

THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION: Mobilization and Turnout over Time

Kenneth M. Goldstein and Travis N. Ridout

Recent studies have argued that mobilization is not only an important determinant of individual participation, but that it can explain the mystery of declining voter turnout in the United States over the past 40 years. We identify and evaluate three possible ways in which mobilization might have affected levels of turnout over time: (a) aggregate rates of mobilization may have declined, (b) the effectiveness of mobilization contacts may have declined, and (c) the targeting of mobilization may have changed. The first two theories have been well articulated in the literature; the third has not. We find no evidence of a decline in mobilizing activity, nor do we find that mobilizing techniques have become less effective. Although we find that campaigns are more likely to target habitual voters in recent years, this pattern of behavior can only explain a small amount of the overall decline in turnout.

Key words: voter turnout, mobilization, political participation.

Different studies on different elections at different times using different methods have all found that political mobilization—variously labeled voter contact, get-out-the-vote (GOTV), or the voter canvass—matters (Blydenburgh, 1971; Cutright, 1963; Gerber and Green, 2000; Gosnell, 1927; Katz and Eldersveld, 1961; Kramer, 1970; Merriam and Gosnell, 1924; Nagel, 1987). These works, among them some of the oldest empirical and behavioral studies in our discipline, demonstrate that political activity and mobilization contacts must be part of any comprehensive explanation of why citizens participate in politics. Recent studies, however, have taken this basic finding a step further, arguing that mobilization is not only an important determinant of individual participation, but that decreases in either its amount—which would

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reduce its net effect—or quality—which could reduce its effectiveness—can explain the mystery of declining turnout in the United States over the past 40 years (Kernell and Jacobson, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Schier, 2000).

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), for example, argued that a decrease in mobilization activity was the main explanation for the drop in turnout over time. They wrote, “Had candidates, parties, campaigns, interest groups, and social movements been as active in mobilizing voters in the 1980s as they were in the 1960s, even leaving the social structure and the condition of individual voters unchanged, reported voter participation would have fallen only 2.6 percent, rather than the 11.3 percent that it did” (p. 218). This claim is echoed by Kernell and Jacobson (2000): “The major reasons for the decline (*in turnout*) are . . . institutional: a decline in mobilization by parties, candidates, and groups such as labor unions” (p. 358).

A second explanation in which mobilization is the culprit for the 40-year decline in turnout speaks to the quality of contacts. The story goes that whereas mobilization in the past may have meant friends, neighbors, and committed volunteers canvassing a citizen in person, voter contact operations are now often purchased off-the-shelf from consultants and phone banks that specialize in identifying and contacting voters for candidates and parties. It seems reasonable to believe that a contact from a friend, neighbor, or a committed volunteer in the “good old days” was likely to be more effective than a sterile phone call from an anonymous telemarketer at a phone bank. In short, if we believe that the power of parties and the quality of civic life have decayed over the last 40 years, it is possible that the quality of mobilization has decreased, even as its quantity has remained steady or even risen, thus reducing the effectiveness of these contacts.¹ Putnam (2000) makes a strong argument that the nature of mobilization has changed:

The last three decades of the twentieth century witnessed an accelerating trend toward more and more voter contact but fewer and fewer party workers. By 1996 this ratio was 2.5 times greater than the equivalent figure in 1968. At first blush one might admire the growing productivity in this flourishing industry. Each worker seems to be producing more and more “contacts.” In reality, however, this trend is evidence of the professionalization and commercialization of American politics. The “contacts” that voters report are, in fact, less likely to be a visit from a neighborhood party worker and more and more likely to be an anonymous call from a paid phone bank. Less and less party activity involves volunteer collaboration among committed partisans. More and more involves the skilled (and expensive) techniques of effective mass marketing. This trend goes hand in hand with the explosive growth of direct mail fund-raising and political action committees formed to channel financial support to party organizations. During the same period that citizen involvement in party activities was slumping by more than half, spending on presidential nomination and election campaigns exploded from \$35 million in 1964 to over \$700 million in 1996,

a nearly fivefold increase even in constant dollars. The bottom line in the political industry is this: Financial capital—the wherewithal for mass marketing—has steadily replaced social capital—that is, grassroots citizen networks—as the coin of the realm. (p. 39)

Other work suggests that the changing nature of mobilization pointed out by Putnam could have an impact on levels of turnout. Gerber and Green (2000), for instance, demonstrated through experimental evidence that personal contacts are more effective than phone contacts. This led them to speculate that a decrease in the use of more effective, in-person mobilization techniques provides a clue to solving the puzzle of falling turnout levels. In other words, even if the proportion of voters reporting a contact has held steady or even increased since the 1960s, it is possible that these contacts have become less effective.

These arguments have important normative implications. If propensities to vote are not only determined by immutable demographic factors but by environmental and strategic factors as well, then reducing the structural barriers to voting and strengthening the amount or quality of mobilization may bring more people to the polls. In short, if the volume and quality of mobilization and voter contacts are a big part of the problem, perhaps improving the quality and increasing the volume of mobilization and voter contacts can be part of the solution as well.

We begin this article by assessing recent claims about mobilization's culpability in the puzzle of declining turnout. We find little merit in the claim that there has been a decrease in the volume or effectiveness of mobilization since the early 1960s. More important, we develop and test an alternative hypothesis—that the targeting of mobilization efforts has changed. Given technological advances in targeting and marketing techniques, campaigns certainly have an increased ability to target those voters most likely to vote, but they also have the ability to neglect those who might have voted had they been given a small push (Schier, 2000). The question is whether campaigns are targeting likely voters and how much this ultimately affects turnout rates as a whole. We examine these questions using data from the National Election Studies (NES) and show that while there have been some changes in the targeting of mobilization efforts, they have not been of a magnitude that can explain the decline in turnout.

HAS THE VOLUME OR EFFECTIVENESS OF MOBILIZATION ACTIVITY DECLINED?

The most straightforward causal explanation for declining turnout that involves mobilization holds that aggregate participation rises or falls with aggregate levels of mobilization and that aggregate levels of mobilization have fallen

over the past 40 years. As Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) argue, “The level of electoral participation in the United States waxes and wanes in response to political mobilization. People participate in electoral politics in all its forms when they are mobilized to do so. When political mobilization falls, so does the propensity of people to take part” (p. 227). The explanation seems logical, but has mobilization actually waned?

The available evidence suggests it has not. For example, Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde (2002) examined the voter contact question asked in the NES (the most direct measure of GOTV efforts over time) over the last 40 years. Looking at these data up through the 2000 contest, they concluded that there has been no decline in mobilization. Furthermore, they pointed out that reported contact rates were at some of their lowest levels in the 1960s when turnout was at its peak and reached some of their highest levels during low turnout elections in 1996 and 2000 (Figures 1 and 2). They sum up by noting, “Even though there was a strong relationship between being contacted and voting, and even though the percentage contacted by party was substantially higher than in 1960, turnout has declined markedly over the course of these decades” (p. 90).

