Family Structure and Voter Turnout*

Nicholas H Wolfinger
Department of Family and Consumer Studies
The University of Utah
Nick.Wolfinger@fcs.utah.edu

Raymond E. Wolfinger
Charles and Louise Travers Department of Political Science
University of California, Berkeley
vturnout@berkeley.edu

Paper prepared for the 2006 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia

*We acknowledge the Carnegie Corporation of New York for generous funding, Benjamin Highton for assistance with the CPS and Linda Keiter for obtaining the data.

September 19, 2006

Working Paper 2006-09-13
http://ipia.utah.edu/workingpapers.html

Institute of Public and International Affairs
The University of Utah
260 S. Central Campus Drive, Room 215
Salt Lake City, Utah 84112
http://ipia.utah.edu
(801) 581-8620

Family Structure and Voter Turnout

Abstract

We use data from the Voting and Registration Supplement of the Current Population Survey to explore the effects of family structure on turnout in the 2000 presidential election. Our results indicate that family structure, defined as marital status and the presence of children, has substantial implications for turnout. Married adults vote more frequently than do those who have never been married; in turn, previously married people are the lightest voters. On the other hand, the effects of children on turnout are small and inconsistent. These findings are only partially explained by social and demographic differences.

Author Contact Information

Nicholas H Wolfinger
Department of Family and Consumer Studies
The University of Utah
Nick.Wolfinger@fcs.utah.edu

Family Structure and Voter Turnout

Nicholas H. Wolfinger and Raymond E. Wolfinger

INTRODUCTION

Soccer moms and NASCAR dads, staple characters in journalists' stories about past and future elections, are not even bit players when social scientists describe who is likely to vote. Analyzing citizens one by one, researchers have concluded that who votes is explained largely by a triad of individual characteristics: education, age, and residential stability; the more of each, the greater the probability of voting (R. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Squire, R. Wolfinger, and Glass 1987; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Although not disputing this conventional wisdom, we add a fourth variable to be treated as a significant predictor of turnout: each person's family structure, defined as marital status and the presence of children in the household.

This connection is noteworthy for several reasons. First, sociologists have established that family structure has important implications for many aspects of well-being (McKeever and N. Wolfinger 2001, 2005a,b; Waite and Gallagher 2000; N. Wolfinger 2005). We inquire whether these implications extend to electoral participation. Second, we find that vulnerable social groups—notably single parents—are light voters and therefore may be proportionately underrepresented in policy making. Third, married people are more inclined than other citizens to vote for Republican presidential candidates (Miller and Shanks 1996, pp. 263, 534-535; *New York Times* 2004).

Previous Research

Studies of the electoral participation of married couples are an exception to our sweeping opening sentence, but consensus is lacking about even the most elementary question: are married people more likely to vote? The magisterial *The New American Voter* reports a clear affirmative answer (Miller and Shanks 1996, pp. 263, 534), as do Plutzer (1998, 2002); Plutzer and Wiefek (2006); Strate *et al.* (1989, p. 449); Timpone (1998, p. 151); and R. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, pp. 44-45). One study concentrating on young people reports a negative relationship up to age 42 (Stoker and K. Jennings 1995). Two other articles on youth turnout report that marriage makes essentially no difference (Highton and R. Wolfinger 2001; Plutzer and Sandell 2005).

Some research about married couples gives rise to the classic question: "compared to who?" (We anticipate our data analysis by noting that fewer than three-fifths of adult American citizens are married.) As Miller and Shanks (1996, p. 254) point out, marital status is not a dichotomous variable. Some scholars, however, evidently compared married individuals to everyone else (Plutzer 1998; Plutzer and Sandell 2005; R. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Yet divorced and to a lesser extent widowed people fare worse than their married and never-married peers on a variety of social indicators (Waite and Gallagher 2000) that are related to political participation.

Another question not satisfactorily resolved—indeed, rarely addressed—in previous research concerns the effect of children on voting. Kent Jennings (1979, p. 755) found that the presence of children in the household "has a trivial or debilitating impact in the domain of national politics but a highly salutary one in school politics." In contrast, Plutzer (2002) showed no relationship between children and voting while Plutzer and Sandell (2005) found that children diminished turnout when born to white parents attending high school. There are reasons to expect

both higher and lower turnout rates for families with children. On the one hand, child care may reduce the time available to vote, an issue especially for single parents. It is also possible, however, that children may increase turnout by stimulating parental civic involvement, particularly in the public school system (K. Jennings 1979). Voting even in nonconcurrent school board elections requires registering to vote, which facilitates participation in national contests and increases exposure to electioneering. An additional point concerns omitted variable bias. Given the strong correlation between marriage and children, it would seem advisable to avoid measuring the effect of one variable in the absence of the other.

