

The Influence of Media Projections on Voter Turnout In Presidential Elections From 1980-2000

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Abstract

Several scholars have addressed the effects that media projections in presidential elections have upon voter turnout. We, however, believe that much of this research does not adequately address the influence that demographics and election specific factors have upon turnout. By controlling for voter and election specific variables across states, we can better speak to the extent to which media projections affect voter turnout among the eligible voting population, and how much of the variation in turnout is simply a function of these other factors. Since a significant amount of research on this topic addresses the 1980 election, we use this as our starting point. We then proceed to apply our model to every subsequent presidential election. We find that voter and election specific variables account for much of the variation in voter turnout; however, media projections have a small yet significant effect in decreasing turnout.

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Introduction

Although not always accurate in its predictions, the media play a distinct role on Election Day in the United States. Throughout the afternoon and evening, the newscasters and pundits with their red and blue maps use exit-polling to announce which states have fallen and which way the race is leaning. Based upon this information, the media frequently declare a winner prior to the closing of all state polls. Littlewood (1998:1) calls the election of the president, "news converted instantly and continuously into numbers."

When presidential elections are close, projections typically will be made late in the evening after the electorate has cast their ballots. The highly contested 2000 presidential election effectively illustrates this scenario. Although the media speculated the direction of the election, no resolute declaration of victory was made. In some elections, however, it is evident who the winner will be early in the evening. In these cases, broadcasters announce the next president-elect before all of the voters across the U.S. have had an opportunity to go to the polls. During the 1980 election, for instance, the broadcast media declared at 8:15 p.m. EST that Ronald Reagan was to become the next president of the United States. Although most of the polling stations had already closed on the East Coast, it was only 5:15 p.m. on the West Coast where the polls were to remain open for some time. Perhaps this practice is an influencing factor in the calculus regarding the decision to vote for post-call voters.

In this paper, we explore the effect that early projections have on voter turnout. This issue has significant implications beyond the immediate presidential level, since a change in turnout can potentially have adverse effects on congressional elections (Tannenbaum

and Kostrich 1983). In 1980, for instance, many House Democrats blamed their losses on the early call (Wolfinger and Linquiti 1981). Although both the media and Congress have debated this important question, there has been limited scholarly attention dedicated to the research of this topic, particularly beyond the 1984 election (for a recent exception see Hansen 2001).¹

The first section of this paper presents a brief synopsis of the literature on this topic. The ensuing section discusses the theoretical reasons why an early call as well as other factors may influence voter turnout. Following this, we develop a model to test the hypotheses derived from these theories. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings, particularly with respect to the effects that changes in turnout have upon congressional races.

Literature Review

The predictable early call for Johnson at 6:48 p.m. EST in the 1964 presidential race spurred some of the early studies of election night projections. Mendelsohn (1966) and Fuchs (1966) both use a micro-level survey approach to search for voter fall-off due to early projections. This method generally relies on a pre-election survey to determine voter intentions, followed by a post-election survey to ascertain any indication of projections influencing voting behavior. Although this approach has some advantages, it is limited because it relies on faulty human memory. Furthermore, surveys such as those

¹ For recent examples of media and congressional attention, see “Election rancor reignites as parties rip media role,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, Scott Shepard, February, 15th 2001 and H. Con Res. 40 (“Expressing the sense of the Congress that national news organizations should refrain from projecting the winner of a presidential election until all the polls in the Continental United States have closed”), introduced in the 107th Congress, for some recent discussion of this issue.

performed by Mendelsohn and Fuchs, frequently encounter the problem of respondents over-reporting turnout.² Both of these studies conclude that an early call has negligible (approximately 1%) effects on turnout.