Of course, the NES turnout measure is only one measure. We therefore gathered several other indicators of mobilization activity, including campaign spending and electoral closeness—both real and perceived. This evidence reveals that electoral competitiveness has not declined in Senate, House, or presidential elections. In addition, the perceived closeness of the presidential race has, if anything, increased, and more dollars are now being spent on campaigns, even when adjusting for inflation (see the appendix for more detailed information on the sources and year-by-year movement in these mea-

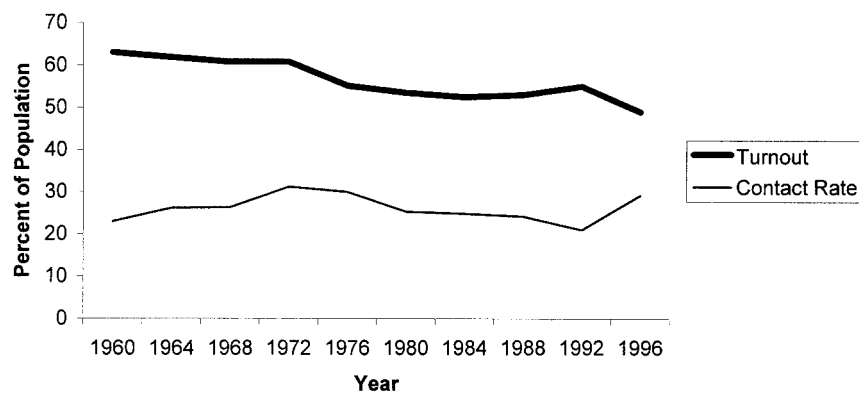


FIG. 1. Voter turnout and rates of contact (presidential years).

Sources: Federal Election Commission; National Election Studies, 1960–1998, percentages reflect weighting by variable vcf0009b.

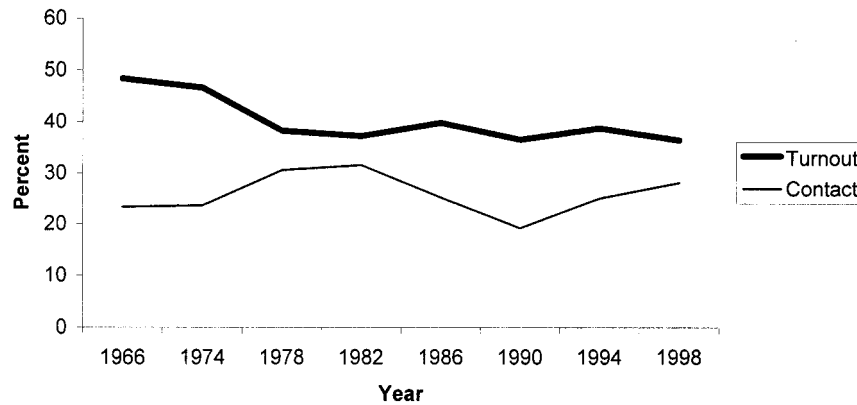


FIG. 2. Voter turnout and rates of contact (midterm years).

Sources: Federal Election Commission; National Election Studies, 1960–1998, percentages reflect weighting by variable vcf0009b. The NES did not ask the contact question in 1962 or 1972.

asures). To be sure, none of the measures are perfect.² Still, multiple indicators of mobilization fail to show any decrease in mobilization activity and in some cases show an actual increase over the last 40 years. Of all the measures of aggregate mobilization activity that we examined, only the existence of gubernatorial races in presidential election years showed a decrease over time. In short, we find little evidence for the claim that there have been decreases in aggregate rates of mobilization.

Now, what about the effectiveness of voter contacts in individual years? Central to most studies of participation over time is the assumption that the effects of the fundamental correlates of turnout have stayed constant over time (Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Teixeira, 1987, 1992).³ For example, most scholars have assumed that mobilization along with education, efficacy, interest, and the rest of the usual causal suspects have the same effect now that they did 30 or 40 years ago. Given this, much of the search for the culprit for declining turnout has focused on identifying an important causal variable omitted from previous models of turnout or looking for how the distribution of an identified factor (with an assumed fixed effect) has changed.

Alternatively, mobilization—or other variables for that matter—could still explain the decline in turnout if it is having less of an impact than it once did. Perhaps the “money-intensive” mobilization tactics of today are less effective than the “labor-intensive” tactics of the past. Or perhaps, for some reason related to people’s lifestyles nowadays, they just are not responding as well to today’s mobilization efforts. But is there any evidence that mobilization contacts are actually less effective now than they were in previous years?

To answer this question, we model turnout using the standard correlates of voting participation found in the literature (Abramson et al., 2002; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Teixeira, 1992; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980), including demographic characteristics, individual attitudes, characteristics of the race, and indicators of mobilization. Clearly, whether someone votes cannot influence demographic characteristics of the voter, nor can it conceivably affect characteristics of the race, such as its competitiveness, which depends on things such as the quality of the candidates and how much they spend. The individual's propensity to vote, however, may influence whether that person is contacted. As demonstrated later in this article, mobilizers tend to contact people who are highly likely to vote, making this assessment on the basis of things they can observe, such as a person's past voting record. In other words, voting and mobilization are endogenous.

Because biased coefficient estimates may result if the disturbance terms associated with the contact and turnout variables are correlated, such an endogenous relationship raises some statistical issues. One way to account for the endogeneity is to ensure that exogenous variables that influence the endogenous variables—in our case, factors that influence both contacting and turnout—are included in the model. This is the approach we take here, controlling for an extensive list of demographic predictor variables that are also the ones mobilizers would be most likely to use when making targeting decisions.⁴ An identical strategy has been followed in other major works on mobilization and participation, including Verba, Schlozman, and Brady's (1995) book.

To test the hypothesis that the effectiveness of mobilization contacts has declined over time, we estimate a pooled logit model predicting voter turnout. Our data come from the NES cumulative file (Sapiro et al., 1999) and span the period from 1960 to 1998. Each independent variable is interacted with a dummy variable for each election year, which allows the effect of each predictor to vary over time. The year dummy variables were also retained in the model as main effects.⁵ Note also that a time-series model is not necessary here as each year's survey contains a new cross-section of voters, and thus autocorrelation should not interfere with estimating correct parameters.

Several basic demographic and attitudinal factors were included as covariates (a description of the variables, question wordings, and codings can be found in the appendix). In addition, we have augmented the NES survey data with contextual variables measuring the competitiveness of House, Senate, and presidential races within each state and the existence of a gubernatorial election. Although the model does not have any direct measures of registration requirements, it does contain a variable indicating whether a respondent lives in the South, which should serve to identify some of the most extreme legal barriers to voting over the 40-year period under study. The inclusion of one other covariate—whether the respondent voted in the previous presidential

election—deserves discussion. Our rationale for its inclusion is that the variable taps unobservable elements of sociology and psychology that are persistent over time, such as habituation, reinforcement or duty, that are otherwise omitted from the analysis.⁶

Table 1 shows model estimates of the major correlates of voting for the 10 presidential elections from 1960 to 1996.⁷ Year after year, the standard predictors—education, income, and strength of party identification—are statistically and substantively significant. Looking specifically at the effect of mobilization contacts, the most straightforward measure of GOTV, there is certainly no steady decline in effect. In fact, if anything, the effect of a contact seems to have risen over time.