We expect that differences in turnout rates by family structure may be related to the demographic correlates of divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing, hence propositions presented in the following paragraphs will be tested in our multivariate analysis. Divorce is disproportionately common among women with less time in school (Bramlett and Mosher 2001); education is a powerful predictor of voting (R. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). On the other hand, the average age of divorced women is fifty (McKeever and N. Wolfinger 2005a), when Americans generally are entering their highest turnout years (R. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Widows of course tend to be older, while never-married adults may have low aggregate turnout rates simply because they are young. The lack of a spouse may depress turnout by the parents of children born out of wedlock, who usually are young (Wu, Bumpass, and Musick 2001) and uneducated (Korenman, Kaestner, and Joyce 2001; McKeever and N. Wolfinger 2005b). These considerations lead us to expect unmarried parents to be least likely to vote.

Divorce may deter voting for several other reasons. Ending a marriage is a stressful process that frequently disrupts familiar routines (Wallerstein and Kelley 1980). Moreover, between 40 and 50 percent of divorced women move within a year after their marriages end (McLanahan 1983;

Speare and Goldscheider 1987), an experience that greatly reduces turnout (Squire, R. Wolfinger, and Glass 1987). For both reasons controlling for residential mobility should have a larger effect on the estimated turnout of separated adults—who presumably have ended their marriages fairly recently (Ono 1995)—than for their divorced counterparts. Moreover, divorce deprives ex-spouses of companions who might provide an impetus for civic participation (e.g., Stoker and K. Jennings 1995). Specifically, and of greater theoretical interest, household members might share such pedestrian tasks as registering and learning where to vote. This clerical function perhaps is more important when absentee ballots are an option, a growing practice in many states. (In California more than 25 percent of all votes cast in the 2004 presidential election were on absentee ballots.) In other words, one individual's action might suffice to meet the voting costs of a couple.

METHODS

Our data are from the 2000 Voting and Registration Supplement (VRS) of the Current Population Survey (U.S. Department of Commerce 2001). The Census Bureau conducts the Current Population Survey (CPS) each month primarily for raw data on unemployment. The basic questionnaire provides detailed demographic information; monthly supplements solicit data on an additional topic, e.g., internet use, smoking, child care. In November of each even-numbered year the VRS asks about citizenship status, registration, and voting.[1] The most apparent feature of the VRS is its immense sample, which provides complete data on voting in 2000 for 73,541 citizens.[2] The huge sample also is essential for analyzing sub-groups, e.g., widows with children, who are sparse in conventional surveys.

Sample size is not the only CPS advantage. The completion rate for the 2000 VRS was 87 percent.[3] This compares to an aggregate response rate of just 52 percent for the 2000 National Election Study (Burns et al. 2002), the other common source for analyses of electoral participation.[4] The VRS interviewing concludes by the third week in November, while NES field work continues into mid-December.

Our dependent variable is whether each VRS case voted in the 2000 presidential election. Our primary independent variable is family structure. This is a ten-category nominal variable based on current marital status and presence in the household of children under age eighteen. The coding for all variables appears in Appendix A. Seven other independent variables allow us to determine whether differences in turnout based on family structure can be explained by the personal and social attributes social scientists have used in studies of turnout (e.g., Squire, R. Wolfinger, and Glass 1987; R. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). The "big three" of turnout variables are age, education, and residential mobility. Age is a continuous variable; its square is included to account for curvilinearity in its relationship to turnout (R. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Education and residential mobility are treated as categorical, as are the rest of our independent variables. These include family income, race, sex, and whether individuals were currently employed. There is no easy way with CPS data to determine the presence of unmarried live-in partners; nor can children's ages be readily ascertained.

Voter turnout is a binary variable, analyzed using logistic regression. Sample weights are employed to make the data nationally representative. Our analyses employ Huber-White standard errors (Huber 1967; White 1980) to avoid the artificially inflated t-ratios that can result from weighted data. The Huber-White algorithm also provides asymptotically correct standard errors for cluster-sampled data. Two variables have missing data. Income is not available on about 13

percent of cases. Because this item is treated as categorical, we employ an additional dummy for missing data. More sophisticated means of addressing missing data, such as multiple imputation, do not perform appreciably better (Paul, McCaffrey, Mason, and Fox 2003). For residential mobility, lacking data on less than one percent of cases, we use listwise deletion.