Wolfinger and Linqiti (1981) use the Current Population Survey of 90,000 people to study the 1972 election. The survey asks respondents whether they voted in the 1972 and 1974 presidential and congressional elections and, if so, what time of day the vote was cast. In 1972, NBC and CBS projected Nixon as the winner at 8:30 pm and 8:50 pm EST respectively. Using the 1974 results as a baseline, they determine that the early call depressed turnout by 2.7 percentage points in the Pacific states. Although this phenomenon did not have a substantial impact on the presidential outcome, the authors contend that it may have negatively affected Rep. James Corman (D-CA), who narrowly lost his reelection race.

Epstein and Strom (1981) compare turnout in early call years to turnout in years with no early call. Their research finds that early calls do not influence voter behavior. However, their baseline measurement is unable to capture the unique differences each election presents the voter. Turnout may vary from year to year independent of the presence or absence of an early call. It is important to either control for these factors or create an independent baseline for each election under study. The authors argue their result is accurate because the voter's decision to vote is based on a “complicated combination of factors,” yet they fail to control for any of these factors in their design (486).

² Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde (1999) state that on average 15 percent of respondents falsely report voting.

The 1980 race between Reagan and Carter has drawn the most attention in this literature. Jackson (1983) continues using the micro-level approach to study this election with a sub-set of the 1980 National Elections Study data set. He argues that when voters hear the news that a winner is projected, their likelihood of voting diminishes. According to the author, this has the possibility of decreasing turnout by up to 12 percent among those who had not voted and heard the call, which clearly has the potential to significantly influence state results in many presidential elections.

Delli Carpini (1984) also finds a decrease in turnout due to the early call in 1980, although he uses a different method. He approaches the problem from a macro-level approach, studying the actual turnout numbers for pre- and post-call congressional districts and compares them to a baseline. The pre-call districts are those where the polls have already closed prior to a projection being made, while the post-call districts are those that are open when the media make an early call. Although there exists limitations to making individual level inferences from macro-level analysis, an important advantage of this method is that it enables the researcher to analyze all of the geographic areas that are open after the media make the call, not just select districts or cities on the West Coast as seen in past studies.³ Sudman (1986) also analyzes the 1980 election and finds a decrease of approximately 1 to 5 percent in turnout in some congressional districts. Tannenbaum and Kostrich (1983) reanalyze many of the previous studies and conclude that early projections can influence voting behavior. In sum, a variety of conclusions have been reached that range from the assertion that media projections have little effect

³ When using a macro-level approach, such as that employed in this paper, it is frequently difficult to disaggregate data. For example, it is often not possible to accurately identify groups or individuals affected by key independent variables. However, this falls outside the objective of our paper, which is to estimate the *aggregate* effects of media projections on voter turnout.

on voter turnout to the conclusion that projections may have been fundamentally responsible for substantial declines in voter turnout.

Although each of the previous works contributes to our knowledge of the effects of media projections, we believe that this body of research has not fully addressed the influence that demographics and other important voting variables have upon voter turnout. The lack of controls produces several threats to validity that we will try to correct for in our theoretical and empirical model. Principally, our model controls for several of the confounding factors that may influence voter turnout beyond an early projection. By controlling for these factors, we are better able to determine how much the media are influencing voting behavior and how much of the variation in turnout is a function of these other factors. Furthermore, including five elections in this study allows us to speak more generally about the results since a wider variety of political contexts are considered.

Early Calls and Late Voters

The model developed below attempts to describe voting behavior during presidential elections. Specifically, it tries to identify the factors responsible for differences in turnout between states for each presidential election from 1980-2000. The model will demonstrate how much of this difference is due to early media projections and how much is due to other differences between the states. We argue that the empirical analysis of much of the previous research on this topic omits variables of importance, which may introduce bias. In order to isolate the impact that media projections have on turnout, a model should control for both election and voter specific factors.

Election Specific Determinants

Along with much of the previous research, we make the assumption that exposure to an early call can alter a person's behavior, and thus lead to actions different from those that would otherwise have occurred. One theory developed in past literature contends that an early projection produces a bandwagon effect, in which citizens supporting the projected winner and not intending to vote may be inspired to head to the polls because they enjoy supporting a winner. The opposite result, an underdog effect, may cause supporters of the projected loser to vote to reduce the margin of loss (Tuchman and Coffin 1971). However, there has been little evidence in current research in support of either of these theories.

