitudes are removed for the 1996 model the substantive influence mobilization almost triples increasing to .20. In the full 2000 model, mobilization had an even greater influence on one’s probability of casting a ballot, increasing it 20%. Removing the attitude measures from the 2000 model results in the substantive impact of party contact more than doubling.

The results in Table 5.6 support my second hypothesis that there is a mediating relationship between mobilization and political attitudes. This suggests that contact by

parties and candidates can have a positive influence on attitudes, which, in turn, results in an increase in the likelihood of increased voter participation.²⁷

Conclusion

The results in this chapter address two key areas of the participation literature. First, using survey data from the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections, I develop and test a model of political participation. The findings from this model suggest the need to look beyond traditional SES explanations of individual turnout (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980).

In both 1996 and 2000 individual attitudinal measures predicted voter turnout as well or better than levels of education, income and age. Respondents with higher levels of external efficacy, stronger partisan attachments and greater campaign interest were more likely to cast a ballot in both campaigns. Also, the often overlooked attitudes of alienation and indifference were found to be relevant to our understanding of contemporary elections. Individuals who displayed higher levels of political alienation and indifference were more likely to abstain on Election Day.

Second, I find that individual attitudes are mediated by the actions of elites. Individuals contacted by parties and candidates were more likely to display higher levels of internal and external political efficacy and less likely to display feelings of indifference and alienation. Consequently, these results suggest mobilization does more

²⁷ I do not intend to imply that attitudes cannot have a direct effect on voter turnout. However, the previous chapters suggest that attitudes change over time. The findings in this chapter imply that one of the factors that could explain attitude change is party mobilization.

than simply reduce the costs of voting as suggested in prior research (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 2001). The efforts by political elites can also help individuals to differentiate between parties and candidates, while at the same time facilitate the development of stronger political attachments, campaign interest and greater levels of external efficacy.

Though the findings in this chapter begin to answer the question as to how elite mobilization is effective, other questions still remain. For one, we know that political elites strategically target mobilization efforts (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 2001). How might the results observed in this project change if mobilization efforts were broadened?

We know that minority populations are less likely to be contacted by candidates or parties (Leighley 2001). These are also the populations who have been found to have more negative attitudes about politics in general (Buzan 1980; Welsh et al. 1973). As we move forward with this line of research, we may find that mobilization influences segments within the population differently.

The findings in this chapter suggest that if political elites were to broaden their mobilization efforts beyond that of habitual voters it could have an influence on overall participation rates. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, a sporadic voters' decision to participate in any give election are influenced by attitude change from one election to the next. If, as this chapter demonstrates, elite mobilization can influence attitudes, it would follow that elite mobilization of sporadic voters would bring more voters to the ballot box.

Finally, this chapter expands our theoretical understanding of the relationship between mobilization and voter turnout. Earlier scholars had posited that mobilization increased turnout by reducing the cost of voting because it provided resources such as information and transportation (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Lieghley 2001). While I don't disagree with this assertion, I do think it is incomplete. Contact by parties and candidate can also strengthen partisan attachments, increase campaign interest and give individuals a greater feeling that government cares about their problems.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The trend in the political participation literature over the past 30 years has been the influence of skill levels and how to reduce the cost of voting. Over the same time period, the federal government implemented Motor Voter, and a number of states implemented early voting, vote by mail and relaxed absentee voting restrictions. Yet, while the cost of voting has been reduced, we have observed little change in voter turnout. In this dissertation, I have attempted to move political participation research in a new direction. If the cost associated with voting has been reduced and participation levels have not changed, perhaps we have focused too much on the skills individuals bring to the political arena and too little on what they think about the options with which they are presented in each election.

More specifically, I posit that most Americans will decide whether to cast a ballot or not based on their individual attitudes about the parties, the particular candidates who are running for office and their overall interest in the election. To boost citizens' interest in elections parties, candidates and interest groups attempt to mobilize their supporters with campaign ads and neighborhood canvassing efforts. Elections garner a great deal of media attention. Yet, the context of elections changes from year to year, different candidates run for office, the issues emphasized change and the media's coverage often varies. Participation theories that focus on the skill levels of citizens or

suggest that voting is a habit acquired over one's lifetime ignore the contextual differences between elections and how those changes might influence participation rates.