RESULTS

Fifty-eight percent of adult citizens were married, a tenth were divorced, seven percent were widowed, another two percent were separated, and 22 percent—whom we will call "single"—had never married. Nearly three-quarters of married people voted in 2000, compared to just over half of the singles. These simple tabulations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 here

Table 2 shows zero order results from our regression of voter turnout on family structure: predicted probabilities of voting, based on regression standardization (metric logit coefficients are presented in Appendix B). The differences, all of which are statistically significant, show that family structure is an important determinant of who votes. Thirty-four percentage points differentiate the lowest-voting population group, single parents, and the highest, married childless adults.

Table 2 here

Prior researchers reported mixed results about the relationship between marriage and voting. We find that married CPS participants, both with and without children, had the highest turnout rates of any family type. Seventy percent of married parents and 78 percent of childless married adults voted in the 2000 presidential election. In many respects this is predictable. Married people enjoy

greater physical and emotional health (Waite and Gallagher 2000). They have partners to help with household tasks and also most of the bureaucratic chores associated with voting: not only registration, but also locating polling places or obtaining absentee ballots. However, married parents do not necessarily have more free time than do their single counterparts (Sayer, Passias, and Casper 2006).[5]

As Table 2 shows, the negative effect of children on turnout persists among all family structure types, ranging from four percentage points for widowed parents to eleven points for separated parents. Separated people are almost always in transition from separation to divorce (Ono 1995), so their low turnout rates are understandable. Marital disruption brings profound personal upheaval, and separated parents have had less time to adapt than have their counterparts who have formally ended their marriages. Under these circumstances the exigencies of child care are especially likely to interfere with political participation. Thus the second lowest turnout rate in Table 2, 45 percent, belongs to separated parents with children.

The lowest turnout rate shown in Table 2 is for single parents. Often poor and uneducated, it is not surprising that fewer than half voted in 2000. One out of three children are now born out of wedlock (Day 2005), so this is a noteworthy demographic group. However, many adults who give birth out of wedlock will eventually marry (Lichter and Graefe 2001).

At 52 percent, the turnout rate for unmarried adults without children is nearly as low as it is for their counterparts with children. Childless unmarried adults do not have to contend with the burdens of parenthood. They also are less likely to suffer disadvantages—poverty and low education—that afflict single parents. Yet single adults without children vote only 8 percent more often than their counterparts with children—and 26 percent less than childless married couples.

Age

Perhaps the low turnout of single adults reflects their tender years; turnout increases with age, and almost everyone enters adulthood without a spouse. Table 3 explores this possibility by presenting results that control for age. Predictably, age makes the biggest difference for adults who have never married. In the zero order results shown in Table 2, 52 percent of childless single adults voted; after controlling for age, the comparable figure is 66 percent. One of the reasons single adults often do not vote is simply because they are disproportionately young. Note, however, that single parents still are much lighter voters than married parents. This difference cannot be attributed to additional time demands that children make on their parents: after controlling for age, children have little or no effect on the turnout levels of married and divorced adults. Indeed, age completely accounts for the 8 percent higher turnout rate for married adults without children over those with children that was observed in Table 2; after controlling for age, 72 percent of both groups voted.

Table 3 here

This finding suggests various interpretations about the time required to vote. It is possible that voting—and the preparation voting requires, minimally registration and locating one's polling place—are not sufficiently time-consuming to dissuade otherwise busy parents. Alternately, children may stimulate interest in political issues concerning education and recreation (Jennings 1979). This would also explain why divorcées with children vote a bit more often (58%) than do childless divorced adults (55%). However, for separated parents children predictably reduce turnout. Most separated adults have ended their marriages relatively recently and may still be

adjusting to single life. Under these circumstances, child care may represent a time commitment that conflicts with voting.

The other implication of our age control concerns the political participation of childless widows and widowers. Controlling for age reduces their estimated turnout by eleven percentage points, from 66 percent in Table 2 to 55 percent in Table 3. Widows, of course, tend to be older; were this not the case, they would vote at rates comparable to separated and divorced people. Ranging from 53 to 55 percent, the turnout of childless divorced, widowed, and separated adults is over ten percent below that of their single counterparts. No matter how it happens, ending a marriage substantially reduces turnout.