Figure 3 demonstrates this graphically by plotting the coefficients on the contact variables for each year. A 95% confidence interval around each coefficient also is plotted. That these error bars overlap in all years indicates that the effect of a contact varies little over time. This visual conclusion is confirmed by a statistical test. We are unable to reject the null hypothesis that all of the contact coefficients are equal to each other ($\chi^2 = 11.11, p = 0.268$).

To translate the logit coefficients into more easily comprehensible probabilities, we also estimated the marginal effect of a mobilization contact for each year. This was done by comparing the predicted probability of voting by a contacted person who is average within that year on all other covariates and the predicted probability of voting by a person, average again on all covariates within that year, who was not contacted. The marginal effects of voter contacts by year are shown in Figure 4. Effects range from 2.1 to 9.7 percentage points across years, but there is little evidence of any over-time trend.

At first glance, the effect of a contact on voting may look quite large in some years. Keep in mind, however, that this effect is at the individual level. An increase in the probability of voting by .10 does not translate into an aggregate increase in turnout of 10%. An increase in the probability of voting of .10 among the approximately 25% of people who are contacted in a given year yields about a 2.5% net increase in turnout.⁸

Political consultants and other campaign professionals who specialize in GOTV and voter stimulus campaigns tell us that a good campaign can make from a one to four percentage point difference in turnout rates.⁹ Thus, the sizes of the model estimates are well within reason and have face validity.

The results for midterm years, reported in Table 2, show a similar pattern. As with presidential years, we can show visually the estimated effect of a contact on one's probability of voting for each year. Figure 5, a plot of the coefficients, demonstrates that the impact of a contact fluctuates somewhat more than in presidential years, but it remains difficult to find a trend in the impact or effectiveness of contacts that could explain the turnout decline. That is confirmed by a chi-square test in which we fail to reject the null hypothesis

TABLE 1. Predictors of Vote (Presidential Years)

	1960	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996
Contact	0.25	0.78	0.44	0.32	0.41	0.62	0.55	0.58	0.53	0.58
Age	0.28	0.23	0.23	0.21	0.15	0.19	0.21	0.20	0.27	0.21
Age-squared	0.08	0.03	0.02	-0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.03	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02
Male	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03
	-0.08	-0.03	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.02	-0.02	0.01	0.02	0.03
	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03
	0.34	0.07	0.02	0.10	0.25	0.07	-0.17	0.05	-0.17	-0.05
	0.24	0.16	0.17	0.12	0.14	0.16	0.13	0.15	0.14	0.16
Education	0.34	0.18	0.23	0.42	0.36	0.21	0.29	0.39	0.49	0.39
Black	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.08	0.12	0.13	0.11	0.10	0.09	0.10
	-0.55	-0.01	-0.22	-0.06	0.17	0.09	0.28	0.17	0.33	-0.09
	0.33	0.26	0.26	0.22	0.25	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.21	0.26
South	-0.99	-0.74	-0.27	-0.43	-0.30	-0.26	-0.15	-0.34	-0.37	-0.18
	0.27	0.20	0.20	0.25	0.15	0.19	0.16	0.27	0.17	0.25
Income	0.12	0.09	0.20	0.08	0.09	0.15	0.18	0.23	0.18	0.13
	0.12	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.10
Union	-0.27	0.25	-0.08	0.05	0.32	-0.07	-0.09	-0.20	0.14	0.25
	0.24	0.20	0.18	0.14	0.15	0.20	0.21	0.20	0.21	0.23
Strength of party ID	0.11	0.21	0.23	0.26	0.22	0.20	0.10	0.30	0.16	0.30
	0.12	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.09	0.08	0.11	0.08	0.06	0.08

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Married	0.07	0.00	0.21	0.12	0.18	0.15	0.21	0.13	0.58
	0.32	0.19	0.13	0.14	0.18	0.17	0.18	0.15	0.19
Interest	0.35	0.44	0.39	0.38	0.66	0.54	0.63	0.61	0.77
	0.16	0.11	0.08	0.09	0.11	0.10	0.11	0.10	0.12
Efficacy	0.69	0.04	0.71	0.54	0.76	0.61	0.45	0.29	-0.16
	0.28	0.21	0.20	0.15	0.19	0.18	0.19	0.17	0.24
Voted in last election	2.62	1.92	2.01	1.97	2.48	3.35	2.64	2.43	2.26
	0.24	0.17	0.17	0.14	0.19	0.36	0.17	0.14	0.17
House competitiveness	0.05	-0.12	0.05	-0.02	0.03	0.22	0.05	-0.08	-0.14
	0.16	0.13	0.12	0.11	0.14	0.14	0.24	0.10	0.13
Senate competitiveness	-0.09	0.02	0.11	-0.14	-0.07	0.04	-0.07	0.02	0.05
	0.14	0.09	0.08	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.09
Presidential competitiveness	0.00	0.00	0.02	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03	0.00	0.01	0.00
	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01
Gubernatorial election	0.19	0.05	0.11	0.11	0.59	0.21	-0.08	-0.20	0.12
	0.25	0.17	0.18	0.16	0.29	0.24	0.22	0.19	0.30
Contested primary	-0.42	0.14	-0.15	-0.09	-0.38	0.11	-0.10	-0.15	-0.02
	0.30	0.19	0.17	0.14	0.26	0.22	0.21	0.21	0.19
Perception of race closeness	0.59	0.12	0.11	0.08	0.26	0.21	0.37	0.37	0.30
	0.31	0.17	0.18	0.18	0.20	0.13	0.18	0.17	0.17
Constant	-4.48	-3.01	-2.80	-3.48	-3.26	-4.82	-4.48	-3.36	-4.17
	1.18	0.78	0.56	0.57	0.69	0.64	0.72	0.60	0.83

Notes: N = 19,371. Model $\chi^2 = 7416.23$ ($p < 0.001$). Standard errors below estimated coefficients. Boldfaced entries indicate $p < .05$.

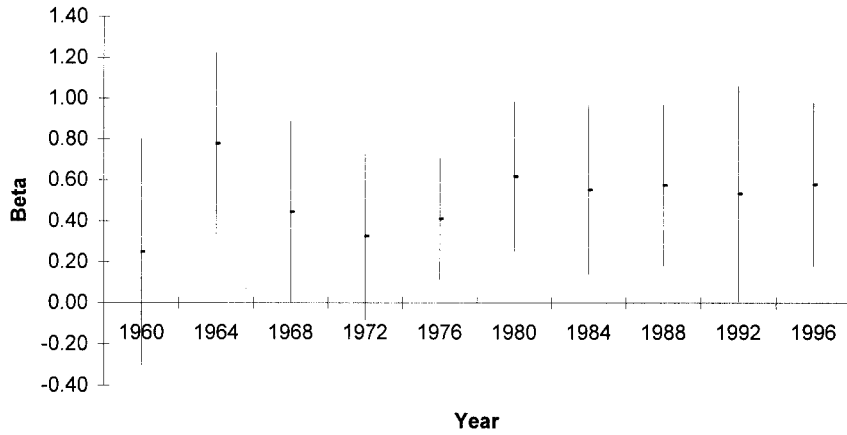


FIG. 3. Effect of contact on vote (presidential years).