Because of the theoretical limitations of the two most dominant approaches to the study of political participation, I posed three questions: when observing individuals' voting patterns over time do they fit neatly into the categories of habitual voters and habitual nonvoters; if a third category does exist, can attitude change be used as an effective measure as to the likelihood of an individual within this third category casting a ballot; and finally, if attitudes, such as partisan strength, campaign interest and external efficacy, influence the voting behavior of contemporary voters, how might the mobilization efforts of parties and candidates moderate political attitudes? Empirical evaluations of these questions suggest that we should expand our existing theories of political participation and mechanisms that explain why political mobilization is effective.

Summary of Findings

After observing the voting behavior of Americans in two panel studies conducted 20 years apart, there seems to be no pattern for individuals to fit into the two category models of habitual voters and habitual nonvoters. About 25% of the voting age population reported voting in some elections and abstaining in others, suggesting the need for a third category to be added to the category models of voters, that of *sporadic voters*. Sporadic voters, while voting in one election, do not appear to have acquired a habit.

Though sporadic voters move in and out of the voting population, it is not the simple result of circumstance. This dissertation suggests that they make their decisions to participate based on their attitudes from one election to the next. Sporadic voters who increased in their partisan attachments, campaign interest and external efficacy between the 1972 and 1976 or between the 1990 and 1992 elections were more likely to cast a ballot. Also, over the same elections those sporadic voters who increased in their feeling of party alienation were less likely to turn out on Election Day.

Like Plutzer (2002), I find that a large number of Americans display habitual behavior. Individuals classified as habitual voters and habitual nonvoters differed from sporadic voters in that changes in their attitudes from one election to the next had no influence on their voting decisions. Yet, habitual voters and habitual nonvoters did not differ from sporadic voters in the amount of attitude change between elections, which would suggest they are repeating a behavior regardless of changes in their attitudes about the election.

This dissertation also suggests that individuals respond differently to congressional elections than presidential elections. The *surge and decline* phenomena is well established in political science literature. However, most of the work has been theoretical or empirically examined with aggregate data limiting our understanding at the individual level.

All respondents in the 1974 election were influenced by their interest in the campaign. Those individuals who had an increase in campaign interest between the 1972 and 1974 election were more likely cast a ballot in the 1974 midterm election. This

finding differs from that in presidential elections in that attitude change had no impact on the behavior of habitual voters and nonvoters. While changes in campaign interest affected the behavior of all Americans, its substantive impact differed among the population. For habitual voters and habitual nonvoters, campaign interest had about half the influence on turnout as it did among sporadic voters.

One similarity between congressional and presidential elections is that attitude change influences sporadic voters differently than it affects habitual voters and nonvoters. Not only did changes in campaign interest have greater influence over the behavior of sporadic voters, other change in attitude measures only influenced sporadic voters. Increases in external efficacy and, to a lesser degree, changes in voting importance and party alienation, influenced the likelihood sporadic voters cast a ballot in congressional elections.

There have been two competing theories in the literature for the explanation of higher turnout in presidential elections than in midterm elections. The first suggestion, introduced by Campbell (1960,1964,1966), argues that the drop in turnout observed in congressional elections is the result of a drop in interest because midterm elections are less dynamic events. The second posits that the lower turnout in midterm election is due to attitudes about the president and the president's party (Abramowitz, Cover and Norpoth 1986; Kernell 1977; Lewis-Beck and Rice 1984; Ophenheimer, Stimson, and Waterman 1986 and Tufte 1978). These authors suggest that individuals with negative attitudes about the President and the President's party will be more likely to turnout in midterm elections, and those with positive attitudes stay home resulting in lower turnout.

The results in this dissertation add to the discourse relating to higher voter turnout for a presidential election. As Campbell (1966) argues, my findings suggest that the primary factor explaining turnout in the 1974 congressional election was interest in the campaign. Change in partisan strength and party alienation had either no influence or minimal influence on the behavior of voters.

