

8-2016

# After the honeymoon: The Obama effect on political attitudes and participation

Laurent W. Vesely  
*Purdue University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open\\_access\\_dissertations](https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open_access_dissertations)



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Vesely, Laurent W., "After the honeymoon: The Obama effect on political attitudes and participation" (2016). *Open Access Dissertations*. 874.

[https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open\\_access\\_dissertations/874](https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open_access_dissertations/874)

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL  
Thesis/Dissertation Acceptance**

This is to certify that the thesis/dissertation prepared

By Laurent W Vesely

Entitled

AFTER THE HONEYMOON: THE OBAMA EFFECT ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND PARTICIPATION

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



Is approved by the final examining committee:

James A McCann

Chair

Rosalee A Clawson

Ann M Clark

William R Shaffer

To the best of my knowledge and as understood by the student in the Thesis/Dissertation Agreement, Publication Delay, and Certification Disclaimer (Graduate School Form 32), this thesis/dissertation adheres to the provisions of Purdue University's "Policy of Integrity in Research" and the use of copyright material.

Approved by Major Professor(s): James A McCann

Approved by: Rosalee A Clawson

Head of the Departmental Graduate Program

7/20/2016

Date



AFTER THE HONEYMOON: THE OBAMA EFFECT ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES  
AND PARTICIPATION

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Laurent W. Vesely

In Partial Fulfillment of

Requirements of the Degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2016

Purdue University

West Lafayette, Indiana

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mom and John, I can never thank you enough for all you have done for me. Thank you for all your love and support and for helping me get here.

Rima, Ethan, Matai, Jaxson, having such a wonderful family, and seeing so much of you, has been so important especially this past year. I feel revitalized after every trip to see you guys.

Debbie and Curt Nutkins, Mary Elsesser, Brenda Hammersmith, and Tracy Andrews...oh the Nutkins family. Thank you for offering me a place to live and learn and grow, for being a second family to me, and for allowing me to go to Gladstone High when I otherwise might have been floundering in the wind.

Mr. Doug Lombard—if I can still call you Mr. Lombard—thank you for challenging my thinking at a young age and for inspiring me to become a teacher in the first place.

Professor Anthony Browne, without you I never would have taken the first step down this path. Thank you for believing in me and for nominating me for the MMUF. You are an amazing teacher and scholar and a true mentor.

Professor Joanne Edey-Rhodes, you treated me like a son as well as a student, and I am very grateful for all your guidance and support especially in my years at Hunter.

Now I must thank my amazing dissertation committee for helping with through this process, among other things. Professor James McCann, my committee chair and teacher and friend, I am eternally grateful for your hands-on approach to shepherding me through this research process. You are committed and engaged and a great scholar and an adviser in the truest sense, at times believing in me more than I believed in myself. Professor Rosalee Clawson, you positively affected my graduate career in too many ways to mention here. Your courses were among the best I've ever taken, and I took a leap forward in my thinking as a scholar in the semester I TA'd for you. You challenged me in my research but were patient in talking things through. Thank you for supporting me throughout this journey. Professor Ann Marie Clark, thank you for joining my committee and especially for helping me develop my qualitative methodology. I would have had a very difficult time trying to develop my interview protocols without your help, so I am very appreciative of all your guidance. Professor Bill Shaffer, thank you for sticking with me even after your retirement from Purdue, and for helping me strengthen this project even in its final stages. You've been studying party politics for a long time and I benefited enormously from your insights.

I also want to thank many of the staff who have helped me navigate everything in the Political Science Department over the years. Annie Wheeldon, Brenda Dittmar, Betty Hartman, Munazzah Rahman, Daniele Sharp, Michelle Conwell, and Tracy Emerson, for all your support, logistical and otherwise.

Zach Haas, thanks for your help through the Statistical Consulting Service. I am very appreciative of your help in developing some of my quantitative methodology in the early stages.

Thanks to all my 30 interviewees for Chapter 6 of this dissertation, whose names shall remain anonymous, but without whom my research would have suffered greatly!

To all those associated with the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) program who helped me get here, I am so deeply appreciative. Jill Richardson, your brainchild the MMUF Summer Program was twice a game-changer for me: first as a student to help me get into Purdue, and then to gain some valuable professional experience when I took over as coordinator. Lisette Nazario, you helped so many of us Hunter Mellons get started with our academic careers. Thank you for everything you did in service of that program and with very little fanfare. Professor Margarite Olmos, thank you for all your support and guidance with the expansion of the CUNY Mellon Summer Program and for being so supportive of Mellons like myself. Shanna Benjamin and Cally Waite, true I met you both just a year before completing this project, but thank you for equipping me with some important tools that helped me complete it. Your Mellon Dissertation Writing Retreat was amazing. I am still using the Pomodoro timer.

To all those at DePauw University who have been so supportive while I finished my work at Purdue, thank you so much! Especially to Professors Geoff Klinger, Andrew Hayes, Clarissa Peterson, David Worthington, Jennifer Adams, and Larry Stimpert, and also Janet Whitman and Jane Griswold, I deeply appreciate all you have done for me.

Finally, I want to acknowledge several others who helped specifically with elements of this project and/or who helped me get across the finish line. Nosa Walcott, your work on volunteer recruitment with Students for Barack Obama proved invaluable to my research. Jimmy Gleason, I don't know how you put up with housing me for an entire month during this research process, but thank you for opening your home to me.

Bob Kulzick, without your help with tables and SPSS I might have gone absolutely crazy from this project. Erik and Vicki Potter, Haingk! for hosting a “sponsor a Ph.D student” week for me that really helped me maintain my writing momentum. Astra Gorski, thanks for reminding me how close I was to the finish line, and for being so encouraging when I needed it most. Carlos Aguirre, you were a good writing accountability partner and I hope I was also of some help to you. Terry Cline, you helped with some important logistical work in my final days of writing and I am very appreciative for that help. And lastly, thanks to the Secretive Cadre because you make the world a better place.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER 1: DEFINING THE “OBAMA EFFECT” .....	1
The Obama Effect in the 2008 Primary .....	5
The Obama Effect in the 2008 General Election .....	7
The Obama Effect on Fundraising .....	9
The Obama Effect on Grassroots Volunteerism .....	11
The Obama Effect and the Historic Nature of Obama’s Candidacy .....	15
Chapter Breakdown.....	18
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	24
Central Research Question .....	24
Why Study Campaign Effects? .....	24
From Party-Centered to Candidate-Centered Campaigns .....	26
The Popular Question in Campaign Effects Research .....	29
The Case for Limited or Minimal Campaign Effects.....	30
The Case for Significant Campaign Effects .....	33
Theorizing an Obama Effect .....	36
Theorizing My Dependent Variables .....	38
Inclusion of Resource Variables into the Analysis .....	47
CHAPTER 3: DATA AND METHODS .....	50
Using Panel Surveys for Quantitative Analysis .....	50
Comparing Panel Surveys between Presidencies.....	52
Variable Measurement and Missing Values.....	53
Question Wording .....	56

	Page
Survey Questions: 2008-2010 .....	57
Survey Questions: 2000-2002 and 1992-1994 .....	58
Hypothesis Testing .....	59
Major Hypotheses for Political Attitudes .....	64
Major Hypotheses for Political Participation .....	65
Statistical Testing for Quantitative Analysis .....	65
Interview Methodology: Using In-Depth Interviews for Qualitative Analysis .....	66
Appendix A: Cross Tabulation Tables for 2008 Survey Responses .....	69
Appendix B: Interviewee Recruitment Information Sheet .....	70
Appendix C: Script to Begin Interview .....	72
Appendix D: Interview Questions .....	73
CHAPTER 4: POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND THE OBAMA EFFECT .....	75
Theory .....	75
Hypothesizing an Obama Effect on Political Attitudes .....	77
Political Interest .....	78
External Political Efficacy .....	87
Partisanship .....	97
CHAPTER 5: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THE OBAMA EFFECT .....	116
Theory .....	116
Hypothesizing an Obama Effect on Political Participation .....	118
Voter Turnout .....	120
Attending Political Meetings .....	122
Attending Political Protests .....	124
CHAPTER 6: CAMPAIGN VOLUNTEERS AND THE OBAMA EFFECT .....	135
Level of Volunteer Engagement during 2008 Obama campaign: .....	136
Demographic Characteristics of Volunteer Sample: .....	137
Volunteer Responses to Interview Questions .....	137
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION .....	173
REFERENCES .....	178
VITA .....	186

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1 Gender and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008 .....	60
Table 2 Age and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008 .....	61
Table 3. Race and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008.....	62
Table 4. Income and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008.....	62
Table 5. Education and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008 .....	64
Table 6 Political Interest and Candidate Choice, 2008.....	69
Table 7 Political Efficacy A and Candidate Choice, 2008 .....	69
Table 8 Political Efficacy B and Candidate Choice, 2008.....	69
Table 9 Party Identification and Candidate Choice, 2008 .....	69
Table 10 Voter Turnout and Candidate Choice, 2008 .....	70
Table 11 Attending Political Meetings and Candidate Choice, 2008 .....	70
Table 12 Attending Political Protests and Candidate Choice, 2008 .....	70
Table 13 Political Interest, 2008-2010, Baseline .....	102
Table 14 Political Interest, 2008-2010, with Demographics .....	102
Table 15 Political Interest, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for Obama*Gender.....	102
Table 16 Political Interest, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for Obama*Income .....	103
Table 17. Political Interest, 2000-2002, Baseline .....	103
Table 18. Political Interest, 2000-2002, with Demographics .....	103
Table 19 Political Interest, 1992-1994, Baseline .....	104
Table 20 Political Interest, 1992-1994, with Demographics .....	104
Table 21 Political Efficacy A, 2008-2010, Baseline.....	104
Table 22 Political Efficacy A, 2008-2010, with Demographics.....	105
Table 23 Political Efficacy A, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for Obama*Income .....	105

Table	Page
Table 24 Political Efficacy A, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for McCain*Income.....	106
Table 25 Political Efficacy A, 2000-2002, Baseline.....	106
Table 26 Political Efficacy A, 2000-2002, with Demographics.....	107
Table 27 Political Efficacy A, 2000-2002, Interaction Effect for Bush II*Income.....	107
Table 28 Political Efficacy A, 1992-1994, Baseline.....	108
Table 29 Political Efficacy A, 1992-1994, with Demographics.....	108
Table 30 Political Efficacy B, 2008-2010, Baseline.....	108
Table 31 Political Efficacy B, 2008-2010, with Demographics.....	109
Table 32 Political Efficacy B, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for Obama*Race.....	109
Table 33 Political Efficacy B, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for McCain*Race.....	110
Table 34 Political Efficacy B, 2000-2002, Baseline.....	110
Table 35 Political Efficacy B, 2000-2002, with Demographics.....	110
Table 36 Political Efficacy B, 1992-1994, Baseline.....	111
Table 37 Political Efficacy B, 1992-1994, with Demographics.....	111
Table 38 Political Efficacy B, 1992-1994, Interaction Effect for Clinton I*Race.....	111
Table 39 Political Efficacy B, 1992-1994, Interaction Effect for Bush I*Race.....	112
Table 40 Partisanship, 2008-2010, Baseline.....	112
Table 41 Partisanship, 2008-2010, with Demographics.....	112
Table 42 Partisanship, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for McCain*Education.....	113
Table 43 Partisanship, 2000-2002, Baseline.....	113
Table 44 Partisanship, 2000-2002, with Demographics.....	113
Table 45 Partisanship, 1992-1994, Baseline.....	114
Table 46 Partisanship, 1992-1994, with Demographics.....	114
Table 47 Partisanship, 1992-1994, Interaction Effect for Clinton*Education.....	114
Table 48 Partisanship, 1992-1994, Interaction Effect for Bush*Education.....	115
Table 49 Turnout, 2008-2010, Baseline.....	128
Table 50 Turnout, 2008-2010, with Demographics.....	129
Table 51 Turnout, 2000-2002, Baseline.....	129
Table 52 Turnout, 2000-2002, with Demographics.....	129

Table	Page
Table 53 Turnout, 1992-1994, Baseline .....	130
Table 54 Turnout, 1992-1994, with Demographics.....	130
Table 55 Meetings, 2008-2010, Baseline .....	130
Table 56 Meetings, 2008-2010, with Demographics.....	131
Table 57 Meetings, 2000-2002, Baseline .....	131
Table 58 Meetings, 2000-2002, with Demographics.....	131
Table 59 Meetings, 1992-1994, Baseline .....	132
Table 60 Meetings, 1992-1994, with Demographics.....	132
Table 61 Protests, 2008-2010, Baseline.....	132
Table 62 Protests, 2008-2010, with Demographics .....	133
Table 63 Protests, 2000-2002, Baseline.....	133
Table 64 Protests, 2000-2002, with Demographics .....	134

## ABSTRACT

Vesely, Laurent W. Doctorate of Philosophy, Purdue University. August 2016. *After the Honeymoon: the Obama Effect on Political Attitudes and Participation*. Major Professor: James McCann.

My dissertation takes a mixed-methods approach to investigating the possibility of a *lasting* Obama Effect on the political attitudes and behaviors of 2008 Obama supporters. Defining the Obama Effect as the extraordinary enthusiasm surrounding the 2008 Obama campaign, I argue that a *short term* Obama Effect was clearly present in 2008 based on Obama's electoral success, fundraising prowess, and ability to inspire volunteerism, as well as on the historic nature of his candidacy. However, my quantitative analyses—built upon panel survey data from the American National Election Studies—suggest little evidence of lasting campaign effects that were positive and/or unique to Obama supporters. With regard to attitudes and behaviors such as political interest, political efficacy, or attendance of political events, Obama supporters often showed relative declines or stagnation over time when compared to nonsupporters or supporters of previous presidents. Conversely, my qualitative analysis—based upon interviews with 30 former campaign volunteers—revealed many different manifestations of a lasting Obama Effect on campaign volunteers. Many former Obama volunteers remained highly

interested, civically engaged, and continually inspired as a result of their involvement in the 2008 Obama campaign. In sum, I find little evidence of the transformational Obama Effect on the broader electorate, but strong evidence of a lasting and positive Obama Effect on many of his most enthusiastic supporters.

## CHAPTER 1: DEFINING THE “OBAMA EFFECT”

The term “Obama Effect” entered popular lexicon in 2008 to describe the surprisingly high level of enthusiasm surrounding Barack Obama’s first presidential campaign. Obama had become well-known within political circles after his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, but, prior to that speech, had been an obscure Illinois state senator with negligible name recognition nationally. Having been in Washington only 2 years, he ranked among the least-powerful senators and had garnered few legislative accomplishments. As late as October 22, 2006, he was still making Shermanesque statements to Tim Russert on *Meet the Press*, clearly stating his intentions for the upcoming presidential election cycle:

Russert: You’ve been a United States senator less than two years; you don’t have any executive experience. Are you ready to be president?

Obama: Well, I’m not sure anybody is ready to be president before they’re president. You know, ultimately, I trust the judgment of the American people that, in any election, they sort it through. And we have a long and rigorous process, and, should I decide to run, if I ever did decide to run...

Russert: When we talked back in November of ‘04, after your [U.S. Senate] election, I said, “There’s been enormous speculation about your political future. Will you serve your full six-year term as a United States senator from Illinois?” [You said] “Absolutely.”

Obama: I will serve out my full six-year term. You know, Tim, if you get asked enough, sooner or later you get weary and you start looking for new ways of saying things, but my thinking has not changed.



Russert: So you will not run for president or vice president in 2008?

Obama: I will not.

As it so happened, by February 2007, tremendous encouragement from his supporters had persuaded Senator Obama to throw his hat into the ring. Yet nobody believed his nomination to be a foregone conclusion. From the beginning, Senator Hillary Clinton was widely considered by pollsters and by the national press to be the prohibitive frontrunner. She would, in fact, maintain a dominant lead in national polls over the rest of the Democratic primary field all throughout 2007. As Gallup's polling team observed that October:

Clinton has led the Democratic pack in every Gallup Poll conducted between November 2006 and October 2007. For most of this time, Clinton has led Obama by a double-digit margin. Clinton's lead over Obama has expanded to nearly 30 points in Gallup's latest poll, conducted Oct. 12-14. Gallup polling on Democratic nominations going back to the 1972 election shows that, by historical standards, a lead of even 20 points is large for Democratic candidates. (Newport et al. 2007)

Despite Obama's heavy underdog status, the enthusiasm engulfing his budding support base was undeniable. In 2012, a year after I had decided to write my dissertation on the Obama Effect, an eponymous film was released by Charles Dutton. In *The Obama Effect*, Dutton plays an obsessive supporter so overcome with emotion by Barack Obama's first presidential campaign that he quits his job, hides serious health issues from his family (so they don't make him rest), plasters his entire home (inside and out) with Obama campaign placards, and embarks on a nearly 2-year crusade in which every aspect of his life becomes devoted to the singular mission of converting new Obama supporters to the cause. His next-door neighbor becomes so fatigued by Dutton's unbridled

enthusiasm for the Obama campaign that he hangs a giant “UNDECIDED” sign outside his house, in hopes that he will be left alone at least until Election Day draws nearer.

From the sensationalized to the actual, throughout Obama’s campaign the national press routinely attributed the extraordinary enthusiasm to the “historic” nature of his candidacy. He was, after all, the first African-American candidate with a serious chance of winning a major party nomination, let alone the presidency. His future running mate, Joe Biden, was even criticized for his spontaneous remarks on Obama entering the race: “I mean, you’ve got the first mainstream African American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy. I mean, that’s a storybook, man.” The next day, after apologizing and clarifying that he meant no offense to his friend and competitor, Biden (then a 35-year veteran of the Senate) elaborated on his sentiment: “Barack Obama is probably *the most exciting candidate that the Democratic or Republican Party has produced at least since I’ve been around*” (Thai and Barrett 2007, emphasis mine).

The Obama campaign made every effort to capitalize on both the positive coverage and the bright spotlight. In his announcement speech, on February 10, 2007, Obama effectively cast himself as a transformative figure, needed at that exact moment in American history. In choosing to deliver the speech from the Illinois State Capital building, the scene of Abraham Lincoln’s heralded “A house divided against itself cannot stand” declaration, Obama intentionally and explicitly offered himself as the logical extension of President Lincoln. Lincoln’s greatest legacy had been to free the slaves and to keep the States “United”; and now, a century and a half later, here was an African-American candidate presenting himself as someone who could once again bring together

a nation exhausted and seemingly divided by unending war, overridden with hyper-partisanship, and paralyzed by political gridlock.

From the beginning, Obama's campaign operation was designed to be one of agency and mobilization: "This campaign can't just be about me," the then-Illinois Senator had said in that announcement speech; "it has to be about you as well." He argued, as politicians often do, that this particular election was especially important and critical. But it would not be good enough, Obama claimed, for the thousands in the crowds to simply vote on Election Day and then again in four years. His campaign and presidency would be designed to serve as a grassroots vehicle that would allow the electorate to maintain their engagement *even after the election*.

Obama's taglines during that campaign often mirrored themes from Gandhi's call to "Be the change that you want to see in the world" and a line from June Jordan's (1980) poem "We are the ones we've been waiting for." He gave people to understand that through his presidency, his supporters would be empowered—even more so than registered lobbyists and special interest groups, he was fond of promising—to create for themselves the "change" they so deeply desired.

Over the yearlong-plus campaign to follow, more than a few political observers would come to criticize the Obama Effect. *National Review* editor Rich Lowry (2008), for example, poked fun at Obama supporters for appearing to pre-anoint the relatively unaccomplished Illinois Senator as the reincarnation of John F. Kennedy. Arch-conservative firebrand radio host Rush Limbaugh (2008) sneered aloud at the notion that several Obama supporters had actually fainted in his presence from too much excitement. At one point, even Bill Clinton joined in (on behalf of his wife's rival candidacy),

mocking Obama's candidacy as a "fairy tale." The common notion among critics was that the supporter enthusiasm amounted to a "cult of personality" that was both asinine and undeserved.

However, for the Obama campaign, this agency-based approach proved to be a remarkable success in terms of supporter recruitment and mobilization. By many measures, such as primary election turnout, general election turnout, overall fundraising, small-donor fundraising, grassroots volunteerism, and the historic nature of the candidacy itself, the 2008 Obama candidacy inspired a level of enthusiasm unprecedented in modern presidential campaigns. And it proved to make all the difference, electorally speaking.

### **The Obama Effect in the 2008 Primary**

The 30.2% of eligible voters who participated in the 2008 presidential primaries represented the highest rate of turnout since the direct primary system was implemented by both major parties in 1972. Almost every state in the Union shattered its previous turnout record. Yet, despite both the Democratic and Republican Parties featuring an "open" race in 2008 (i.e., with no incumbent president or vice president running), and despite highly competitive races for both Party nominations, the lion's share of these votes—19.3%—were cast in the Democratic Primary. Only 10.8% chose to vote in the Republican Primary. For recent comparison: the previous two open Democratic races in 2004 and 1992 had witnessed turnout rates of 9.7% and 12.6%, respectively. Similarly, the previous two open Republican races in 2000 and 1996 had produced turnout rates of 10.1% and 9.8%, respectively. One must go back to 1980 to find a combined-party

primary turnout rate above 26% of eligible voters, and back to 1976 to find a single-party primary turnout rate higher than 16% (Gans 2008).

Certainly, it would be an overstatement to attribute this “enthusiasm gap” between Democrats and Republicans—one that would persist throughout the general election season—to the Obama Effect. Other major factors that likely contributed to driving up Democratic Party turnout included the equally historic nature of Hillary Clinton’s campaign as the first major female candidate for president, the determinedly low approval ratings of sitting Republican President George W. Bush, the weakening national economy, and the increasing unpopularity of the War in Iraq. (Only the Democratic candidates were calling for troop withdrawal.)

Despite a possible convergence of several factors, once the Democratic primary voting began, the undeniably unique reality of the Obama Effect came into clear focus. On January 3, 2008, Obama received a stunning 38% support from caucus-goers in the first-in-the-nation Iowa caucus. John Edwards followed with 30%, with Hillary Clinton receiving 29%. Although Obama was favored to win, the wide margin was a major surprise to pollsters and the national press. The average of the six polls conducted the week prior placed him at 30.8%, less than 2 points ahead of his closest rival, and not a single poll had him above 34% (Real Clear Politics 2008). In fact, many prognosticators had predicted that Obama’s base of young supporters and first-time caucus-goers would *underperform* turnout expectations (due to the time-consuming nature of caucus-going compared to voting in a traditional primary). Indeed, the blowout nature of Obama’s Iowa caucus victory was a widely-recognized affirmation of the extraordinary enthusiasm

surrounding his campaign, that is, the Obama Effect. Once the voting began, nobody could deny that it was a very unique and a very real phenomenon.

Clinton rebounded by defeating Obama 39-36 in the New Hampshire primary a week later; however, on January 26, Obama regained his momentum with a landslide 55-27 victory over her in the South Carolina primary. He was widely regarded as the favorite from that point forward. On February 5, “Super Tuesday,” Obama solidified his newfound frontrunner status by dominating the Illinois, Georgia, and Alabama primaries and by winning with supermajorities in each of the caucus states that voted that day: Colorado, Minnesota, Kansas, Idaho, Alaska, and North Dakota. Over the next few weeks, his momentum continued with huge victories in Washington State, Nebraska, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Washington D.C., Virginia, Hawaii, and Wisconsin. By the time Clinton recovered to win the March and April primaries in Ohio, Texas, and Pennsylvania, Obama had already opened up a nearly insurmountable delegate lead, giving him a clear path to the nomination (“Primary Season Election Results” 2008).

### **The Obama Effect in the 2008 General Election**

The November 4, 2008, election cycle produced a higher rate of voter turnout—about 58% of the voting-age public—than in any United States election since 1968. For recent comparison, the 2012 presidential campaigns produced a voter turnout rate below 55% of eligible voters. Despite a voting-age population increase of roughly 10 million between the 2008 and 2012 elections, more people overall voted in the 2008 presidential election (131 million) than in the 2012 election (129 million) (Peters and Woolley 2015).

Notwithstanding John McCain’s personal popularity and a track record of considerable accomplishments in the Senate, the heightened electoral participation in

2008 was not attributed by the national press to any sort of “McCain Effect.” In fact, many commentators observed that the Republican Party tended to nominate the logical “next in line” candidate (e.g. Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush), and John McCain was simply and clearly next in line, as the candidate who had lost to George W. Bush in the 2000 Republican Primary.

Attributing the higher-than-usual turnout at least in part to the Obama Effect instead of a McCain effect also makes sense in light of the proportion of the vote received by Obama. In terms of winning percentage, Obama’s 52.9% represented the largest share of the national popular vote received by any candidate since George H.W. Bush in 1988. Obama received nearly 70 million votes, about 10% more than George W. Bush had received in the previous election cycle of 2004 (Peters and Woolley 2012).

It was also noteworthy that Obama won every swing state in the 2008 general election besides Missouri. His 365 Electoral College votes represented the highest total since Bill Clinton’s 379 Electoral College votes in 1996. He defeated McCain in the most important swing states, Ohio and Florida, and by relatively comfortable margins. Furthermore, Obama’s appeal wasn’t limited to traditional blue states or even traditional swing states; he was able to expand the electoral playing field even into traditionally red states (Nagourney and Zeleny 2008). North Carolina wound up voting for the Democratic presidential candidate for the first time since choosing Jimmy Carter over Gerald Ford in 1976. Similarly, Virginia and Indiana voted for the Democratic candidate for the first time since Lyndon B. Johnson’s landslide defeat over Barry Goldwater in 1964 (in which Goldwater won only 6 states). Indeed, the enthusiasm driving the 2008 Obama campaign

proved to be more broad-based than even his most optimistic supporters could have imagined 2 years prior as they were encouraging him to enter the race.

### **The Obama Effect on Fundraising**

In early 2007, while still trailing Senator Clinton in the Democratic primary polls, Obama promised that he would finance his general election campaign with public funding. However, by June of 2008, as the general election campaign season was beginning, it was clear that Obama could raise much more money privately than he would receive from the public funding system; thus, it made little practical sense to adhere to his commitment. The move was widely noted by the national press as the sort of blatant promise-breaking that is common among presidential primary candidates. They are often willing to “pander to the base” or “tack to the left” to win the nomination, without intending to adhere to those promises during the general election. In all likelihood, his campaign simply had not anticipated his remarkable capacity for fundraising. At any rate, Obama was largely able to avoid sharp or sustained criticisms. Kenneth Vogel of *Politico* reported the press reaction to the broken promise as follows:

In a widely expected move that will give Democrat Barack Obama a huge cash advantage over Republican John McCain, Obama announced Thursday morning that he will be the first modern presidential candidate to decline public financing in a general election. Obama’s decision represents a break from the strong signals he sent last year about his commitment to the public financing program. It means his campaign, which has shattered [primary] fundraising records, won’t accept the federal system’s \$84 million in taxpayer money, but also won’t be subject to its \$84 million spending limit. (2008)

In 2004, the George W. Bush and John Kerry campaigns had raised a combined \$653 million between the primary and general election campaigns. This included the nearly \$75 million that each candidate received in public funding for the general election.



That massive sum (which did not include substantial fundraising from Howard Dean and several other primary candidates) dwarfed the \$528 million raised by all candidates combined in the 2000 primary and general election cycle.

Surprisingly, the 2008 Obama campaign blew right past that 2004 fundraising record. The *Associated Press* (2008) observed that the Obama campaign outraised the Bush and Kerry campaigns combined, for a total of about \$745 million between the primary and general elections. As Tahman Bradley reported in December of 2008, while most candidates opted out of public funding for their primary campaigns (on the calculation that they could raise more money independently), Obama was the first major presidential candidate to decline public funding in the general election. As noted above, the reason was clear: his campaign was a fundraising juggernaut by any comparative standard. While McCain's campaign was capped at \$84 million, in accordance with public financing rules, the Obama campaign amassed nearly \$300 million just in the two months following the Democratic National Convention.

Shortly after the 2008 general election, NPR reporters Renee Montagne and Peter Overby summarized the Obama campaign's fundraising prowess in the following terms:

Montagne: Now, Peter, we've been hearing about record financing from the Obama campaign for a couple of years now. Is this more of the same?

Overby: It is—it's more of more of the same. This report runs from October 16th to 20 days after the election and over that time period—obviously, mostly before Election Day—the Obama campaign raised \$104 million. Not so long ago, that was a good amount to run a whole presidential campaign on. I was at a conference yesterday with some political scientists, talking about all this. And Tony Corrado [of the Brookings Institute] made the point that the Obama campaign raised more than the Democratic National Committee and the Republican National Committee combined. And Corrado's take on it was that the Obama campaign is a party unto itself.

By the spring of 2008, the national press had become especially enamored with the Obama campaign's ability to raise money, particularly, from small donors. No campaign in history had ever tapped into such a broad donor base. In May 2008, the *Associated Press* pointed to the unprecedented breadth and nature of the operation:

Dozens of *Associated Press* interviews with donors and an *AP* financial analysis show how contributions that make only a soft “ka-ching” by themselves, arriving in increments of \$10, \$15 and \$50, have *collectively swelled into a financial roar* that has helped propel Obama toward the Democratic presidential nomination. Altogether, Obama's campaign has taken in an unprecedented \$226 million, most of it contributed online. His donor base is larger than the one the Democratic National Committee had for the 2000 election. (May 9, 2008, emphasis mine)

The *Washington Post* reported that by Election Day of 2008, more than 4 million individual donors had contributed to the Obama campaign. Over 40% of these donations were from donors who contributed \$200 or less, representing a record percentage of fundraising from small donors for any campaign on record (MacGillis and Cohen 2008). A LexisNexis search revealed that in the last 3 months of 2008 alone, the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* published a combined 16 articles referencing Obama's remarkable ability to raise funds from small donors.

### **The Obama Effect on Grassroots Volunteerism**

The Obama campaign's fundraising operation may have been trumped in impressiveness only by its volunteer recruitment operation. Volunteerism was an especially heavy point of emphasis for Obama's senior campaign staff, many of whom had considerable experience running field operations for previous campaigns. (Field operations refer to direct voter contact operations, e.g., phone-banking, canvassing, and volunteer recruitment.) For example, Obama's Campaign Manager, David Plouffe, had served as a Field Director for Tom Harkin's presidential campaign in 1992. His Deputy

Campaign Manager Steve Hillenbrand, who served as chief coordinator for early state operations, had been the Iowa State Director for Al Gore in 2000. Obama's Iowa State Director Paul Tewes had worked alongside Hillenbrand on the 2000 Gore field team and had also run field operations for two previous senate campaigns. Mitch Stewart, Tewes' chief deputy in Iowa, had previously coordinated statewide field operations for both the Louisiana Democratic Party and the South Dakota Democratic Party, as well as for Jon Edwards' 2004 presidential campaign in Iowa. And Obama's National Field Director, Jon Carson, was highly-regarded for his previous successes in running statewide field operations for the Democratic Party in both South Carolina and New Jersey.

The grand idea was for this experienced senior staff to channel the remarkable enthusiasm of early Obama supporters into a massive and sustainable grassroots volunteer operation. The national press began to take notice of this emphasis on grassroots organizing as early as March 2007. Chris Cillizza's *Washington Post* article "Obama Campaign Aims to Turn Online Backers into an Offline Force" (2007) chronicled the earliest stages of the volunteer recruitment operation. He observed that Obama's aforementioned senior staff viewed Howard Dean's 2004 campaign collapse as a cautionary tale, largely because of Dean's inability to translate online supporter enthusiasm into actual support on the ground in the early voting states (i.e., Iowa and New Hampshire). And without success in the early states, it was virtually impossible for any campaign to gain momentum leading into the later voting states. Thus, the promise, energy, and momentum that had earned considerable media praise and attention for the Dean campaign throughout 2003 had been largely quelled even before the first caucus and primary votes were cast in January of 2004.

Against this backdrop, Cillizza described how Obama's campaign team sought from the beginning to translate their enthusiastic support base not just into voter turnout, but also into volunteerism. Anyone who attended an Obama campaign event was required to provide the campaign with their phone number and email address, so that they could later be asked to volunteer. "In the first weekend of his campaign for president," Cillizza observed, "Obama signed up more volunteers in Iowa than Al Gore, then the vice president, did in the first six months of his campaign for the 2000 nomination" (2007).