Other theories that appear more plausible rely on the application of a rational choice model to voting behavior. Riker and Ordeshook's (1968) and Downs' (1957) calculus of voting theories suggest that the probability of voting is partially contingent upon the degree to which voters perceive themselves as being critical in affecting electoral outcomes (this is represented by the P term in the equation).⁴ The probability of this term is essentially zero and, therefore, plays only a minimal role in determining turnout. Although the presidential race is not the only contest that the voter can hope to influence, turnout is largely a function of the top of the ticket. This is clearly exhibited in mid-term election years, which have comparatively lower turnouts (Campbell 1979).

⁴ Riker and Ordeshook's calculus of voting equation is: $R = PB + D - C$ (they extend Downs' model by adding the D term), in which R is the expected utility for casting a vote, P is the degree to which voters perceive that they are critical in changing electoral outcomes, B is the differential benefit of electing one candidate over the other, D is the intrinsic value attached to civic duty, and C is the general cost term.

While the P term has some influence on determining voting decisions at the periphery, its value is still quite small and therefore perceived civic contribution and the intrinsic value of participation account for much of the voter turnout.⁵ Hansen (2001) argues that early calls reduce the benefits associated with these factors. The author claims that people are likely to vote despite a small P term if they believe that they are making an important civic contribution (represented by the D term). However, when a projection is made, the voter is essentially alienated from making such a contribution, and therefore is less likely to participate. In addition, the parties and advocacy groups will tend to ease efforts to get out the vote. Simply put, when a voter hears news that the presidential race is effectively over, the benefits received from the act of voting decrease and thus, the probability of voting declines.

Due to the variation present in the elections considered in this research, it is important to explore the implications that different levels of perceived competitiveness have upon the likelihood of voting. In some years (i.e. 1980), the early call came as a surprise to most voters, while in others, the outcome of the race was widely anticipated (i.e. 1996). In the former, the early call provides new information to the voters. Therefore, some may argue that an early call can only have an effect when it provides news. According to this argument, a voter would be less likely to alter her behavior as a function of an early call in an election that is thought to be lopsided, since the outcome is already anticipated. However, we do not believe that this argument is entirely consistent with the calculus of voting. Since most voters turn out as a function of the intrinsic benefits of civic contribution or participation, as opposed to the perceived likelihood of

⁵ This may be important for individuals with low D values or significantly inflated perceived values of casting the deciding vote.

their vote being decisive, the level of surprise presented by an early call should not affect the factors primarily responsible for turnout. In other words, "...people who wish to be part of an event will no longer care to participate in an election that is already in the history books," (Hansen 2001:2). Regardless of whether or not the early call was a surprise, the finality of the event associated with the projection should create a uniform decline in voter turnout across elections, *ceteris paribus*.

Although the early call is the main variable of interest, one needs to consider other factors before blaming the media for lowering turnout. Since we employ a macroscopic approach in which aggregated data are used, a method of measuring the decrease in turnout with respect to projections is to observe turnout in areas where the polls remain open after an early call. Arguably, this approach commands greater accuracy since it circumvents the previously discussed problems that plague survey research. However, there may be other election-specific differences between the states that account for some of the turnout disparities. These differences may distort the true relationship between early projections and depression of voter turnout.

One such variable is the closeness of the election in the given state. Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) and Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) point out that when the presidential race is close, citizens are more involved in electoral politics and therefore more likely to vote. Conversely, a race in which one candidate is viewed by the public as having a substantial advantage over others, creates less incentive for the electorate to vote. Cox and Munger (1989) find that the increase in turnout in close elections is in response to efforts by elites to get out the vote rather than a direct electoral response. This concept is also supported by Riker and Ordeshook's (1968) and Downs'

(1957) theories of the voting calculus. Although the P value may increase marginally with increases in closeness, the value remains virtually indistinguishable from zero. Rather, the increase in voter turnout related to closeness can be contributed to increased efforts by elites that reduce the C term in the calculus of voting equation. Therefore, a reduction in the C term is proportional to a relative increase in the other terms. Thus, it follows that as competition in an election increases, so should turnout.