Note: Ninety-five percent confidence intervals around coefficient estimates are shown.

that the coefficients are equal ($\chi^2 = 9.92$, $p = 0.271$). Translating the logit coefficients into probabilities shows that a contact increased the probability that an average person would vote by 8.6 to 22.9 percentage points, depending on the year (Figure 6). That these numbers are higher than those in presidential years is not surprising given that midterm elections are lower information events with lower base levels of turnout. In such contests, the added push of being contacted may mean more. Again, there is no evidence that the effect of mobilization has declined over time.

WHO GETS CONTACTED?

These traditional explanations of how mobilization has influenced turnout over time have surprisingly little explanatory power. We therefore develop an alternative causal explanation. Specifically, mobilization could still account for falling turnout if the type of voter contacted has changed. In other words, what if the way campaigns target voters has changed over the last 40 years? Perhaps the targeting of mobilization has switched from those most in need of a push to participate to those who would vote whether or not they were reminded and encouraged to do so. What if candidate and party workers are increasingly targeting high propensity voters? In other words, if the endogeneity problem, endemic to all nonexperimental studies of mobilization and turnout, has gotten worse over time, the number of contacts could have remained constant or even risen while the net effect of contact activities could have declined.¹⁰

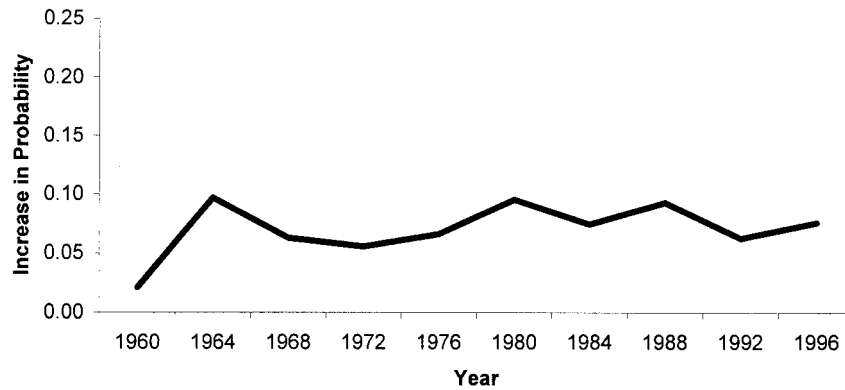


FIG. 4. Predicted effect of a contact on probability of voting (presidential years).

To see whether campaigns in recent years have been more likely to target high propensity voters, we estimated a model in which reported contact is the dependent variable. In addition to some familiar demographic variables, we also included as an independent variable whether a respondent reported having voted in a previous election. The inclusion of this variable clearly does not allow us to unpack the independent effect of each of these demographic variables on the probability of being contacted. Nevertheless, campaigns are not concerned with independent effects and must mobilize on variables “they can see” and for which they have records. Our own experience with campaigns, along with conversations with consultants and GOTV specialists, indicates that a person’s previous voting patterns—recorded from voter lists and gathered by canvasses—is by far and away the main variable that campaigns use in choosing whom to contact. Therefore, as an indicator of who is likely to be contacted and of the severity of the endogeneity problem over time, information about whether a respondent voted in a previous election is crucial.

Table 3 reports results for presidential years, and Table 4 reports results for midterm election years. The results show that candidates, parties, and campaigns target those most likely to vote. The more educated, the wealthier, and those with the strongest partisan attachments are more likely to be contacted. Having voted in the previous election is also a strong predictor of whether or not a citizen will be contacted. But more central to our argument, having voted previously has become an increasingly strong predictor of whether or not a respondent will be contacted. We show this statistically by performing a likelihood ratio test comparing two models. In the first pooled model predicting contact, we estimate only one coefficient for previous vote, which constrains the effect of having voted in the last election to be equal in all years.

TABLE 2. Predictors of Vote (Midterm Years)

	1966	1970	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998
Contact	0.39	0.45	0.74	0.58	0.54	0.36	0.63	1.02	0.62
Age	0.20	0.16	0.18	0.13	0.17	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.18
Age-squared	0.02	0.03	0.00	-0.01	0.11	0.04	0.06	0.02	0.08
Male	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03
Education	-0.01	-0.02	0.01	0.01	- 0.09	-0.02	-0.04	0.00	-0.05
Black	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03
South	-0.06	-0.03	0.13	-0.14	0.34	-0.14	0.15	0.27	0.13
Income	0.15	0.14	0.16	0.12	0.15	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.16
Union	0.19	0.32	0.33	0.28	0.31	0.12	0.19	0.20	0.21
	0.11	0.10	0.15	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.08	0.09	0.10
	0.18	-0.08	-0.49	-0.18	0.38	0.27	0.16	0.18	0.26
	0.26	0.26	0.32	0.23	0.26	0.21	0.21	0.23	0.26
	- 0.58	- 0.59	-0.26	-0.31	-0.31	- 0.39	-0.25	-0.19	- 0.78
	0.19	0.16	0.20	0.17	0.18	0.16	0.18	0.15	0.21
	0.18	0.16	0.05	0.04	-0.01	0.04	0.12	0.14	0.11
	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.08
	-0.12	-0.01	-0.09	0.04	0.17	-0.26	0.03	0.14	0.24
	0.18	0.17	0.21	0.15	0.19	0.18	0.17	0.18	0.23

Strength of party ID	0.25	0.23	0.20	0.19	0.27	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.32
Married	0.08	0.07	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.08
Interest	0.57	-0.27	0.43	-0.23	0.29	0.26	0.16	0.27	0.22
Efficacy	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.14	0.15	0.17
Voted in last election	1.04	0.64	0.99	0.93	0.85	1.18	0.94	0.90	0.87
House competitiveness	0.11	0.10	0.15	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.12
Senate competitiveness	0.12	0.16	0.37	0.02	0.27	0.43	-0.09	0.27	0.25
Gubernatorial election	0.19	0.18	0.19	0.15	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.19	0.21
Constant	2.68	2.63	3.43	3.34	2.51	3.54	5.40	2.99	2.45
	0.26	0.18	0.53	0.41	0.19	0.30	0.63	0.20	0.22
	-0.08	-0.09	0.22	-0.18	0.23	0.28	0.26	0.05	0.00
	0.10	0.12	0.15	0.12	0.13	0.19	0.17	0.12	0.10
	0.06	0.14	0.02	0.02	0.08	0.02	0.09	0.10	0.06
	0.08	0.06	0.10	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.08
	-0.03	0.32	0.08	-0.05	0.14	0.09	0.53	-0.13	0.36
	0.17	0.15	0.16	0.18	0.17	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.19
	-6.08	-5.49	-6.24	-4.07	-8.09	-7.36	-10.69	-6.64	-8.17
	0.78	0.71	0.87	0.62	0.74	0.64	0.80	0.68	0.79

Notes: N = 15,322. Model $\chi^2 = 8092.13$ ($p < 0.001$). Standard errors below estimated coefficients. Boldfaced entries indicate $p < .05$.