On March 31, 2007, more than 9 months before the start of the primary voting, this loose grassroots infrastructure was put to the test for the first time. Supporters were encouraged to use a basic social media tool on the campaign website to self-organize a nationwide series of "Community Kickoff" events; any supporter could set up a local event or find one nearby through a zip code search feature. The strategy proved an astounding success: over 6,000 meetings nationwide were set up at venues such as Obama supporter homes, local public libraries, and college student union buildings. In a video recorded for these meetings, Obama emphasized to his highly enthusiastic support base: "The movement of change begins with you. It's one thing to understand that in theory. It's another to sit in a room full of motivated people, make a plan, and then witness the effects of hard work." (2007)

Throughout most of 2007, the Obama campaign provided few material resources to volunteers outside of the early states (Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina). Most states had few, if any, campaign offices or paid staffers, and volunteers on the ground received very little from campaign headquarters in terms of direct funding or other material resources. Through the website, volunteers were typically provided only

with printable lists of voters to contact in their areas and printable messaging scripts to help them “stay on message” when reaching out to these potential supporters on behalf of the campaign. Volunteers were always asked to record information for the campaign database about every voter they contacted (in particular, whether the voter was a supporter, non-supporter, or undecided). By allowing their loosely-organized grassroots volunteer operation to channel its enthusiasm into direct voter contact, the Obama campaign was able to collect large amounts of data and thus continually improve the efficiency of its voter outreach efforts throughout the campaign.

By June of 2007, the wide-ranging grassroots network had blossomed to include more than 10,000 volunteers nationwide. At this early stage in the primary campaign, they had already knocked on more than 350,000 doors during their door-to-door canvassing operations (Keating 2007). In December, Obama campaign volunteers were making over 10,000 calls per night to potential caucus-goers in advance of the January 3<sup>rd</sup> Iowa caucus (Zeleny 2007). By the time the general election got into full swing in the summer of 2008, already more than two million people had volunteered for the Obama campaign at least one time. The campaign estimated that about 70% of these volunteers had never previously volunteered for any political campaign, and that around six million people would volunteer at least once before Election Day (Mooney 2008).

The aforementioned record-setting fundraising hauls were now being translated into more professionalized field operations in more than a dozen swing states that the Obama campaign considered winnable for the general election. *Boston Globe* reporter Brian Mooney (2008) observed that the ever-growing base of enthusiastic volunteers that had been called upon to self-organize during the primary season, were now being

organized by the largest army of paid field staff in the history of presidential campaigns. The Obama campaign reported deploying an astonishing 1.5 million volunteers for get-out-the-vote operations on Election Day 2008 alone (Moore 2008).

### **The Obama Effect and the Historic Nature of Obama's Candidacy**

The uniqueness of Obama's race and racial identity also contributed to the enthusiasm surrounding his 2008 campaign. Obama was not treated by the national press as just another candidate who happened to be black. Instead, journalists frequently referenced the "historic" nature of Obama's candidacy and commented explicitly on his status as the first African American nominee of a major political party, or as the first African American with a serious chance of winning the presidency. A Lexis Nexis search from 2007-2008 revealed no less than 103 different *New York Times* or *Washington Post* articles containing both the terms "Obama" and "historic" or "Obama" and "African American." A good deal of academic literature also appeared in the two years after his election to challenge those who attempted to characterize Obama as a "postracial" candidate (Teasley and Ikard, 2010; Donovan 2010; Asukile 2009).

While the press commented often on Obama's race, and while Obama himself wrote extensively about his racial identity in his 1995 memoir *Dreams from My Father*, he took great pains in his national political career to avoid being viewed simply as a black candidate who was representing or running on "black issues." This is illustrated in "Barack Obama and the Politics of Blackness" (2007), in which Ron Walters draws multiple points of contrast between Jesse Jackson's failed 1984 and 1988 candidacies and Obama's candidacy. Of particular note, Walters argues that Jackson's principal motivation was to empower the black electorate and other marginalized groups.

Conversely, Obama took a universalistic approach: his campaign wanted to capitalize on his newness with the electorate and to focus less on issues specifically of race, and more on issues like health care and opposition to the Iraq War. Also, while Jackson sought to lead a social movement reminiscent of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, Obama set out to run a more traditional campaign merely seeking to maximize votes. A third major distinction was Jackson's limited fundraising appeal—he raised less than \$14 million between his two presidential campaigns—relative to Obama's renowned fundraising prowess and reliance on a much broader donor base (as described above) to support his campaign.

Furthermore, Obama's desire to appeal to the broader electorate often did result in attempts to employ "postracial" rhetoric. For example, in his 2004 convention speech Obama claimed famously, "there is no black America, there is no white America, there is only the United States of America." In 2005, he refused to criticize the Bush Administration's response to Hurricane Katrina in racialized terms. He insisted, "It is way too simplistic just to say that this administration doesn't care about black people," instead arguing that the administration had simply been insensitive to the issues of "poor people" (p. 18). Even in his 2007 announcement speech he explicitly invoked President Lincoln, yet did not explicitly mention race at any point during the speech.

Walters notes that when Obama did employ racialized rhetoric, it was again often as a tactic to reassure whites that he was not going to focus too much on black issues. For example, he would occasionally chastise blacks about not taking personal responsibility for community or family plights (e.g., gang violence or absentee parenting), but without mentioning any public policy issues at the root of those very plights. This reassurance

tactic was employed broadly, for example, in his March 18, 2008 speech entirely about race, delivered in Philadelphia in the wake of a firestorm of negative press over comments made by Obama's former reverend, Jeremiah Wright. In that speech Obama did attempt, at great length, to articulate reasons behind the anger felt by many black Americans such as Reverend Wright; yet he also spoke at length and in a legitimizing way about frustrations experienced by whites toward nonwhites. He placed much of his emphasis on themes such as optimism and the need for more cross-racial dialogue. The *New York Times*' analysis of the speech the following day was headlined, "Obama Chooses Reconciliation over Rancor" (Scott 2008).

Obama's apparent cross-racial appeal during the 2008 election does not, of course, mean that Obama's nonwhite racial identity was an asset to his electoral chances or that it made campaigning easier for him. In fact, in his analysis of survey data from 1992-2008, Piston (2010) found considerable evidence to the contrary, arguing that Obama likely would have done much *better* if not for persistent white prejudice (as defined by whites characterizing blacks as lazier and/or less intelligent than whites). Piston noted that Obama won 95% of the vote among African Americans and 67% among Latinos, but only 43% among whites. He concluded that Obama was affected negatively by racial prejudice more than any other candidate in the previous two decades.

Notwithstanding the headwinds Obama likely faced as a result of race, I argue that his unique racial identity did serve as a genuine source of excitement for the national press and for many racial minorities as well. The national press was largely positive toward Obama regarding his handling of race-related issues, and more generally about his status as the first African American nominee of a major party. African Americans and



Latinos alike voted for Obama at a substantially higher rate than they had voted for John Kerry, the Democratic nominee, in 2004. I therefore I argue that the historic nature of the Obama's campaign was a major contributing factor to the Obama Effect in 2008.

### **Chapter Breakdown**

In these opening pages, I defined the Obama Effect as the extraordinarily high level of supporter enthusiasm surrounding Barack Obama's first campaign. The Obama Effect was observable from early 2007 when he announced his candidacy and up until his election to the Presidency of the United States on November 4, 2008. I explained how the Obama Effect manifested itself in a dominant primary election win over the heavily-favored Hillary Clinton, and then in a general election landslide victory over John McCain; in record fundraising totals from small donors in particular; in extraordinary levels of volunteerism from his tremendously enthusiastic support base; and even in part because of his historic status as the first African American nominee of a major political party.

Chapter 2 contains my literature review and theory chapter. I begin by situating my research question within the pertinent literature on and candidate-centered campaigns. While most studies of campaign effects employ vote choice as the dependent variable (i.e., they investigate the factors that influence the vote choice), I explain my decision to use vote choice as an independent variable to investigate possible campaign effects. I employ it to compare attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of Obama supporters over time to outcomes of non-supporters over time. Through my theoretical framework, I juxtapose Obama with other outsider candidates in the post-reform era and posits the 2008 Obama campaign as the culmination of the candidate-centered campaigns (as opposed to party-

centered campaigns) that have characterized these last 4 decades of American presidential elections. As such, the central research question guiding the study is: Did the 2008 Obama campaign actually have, as I hypothesize, a positive, unique, and lasting Obama Effect on the political attitudes and political participation of his supporters? In other words, was the 2008 election truly a transformative election—as the Obama campaign hoped—that was able to keep supporters engaged even after the election? Or was the Obama Effect just a campaign phenomenon of extraordinary but short-lived enthusiasm, easily observable during the campaign season, but destined only to wither and die out after Election Day 2008? (This would represent the null hypothesis, i.e., that there was no lasting Obama Effect.) Or, to consider a third possibility, was there indeed a lasting effect to the campaign, but one that represented a larger presidential effect or candidate effect (as opposed to an Obama Effect), not at all unique to Obama supporters? A fourth and final possibility is that the lasting Obama Effect actually constituted a negative effect on the political attitudes and political participation of Obama supporters. (These last two outcomes would constitute rejections of my general hypothesis of a positive Obama Effect.) After explaining each possible outcome, I argue that a positive and durable Obama Effect on his supporters should be expected precisely because of the unique and extraordinary success enjoyed by his 2008 campaign. Lastly, I provide a theoretical basis for the inclusion of all other dependent and independent variables under investigation in my analytical chapters (Chapters 4-6).

Chapter 3, my Data and Methods chapter, includes a discussion of my empirical mixed-methods approach to investigating the Obama Effect. It begins with an explanation of the rationale for employing panel survey data and American National Election Studies

(ANES) data, in particular, for my quantitative analyses in Chapters 4 and 5. Second, it explains how data is incorporated from earlier election cycles for comparative purposes, so that it is possible to differentiate between an actual Obama Effect, and an effect that is not unique among Obama supporters. Third, it discusses relevant information on interviewer methods, survey items, variable measurement, and validity and reliability concerns. Further, it explains the approach to hypothesis-testing and lays out all of my major hypotheses for Chapters 4 and 5. I then shift my attention to the discussion of the qualitative data and methods for Chapter 6, the interview-based analysis. This section begins with a discussion of interviewee sampling and recruitment techniques, including the Internal Review Board process required for working with human subjects. It explains how my sample of interviewees—all volunteers from the 2008 Obama campaign—differs from the samples of panel participants that constitute the ANES panel surveys. Next, it provides general data on my interview subjects, such as dates, lengths, questions, and formatting of interviews. Finally, it establishes the relationship between my chosen interview question wording and the ANES survey items used in my quantitative analyses. I explain how the in-depth interviews were designed to flesh out the major themes from my quantitative findings, in order to draw comparisons and contrasts between these campaign volunteers and the ANES panel participants (who are more reflective of the national electorate than a group of volunteers).

Chapter 4 presents my empirical quantitative analysis of potential Obama Effects on political attitudes. I run regression models testing my hypotheses of a lasting and positive Obama Effect on the political interest, on the political efficacy, and on the partisanship (i.e., party loyalty) of Obama's 2008 campaign supporters. When apparent

campaign effects were observable, I distinguish between an “Obama Effect,” a presidential effect,” and a “candidate effect” by comparing my results from the 2008–2010 election cycle to corresponding results from the previous two presidencies (2000–2002 and 1992–1994). While I identified certain instances of a clear and positive Obama Effect—on political efficacy in particular—in the broader analysis, I find it quite difficult to draw neat conclusions about a positive and lasting Obama Effect on the political attitudes of his supporters. While some ambiguity in the data is to be expected, patterns that apply to all political attitudes in my analyses were far less clear than I had anticipated. In some cases, such as with political interest, I actually observe what appears to be a negative Obama Effect. In yet other cases, such as with partisanship, I observe remarkably similar outcomes across groups and across election cycles, prompting me to posit a broader *candidate* effect instead of the hypothesized Obama Effect. This result leads to a discussion of some broader candidate effects that were identifiable among Obama supporters, but not unique to that group. I interpret all of my statistical analysis for this chapter (and the next) in the comparative context of the three election cycles.

Chapter 5 follows a layout similar to Chapter 4. In this second quantitative chapter, I present my empirical analysis of potential Obama Effects on political participation. Once again, I employ multiple regression models, as well as binary logit models, for hypothesis testing. I hypothesize a lasting and positive Obama Effect on the voting behavior, on attendance of political meetings, and on attendance of political protests among Obama’s 2008 campaign supporters. Surprisingly, I find that support for a candidate had no observable impact on voter turnout. In the case of attending political meetings, I find increased participation among supporters of both candidates; but the

level of increase if consistently higher among supporters of the losing candidates.

Similarly and unsurprisingly, supporters of losing candidates tended to participate more in protests, marches, rallies, or demonstrations.

Chapter 6 is my qualitative analytical chapter. My data package for this chapter is comprised of transcripts from 30 in-depth interviews I conducted with volunteers from the 2008 Obama campaign. All 30 volunteers were Purdue University students who volunteered for Obama on the Purdue campus at least twice in 2008. I asked these former volunteers wide-ranging questions about their political attitudes and participation since 2008, with particular focus on how they came to feel about the candidate they helped elect after the initial excitement of his election—the proverbial “honeymoon period”—had subsided. I also probed into their political and civic participation, or lack thereof, over the course of Obama’s first term. While I frame much of the analysis in relation to my quantitative results from Chapters 4-5—that is, I compare the political attitudes and political participation of these volunteers to the much larger and more representative samples of panel respondents analyzed in the previous two chapters—this chapter also serves as a stand-alone analysis of the Obama Effect on candidate Obama’s most enthusiastic group of supporters: those who were willing to go out and volunteer for his campaign on their free time.

Chapter 7, my concluding chapter, contains a summary of my quantitative and qualitative analyses and situates my findings in the context of further discussion. I will be completing this dissertation in the spring of 2016; so the following question is raised in my closing pages: what might we expect in terms of the long-term attitudinal outcomes of the supporters of the next president, based on the comparisons between Barack Obama’s

supporters, George W. Bush's supporters, and Bill Clinton's supporters? I argue that there are likely more similarities than differences between each president's effects (or lack thereof, as was often the case) and that truly transformational effects may be the rarest of legacies for American presidential campaigns.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **Central Research Question**

Following the 2008 election, was there a positive, unique, and lasting Obama Effect on the political attitudes and political participation of Obama supporters? Based upon some of the more remarkable elements of the 2008 campaign which I discussed in Chapter 1 (i.e., turnout, fundraising, volunteerism), my general hypothesis at the outset of the study was that such an Obama Effect may have been not only positive, but possibly even transformational, in terms of its lasting impact on the political attitudes and political participation of its supporters. It was, after all, his campaign's explicit hope to transform the American electorate in these ways. My central task in this research is to investigate the extent to which he succeeded in that endeavor, in other words, the degree to which his campaign succeeded in producing a positive, unique, and lasting Obama Effect.

### **Why Study Campaign Effects?**

The study of political campaigns can potentially tell us a great deal about the quality of democratic representation in the United States. As a representative democracy, we expect our candidates to tell us what they plan to do if elected. We thus provide candidates who hope to be re-elected (i.e., the vast majority of candidates) with a clear incentive to govern in a fashion consistent with their campaign rhetoric. To disappoint public expectations would signal to voters that the campaign was little more than a

charade and that the candidate (and, by extension, his or her party) cannot be trusted in the future. To this point, political scientists have indeed found that—contrary to conventional wisdom—candidates for office are, in fact, inclined toward honoring or at least attempting to honor their campaign promises. The nature of democratic representation, that is, the re-election principle, gives them great reason to do so (Shaw 1998; Mayhew 1977; Downs, 1957).

This incentive to campaign in good faith allows us to study political campaigns as the mechanism through which candidates for office seek to inform voters about their intentions. For instance, we can analyze the degree to which they do or don't influence certain political attitudes and/or political behaviors within the electorate. We can distinguish between more immediate or short-term campaign effects, such as influencing the vote choice in that immediate election, and longer-lasting campaign effects, such as sustained changes in political attitudes and behaviors that can be observed over the course of multiple years or even multiple election cycles.

The study of campaigns can also potentially tell us a great deal about the relative strength of political parties and how this relative strength has or hasn't changed over time. Wattenberg's first edition of *The Decline of Political Parties* (1984) was published over 30 years ago, and his thesis has only gained traction in the years since. He has updated the volume several times to present new data and evidence regarding this decline in pure partisanship and in party power, especially since the 1970s era of Vietnam and Watergate. To be clear, this decline in pure partisanship should not be overstated; many pure partisans have become "partisan leaners" as opposed to true Independents. In other words, while the decline in pure partisanship over the last 4 decades looks quite stark on



a 3-point scale (Democrat, Independent, Republican), a 7-point scale reveals that the decline in pure partisanship has led to a rise in Independent-Democrat leaners and Independent-Republicans leaners.

### **From Party-Centered to Candidate-Centered Campaigns**

I am particularly interested in the uniqueness, or lack thereof, of the 2008 Obama campaign and its effects. This potential uniqueness is best understood in the larger context of the modern presidential nomination process. Prior to the post-reform era (pre-1972), presidential nominations were essentially the business of the national Democratic Party and the national Republican Party. Whether running for local, state, or national office, candidates typically could not be seen as viable without strong party backing (McCann 1996). Logistical support, including fundraising operations, get-out-the-vote drives, and campaign office staffing, was largely provided by the party infrastructure, which served as the centralized decision-making apparatus (including candidate selection) from the national all the way down to the local level.

Following the 1968 Chicago protests and riots outside the Democratic National Convention, the Democratic Party changed its nomination process to allow primary voters to nominate candidates directly. The Republican Party followed suit shortly after. Any introductory *American Government* textbook will observe that these changes formally ended the era of party “bosses” selecting their presidential candidates in those proverbial smoke filled back rooms, without any input whatsoever from rank and file voters. However Cohen et al. argue in *The Party Decides* (2008) that contrary to this conventional wisdom, not much has changed in the post-reform era. The nomination systems still allow for party insiders and activists to function as filters for presidential

nominees, thus limiting the choices available to primary voters. No candidate can win a major party nomination on the strength of primary voters, they argue, unless that candidate already has a strong base of support among state party officials, lobbyists, and leaders of special interest groups.

We do have clear evidence, however, that in at least certain circumstances candidates can earn substantial popular support with primary and general election voters regardless of their standing or level of formal support within the party. Wattenberg (1991) contends, convincingly, that political campaigns in the United States have indeed become increasingly candidate-centric and decreasingly party-centric since the early 1970s reforms. Most notably, despite having no institutional supporter whatsoever, in the 1992 general election Ross Perot won 19% of the national popular vote as an Independent candidate running against the candidates nominated by the two major parties. Ralph Nader, a famously independent-minded candidate running on the Green Party ticket in 2000, played a widely-documented outsized role in influencing that presidential election despite earning less than 1% of the national popular vote. Many others have run “individual-centered” primary campaigns for a major party nomination; this list includes Pat Robertson, Pat Buchanan, Steve Forbes, Alan Keyes, Mike Huckabee, Rick Santorum, and Ron Paul for the Republicans; and Jesse Jackson, Gary Hart, Bill Clinton, and, of course, Barack Obama for the Democrats. Except for Clinton and Obama, who of course ultimately did secure the nominations for their party, each of these candidates was able to secure substantial support within his party’s primary electorate despite his lack of institutional support from the party itself.

One might argue that the Republican Party remains relatively strong compared to the Democratic Party, in the sense that Republican voters have repeatedly selected the “next in line” candidate who is generally a party elder. Republican primary voters have been loath to nominate an individual-centered candidate the way the Democratic Party did with Clinton and Obama. For example, Gerald Ford who inherited the presidency after Nixon’s resignation was able to defeat the “outsider” Reagan to represent Republicans in the 1976 election. Reagan, having lost the last time around, was able to win the nomination over George H.W. Bush in 1980. After serving 2 terms as Reagan’s vice president, George H.W. Bush was tapped for the Republican nomination in 1988. Party elder Bob Dole was nominated to run in 1996; and then George W. Bush, son of the former Republican president, was chosen by Republican primary voters in 2000. Longtime Washington stalwart and party leader John McCain won the Republican nomination in 2008. His closest rival in that 2008 primary election, Mitt Romney, was the winner of the 2012 Republican primary. Therefore, we might draw this conclusion: although many candidates have attracted a substantial segment of enthusiastic Republican primary voters, the Republican primary electorate as a whole have typically selected the same candidate that would likely have been chosen by party elders in that proverbial smoke-filled back room. This conclusion suggests that although candidates are no longer beholden to merely carrying out the will of the party and its platform, the parties are not equal in strength; in this regard the Republican Party is the stronger of the two.

Unlike their Republican counterparts, Democratic primary voters don’t always choose the “next in line” or the party insider. This factor suggests a relatively weakened party structure in the modern era. The Democratic Party has actually nominated several

candidates in recent decades whose nomination did not seem likely at the beginning of the primary. Jimmy Carter, for example, was nominated in 1976 despite being an obscure governor from Georgia with negligible national name recognition at the time of his announcement. Bill Clinton, similarly, was running outside the top five Democratic candidates in the early primary polls from 1992. And perhaps most obviously, Obama, having only served 2 years in an office higher than state senator when his candidacy began, was also relatively unknown among the national electorate at the time of his campaign announcement speech.

Indeed, Wattenberg's *The Rise of Candidate Centered Politics* was published in 1991 as a sequel to *The Decline of American Political Parties*. This modification in terminology indicates the dual nature of the phenomenon under observation: not only that parties have grown increasingly weak, but that the vacuum was being filled by individual candidates often with strong, dynamic, unique, and engaging personalities. Many of these candidates have been willing or even eager to draw contrasts with their own party platforms or traditions, to run populist "outsider" campaigns, and to sometimes emphasize these contrasts as an effective mechanism for highlighting their independence from their party. After all, the thinking goes, voters respect qualities in a candidate such as independence, leadership, and willingness to do what they think is right even if unpopular within their own parties.

### **The Popular Question in Campaign Effects Research**

Traditionally, political scientists have tended to treat vote choice as the dependent variable in research on campaign effects (Holbrook, 1996). They ask, what factors influence vote choice? This is often the case for both individual-level analyses, in which

the goal is to determine the potential factors that may influence the vote choice of individuals, and aggregate-level analysis, in which the goal is to determine the potential factors that may influence larger electoral outcomes at the local/state/national level.

In this project, however, I am investigating the possible existence of a very different type of campaign effect. Instead of treating vote choice as the dependent variable and then seeking to determine whether the 2008 campaign did or didn't have a major impact on voting behavior, I treat vote choice as my key *independent* variable. In essence, my question deals with whether support for a particular campaign may condition certain types of changes in our political attitudes and political behaviors. Nonetheless it makes sense to briefly review the main studies looking at potential campaign effects on voting behavior, since this constitutes the general thrust of the literature on campaign effects.

### **The Case for Limited or Minimal Campaign Effects**

As noted above, the over-arching theme in this body of research is to determine the degree to which political campaigns affect voting behavior. Some political observers assume campaigns to be the key independent variable, or at least one of the more important ones, that influences vote choice. After all, presidential campaigns are very expensive and time-consuming. For that reason, the lay reader may be surprised to learn that in the view of many political scientists, campaigns are essentially tales of sound and fury, but which signify very, very little in terms of actual campaign effects (i.e., influencing individual or aggregate vote choice). For example:

- In their groundbreaking 1940s Columbia panel study on voting behavior, Lazarsfeld, Berleson, and Gaudet (1944) found that individuals rarely changed

their vote preference at the end of the campaign from the preference they had expressed at the beginning of the campaign. They argued that campaigns may strengthen or weaken previous political dispositions held by individuals, which are typically derived from family/group membership. But campaigns were unlikely to convert more than a very small percentage of voters to the other candidate, because most voters would be disinclined to break from the perceived group interests that led to their original candidate preference. This research is considered seminal seven decades after publication.

- The authors of the seminal *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960) argued that party identification was far more influential as a vote choice determinant than campaigns could ever be. One may assume that policy preferences tend to condition support for a party/candidate; however, they argued that the causal arrow typically points in the opposite direction: Americans actually talk themselves into agreeing with the positions and voting for the candidates because of their party affiliation. According to this argument, then, individual campaign effects are not produced in a vacuum but are typically additive to the effect of party identification. Although an individual's party identification is obviously not deterministic or set in stone for life, Campbell and colleagues characterized it as a relatively stable political attitude, typically adopted through the political socialization process involving institutions such as family, schools, and media. They argued that party affiliation was unlikely to be flipped by any single political campaign. They found that on average, a strong majority of 63% of voters had already made up their minds who they would vote for by the ends of

the respective Democratic and Republican nomination conventions, before the beginning of the general election campaign.

- In *The Responsible Electorate* (1966), Key argued that neither predisposition based on group membership nor party identification was the most important factor in determining vote choice. Instead, he argued that voters were “retrospective” and that they were inclined toward rewarding the party of the previous administration if they did a good job while in office. Conversely, voters would punish that party by supporting their opponents if the previous administration had done a poor job. Vote choice in the future, in his view, would largely be a function of how voters evaluated the previous administration. His work is perhaps best viewed as a theoretical precursor to Reagan’s famous rhetorical question from the 1980 campaign: “Are you better off than you were 4 years ago?”
- Pomper (1985) remarked that “Americans could have skipped the 1984 campaign.” His argument was that structural factors, such as the booming economy and Reagan’s personal popularity, would have led to his landslide victory no matter whom the Democrats had nominated and no matter what Mondale had done differently during his campaign.
- A senior Dukakis strategist Susan Estrich argued after the 1988 campaign that while they could have run a much better campaign, they never really had much of a chance of winning. After all, she noted, the unemployment rate was at a 20+ year low, and the Reagan/Bush administration was able to point to a years-in-the-making economic recovery to provide all the tailwind Bush needed for his campaign sails.

- Quirk and Dalager (1993) argued, similarly, that for structural reasons, any Democrat would have beaten George H. W. Bush in 1992 by emphasizing the theme of change (as Clinton did). After all, with the economy in such a deep slump and after 12 years of Bush being in the White House as vice president and then president, it was all but a given that Americans would elect a Democrat to replace him in 1992.
- 2008 may have been very similar to 1992, in that any Democrat running on the idea of “change” may have been able to defeat any Republican. After all, McCain or any other Republican would have been associated with the party that was in office when the housing market and stock market collapsed in 2007-2008. These collapses led to a national (and worldwide) recession, further suppressing the approval ratings of the already unpopular George W. Bush.

### **The Case for Significant Campaign Effects**

While the more prominent line of research argues that campaign effects are relatively minimal, or at least relatively unimportant, certainly not all scholars have arrived at this conclusion that campaigns have little, if any, impact on vote decisions. Many observers of American campaigns have referred to powerful campaign occurrences that seemed to represent a major impact on the attitudes of the electorate, such as the following:

- In the second debate of 1984 between Reagan and Mondale, the incumbent Reagan drew loud laughter from the audience and an overwhelmingly positive media reaction when he said that he would not exploit Mondale’s “youth and inexperience.” While it is important not to exaggerate the impact of debates, it



became conventional wisdom that this was an important moment in Reagan's re-election campaign because he effectively deflected criticisms that his age may render him unfit for office.

- The Willie Horton advertisement from George H.W. Bush's 1988 campaign was widely seen as successfully instilling fear in the public that Dukakis would be weak on crime. Later, when Dukakis was asked if he would support the death penalty if his own wife were raped and murdered, he answered in the negative, because, he said, "I don't see any evidence that it's a deterrent and I think there are better and more effective ways to deal with violent crime." *Time Magazine* (2015) characterized this as "Dukakis's deadly response . . . to viewers the answer seemed both dispassionate and dismissive."
- Early in the 1992 campaign, George H.W. Bush visited a grocery store and expressed wonder and amazement at the technology of the price scanner (which had been commonplace for many years). The *New York Times* described his central problem as such: "This career politician . . . is having trouble presenting himself to the electorate as a man in touch with middle-class life." In other words, his inability to run an effective campaign would prohibit him from winning re-election in his campaign against Bill Clinton.
- Following the 2000 election in Florida, Al Gore drew considerable criticism for looking dull and boring compared to George W. Bush. Gore was viewed throughout the campaign as an uninspiring policy wonk, while Bush became a caricature of the guy people "wanted to have a beer with."

- In 2008, John McCain was widely scrutinized for his selection of the relatively unknown Sarah Palin as his running mate. This initial decision seemed to provide a jolt of momentum to the McCain campaign, indicating a sort of campaign effect; indeed, McCain closed a significant polling gap with Obama in less than a week after the Palin announcement. However as the campaign wore on, the Palin detractors grew increasingly louder as her inexperience and unpreparedness were revealed through a series of media interviews. Ultimately, the campaign felt these media appearances were so damaging with voters that they completely withdrew media access to the vice presidential candidate. She did not conduct a single media interview for the entire 2 months of the 2008 campaign.

Speaking of campaign instances such as these, Holbrook (1996) offered the following: “Campaigns provide a lot of interesting, high-profile moments that survive well after the campaign has ended. Imagining that anything we remember as being significant must have been so is, therefore, easy. But is it really that simple? Is the American public so fickle and open to persuasion?” (3). In other words, as I noted above with the Reagan debate example, it is important not to overstate or exaggerate the existence of a campaign effects based on conventional wisdom and anecdotal evidence alone. Holbrook essentially cautions that while we can point to many instances of *apparent* campaign effects, the scholarly community does well to remember the more established body of literature suggesting that campaign effects are typically quite limited.

The above sections suggest that while many campaign happenings may move the polls in the short term, or in minute ways, ultimately, the discipline of political science remains skeptical that such events are the overarching determinants of individual voting

behavior or aggregate electoral outcomes. Instead, scholars have pointed to more structural factors such as socialization processes, economic conditions, and party/group identification, as much more relevant variables, generally speaking, than campaign effects could ever be.

### **Theorizing an Obama Effect**

I have stated my intent to investigate the existence of a positive, unique, and lasting Obama Effect following his 2008 campaign. At this point, it becomes important to clarify exactly what would constitute such an effect. By lasting, I mean the effect was observable two years after the campaign. By unique, I mean the effect was not similarly observable in the supporters of other recent presidential candidates. By positive, I mean that Obama supporters could be distinguished from non-supporters on the value of change in the dependent variable (i.e. the attitude or behavior), and that the change occurred in the direction that the Obama campaign would find desirable. For example:

- If Obama supporters increased or sustained their political interest and/or external political efficacy over time, relative to non-supporters, the conclusion would be that they experienced a positive Obama Effect on political interest and/or external efficacy, respectively. If, however, Obama supporters decreased their interest and/or efficacy over time, relative to non-supporters, this would constitute a negative Obama effect on political interest and/or efficacy.
- If Obama supporters increased or sustained their loyalty to the Democratic Party over time, relative to McCain supporters' loyalty to the Republican Party, then I would argue that they have experienced a positive Obama Effect on partisanship;

conversely, if Obama supporters decreased their party loyalty over time, relative to McCain supporters, then this would constitute a negative Obama Effect.

- Finally, if Obama supporters have increased their political participation and/or civic engagement over time, relative to non-supporters, it would show that they have experienced a positive Obama Effect. If they have decreased their participation in these areas relative to non-supporters, this would constitute a negative Obama Effect on participation.

It is worth emphasizing here the theoretical importance of the relative factor, that is, the comparison of Obama supporters to non-supporters when I theorize an Obama Effect. In my estimation, it is not enough to observe that Obama supporters experienced, for example, an increase in political participation after the 2008 election. Even if the numbers demonstrated increased participation among Obama supporters, to accept that as proof of an Obama Effect would be to ignore the possibility that non-supporters also experienced this increase in participation. If it were true for non-supporters as well as Obama supporters, then the observation would clearly be attributable to something other than the type of Obama Effect I am hypothesizing for this research, such as a larger candidate effect that tend to characterize supporters of all presidential candidates, not only winning candidates.

For this reason, I set up my analysis of the political attitudes and behaviors of 2008 Obama campaign supporters as a relative comparison to non-supporters (a category that includes McCain supporters, third party voters, and nonvoters). If I observe changes (positive or negative) in the attitudes and behaviors of Obama supporters relative to non-supporters, but do not observe similar changes among McCain supporters relative to

McCain non-supporters, then these changes can possibly be attributed to an Obama Effect.

I am expecting a positive Obama Effect to manifest in Obama supporters, relative to non-supporters, in the form of a sustained increase in political interest, a heightened sense of external political efficacy, a strengthening of party loyalty, an increase in voting activity and partisan voting, and an increase in civic engagement.

### **Theorizing My Dependent Variables**

I have chosen to focus my study on five important dependent variables which can tell us a great deal about the lasting impacts, or lack thereof, of the 2008 Obama campaign. These variables—political interest, political efficacy, partisanship, voting behavior, and civic engagement—are conceptually important because, in conjunction, they represent a robust combination of both mental and physical engagement with political and civic life.