While the findings in Chapter III and Chapter IV suggest that changes in an individual voter's attitudes from one election to the next influence the behavior of a significant number of Americans, Chapter V's findings move the discussion in a slightly different direction. First, Chapter V's findings establish that individual attitudinal measures predicted voter turnout as well or better than levels of education, income and age in contemporary elections. Individuals with higher levels of external efficacy, stronger partisan attachments and greater campaign interest were more likely to cast a ballot. Also, the often overlooked attitudes of alienation and indifference were found to be relevant to our understanding of present-day elections. Individuals who displayed higher levels of political alienation and indifference were more likely to abstain on Election Day.

Second, I find that attitudes are mediated by the actions of political parties and candidates. Individuals contacted by parties and candidates were more likely to display higher levels of external political efficacy and less likely to display feelings of indifference and alienation. Therefore, these results suggest mobilization does more than simply reduce the costs of voting as suggested in prior research (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 2001). The efforts by political elites can also help individuals to

differentiate between parties and candidates, while at the same time facilitate the development of stronger political attachments, campaign interest and greater levels of external efficacy.

Implications and Conclusion

Whereas I agree with Plutzer's (2002) thesis that individual factors suggested by earlier authors attempting to explain political participation are incomplete (i.e. socioeconomic status), the results in this dissertation suggest his habitual voter framework oversimplifies the American electorate. While I also find that a majority of the electorate repeats the same behavior from one election to the next regardless of changes in individual or attitudinal characteristics, my findings suggest a significant number of Americans change their behavior depending upon their perceptions at the time of the election.

The implications of my results call into question the way we study voter turnout and the theoretical approaches we use to explain participation levels. The findings in this dissertation stress the need for more and longer panel studies if we are to get a clear picture of the connection between our concepts, indicators and the mechanisms influencing behavior. Because the context of elections changes over time we need to observe the same individuals and their behavior in different elections.

More importantly, I would argue that we should pay less attention to the instrumental benefits of voting, which are at the heart of the cost/benefit paradigm and reconsider how voting, as an expressive act, can help us to understand why some

individuals decide to cast a ballot and others do not. (Riker and Ordeshook 1973; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Some scholars have compared expressive voting to the way people support a sports team and at other times ignore the games (Brennan and Hamlin 1998; Tullock 2000).

For example, because I grew up in Kentucky, I am a fan of the Kentucky Wildcats basketball team. The attention I give to the Wildcat basketball season varies from year to year. If they recruit a group of promising players, I will likely watch more games. If the team hires a new coach, that could mean a change in its style of play and could entice me to be more interested in the season. My interest could be sparked by something as simple as a phone call from my father to remind me of the yearly game against Kentucky's rival Indiana. There are costs associated with my watching the Wildcats' games and being involved in the team's season. I have to insure I have a two hour block of time free to watch a game. I have to take the time to find the time and channel on which the game is being played. Yet, only on rare occasions do the costs of watching a game play any role in my decision to tune into the game. I also know my watching has no influence on the game's outcome. Finally, the only benefit I receive is the thrill of watching the game and hopefully the satisfaction of seeing *my* team win.

Similarly, I contend that many Americans (i.e. sporadic voters) show up at the polls because a candidate sparks their interest or the issues at the center of the campaign are important to the those individuals. They may also vote because they received a call or a knock on the door reminding them that an election is approaching and their party

could use their support. Again, for these individuals voting is not the result of some cost/benefit analysis they vote to express support for a party, issue or candidate.

I also support Aldrich's (1993) argument that in most cases voting is both low in cost and low in benefit. If true, it explains why I found that for some voters moving one or two points between elections on the partisan strength or external efficacy measures can bring them to the polls or keep them at home. Yet, a number of questions remain unanswered before we can develop a comprehensive theory explaining sporadic voter behavior.

In Chapter V I attempt to answer a central question of this dissertation, what are the mechanisms that link attitude change to change in voting behavior? The findings are limited by the data and only scratch the surface of how attitude change is linked to change in voting behavior. My findings suggest that elite mobilization can mediate individual attitudes. However, I do not directly link mobilization to attitude change.