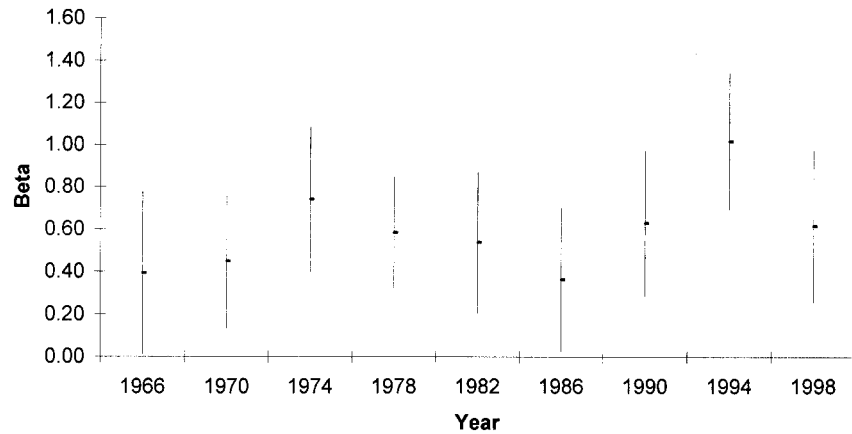


FIG. 5. Effect of contact on vote (midterm years).

Note: Ninety-five percent confidence intervals around coefficient estimates are shown.

In the second pooled model, the previous vote coefficient also is constrained, but in a manner that forces its effect to rise linearly across years.¹¹ This constraint is accomplished by interacting a countervariable (a series of positive integers, i.e., 1, 2, 3 . . .) with the variable indicating a vote in the previous election. The latter model proves a better fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 21.47$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that having voted in the previous election is becoming an increasingly important predictor of being contacted.

Although rates of contacting have stayed steady, in recent years those contacts have been much more likely to be aimed at those who have high pre-

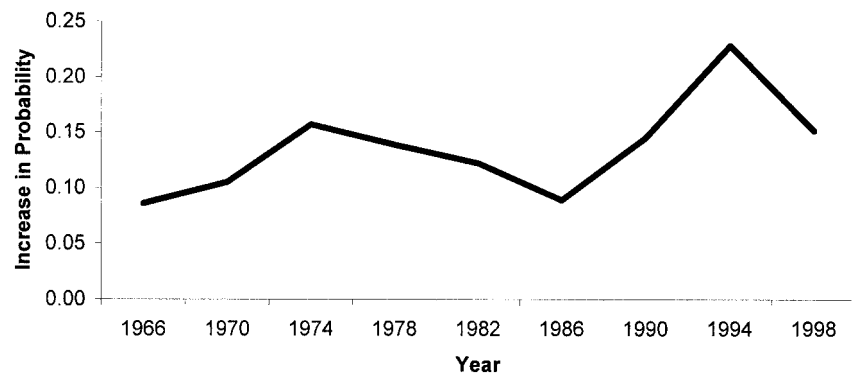


FIG. 6. Predicted effect of a contact on probability of voting (midterm years).

contact probabilities of voting. This is shown graphically by Figure 7, which displays the difference in a person's pre-contact probability of voting between those who are eventually contacted and those who are not in presidential election years (calculations are based on the turnout models in Table 1 and Table 2). Figure 8 does the same for midterm years. To illustrate, a citizen who was contacted in 1990 had a .35 greater probability of voting than someone who was not contacted, independent the effect of the contact itself. The effect of this change in targeting patterns is that the endogeneity between contact and the pre-contact probability of voting—always a problem in estimating the effect of voter contact activities—has gotten worse over time.

This is especially true in midterm years. The difference in the probabilities of voting between those who were and were not contacted continues to rise. In presidential election years, the differences are less pronounced, although the difference in the probabilities of contact did increase almost monotonically over time before dropping off in the 1990s.

We now have evidence that who is targeted has changed over time, but how much of a difference does this make in terms of turnout? To quantify this effect, we used NES data to do the following:

1. We estimated an equation based on 1960 data predicting whether an individual was contacted. From that we calculated the probability of each respondent in the 1996 sample being contacted, based on his or her characteristics.¹²
2. After estimating a contact equation based on 1996 data, we calculated the probability of each respondent in the 1996 sample being contacted, based upon his or her characteristics.
3. Using the 1996 vote equation, we calculated the probability of each respondent in the 1996 sample voting, inserting the probability of being contacted in 1996 from above (not a dummy indicator) as a predictor. We then did this using the probability of being contacted in 1960.
4. We found the difference in the two probabilities of voting.

The difference that we found is, to say the least, unremarkable. If people had been contacted in 1996 in the same way they were contacted in 1960, then the average probability of voting would actually have declined by 0.004%. We then recalculated the analysis for two midterm years, 1966 and 1994. Again, the effect on turnout of changes in targeting would have been almost nil, increasing the average probability of voting by 0.002. Similar calculations involving comparisons of different years, such as 1964 and 1992, lead to the same conclusion: Although parties are targeting differently nowadays, the effect of that changed targeting is minimal. Even though mobilization can demonstrably affect whether an individual votes, its impact on aggregate levels

TABLE 3. Predictors of Contact (Presidential Years)

	1960	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996
Age	-0.02	-0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.03
Age-squared	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Male	0.01	0.02	-0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.01
	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
	-0.06	0.06	0.02	0.06	0.08	-0.19	0.00	-0.07	0.05	-0.06
	0.15	0.12	0.14	0.14	0.11	0.14	0.11	0.13	0.10	0.13
Education	0.31	0.37	0.29	0.14	0.27	0.19	0.27	0.19	0.25	0.22
	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.07
Black	-0.53	-0.04	0.29	-0.02	-0.10	-0.14	0.08	0.09	-0.04	-0.08
	0.35	0.26	0.22	0.22	0.24	0.21	0.21	0.19	0.17	0.23
South	-0.46	-0.31	-0.16	-0.24	-0.42	0.28	-0.32	-0.27	0.26	-0.23
	0.20	0.19	0.18	0.20	0.14	0.15	0.15	0.20	0.15	0.17
Income	0.03	0.23	0.17	0.09	0.17	0.21	0.07	0.10	0.19	0.09
	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.06	0.07

Union membership	0.18	0.18	-0.05	0.01	0.22	0.14	0.22	-0.02	0.42	0.03
	0.17	0.17	0.15	0.14	0.12	0.15	0.14	0.15	0.14	0.16
Strength of partisan ID	0.00	0.17	0.08	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.11	-0.03	0.10	0.06
	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.07
Voted in last election	0.13	0.48	0.27	0.46	0.58	0.32	0.45	0.85	0.70	0.72
	0.23	0.19	0.19	0.15	0.13	0.17	0.18	0.16	0.17	0.18
House competitiveness	0.20	0.23	0.01	0.11	0.20	0.25	0.46	0.25	0.06	0.51
	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.08	0.09	0.11	0.10	0.20	0.08	0.10
Senate competitiveness	-0.06	-0.18	0.03	0.04	-0.05	0.05	0.20	0.05	0.15	0.06
	0.09	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.05
Presidential closeness	-0.03	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.01
	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Gubernatorial election	0.40	-0.15	0.15	0.13	-0.29	0.11	0.04	0.03	0.26	0.37
	0.18	0.13	0.13	0.11	0.14	0.18	0.16	0.20	0.17	0.18
Constant	-1.72	-2.43	-3.41	-1.62	-3.14	-3.74	-4.25	-3.58	-4.25	-4.50
	0.86	0.73	0.67	0.44	0.49	0.55	0.50	0.63	0.55	0.70

Notes: N = 19,371. Model $\chi^2 = 1277.13$ ($p < 0.001$). Standard errors below estimated coefficients. Boldfaced entries indicate $p < .05$.