Dependent Variable #1: Political Interest. Some degree of political interest is a necessary precursor to the level of political engagement that is critical for effective democratic representation. Prior (2010) observed that “Politically interested people are more knowledgeable about politics, more likely to vote, and more likely to participate in politics in other ways” (747). Thus while political interest may not be the target outcome in and of itself, it functions as a conduit to other desirable outcomes related to democratic and civic engagement.

The subject of political interest has captured the attention of political scientists since the Columbia Studies of the 1940s–1950s. These authors (Berleson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berleson, and Gaudet 1944) argued that interest in politics was

primarily a function of family background. Before we are even aware of any external influence, they argued, we are absorbing our parents' traits and tendencies. Campbell et al. (1960) agreed that socialization played a major role in political interest, but they contended that the relationship was less direct. They believed in a more direct relationship between family socialization and party identification. Then, by extension, the strength of our party identification would condition our political attitudes, in other words, our level of political interest. As such, they found that political interest was strongest among the strongest partisans in the electorate (including political elites) and weakest among Independents or "leaners" (i.e., those who "lean Republican" or "lean Democrat"), who represent the least partisan sectors of the American electorate.

In a recent study that employed panel data analysis, spanning four decades and four countries, Prior (2010) found that political interest was "exceptionally stable" not only during short-term campaigns, but even across an individual's entire lifespan. His analysis revealed that political interest more closely resembles a personality trait than an attitude that would fluctuate for individuals whenever the newsworthiness of politics changes. This finding is particularly important for my research because I am examining the possibility that one specific campaign—the 2008 Obama campaign—became an exception to the relatively static nature of political interest. If this campaign truly represented a transformational moment in American politics, then theoretically we would expect to see significant, substantive, and positive changes in the political interest of the supporters of that campaign (relative to non-supporters).

Dependent Variable #2: Political Efficacy. A high degree of political efficacy is a necessary condition to a healthy citizenry in any democratic system of government.

Campbell et al. (1954) defined political efficacy as “The feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact on the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (187). The typical *American Government* textbook would further distinguish between internal political efficacy, in other words, a belief in one’s own capacity to understand matters of government and politics, and external political efficacy, or a belief in one’s ability to actually influence matters of government and politics because government is responsive.

Campbell and colleagues (1960) were mainly concerned with the concept of external political efficacy. They included two questions on external political efficacy in the American National Election Studies surveys that serve as the quantitative datasets for my analyses in Chapters 4-5: 1) “I don’t think government officials care much about what people like me think”; and 2) “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.”

These scholars theorized that an understanding of external political efficacy was particularly important because it represented the political attitude that could best explain varying levels of political participation within the citizenry. Those who chose not to participate in politics, they argued, lacked the desire to participate largely as an artifact of low external efficacy. These citizens did not believe that they could positively influence their own democratic representation. Conversely, those who participated at high levels were reflecting the highest possible levels of external efficacy. These citizens reckoned that political participation was worth their investments of time and energy.

Early scholarship on the subject found political efficacy to be positively correlated with other desirable attitudes such as trust in government, trust in leadership, and patriotism, and also positively associated with various forms of participation, such as participation in campaign politics, voting, and participation in protest politics. (For a brief review of this early literature, see Balch, 1974, 2-3.) Some scholarship on efficacy has observed that the causal arrow does not always point from external efficacy toward participation; rather, the act of participation can actually breed an increased sense of external efficacy in the individual.

Balch (1974) argued for the importance of analyzing efficacy as a dependent rather than an independent variable, thus emphasizing the importance of figuring out what affects individuals with respect to efficacy. This trend has not shaped the prevailing research tradition, unfortunately; as Anderson (2010) noted in a recent study, “most studies tend to use efficacy . . . as an independent variable to explain political actions such as voting, campaign involvement, and the like” (59). Indeed, subsequent theorists and scholars in the tradition of John Stuart Mill or *The American Voter* authors were concerned primarily with what efficacy could do for the state or the elites, rather than with efficacy in and of itself. However I would argue along with Balch, if we are truly concerned with the quality of our democratic representation, it is more important to ask what can be done to foster a deeper sense of an individual’s external political efficacy in particular, to ensure everyone’s participation in the political process. After all, the government exists for the people, and not the other way around.

In more recent scholarship following this theoretical tradition, Anderson (2010) found that a sense of community had a significant impact on individual efficacy. For



individuals to truly have a sense of community, she argued, they needed to feel not only membership in the community, but also influence, in other words, a sense that the relationship is reciprocal. A strong community implies that individuals within that community feel they are contributing to communal needs, not only taking from the community. It makes sense, therefore, to analyze the 2008 Obama campaign through this theoretical lens. Of particular interest is determining whether a political campaign can have a lasting positive impact on external efficacy by making its supporters feel as if they are a part of something important. As discussed in Chapter 1, this campaign made a particularly strong effort to engage and mobilize its supporters by putting unprecedented focus on volunteerism and creating a sense of community within that campaign. So if a lasting Obama Effect on his supporters truly exists, it very well may manifest in an increased sense of external political efficacy because his supporters felt like they were getting something out of the campaign for themselves, as opposed to only contributing to the campaign for the sake of the candidate.

Dependent Variable #3: Partisanship. To state the obvious, both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party have a vested interest in increasing partisanship within the electorate. By partisanship, I simply mean party loyalty among voters. Of course Democratic Party candidates, officeholders, officials, and other elites want to see more voters identifying as “Ds” and vice versa for Republican Party insiders.

Research from Miller and Shanks (1996) has shown party identification to be a relatively stable attitude in adults. Notwithstanding the occasional realignment or generational change by cohort, Americans stick with the party affiliations of their parents more often than not; and meaningful group bonds are not easily broken. (Achen 2002;

Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964). However, Gerber and Green (1998) discovered that voters' partisan attitudes are more malleable than previously believed. As voters receive new information about a party, they show more willingness to change their attitudes towards that party. Furthermore, as voters observe parties change their focus on specific issues (if not their positions on those issues), those voters may begin to change their minds about the parties based on their own issue preferences (Carsey and Layman 2006).

Traditionally, the rise of candidate-centered campaigns in this post-reform era has been viewed as a largely negative trend for both parties (Wattenberg 1991). After all, such campaigns seek to breed loyalty for that individual candidate himself or herself, as opposed to attempting to breed loyalty for the political party to which that candidate belongs. As noted above, candidates sometimes find it advantageous to draw explicit contrasts between their own views and those of their party platforms and/or leadership. Furthermore, multiple individual-centered campaigns are likely to divide support between the party's primary voters (i.e., their most active voters), which may further weaken partisanship. (Stone et al. 1992).

To be sure, the vast majority of Americans still identify with one of the two major political parties, as leaners if not strong partisans. This has been the case since the ANES began asking about party identification in the 1952. Yet, partisan identification has weakened in recent decades, corresponding to the rise of individual-centered campaigns discussed above (American National Election Studies 2010). In the 1950s, those who identified as Strong/Weak Democrats/Republicans comprised more than 75% of the respondents; pure Independents comprised fewer than 10%, and Independent-Leaners

represented about 15%. By the early 1970s, as Vietnam and Watergate took their toll on the public trust, and as candidate-centered campaigns became more prevalent, a much larger segment of the population began to identify as Independent or as Leaners. In fact, from the 1970s all the way through 2008, party identification remained relatively stable. Pure Independents and Independent-Leaners have tended to comprise about 40% of the electorate, with the percentage of Strong/Weak partisans falling from the high 70s before the post-reform era down to about 60% in recent decades.

Against this backdrop, can any single campaign, such as the 2008 Obama campaign, actually produce a positive effect on partisanship, or are all individual-centered campaigns doomed to having a negative if any effect? Aldrich (1995) noted that despite the rise of Independents within the electorate, and the overall weakening of the party system in certain respects, most candidates still do maintain a highly symbiotic relationship with state parties and with the national party. This again suggests that parties are appropriately described as weaker than they once were, but not necessarily as weak.

Consider the following: as noted above, the majority of Americans continue to identify as either Democrat or Republican. Furthermore, once the primary process has concluded, parties typically try to unite all their members (including the weakest partisan leaners) under a big tent by providing a great deal of logistical, organizational, and financial support for their nominees. Once the general election begins, former intra-party primary opponents of a candidate may now actually serve as surrogates for that same candidate they had previously opposed, because they are now on the same team. Aldrich observed that these reciprocal partisan relationships do not end with the election of a new president; in fact, the opposite tends to occur. Once the governing starts, relationships

within and between the branches of government are typically characterized by partisan considerations and structures.

Perhaps the strongest theoretical reason to suggest that a particularly effective campaign can positively impact partisanship is that presidents traditionally serve as heads of party (not just heads of state) while they are in the White House. This symbiotic relationship allows the party to benefit from the president's individual popularity that led to his/her election and obviously from his/her presidential powers; on the other hand, it allows the president to set much of the party agenda and to set the tone for the party throughout his/her years in office. This "head of party" designation provides a great incentive for presidential candidates to promote their parties up and down the ballot, in other words, to truly promote partisanship from the top of the ticket during their campaigns.

Dependent Variable #4: Voter Turnout. As I have mentioned, presidential candidates have a vested interest in building long-term relationships with voters. While the current campaign cycle may be the top priority, all candidates are cognizant of the need to build a *durable* coalition of voters, which can be mobilized again for the re-election campaign (and potentially for other party operations as well).

A line of experimental research developed by Alan Gerber and Donald Green and colleagues has been particularly instructive for understanding the potential for a campaign effect to mobilize voters to turn out for future elections. Gerber, Green, and Shachar (2003) found from one experimental design that voting can be "habit forming," that is, that voting in one election play a significant role in turning out in subsequent elections (or at least the next election if not long-term). They are careful not to overstate

the causal impact, but on the aggregate their research makes clear that successful campaign mobilization can have positive implications beyond the current campaign.

In a different experiment, Gerber and Green (2000) were able to show that nonpartisan contact with voters—face-to-face canvassing, in particular—had a positive and very substantial impact in terms of increasing voter turnout. Conversely, professionalized direct mail operations had no effect in terms of driving up turnout, even when prospective voters were blasted with get-out-the-vote mailings multiple times in the weeks leading up to an election. Given the exceptionally high level of emphasis placed on direct voter contact and direct mobilization by the 2008 Obama campaign, it seems at least possible that a lasting Obama Effect could produce increased voter turnout among its supporters in subsequent election cycles.

Dependent Variable #5: Civic Engagement. While most of my analysis for this project focuses directly on political attitudes and voting behavior, I also wanted to consider other forms of civic engagement, such as volunteerism (political or otherwise), engagement in local political or social issues, attendance of protests or rallies. I think it is at least theoretically plausible that the 2008 Obama campaign may have produced a positive “spillover effect” or that helped mobilize its supporters to engage political and civic life in other ways beyond just voting. A spillover effect, technically speaking, “occurs when mobilization in a nomination campaign increases participation in nonpresidential campaigns” (Stone et al. 1992, 427).

Pastor and Rappaport (1999) identified strong evidence for positive spillover effects after Pat Robertson’s very candidate-centered 1992 campaign. Distinguishing Robertson’s lay supporters from his activists, they found that “Robertson activists were

almost twice as likely to become involved in the Republican House campaigns in 1988 as those who merely preferred Robertson...especially remarkable because a majority of Robertson activists in 1988 were newcomers” (436). In other words, those who became active in a candidate-centered campaign were far more likely to also become active volunteers (not just voters) for their local House candidate, despite never having been activists for any other political campaign up to that point. McCann’s (1996) study also turned up evidence of positive spillover effects, revealing that activists for losing candidates were just as likely to become active in their local House races that year as activists for winning campaigns.

Research in this area has tended toward analysis of losing primary candidates because they are often very candidate-centered in their campaigns (relative to the candidates who often win the nominations). Often primary candidates have been able to appeal to a particular subgroup of highly vocal and active supporters (e.g., antiwar voters for McCarthy in 1968, evangelical voters for Robertson in 1988, or libertarians for Ron Paul in 2008), but unable to appeal to a broad enough coalition to win their party’s nomination. Needless to say, the Obama campaign was unique in that regard. The question I will examine, then, is whether or not his winning campaign produced any positive spillover effects on his supporters.

### **Inclusion of Resource Variables into the Analysis**

The goal of my quantitative research in Chapters 4-5 is to uncover potential changes in the political attitudes and behaviors of 2008 Obama campaign supporters, relative to non-supporters. I am primarily interested in determining whether any such changes can be attributable to an Obama Effect, that is, support for the 2008 Obama

campaign, or lack thereof. As such, the key independent variable in my statistical analyses is “Vote Choice”: “Voted for Obama” or “Voted for McCain.”

It is common in these types of studies to include resource variables—gender, age, race/ethnicity, income, and education— as independent variables that allow to factor demographics into the causal analysis. These resource variables are typically included in causal analysis to determine if they, rather than vote choice, may be responsible for some or all of the statistically significant change that is observed in a model.

For example, suppose we discover that support for Obama (i.e., vote choice, the key independent variable under observation) had a statistically significant impact on the electorate’s increase in external efficacy from 2008-2010. This inference may prompt me to hastily claim that there is a positive Obama Effect on external efficacy. However if the resource variables are included in this same analysis as independent variables in a multivariate regression model, the results could show that most of the statistical significance previously observed in the first model is attributable to certain participants being female and/or highly-educated, rather than to being Obama supporters. Or, the analysis could imply that all three independent variables have statistical significance, but that the other resource variables (race/ethnicity, age, and income) have no impact on this specific model. This type of finding would suggest an additive effect, meaning that being an Obama supporter, being female, and being highly educated each separately increased the impact on political efficacy.

There is another major reason for including resource variables in my analyses. In addition to analyzing differences between groups (i.e. between Obama supporters and non-supporters), such analysis design allows to study also intragroup differences (i.e.,

within the group of Obama supporters and, separately, within the group of non-supporters). Resource variables can be very effective in helping us understand the potential impact of sub-sample variations. For example, the analysis of sub-sample (intra-group) variation can help distinguish between the impact of being a female, high-income Obama supporter and being a female, low-income Obama supporter. In this example, my model can test not only for a potential additive effect among the three variables separately, but also for an interactive effect.

I now turn to the next chapter for a discussion of the data and methods employed in my quantitative and qualitative research for this project.



## CHAPTER 3: DATA AND METHODS

My original dissertation research required an empirical mixed-methods approach—incorporating analyses of both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data—in order to explore the legacy of the Obama Effect. This chapter first details the quantitative data and methods employed in Chapters 4 and 5. It then details the qualitative data and methods employed in Chapter 6.

### **Using Panel Surveys for Quantitative Analysis**

Panel surveys were the most appropriate form of data for my quantitative analysis. As Bartols argues, “The most powerful way to incorporate a dynamic element in survey research is to interview the same individuals at two or more points in time and attribute observed changes in their attitudes or behavior to the effects of intervening processes or events” (1). The panel surveys I employed for my analysis in Chapters 4-5 were conducted by the American National Election Studies (ANES), which has been conducting election studies surveys biennially since 1952.

Panel data is generally characterized by surveying the same individuals on the same set of variables at different points in time (e.g.,  $t$ ,  $t - 1$ ,  $t - 2$ , etc.), for purposes of identifying causal mechanisms for any observable changes over time. For the ANES, typically one wave of a panel survey ( $t$ ) is conducted shortly after a given presidential

election, and another wave ( $t - 1$ ) is conducted either shortly before or shortly after the midterm elections two years later.

Use of panel data has two major advantages for my research over other types of survey data. First, it allows for a direct measurement of change over time. This measurement of change is preferable here to cross-sectional survey data, in which respondents are surveyed on a set of variables only at one point in time. It also differs from the more widely used “time series” survey data, which can only infer change (but cannot measure it directly) because different individuals are being surveyed at each point in time (Bartols 2000; Finkel 1995).

The second major advantage is that, as noted above, panel data lends especially well to causal analysis. Establishing a causal connection between independent and dependent variables requires three commonly-cited conditions to be met: that  $x$  and  $y$  covary, that  $x$  precedes  $y$  in time, and that the relationship is not spurious, that is, caused by some other variable(s) not included in the model. (A fourth and usually implied condition is an accurate measurement of variables or the reliability of survey instruments.) By definition, cross-sectional data cannot meet the second condition. Even if covariance is established and all relevant variables are included in the model, it is not possible to determine temporal order from cross-sectional data (in other words, it is not possible to know whether  $x$  influenced  $y$ , or whether  $y$  influenced  $x$ , or whether the connection was spurious). Conversely, panel data avoids this pitfall precisely because the temporal ordering is self-evident for survey data collected at different points in time (Finkel 1995).

In contrast to cross-sectional data, time series data is sometimes employed to establish causal inference (e.g., Granger Causality, which uses past variable values to

predict future variable values for the different sample of respondents). However, establishing causality with time series data is a noisier and less precise process than with panel data, for the very reason that respondents are not the exact same individuals who were surveyed at the earlier point(s) in time. As such, observable changes on the value of the dependent variable are reflecting an estimate of change, as opposed to an exact measurement of change among the same individuals.

### **Comparing Panel Surveys between Presidencies**

My analytical research incorporates panel data from the first two years of the past three presidential administrations: the Barack Obama presidency from 2008-2010, the George W. Bush (hereafter referred to as Bush II) presidency from 2000-2002, and the Bill Clinton presidency from 1992-1994. Within the first few weeks after each presidential election, panel respondents were asked a series of questions about their political attitudes and political behaviors. These same respondents were surveyed again roughly two years later and asked many of the same questions. In the case of 2010, the panel re-contact survey took place in June-July 2010, shortly before the midterm elections. In the case of 2002 and 1994, the panel re-contact survey took place shortly after the midterm elections, in November-December of those years.

My central focus is on the political attitudes and political participation of Obama supporters from 2008-2010. Across all survey instruments, I compared Obama supporters to non-supporters. Merely observing hypothesized differences between these two groups, however, would not necessarily constitute evidence that these differences could be attributed to an enduring Obama Effect. Such differences could potentially be explained by a broader “presidential effect,” in other words, attitudinal or behavioral change also

experienced by the supporters of earlier presidents and therefore not unique to Obama supporters, or even a broader “candidate effect,” that is, change experienced by supporters of even the losing presidential candidates.

Because of these possibilities, I compared my 2008-2010 panel data to the corresponding data from the previous two presidencies mentioned above. I analyzed responses to identical or similar survey questions from each of the three panels in order to draw conclusions about Obama panel data in comparison to similar data for supporters of previous presidents. These comparisons were essential for allowing me to speak more narrowly about an actual lasting Obama Effect (or lack thereof) or more broadly about presidential effects and/or candidate effects.

Respondents for ANES surveys are recruited using traditional random sampling methods. The 2008-2010 panel included 1,588 respondents who were recruited by telephone and who completed surveys on the internet. The 2000-2002 panel included 1,187 respondents who were recruited by telephone and who also completed the surveys by telephone. The 1992-1994 panel included 759 respondents who were recruited by telephone and who completed the surveys face-to-face.

### **Variable Measurement and Missing Values**

My quantitative analyses of each empanelment revolved around the five dependent variables discussed in the previous chapter: political interest, political efficacy, and partisanship in Chapter 4 (on political attitudes); and voting behavior and civic engagement in Chapter 5 (on political participation). Operationally, these concepts are measured by the responses of panel participants. Content validity is supported by the phrasing of each survey instrument. For example, the question, “How interested are you

in information about what's going on in government and politics?" provides clear content validity as a measure of political interest.

As a measure of supporter enthusiasm, these five dependent variables in conjunction have strong construct validity. A relative increase in these areas—for example, an increase in political interest among Obama supporters relative to non-supporters—would reflect a certain form of increased enthusiasm (i.e., a positive Obama Effect), just as a relative decrease in efficacy would reflect a certain form of decreased enthusiasm (i.e., a negative Obama Effect). Each variable by itself could not be viewed as synonymous with enthusiasm, but taken together, these measurements of political attitudes and participation can tell us a great deal about voter enthusiasm, and in particular, how it changes over time.

My statistical models include three types of independent variables. First, each model incorporates two dichotomous presidential vote choice variables as my key predictors: "Voted for Obama: Yes or No?" and "Voted for McCain: Yes or No?" Including these vote choice variables allowed me to compare all Obama supporters to non-supporters and all McCain supporters to non-supporters, for purposes of intra-panel comparisons. (The term "non-supporters" refers to non-voters and third-party voters in addition to those who voted for the opposing candidate.)

Second, each model incorporates a lag of the dependent variable (e.g., "Political Interest in 2008" is the lag for the dependent variable "Political Interest in 2010") as a control variable. Without this lagged control variable, much of the causality for the value in the later period ( $t - 1$ ) would be mistakenly attributed to other independent variables instead of that same variable's value at the earlier period ( $t$ ). Inclusion of the lagged

variable thus avoids the problem of endogeneity by accounting for the earlier value instead of analyzing the later value in a vacuum.

Finally, each model includes as explanatory variables the five resource variables referenced in Chapter 2 (i.e. age, gender, race/ethnicity, income, and education).

Inclusion of resource variables allows for consideration of demographic effects in addition to candidate effects. As with the dependent variables, each of the independent variables in my models are operationalized as responses to the ANES survey items.

In rare instances, a given observation did call into question the reliability (i.e., accuracy in measurement) of certain survey instruments. A classic example, commonly observed in election surveys, is that many more respondents typically say they voted than those who actually have voted. This observation was true for each of my datasets. In such a case, it can be said that a voter turnout survey instrument is not reliable because it is not measuring actual turnout. However, this was not a major concern for this study because there is no reason to assume any systematic bias that would skew my results (i.e., no reason to believe one candidate's supporters would lie to the ANES about having voted more than any other candidate's supporters). Presumably, such measurement errors would be randomly distributed across groups of respondents. As such, my analysis of panel data should be unaffected by such reliability issues.

Missing values were not a major concern. For almost all the variables in all surveys, missing values represented less than 2% of total cases. Given the voluntary nature of empanelment, this extremely high response rate for all questions is unsurprising. Those who were disinclined to answer these types of political questions would likely have been filtered out of the first panel wave (in other words, they would

likely not be included in these samples). In light of such rarity, missing values are unlikely to have had any substantive impact on my statistical findings.

Where they do appear, missing values may exist in ANES survey data sets for several reasons, including the respondent not finishing the survey, refusing to answer a question, answering “don’t know,” or answering “not applicable.” In such cases, the respondents were dropped from the analyses, so that they are unaffected by cases of missing values.

### **Question Wording**

For each of the three presidential periods, I analyzed the exact same survey questions whenever possible. In the most ideal cases, identical questions were used across all surveys. For example, the same Party Identification (partisanship) question, “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or what?” appears in every survey from 1992-2010.

In a few instances, the essence of a question is identical, but the wording is slightly different. For example, in 2008-2010, respondents were asked, “How much can people like you affect what the government does?” on a 5-point rating scale, ranging from “Not at all” to “A great deal.” However, in the two earlier presidential periods, the corresponding survey question employed different Likert scale options: “People like me don't have any say about what the government does” with the 5-point scale ranging from “Agree Strongly” to “Disagree Strongly”. In each case, “1” represents the lowest level of political efficacy, and “5” represents the highest level of political efficacy.

In still other instances, I had to use different questions for different periods because they address the same concept despite variances in wording. Even minor

differences in question wording can make a significant difference, so this unideal decision reflected the limited and sometimes inconsistent nature of ANES survey questions from one election cycle to the next. For example from the 2008-2010 survey, I used the question, “How interested are you in information about what’s going on in government and politics?” This exact question was not asked in the earlier surveys. Therefore, to gauge political interest from 2000-2002 and from 1992-1994, I relied upon the survey question “Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you?” Although the questions are asking about two different areas of political interest, and therefore not ideal for comparative analysis, I determined that both questions sufficiently address the core concept of “political interest.”

Below are the full texts of survey questions that were incorporated into my analyses for Chapters 4-5. When necessary, the year of the question is included in parentheses to designate varied question wording between surveys. The questions on political attitudes relate to interest in politics, political efficacy, and partisanship. The questions on political participation relate to voter turnout, voter choice, and civic engagement.

### **Survey Questions: 2008-2010**

*Political Interest:* How interested are you in information about what’s going on in government and politics? (5-point scale)

*External Efficacy A:* How much do government officials care what people like you think? (5-point scale)

*External Efficacy B:* How much can people like you affect what the government does? (5-point scale)

*Partisanship/Party ID:* Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what? (7-point scale)



*Turnout (2010 only):* How likely is it that you will vote in the congressional elections this November? (5-point scale)

*Turnout (2008 only):* How about the election for the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington DC? Did you vote for a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives, or not?

*Meetings (2010 only):* During the past 12 months, have you attended a meeting to talk about political or social concerns, or have you not done this during the past 12 months?

*Meetings (2008 only):* Have you done this, or have you never done it? Attended a meeting to talk about political or social concerns.

*Protests (2010 only):* During the past 12 months, have you joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration, or have you not done this during the past 12 months?

*Protests (2008 only):* Have you done this, or have you never done it? Joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration.

#### **Survey Questions: 2000-2002 and 1992-1994**

*Political Interest:* Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? (5-point scale)

*External Efficacy A:* "Public officials don't care much what people like me think." Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement? (5-point scale)

*External Efficacy B:* "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement? (5-point scale)

*Partisanship/Party ID:* Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what? (7-point scale)

*Turnout (2002, 1994 only):* In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you—did you vote in the elections this November?

*Turnout (2000, 1992 only):* How about the election for the House of Representatives in Washington. Did you vote for a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives?

*Meetings:* Did you go to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate?

*Protests (2000, 2002 only):* Aside from a strike against your employer, in the past twelve months, have you taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration on some national or local issue?

### **Hypothesis Testing**

In Chapters 4 and 5, my quantitative analysis chapters, I tested several specific hypotheses on relative change in political attitudes and political participation. My hypothesis-testing was applied to all three panels (2008-2010, 2000-2002, and 1992-1994): within each panel, I examined the attitudes and participation of Obama supporters relative to non-supporters, as well as those of McCain supporters relative to non-supporters. This allowed me to determine whether there was a possibility of a positive Obama Effect (if the results support the hypothesis), a negative Obama Effect (if the results run contrary to the hypothesis), a candidate effect experienced by supporters of both candidates, or no effect at all (the null hypothesis). I then drew comparisons between panels to determine whether the initial findings are unique to the 2008-2010 cycle, or whether any significant results can be better explained as a broader presidential effect or a candidate effect. A presidential effect would be one experienced by the supporters of winning candidates (i.e., Obama, Bush II, and Clinton), whereas a candidate effect would be one experienced by the supporters of both winning and losing candidates.

The dependent variable for each specific hypothesis is the political attitude or political behavior in the midterm year. My general hypothesis is that presidential vote choice has a significant impact on attitudinal and behavioral change over time. I generally expect the changes between 2008 and 2010 to be in the direction that would be considered a positive Obama Effect.

I also expect positive Obama Effects to be most concentrated among the demographic groups that were most supportive of Obama in the 2008 election. Tables 1-5 below present cross-tabulations for my 2008—2010 panel data that break down each demographic group by voice choice.

**Table 1 Gender and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008**

Candidate	Male	Female	Total
McCain	47.8	37.9	42.0
Obama	39.8	52.1	47.0
Neither	12.4	10.0	11.0
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	655	933	1588

*Gender:* Table 1 reveals a major gender gap in candidate support among respondents, with Obama defeating McCain 52-40 among female respondents, and McCain defeating Obama 48-40 among male respondents. The panel included 933 women (58.8%) and only 655 men (41.2%). Therefore, Obama received a substantially wider margin of the vote among the much larger gender group in the sample. Clearly, this gender gap favoring female respondents was a major driver of Obama’s electoral success, leading me to hypothesize a significant and positive Obama Effect among females relative to males and a significant interaction effect indicating a stronger positive Obama Effect on Obama-supporting women than on Obama-supporting men.

*Age:* Table 2 shows the breakdown of presidential vote choice by age group. (Note that “age” refers to the respondents’ age on Election Day 2008.) While a cursory glance may suggest that younger respondents were Obama’s main driving force to success, their impact should not be overstated. The gap in candidate support was indeed widest among this 18-29 year old group, but they represented only about 6% of

respondents, the smallest portion of the panel by far. The next smallest group was 30-44 year olds, who represented about 23% of respondents.

**Table 2 Age and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008**

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60- above	Total
McCain	30.4	36.1	41.2	49.2	42.0
Obama	45.7	47.5	48.4	45.3	47.0
Neither	23.9	16.4	10.5	5.4	11.0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	92	360	622	514	1588

The more noteworthy takeaway from Table 2 is the remarkably consistent share of the vote that Obama received from each age group. His support ranged from 45% to 48%, meaning he drew almost the same proportion of support from senior citizens as from younger respondents. Thus, the age gaps between candidates are almost entirely attributable to McCain's wide range of outcomes between age groups. McCain received only 30 % support from the youngest bracket, but over 49% from the oldest group of respondents.

Nevertheless, the age gap between candidates did narrow with each bracket of older respondents relative to the next-youngest bracket. This leads me to hypothesize a significant and positive Obama Effect among younger respondents relative to older respondents and a significant interaction effect, indicating a stronger positive Obama Effect on younger Obama supporters than on older Obama supporters.

**Table 3. Race and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008**

	<b>White, non- Hispanic</b>	<b>Black, non- Hispanic</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Other, non- Hispanic</b>	<b>Total</b>
McCain	46.7	1.8	29.6	27.0	42.0
Obama	43.1	88.3	50.7	54.0	47.0
Neither	10.2	9.9	19.7	19.0	11.0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	1343	111	71	63	1588

*Race/Ethnicity:* Table 3 shows the breakdown of presidential vote choice by race/ethnicity. White respondents comprised over 84% of the sample and supported McCain by a relatively narrow margin of 47-43%. But the three non-white groups supported Obama over McCain by a much larger margin of 66% to 20%. Thus, while black, Hispanic, and “other” respondents collectively comprised only about one sixth of the panel, the overwhelming support for Obama among these non-white subgroups more than made up for his deficit among white voters, effectively accounting for his entire margin of victory. This leads me to hypothesize a significant and positive Obama Effect among non-white respondents relative to white respondents and a significant interaction effect, indicating a stronger positive Obama Effect on non-white Obama supporters than on white Obama supporters.

**Table 4. Income and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008**

	<b>Nonresponse</b>	<b>Less Than \$15,000</b>	<b>\$15,000 to \$49,999</b>	<b>\$50,000 to \$74,999</b>	<b>\$75,000 to \$99,999</b>	<b>\$100,000 or more</b>	<b>Total</b>
McCain	50.0	24.3	40.6	41.8	42.3	46.8	42.0
Obama	30.0	54.1	46.5	46.7	48.0	46.5	47.0
Neither	20.0	21.6	12.9	11.5	9.8	6.7	11.0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	10	74	490	366	246	402	1588

*Income:* Table 4 shows the breakdown for presidential vote choice by income level. Unlike the breakdowns for gender, age, and race/ethnicity, which showed McCain defeating Obama among at least one subgroup, Obama led McCain by a substantial margin among all income brackets except among those earning over \$100,000. Among those highest earners, Obama and McCain effectively tied for support, with each candidate receiving about 47% of the vote among respondents.

Most noteworthy here is that major difference between the three middle brackets, in which Obama defeated McCain by a margin of 5-6% and the lowest income bracket, in which Obama defeated McCain by a 30-point margin, 52% to 24%. This leads me to hypothesize a significant and positive Obama Effect among lower income respondents relative to higher income respondents and a significant interaction effect, indicating a stronger positive Obama Effect among lower income Obama supporters than among higher income Obama supporters.

*Education:* Table 5 shows the breakdown of vote choice by education level. Although the widest gap in candidate support was found among those with no high school diploma, this result was likely skewed by a very low number of respondents (33) in this subgroup. A clearer pattern emerged across the other four subgroups, with Obama losing to McCain 44-38 among those with a high school diploma but no college education, and losing 45-41 among those with some college education but no Bachelor's degree. Conversely, Obama defeated McCain 53-41 among college graduates, and by an even wider margin of 56-38 among those with graduate degrees.