Another theoretically important variable to include is the presence of another statewide contest. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) find that voters are 5.0 percent more likely to vote in presidential campaigns when they coincide with a gubernatorial election. Furthermore, research has also shown that senatorial elections have similar positive effects on turnout (Jackson 1997). Therefore, we control for both of these factors in our analysis.

Voter Specific Determinants

In addition to the election specific variables, there are voter specific factors that are highly predictive of turnout. Kim, Petrocik and Enokson (1975) study the variation of turnout between the states and show that some of the differences in turnout are directly attributed to the demographic composition of the constituencies. The demographic variables of particular magnitude include education, income, age, and race (Campbell 1979; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). In order to accurately assess the variation in voter turnout across states, it is important to control for these factors.⁶

⁶ Alternatively, a states fixed effects model could be employed to explore differences between states. There are, however, methodological reasons not to do so. Namely, coefficients for the states fixed effects will indicate only the average turnout for each state, and therefore the results would possess little explanatory

As studies have shown, those that have a high school education or greater, are significantly more likely to vote than those with less education (Campbell et al 1960; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Similarly, research contends that per capita income and voter turnout are positively related (Milbrath and Goel 1977; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). The literature generally posits that higher levels of education and income tend to increase resources, which reduce the costs associated with voting, as well as instill individuals with a greater respect for civic “norms.”

Age has also been found to be an important factor in the determination of voter turnout. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) find that between the ages of 45 and 64, individuals are far more likely to vote than other age groups. The authors contend that individuals in this age bracket turn out at higher rates because of general life experience. Specifically, these individuals between the ages of 45 and 64, according to the authors, have acquired skills and information that reduce voting costs.⁷

Much of the scholarly research on voter turnout acknowledges that race is a significant variable in assessing turnout. Of this research, race is largely measured by distinguishing between the African-American population and all other racial groups (see Campbell et al. 1960; Erikson and Tedin 2001, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Studies have concluded that African-Americans are less likely to vote in presidential elections than whites (Abramson and Claggett 1991; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Arguably, this is a result of an apparent disparity in resources between these racial groups (Verba, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie 1983).

power. Furthermore, this approach detracts from the independent variables of interest since the inclusion of these parameters consumes valuable degrees of freedom.

⁷ Rosenstone and Hansen also explain that individuals beyond the age of 64 are less likely to vote because of the difficulties associated with age (life cycle theory).

In addition, numerous scholars have noted that voters in southern states turn out to vote at lower rates, even when controlling for demographic variables (see Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Although this disparity diminishes across the period addressed in this research (Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 1999), we would be remiss to omit consideration of this variable. It has been speculated that lower turnout in the South is partially related to the lingering effects of Jim Crowe and restrictive registration laws. Of course, this inequality in turnout is also attributable to the demographic composition of the South. For example, the lower levels of education in this region are a contributing factor (Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde 1999). Nonetheless, as Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) find, lower turnout persists in the South for reasons independent of demographic factors. Therefore, it is theoretically important to control for this region when explaining aggregated variations in voter turnout. It should be noted, however, that since there are also demographic explanations for lower voter turnout in the South, it is likely that this variable will be highly correlated with the demographic variables. While this does not bias the results, it will make significance among these variables more difficult to achieve since correlation inflates standard errors.

While most of the previous research discussing the effect of projections on turnout has exclusively controlled for differences in time after projection, these studies have not thoroughly addressed voter and election specific differences. If these factors are not taken into consideration, it is difficult to discern which effects result from projections and which are caused by other variables. By controlling for these factors in our model, we attempt to clarify this distinction. We recognize that demographic and election specific factors account for much of the variation in voter turnout; however, we

hypothesize that media projections have a small yet significant effect in decreasing turnout.