Mobilization is only one of many contextual variables we might expect to influence attitude change. As noted in Chapter II, elections do not occur in a vacuum. Citizens are exposed to media coverage and conversations with friends and family. This exposure shapes their attitudes, about themselves and their place within the political sphere. This exposure can also change from election to election. Individuals move. They get promotions and lose their jobs. The parties change candidates and issues. All of these changes could lead to a change in one's attitudes toward his or her political environment and the environment's orientation to the individual.

Before we can accurately explain and predict the behavior of sporadic voters, we need to examine how all varying political context influence attitude change. Do the issue positions stressed in the campaign strengthen or weaken partisan attachments, campaign interest or external efficacy? How might media coverage influence attitude change? I have only investigated presidential and congressional elections; what about state and local elections, where turnout can be 8-10%.

In closing, I would contend that understanding the behavior of sporadic voters should be a primary goal of participation scholars. If my findings, and those of Plutzer (2002), are correct there is little to no variability in the behavior of habitual voters and habitual nonvoters. If one of our primary goals is to accurately explain and predict voter turnout, sporadic voters are the most logical target for our analysis. Because their behavior changes over time depending upon their attitudes about the electoral environment, understanding the relationship between environmental change and attitude change would lead to a more comprehensive theory of political participation.

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APPENDIX

Feeling thermometer scores were introduced in the 1960s as an attempt to improve upon the 5 point Likert Scale from the 1930s. The thermometer score ranges from 0 to 100 and allows for greater variation than the 5 point strongly agree to strongly disagree scale. While use of the measure as both independent and dependent variables has been very common for the last 45 years, a few scholars have questioned their reliability (Brody 1985; Green 1988 and Wilcox, et al. 1989). The problem with using thermometer scores is inter-personal incomparability. In other words, if respondents interpret the scale differently it makes it difficult to compare scores across individuals. One should be most concerned with this problem if the thermometer score is being used as a dependent variable (see Hetherington 1998). In none of the models in this dissertation is a thermometer score used as a dependent variable.

A second concern is how thermometer scores perform as measures of individual opinion. Though thermometer scores cannot be treated as interval measures, research has found that “for most people feeling thermometer[s] convey at least as much –if not more-information as a 5 or 7 point scale” (Winter and Berinsky 1999, 17). As Winter and Berinsky (1999) suggest, I use two thermometer scores to obtain my measures. For example, if one respondent placed the Republican Party at 30 and the Democratic Party at 75 on the thermometer scale, I would argue that she clearly sees a difference between the parties. Yet, if another respondent rated the parties as 56 and 65 respectively, and behaved as the previous respondent, it would actually bias me against finding the

relationship that my hypothesis suggests. Though I do not suggest that I have an interval measure, because I do use them as independent variables and I difference the responses from two questions I think my use of thermometer scores in this dissertation are reliable.

Endogeneity in Survey Data

Scholars have noted the potential problems of endogeneity when using measures of attitudes in an attempt to predict political participation (Finkel 1985, 1987; Junn 1991; Leighley 1991; Madsen 1987 and Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). These authors note that there are often reciprocal effects associated with political participation. For instance, one's partisan strength and political alienation not only influence his or her likelihood of voting; the act of voting can influence one's level of partisan strength and political alienation. Ignoring this reciprocal relationship can inflate the predicted influence of attitudes on one's decision to participate in the political process.

In this dissertation, I address this issue in two ways. First, I have designed my models to insure measures of attitudes are taken prior to the act of voting. All attitude measures are those asked in the pre-election surveys. Next, I subtract the attitude measures from the election under study from those taken in the previous election. Therefore, my measure is not a simple measure of attitudes prior to the election, but one of attitude change from one election to the next (except for Chapter V).

One hypothetical problem that remains is that even though the respondents were surveyed prior to the election they may have already made their decision about participating and adjusted their answers accordingly. If they are also sophisticated

enough to make such adjustments from one election to the next, my results might remain biased. Though I think this is highly unlikely, it is possible and must be taken into consideration.