**Table 5. Education and Presidential Vote Choice, 2008**

	<b>No high school diploma</b>	<b>High school diploma</b>	<b>Some college, no Bachelor's degree</b>	<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	<b>Graduate degree</b>	<b>Total</b>
McCain	27.3	44.4	44.8	41.0	38.2	42.0
Obama	51.5	37.7	41.0	53.3	55.6	47.0
Neither	21.2	17.9	14.2	5.7	6.2	11.0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	33	223	585	407	340	1588

Interestingly, the trend here was the inverse of the observed trend for income levels. Given that Obama performed best among the lowest income earners, one might have expected that Obama would also perform best among the least-educated respondents. However with a moderately weak correlation between income and education in this panel (.393), the opposite was true. Obama performed best among college graduates and those with advanced degrees. This leads me to hypothesize a significant and positive Obama Effect among higher-education respondents relative to lower-education respondents and a significant interaction effect, indicating a stronger positive Obama Effect among higher-education Obama supporters than among lower-education Obama supporters.

### **Major Hypotheses for Political Attitudes**

1. Obama supporters will have increased or sustained their political interest relative to non-supporters.
2. Obama supporters will have increased or sustained their external political efficacy relative to non-supporters.

3. Obama supporters will have increased or sustained their partisan loyalty (partisanship) relative to non-supporters.

### **Major Hypotheses for Political Participation**

1. Obama supporters will have increased or sustained their voter turnout levels relative to non-supporters.
2. Obama supporters will have increased or sustained their attendance of political meetings relative to non-supporters.
3. Obama supporters will have increased or sustained their attendance of political protests relative to non-supporters.

### **Statistical Testing for Quantitative Analysis**

My statistical results in Chapters 4 and 5 were derived from OLS regression models or binary logistic regression models. (Cross-tabulation data for these models are presented in Tables 6-12 in Appendix A.) I first tested each hypothesis using a “baseline” regression model using two-tailed *t* tests. These baseline models included only three independent variables: Voted for [President], Voted for [Challenger], and the lag of the dependent variable. As noted above, each vote choice variable is dichotomous. These baseline models allowed me to make an initial determination about the possibility of a positive Obama Effect or other possible effects (i.e., negative Obama Effects, presidential effects, or candidate effects).

I then ran each model a second time with resource (demographic) variables included along with the three aforementioned predictors from that baseline model. Incorporating these resource variables could result in finding significant additive effects, in other words, being an Obama supporter mattered *x* amount, being female mattered *y*



amount, and being low income mattered z amount. Although my analyses generally were focused on comparisons of each candidate's supporters to nonsupporters (as opposed to men to women, young to old, etc), testing for additive effects in this way allowed me to estimate the separate (and cumulative) statistical effects of multiple independent variables on a given political attitude or behavior.

Finally, one-by-one I added an interaction term to each model to test for possible interaction effects. An interaction term is created by multiplying the vote choice value by a given demographic variable value (e.g., Obama\*Gender); as such, there were 10 interaction terms to test for every hypothesis (i.e., "Voted for Obama" multiplied by all five resource variables, and "Voted for McCain" multiplied by all five resource variables). Analysis of interaction terms provided for more valuable analysis of the impact of demographics than that of additive effects alone. A significant interaction effect is a multiplicative effect indicating that vote choice is significant when moderated by a given demographic value. For example, the Obama\*Gender interaction term allows for direct comparisons of Obama-supporting women to Obama-supporting men. Testing for interaction effects allowed me to determine if the attitudinal or behavioral outcomes of these two subgroups are significantly different from each other.

### **Interview Methodology: Using In-Depth Interviews for Qualitative Analysis**

During the summer of 2013 I conducted 30 in-depth, ethnographic interviews with former Purdue University students who volunteered on campus for the 2008 Obama campaign. As a student volunteer for that campaign, I helped maintained a spreadsheet with contact info for the more than 300 Purdue students who volunteered for the Obama campaign that fall; thus I was able to sample from this spreadsheet to contact volunteers

for these interviews. I contacted 43 former volunteers before reaching my target number of 30. This included 11 non-responses and 2 refusals, resulting in a contact rate of 74%. (I discuss my personal involvement and sampling technique more broadly in Chapter 6.) The purpose of these interviews was to broaden my understanding of whether or not there was a positive, unique, and lasting Obama Effect that the 2008 Obama campaign had on its most enthusiastic supporters: those who chose to volunteer for the campaign.

These interviews lasted roughly 15-20 minutes each and were conducted by phone. I used a recording application to record each interview for purposes of accurate transcription. Each interviewee was asked to elaborate on a series of questions related to their political attitudes and behaviors over the 5-year period from 2008-2013. The interview questions were largely open-ended and designed to provide insight into the causes of their political attitudes and the motivations behind their political behaviors over the past 5 years. (The interviewee recruitment information sheet, script to begin the interview, and full list of questions can be found in the appendices.)

Needless to say, this sample of 30 interviewees who spent a portion of their free time volunteering for a political campaign represents a dramatically different sample than that of the ANES survey respondents upon which my quantitative analysis is based. In fact, while my interviewees would not necessarily be considered “elite” in the socioeconomic or professional sense of the word, these may indeed be considered “elite interviews” in that they were activists (not lay participants or observers) in the field which they were asked to discuss. In other words, while the ANES data employed in my quantitative analysis was derived from surveys with a representative sample of the national population, my interview data was derived from a convenience sample of

interviewees who were not representative of and far more engaged in the Obama campaign than the national population.

As with the ANES data, my interview questions fall into 2 categories: political attitudes and political participation. I ask first about the former volunteers' attitudes on political interest, external political efficacy, Barack Obama's handling of the presidency, and the direction of the country. I then ask about their political participation in terms of voting behavior, campaign engagement, and volunteerism for other political causes. Finally, I explore the possible connection between the volunteers' participation in the 2008 Obama campaign and their other forms of civic engagement since 2008, such as their attendance of local political meetings or volunteer work for non-political causes.

The major benefit of this qualitative approach was the open-ended nature of my interview questions. This allowed me to explore the major themes from my quantitative analysis in greater depth and through analysis of volunteers who were presumably uniquely susceptible to a positive, unique, and lasting Obama Effect. The closed-ended ANES questions allowed only for respondents to register their attitudes and behaviors on a limited response-set, and did not allow for follow-up questions, whereas my open-ended interview questions allowed for respondents to delve deeper into these subjects and elaborate on their attitudes and behaviors whenever I prompted them to do so. This line of qualitative interview-based research, then, stands alone as an analysis of the Obama Effect on former campaign volunteers; but also functions as a powerful complement to my quantitative analyses in the chapters to come.

**Appendix A: Cross Tabulation Tables for 2008 Survey Responses**

**Table 6 Political Interest and Candidate Choice, 2008**

Interest	Not interested at all	Slightly interested	Moderately interested	Very interested	Extremely interested	Total
McCain	0.70%	5.70%	24.70%	40.90%	27.90%	100.00%
Obama	0.80%	5.50%	23.60%	39.50%	30.70%	100.00%
Neither	5.70%	19.00%	39.10%	24.10%	12.10%	100.00%
Total	1.30%	7.10%	25.80%	38.40%	27.50%	100.00%
N	21	112	409	610	436	1588

**Table 7 Political Efficacy A and Candidate Choice, 2008**

Efficacy A	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal	Total
McCain	9.60%	35.80%	45.60%	7.30%	1.60%	100.00%
Obama	4.10%	25.60%	50.70%	14.70%	4.80%	100.00%
Neither	24.10%	35.60%	28.70%	7.50%	4.00%	100.00%
Total	8.60%	31.00%	46.20%	10.80%	3.40%	100.00%
N	137	492	733	172	54	1588

**Table 8 Political Efficacy B and Candidate Choice, 2008**

Efficacy B	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal	Total
McCain	9.60%	36.70%	38.80%	10.90%	3.90%	100.00%
Obama	3.20%	28.40%	42.70%	17.10%	8.60%	100.00%
Neither	20.10%	40.80%	25.30%	10.30%	3.40%	100.00%
Total	7.70%	33.20%	39.20%	13.80%	6.00%	100.00%
N	123	528	622	219	96	1588

**Table 9 Party Identification and Candidate Choice, 2008**

Party ID	Strong Democrat	Not very strong D	Independent Democrat	Independent-Independent	Independent Republican	Not very strong R	Strong Republican
McCain	3.00%	6.00%	1.30%	6.10%	15.90%	21.30%	46.30%
Obama	47.50%	20.50%	17.00%	6.60%	2.30%	5.10%	1.10%
Neither	10.90%	11.50%	12.60%	25.30%	12.60%	19.00%	8.00%
Total	24.80%	13.40%	9.90%	8.40%	9.10%	13.40%	20.80%
N	394	213	158	134	145	213	331

**Table 10 Voter Turnout and Candidate Choice, 2008**

Turnout	Nonvoter	Voter	Total
McCain	0.10%	99.90%	100.00%
Obama	0.10%	99.90%	100.00%
Neither	77.60%	22.40%	100.00%
Total	8.60%	91.40%	100.00%
N	137	1451	1588

**Table 11 Attending Political Meetings and Candidate Choice, 2008**

Meetings	Have never done this	Have done this	Total
McCain	43.50%	56.50%	100.00%
Obama	41.00%	59.00%	100.00%
Neither	69.50%	30.50%	100.00%
Total	45.20%	54.80%	100.00%
N	718	870	1588

**Table 12 Attending Political Protests and Candidate Choice, 2008**

Protests	Have Never Done This	Have done this	Total
McCain	81.40%	18.60%	100.00%
Obama	66.40%	33.60%	100.00%
Neither	85.50%	14.50%	100.00%
Total	74.70%	25.30%	100.00%
N	1184	400	1584

**Appendix B: Interviewee Recruitment Information Sheet**

Title. After the Honeymoon: The Obama Effect on Political Attitudes, Political Participation, and Civic Engagement

Principal Investigator. Dr. James McCann, Purdue University, Department of Political Science

Purpose of Research. To gather information from former 2008 Obama campaign volunteers regarding political attitudes, civic engagement, and political participation, for

purposes of understanding how and why political attitudes and behaviors develop or change over time.

Specific Procedures. Your interview will be conducted via telephone or on the Purdue University campus, whichever you choose. In the interview you will be asked a series of questions about your political attitudes, civic engagement, and political participation.

You may refuse to answer any questions if you choose. The interview will be conducted by Laurent Vesely, a doctoral student in the Department of Political Science at Purdue University. Your interview will be audio-recorded for purposes of transcription only.

Duration of Participation. You will be interviewed once for about 15-30 minutes.

Risks. Potential risks in research such as invasion of privacy, breach of confidentiality, and psychological harm are minimal or absent in this research. Please be aware that your personal information will not be accessed or collected without your knowledge and consent; that no information you provide will be disseminated outside the research setting; and that the risk of psychological harm is minimal given that you may decline to answer any questions if you choose.

Benefits. There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this study.

Compensation. You will not receive any compensation for your voluntary participation in this research.

Confidentiality. The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight. Your records associated with this research will be kept confidential at all times and your name will not be reported in the research. The name, audio-recording, and transcription associated with

of your interview will be destroyed at the conclusion of this research and no later than August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

Voluntary Nature of Participation. You do not have to participate in this research project.

If you agree to participate you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

Contact Information. If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact the Principal Investigator for this research: Dr. James McCann at 765-494-0738, or the interviewer, Laurent Vesely at 765-543-4996. Laurent Vesely is designated Key Personnel for this research and may be considered your first point of contact. If you have concerns about the treatment of research participants, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at Purdue University, Ernest C. Young Hall, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 1032, 155 S. Grant St., West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114. The phone number for the Board is (765) 494-5942. The email address is [irb@purdue.edu](mailto:irb@purdue.edu).

Informed Consent: I have had the opportunity to read this information form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research project and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research project described above.

### **Appendix C: Script to Begin Interview**

First off, thank you for your willingness to be interviewed for this research project. This interview will last about 15 minutes and will be audio-recorded for purposes of accurate transcription. Just as a reminder, your records will be kept confidential and your name will not be publicized in this research. At any time, please let me know if you prefer not

to answer any question, and I will simply skip to the next question. Are you ready to begin?

#### **Appendix D: Interview Questions**

First, I'd like to ask you about some of your political attitudes.

- 1) How interested are you in what's going on in government and politics these days?  
Has your interest changed very much over the past 5 years or remained fairly consistent?
- 2) Do you think the government cares what people like you think?
- 3) How do you feel about Barack Obama these days? And how have your feelings about him changed (or not changed) since his 2008 campaign?
- 4) How do you feel about the way things are going for the U.S. these days? Are you more optimistic and positive about the future, or are you more pessimistic and negative?

Second, I'd like to ask you about your political participation since 2008.

- 1) Did you vote in the midterm elections in November 2010 and/or the presidential election of 2012? Do you think of voting more as a duty or responsibility, or is it something where you really need to be inspired by specific candidates or parties to vote?
- 2) Have you volunteered on any campaigns since the 2008 Obama campaign? For what campaign? What kind of stuff did you do?
- 3) Can you think of any other way in which you participated in politics since the 2008 campaign, such as contributing money to a candidate, putting a campaign



bumper sticker on your car, contacting an elected official about an issue, or attending a political protest?

- 4) Was the 2008 Obama campaign the first political campaign for which you ever volunteered?

Lastly, I'd like to ask you a few questions about civic engagement.

- 1) In the last 5 years, have you voluntarily joined any non-political organizations or associations?
- 2) In the last 5 years, have you attended any kind of community meeting about social or community issues?
- 3) In the past 5 years, have you voluntarily participated in any kind of charity work or donated to any charity yourself?
- 4) Since 2008, can you think of any other type of volunteer work that you have engaged in?
- 5) Finally: When you think back to volunteering on that 2008 Obama campaign 5 years later, is there anything in particular that is really memorable for you or that you think of as having had a lasting impact on your life?

## CHAPTER 4: POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND THE OBAMA EFFECT

### **Theory**

Democratic theory suggests that in an electoral democracy, political candidates and parties will seek to mobilize specifically those segments of the electorate most likely to support them in the next election. Presidential candidates, however, have a vested interest in thinking beyond just the upcoming election. Among other titles, they are seeking to become the de facto leaders of their respective parties. Both statements hold true even for the most “candidate-centered” campaigns, since presidents cannot accomplish much without the support of lower party officeholders. A major goal of presidential campaigns, then, should be to establish the highest quality of democratic engagement possible. A campaign with a particularly high quality of democratic engagement may build coalitions of electoral support not only for the upcoming election, but for future election cycles as well. As such, presidential campaigns should seek to produce long-term positive effects on the political attitudes, and, ultimately, on the future political participation of their supporters (Miller and Shanks, 1996; Holbrook, 1996; Mayhew, 1997; Campbell et al, 1960).

The 2008 Obama campaign experienced unprecedented success by many short-term measures, such as fundraising, volunteerism, and voter turnout. However, the campaign also put a tremendous amount of effort into high-quality democratic

engagement with the electorate, with the express hope of producing more durable positive effects on its supporters. Their campaign outreach and mobilization efforts were notoriously methodical and sustained. As I discussed in Chapter 1, they were quite explicit in seeking this longer-term form of engagement with the electorate, even going as far as to claim that pulling the lever for Obama in the general election was not enough. The campaign sought much more from its supporters, asking that they stay engaged, that they believe in their own power to create change, and that they remain involved in politics even after the election. In sum, the 2008 Obama campaign sought to have a truly transformational effect on the political attitudes and participation of its supporters. But did it succeed?

In this chapter I address this question as it pertains to three political attitudes that may play particularly strong roles in driving long-term democratic engagement within the electorate: political interest, external political efficacy, and partisanship. Political interest refers to prospective voters' inclinations to pay attention to public affairs and to political campaigns. External political efficacy concerns voters' confidence in their own abilities to meaningfully engage and influence government and politics because government is responsive. Partisanship refers to voters' degree of loyalty or lack thereof to a given political party. While voters' levels of political interest, efficacy, and/or partisanship may largely be a function of long-term socialization which depend on their family, friends, school, and media, I have theorized that such attitudes may also be influenced considerably by highly effective candidate-centered campaigns such as the 2008 Obama campaign.

### **Hypothesizing an Obama Effect on Political Attitudes**

My general hypothesis for this chapter is that the 2008 Obama campaign had a significant, lasting, and positive (or even transformational) impact on the political attitudes of its supporters over time. My approach is to compare Obama supporters directly to non-supporters (i.e., McCain supporters + third-party voters + nonvoters.) I test each specific hypothesis using OLS multiple regression models. A “positive” Obama Effect would manifest as an increase in political interest, external efficacy, and partisanship among Obama supporters relative to non-supporters over time; conversely, a “negative” Obama Effect would manifest as a relative decrease over time in the political interest, external efficacy, and partisanship of Obama supporters.

Initially, I considered any significant impact (in either direction) to be a sign of only a possible Obama Effect. This qualification is warranted because what initially appears to be a confirmed hypothesis may actually reflect a larger presidential effect (i.e., one typically experienced by supporters of winning campaigns) or an even broader candidate effect (i.e. one typically experienced by supporters of both winning and losing candidates). In other words, Obama supporters may have experienced presidential effects or candidate effects that are not unique to that group. To account for these possibilities, I performed comparable hypothesis-testing for the 2000—2002 campaign, comparing the political attitudes of Bush II supporters to those of non-supporters, and for the 1992—1994 campaign, comparing Clinton supporters to non-supporters.

My dependent variable for each hypothesis test is the value of the political attitude in the midterm year (i.e., 2010, 2002, or 1994). The lag of this variable (i.e., the

value of the attitude in the corresponding presidential year) is always included as a control variable in each model to avoid the problem of endogeneity (see Chapter 3).

The key independent variables in each regression model are “Voted for [President]” and “Voted for [Challenger].” Each is dichotomous, so that everyone on the panel who voted for Obama is compared on the value of the dependent variable to everyone on the panel who did not vote for Obama (i.e. McCain voters + third-party voters + nonvoters). Likewise, everyone who voted for McCain is compared to everyone who did not vote for McCain (i.e., Obama voters + third party voters + nonvoters). In short, my two key predictors are my vote choice variables. Since both dummy predictors are included in each model, the coefficient always indicates the difference between voters for a particular candidate and everyone else who did not vote for that candidate.

My baseline models include only the vote choice variables and the lagged dependent variable as predictors. After each baseline regression, I ran another multivariate regression model to test for demographic effects as well. These broader models allowed me to test for positive additive effects of gender, age, race/ethnicity, income, and education. I also ran models incorporating all interaction terms that moderate vote choice by a demographic value. Interaction terms allow me to test for multiplicative effects instead of only additive effects.

### **Political Interest**

Major Hypothesis #1: Political Interest. My first major hypothesis is that from 2008-2010, Obama supporters increased or sustained their political interest relative to non-supporters. I expected this positive Obama Effect to be most pronounced among those subgroups that were most supportive of Obama, for instance, female respondents,

younger respondents, non-white respondents, lower income respondents, and highly educated respondents. The hypothesis would be rejected if a negative Obama Effect (that is, a decrease in political interest in supporters relative to non-supporters) was found. The null hypothesis states that vote choice did not have any impact on the direction of political interest between 2008—2010.

The measure of political interest for this survey was: “How interested are you in information about what’s going on in government and politics?” (As noted in Chapter 3, question wording sometimes varies between surveys.) The response set consisted of a 5-point scale, with “1” indicating “not interested at all” in government and politics and “5” indicating that the participant was “extremely interested” in government and politics. Obama-McCain Findings on Political Interest. Contrary to my hypothesis, results from Table 13 revealed a possible negative Obama Effect on political interest rather than a positive one. The lagged dependent variable, with a continuity score of .639, indicates a fair but not overwhelming level of stability in political interest during these two years; but it was only McCain supporters who experienced a statistically significant increase (.191) relative to non-supporters. (Obama supporters actually experienced a relative decrease of -.041, but this was not statistically significant.) This possible negative Obama Effect represents a rejection of my hypothesis and a rejection of the null as well. Results were statistically significant, but in the opposite direction than I had hypothesized.

The broader model reflected in Table 14 indicates that even after controlling for demographics (gender, age, and race/ethnicity, income, education), McCain supporters still increased their interest relative to non-supporters (.120), albeit at the lower

confidence level of .10 as opposed to .01 for the baseline model. The relative decrease among Obama supporters of  $-.063$  was not statistically insignificant in this model either.

In terms of additive effects, in addition to being a McCain voter, both gender and age were statistically significant. Contrary to my expectations, for the period of 2008-2010, it was men rather than women who experienced a relative and significant increase in political interest (.172). Similarly surprising was that the older the respondents, the more likely they were to increase their relative political interest over time. I found that every additional year of age corresponded to an increase in political interest of .009, representing significance at the .01 level. It should be noted that for purposes of my regression models, the actual age of respondents was incorporated in the form of continuous interval data, as opposed to the ordinal age brackets presented in Chapter 3, Table 2. This was done to provide more specificity for my causal explanations than was necessary or practical for cross-tabulation purposes.

Race/ethnicity did not appear to have a significant impact on interest in government and politics over this time period. I had expected that non-white respondents would increase their interest relative to white respondents, but no significant effect was observable. It should be noted that for purposes of my regression models, non-white respondents, meaning black, Hispanic, or “other” respondents, were grouped together and coded as 2 to create the nominal and dichotomous “race/ethnicity” variable. Although this grouping was far from ideal, non-whites collectively comprised a relatively small 15.4% of the panel and supported Obama overwhelmingly. Therefore it was more logical to group them into a sufficiently large  $n$  for purposes of hypothesis testing.

Likewise, income and education appeared to have no impact. I had expected lower income respondents and highly educated respondents to experience a positive Obama Effect. However neither group increased their political interest at a statistically significant level.

Testing for interaction effects revealed two highly significant interaction terms: Obama\*Gender (-.174, see Table 15) and Obama\*Income (-.055, see Table 16). In other words, both gender and income were statistically significant when moderated by support for Obama. (McCain supporters were not distinguishable by gender or income.) The Obama\*Gender effect was particularly interesting since my gender hypothesis had already been rejected in the additive model: it was men, not women, who experienced the relative increase in political interest. The interaction effect ran similarly contrary to my hypothesized direction: it was specifically Obama-supporting women who decreased their interest so sharply, relative specifically to Obama-supporting men.

The income variable did not produce an additive effect; however, when moderated by support for Obama, an observable difference appeared between lower-income Obama supporters and higher-income Obama supporters. Each increase of 1 income bracket corresponded to a -.055 decrease, indicating a substantial falloff in relative political interest among higher-income Obama supporters compared to lower-income Obama supporters. This effect occurred in the hypothesized direction.

Excepting this last observation, each statistically significant result on political interest ran contrary to my hypothesis. There was no grand correspondence between support for Obama and increased political interest; in fact, the opposite appeared to be true under certain conditions. One explanation could be an actual negative Obama Effect



on political interest, rather than a positive effect, manifested as increased interest among those who opposed him. A second possibility could be a negative presidential effect, similarly manifested as increased relative interest among opponents of other winning candidates as well as Obama. I considered these possibilities by turning my attention to the 2000—2002 and 1992—1994 panels for comparative purposes.

Bush II-Gore Findings on Political Interest. Results from the baseline model (Table 17) reveal a significant increase in political interest among both Bush II and Gore supporters between 2000 and 2002. The lagged continuity score of .431 indicates a relatively low degree of stability in political interest over those 2 years; therefore, it is unsurprising that the coefficients for Bush II (.244) and Gore (.197) were substantially higher than for Obama and McCain (see Table 13).

The Bush II coefficient remains largely unchanged (.224) when demographics are introduced into the model (Table 18). The relative increase in political interest among Bush II supporters remains significant at the .05 level (compared to .01 in the baseline model). For Gore supporters, however, the significance of the increase disappears, indicating that it was likely attributable to variables other than the Gore vote choice.

This model identified four different demographic variables as statistically significant. The first variable was age: as with the 2008-2010 panel, older respondents tended to increase their political interest relative to younger respondents. Each year of additional age was associated with an increase of .014. Second, respondents' gender had implications similar to 2008-2010, with women decreasing their political interest relative to men. The coefficient for the Bush II-Gore cycle was actually twice as large (.347) as it was for the Obama-McCain cycle (.172), indicating an even more substantial gender

effect. The other two significant variables—race/ethnicity and income—had not been significant in the Obama-McCain cycle. In this cycle, being non-white was associated with an increase in political interest (.294), while higher incomes were actually associated with decreased political interest, with each added income bracket corresponding to a decrease of -.042.

Based on the significant Obama\*Gender and Obama\*Income interaction effects shown in Tables 15 and 16, I tested four interaction terms for the Bush II-Gore election cycle: Bush II\*Gender, Bush II\*Income, Gore\*Gender, and Gore\*Income. None of these interaction terms appeared to be statistically significant.

Clinton-Bush I Findings on Political Interest. Next, I turn to comparative data from the 1992-1994 cycle. Findings from Table 19 reveal that Clinton and Bush supporters both experienced a significant increase in political interest relative to non-supporters. The lagged continuity score of .382 ranks among the lowest in any of my regression models, indicating relatively high fluctuations in levels of political interest during this cycle. These fluctuations also help explain the relatively large coefficients of .440 for Clinton supporters and .325 for Bush I supporters.

As Table 20 shows, both vote choice variables and nearly all demographic variables were shown to have a significant additive effect, with the statistically insignificant race/ethnicity variable being the lone exception. Even after controlling for demographics, there was a statistically significant relative increase in political interest among both Clinton supporters (.272) and Bush I supporters (.305). Both were significant at the .01 level in the baseline model, but dropped to the .05 significance level in this model incorporating demographic variables.

For this 1992-1994 cycle, the additive effects of both gender and age were very similar to those of the other two cycles. Once again, older respondents increased their interest relative to younger respondents; each year of additional age corresponded to an increase in political interest of .012. And once again, women's political interest decreased substantially compared to that of men, as indicated by the relatively large coefficient of .326.

My analysis of the income and education variables did not produce such clear patterns. Neither had been significant in the Obama-McCain cycle. Income was statistically significant for the 2000-2002 cycle, but not in 1992-1994, for which each increase in income bracket corresponded to a .018 increase in political interest. The education variable had not been significant for the other cycles, but for 1992-1994, each increase in educational level corresponded to a .108 increase in political interest.

Summary and Discussion of Political Interest. The most interesting observation from my findings above is that I had to reject my major hypothesis of a positive Obama Effect on political interest. In fact, the opposite seems to have been the case. The supporters of all five of the other candidates in my analysis actually did increase their relative political interest significantly over the course of two years. Obama was the only candidate whose supporters actually decreased their relative interest (albeit not at a statistically significant level) during this span.

This was noteworthy especially because the percentage of respondents who identified as "very interested" or "extremely interested" was very similar for both candidates: a combined 70.2% for Obama supporters and a combined 68.8% for McCain supporters (see Table 6). Such comparable percentages indicate that the relative decrease

in interest among Obama supporters was not due to having been much more interested in 2008. It would be appropriate, then, to identify these results as having a negative Obama Effect on political interest.

One possible explanation for their relative falloff in political interest is that Obama supporters experienced burnout or fatigue due to relatively heavy campaign involvement. They may have expended so much energy during the 2008 campaign that they were content with the election itself and less interested, relatively speaking, in the governance to follow. This potential explanation would gain considerable traction if the analysis in the next section would show a relative increase in external political efficacy among Obama supporters. Decreased political interest, combined with increased external efficacy, could indicate that Obama supporters felt exhausted after a high level of campaign engagement and were thus inclined to trust the Obama administration to do the rights things while in office (whether they were paying attention or not).

An alternative explanation that seemed very plausible from the 2008-2010 data, but that I found to be lacking after comparisons to the earlier data, is the rise of the Tea Party Movement. Initially, I considered that perhaps the Tea Party phenomenon manifested as increased political interest among those least supportive of Obama, with his election serving as a “focusing event” that prompted increased political interest rooted in negative attitudes (e.g., concern, anger, fear, etc.). Looking only at the results for 2008-2010, such an explanation may seem not only possible but even intuitive. However, the comparisons to 2000-2002 and 1992-1994 election periods make this explanation appear less plausible. After all, the relative increase in political interest of McCain supporters was actually lower than the comparative relative increases for the supporters of Bush II,

Gore, Clinton, and Bush I. This suggests that a relative increase in political interest may be a fairly common candidate effect. The results, then, are likely indicating something closer to the burnout theory mentioned above. The Obama supporters may have simply disengaged after the election because they were relatively exhausted after accomplishing their major goal of helping to elect Obama.

Turning my attention back to demographics: I had initially hypothesized that the demographic groups most supportive of Obama would experience a positive effect on political interest, and/or that the significance of those demographics could be fleshed out by incorporating interaction terms into the models. But this was rarely the case. For race/ethnicity, income, and education, the null hypothesis was confirmed (i.e., no statistical significance).

But most notably, in all three cycles women actually decreased their political interest relative to men, and younger participants *decreased* their political interest relative to older participants. I would be reluctant to characterize the age result as a negative Obama Effect, given that the interaction terms were not statistically significant. I would, however, characterize the 2008 gender finding as a somewhat negative Obama Effect given that Obama-supporting women experienced a decline in interest relative to non-supporting women. More broadly, though, such gender and age effects were not attributable to the 2008 Obama campaign, given the broader patterns of gender and age effects that spanned across multiple election cycles and presidencies. For gender, this pattern was surprising, given the truism in American elections that women consistently vote at higher rates than men. One might speculate that women may be more engaged in elections, while men experience a relative uptick in interest during the governance period

after the presidential election. For age, the established pattern was unsurprising. While I hypothesized a positive Obama Effect on subgroups that were associated with the Obama electoral coalition, such as younger voters, I cannot say I was surprised to find that younger participants were most likely to become disinterested after the election, compared to older participants who are presumably more likely to remain interested in government and politics year in and year out.

### **External Political Efficacy**

Major Hypothesis #2: External Political Efficacy. My second major hypothesis is that between 2008 and 2010, Obama supporters increased or sustained their external political efficacy relative to non-supporters. Once again, I expected this positive Obama Effect to be most pronounced among the subgroups most supportive of Obama (i.e. women, younger respondents, non-white respondents, low income respondents, and highly educated respondents). I also tested for interaction effects (i.e., vote choice multiplied by a given resource variable) to determine whether any significance from demographics is additive or multiplicative (or both) in nature. The major hypothesis would be rejected if a negative Obama Effect was found, that is, if I observed a decrease in external efficacy among Obama supporters relative to non-supporters. The null hypothesis states that vote choice did not have any impact on the direction of external efficacy from 2008-2010.

My analysis incorporated two different survey instruments as measures of external efficacy. (I will present descriptive results for both measures before delving into a summary and discussion of outcomes.) The first instrument, External Efficacy A, asks: “How much do government officials care what people like you think?” The second instrument, External Efficacy B, asks: “How much can people like you affect what the

government does?” (As noted in Chapter 3, question wording for both questions varies slightly across survey cycles.) Responses were measured on a 5-point scale, with “1” indicating “Not at all” efficacious, “3” meaning “A moderate amount” of external efficacy, and “5” representing “A great deal” of external efficacy.

Obama-McCain Findings on Political Efficacy A. Results from Table 21 support my hypothesis of a positive Obama Effect on the first measure of external efficacy (External Efficacy A). As I predicted, based on data from 2008-2010, Obama supporters became significantly more efficacious (.188) relative to non-supporters. This result stands in sharp contrast with McCain supporters, who became significantly less efficacious (-.180) during this span. Both values were significant at the .01 level. The continuity score for the lagged dependent variable was .457, representing a relatively low level of stability for this attitude.

These findings held up in the broader demographics model as well (see Table 22). Surprisingly, the coefficient for McCain supporters (-.229) became even larger and remained significant at the .01 level. The coefficient for Obama supporters (.122) also remained statistically significant (albeit at the .10 level). Even after controlling for demographic effects, much of the explanatory power appeared to be concentrated in the vote choice itself and not just in demographics. These results pointed to the possibility of a positive Obama Effect on this measure of external efficacy.

Although the gender variable was not significant in this model, other demographic variables did have additive effects. The age and income variables were significant, but in the opposite direction from what I hypothesized. Specifically, each additional year of age corresponded to an increase of .003, indicating that relatively older respondents increased

their political efficacy relative to younger respondents. And each move up one income bracket corresponded to an increase of .030, indicating that higher income respondents increased their efficacy relative to lower income respondents. On the other hand, the race/ethnicity and education variables were significant in the direction that I hypothesized. Being non-white corresponded to an increase of .108 relative to white respondents. And each move up one education bracket corresponded to an increase of .075, indicating a positive relationship between formal education and increased efficacy.

Two of the 10 interaction terms I tested were statistically significant at the .10 level: Obama\*Income (Table 23) and McCain\*Income (Table 24). In other words, while income had an additive effect, a clearer picture of its import emerged when this variable was moderated by vote choice. Specifically, the interaction effect for Obama\*Income (.056) suggests that higher-income Obama supporters became significantly more efficacious from 2008-2010 than lower-income Obama supporters. The interaction effect for McCain\*Income (-.056) suggests that lower-income McCain supporters actually increased their efficacy significantly as compared to higher-income McCain supporters.