Data and Variables

Since a significant amount of research on this topic addresses the 1980 election, we find it appropriate to use this election as the starting point for our analysis. Moreover, the use of this election provides a suitable example detailing our departure from the methods previously used. In this analysis, we pool the data from the 1980 election through the 2000 election in order to account for variations in turnout. These elections offer a wide variety of projection times, which enable us to better assess the relationship between turnout and early calls.

The dependent variable in the model is the percent turnout of the voting eligible population for each state.⁸ Although a discussion of the precision of turnout measurements is beyond the scope of this paper, we find that using this dependent variable allows us to avoid problems that research has identified with respect to the primary alternatives – percent turnout of registered voters and percent turnout of voting age population. Timpone (1998) has recently argued that using registered voters to measure turnout is problematic since it potentially creates biased results. According to the author, registered voters are a nonrandom subsample of the electorate. If one is to then measure turnout from this nonrandom subsample, the error terms are likely to be

⁸ Data provided by McDonald, Michael P. U.S. STATE TURNOUT RATES FOR ELIGIBLE VOTERS, 1980-2000 [Computer File]. Springfield, IL: Michael McDonald, University of Illinois [producer], 2002. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2002.

correlated, and thus violate statistical assumptions.⁹ Furthermore, McDonald and Popkin (2001) argue that the use of registered voters in measuring turnout between elections and among states presents additional problems since states do not have uniform registration laws.

Moreover, since states have different regulations regarding the eligibility of voting, measuring voter turnout as a percent of the voting-age population (VAP) yields misleading results (McDonald and Popkin 2001). This is the measure most widely used in academic research, however, it includes persons both ineligible to vote and excludes others who are eligible to vote but not counted in the VAP measure. Ineligible persons who are counted among the voting-age population measure are non-citizens, ineligible felons, and persons who are not registered because they moved after the close of registration. Those persons who are not counted in the VAP but are not eligible to vote are eligible persons living overseas. Quite simply, the VAP includes individuals that are not entitled to vote and excludes some that are entitled to do so. This, however, is not consistent across states and time, and thus using the VAP would be inappropriate for this model. Therefore, we use the percent turnout of the voting *eligible* population as our dependent variable to offer a more accurate measurement that complies with the standard statistical assumptions.

Election Specific Variables

The main independent variable in the model is the amount of time measured in minutes that the polls are open after the media make the early call. Using this measurement allows for the inclusion of all states whose polling stations remained open

⁹ This violates the zero conditional mean assumption (Wooldridge 2000).

after the media make a projection. There are two important elements to this variable – the poll closing times for each state and the time the media projected a winner. For states that have multiple closing times due to time zone variation or discontinuity among districts, we use the average of the closing times.¹⁰ To measure the time of the media projection we use the first projection time made by ABC, CBS, or NBC.

To exhaust the possibility that early calls are only of consequence when they make news, we include a variable that captures the national expectations for the given presidential elections. We create a variable that attempts to measure the level of “surprise” that an early call offers. To operationalize this concept we use the major national poll that provided information closest to the election. We calculate one minus the absolute predicted difference between the two major parties. When it is anticipated that the difference in vote share between candidates will be large, the early call should offer little additional information to voters. Conversely, when a poll predicts a close race, an early call is far more newsworthy. There are no cases in which the national poll used in this study incorrectly predicted the outcome of the election, therefore, we can confidently say that these polls accurately captured the expectations of voters. If the “surprise” variable is of consequence, this variable should be both statistically significant and negative. In other words, when an election is perceived as highly competitive, the “surprise” variable should deter voters at greater rates if it is a significant factor. However, as earlier stated, we believe that there should be minimal, if any, difference in the effects that early calls have upon voter turnout with respect to variations in “surprise.”

¹⁰ Alternatively, we used both the earliest and the latest closing times for each state, and found there to be no substantive difference in the results.