TABLE 4. Predictors of Contact (Midterm Years)

	1966	1970	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998
Age	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.07	0.03
Age-squared	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Male	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	0.00	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.06	-0.01
	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
	0.19	0.08	-0.05	0.04	-0.20	0.03	-0.11	-0.21	-0.12
	0.14	0.16	0.12	0.10	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.14
Education	0.21	0.19	0.21	0.28	0.24	0.35	0.24	0.19	0.12
Black	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.08
	-0.49	0.11	0.13	0.13	0.16	0.25	-0.17	-0.20	-0.18
	0.28	0.30	0.24	0.17	0.21	0.16	0.22	0.21	0.24
South	-0.10	-0.22	-0.93	-0.26	0.00	-0.01	0.09	0.10	-0.38
	0.18	0.16	0.16	0.12	0.15	0.12	0.15	0.13	0.19
Income	0.28	0.08	0.04	0.21	0.17	0.16	0.14	0.21	0.16
	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.07
Union membership	-0.02	0.08	0.02	0.12	-0.13	0.07	0.16	0.13	0.10
	0.17	0.20	0.14	0.11	0.16	0.13	0.16	0.15	0.18
Strength of partisan ID	0.06	0.03	0.06	0.13	0.13	0.04	0.20	0.13	0.12
	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.07
Voted in last election	0.49	0.26	0.57	0.57	1.13	0.70	1.17	1.17	0.77
	0.24	0.15	0.19	0.15	0.18	0.16	0.45	0.19	0.19
House competitiveness	0.19	0.07	0.45	0.32	0.28	0.19	-0.02	0.31	0.39
	0.09	0.17	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.15	0.16	0.09	0.08
Senate competitiveness	0.12	0.02	-0.06	0.23	-0.10	-0.16	0.13	0.04	0.09
	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06
Gubernatorial election	-0.37	0.00	0.15	-0.17	-0.04	-0.06	0.40	0.09	0.43
	0.15	0.21	0.14	0.11	0.14	0.14	0.18	0.14	0.17
Constant	-3.44	-2.30	-2.90	-3.61	-4.06	-4.55	-5.10	-5.89	-4.65
	0.70	0.95	0.59	0.45	0.58	0.52	0.61	0.61	0.64

Notes: N = 15,322. Model $\chi^2 = 1418.74$ ($p < 0.001$). Standard errors below estimated coefficients. Boldfaced entries indicate $p < .05$.

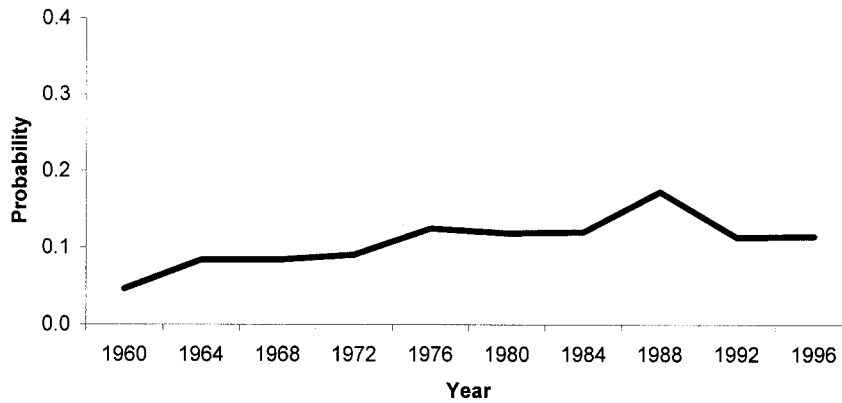


FIG. 7. Effect of contact on probability of voting (presidential years).

of turnout is small because only about a quarter of the electorate is ever contacted.

CONCLUSION

Recent studies have argued that mobilization is not only an important determinant of individual participation, but that decreases in either its amount or quality can explain the mystery of declining turnout in the United States over the past 40 years. In this article, we have demonstrated that the amount of mobilization activity taking place has not declined, that the effectiveness of a

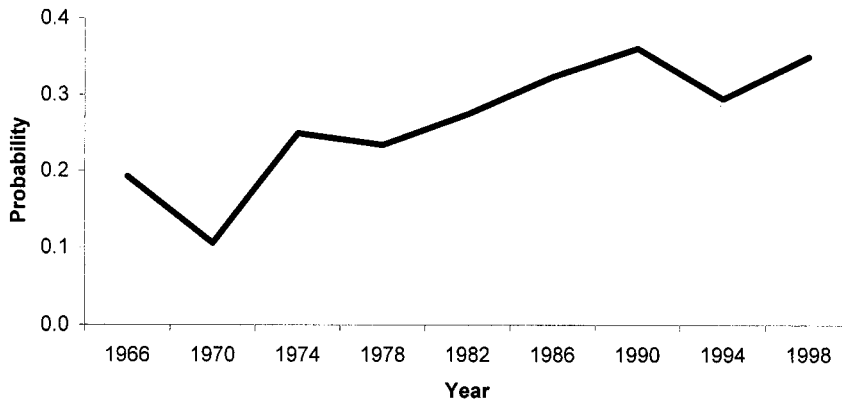


FIG. 8. Effect of contact on probability of voting (midterm years).

party contact has not decreased, and that changes in the targeting of contacts have had a negligible impact on turnout. Mobilization is not the culprit for the declining levels of voter participation in this country. The mystery of declining turnout remains unsolved.

All that is not to say that mobilization cannot help to reverse the decline in turnout over the past 4 decades. Theoretically, targeted high quality GOTV efforts could raise voter turnout in this country. If candidates and parties wanted to increase turnout generally, one simple strategy would be to contact more people. But given resource constraints, a better strategy would be to target heavily those most in need of a stimulus to vote—those on the cusp and those with relatively low likelihoods of voting. Mobilizers would ignore the very highest and the very lowest propensity voters. Of course, the goal of candidates and campaigns is not to increase overall turnout. The goal is to win elections, and increasing differential turnout—the number of one’s own partisans who go to the polls—is often the way to do this.

Electoral targeting decisions should be a function of the competitiveness of a race (the more likely that a vote will make a difference, the more incentive campaigns have to mobilize voters) and the partisan predispositions of mobilization targets (campaigns do not want to mobilize a vote for the other side). Furthermore, to achieve this goal in the most efficient manner and with limited funds, it would make sense for campaigns to target only those supporters on the cusp and to ignore completely those voters with low or high pre-contact probabilities of voting. Putting this another way, efficient rational campaign decision makers should focus on committed partisans with probabilities of voting on the cusp in races that are likely to be close.