These results largely appeared to confirm my major hypothesis that support for Obama had a positive effect on this first measure of external efficacy. The hypothesis was further supported by what appeared to be a contrasting negative effect among McCain supporters. But before I could confirm the hypothesis outright, I turned my attention back to the 2000-2002 and the 1992-1994 panel data. This comparative data allowed me to determine whether there truly was a positive Obama Effect at work, or whether there may have been a broader presidential effect on external efficacy that predated any Obama campaign effect.



Bush II-Gore Findings on External Efficacy A. The baseline model in Table 25 indicates a tremendous increase in this form of external efficacy among Bush II supporters relative to non-supporters (.577). There was also a statistically significant increase among Gore supporters relative to non-supporters, but only at the .10 level of significance (.254). The lagged continuity score of .460 reflected a fairly low level of stability in political efficacy during this 2-year cycle.

As Table 26 shows, inclusion of demographic variables barely reduced the explanatory power for the Bush II vote choice variable (.464); it remained significant at the .01 level. Meanwhile, the Gore vote choice variable lost its explanatory power. These results were not very surprising, given the controversial outcome of the 2000 election, which involved the Bush v. Gore Supreme Court ruling in favor of Bush II. Presumably, that ruling would have made Gore supporters relatively unlikely to respond favorably to the external efficacy question: “How much do government officials care what people like you think?” In a similar vein, non-white respondents—who supported Gore over Bush II at a rate of more than 2 to 1—significantly decreased their efficacy (-.286) between 2000 and 2002. As I observed in most other models, men increased their efficacy relative to women (.208). And once again, higher levels of education also corresponded to increased external efficacy (.123).

Both interaction terms for income (Obama\*Income and McCain\*Income) had been significant in the 2008-2010 cycle, but only the Bush II\*Income interaction term was significant (.108, see Table 27) in the 2000-2002 cycle. The direction was the same as for Obama supporters (with higher-income Bush II supporters increasing their efficacy relative to lower-income Bush II supporters), and the opposite direction of McCain

supporters. Given the parallels between Obama and Bush II supporters, and those between McCain and Gore supporters, these findings may reflect some support for a positive presidential effect thesis, as opposed to one of a unique Obama Effect.

Clinton-Bush I Findings on External Efficacy A. The pattern did not hold up for the 1992—1994 cycle, as neither support for Clinton nor support for Bush I was statistically significant in either the baseline model or the broader demographics model (see Tables 28 and 29). Only two demographic variables were statistically significant: income (.014) and education (.169); both had a positive and significant effect on this measure of external efficacy, matching the pattern from the other election cycles. However, the vote choice\*income interaction terms that had been significant for the other cycles were not statistically significant for the Clinton-Bush I cycle.

In the next section, I present the findings for External Efficacy B, my second measure of the attitude in question. The survey question for this item was: “How much can people like you affect what the government does?” I will then summarize and synthesize the results for both measures of external efficacy.

Obama-McCain Findings on External Efficacy B. Interestingly, as Table 30 shows, results for this measure of external efficacy stand in stark contrast to results from the first measure. On this second measure, it was McCain supporters who significantly increased their efficacy (.142) relative to non-supporters, at the .05 significance level. For Obama supporters, the increase was not statistically significant. The lagged continuity score of .511 indicated a moderate level of stability in this attitude over the two-year cycle.

When demographics are introduced into the model (see Table 31), the relative increase among McCain supporters loses its statistical significance, falling just outside

the .10 threshold of significance. Other variables, race/ethnicity and education in particular, also fell just outside the .10 threshold. The only demographic variable to reach statistical significance was age: just as with the first measure of external efficacy, each additional year added .003 for External Efficacy B. In this case, too, older respondents increased their political efficacy relative to younger respondents. Gender and income were not statistically significant in this model.

The two interaction terms that were statistically significant for this variable were Obama\*Race (.438, see Table 32) and McCain\*Race (-.611, see Table 33). Both were highly significant at the .01 level. This indicated that non-white Obama supporters increased their efficacy significantly relative to white Obama supporters while non-white McCain supporters decreased their efficacy relative to white McCain supporters. It is important, however, not to read too much into these particular interaction effects, given the fairly small *n* of non-white respondents on the panel. Of 1588 respondents, only 245 (15.4%) were non-white. This allows for a very small number of non-white respondents supporting a candidate to have an outsized impact on the level of significance for these interaction terms, thus potentially skewing the results. This may be especially the case for the McCain\*Race term, given that only 37 of those 245 non-white respondents on the panel were McCain supporters.

Bush II-Gore Findings on External Efficacy B. Results from Table 34 reveal a major significant increase in this measure of external efficacy among Bush II supporters relative to non-supporters (.636), and a lesser but still significant increase among Gore supporters relative to non-supporters (.290). The lagged continuity score of .529 reflected a fair but not especially high degree of stability in this attitude between 2000 and 2002.

Table 35 reflects a rare instance in which the vote choice coefficients actually grew larger—to .646 for Bush II supporters and to .310 for Gore supporters—after controlling for demographic variables. None of the explanatory power was conceded to demographic factors, although the education variable was statistically significant at the .05 level. Each additional education bracket corresponded to an increase in efficacy of .113, indicating the positive relationship between education and external efficacy that I hypothesized and observed in most other models. The Bush II\*Race and Gore\*Race interaction terms were not statistically significant.

Clinton-Bush I Findings on External Efficacy B. Results from Tables 36 and 37 reveal that presidential vote choice had very little impact on this measure of external efficacy in the 1992-1994 cycle. In the baseline model, the null hypothesis was confirmed for Clinton supporters; there was no significant change in their efficacy relative to non-supporters. Bush I supporters showed an increase in efficacy relative to non-supporters (.179), but it was just barely significant at the .10 level. The lagged continuity score of .262 was among the lowest in my entire analysis, reflecting a very low level of stability in this attitude over the two-year period.

Once demographics were introduced into the model, neither support for Clinton nor support for Bush I had any significant impact. Gender was significant in this model (-.157), but only at the .10 level. This result appeared to be an outlier in relation to findings from the other election cycles. In all other models for which gender has been significant, it was men who experienced a positive increase in the attitude relative to women, but in this lone model it was women who became more efficacious relative to men. The education variable was also significant, and again it was positively associated with

external efficacy. Each education bracket upward corresponded to a .202 increase in efficacy, a coefficient that reached the highest level of statistical significance.

The interaction terms Clinton\*Race (-.453) and Bush I\*Race (.634) were both statistically significant (see Tables 38 and 39). However, as I noted for Obama\*Race (Table 32) and McCain\*Race (Table 33), the relatively small sample size of non-white participants warrants qualification in terms of the substantive impact of race/ethnicity. Indeed, the samples were even smaller for 1992-1994: out of 759 participants on the panel, only 116 were non-white. Among those, only 60 supported Clinton and only 14 supported Bush I. Creating interaction terms for such small  $n$  subgroup samples resulted in unusually large standard errors for these interaction terms. This issue makes it very difficult to interpret the true impact of race/ethnicity when moderated by vote choice. I struggled to identify a coherent theoretical explanation for these results, given that Obama and Clinton supporters experienced opposite outcomes, and McCain and Bush I supporters experienced opposite outcomes. As with the 2008-2010 findings, I suspect these 1992-1994 results were skewed by the small sample size of non-white respondents on the panel.

Summary and Discussion of External Efficacy. I employed two distinct survey items measuring different dimensions of external political efficacy; the results for each dimension were markedly different from the other. On the measure asking whether government cared about what people like them thought, Obama supporters became much more efficacious while McCain supporters registered a sharp decrease in external efficacy, not only relative to each other, but relative to all other candidates in the earlier election cycles. For Obama's supporters, this appeared to be a possible manifestation of

the hypothesized Obama Effect: that enthusiasm over Obama's election was so powerful that it would have a lasting and positive effect on their efficacy. Obama supporters had a unique sense that the Obama-led government now cared, or cared more, about what people like them thought. This effect appeared to be especially pronounced among higher income Obama supporters and not as much among lower income supporters. For McCain supporters, unlike my conclusion for political interest, these efficacy findings did appear to reflect a manifestation of the 2009-2010 rise of the Tea Party Movement. This movement of disaffected citizens, overwhelmingly McCain supporters, formed after the 2008 election for the express purpose of organizing around shared feelings of political disenfranchisement and alienation; so it makes sense that such attitudes would register as a relative decrease on that first measure of external political efficacy.

On the second measure of external efficacy, which asked whether people like them could affect what government does, I observed a possible negative Obama Effect that ran contrary to my hypothesis. It was not Obama supporters but rather, McCain supporters who experienced the relative increase on this dimension of efficacy. It is likely that the organizational capacity provided by the Tea Party movement and the decision of most Republican candidates to campaign on repealing Obama's major accomplishments (for instance, the Affordable Care Act and the Dodd-Frank Act) led to McCain supporters feeling more emboldened in terms of their capacity to influence government. For Obama supporters, the relative ambivalence may have reflected a reluctance to continually engage a grueling legislative process. Obama had campaigned on change, but even with strong Democratic majorities in both the House and Senate, he had to make major compromises and concessions on his major agenda items to get them passed through

Congress. It is not completely surprising, then, that Obama supporters would come to feel that they had a strong advocate (External Efficacy A), but who was not as successful a change agent as they had hoped (External Efficacy B); and that McCain supporters would come to feel that they could influence government policy (External Efficacy B) even if they felt increasingly that the Obama-led government did not care what people like them thought (External Efficacy A). Presumably they felt they could influence government specifically by blocking Obama's agenda.

In the above section on political interest, I suggested that the relative decline among Obama supporters was likely due, at least in part, to burnout or fatigue after an exciting but exhausting campaign. Here I posit a related argument: that the relative decrease in External Efficacy B was likely due, at least in part, to Obama's inability to meet the impossibly high expectations placed upon him by his supporters. Indeed, Obama rode into Washington in January 2009 on a wave of popularity and high expectations, with his approval ratings ranging in the high 60s for the first half of that year (Peters and Woolley 2015), following nearly two full consecutive years of campaigning for support. But the honeymoon period did not last long. By late 2009 the heated national debate was raging over passage of the Affordable Care Act, and many supporters had grown disenchanted with Obama compromising and agreeing to remove key provisions from the legislation (most notably, the so-called public option being stripped to win the votes of moderate Democratic senators). His approval ratings dropped into the low 50s by October 2009 as the legislative process kicked into full gear. The relative decline in External Efficacy B among supporters, then, was likely more an artifact of an unpopular Congress blocking core components of Obama's agenda, than any unwillingness on the

part of Obama to allow his support base to influence his administration. Presumably many supporters felt highly empowered by Obama's 2008 campaign, but not at all by his governance after the election. Yet they continued to feel that they had an advocate in the White House who at least cared about people like them. This would help explain why his supporters experienced a positive effect on External Efficacy A, but registered a negative effect on External Efficacy B.

I now turn my attention to partisanship, the attitude which, unsurprisingly, reflected the deepest differences between the two candidates' groups of supporters.

### **Partisanship**

Major Hypothesis #3: Partisanship. My third major hypothesis is that from 2008-2010, Obama supporters increased or sustained their partisanship (i.e., party identification) relative to non-supporters. I expected this positive Obama Effect to be most pronounced among sub-groups that were most supportive of Obama, in other words, that women, younger respondents, non-white respondents, those with relatively low levels of income, and those with relatively high levels of formal education became more loyal to the Democratic Party, while men, older respondents, white respondents, those with relatively high incomes, and those with relatively little formal education became more loyal to the Republican Party. As with the political interest and political efficacy variables, I also tested for interaction effects for the 10 interaction terms that multiply the vote choice value by a given resource variable. My hypothesis would be rejected if I found a negative Obama Effect on partisanship. The null hypothesis would find support if vote choice was found to have had no statistically significant impact on partisanship during the 2008-2010 cycle.



The measure of partisanship is based on the question: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or what?” The response set consists of a 7-point scale ranging from Strong Democrat (1) to Strong Republican (7). A positive effect on partisanship, for purposes of my analysis, is an increase in partisanship. (In certain other political contexts, increased partisanship may be considered a negative outcome; but because presidential candidates are explicitly seeking to become the leaders of their respective parties, increased partisanship is considered here to be a positive campaign effect.)

Obama-McCain Findings on Partisanship.<sup>1</sup> Table 40 reveals a highly significant and positive effect on partisanship for both Obama supporters relative to non-supporters (- .326) and McCain supporters (.301) relative to non-supporters. This result appears to reflect more of a positive “candidate effect” rather than one specific to Obama (i.e., the hypothesized Obama Effect) or only to winning candidates (i.e., a presidential effect). The lagged continuity score of .743 reflects a very high degree of stability during this cycle, with the low degree of movement taking the form of both Democrat and Republican participants retreating even deeper into their partisan corners.

Each vote choice variable remained significant at the .01 level even after demographics were introduced into the model. As Table 41 shows, the gender and income variables had no significant impact in the demographics model. On the other

---

<sup>1</sup> With regard to all my independent variables and the partisanship lag in particular, I considered the possibility of a multicollinearity issue between independent variables. It seemed especially plausible that candidate support might be correlated too strongly with party identification for OLS assumptions to hold. I therefore tested for the VIF (variable inflation factor) statistic in each OLS model. In all models the VIF statistic was below 4; it was 2.215 for the partisanship lag from Table 34. The danger zone for multicollinearity would be a VIF statistic between 9 and 10; therefore I determined that multicollinearity was not a major concern in my OLS regression models.

hand, age, race/ethnicity, and education were all statistically significant. Each additional year of age corresponded to a  $-.004$  change toward the Democratic Party identification; this result was the opposite of my hypothesis. Being non-white was associated with a  $.203$  movement in the hypothesized direction of Democratic Party identification. Finally, each additional education bracket corresponded to a  $-.042$  change in the hypothesized direction of Democratic Party identification. The only significant interaction term was McCain\*Education ( $.083$ , see Table 42), indicating that higher-educated McCain supporters increased their loyalty to the Republican Party more than lower-educated McCain supporters. This interaction effect was significant at the  $.10$  level, but the corresponding interaction term for Obama supporters was not statistically significant.

Bush II-Gore Findings on Partisanship. Table 43 reveals a very similar pattern for the 2000-2002 cycle as that observed in the 2008-2010 cycle. Once again, supporters of the winning candidate, Bush II, become much more Republican relative to non-supporters during those two years ( $.427$ ); and supporters of the losing candidate, Gore, became even more loyal to the Democratic Party ( $-.546$ ), relative to non-supporters, during that cycle. The lagged continuity score of  $.719$  was comparable to the 2008-2010 score, reflecting a very high degree of stability in party identification during this cycle.

The demographics model presented in Table 44 did not have much impact on the significance of the vote choice variables. Both support for Bush II and support for Gore remained significant at the  $.01$  level. The only demographic variable to achieve statistical significance was the race/ethnicity variable, with non-white respondents becoming much more Democratic ( $-.265$ ) during this cycle. The interaction terms moderating education by vote choice were not statistically significant.

Clinton-Bush I Findings on Partisanship. The results shown in Table 45 for the 1992-1994 cycle are markedly similar to those from the other two cycles, with Clinton supporters becoming much more loyal to the Democratic Party (-.928) and Bush I supporters becoming much more loyal to the Republican Party (.588). The lagged continuity score of .639 reflected a moderate level of stability in party identification during this cycle, which translated into a greater change than was observable in the other cycles.

The model incorporating demographic variables is presented in Table 46. Controlling for demographics did not mitigate the highly significant impact of either vote choice variable; both remained significant at the .01 level. The race/ethnicity variable was once again significant (-.352), with non-white respondents becoming significantly more Democratic during this cycle than their white counterparts. The income variable was also highly significant in this model, with each move upward into a new income bracket corresponding to a .023 increase in loyalty to the Republican Party. The race/ethnicity variable was significant at the .05 level, and the income variable was significant at the .01 level.

The education variable was highly significant when moderated by vote choice, as had been the case for McCain supporters. As shown in Tables 47 and 48, both the Clinton\*Education term and the Bush I\*Education term revealed significant interaction effects. Clinton supporters with higher levels of education increased their loyalty to the Democratic Party significantly more than Clinton supporters with lower levels of education (-.240); and Bush I supporters with higher levels of education became

somewhat more loyal to the Republican Party than Bush I supporters with lower levels of education (.159).

Summary and Discussion of Partisanship. Results across the three election cycles revealed a far more consistent pattern for the partisanship variable than I had observed for the political interest and political efficacy variables. Indeed, supporters of all candidates under analysis—Obama and McCain, Bush II and Gore, and Clinton and Bush I—became much more partisan during the 2 years after the election, and at the highest .01 level of statistical significance in every case. The one consistent demographic trend was that of non-white respondents increasing their loyalty to the Democratic Party to a greater extent than white respondents did to the Republican Party; however, this outcome is not surprising given that a substantial proportion of Democratic Party supporters were white, while only a small percentage of Republican Party supporters were non-white.

Clearly this pattern of increasing partisanship after the election was not isolated among a small subset of the population or among one or two particular demographic groups. It was experienced by supporters of Democratic and Republican candidates, by young and old, by male and female, and across income and education levels. Such consistent and wide-ranging candidate effects point to a noteworthy observation in recent presidential politics: that campaign supporters of the president tend to become much more loyal to that president's party after the election, and that campaign supporters of the losing candidate tend to become much more loyal to that candidate's party after the election.

In the next chapter, I turn my attention to from political attitudes to the Obama Effect on political participation.

**Table 13 Political Interest, 2008-2010, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.125	.091	.000
Voted for McCain	.191	.069	.006***
Voted for Obama	-.041	.069	.553
Interest 2008	.639	.021	.000***

- a. Dependent Variable: Interest 2010  
 b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .385  
 c. \*\*\* p < .01

**Table 14 Political Interest, 2008-2010, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	.734	.142	.000
Voted for McCain	.120	.069	.085*
Voted for Obama	-.063	.069	.357
Interest 2008	.603	.022	.000***
Gender	.172	.040	.000***
Age	.009	.001	.000***
Race/Ethnicity	-.049	.056	.375
Income	.010	.016	.506
Education	.007	.020	.715

- a. Dependent Variable: Interest 2010  
 b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .413  
 c. \*\*\* p < .01  
 d. \* p < .10

**Table 15 Political Interest, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for Obama\*Gender**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	.700	.142	.000
Voted for McCain	.119	.069	.085*
Voted for Obama	.007	.076	.931
Interest 2008	.604	.021	.000***
Gender	.250	.054	.000***
Age	.009	.001	.000***
Race/Ethnicity	-.052	.056	.350
Income	.011	.016	.483
Education	.008	.020	.706
Obama*Gender	-.174	.079	.029**

- a. Dependent Variable: Interest 2010  
 b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .412  
 c. \*\*\* p < .01  
 d. \*\* p < .05  
 e. \* p < .1

**Table 16 Political Interest, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for Obama\*Income**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	.659	.147	.000
Voted for McCain	.105	.070	.135
Voted for Obama	.103	.112	.360
Interest 2008	.604	.021	.000***
Gender	.172	.040	.000***
Age	.010	.001	.000***
Race/Ethnicity	-.056	.056	.317
Income	.036	.021	.084*
Education	.009	.020	.668
Obama*Income	-.055	.029	.061*

a. Dependent Variable: Interest 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .411$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*  $p < .1$

**Table 17. Political Interest, 2000-2002, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.492	.092	.000
Voted for Bush II	.244	.088	.006***
Voted for Gore	.197	.088	.025**
Interest 2000	.431	.025	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Interest 2002

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .235$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 18. Political Interest, 2000-2002, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.246	.233	.000
Voted for Bush II	.224	.090	.013**
Voted for Gore	.140	.088	.112
Interest 2000	.403	.025	.000***
Gender	.347	.068	.000***
Age	.014	.002	.000***
Race/Ethnicity	.294	.084	.000***
Income	-.042	.017	.015**
Education	.011	.034	.737

a. Dependent Variable: Interest 2002

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .292$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 19 Political Interest, 1992-1994, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.443	.143	.000
Voted for Bush	.440	.122	.000***
Voted for Clinton	.325	.117	.006***
Interest 1992	.382	.036	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Interest 1994

b.  $R^2 = .175$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 20 Political Interest, 1992-1994, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	.835	.346	.016
Voted for Bush	.305	.132	.021**
Voted for Clinton	.272	.125	.030**
Interest 1992	.357	.040	.000***
Gender	.326	.101	.001***
Age	.011	.003	.000***
Race/Ethnicity	.186	.141	.187
Income	.018	.009	.042**
Education	.108	.050	.030**

a. Dependent Variable: Interest 1994

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .222$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 21 Political Efficacy A, 2008-2010, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.190	.077	.000
Voted for McCain	- .180	.066	.006***
Voted for Obama	.188	.066	.004***
Efficacy A 2008	.457	.022	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy A 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .281$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 22 Political Efficacy A, 2008-2010, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	.645	.138	.000
Voted for McCain	- .229	.067	.001***
Voted for Obama	.122	.067	.070*
Efficacy A 2008	.441	.022	.000***
Gender	- .006	.040	.884
Age	.003	.001	.035**
Race/Ethnicity	.108	.055	.048**
Income	.030	.015	.050**
Education	.075	.020	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy A 2010

b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .293

c. \*\*\* p < .01

d. \*\* p < .05

e. \* p < .01

**Table 23 Political Efficacy A, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for Obama\*Income**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	.719	.143	.000
Voted for McCain	- .214	.068	.002***
Voted for Obama	- .048	.110	.666
Efficacy A 2008	.442	.022	.000***
Gender	- .006	.039	.870
Age	.003	.001	.041**
Race/Ethnicity	.114	.055	.037**
Income	.004	.020	.832
Education	.074	.020	.000***
Obama*Income	.056	.029	.052*

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy A 2010

b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .294

c. \*\*\* p < .01

d. \*\* p < .05

e. \* p < .1



**Table 24 Political Efficacy A, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for McCain\*Income**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	.577	.143	.000
Voted for McCain	- .051	.114	.654
Voted for Obama	.113	.067	.093*
Efficacy A 2008	.443	.022	.000***
Gender	- .006	.039	.876
Age	.003	.001	.048**
Race/Ethnicity	.113	.055	.039**
Income	.054	.020	.006***
Education	.075	.020	.000***
JM*Income	- .056	.029	.052*

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy A 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .294$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

e. \*  $p < .10$

**Table 25 Political Efficacy A, 2000-2002, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.816	.154	.000
Voted for Bush II	.577	.142	.000***
Voted for Gore	.254	.141	.073*
Efficacy A 2000	.460	.043	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy A 2002

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .127$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*  $p < .1$

**Table 26 Political Efficacy A, 2000-2002, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.451	.390	.000
Voted for Bush II	.464	.152	.002***
Voted for Gore	.189	.149	.206
Efficacy A 2000	.428	.044	.000***
Gender	.208	.109	.057*
Age	.001	.004	.861
Race/Ethnicity	- .286	.138	.039**
Income	.028	.028	.320
Education	.123	.054	.023**

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy A 2002

b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .136

c. \*\*\* p < .01

d. \*\* p < .05

e. \* p < .10

**Table 27 Political Efficacy A, 2000-2002, Interaction Effect for Bush II\*Income**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.613	.397	.000
Voted for Bush II	- .015	.276	.957
Voted for Gore	.200	.149	.180
Efficacy A 2000	.425	.044	.000***
Gender	.207	.109	.057*
Age	.001	.004	.801
Race/Ethnicity	- .306	.138	.027**
Income	- .011	.033	.750
Education	.123	.054	.022**
Bush II*Income	.108	.052	.038**

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy A, 2002

b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .139

c. \*\*\* p < .01

d. \*\* p < .05

e. \* p < .10

**Table 28 Political Efficacy A, 1992-1994, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.644	.101	.000
Voted for Bush I	.005	.099	.956
Voted for Clinton	.099	.095	.297
Efficacy A 1992	.260	.031	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy A 1994

b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .092

c. \*\*\* p < .01

**Table 29 Political Efficacy A, 1992-1994, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.145	.281	.000
Voted for Bush I	- .150	.108	.166
Voted for Clinton	.039	.102	.703
Efficacy A	.245	.033	.000***
Gender	- .045	.083	.590
Age	- .002	.003	.352
Race/Ethnicity	.107	.116	.355
Income	.014	.007	.067*
Education	.169	.040	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy A 1994

b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .145

c. \*\*\*p < .01

d. \* p < .10

**Table 30 Political Efficacy B, 2008-2010, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.154	.081	.000
Voted for McCain	.142	.071	.047**
Voted for Obama	.071	.071	.321
Efficacy B 2008	.511	.021	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: EfficacyB 2010

b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .202

c. \*\*\* P < .01

d. \*\* p < .05

**Table 31 Political Efficacy B, 2008-2010, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	.795	.149	.000
Voted for McCain	.118	.073	.109
Voted for Obama	.039	.073	.599
Efficacy B 2008	.506	.022	.000***
Gender	.032	.043	.457
Age	.003	.002	.047**
Race/Ethnicity	.092	.060	.128
Income	.003	.017	.877
Education	.032	.021	.140

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy B 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .276$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 32 Political Efficacy B, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for Obama\*Race**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.136	.177	.000
Voted for McCain	.070	.074	.347
Voted for Obama	-.498	.169	.003***
Efficacy B 2008	.505	.022	.000***
Gender	.031	.043	.469
Age	.003	.002	.053*
Race/Ethnicity	-.201	.102	.050**
Income	.004	.017	.792
Education	.037	.021	.087
Obama*Race	.438	.124	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy B 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .282$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

e. \*  $p < .10$

**Table 33 Political Efficacy B, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for McCain\*Race**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	.646	.153	.000
Voted for McCain	.782	.178	.000***
Voted for Obama	.036	.073	.618
Efficacy B 2008	.505	.022	.000***
Gender	.034	.043	.421
Age	.003	.002	.060*
Race/Ethnicity	.206	.066	.002***
Income	.005	.017	.774
Education	.036	.021	.093*
McCain*Race	- .611	.150	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy B 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .284$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*  $p < .10$

**Table 34 Political Efficacy B, 2000-2002, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.664	.150	.000
Voted for Bush II	.636	.136	.000***
Voted for Gore	.290	.135	.032**
Efficacy B 2000	.529	.038	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy B 2002

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .196$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .5$

**Table 35 Political Efficacy B, 2000-2002, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.568	.373	.000
Voted for Bush II	.648	.145	.000***
Voted for Gore	.310	.142	.030**
Efficacy B 2000	.501	.041	.000***
Gender	.110	.104	.288
Age	- .005	.003	.132
Race/Ethnicity	- .102	.132	.437
Income	.004	.027	.867
Education	.113	.052	.030**

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy B 2002

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .136$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 36 Political Efficacy B, 1992-1994, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.737	.123	.000
Voted for Bush I	.179	.108	.099*
Voted for Clinton	.060	.104	.565
Efficacy B 1992	.262	.032	.000***

- a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy B 1994  
 b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .090  
 c. \*\*\* p < .01  
 d. \* p < .10

**Table 37 Political Efficacy B, 1992-1994, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.861	.316	.000
Voted for Bush I	.013	.119	.911
Voted for Clinton	-.056	.112	.614
Efficacy B 1992	.218	.034	.000***
Gender	-.157	.091	.084*
Age	-.004	.003	.117
Race/Ethnicity	-.053	.127	.679
Income	.005	.008	.562
Education	.202	.045	.000***

- a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy B 1994  
 b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .136  
 c. \*\*\* p < .01  
 d. \* p < .10

**Table 38 Political Efficacy B, 1992-1994, Interaction Effect for Clinton I\*Race**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.613	.343	.000
Voted for Bush I	.035	.119	.770
Voted for Clinton	.488	.318	.125
Efficacy B 1992	.214	.034	.000
Gender	-.165	.091	.069
Age	-.004	.003	.127
Race/Ethnicity	.176	.178	.324
Income	.005	.008	.508
Education	.199	.044	.000
Clinton*Race	-.453	.248	.068

- a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy B 1994  
 b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .139  
 c. \*\*\* p < .01  
 d. \* p < .10

**Table 39 Political Efficacy B, 1992-1994, Interaction Effect for Bush I\*Race**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.968	.321	.000
Voted for Bush I	-.681	.392	.083*
Voted for Clinton	-.050	.112	.654
Efficacy B 1992	.222	.034	.000***
Gender	-.155	.091	.089*
Age	-.004	.003	.125
Race/Ethnicity	-.152	.137	.271
Income	.004	.008	.623
Education	.200	.044	.000***
Bush I*Race	.642	.346	.064*

a. Dependent Variable: Efficacy B 1994

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .139$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*  $p < .10$

**Table 40 Partisanship, 2008-2010, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.051	.093	.000
Voted for McCain	.301	.084	.000***
Voted for Obama	-.326	.084	.000***
Party ID 2008	.743	.015	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Party Identification 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .818$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 41 Partisanship, 2008-2010, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.612	.176	.000
Voted for McCain	.326	.086	.000***
Voted for Obama	-.285	.086	.001***
Party ID 2008	.738	.015	.000***
Gender	.018	.048	.708
Age	-.004	.002	.024**
Race/Ethnicity	-.203	.067	.002***
Income	.004	.019	.849
Education	-.042	.024	.077*

a. Dependent Variable: Party Identification 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .819$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\* =  $p < .05$

e. \* =  $p < .10$

**Table 42 Partisanship, 2008-2010, Interaction Effect for McCain\*Education**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.729	.188	.000
Voted for McCain	.052	.174	.764
Voted for Obama	-.269	.086	.002***
Party ID 2008	.736	.015	.000***
Gender	.018	.048	.715
Age	-.004	.002	.026**
Race/Ethnicity	-.210	.067	.002***
Income	.004	.019	.852
Education	-.076	.030	.012**
McCain*Education	.083	.046	.070*

a. Dependent Variable: Party Identification 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .820$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\* =  $p < .05$

e. \* =  $p < .10$

**Table 43 Partisanship, 2000-2002, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.272	.101	.000
Voted for Bush II	.427	.093	.000***
Voted for Gore	-.546	.088	.000***
Party ID 2000	.719	.022	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Party Identification 2002

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .736$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 44 Partisanship, 2000-2002, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.433	.249	.000
Voted for Bush II	.407	.097	.000***
Voted for Gore	-.609	.094	.000***
Party ID 2000	.701	.023	.000***
Gender	.107	.067	.111
Age	-.001	.002	.612
Race/Ethnicity	-.265	.084	.002***
Income	.003	.017	.866
Education	.046	.033	.162

a. Dependent Variable: Party Identification 2002

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .740$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$



**Table 45 Partisanship, 1992-1994, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.636	.142	.000
Voted for Bush I	.588	.126	.000***
Voted for Clinton	-.928	.120	.000***
Party ID 1992	.639	.030	.000***

- a. Dependent Variable: Party Identification 1994  
 b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .650$   
 c. \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 46 Partisanship, 1992-1994, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	2.130	.354	.000
Voted for Bush I	.538	.134	.000***
Voted for Clinton	-.918	.129	.000***
Party ID 1992	.623	.032	.000***
Gender	-.101	.098	.301
Age	-.004	.003	.150
Race/Ethnicity	-.352	.138	.011**
Income	.023	.009	.008***
Education	-.010	.047	.823

- a. Dependent Variable: Party Identification 1994  
 b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .676$   
 c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$   
 d. \*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 47 Partisanship, 1992-1994, Interaction Effect for Clinton\*Education**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.947	.358	.000
Voted for Bush I	.473	.135	.000***
Voted for Clinton	-.264	.266	.322
Party ID 1992	.618	.031	.000***
Gender	-.095	.097	.330
Age	-.005	.003	.111
Race/Ethnicity	-.371	.138	.007***
Income	.023	.009	.007***
Education	.084	.058	.143
Clinton*Education	-.240	.085	.005***

- a. Dependent Variable: Party Identification 1994  
 b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .679$   
 c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 48 Partisanship, 1992-1994, Interaction Effect for Bush\*Education**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	2.269	.362	.000
Voted for Bush I	.071	.302	.814
Voted for Clinton	-.892	.130	.000***
Party ID 1992	.622	.031	.000***
Gender	-.100	.097	.307
Age	-.005	.003	.126
Race/Ethnicity	-.364	.138	.009***
Income	.023	.009	.008***
Education	-.058	.054	.286
Bush I * Education	.159	.092	.085*

a. Dependent Variable: Party Identification 1994

b. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .677

c. \*\*\* p < .01

d. \* p < .10

## CHAPTER 5: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THE OBAMA EFFECT

A *New York Times* article from April 2014 chronicles the campaign experience of Eric Lesser, a candidate in a Massachusetts Senate race who traces his inspiration for seeking public office directly to the 2008 Obama campaign. Mr. Lesser, then age 29, began his career “in politics” by carrying luggage for Obama campaign staff and for reporters covering that campaign. He accepted a low-level job in the White House after the campaign and “I ended up working for his Council of Economic Advisors,” he reminisced (Horowitz 2014).