Another election specific variable controlled for in this model is the closeness of the election in each state. Unlike the “surprise” variable, which attempts to measure the disruption in national sentiment caused by an early call, this variable seeks to capture the specific political context in each state for the given election. To measure this variable, we use the results in each state and take one minus the absolute difference in percent between the top two candidates.¹¹ We expect the effect of closeness to have an exponential rather than linear relation to levels of competitiveness. In other words, closeness has more impact when the race is close, and much less when the margin of victory is anticipated to be large. This is largely a function of the effort made by parties to get out the vote. Specifically, parties will exert high levels of effort in the most competitive races, however, we should not expect a constant marginal decrease in effort as competitiveness wanes. Therefore, we square the closeness variable.

In addition to the closeness of the race, we control for the presence of senatorial or gubernatorial campaigns. We code this variable dichotomously, giving a value of "1" to those states in which the presidential election occurred at the same time as one of the previously discussed statewide contests, and "0" in all other cases. To control for the complexities of the individual elections studied, we include dummy variables for the elections between 1984 and 2000, using 1980 as the baseline.

¹¹ Although, it would be more accurate in some respect to use a measurement that captures closeness *prior* to the election, by using this method we are able to eliminate some of the inconsistencies present in state polling data. The most frequently incurred problems associated with polling data are differences in the size of polls and missing data from states where polling is not available.

Voter Specific Variables

The demographic control variables included in this model are education, age, race and income. We measure education, which is thought to be the most important determinant of turnout (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980), as the percent of the state population completing at least four years of high school. Age is measured in the model as the percentage of the electorate in each state between the ages of 45 and 64. We operationalize race as the proportion of the state population that is African-American. The final demographic variable, income, is measured by the mean per capita income in each state. We also include a dummy variable for Southern states.¹²

Results

Table 1 presents the results of our model. In the table, the independent variable titled “Time” represents the number of minutes that polls are open past the projection by state, and is the main explanatory variable in the model. “Age,” “Education,” “Income,” and “Race” correspond to the demographic measurements previously discussed, and the “South” variable accounts for the potentially anomalous voting behavior of associated with southern states. The independent variable “Closeness²” denotes the competitive nature of the election in each state, while “Statewide” refers to the presence of a gubernatorial or senatorial race during the presidential election year. The “surprise” variable taps the amount of information present in an early call. The remaining independent variables are election dummy variables.

<Insert Table 1 Here>

¹² For a more detailed explanation of the variables found in this model see the Appendix.

As we can see from the results, the number of minutes that polls are open past the projection has a significant and negative effect on voter turnout. As expected, the variable's coefficient is relatively small; however, it has the capability to have a substantial affect on voter turnout depending upon the time of projection. In other words, polls that are open for only a short time after a given projection experience minimal reductions in turnout. However, when polls remain open for an extended period of time following an early projection, the decline in turnout can be considerable. Table 2 details the estimated maximum effect of an early call for each election considered. For example, in 1996 broadcast media declared Clinton the victor at 6:00 p.m. EST, and polls in California were to stay open for an additional 300 minutes. According to our findings, this projection resulted in a 2.96 percent decrease in voter turnout.¹³

<Insert Table 2 Here>

With exception only to the age variable, the model yields coefficients for the demographic variables that are directionally consistent with the theories presented above. Furthermore, education is the only such variable that is not significant, and presumably this is a result of a high level of correlation with the south variable.¹⁴ We make the argument throughout this paper that it is critically important to include these explanatory variables when exploring the effect that projections have on voter turnout. We find that the voter-specific variables alone are jointly significant with an F value of 35.8, and

¹³ To test if the slopes are different for each election, we ran an alternative models that included interaction terms between time and year. None of these coefficients were statistically significant, therefore, we conclude that the slope is in fact the same for each election. Further, we ran a nested F-test to see if the a alternative model was better specified and we failed to reject the null of no difference. Therefore, we employ the more parsimonious model to preserve degrees of freedom.