Although there is evidence in the models presented in this article that mobilization activities are more likely to be targeted at strong partisans in close races, campaigns and candidates do not appear to be targeting those on the cusp of participation. Instead, much of their mobilization effort is being targeted at those who are already likely to vote in the first place.¹³ Why is this so?

In our conversations with political consultants and our experiences in election campaigns, one fact shines through: efficiency is not an issue. Campaigns have two fears when it comes to GOTV activities. The first is that their strong core supporters will not show up, and the second is that mobilization activities will energize opponents. The consequence of these twin fears is that campaigns often end up repeatedly contacting their strongest supporters, even if they already have a high probability of voting. Failing to contact thousands of strong supporters who probably would have voted in any case is not a catastrophic error for a congressional campaign, but failing to contact a few hundred strong supporters who for some reason are not energized by the current campaign is a grave error. Even worse is contacting a couple hundred of the opponent’s supporters and stimulating them to vote. The parties’ GOTV efforts are generally conducted off registered voter lists or membership lists that

have been canvassed for strong supporters. The result is that party loyalists, who are highly likely to vote in the first place, are the citizens who are most likely to get the great majority of mobilization contacts.

There is, however, an exception to this rule. Our conversations with GOTV professionals as well as the first author's experiences in politics indicate that Democrats are more likely to pursue more expansive strategies targeted at lower propensity African-American voters. Still, these efforts are far from random and are seldom targeted at those on the cusp. In fact, Democratic GOTV efforts tend to be targeted on the tails of the probability distribution of turnout. This is because the party's most loyal constituencies are African Americans and those with postgraduate educations. Levels of voter contact may have risen, but because campaigns are increasingly targeting the highest propensity voters—and in the case of Democrats, loyal but low propensity voters—the net effect of changes in targeting practices may be a decrease in the net effectiveness of voter contact activity.

In sum, mobilization can help us explain why and when people vote. Some scholars have assumed that strong findings on such organizational variables as mobilization should make us more optimistic about reversing the 4-decade long turnout decline in this country. For example, proponents of various registration reforms such as Motor Voter have argued that if we bring more voters into the electorate, even if they are low propensity voters, parties will then have the incentive to energize them. Although we obviously are not suggesting that such reform efforts be discontinued, there is a Catch-22 situation at work here. Mobilization efforts by candidates, parties, and other organizations are needed to spur those on the cusp of turning out to vote. Yet, such potential voters are likely to be weak partisans with a short paper trail in terms of past voting behavior. Thus, they are precisely the types of voters whom parties will shy away from contacting.

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APPENDIX: QUESTION WORDING, CODING, AND VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS

All individual level data are taken from the American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1960–1998.

Voter Turnout. (vcf0702) Question Wording: “In talking to people about the election we (1972 and later: often) find that a lot of people weren’t able to vote because they weren’t registered or they were sick or they just didn’t have time. (1960: How about you, did you vote this time?) (1964–1970: How about you, did you vote this time, or did something keep you from voting) (1972–1976: How about you, did you vote in the elections this fall?) (1978 and later: How about you, did you vote in the elections this November?)” Coding: 1 if yes, 0 if no.

Education. (vcf0110) Question Wording: (1960–1972) “How many grades of school did you finish?” (1974 and later) “What is the highest grade of school or year of college you have completed?” Coding: 1 if 8 grades or less, 2 if 9–12 grades, 3 if some college, 4 if college or advanced degree.

Male. (vcf0104) Observed by interviewer. Coding: 1 if male, 0 if female.

African American. (vcf0105) Observed by interviewer. Coding: 1 if African American, 0 otherwise.

Age. (vcf0101) Question Wording: (1964–1976) “What is your date of birth?” (1978–1982) “What is the month and year of your birth?” (1984 and later) “What is the month, day, and year of your birth?” Coding: Respondent’s Age in Years.

Strength of Party Identification. (vcf0301) Question Wording: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?” (If Republican or Democrat) “Would you call yourself a strong (Republican/Democrat) or not very strong Republican/Democrat?” (If independent, other or no preference) “Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?” Coding: 0 if independent or apolitical, 1 if independent leaning toward a party, 2 if a weak partisan, 3 if strong partisan.

South. (vcf0113) Observed by Interviewer. Coding: 1 if South (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia), 0 if non-South.

Married. (vcf0147) Question Wording: “Are you married now and living with your husband/wife—or are you widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never married?” Coding: 1 if married, 0 if not presently married.

Income. (vcf0114) Question Wording: (1960) “About what do you think your total income will be this year for yourself and your immediate family?” (1964, 1968) “About what do you think your total income will be this year for yourself and your immediate family. Just give me the (number/letter) of the right income category.” (1966, 1970) Many people don’t know their exact (1966/1970) income yet; but would you tell me as best you can what you expect your (1966/1970) income to be—before taxes? You may just tell me the letter of the group on this card into which your family income will probably fall.” (1972–1990, 1992 long form, 1994–later) “Please look at this card/page and tell me the letter of the income group that includes the income of all members of your family living here in <previous year> before taxes. This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income. (If uncertain) What

would be your best guess?” (1992 short form) “Can you give us an estimate of your total family income in 1991 before taxes? This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest and all other income for every member of your family living in your house in 1991. First could you tell me if that was above or below \$24,999? (If uncertain) “What would be your best guess?” (If above/below \$24,999:) “I will read you some income categories, could you please stop me when I reach the category that corresponds to your family situation?” Coding: 1 if 0 to 16 percentile, 2 if 17 to 33 percentile, 3 if 34 to 67 percentile, 4 if 68 to 95 percentile, 5 if 96 to 100 percentile.

Union. (vcf0127) Question Wording: “(1960–1984: Does anyone) (1986–later: Do you or [1988: does] anyone else) in this household belong to a labor union?” Coding: 1 if yes, 0 if no.

Voted in Last Election. (vcf 9027) Question Wording: See NES codebook. Coding: 1 if voted in previous presidential election, 0 if did not vote.

Perception of Race Closeness. (vcf0714) Question Wording: “Do you think it [the presidential race] will be a close race or will <respondent’s predicted winning candidate> win by quite a bit?” 1980 and later: “Do you think the presidential race will be close or will one candidate win by quite a bit?” Coding: 1 if election perceived as close, 0 if not.

Mobilization Contact. (vcf9030) Question Wording: (1960, 1964, 1966, 1968) “You know that (other years except 1988, 1996: “As you know,”) The political parties try to talk to as many people as they can to get them to vote for their candidate(s). Did anyone from one (1956, 1960, 1964, 1966, 1968, “either”) of the political parties call you up or come around and talk to you about the (1956, 1960, 1964, 1966, 1968 “during the”) campaign (1976 “this year”)?” Coding: 1 if contacted, 0 otherwise.

Senate Race Competitiveness. Coding: 0 if no race, 1 if safe seat, 2 if somewhat competitive, 3 if very competitive. Source: *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*.

House Race Competitiveness. Coding: 1 if safe seat, 2 if somewhat competitive, 3 if very competitive. For 1970 and 1998, years in which CQ data were unavailable: 1 if top candidate won less than 55% of the vote, 2 if top candidate received 55–60% of the vote, 3 if top candidate received greater than 60% of the vote. Source: *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*.