As I discussed in Chapter 1, Obama built his 2008 campaign largely upon a theme of active engagement in politics. His reiterations of slogans such as “we are the ones we’ve been waiting for” were explicit appeals to engage particularly a generation of young supporters such as Mr. Lesser to become more politically and civically engaged. However according to Jason Horowitz, the author of that article, Mr. Lesser seems to be much more the exception than the rule. The title of Horowitz’s article: “Obama Effect Inspiring Few to Seek Office.”

### **Theory**

As I discussed in Chapter 2, the nature of the democratic and electoral processes in the United States stipulates that candidates must mobilize their supporters in order to be successful in the next election. However if a presidential candidate is able to

truly engage, inspire, and mobilize supporters for the upcoming election, then his actions can have a positive impact for the candidate/party not just for that election, but in subsequent election cycles as well. Such “spillover effects” can have major positive implications for the political parties and for the larger democratic system. A positive spillover effect may make a candidate’s supporters more likely to participate in politics or civic life in other ways in the future. Although support for an individual candidate in one election cycle guarantees neither future party loyalty nor future participation in politics, a candidate effect does have the capacity to reinforce or strengthen voters’ propensities to participate in politics. Indeed, it was an explicit goal of the 2008 Obama campaign to create positive spillover effects by emphasizing the importance of long-term engagement and participation in political processes and civic life. In this chapter I test the degree to which that campaign accomplished this objective, in other words, I investigate the possibility of a positive, unique, and lasting Obama Effect on various types of political participation.

Given my findings of a strong candidate effect on partisanship in the previous chapter—that is, an increase in party loyalty for all candidates’ supporters in the two years after the election—a candidate effect on participation would likely manifest in ways that reflected this increased partisanship. A negative candidate effect on participation would harm the party in the future, while a positive candidate effect on participation would be a boon to the candidate’s party. My findings further revealed a direct relationship between political interest and External Efficacy B, the measure of political efficacy regarding how much people feel they can affect what government does. Obama supporters registered relative decreases in interest and relative decreases in this form of

efficacy in tandem, even as they increased their External Efficacy A (i.e., they felt government cared more about what people like them think). I suggested these findings may be related to increased complacency, burnout or fatigue after the exciting campaign, personal satisfaction with Obama but dissatisfaction with the larger government, and/or to unrealistically high expectations for the Obama presidency. Thus although I framed my formal hypotheses at the onset of this project to expect a positive Obama Effect on participation, I knew it was at least possible that these negative outcomes on attitudes discussed in the previous chapter may correspond to negative outcomes on participation.

In this chapter, I focus on three specific manifestations of political participation that represent individual engagement with the democratic process: voter turnout, attending local government meetings, and attending political protests. Voter turnout refers first to an individual's decision to vote or not vote in the midterm election following the presidential election cycle in question. Attending local government meetings demonstrates a higher level of political participation and a deeper engagement with the democratic process than voting alone. The same can be said for attending political protests. I argue that the decision to participate in politics in these ways may be, at least to some degree, a function of a positive or negative Obama Effect.

### **Hypothesizing an Obama Effect on Political Participation**

My general hypothesis for this chapter is that the 2008 Obama campaign had a significant, lasting, and positive (or even transformational) impact on the political participation of its supporters over time. A positive Obama Effect would manifest as a relative increase in voter turnout among Obama supporters, a relative increase in attendance of local political meetings, and a relative increase in attendance of political

protests. Conversely a negative Obama Effect would manifest as relative decreases in these forms of participation among Obama supporters. Once again, in this chapter I distinguish between an Obama Effect, a broader presidential effect, and a candidate effect by comparing outcomes from the 2008-2010 election cycle to those from the 2000-2002 cycle and the 1992-1994 cycle.

My dependent variable for each hypothesis test is the value of the political behavior in the midterm year (i.e., 2010, 2002, or 1994). The lag of this variable (i.e., the value of the behavior in the corresponding presidential year) is always included as a control variable in each model to avoid the problem of endogeneity (see Chapter 3).

My two key predictors are my vote choice variables: “Voted for [President]” and “Voted for [Challenger].” Each is dichotomous, I replicate my methodological approach from the previous chapter so that everyone on the panel who voted for Obama is compared on the value of the dependent variable to everyone on the panel who did not vote for Obama (i.e. McCain voters + third-party voters + nonvoters). Likewise, everyone who voted for McCain is compared to everyone who did not vote for McCain (i.e., Obama voters + third party voters + nonvoters). Since both dummy predictors are included in each model, the regression coefficient indicates the difference between voters for a particular candidate and everyone else who did not vote for that candidate.

I employ linear regression models for the voter turnout question and binary logistic models for the questions regarding attendance of political meetings and attendance of political protests. As in the previous chapter, my baseline models in this chapter include only the vote choice variables and the lagged dependent variable as predictors. After each baseline regression, I ran a second regression model to test for

demographic effects as well. These broader models allowed me to test for positive additive effects of resource variables as well as for interaction effects between demographics and vote choice.

### **Voter Turnout**

Major Hypothesis #1: Voter Turnout. My first major hypothesis is that from 2008-2010, Obama supporters will have increased or sustained their voter turnout levels relative to non-supporters. I expected this positive Obama Effect to be most pronounced among those subgroups that were most supportive of Obama, namely, female respondents, younger respondents, non-white respondents, lower income respondents, and highly educated respondents. The hypothesis would be rejected if a negative Obama Effect (that is, a decrease in voter turnout in supporters relative to non-supporters) was found. The null hypothesis states that vote choice did not have any impact on the direction of voter turnout between 2008—2010.

The measure of voter turnout during midterm years (2010, 2002, 1994) was: “How likely is it that you will vote in the congressional elections this November?” The corresponding question during the presidential years (2008, 2000, 1992) was: “How about the election for the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington DC? Did you vote for a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives, or not?” This latter question serves as the lag, so that I am comparing House voting levels in the midterm years directly to House voting levels in the presidential years (instead of to presidential voting levels in those years).

Summary and Discussion Findings on Voter Turnout. My findings for the voter turnout variable were more consistent across election cycles than my findings for any other

dependent variable under analysis in either this chapter or the previous chapter. There did not appear to be any significant candidate effects in either 2008-2010 or 2000-2002; the null hypothesis was confirmed for both election cycles. As Table 49 shows, neither support for Obama (-.041) nor support for McCain (.223) had a statistically significant effect on their supporters' turnout levels, relative to nonsupporters, in the 2010 midterm elections. Table 51 shows that the same was true for supporters of Bush II (.525) and Gore (.478). Only in the 1992-1994 cycle did vote choice appear to have a significant effect on voter turnout (see Table 53), with support for Bush 1 produced a coefficient of .599 which was significant at the .05 level in the baseline model. Support for Clinton in this cycle did not have a significant effect. The null being confirmed for 5 of 6 cases in my analysis lends strong support for the notion of minimal candidate effects on voter turnout.

The broader models reflected in Tables 50, 52, and 54 revealed various demographic characteristics to be significant in various election cycles. Being male was associated with an increase in turnout for both 2008-2010 (.155) and for 1992-1994 (.580). Relatively high income was associated with increased turnout from both 2008-2010 (.048) and 1992-1994 (.084). Both these results were the opposite of the direction I hypothesized, meaning it was not those subgroups most supportive of Obama that were associated with relative increases in turnout. On the other hand, in accordance with my hypothesis relatively high education was associated with increased turnout from both 2008-2010 (.122) and 2000-2002 (.404). Only the age variable was consistent across all three cycles, yet it ran contrary to my hypothesis; each year of age corresponding to an increase of .016 from 2008-2010, .043 from 2000-2002, and .040 from 1992-1994. The



race/ethnicity variable was the only variable not statistically significant in any of my voter turnout models.

I now turn my discussion to the voter choice variable.

### **Attending Political Meetings**

Major Hypothesis #2: Attending Political Meetings. My second major hypothesis is that from 2008-2010, Obama supporters will have increased or sustained their attendance of political meetings relative to non-supporters. I further expected positive additive effects among the demographic subgroups most supportive of Obama. The hypothesis would be rejected if a negative Obama Effect was found, in other words, if Obama supporters registered a relative decline in attendance of political meetings from 2008-2010. The null hypothesis would be confirmed if presidential vote choice did not have any significant effect on levels of attendance of political meetings.

The measure of voter choice for the 2010 survey was: “During the past 12 months, have you attended a meeting to talk about political or social concerns, or have you not done this during the past 12 months?” The presidential year version of this variable is included as a lag in my logit models. This version asked during the presidential year surveys, “Have you done this, or have you never done it? Attended a meeting to talk about political or social concerns,” parallels the midterm version conceptually despite the unfortunateness of varied question wording.

Obama-McCain Findings on Attending Political Meetings. Contrary to my hypothesis, results from Tables 55 suggested a broader candidate effect rather than a unique Obama effect on attendance of political meetings. McCain supporters increased their attendance significantly (.880) relative to nonsupporters. Obama supporters also increased their

attendance (.555), but only at the .10 level of significance compared to the much higher .01 level for McCain supporters.

As Table 56 shows, even after controlling for demographics McCain supporters increased their attendance of meetings at almost the same rate (.878), still significant at the .01 level. Yet in this broader model, support for Obama was not statistically significant. In its stead, being male (.248) and being relatively highly educated (.175) both were associated with increased attendance of meetings. This gender finding, which ran contrary to my hypothesis, seemed to correspond to my finding in the previous chapter regarding the decrease in political interest in women relative to men. (While this gender dynamic was consistent across all 3 election cycles in terms of political interest, the gender variable was typically not statistically significant on either measure of external efficacy.) That higher levels of formal education would correspond to increased attendance of political meetings was in line with my hypothesis. I had also expected that being non-white, being relatively young, and relatively low income would significantly affect attendance of political meetings positively, but none of these demographic variables were statistically significant in the model. Likewise, none of the interaction terms I tested in this model were statistically significant.

Bush II-Gore Findings on Attending Political Meetings. Results from my 2000-2002 baseline model (Table 57) showed increased relative attendance of political meetings among Gore supporters (1.109) at the .05 level of significance. The relative increase among Bush II supporters (.656) was not statistically significant.

When demographics were introduced into the model (Table 58), the relative increase among Gore supporters (.935) was still significant but only at the .10 level. The

only other statistically significant variable was gender. In this election cycle as well, being male corresponded to a relative increase in attendance of political meetings (.589).

The age, race/ethnicity, income, and education were not significant in this model.

Clinton-Bush I Findings on Attending Political Meetings. Results from the 1992-1994 baseline model (Table 59) revealed increased attendance of political meetings among Bush I supporters (1.149) relative to nonsupporters. This increase was statistically significant at the .01 level. For Clinton supporters, there was a slight but not statistically significant increase of attendance (.316) relative to nonsupporters.

The broader model shown in Table 60 indicated that support for Bush I was still significant, but now only at the .10 level. The coefficient dropped to .888. The only demographic variable that was significant was education (.537) at the .01 level. The gender, age, race/ethnicity, and income variables were not significant in this model.

I will turn to the discussion of the Obama Effect and civic engagement after the next section, in which I summarize my findings on attendance of political protests.

### **Attending Political Protests**

Major Hypothesis #3: Attending Protests. My third major hypothesis is that from 2008-2010, Obama supporters will have increased or sustained their attendance of protests, marches, rallies, and/or demonstrations relative to non-supporters. (I refer to these going forward as “political protests” for shorthand.) Despite the oppositional nature of protests and demonstrations (if not marches and rallies), I still hypothesized a relative increase among Obama supporters because they are important measures of civic engagement. Presumably Obama supporters would not become protesters *of Obama* specifically but may have been galvanized or otherwise influenced by the Obama campaign to take a

more oppositional but active role in some other area of civic life. Such an outcome would indeed, in my view, potentially reflect a positive Obama campaign effect. The hypothesis would be rejected if a negative Obama Effect was found, that is, if Obama supporters registered a relative decline in attendance of political protests, marches, rallies, and demonstrations from 2008-2010. The null hypothesis would be confirmed if presidential vote choice did not have any significant effect on levels of attendance of political meetings.

The measure of attending protests for the 2010 survey was: “During the past 12 months, have you joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration, or have you not done this during the past 12 months?” The lag variable comes from the version asked in presidential years: “Have you done this, or have you never done it? Joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration.” The response set is coded dichotomously, with “1” indicating “Having done this” and “0” indicating “Have never done this.” Unfortunately this question was not asked on the 1994 panel survey; therefore the results discussed below pertain only to the 2008-2010 cycle and the 2000-2002 cycle.

Obama-McCain Findings on Attending Protests. My findings from Table 61 showed that Obama supporters increased their attendance of political protests (1.286) relative to nonsupporters, but only at the .10 level of significance. Conversely, McCain supporters increased their attendance of political protests (2.340) at the .01 level of significance. As with attendance of political meetings, the relative increase in this form of political participation among supporters of both candidates suggested the possibility of a broader candidate effect, rather than the unique Obama Effect that I hypothesized. Furthermore,

while vote choice was statistically significant for both, the effect of support for McCain appeared to be much stronger than the effect of support for Obama.

The demographics model shown in Table 62 revealed very little change in the vote choice coefficients for either Obama supporters (1.228) or McCain supporters (2.312). Both remained significant at the .10 and .01 levels, respectively. Gender had a statistically significant effect on attending protests (.434), but again not in the direction I hypothesized. It was men who increased their attendance relative to women, a result that did not support my thesis of an Obama Effect but that did correspond to my findings on political interest as well as political meetings. Income was significant (.136) but only at the .10 level and not in the direction I hypothesized. It was higher income respondents who increased their attendance of protests relative to lower income respondents. The age, race/ethnicity, and education variables were not statistically significant in this model. I tested each interaction term in this model but as with the model on political meetings, none were statistically significant.

Bush II-Gore Findings on Attending Protests. Contrary to the Obama-McCain cycle, results from the 2000-2002 baseline model (Table 63) showed a relative decrease in attendance of political protests among both Bush II supporters (-1.375) and Gore supporters (-.808). The relative decrease among Bush II supporters was at the .01 level, while the level of relative decrease among Gore supporters was at the .10 level.

The broader model shown in Table 64 appeared to be an isolated finding in which the vote choice effects actually became stronger after demographic variables were included. The coefficients among Bush II supporters and Gore supporters became -1.788 and -1.284, respectively. Both vote choice variables were now significant at the .01 level.

Both income level (.196) and education level (.429) appeared to have a positive effect on attendance of protests. The age, gender, and race/ethnicity variables were not statistically significant in this model.

Summary and Discussion of Civic Engagement. My general hypothesis of a unique, positive, and lasting Obama Effect on civic engagement was not confirmed, either with regard to attendance of political meetings or attendance of political protests. In fact, it was McCain supporters, not Obama supporters, who experienced a relatively positive increase in attending political meetings. Yet as I compared this result to those from the earlier two cycles, I observed what appeared to be a negative presidential effect rather than a uniquely negative Obama Effect. Indeed, in terms of attending political meetings, the candidate effects—even after controlling for demographics—were concentrated among the supporters of McCain, Gore, and Bush I, the losing candidates in my analysis.

Interestingly, this oppositional trend did not extend to attendance of political protests. I observed what appeared to be a negative presidential effect on attendance of political meetings, but with regard to political protests, there was a relative increase in attendance among supporters of all four candidates under analysis (Obama, McCain, Bush II, and Gore). Two caveats are important to note here, however. First, fewer than 5% of respondents participated in protests; thus these results may be skewed by just a few respondents among a relatively small *n*. Second, as I noted earlier, I used “protests” for shorthand but the question pertains to political demonstrations, marches, and rallies as well as protests. Unfortunately for my purposes, the closed nature of the ANES survey instrument is rather broad and did not allow me to determine the nature of this political participation at a more detailed level.

Initially I posited that the excitement surrounding the 2008 Obama campaign may have had a transformative impact on the civic engagement of Obama supporters. After all, Obama made many explicit appeals throughout his campaign for his supporters to become more civically minded and civically engaged. Suffice to say, I did not observe any kind of positive Obama Effect that would suggest that campaign was successful in that regard. On the contrary, based on the data not only from 2008-2010 but from the previous election cycles as well, it appears more likely that supporters of the losing presidential candidates will become more participatory in these regards than supporters of the winning candidates.

In Chapters 4-5, I conducted quantitative analyses on the Obama Effect in relation to the political attitudes and participation of the broader American electorate. In the next chapter I analyze the Obama Effect qualitatively in relation to the political attitudes and participation of those who volunteered on the 2008 campaign. I compare and contrast these two populations to determine the differences between these two populations, namely, one that was more representative of the national population and one that was representative of those most enthusiastic about the 2008 Obama campaign.

**Table 49 Turnout, 2008-2010, Baseline**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	2.617	.089	.000
Voted for McCain	.223	.177	.207
Voted for Obama	- .041	.176	.814
Turnout 2008	1.790	.192	.000***

- a. Dependent Variable: Turnout 2010
- b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .214$
- c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 50 Turnout, 2008-2010, with Demographics**

Model	B	Std. Error	Sig.
(Constant)	1.349	.179	.000
Voted for McCain	.089	.170	.602
Voted for Obama	-.135	.169	.427
Turnout 2008	1.687	.184	.000***
Gender	.155	.052	.003***
Age	.016	.002	.000***
Race/Ethnicity	-.038	.071	.595
Income	.048	.020	.016**
Education	.122	.026	.000***

a. Dependent Variable: Turnout 2010

b. Adjusted  $R^2 = .218$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 51 Turnout, 2000-2002, Baseline**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for Bush II	.525	.442	.235
Voted for Gore	.478	.439	.276
Turnout 2000	1.276	.254	.000***
(Constant)	.138	.461	.764

a. Dependent Variable: Turnout 2002

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .031$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 52 Turnout, 2000-2002, with Demographics**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for Bush II	.487	.492	.322
Voted for Gore	.482	.495	.331
Turnout 2000	1.035	.276	.000***
Gender	.345	.224	.123
Age	.043	.008	.000***
Race/Ethnicity	.240	.287	.402
Income	.080	.056	.156
Education	.404	.115	.000***
(Constant)	- 3.758	.902	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Turnout 2002

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .089$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$



**Table 53 Turnout, 1992-1994, Baseline**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for Bush I	.599	.269	.026**
Voted for Clinton	.362	.255	.155
Turnout 1992	.829	.268	.002***
(Constant)	.067	.285	.814

a. Dependent Variable: Turnout 1994

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .028$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $P < .05$

**Table 54 Turnout, 1992-1994, with Demographics**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for Bush I	.564	.313	.072*
Voted for Clinton	.647	.309	.036**
Turnout 1992	1.375	.299	.000***
Gender	.580	.239	.015**
Age	.040	.008	.000***
Race/Ethnicity	- .065	.320	.838
Income	.084	.022	.000***
Education	.058	.118	.622
(Constant)	- 3.705	.789	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Turnout 1994

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .147$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

e. \*  $p < .10$

**Table 55 Meetings, 2008-2010, Baseline**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for McCain	.880	.304	.004***
Voted for Obama	.555	.304	.068*
Meeting 2008	1.629	.162	.000***
(Constant)	- 3.144	.305	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Meetings 2010

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .090$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*  $p < .10$

**Table 56 Meetings, 2008-2010, with Demographics**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for McCain	.878	.310	.005***
Voted for Obama	.494	.310	.111
Meeting 2008	1.572	.168	.000***
Gender	.248	.137	.070*
Age	-.002	.005	.704
Race/Ethnicity	.290	.193	.133
Income 2008	.036	.054	.508
Education	.175	.070	.013**
(Constant)	-4.167	.535	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Meetings 2010

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .099$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*  $p < .10$

**Table 57 Meetings, 2000-2002, Baseline**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for Bush II	.656	.520	.207
Voted for Gore	1.109	.500	.026**
Meeting 2000	2.221	.324	.000***
(Constant)	-6.179	.604	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Meetings 2002

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .047$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 58 Meetings, 2000-2002, with Demographics**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for Bush II	.483	.542	.372
Voted for Gore	.935	.516	.070*
Meetings 2000	2.178	.341	.000***
Gender	.589	.308	.056*
Age	.006	.011	.583
Race/Ethnicity	.217	.369	.557
Income	.077	.080	.334
Education	.020	.148	.893
(Constant)	-7.289	1.082	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Meetings 2002

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .047$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 59 Meetings, 1992-1994, Baseline**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for Bush I	1.149	.419	.006***
Voted for Clinton	.316	.448	.481
Meetings 1992	2.479	.332	.000***
(Constant)	- 3.747	.363	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Meetings 1994

b. Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> = .079

c. \*\*\* p < .01

**Table 60 Meetings, 1992-1994, with Demographics**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for Bush I	.888	.466	.057*
Voted for Clinton	.136	.482	.778
Meetings 1992	2.215	.350	.000***
Gender	.067	.334	.842
Age	.001	.011	.916
Race/Ethnicity	.072	.526	.891
Income	- .012	.032	.714
Education	.537	.168	.001***
(Constant)	- 5.175	1.079	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Meetings 1994

b. Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> = .097

c. \*\*\* p < .01

d. \* p < .10

**Table 61 Protests, 2008-2010, Baseline**

Variables	B	S.E.	Sig.
Voted for McCain	2.340	.725	.001***
Voted for Obama	1.286	.733	.079*
Protests 2008	1.398	.201	.000***
(Constant)	- 4.752	.718	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Protests 2010

b. Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> = .049

c. \*\*\* p < .01

d. \*p < .10

**Table 62 Protests, 2008-2010, with Demographics**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Voted for McCain	2.312	.733	.002***
Voted for Obama	1.228	.740	.097*
Protests 2008	1.292	.206	.000***
Gender	.434	.201	.031**
Age	.008	.008	.278
Race/Ethnicity	.553	.272	.042**
Income	.136	.082	.097*
Education	.066	.106	.529
(Constant)	- 6.679	.990	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Protests 2010

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .058$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

e. \*  $p < .10$

**Table 63 Protests, 2000-2002, Baseline**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Voted for Bush II	- 1.375	.505	.006***
Voted for Gore	- .808	.434	.063*
Protests 2000	2.977	.472	.000***
(Constant)	- 2.937	.308	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Protests 2002

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .036$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*  $p < .10$

**Table 64 Protests, 2000-2002, with Demographics**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Voted for Bush II	- 1.788	.522	.001***
Voted for Gore	- 1.284	.472	.007***
Meetings 2000	2.668	.513	.000***
Gender	- .166	.394	.673
Age	.013	.013	.339
Race/Ethnicity	.179	.474	.705
Income	.196	.103	.057*
Education	.429	.190	.024**
(Constant)	- 5.689	1.149	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Protests 2002

b. Pseudo  $R^2 = .047$

c. \*\*\*  $p < .01$

d. \*\*  $p < .05$

e. \*  $p < .10$

## CHAPTER 6: CAMPAIGN VOLUNTEERS AND THE OBAMA EFFECT

Are the political attitudes and behaviors of those who actually volunteered for the 2008 Obama campaign markedly different from the political attitudes and behaviors of Obama's lay supporters? In this chapter, I address that question by analyzing qualitative data from in-depth ethnographic interview transcripts with former 2008 Obama campaign volunteers, in relation to my quantitative findings on political attitudes and behaviors from the previous two chapters. My overarching goal is to determine whether or not there was a unique, lasting, and positive Obama Effect on his *volunteer base* that was distinct from the effects (or lack thereof) observable in the larger population of citizens represented by the ANES panel and discussed in the previous 2 chapters.

Over 300 Purdue University students, including myself, volunteered on campus for the Obama campaign during the fall of 2008. Volunteers were typically engaged in one of the following activities: 1) Voter registration drives to encourage Purdue students to register and vote locally; 2) Phone-banking drives to encourage students to support Obama over McCain; 3) Data entry to help the campaign record and track the attitudes of potential voters and volunteers; and 4) Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) drives to ensure that registered Obama supporters would actually go out to cast their ballots.

One of my individual volunteer tasks, with respect to data entry, was to maintain a spreadsheet of all volunteer names and contact information. Throughout that fall of 2008,

I coded and re-coded volunteers in that spreadsheet as 1 (highly active), 2 (moderately or regularly active), 3 (volunteered more than once and worth asking again), or 4 (volunteered only once, do not invite again until GOTV time). This coding system helped the campaign reach out to volunteers in a more efficient manner than if all who had volunteered at least once were treated equally in the database, regardless of level of enthusiasm or involvement.

That database had been dormant for the entire first Obama term before I reactivated it to reach out to potential interviewees (via email or text message) for my research in the summer of 2013. I randomly sampled the 1s, 2s, and 3s in the database until I had identified 30 former volunteers who were willing to be interviewed about their political attitudes, political participation, and civic engagement. Therefore while they were randomly sampled within that limited universe of Purdue student volunteers, they represented a “convenience sample” with a limited age range. (In other words, I sampled from this limited universe of young volunteers instead of a national sample of Obama campaign volunteers because these were the interviewees to which I had direct access.) The headline of my initial message read: “Can I interview you about your experience volunteering for Barack Obama?” This direct and personal request led to a very high contact rate of 74 percent (32 of 43), with only 2 former volunteers declining my interview request. Names used below are not the real names of the volunteers, so as to protect their anonymity. Below is the breakdown of the 30 volunteers I interviewed, by level of volunteer engagement achieved by the end of the campaign.

**Level of Volunteer Engagement during 2008 Obama campaign:**

- 12 coded as “1” (highly active)

- 9 coded as “2” (moderately or regularly active)
- 9 coded as “3” (volunteered more than once and worth asking again)
- I did not include any “4s” (volunteered only once; do not invite again until GOTV time) in the interviewee sample. Therefore all 30 interviewees in the sample volunteered at least twice for the 2008 Obama campaign.

Next I recount the demographic characteristics of all 30 volunteers in the sample.

### **Demographic Characteristics of Volunteer Sample:**

- Gender: 19 men, 11 women
- Age: all were between 18-26 years old in November 2008
- Race/Ethnicity: 18 white, 12 nonwhite
- Income: unknown
- Education: All 30 volunteers were Purdue University college students (27 undergraduates, 3 graduate students) in November 2008

### **Volunteer Responses to Interview Questions**

**Political Interest.** The first question I asked interviewees was: “How interested are you in what’s going on in government and politics these days?” I generally would follow up with: “Has your interest changed very much over the past 5 years, or remained fairly consistent?”

Of the 30 volunteers, 21 could be characterized as “very interested;” 6 others as “interested but less than in 2008; and the remaining 3 as being far less interested in 2008. Given the relative falloff in interest among Obama supporters that I discussed in Chapter 4, it is noteworthy if not surprising that these young Obama volunteers maintained their high interest to this degree. Among the 70% of the sample who reported a continuing



high level of interest, several appeared to be the direct product of a positive Obama Effect. One volunteer, Cassie, summed up the views of several others in stating, “I would say I’m very interested. I was never as interested until 2008 when I started campaigning for President Obama. I’ve had about the same level of interest since then.” Another volunteer, Derek told me, “I’m very interested...I’m working in politics! I work for the State Democratic Party in Minnesota now. I would say I was a little interested in politics even before 2008, but my interest has grown exponentially over time because of Barack and what we did in 2008.”

Others told me they had been interested even before the 2008 campaign, and so their sustained or increased interest could not be attributed to an Obama Effect. Samantha, for example, came from a “very liberal” Massachusetts family. She had been very interested in local politics even in high school; and when she moved back to her hometown after living in Indiana for four years, she picked up her interest in *local* politics right where she had left it before college. During her four years in Indiana, she did become more interested in *national* electoral politics, perhaps because of Obama, but the political interest itself was not new. In a similar vein, Caroline reported being “Very interested...I follow the news on a daily basis, as I have since my parents started reading the newspaper to me when I was a kid. And I just graduated in May, so I actually work for a government relations firm in Washington now...But if politics wasn’t my job then it would be my hobby.” For volunteers like these two, it appeared that Obama was a beneficiary of preexisting political interest.

Others offered rather nuanced views of how their interest had changed over time. Tyler was in the very interested category but said, “I’ve maybe been a little less interested

in actual campaigns, but I've become more interested in things like lobbying efforts and PACs and nonprofits that work toward policy goals." Richard also reflected on his changing political interest:

The sorts of politics and government that I'm interested in now have varied over the past decade. When I first became interested in high school I was drawn in by opposition to the Iraq War so I became very interested in issues of foreign policy. And also civil liberties issues relating to wire-tapping and some of the things that came out of the Patriot Act as a response to 9/11. Then it became more related to the recession and domestic and economic policy. As I've gotten older it's become less about civil liberties and more about fiscal issues.

To be sure, a few volunteers did report a drop-off in interest after 2008. For example Victoria "would say I'm mildly interested. I'm definitely not invested in politics as I once was. I didn't volunteer again in 2012 but I do keep up to date on what issues are going on. And I encourage other people to be more involved than I am." Cameron alluded to wishing he was still interested, but said "politics is so sickening nowadays, it's so obnoxious how nobody in Washington can accomplish anything without a supermajority in their party, and even then things don't usually go the way I want. Too much gridlock for me to pay that much attention anymore."

**External Efficacy.** The second question I asked interviewees was: "Do you think the government cares what people like you think?" On this measure of external efficacy the interviewees reported in aggregation 7 yesses, 14 mixed responses, and 9 nos. I observed perhaps more nuance in responses to this question than any other question I asked in the interviews.

Representing the most externally efficacious viewpoints, Samantha stated: "Yes, absolutely. I think that everyone who wants to can get representation. Sometimes I wonder if people have access to information or know *how* to voice their opinion, but

there are always ways. It's fascinating to see how many people can group together and try to get a response from the government on a platform like Reddit." Picking up on this theme, Tyler answered, "I think individuals have the ability to put enough power behind their voice when they become part of a big voting constituency or lobbying effort." Conversely, Richard said he was efficacious at the individual level but not the societal level, specifically because of his privileged status in society: "Yes actually.... I haven't always felt that way. In high school and college I felt more marginalized. But now I'm a pretty affluent white male and a business owner. On an identity basis the only thing that makes me a minority is being an atheist. If our government is gonna be responsible to anyone, it's going to be donor class people like me."

Almost half of the sample, 14 of 30 interviewees, were best characterized as having mixed, moderated, or qualified external efficacy. Caroline, for example, said "I think there are individuals within the government that certainly care, like Obama. One of the problems we face is, as an institution that is more difficult to believe." Her response appeared to be a direct causal result of the Obama Effect. While it did not give her a high degree of external efficacy in general, it did *increase* her efficacy from where it was before the Obama election. I observed the Obama Effect at work in another volunteer, Josh, who I also recorded as mixed efficacy: "That's an interesting question. I think there's certain elements in government that do care. But the Republicans in Congress and a lot of groups out there don't care about what people like me think. They don't care what my opinion is. But I do think the executive branch does care about what I think." Aaron said it just depended who we are talking about: "I think it depends on if your name carries weight. A community leader is different than just Jo Shmo calling into his

congressman's office, uneducated about the issues. So it varies based on the dependability of the person voicing their issues.”

Multiple volunteers distinguished between their external efficacy when it comes to local versus national politics. Kristen, for example, stated “I think at the level of local and state government they care a little more. I don't always think that the federal government, that our voices are heard. Jeff agreed:

Sometimes yeah with respect to certain issues, but with respect to other issues I feel like it can be drowned out by corporate money...For the most part I feel like more local issues are where I have more of a voice, but for national issues like foreign policy I feel like I don't have any say at all. But for an issue where there's a city council meeting like how to allocate library funds I feel like I have more of a voice.

Seven of the 30 volunteers expressed more negative or cynical attitudes on external efficacy. Speaking personally, Lucas offered an interesting contrast to Richard's response above:

“I think due to my income level, no they probably don't care. I think my ability to influence people in power is relatively minor.” I followed up asking if Obama being in the White House impacted his views on that at all, which prompted him to express the following:

I think the President is different. I think he actually thinks about people. I was able to sign up for his healthcare plan at a really good premium with subsidies from the federal government. I think his actions are very indicative of actually caring and trying to get something done. He came into office to increase the economic fortunes of the middle class, especially the lower middle class, and I think he's been working hard to do that.