Because in two of my chapters I use panel data, there is also the chance that the act of voting enhances attitudes in subsequent elections. Finkel (1985) found that voting could increase levels of political efficacy in future elections. Yet, in his models he constrains the attitude scores to be equal over time. When these constraints are relaxed, the reciprocal relationships in the panel are no longer significant (Finkel 1985, 902). Tables 3.1-A and 3.2-A suggest that attitude change is the same between elections, regardless if the individual is a habitual, sporadic or nonvoter. However, it is only among the sporadic voters that I find attitude change influencing behavior. This might explain why Finkel (1985) had insignificant results when he relaxed his constraints.

A second approach to accounting for the potential problem of endogeneity is to use econometrics. Previous scholars have used two-stage least squares to correct for endogeneity between independent and dependent variables (Leighley 1991; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Unfortunately, they were using participation scales as dependent variables and my research uses dichotomous dependent variables, which are not appropriate for two-stage least squared models.

Encouragingly, advances in technology allow two-step estimators to be used to obtain coefficients estimates with dichotomous dependent variables (see Newey 1987 and Wooldridge 2002). The `ivprobit` command in STATA 9 allows for the estimation of a two-step model with a dichotomous dependent variable. A second advantage the

ivprobit model is that the output also contains a Wald statistic and p-value for the test of the hypothesis that all of the slope coefficients are jointly zero. If the Wald test statistic is insignificant, one cannot reject the null that there is no endogeneity. If this is the case a regular probit or logit regression would be more appropriate (see Wooldridge 2002).

To ensure that endogeneity was not a problem, I estimated all the models reported in Chapters III through V as two-step equations. In Chapter III and Chapter IV I used change in income, change in education and change in age as instrumental variables. It is very unlikely that these variables would be determined by voting so they are very likely exogenous. The results in Table 3.8, when estimated as an ivprobit model, had an insignificant Wald test of exogeneity ($\text{Prob} > \chi^2 = .26$). When table 3.9 was estimated as an ivprobit, again the Wald test of exogeneity was insignificant ($\text{Prob} > \chi^2 = .86$). In Chapter IV, I estimated Table 4.4 as an ivprobit model and the Wald test suggested a probit or logit model was more appropriate ($\text{Prob} > \chi^2 = .71$).

Chapter V is the only chapter that uses cross-sectional data. This makes concern about endogeneity greater because I am not using change in attitudes measures as in the previous chapters. To reduce this concern, I ran the two models in Table 5.1 as two-step equations. For both the 1996 and 2000 models I used education, income, age, black and Hispanic as instrumental variables. As in the analyses in previous chapters I believe these demographic measures are exogenous. When run as two-step equations, both the 1996 ($\text{Prob} > \chi^2 = .57$) and the 2000 ($\text{Prob} > \chi^2 = .14$) models had insignificant Wald test of exogeneity. Again, the results suggest that a probit or logit model is the most appropriate.

Table 3.1-A Mean Change in Values of the Independent Variables 1972-1976.

Variables (Range)	Habitual Voters	Sporadic Voters	Non-Voters
Party ID Strength (0-3)	.01	-.07	.03
Income (1-19)	1.33	.78	.52
Campaign Interest (0-2)	.08	.07	.12
Importance of Voting (0-2)	-.003	-.04	.1
External Efficacy (0-2)	.01	-.03	.01
Party Alienation (0-100)	7.94	9.2	11.9
Moved	.23	.38	.36
N	782	307	127

None of the differences significant at the .05 level.

Source: 1972-1976 NES Panel Study.

Table 3.2-B Mean Change in Values of the Independent Variables 1990-1992.

Variables (Range)	Habitual Voters	Sporadic Voters	Non-Voters
Party ID Strength (0-3)	.08	.06	.04
Income (1-19)	.94	.98	.71
Campaign Interest (0-2)	.12	.16	.09
External Efficacy (0-2)	.03	.04	-.02
Party Alienation (0-100)	6.44	7.82	9.92
Moved	.23	.38	.36
N	552	217	332

None of the differences significant at the .05 level.

Source: 1990-1992 NES Panel Study.

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