Presidential Race Competitiveness. Coding: The difference in the percentage of the vote obtained by the top two candidates within a state in each year. Source: *Atlas of United States Presidential Elections: 1932–1996*.

Gubernatorial Election. Coding: 1 if state holds a gubernatorial election in that year, 0 if it does not. Source: *Congressional Quarterly’s Guide to U.S. Elections*, 3rd ed.

Contested Primary. Coding: 1 if state holds a contested presidential primary, 0 if it does not. Source: *Congressional Quarterly’s Guide to U.S. Elections*, 3rd ed.

Measures of Mobilization Activity

Year	Number of Gubernatorial Elections	House and Senate Race Spending	Perceived Presidential Race Closeness	Actual Presidential Race Closeness	Last Poll Presidential Race Closeness	House Seats, Percentage Safe	Senate Seats, Percentage Safe
1960	28		0.85	1.1	2	60	32
1962	35					67	44
1964	26		0.49	22.7	28	66	34
1966	35					70	33
1968	22		0.75	0.7	1	70	33
1970	35					71	29
1972	19	301.43	0.36	23.1	24		
1974	35	291.61				62	50
1976	14	330.87	0.84	2.1	1	70	41
1978	36	487.00				67	33
1980	13	472.78	0.83	9.8	3	67	35
1982	36	578.35				63	22
1984	13	586.89	0.51	18.2	18	75	55
1986	35	670.59				78	38
1988	12	630.64	0.74	7.7	12	81	48
1990	35	446.30				81	43
1992	11	788.05	0.82	5.5	12	55	28
1994	36	796.52				66	43
1996	11	795.05	0.52	8.3	11	60	15
1998	36	740.40					
2000			0.1		2		

Notes: Gubernatorial elections data source: *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections*, 3rd ed.
 Campaign spending data sources: Green (1999) and Federal Election Commission. All entries transformed into 1998 dollars. All entries in millions of dollars.

Perceived closeness data source: National Election Studies. Higher values indicate the race is perceived to be closer.
 Last presidential poll source: The Gallup Organization. Entry is the percentage point difference in support between the Democratic and Republican presidential nominee.

House and Senate safe seats data source: *CQ Weekly Report*.
 Blank entries indicate data were not available.

NOTES

1. It is important to make a theoretical distinction between the quality of a contact and its effectiveness. Effectiveness refers to the responses of the people contacted—did it make them more or less likely to vote? This we can measure. A contact's quality, by contrast, refers to the characteristics of the contact—who made it and by what means it was made. We lack direct measures of a contact's quality. Thus, although we believe there is a strong relationship between the quality and effectiveness of contacts, our empirical work can only speak to their effectiveness.
2. A competitive presidential election, the existence of other high-profile elections, and more competitive House contests should spur greater turnout—in part because such contextual factors should encourage greater mobilization efforts by campaigns. Nevertheless, not all of the effect of a gubernatorial election or a competitive House race should be ascribed to increased voter contact activity by candidates and campaigns. The very existence of an election gives people the opportunity to vote, and competitive contests also influence perceptions, interest, media coverage, and a host of other predictors of turnout not directly tied to voter contact activity.
3. Two exceptions are Wielhouwer and Lockerbie (1994) and Martin (2001).
4. To ensure the robustness of our results, we also employed another common approach to accounting for endogeneity. We ran a separate two-stage regression model for each year, making the contact variable an instrument. Robust standard errors were used to compensate for the heteroskedasticity arising from the linear probability model specification. The resulting coefficients for the contact instrument (all positive and discernible from 0 with one exception) were regressed on a counter variable (a series of positive integers, i.e., 1, 2, 3 . . .), which produced a positive coefficient, though it was not significantly different from 0. This supports our central argument that the effect of a contact on one's probability of turning out to vote has not declined over time.
5. Estimating a pooled model that includes both year dummy variables and their interactions with the other predictors yields the exact same coefficients that would result if one estimated a separate logit model for each yearly cross-section. Standard errors are also virtually the same across the two procedures. Our main reason for opting for the pooled model, as opposed to separate logit models for each year, is that it allows direct statistical tests of the equality of coefficients across years.
6. The elimination of this variable, a powerful predictor of the vote in each year, does not change the conclusions we draw from the analysis. Indeed, the coefficients on the contact variable remain virtually the same in the 1960s and 1970s, and increase slightly in the 1980s and 1990s. This lends even more support to our claim that the effectiveness of contacts has not declined over time.
7. When confronted with missing data, analysts frequently throw out cases for which a value is missing. This is called listwise deletion. This procedure can severely reduce one's sample size and can lead to biased parameter estimates if the missingness is related systematically to characteristics of the respondents (King, Honaker, James, and Scheve, 2001). To avoid these problems, we imputed all missing values using the software program *Amelia* (Honaker, Joseph, King, Scheve, and Singh, 1999). To account for the uncertainty of the imputed values, the program creates five complete data sets, each slightly different from the other four because of random sampling. The multiple imputation estimate of the coefficients is simply the average of the values obtained after running the regression on each of the five datasets. The reported variance of these point estimates equals the average of the computed variances *within* the five data sets plus the variance *across* the five data sets. We impute more than 15% of the observations for only one variable. This was for the "previous turnout" variable

(29% missing), which was not asked in some years. Although this degree of missingness seems high, we do not find it particularly troublesome because (a) the uncertainty of our imputed values is reflected in the standard errors of the variables in the estimating equation, (b) this variable is not a difficult one to impute, given its high correlation with current turnout, and (c) there is precedent for using multiple imputation with even higher rates of item non-response (Gelman, King, and Liu, 1998).

8. Here we assume that pre-contact probability of voting is distributed uniformly across the population and that the probability of an individual's being contacted is unrelated to his or her probability of voting. Neither is probably strictly true, but the assumptions are necessary to translate changes in individual probabilities into changes in aggregate turnout.
9. Our thanks go to political consultants Laurie Moscovitz, Amy Bechoffer, and Lori Weigel for allowing us to conduct informal interviews with them.
10. This point addresses a thorny methodological issue that scholars have faced when trying to assess the effectiveness of mobilization: namely, that political contact may be an endogenous predictor of voter turnout. In other words, if campaigns are more likely to target their efforts at those already likely to vote, much of the connection between a mobilization contact and turnout may be spurious. The volume of work showing contact matters and the confirmation by field experiments (Blydenburgh, 1971; Gerber and Green, 2000) make us confident that one cannot ignore mobilization. Still, although we can be confident that the coefficient for voter contact is positive and statistically significant, nonexperimental models that ignore the mobilizers' estimations of the probability of a person's voting if asked, can never be sure of the exact magnitude of a mobilization contact.
11. Because we pool all years together in performing this test, we have added to our earlier specification a dummy variable indicating whether the year is a presidential or midterm one.
12. We chose these years because they were the first and last presidential election years in our time series. Because this is a bit arbitrary, we also performed the same procedure with several other pairs of years, reaching the identical conclusion.
13. Laurie Moscovitz, who headed up Democratic field efforts in 2000, told us that high propensity Democratic voters could have received up to 30 phone calls in the last week of the election.

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