Thus while Lucas directly indicated low external efficacy, the follow-up question appeared to reveal indirectly a significant Obama Effect on his efficacy toward Obama himself, if not the larger federal government.

Almost one-quarter of my sample, 7 of 30 interviewees, expressed overwhelmingly negative external efficacy. Cassie answered the question thusly, in a response fairly typical of this last group:

Unfortunately not. I mean, I know the thing to say is everyone's voice counts and that voting is important. And I believe it's a good idea to say that and tell other people that just to get other people to come out and participate, otherwise they won't even vote. And then what's the point in even calling us a democracy. But when it comes down to it, it's just who has the most votes in Congress, how many Republicans are there versus how many Democrats. So I don't think they listen to the public, including myself, as much as they should.

**Attitudes toward President Obama.** Although my quantitative analyses in Chapters 4 centered on attitudes such as interest, efficacy, and partisanship, for this qualitative chapter I wanted to gain a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of these former young volunteers' attitudes toward the president himself. As such, below I included full or partial responses from most volunteers to my third question: "How do you feel about Barack Obama these days? And how have your feelings about him changed (or not changed) since his 2008 campaign?" Among the 30 interviewees, 21 were best characterized as having overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Obama; the other 9 had mixed attitudes toward the president. It should not be surprising that none of the interviewees had an overwhelmingly negative attitude toward Obama, given that all 30 of them had volunteered to help elect him less than 5 years prior.

Although 70% of my interviewees expressed overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Obama in the summer of 2013, almost all responses contained some qualification related to partisanship, gridlock, or to dissatisfaction with Obama's handling on certain specific issues. Yet a few volunteers did express unqualified approval for the president, such as Cassie, who began her answer with a hearty laugh: "I love, love, *love* President

Obama. I love to watch him on TV, I love to read about him and listen to him. I just think he's wonderful for the country and I haven't had a problem with anything he's done.

Love him. Always have." Another volunteer, Bridget said:

I think he's doing a good job, that he's kept his campaign promises. And I'm certainly sympathetic to the opposition he's dealt with, but I think he's done the best he could. I've been happy with his handling of healthcare. In terms of disappointment I can't say there's anything off the top of my head. I appreciate when he talks about how he wants to revamp student loan policies because that affects me a lot.

Yet another, Olivia, indicated that her support had become even broader in recent months: "I think he's trying to do everything he can to better this country. Overall I feel he's been consistent in most areas and good for America. Especially since his re-election, I feel he's much more assertive which is good."

I prompted Lucas to elaborate after he initially offered the short response that he was "pleased with the president...I think he's doing a good job." I followed up: "You mentioned you personally benefited from Obama's health care bill. Any other issues where you're particularly happy or where you're dissatisfied with the president?" I asked. He replied, "I really like his nominees to the federal bench, his economic stimulus, and like I said his health care bill. I think all of this has been beneficial. I'm also particularly pleased with his appointment of Justice Elena Kagan. I knew what I was getting into when I voted for him again. I was pleased with him during his first term and I'm still pleased right now." Again asking if he had any areas of disappointment in Obama, Lucas offered, "Boy that is tough. When he was considering getting us into the war in Syria, I was very much against that. I was very pleased [Secretary of State] John Kerry ratcheted

down the war rhetoric. That is probably the only negative thing that I would put on President Obama, the rest has more to do with the Republicans that control Congress.”

Josh told me that “My opinion is pretty much the same as it was in 2008. A lot of people I know are disillusioned with Obama but I kind of feel like a lot of what we’ve gotten from the president is what I expected when I was helping campaign for him.” I followed up, “Your attitudes toward Obama are clearly very positive, but are there any areas where you’re disappointed in him? He responded, “I think on issues like gun control and immigration he could use his powers from the executive branch a little more strongly to try and force legislation through or to do things unilaterally with executive orders. He’s done that a little with guns but it just seems like he could try a little harder on this issues where most of the American people would support him.”

Victoria expressed similar attitudes in that she was very approving of the president, yet felt he could be doing more. “I do approve of the president,” she began. “I’m glad the healthcare reform went through. But I don’t think he’s doing as much as he could be doing. But on the things he’s doing I don’t think he’s doing a bad job at all.” I followed up, “It sounds like your feelings about President Obama are mostly positive but not fully. Any particular issues where you think he could be doing more? She did then offer some specific critiques of the president:

Two issues where he could make a bigger stand are regarding national gay marriage legalization, and also marijuana. He came out in support of same-sex marriage, but hasn’t really done anything more than make a statement, not that that is nothing but it’s not enough. I definitely think we could be doing reforms in the areas of both medical and recreational use of marijuana. I think decriminalizing it would help out a lot. And in terms of border security, he says he is friendly to immigrants but they are putting up a wall in certain parts of Texas and California, I just don’t think that’s right for him to give in to the people who want to wall our country off from the rest of the world.

Jeff, similarly, articulated overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Obama, knowing how constrained he would be as president. He stated, “There’s always been some minor problems. Nothing huge. I knew that some of my issues weren’t exactly politically feasible. I wanted the infrastructure program in the American Recovery Act when he first got elected to be much larger. And I wanted healthcare to be single payer but those weren’t exactly feasible so I think he did the best with what he had.” Following this theme, Johnathan told me, “I definitely still support him. I mean you never agree with someone 100% of the time and I don’t agree with all of Obama’s current policies. But if I had to scale my support 1-10 I would say a 9.” When I asked if Johnathan had been particularly disappointed about any specific issues, he stated, “Things like Guantanamo, I realize it’s not totally in his control and Congress is doing everything it can to prevent its closure. But it’s frustrating that it’s still open more than 4 years later.”

Chris also expressed deep sympathy for Obama entering office during an economic crisis:

I feel like he’s doing a good job given the situation that he inherited and given the circumstances in Congress. The economy, unemployment, job creation, creating a strong middle class, they’re all important issues that the President has focused on. Overall I’ve been definitely satisfied with how he’s handled those issues. When you become president the circumstances and the situation isn’t always static. And given what he inherited and given the situation, I feel like he’s done a good job.

One volunteer, Caroline began by articulating a very positive view of Obama, but then revealed her mixed feelings: “In the past I have been a huge supporter. I’m still confident that he’s the right one. But it is discouraging and frustrating when someone has that kind of potential to make change, and the system gets in the way. It’s frustrating, so I’m kind of neutral toward him now I suppose.” Derek also felt this frustration, but



thought such attitudes were the product of unrealistically high expectations given the context of the negative economic and militaristic conditions under which Obama assumed the office:

The president inherited a very difficult situation with the economy that no one could fix overnight, and two very costly wars, and he's done a very good job trying to fix all that. But because he came into office with such high expectations...overall I think he's done a very good job as president. I just don't think he's met the expectations he set for himself during his first presidential run. I think that's mainly because Republicans refuse to play ball and cut deals, that's why he's struggled at times. I've felt that way fairly consistently going back to 2008.

This last point made by Derek reflected the most common theme that arose when I asked about attitudes toward Obama. Indeed, most volunteers offered some combination of an expression of support for Obama and an expression of frustration with congressional Republicans striving to block any agenda item supported by the president. Samantha put it like this: "I think everyone's a little frustrated and I'm a little frustrated, not with him but with the process. It was nothing that I didn't expect. Obviously everything is glittering and shiny when it's campaign promises but nobody expects that all campaign promises will be fulfilled. I don't feel any differently toward him...but I definitely wish he could get more through Congress. Another volunteer, Dominic, said that "He's doing the best he can with what he has. With the Congress that he has. With the current state of the economy and what's going on overseas...I think he's doing a good job so far." Abby agreed, elaborating on why she still had such positive attitudes toward Obama: I still support him a great deal. He hasn't had it easy, but what president does? So I kind of give him the benefit of the doubt because I think he's doing the best he can with John Boehner and the Republicans." Mentioning an issue of particular importance to

her, she said, “I was proud of his show of support for LGBT issues recently, especially given the climate in Washington...it was something he could actually do without Republicans.”

Speaking as one of those volunteers who had more tepid support or mixed attitudes toward the president, Cliff said,

It’s not that I feel he’s been ineffective on purpose. I think a lot of that just has to do with how our system works, with Congress these days. I do think he’s trying to be effective, and that his hands are tied. There have been a few examples though where I thought he should have been a little bolder, like not dropping the public option or just letting the Bush tax cuts expire. But I think that’s the danger of our system right now, how our Congress is supported by lobbyists...So a lot of this really isn’t his fault. I think we all had a lot of hope for our future that hasn’t turned out into what we thought it would. I think most of the blame is on who he has to work with.

Tyler offered a somewhat different perspective by focusing more on the fact that Democrats had large majorities in Congress during Obama’s first two years in office, than on Republican obstruction. “I don’t regret my involvement in 2008,” he said. “My endorsement is maybe a little less emphatic than back then, but I would say it hasn’t really changed completely. I was disappointed with Democrats generally because they had a supermajority and failed to deliver the kind of healthcare law I wanted. I think the Affordable Care Act is weaker and more conservative than I would’ve liked.” I asked if he put any of the blame directly on the president, or only upon Democrats in Congress, and he replied, “I think the President has been too conciliatory in light of all the Republican obstructionism. But I do think he has restored some of our positive image around the world, and I also like his Supreme Court pick, so a lot of my frustration is with the Democratic leadership in Congress.”

Tonya, a self-described environmentalist, offered another interesting combination of support for and frustration with the president: “I still really like Obama, I can’t deny it. I feel increasingly sorry for him as I watch his level of frustration grow with Congress.”

But she qualified her support by saying Obama wasn’t fighting hard enough:

A couple of years ago when the big [BP] oil spill happened, he had an opportunity to really do something big related to climate change legislation. If there was ever an opportunity that was squandered, that was it. I really felt like an environmental disaster that nothing good could have come out of except for increased legislation to prevent that kind of thing from happening in the future. And that didn’t happen... That was one of the reasons I supported Obama in the first place, because he was all about science, but then he barely even fought Republicans on that issue. I think most people in the country would have supported him, he sort of squandered it which made me very frustrated. But except for the oil spill, when he’s been able to do things that are within his control, like get Bin Laden. When power has been divided between him and Congress, he hasn’t been able to be effective. I do support most of what he says, it’s just I think he could do a better job of fighting Republicans on issues like the environment.

Although all volunteers expressed at least mixed support for Obama, several offered sharp criticisms of certain policy positions. For example, volunteers like Kent were pleased with the president’s handling of the Affordable Care Act and the economy, but also stated that “There have been some areas where there’s been a lack of transparency which is something that he said he wanted to improve upon. It doesn’t seem like that’s happened, but actually the opposite. Probably that’s very difficult to do, but really disappointing not much has changed there.” I asked if he was referring to the Edward Snowden revelations in the news that summer, and he said “I am. I’m also referring to drone strikes, to letting interest groups write legislation, and to letting lobbyists continue to have so much influence over government decisions.” Another volunteer, Jordan, agreed, saying that his attitudes toward Obama were

Generally positive but he could be so much better... with recent events related to intelligence gathering, I've had a lot of concern. I think he's slow to act on civil liberties and civil rights issues. Things like how he handled Snowden, and not fighting the bad state voting laws that are popping up everywhere, and joblessness for minorities being much higher than white Americans... He's come out for gay marriage personally but it's not something he's proactively pursuing in terms of federal legislation. It's more like he's saying 'I support it personally but we'll let the states handle it.' And I think given the public sentiment and how it's changing rapidly I think he could be more proactive in that regard.

Only 3 of the 30 volunteers in my sample could appropriately be characterized as having mixed, but more negative than positive feelings toward Obama. Obviously since they had volunteered for his campaign, such attitudes were attributable to a deep disappointment with the president after having high expectations for him. Daniel, for example, said that Obama was merely "better than the alternatives." When I asked if he was referring to McCain and Romney, or to other Democrats, he said

I'm referring to the Republicans. He's pretty much Republican-light in most economic issues anyway. For example, he's considering putting Larry Summers in as head of the Fed. That guy has been consistently wrong about how to help the middle class so I just don't get why Obama would want to associate with him, let alone give him so much power over the economy. Foreign policy is the one part, all things considered, that I'm actually pretty okay with. But on domestic issues, he could do so much better ... When he passed Obamacare, it was by the skin of his teeth. It was like we were lucky to get anything on that whole mess. So I can't really fault him for that. But on economic issues, issues of government transparency, all that stuff, he sort of renegeed on a lot of key promises. But during last year's election, then it was like oh God, please don't let Romney be president. So my support went up slightly then, but overall I would say a slight decline from 2008.

Another volunteer whose attitudes were on the relatively negative side was Greg, who said he was "torn and mixed" in his attitudes toward Obama. "Depends on the issue," he said.

I support his social policies but any Democrat can be pro-choice. I wish he were more liberal on tax equality, and I *really* wish he were more liberal on questions of national security, NSA data collection. I wish he pursued financial regulations

harder than he currently does. The Dodd-Frank bill was weak, does anybody believe it fixed the problem of banks being 'too big to fail'? But that's not to say I'm not happy with him as president. I still happily voted for him in 2012. We could be doing a whole lot worse. I think expectations were unrealistically high for him coming into office, given what he has to work with in Congress.

Thus while Greg and a few others did attribute much of their frustration to congressional Republicans, they also laid a substantial portion of the blame for their disappointment at the feet of Obama himself.

Finally, Cameron offered perhaps the most negative views of among all 30 volunteers:

It's not the same as when he was campaigning, obviously. I do have very mixed feelings about him. Overall I stand by my vote because the Republican candidate was too far away from my political views. But that being said, there are some things I take great issue with in Obama's case. I have mixed feelings about the health care policy. I'm greatly displeased that he was defending the NSA on their domestic spying. I don't think he's been supportive enough of Israel. Sometimes he sounds like he is trying to move back in the right direction, like when he said he would review the NSA's policies, but his government should not have been so intrusive in the first place.

As I noted above, it was not surprising that all 30 of these volunteers from Obama's 2008 campaign expressed at least partial support for him in the summer of 2013, or that the overwhelming majority still have overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward him. Yet I also observed a wide range in negative attitudes couched within the positive overall assessments of the president, especially with respect to his handling of specific issues (e.g., the Affordable Care Act, the Dodd-Frank Act, the NSA domestic surveillance, tax policy, gun control, choice of appointees, the environment, etc.) Many of these young volunteers were inclined to qualify their support by raising some objection to his handling of said issues. I noticed most of the interviewees only criticized Obama after first expressing their general ongoing support for him. Without question, the vast

majority of volunteers that I interviewed pinned the blame for their frustrations on Republicans in Congress, rather than at Democrats or at Obama himself.

**Attitudes on Direction of the Country.** My final question in the attitudes section of the related to the interviewee's general outlook toward the future. I asked, "How do you feel about the way things are going for the U.S. these days? Are you more optimistic and positive about the future, or are you more pessimistic and negative?" Exactly half the sample, 15 volunteers, were best characterized as optimistic. Nine of the 30 had mixed attitudes, and the remaining 6 said they were more pessimistic on the whole.

Chris, picking up on the major theme from the previous section, said that he was "very optimistic about our future. I mean I'm very disappointed with Congress, but overall I feel pretty optimistic." Daniel, another optimistic, said that "Things are looking up. Economy is recovering, wars are ending. We're probably gonna get another Democrat in 2016 so that's probably a good thing." Bridget told me, "I'm optimistic for 2 reasons. First, when I hear the job numbers, compared to where they were 2-3 years ago, clearly the economy is getting better. And second, from an anecdotal standpoint, I'm a recent law school graduate....Looking at the classes 1 or 2 years ahead of me, it's far easier to find jobs now. So I feel more optimistic about the economy." Aaron also felt the economy provide solid ground for a positive outlook, in part because of Obama's initiatives:

I feel optimistic. The private sector is picking up a lot of slack where the public sector has had some shortcoming. On the energy side of the economy, renewable energies are growing, natural gas is booming, and we're exporting more energy. We're thawing relations with Iran which I think is really important because that's an issue that could turn disastrous. And one other thing I'm optimistic about is the President has recently been promoting these manufacturing hubs, public-private partnerships to bring together community businesses, schools, and research

institutions to bring together ideas and concepts that are conceived at universities, to bring them to market. And I think that's really important.

Tyler also pointed to the economy picking up steam by saying he had a “generally positive feeling about the future. More startup companies are emerging, the Dow has doubled since 2008 when everything fell apart, and we're less involved in wars now. I'm concerned about the deficit we're running, but I do still feel optimistic about the direction the country is heading.”

Caroline attributed her optimism more to personality than to Obama or any other specific thing. “I'm an optimistic person,” she told me. “There are probably a lot of areas where we could get down on our luck and think that as a country we're headed in the wrong direction, and there's credence to that view, but pessimists are not seeing the whole picture.” When I asked her to elaborate further on the reasons for her optimism, she said, “I just know so many young people on the front lines of doing great work around important issues. So even if the guys at the top of our country seem like they're pushing things in the wrong direction, at the ground level I see lots of great work being done in our country by young people. And that's the future, right?”

Certainly other interviewees were more tepid, reserved, or qualified in their optimism. Cliff, for example, qualified his response by saying it depended on class:

That *really* depends who you are. For the middle class or for the average person, probably not going in the right direction. If you look at unemployment, the job market just doesn't seem like we're headed back to the 1990s anytime soon. But that being said, I do think that there's still plenty of opportunity depending on how creative you are and how hard you're willing to work. And I still believe, and I hope I'm right, that hard work still pays off. Even though there are certain things about this country that were tougher on us how than they were 15 or 20 years ago, that's not necessarily all bad. Despite all that's going on with governmental gridlock, in spite of all of that, there's still a lot of opportunity to be had. I think we should be thankful that we are not in a third world country where people can

barely feed themselves. We still have it so much better than so many other places in the world so we should be very thankful for that. But it really depends on who you are.

Tonya and several others agreed with Cliff that class and income inequality were paramount

Issues with respect to the future health of the United States:

It totally depends on who you are. When you think about inequality, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, well is that going to be acceptable, is that the kind of country that we're gonna have? That's the path we're on, and it's very scary. So when you take that inequality and you put it in the context of the globe, all the people on the low end in the U.S., where do they fall globally? From a global perspective maybe it's not as bad. People are walking around with an iPhone in their pocket, and they want an iPhone 5 but they only have an iPhone 4... We're so self-absorbed... Some people could stand to realize how lucky they are to be Americans. From a global perspective, a lot of our problems in the U.S. will seem very trivial but from a national perspective they seem very tough. So it depends a lot on the perspective we take.

Kent said that he was

Both optimistic and pessimistic. I think we're going in the right direction in some areas and the wrong direction in some areas. I think we're moving in the right direction in terms of how we relate to the rest of the world; building relationships with other countries and working together on global challenges. I think the economy is doing better than it was 5 or 6 years ago. But at the same time, there's more inequality. That gap between people who have the most and people who have the least is widening. And that's not the direction we should be going.

Lucas also gave a mixed assessment because of rising income inequality.

I think that's a complicated question. The economics of the country are strong, I just don't think they are distributed correctly. And I think the biggest failure of the Democratic Party is not addressing that. If we are going to continue on that the country's fortunes are going to continue, we have to move toward a more social democratic party, one that is willing to talk about the economy as a project that we can control, as something where government has the levers to achieve that.

Only 6 volunteers in my sample reported an overwhelming pessimistic attitude.

Greg offered perhaps the most cynical or negative outlook of all, beginning by saying he was "incredibly pessimistic... A large part of that has to do with frustrations with money



in politics. That's what's given rise to the Tea Party. Now we don't even have an opposition party. One party is just trying to win the political game." I asked him if he thought it was possible for things to get better or reverse course in this regard, and he said "No, I don't see it going away anytime soon. And as long as that's the case I don't have a lot of optimism for any sort of legislation, which means the country will be held back artificially. I mean, we couldn't get a farm bill passed this year! I'm pessimistic because Republicans exist." Josh said that he was also "Mostly pessimistic...because of the gridlock in Washington, and just politicizing things that didn't use to be politicized like the debt ceiling, I just feel like we're heading down a path we shouldn't be going down."

Dominic gave a particularly interesting response, invoking the income inequality issue as grounds for his pessimism, but tying it to his observations from being employed at a struggling retail outlet:

Unfortunately I feel more pessimistic about the future. I look at the widening income gap, and if you look at the directions incomes are going, they're getting skewed higher for people who make more money, and lower for people who don't. The middle class is eroding. Most people who go to college aspire to be middle class, to provide a stable environment for their offspring. But if you just look at something like retail, I work in retail at a mid-range department store, JC Penney, and they have been really squeezed. But you look at Saks 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Bloomingdale's and they're doing awesome. And Dollar General, Dollar Tree at the low end are doing great as well. But stores right there in the middle, like JCP, are closing stores. It shows you exactly what's going on in our country. It's discouraging because I aspire to be middle class and it's just becoming harder and harder. That makes it tough to be an optimist, know what I mean?"

**Voting Behavior.** In the second segment of the interview, I asked the 30 volunteers several questions about their political participation (or lack thereof) in the four and a half years since the 2008 election. My first participation question asked, "Did you vote in the midterm elections in November 2010 and/or the presidential election of 2012?" A yes

response would prompt the follow up question, “Do you think of voting more as a duty or responsibility, or is it something where you really need to be inspired by specific candidates or parties to vote?” All but 1 volunteer said he or she voted in 2012 to reelect President Obama. (The lone nonvoter said she did not vote because she was hospitalized at the time.) The vast majority, 25 of 30, said they also voted in the 2010 midterm elections. About 77% of the sample, 23 of them, said they saw voting as a duty and/or responsibility. The remaining 7 said that they viewed voting as more of a personal decision and/or that their voting habits were conditional upon being inspired to turn out for a particular election (as in 2008).

Caroline represented the views of many volunteers with her straightforward and strong opinion on the importance of voting: “I think it’s a duty. It’s part of the gig of being a citizen, plain and simple. If we’re gonna have an opinion on things, it doesn’t make sense not to participate in the process.” Likewise, Tonya said that “I have voted in every election since I was able to vote, so I think it’s just personal responsibility that we all need to take. Jordan said, “I don’t think my voting is contingent upon my level of motivation for a specific candidate. I guess I would classify it more as a civic duty. I think it’s important to have a voice to the extent that you can have a voice, so I don’t think it’s dependent on personality or how excited I am about a specific party or candidate.” Daniel told me he would vote even if he hated everyone on the ballot, and he wished all citizens felt that way. “I consider it a civic responsibility,” he stated. “I always think of it as a 2-party system. I’m not really happy with Obama but it would be a lot worse if Romney got to be president. I hate to say it but it’s almost like the lesser of two evils sometimes.” Johnathan also considered it a duty even though he didn’t really believe his vote

mattered. “I don’t vote with the idea that my vote might actually change an election; I’m not that naïve. But I always vote. But it’s usually the headline candidates I know most about, and beyond that I just go by party.”

Only a handful of volunteers admitted to not having voted in the 2010 midterm elections; and only 7 said they did not see voting as a duty or responsibility. Most in these groups did not care to elaborate on the subject, but simply indicated that the voting system itself wasn’t something sacred or of overarching importance to them. One who did elaborate on her views, Cassie, said she did not vote in the midterms, but felt the full force of the Obama Effect in 2008 and 2012: “What we say and what we learn in school is it’s your responsibility to come out and vote, but I myself am not a perfect example of that because I never vote in the local elections. I don’t know why. I should probably think about changing that. But it’s like, President Obama, he’s powerful so I’m going to vote for him in the presidential election.”

**Political Volunteering Since 2008.** My next participation question to interviewees was, “Have you volunteered on any campaigns since the 2008 Obama campaign?” If they responded in the affirmative, I followed up by asking which campaign(s) they had volunteered for and what their responsibilities were. I also asked if the 2008 Obama campaign was the first campaign on which they had ever volunteered; a full 90% of the sample, 27 of 30 volunteers, said that it was indeed their first campaign volunteer work.

My first 4 interviews included a related question regarding campaign mobilization which I dropped in later interviews: “Were you contacted and asked to volunteer again for the 2012 Obama campaign?” I decided to drop this question after noting the stark similarity between the first 4 responses, for example, “I mean, I received emails from the

campaign asking me to volunteer but no I don't think I wasn't contacted personally by anyone." It appeared evident that the 2012 Obama campaign sought to reactive all former 2008 volunteers early in the campaign through mass email outreach, but that the approach was not as personalized as in 2008. (This also represented my own experience as a former volunteer: I was sent many mass emails by the 2012 campaign but was not contacted directly.) This was not surprising, given that Obama was not a new candidate in 2012 and already had some existing campaign infrastructure in place for his reelection bid. It was also not surprising because many volunteers clearly were more qualified in their support for Obama in 2012 than they had been in 2008. The campaign may have focused more on recruiting a fresh group of young volunteers than on reactivating its former volunteer base. Yet perhaps the main reason for the lack of direct campaign mobilization with these former volunteers was that Indiana was treated by both campaigns as a swing state in 2008 but not in 2012. It is likely that the 2012 Obama campaign did in fact engage in more personalized direct mobilization efforts, as opposed to mass email outreach only, for former 2008 volunteers who were living in swing states in 2012. Those with Indiana addresses may have been left off the recruitment list for that reason alone.

Notwithstanding the 2012 Obama campaign's apparent lack of personalized volunteer outreach in Indiana, about 57% of the sample had volunteered in some political capacity in the four and a half years since the 2008 election. Among these 17, I coded 6 as having volunteered a lot, 8 as having volunteered a little, and 3 who had worked in politics since leaving Purdue and also volunteered at some point. Of the remaining 13 interviewees, 2 had worked in politics since graduating but not volunteered; and 11 had not done any political work or volunteering since the 2008 Obama campaign.

Chris told me that he “was involved in a couple midterm campaigns back in Indiana... In 2012 I was a field organizer for Obama on the ground in Las Vegas.” He credited his experience volunteering for the 2008 campaign with giving him the desire to pursue a full time job on the 2012 campaign. Kent told a very similar story: he worked full time as a field organizer on the 2012 Obama campaign in Ohio, and volunteered for several local Democratic Party candidates on several 2010-2011 local races in West Lafayette, Indiana. Abby said that she was also “very active in the 2012 Obama campaign... I was an organizer over the summer, and I did some volunteer work like doing data entry and voter registration as well. I went to Ohio to register voters. I was also in charge of re-activating some volunteers from 2008.” I asked if she was a paid organizer, and she said it was an unpaid internship requiring 20 hours of campaign work each week.

On the other end of the spectrum were volunteers like Tonya, who volunteered 1 time for 1 candidate. She told me that she had volunteered to attend the Indiana State Democratic Party convention in 2010 as a delegate for candidate Vop Osili, but that she had not volunteered since. No less than four 2008 volunteers told me that they didn’t volunteer for Obama in 2012 simply because Indiana (or the state they were living in) was not competitive in the Electoral College.

Donovan, one of the most active volunteers on Purdue’s campus in 2008, said that he knew Obama was going to win his state of Maryland in 2012; but this did not fully deter him from volunteering. Instead he canvassed down-ballot Democratic Party candidates. However going out a few times, he lost the passion for political volunteer work. “It just wasn’t as exciting as 2008,” he said. “We didn’t have the same type of

community involvement.” I asked if he had considered working for the 2012 Obama campaign so that he could be paid to do what he enjoyed so much as a volunteer back in 2008; he laughed, saying that would be a bad use of his engineering degree. “I’ve graduated and it’s harder to work for free like when I was in college,” he said. In contrast, Caroline, another one of Purdue’s most active volunteers in 2008, said that she had only grown to love it more. “I volunteered for the Democrats in the 2010 midterms and I worked on a gubernatorial race, and then volunteered again for Obama in 2012... We did a lot of GOVT stuff, organizing people into canvassing and phone-banking events. I was also part of a group that helped organize a debate between Howard Dean and Liz Cheney.” She and Donovan seemed to have very contrasting experiences, with one experiencing a powerful but short term Obama Effect, and the other a lasting Obama effect that made her want to do political volunteer work in the future.

Perhaps the most engaged volunteers since 2008 were Jordan and Richard. “I’ve volunteered on several races for state senate and state representative in Indianapolis,” Jordan told me, continuing, “I also volunteered on Melinda Kennedy’s race for Indianapolis mayor. And I did a lot of field work for our statewide candidates, John Gregg for governor and Joe Donnelly for senator. So I’ve been a pretty active volunteer ever since 2008.” Similarly, Richard said “I’ve volunteered on a number of state and municipal races in 2010 and in 2012 at the gubernatorial level. And I was involved last year in getting the president reelected. I’ve been involved in voter registration in the midterm, municipal, and presidential elections. I’ve done direct phone calling, door to door canvassing, you name it. I’ve probably been doing it.”

In sum, a full 30% of the sample reported either working in politics or doing lots of volunteer work; and another 27% had done at least some political volunteering since 2008. Based on what many of the interviewees told me, it would appear the 2008 Obama campaign did produce a positive and lasting Obama Effect on political participation. In many cases, it manifested very directly in the form of a spillover effect, in which former Obama campaign volunteers from 2008 became engaged as volunteers for other Democratic Party candidates in off-year and down-ballot races.

**Other Forms of Political Participation.** My third question in the participation section asked, “Can you think of any other way in which you participated in politics since the 2008 campaign, such as contributing money to a candidate, putting a campaign bumper sticker on your car, contacting an elected official about an issue, or attending a political protest?” Thirty percent, or 9 of the 30 interviewees, reported participating in politics in at least 4 distinct ways since the 2008 Obama campaign. Two others participated in exactly 3 ways, and 10 more said they participated in 2 different ways. Another 5 said they had participated in only 1 way, and 4 of the 30 reported not having participated in politics at all since 2008 beyond voting (and volunteering, in the case of 2 of the 4).

Many of the former volunteers participated by displaying campaign memorabilia. Cassie, for example, said “My car is covered in Obama bumper stickers, and I wear buttons and stickers showing my support for him but I haven’t participated in other ways.” Similarly, Johnathan said “I’ve had my Obama yard sign in my yard since April 2008, and a bumper sticker on my car. But that’s about it.” Josh had gone a bit further: “Definitely bumper stickers and t-shirts, and I’ve had my Obama bumper sticker since 2008.” But he went a little further, saying he had also “contacted local congressmen in

Indiana about stuff, especially about the gay marriage ban they were talking about, and some gun control stuff.”

Greg said that he often participated in politics both offline and through social media. “I’ve both formally and informally contacted voters,” he told me. “When I say informally I mean posting on Facebook and that sort of thing. I also donated to 3 campaigns, including Obama 2012 because he really needed my \$15 or he would not have won! I’ve done bumper stickers. I tweeted on behalf of candidates I support.”

Chris, Kent, and Tyler were perhaps the most active in terms of non-volunteer political participation since 2008. He also mentioned participating both online and offline:

Yeah I have an Obama bumper sticker, and I try to make sure that people know about what’s going on in the news and in current public affairs. It’s important to be involved. I’ve contacted elected officials when I’ve felt angry, I would Tweet at them, like last year with my Congressman Todd Rokita back in Indiana and his vote against the debt ceiling increase. I felt that was very irresponsible of him. People like that can become my worst enemy on Facebook. I remember I also gave money to a couple of senate candidates like Joe Donnelly. And with friends, colleagues, anyone I meet, I like to talk to them about all that political stuff.

Kent, who told me he came from a very politically active family, said

Kent: I’ve contributed money, I’ve worn lots of buttons and t-shirts, I’ve held signs, and I’ve lobbied government officials as a constituent. I’ve contacted a number of state and national officials about a number of issues. Letters and emails and stuff. I’ve also met with a few members of Congress with a student government delegation. We met with all the Indiana delegation. I’ve also met with some state legislators about some state issues.

Finally, Tyler articulated the widest array of types of participation:

I’ve displayed bumper stickers for many candidates, and I’ve been writing undecided legislators about the importance of supporting same-sex marriage. I haven’t donated to any candidates since Obama, but I have donated money in the last couple years to a couple women’s rights or gay rights groups like Planned Parenthood and the Human Rights Campaign. I have also attended Jefferson-



Jackson dinners and paid for tickets which go into the Democratic Party fund. I also did some research for a candidate running for judge, because he needed to be aware of things he wasn't allowed to do as a candidate for office. I was Finance Chair for College Dems of Indiana... I actually just sent letters to a bunch of legislators last night. I went to law school after Purdue and part of the reason is because I wanted to be able to participate in the process of crafting public policy.