¹⁴ The correlation between the education and south variables is -.42.

failure to include them in the model would likely produce biased results that would inflate the estimated effects of projections.

The closeness variable produces a coefficient that is both positive and significant. This is consistent with the theory, but has only a small affect on turnout across states. This effect, however, is more defined when elections are extremely close. With respect to the presence of a statewide race, we find that the variable has the expected sign, yet is not significant. Further, as we hypothesized, the surprise variable is indistinguishable from zero. Therefore, voters are equally deterred from turning out to vote given an early call irrespective of the level of surprise presented by the news, all else equal.

Discussion

In this paper, we have sought to explore the affect that media projections in presidential elections have upon voter turnout. As discussed earlier, there have been a number of attempts to explain this relationship; however, most of this research does not control for other voter and election-specific variables. Conversely, our study presents a model controlling for these factors. It is only when these variables are controlled for that we can determine the extent to which the variation in turnout is a function of media projections and how much can be attributed to demographic and election-specific elements.

We find that media projections have a statistically significant and negative effect on voter turnout. Although the coefficient is small, our model indicates that a sufficiently early projection can result in a substantial decrease in voter turnout. This alone has considerable ramifications upon the presidential election process. Namely, one could

argue that media projections essentially rob a portion of the electorate from the feeling of making a civic contribution, and discourage them from participating in a central democratic process.

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Table 1 – Effects of Early Call on Voter Turnout, 1980-2000

Independent Variable	Estimated Coefficients (Standard Errors)
Time	-0.0099* (0.0057)
Age	-0.685* (0.272)
Education	0.069 (0.060)
Income	0.0003* (0.0001)
Race	-0.240* (0.049)
South	-4.343* (1.079)
Closeness ²	-0.002* (0.008)
Statewide	0.120 (0.691)
Surprise	-24.668 (29.091)
2000	-4.681* (2.769)
1996	-2.591 (4.097)
1992	2.060 (1.947)
1988	-3.739* (1.941)
1984	6.012 (6.494)
Constant	67.214* (7.436)
R ²	0.49
Adjusted R ²	0.47
F-statistic	19.74

*p<.05 one-tailed test

**Table 2 - Time of Call - Predicted Projection Effects
On West Coast States**

Year	Time of Call(EST)	Maximum Turnout Decline
2000	---	---
1996	6:00 p.m.	2.96%
1992	10:50	0.10
1988	9:17	1.90
1984	8:01	2.65
1980	8:15	2.52

Appendix

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Source</u>
Turnout	% turnout Voting Eligible Population for President	ICPSR Data Set 1248
Age	% between 45 and 64	U.S. Census
Education*	% of population completing at least four or more years of high school	U.S. Census and Digest of Education Statistics
Income	Per Capita Income	Bureau of Economic Analysis
Race**	% African-American	U.S. Census
Closeness ²	(1 minus the absolute difference between top two candidates) ²	Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections
Statewide	Presence of Senate of Gubernatorial race.	America Votes22
South***	Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia,	These are the states included in Bullock and Rozell (1998) plus the additional border state of Kentucky.
Surprise	1 minus the absolute predicted difference between the two major parties	Lexis-Nexis http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe
Media Projections	1980, 1984	“Dilemma of Voter Polls: Suspense or Knowledge,” Dudley Clendinen. <i>The New York Times</i> . 11/8/94
	1988	“The Elections: Television; Projections with Polls Still Open Anger West Coast Voters,” Associated Press. <i>The New York Times</i> . 10/10/88
	1992	“Networks’ Coverage Makes for a Fast-Paced Election Night,” Frazier Moore. Associated Press. 11/4/92
	1996	“Elections ’96; TV Rerun: The Perils of Projection,” Howard Rosenberg. <i>Los Angeles Times</i> . 11/6/96

*For 1988, used 1989 estimates. For 1984, interpolated 1980-1989 estimates.

**For 1984, used 1985 estimates.

***Alternative categorizations of the South produces substantively similar results