**Joining Organizations or Associations.** In the third segment of my interviews, I asked the volunteers about various types of civic engagement that are not explicitly political in nature. I really wanted to get a sense here of whether the Obama Effect had any lasting implications in terms of a *nonpolitical* spillover effect. My first question was, In the last 5 years, have you voluntarily joined any non-political organizations or associations? Five of the 30 said that they had joined at least 1 professional and 1 nonprofessional association/organization; 6 others said they had joined at least 1 nonprofessional organization; and 5 others had joined at least 1 professional association. The remaining 14 volunteers said they had not joined any organizations or associations, meaning the sample was almost evenly divided in half between joiners and non-joiners.

Professional organizations that were mentioned included Young Professionals of Lafayette, the American Library Association, the American Geographical Union, Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, the American Counseling Association, The Verge (an association for young professionals), the Black Law Student association, and National Association of American Personnel Administrators.

Some of the nonprofessional organizations that were mentioned included the American Civil Liberties Union, the Black Expo, the Lafayette Go Greener Commission, and the Foreign Policy Association. Although I had asked for nonpolitical examples, I thought the responses were still worth noting since they related to issues and not

campaigns. I was surprised, however, at the dearth of examples that lacked any explicit political connection. None of my volunteers reported linking up with the local book group, or signing up with the cycling club, or even joining a bowling league.

One response, from Tyler, jumped out to me as particularly interesting. He told me,

Immediately after undergrad I joined the Peace Corps. I served for about a year as a community health and economic development volunteer in the country of Lesotho. I'm a member of an organization in law school that helps victims of domestic violence get protective orders. I worked for a year as a fundraiser for an international development firm called Oxfam, to raise money to combat severe drought and famine in East Africa. And I was part of a clinical project at my law school that helps provide legal research and assistance to the LGBT community in Indiana.

I followed up with Tyler to ask if he was inspired to join the Peace Corps in part because of Obama. "Absolutely," he said. "And the 2008 Obama campaign wasn't just a minor influence. Being part of that campaign made me want to be part of some of those other things for sure, because I saw what people could accomplish when they join up for a common cause like we did on that campaign."

**Attending Local Meetings.** My second question pertaining to civic engagement was, "In the past 5 years, have you attended any kind of community meeting about social or community issues? Almost two-thirds of the sample said yes they had attended at least 1 such meeting. The remaining 11 of 30 said no they had not attended any community or social meetings since 2008.

Josh told me "Yeah, I used to attend stuff like that quite a bit in college, like different community events and public debates. We did them on issues like freedom of speech, or on whatever was going on in the country at the time. And I went to city

council meetings a couple times to let them know that our streetlights were messed up.” Cameron said, “I attended a symposium about the future and the economy of water. And I know they’ve been having meetings at my synagogue to talk about social issues, I should go to those but I haven’t been going yet.” Samantha said she had regularly been attending meetings of the Chelsea Women’s Club in her neighborhood. Dominic said the Black Expo sometimes held meetings that he would attend, to discuss things like organizing community events to promote local and African American owned businesses. Tonya said that “I’ve actually given several public talks as part of the ‘Go Greener’ initiative. I did a compost workshop, and a rain barrel workshop. These were to promote environmental education within the community but didn’t have any specific political agenda. It was really a chance for the public to come out and ask questions about sustainable and environmentally friendly living.”

**Nonpolitical Volunteering since 2008.** The final question of my formal interview was, “Since 2008 can you think of any other type of volunteer work that you have engaged in?” I was surprised that the overwhelming majority, 23 of 30, said yes they had done nonpolitical volunteer work, while only 7 had not. If someone reported doing a particularly substantial amount of volunteer work, then I followed up by asking them to articulate their motivations as best they could.

Three different interviewees had gone on to do some volunteer work through their law programs. Jeff said he “worked with the IRS’s volunteer income tax program at Indiana University’s Law School.” Bridget was involved in volunteer work through the Black Law Student Association. There were various things we did, whether it was adopting a highway, or visiting a soup kitchen, or donating law books to prisons. It was a

way to get a good amount of community service work done in different areas and to raise money for various organizations and other things.” Tyler volunteered “with two law school organizations to help domestic violence victims get protective orders and help the LGBT community with legal research and assistance.

One interviewee, Victoria, seemed particularly excited to answer this question. “Part of my position [at work] is to do service projects for community members. A recent one is we participated in a local Toys for Tots group so children could have Christmas gifts. And we donated money to a local senior center to have more resources. I’ve donated to our local soup kitchen and stuff like that. And we’ve helped out at some of the local animal shelters.” I followed up, “It’s clear that volunteerism and community involvement are very important to you and a core part of your work as well. Do you feel like being involved in that 2008 Obama campaign encouraged you toward more volunteerism or do you think that would’ve happened anyway?” She responded, “I do think my volunteering in general would’ve happened anyway, however I feel like I wouldn’t have gotten involved in political organizations like the Quad City Chamber of Commerce or the Quad Cities Democratic Caucus. But as far as volunteering and getting involved in professional organizations, I would’ve done that anyway.” So here was someone who was more likely drawn to the Obama campaign for the opportunity to volunteer, than drawn to volunteering because of an Obama Effect.

Others mentioned donating blood, participating in clothing drives, donating to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, helping out the Defenders of Wildlife, and working for a Jewish organization that feeds the poor. One worked with the Trusted Mentors program, and three had been a Big Brother or a Big Sister at some point

in the past 5 years. Caroline was the volunteer who seemed to have done most of these things herself:

I am very active in my church. We're involved in tutoring programs, nursing home visits, food drives, stuff like that. I also teach Sunday school. We also have a high immigrant population here in Milwaukee, so I have done lots of tutoring and organizing of other community events particularly for the Mung population. Let's see, what else...I have also been part of getting our community gardens up and running.

Representing the other end of the spectrum and revealing a lack of a lasting Obama Effect, I asked Donovan, one of the most active volunteers for Obama at Purdue, if he had done any nonpolitical volunteering in the past five years. "No," he stated flatly, "because I can't afford to volunteer. You can't be a college student forever."

**Final Thoughts from the Volunteers.** I closed these interviews with what I described to the volunteers as a very open-ended question that they could answer however they chose. I asked, "When you think back to volunteering on that 2008 Obama campaign almost 5 years later, is there anything in particular that is really memorable for you or that you think of as having had a lasting impact on your life?" The purpose of those question was to give the volunteers an opportunity to articulate any manifestations of a lasting Obama Effect that may not have been captured in responses to the more pointed questions related to the core of my research and analysis (i.e., those related directly to political attitudes or participation).

I identified 4 main themes or points of recurring focus in the volunteer responses: involvement, community, memorable events, and connection to family. Representing the first major theme of involvement, Donovan recalled how being involved in the campaign inspired him to become a more civically engaged even in his professional life:

My experience on that campaign actually made me think more about what government is supposed to do for the people, and made me change majors to civil engineering, because it has the biggest effect on people day to day. And that's why I want to be involved in government still. I think it made people who volunteered want to be leaders more, maybe not political leaders but people who are driving society forward. And I'm pretty sure some of us had never experienced that drive before.

Bridget was another who drew inspiration for her professional life from her involvement in the Obama campaign:

Yeah, I have great memories about relationships that were fostered. Really, one of the regrets in my own life is I haven't stayed as involved as I want to be. But it changed me in a way that will serve me well in the future. Working on the campaign, learning to organize and persuade, I think it helps me a lot in my professional life. So I would say the skills I gained during that time period are really positive memories for me.

Abby talked about how being involved in the campaign inspired her early in her Purdue career helped her realize her agency:

When I worked on the 2008 campaign, it was my freshman year in college. So seeing how active and engaged people wanted to be in the process if they felt they had a candidate that spoke to them, that gave me a good push toward what I wanted to do in life. It made me think younger people do really care if candidates talk to them about issues they cared about. So that's what stands out to me now, just how active and organized we were on Purdue's campus. It was pretty impressive.

Several others reminisced positively and proudly about their involvement in the 2008 campaign. Derek brought up the power of teamwork, telling me, "The thing about that campaign is it showed me what people can accomplish when they come together and work hard for a common goal. Just the way everyone seemed to have self-motivated to do their part to get President Obama elected, that's what I remember most." Jordan talked about the excitement he felt from helping others to get involved as well: "I had a lot of good moments, especially when we were registering voters where it had been years and

years since they voted. And it was pretty exciting to see that level of involvement and interest on the part of some people who hadn't ever been involved. It was a very refreshing experience." Aaron relished in having been involved in Obama's victory: "Obviously it was really exciting when we won. I guess it was my first real-world experience defending a candidate, so going door to door in a state like Indiana, I would say it was challenging and rewarding at the same time."

Tyler offered a particularly emotional response about the meaning of his involvement in the 2008 Obama campaign. When I asked what was particularly memorable for him, he responded:

For me, the extraordinary thing was that the year and a half before that campaign, my grades really tanked. I didn't do much, I didn't join clubs or make any effort to hang out with friends or make new friends. I didn't realize it at the time but it was basically symptoms of depression. So when that campaign started I basically decided to force myself to go out and *do something*. And then during that campaign it wouldn't be uncommon for me to work tons of hours on the campaign on top of school stuff. I felt myself being more energized and more productive and even got better grades that semester, I think just based off the energy we had on the campaign. It was very fulfilling working toward something that I believed in like that. That was very rewarding. Being able to work that much on something that I care about, to completely throw myself into a worthwhile project, and being around a whole bunch of people that were at least somewhat like-minded...it was a really enjoyable social experience, I kind of miss that sometimes.

The second major theme I identified was community. Many volunteers deeply appreciated the opportunity to work side by side in a community of peers on a project of such great significance. Cliff, for example, responded to the final question like this:

For me what really stood out was, we all came from different backgrounds. There were political science students but also engineering students. The diversity of our group was pretty widespread. It was amazing just how focused everybody was and how much of a team player everybody was. Maybe we didn't solve all of our problems electing Obama president but to work so hard as a team for a common goal was just amazing.

Greg also tapped directly into the theme of community, citing it as a source of future inspiration:

Two big things I remember. One is it really demonstrated how important that type of work can be. It felt like we had a lot of ownership over the process, and that's one thing that kept me coming back. The other thing is, it was really cool seeing my peers being so dedicated not just mentally and emotionally, but also with their time. That was the first time I had seen that and that's something I've carried with me in my political volunteerism.

Lucas told me that for him, the campaign had evolved into a joint business venture with a fellow volunteer: “[Richard] and I are still working together on our business venture. The social network has also been very substantial in my life since then.”

The third major theme I identified was memorable events. Several volunteers spoke about a single experience from the campaign that was especially memorable for them. Of the 12 nonwhite volunteers, only one, Dominic, talked about race in relation to this final interview question. He told me about a particularly meaningful day for him on an out-of-state campaign trip that really influenced his thinking about race relations:

I think from time to time about when I was canvassing for Barack in Ohio. I'm from an all African American community from Gary, and when I got to Purdue I had in my mind, “white people are this way and black people are this way”. But that campaign really challenged my thinking on race. Point in case is when we were in Ohio, canvassing in this rich white neighborhood, me and my girlfriend, these 2 young black kids, and I was just shocked at how many people invited us to come into their homes and actually sit on their furniture and talk to them. Some even tried to feed us. And they didn't know us from a hole in the wall. And I remember thinking wow, this is really cool, some rich white people are actually nice like this in real life! So that was a really big deal for me, because they actually cared what we were saying and asked questions about what we were studying in school and stuff, like they were really excited we came by. It was just a very exciting experience.

Richard also focused his response on his most memorable experience campaigning for Obama in another state:



I remember going to Iowa to volunteer over winter break. I was gonna be moved to Cedar Rapids but one of the staffers was sick so I was put in charge of the entire Osage, Iowa office. I remember going out canvassing with this former Department of Justice staffer who had this personal vendetta against the Clintons. We went out in his little Prius and the wind chill was like -3 degrees. So his job was to drive between houses as I went up to knock and make the pitch. Then the day of the actual caucus, it was in the senior center and the Hillary people were the older people and they had the keys to the center. So they went up and hung up a bunch of Hillary signs all around the caucus area. So I remember showing up and having to call the elections officials and waiting for the official to come down before we went in to set up. But anyway, we won, we went out to a bar and celebrated with the Edwards people. So it was between that, and when Obama came to campus in July. I was so excited that I didn't sleep the night before.

Daniel first told me about a particular memorable event from the campaign, and then turned to the theme of involvement and how it helped his professional development:

I remember the day of Halloween I ran into Jade (Purdue's field organizer for the Obama campaign) and we went down to the tailgating crowd for the football game and did some campaign work for getting out the vote. That's one day I will always remember. But overall I guess just the sense of working as a team. I worked at a couple jobs before Groupon and I think it helped me out with that. I also think it may have contributed to my job at Groupon. When we first started, there were a ton of people I knew who applied at Groupon but didn't get a job. But my interviewer was really interested in what kind of campaign work I did, and what kind of team work I had experienced. So I told her about the campaign, how I did all this work, and I got the feeling that she really liked that part.

One volunteer, Josh, talked about how excited he was to be invited to a special event with Obama as a reward for his campaign involvement. He told me, "My buddy and I were still in high school during the 2008 primaries, and we got to see Obama play basketball in Kokomo because we got so many voter registrations. That was our reward from the campaign. It was a great day!" Another, Cameron, mentioned a big local music festival in support of the campaign: "I also remember the Turn Indiana Blue musical festival on the Lafayette Bridge. And in the end we actually turned Indiana Blue!" Tabitha also referenced election night itself as a particularly memorable moment for Purdue

volunteers like her: “Indiana hadn’t gone blue in 44 years. And it went blue by just a few thousand votes. So just knowing I had participated in that, I remember feeling that night like it was a historical moment and I had been part of creating it. What a feeling.”

The final theme that emerged in volunteer responses was connection to family.

Two volunteers touched upon this theme in very meaningful ways. Caroline told me:

That campaign was actually a pivotal moment in the history of my family. My mom was a volunteer coordinator for the campaign, and my dad was making sure that everyone who came into his doctor’s office was registered to vote. Both my brother and sister got into phone-banking for Obama. Then we all took a road trip to his inauguration in January 2009!

Tonya’s response to my final question represented a blending of 3 of the 4 themes I discussed in this section. She began by discussing a memorable event, but then quickly pivoted to the larger meaningfulness of her involvement. She then drew an emotional connection between her involvement in the 2008 Obama campaign and her family history:

I got to shake Obama’s hand! But seriously, I mean, I had never been so personally connected to a campaign before. So I guess that turned me from being politically passive to politically active. So Obama’s campaign was clearly a definitive point in my life. Before that I still cared about politics, I mean I voted, but I didn’t pay nearly as much attention as I did because of that campaign. And I think that will carry through for the rest of my life. I don’t see that changing; I’m involved now. I may have been disconnected for a few months around when my daughter was born, but I’m back into it now. And the people that you talk to when you’re campaigning, you get a sense that it’s important to them too. So if other people were going to be informed citizens, I feel like it’s my responsibility to be an informed citizen too. And the other thing, my dad was a journalist for PBS radio in New York City so I kind of grew up in a household with politics, because that’s what he did every day, he would come home and he didn’t have the news on because he didn’t need to, because he was intimately involved in it. And so I grew up in a household where the news was important to my dad but never really translated into being important to us. And I lost my dad when I was 19, and now that I’m involved in politics I can see why he was so passionate about it. And that also makes me feel like I’m motivated to stay involved for very personal reasons.

So with the Obama campaign, I hope that's something where he would feel proud that I got involved in it.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The story I thought I might be telling, not long after I began this project, was one of the Obama Effect gone awry. I situated my project in the literature on campaign effects and individual-centered campaigns, hypothesizing a positive and lasting Obama Effect for this seemingly unique candidate; but the honeymoon period didn't last very long into his first year. With Obama's approval ratings sinking below 50% in late 2009, I was already beginning to wonder if I had my general hypothesis backward. The 2008 Obama campaign had set out to transform the electorate, but instead was welcomed by the rise of the Tea Party Movement. Obama had sought to strengthen his Democratic Party, but instead it was the other Party that he seemed to energize more *after* his 2008 election. The Democrats suffered landslide losses in the 2010 midterms and found themselves thereafter blocked at nearly every policy turn by their Republican counterparts. I wondered if the Obama Effect might be a negative thing, a phenomenon experienced most deeply by his harshest critics rather than by his strongest supporters.

Ultimately I decided to test directly that campaign's assertion that it could and would transform the electorate into a more engaged and participatory citizenry. I framed my hypotheses accordingly to expect a positive and lasting Obama Effect on political interest, external political efficacy, partisanship, voter turnout, attendance of political meetings, and attendance of political protests. As it turns out, the picture that emerged

was far too muddy to characterize so neatly or generally as an overarching “positive” or “negative” Obama effect. What is rather obvious from the data is that the 2008 Obama campaign did not have the clearly transformational positive impact on the electorate in these ways as it had hoped.

Within the chapter on political attitudes, I found a negative Obama Effect on political interest, indicating that his supporters did not stay engaged in politics after the election to the degree that his campaign hoped. I observed a positive Obama Effect on one type of external efficacy (How much do government officials care what people like you think?), although the negative sentiment among McCain supporters was stronger than the positive sentiment among Obama supporters. And I observed a sort of oppositional effect on my second measure of efficacy (How much can people like you affect what the government does?) I observed a very broad candidate effect on partisanship, indicating that supporters of any candidate prone to increased partisanship in the first two years after a typical modern presidential election.

Within the chapter on political participation, I observed no statistically significant candidate effect on voter turnout. I did, however, find a negative presidential effect on attending local meetings to discuss political or social concerns. Although Obama supporters did register a relative significant increase their attendance, the magnitude of the increase was stronger among McCain supporters. Likewise, supporters of Gore and Bush II, the other losing candidates, registered similar increases. This suggested a possible oppositional thesis, in which the opponents rather than the supporters of the winning candidate become more participatory after the election. I observed a similar dynamic between Obama and McCain supporters with attending protests, with supporters

of both candidates showing an increased attendance of protests, but with a significantly larger increase among McCain supporters. Not surprisingly, comparative data from the contested 2000 election showed a spike in protest activity among both Bush II and Gore supporters. In sum, results on participation were mixed but revealed more of an oppositional thesis, in other words, more of a negative Obama Effect on participation than a positive one. It is important to keep in mind the relative nature of the analysis here, given that even Obama supporters showed increases in these types of participation, just not as large as those for supporters of McCain and other candidates from previous election cycles.

It seems safe to say, based on my quantitative analyses, that there was not a positive, unique, and lasting Obama Effect in any overarching sense regarding the attitudes and behaviors of his supporters. Certainly the election was not transformative in the sense that the Obama campaign hoped. If anything, his opponents appeared to be emboldened more than his supporters when it came to thinking they could affect government. He did not inspire heightened turnout among his supporters in the 2010 midterms, and it was his opponent's supporters who were more active in terms of attending meetings and protests during those two years after the election.

Within the chapter on 2008 Obama campaign volunteers, I found that former Obama volunteers tended maintain a high degree of political interest, but that just as many were externally inefficacious as efficacious (with "mixed efficacy" being the modal category). Volunteers gave overwhelmingly positive assessments of President Obama in that summer after his 2012 reelection, but the vast majority also qualified their praise by expressing certain frustrations. The most common frustration expressed was with

congressional Republicans who were viewed as universally obstructionist toward any proposal by made by President Obama. While many expressed frustration with systems of checks and balances and divided government that disallowed Obama from enacting parts of his agenda, most also expressed some awareness of and sympathy for Obama's constraints. Many volunteers mentioned that he had been put in an impossible political situation, citing circumstances such as the economic crisis and the two ongoing wars. Yet quite a few volunteers did lay partial blame for their disappointment squarely on Obama's shoulders. Some were displeased with his handling of the NSA or the Affordable Care Act or other individual issues, while others thought he was right on the issue(s) but too eager to compromise. This latter group wanted him to fight harder to defend his positions instead of, as they perceived it, giving in to his political opponents.

Almost all volunteers I interviewed had voted in 2010 and 2012, with the vast majority viewing voting as a duty or responsibility. Most of them participated in politics in other ways, if not by volunteering for a campaign, then through social media, bumper stickers, and the like. Several had even worked in politics. In terms of direct mobilization efforts, it seemed the 2012 Obama campaign contacted many of these Indiana volunteers only by mass email and not with personal outreach; nonetheless, several became involved with the 2012 campaign as staffers or volunteers.

More broadly, in the area of participation I saw what appeared to be some clear evidence of a positive and lasting Obama Effect on many of these young volunteers. Yet when it came to the other type of participation I asked about, non-political civic engagement, a lasting Obama Effect seemed to be largely absent. The group was not nearly as civically engaged outside of politics as I might have expected, with only half

the group having joined even 1 organization or association in the past 5 years. When professional organizations were discounted, that figure dropped to about one-third. Most of them had volunteered in some non-political capacity at some point in the past 5 years, but only a few spoke about volunteering as a core part of their lives or identities.

In many volunteers' responses to many specific questions, I did hear what sounded like a positive and unique and lasting Obama Effect. Surely if the (anecdotal) responses to my final survey question are indication, many or even most of them would claim that the 2008 Obama campaign had some kind of transformational impact on their lives. Yet at the aggregate level, for most questions under analysis I could not make this argument even for my sample of interviewees, let alone for the national population that was sampled for the ANES panels. The data was often mixed and sometimes even pointed to a negative Obama Effect.

Very rarely did I find any clear evidence of a positive, lasting, and unique Obama Effect. Only in a few instances were my original hypotheses of significant and positive campaign effects confirmed empirically through systematic data analysis. As such, this research mostly reinforces the "minimal effects" literature I discussed in Chapter 2. I found that even for the historic Obama campaign, even with a candidate who won a landslide victory, even with a campaign that broke all previous fundraising and volunteerism records, it was not possible to produce that kind of transformative impact on the American electorate.



## REFERENCES

## REFERENCES

- Achen, Christopher H. 2002. "Parental Association and Rational Party Identification." *Political Behavior* 24(2): 151-170.
- Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Party Politics in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- American National Election Studies. 2010. "Party Identification 7 Point Scale, 1952-2008." *The ANES Guide to Electoral Behavior and Public Opinion*.  
[http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab2a\\_1.htm](http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab2a_1.htm)
- Anderson, Mary R. 2010. "Community Psychology, Political Efficacy, and Trust." *Political Psychology* 31(1): 59-84.
- Associated Press. 2008. "Obama's Army of Small Donors." 9 May 2008.  
<http://www.politico.com/story/2008/05/obamas-army-of-small-donors-010223>
- Associated Press. 2008. "Obama Camp Takes in Record 745M Haul." 5 December 2008.  
[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28070544/ns/politics-white\\_house/t/obama-camp-takes-record-million-haul/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28070544/ns/politics-white_house/t/obama-camp-takes-record-million-haul/).
- Asukile, Thabiti. 2008. "The Barack Obama New Era: Race Matters More than Ever in America." *The Black Scholar* 38(4): 41-31.

- Balch, George R. 1974. "Multiple Indicators in Survey Research: The Concept "Sense of Political Efficacy"." *Political Methodology* 1(2): 1-43.
- Bartols, Larry. 2000. Panel Effects in the American National Election Studies. *Political Analysis* 8(1): 1-20.  
[https://my.vanderbilt.edu/larrybartels/files/2011/12/Panel\\_Effects\\_American\\_Election.pdf](https://my.vanderbilt.edu/larrybartels/files/2011/12/Panel_Effects_American_Election.pdf)
- Berleson, Bernard R., Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William McPhee. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bradley, Tahman. 2008. "Final Fundraising Figure: Obama \$750 Million." December 5. *ABC News*. <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Vote2008/story?id=6397572&page=1>.
- Campbell, Angus, Phillip E. Converse, Donald Miller, and Arthur Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Campbell, Angus, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller. 1954. *The Voter Decides*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson Publishing.
- Carsey, Thomas M., and Geoffrey C. Layman. 2006. "Changing Sides or Changing Minds? Party Identification and Policy Preferences in the American Electorate." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2): 464-477.
- Center for Responsive Politics. 2004. "2004 Presidential Race."  
<http://www.opensecrets.org/pres04/index.php#>.
- Chamberlain, Adam. 2012. "A Time Series Analysis of External Efficacy." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76(1): 117-130.

- Cillizza, Chris. 2007. "Obama Campaign Aims to Turn Online Backers into an Offline Force." *The Washington Post*. March 31, 2007. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/30/AR2007033001993.html>
- Cohen, Marty, David Carol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2008. *The Party Decides*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Converse, Philip. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter. London Free Press.
- Donovan, Todd. 2010. "Obama and the White Vote." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 63(4): 863-874.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper.
- Finkel, Steven E. 1995. *Causal Analysis with Panel Data*. California: Sage Publications.
- Gans, Curtis. 2008. "2008 Turnout Falls Just Short of Record Nationally, Breaks Record in Most States." *Center for the Study of the American Electorate*.  
[http://www1.american.edu/media/electionexperts/2008%20Primary%20Turnout\\_Updated.pdf](http://www1.american.edu/media/electionexperts/2008%20Primary%20Turnout_Updated.pdf)
- Gerber, Alan, and Donald P. Green. 1998. "Rational Learning and Partisan Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 42(3): 794-818.
- . 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94(3): 653-663.

- Gerber, Alan, Donald P. Green, and Ron Shachar. 2003. "Voting May Be Habit-Forming: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(3): 540-550.
- Gerber, Alan, Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 33-48.
- Holbrook, Thomas. 1996. *Do Campaigns Matter?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage University Press.
- Horowitz, Jason. April 13, 2014. "Obama Effect Inspiring Few to Seek Office." *The New York Times*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/14/us/obama-effect-inspiring-few-to-seek-office.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/14/us/obama-effect-inspiring-few-to-seek-office.html?_r=0)
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2010. "George W. Bush, the Iraq War, and the Election of Barack Obama." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 40(2): 207-224.
- Jordan, June. 1978. "Poem for South African Women." *Directed by Desire: The Collected Poems of June Jordan*. Retrieved from: <http://www.junejordan.net/poem-for-south-african-women.html>
- Keating, Stephen. 2007. "Obama Moms Cradle Campaign." *The Denver Post*, June 23, 2007. Retrieved from: [http://www.denverpost.com/newsheadlines/ci\\_6103693](http://www.denverpost.com/newsheadlines/ci_6103693)
- Key, V. O. 1966. *The Responsible Electorate*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard Berleson, and Hazel Gaudet. 1944. *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. New York: Columbia University Press.

*The Rush Limbaugh Show*. 2008. "Transcript." April 15.

[http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2008/04/15/in\\_depth\\_analysis\\_we\\_are\\_the\\_ones\\_we\\_ve\\_been\\_waiting\\_for](http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2008/04/15/in_depth_analysis_we_are_the_ones_we_ve_been_waiting_for) (April 15, 2008).

Lowry, Rich. 2008. "Democrats Have Their New JFK." *Star-News*, 8 June 2008.

<http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.lib.purdue.edu/hottopics/Inacademic/>

MacGillis, Alec, and Sarah Cohen. 2008. "Final Fundraising Tally for Obama Exceeded

\$750 Million." *The Washington Post*, 6 November 2008. Retrieved from:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/05/AR2008120503468.html>

Mayhew, David. 1977. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. Yale University Press.

McCann, James. 1996. "Presidential Nomination Activists and Political Representation:

A View from the Active Minority Studies." In *In Pursuit of the White House*, ed.

William G. Mayer. Chatham House.

Merolla, Jennifer L., Abbylin H. Sellers, and Derek J. Fowler. "Descriptive

Representation, Political Efficacy, and African Americans in the 2008

Presidential Election." *Political Psychology* 34(6): 863-875.

Miller, Warren E., and J. Merrill Shanks. 1996. *The New American Voter*. Harvard

University Press.

Montagne, Renee, and Peter Overby. 2008. "Obama Campaign Shatters Fundraising

Records." December 5. *National Public Radio*.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97843649>.

- Mooney, Brian C. 2008. "Obama's Paid Staff Dwarfing McCain's." *The Boston Globe*, 20 July 2008.  
[http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2008/07/20/obamas\\_paid\\_staff\\_dwarfing\\_mccains/?page=2](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2008/07/20/obamas_paid_staff_dwarfing_mccains/?page=2)
- Moore, Martha T. "Ground Game Hits Final Hours; Dems Hoping to Trump GOP Success in Turning Out Voters." *ABC News*.  
<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=6143894&page=1>
- Nagourney, Adam, and Jeff Zeleny. 2008. "Obama Maps a Nationwide Push in G.O.P Strongholds." *The New York Times*, 8 June 2008.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/08/us/politics/08obama.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/08/us/politics/08obama.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)
- Newport, Frank, Jeffrey M. Jones, Lydia Saad, and Joseph Carroll. 2007. "Gallup Election Review: October 2007." *Gallup*, 23 October 2007.  
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/102277/Gallup-Election-Review-October-2007.aspx>
- Pastor, Gregory S., Walter J. Stone, and Ronald B. Rapoport. 1999. "Candidate-Centered Sources of Party Change: The Case of Pat Robertson, 1998." *Journal of Politics* 61(2): 423-444.
- Peters, Gerhard, and John T. Woolley. 2015. "Voter Turnout in Presidential Elections, 1828-2012." *The American Presidency Project*.  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/turnout.php>
- Piston, Spencer. 2010. "How Explicit Racial Prejudice Hurt Obama in the 2008 Election." *Political Behavior* 32(3): 431-451.

“Primary Season Election Results.” 2008. *The New York Times*.

<http://politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/results/votes/index.html>

Pomper, Gerald. 1985. *The Election of 1984: Reports and Interpretations*. New Jersey: Chatham House.

Prior, Markus. 2010. “You’ve Either Got It Or You Don’t?: The Stability of Political Interest Over a Life Cycle.” *Journal of Politics* 72(3): 747-766.

Putnam, Robert B. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rapoport, Ronald B. 1997. “Partisan Change in a Candidate-Centered Era.” *Journal of Politics* 59(1): 185-199.

Real Clear Politics. 2008. “RCP Average.” *Iowa Democratic Caucus*, 3 January 2008.

[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2008/president/ia/iowa\\_democratic\\_caucus-208.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2008/president/ia/iowa_democratic_caucus-208.html)

Scott, Janny. March 19, 2008. “Obama Chooses Reconciliation Over Rancor.” *The New York Times*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/19/us/politics/19assess.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/19/us/politics/19assess.html?_r=0)

Shaw, Carolyn M. 1998. “President Clinton’s First Term: Matching Campaign Promises with Presidential Performance.” *Congress and the Presidency* 25(1): 43-65.

Slevin, Peter. 2008. “Obama Volunteers Share the Power of Personal Stories.” *The Washington Post*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/25/AR2008072503118.html>

Skocpol, Theda, and Morris P. Fiorina. 1999. “Making Sense of the Civic Engagement Debate.” In *Civic Engagement in American Life*, eds. Theda Skocpol and Morris Fiorina. Brookings Institution Press.



- Stone, Walter J., Lonna Rae Atkinson, and Ronald B. Rappaport. 1992. "Turning On or Turning Off? Mobilization and Demobilization Effects of Participation in Presidential Nomination Campaigns." *American Journal of Political Science* 36(3): 665-691.
- Teasley, Martell and David Ikard. 2010. "Barack Obama and the Politics of Race: The Myth of Posttracism in America." *Journal of Black Studies* 40(3): 411-425.
- Time Magazine. 2015. "Top 10 Memorable Debate Moments."  
[http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1844704\\_1844706\\_1844712,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1844704_1844706_1844712,00.html)
- Thai, Xuan, and Ted Barrett. 2007. "Biden's Description of Obama Draws Scrutiny."  
*CNN*, 9 February 2007.  
<http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/31/biden.obama/>
- Vogel, Kenneth P. 2008. "Obama to Decline Public Financing." *Politico*, June 19 2008.  
Retrieved from: <http://www.politico.com/story/2008/06/obama-to-decline-public-financing-011202>
- Walters, Ron. 2007. "Barack Obama and the Politics of Blackness." *Journal of Black Studies* 38(1): 7-29.
- Wattenberg, Martin P. 1991. *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Zeleny, Jeff. 2007b. "Obama Showing New Confidence with Iowa Sprint." *The New York Times*, 16 December 2007.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/16/us/politics/16obama.html?pagewanted=print>

VITA

## VITA

Laurent W. Vesely was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1981. He became a Mellon Fellow at Hunter College in 2003 before earning his B.A. in Africana, Puerto Rican, and Latino Studies. He earned his M.A. in American Studies and Ph.D in Political Science from Purdue University. Laurent has taught courses such as American Government and Politics, Black Political Participation, Public Communication and Controversy, Communication and Cultural Identity, and Fundamentals of Speech Communication. He currently teaches at DePauw University and makes his home in Indianapolis, Indiana.