Education

Table 4 displays voter turnout by family structure controlling for education. The most important point here concerns what is known about the relationship of education to family structure. Divorce and out-of-wedlock childbirth are both inversely related to education (Bramlett and Mosher 2001; McKeever and N. Wolfinger 2005b), while education increases the likelihood of matrimony (Goldstein and Kenney 2001). Education, moreover, is perhaps the strongest predictor of voter turnout (R. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, pp. 17, 24). Of our ten categories of family structure, the least educated are single parents. Therefore it is not surprising that their turnout estimates are strongly affected after controlling for education: rates increase from 44 percent in the zero order model to 56 percent. Apparently one of the reasons single parents are light voters is because of their disproportionately low levels of education. On the other hand, single CPS

participants without children do not vote at appreciably higher rates once education is accounted for.

Table 4 here

Because educated people are less likely to end their marriages, separated and divorced people have substantially higher rates of turnout in the logit models controlling for education. Net of education separated respondents without children, for instance, have turnout rates 10 percent higher than in the zero order model. Education is associated with similar benefits for parents, as well as widows and widowers. The latter are disproportionately likely to be older and therefore to have come of age at a time when education attainment was typically lower (Stoops 2004).

After controlling for education, childless married people have even higher rates of estimated turnout (83%) than in the zero order model (78%). We speculate that education has a complex relationship to marriage and fertility.

Residential Mobility

People who have moved recently are less likely to vote (Squire, R. Wolfinger, and Glass 1987). Of the family structure types we consider, separated people are by far the most likely movers; 40 to 50 percent of adults move within a year of ending a marriage (McLanahan 1983; Speare and Goldscheider 1987), and therefore need to register anew. We anticipate that controlling for residential mobility should be most consequential for understanding the behavior of separated individuals. This expectation is borne out by our results. With mobility controlled (see Table 5), turnout rates increase five percentage points for separated parents and seven points for those without children. Nevertheless, turnout for separated respondents with children remains low: just

half of them voted. In line with our earlier speculation, voting appears to be a low priority for these single parents even if they have not moved. The likelihood of moving declines as time passes subsequent to marital dissolution (McLanahan 1983; Speare and Goldscheider 1987), which presumably explains why the estimated turnout of the divorced is only minimally affected by controlling for residential mobility.

Table 5 here

The other family structure type most affected by moving is single adults with children, who experience a five percent point turnout gain when mobility is controlled. In contrast, married couples move relatively infrequently, hence controlling for residential mobility has almost no effect on their estimated turnout, irrespective of children.

The Big Three

Social scientists have explained turnout with the three independent variables we have used up to this point—age, education, and residential mobility. Together they account for much of the variation in turnout related to family structure. But noteworthy differences remain, as Table 6 shows.

Table 6 here

Married citizens continue to be turnout leaders after controlling for the Big Three. Childless married couples have turnout rates at least 7 percent above other childless adults. Married people with children also vote at high rates. Compared to separated adults with children, married parents are 12 percentage points more likely to have voted in 2000.

Our results show that treating marital status as a dichotomous variable conflates different rates of turnout among unmarried people. Previously married citizens—separated, divorced, and widowed—all are lighter voters than people who have never married. In this respect it appears that some people never recover from the loss of a spouse. For childless adults, the circumstances of this loss seem unimportant. After controlling for age, education, and mobility, the estimated turnout rates for separated, divorced, and widowed adults are within 3 percentage points of each other. In contrast, those who have never married have turnout rates 6 percentage points higher than divorced and widowed people and 3 points higher than those who are separated.

The lowest turnout rates in Table 6—64 percent—are reserved for separated parents. Given the upheaval associated with marital disruption, which probably occurred recently, many separated parents would be disinclined to vote. It is more surprising that single parents vote at about the same rate (72%) as do never-married adults without children (71%). There are manifold disadvantages associated with giving birth out of wedlock (Korenman, Kaestner, and Joyce 2001). Yet with respect to voting, these disadvantages can be accounted for by age, education, and residential mobility.

Everything Else

Table 7 includes controls for all seven independent variables: in addition to age, education, and residential mobility, measures of race, income, employment status, and sex are added to the model. The additional four variables do not have a substantial effect on the relationship between family structure and turnout, and therefore add little to the analysis including just the Big Three.

Table 7 here

The only consequence of controlling for all seven independent variables concerns the turnout of single parents, which is now only 2 percent below that of married parents. Why might single parents, facing so many challenges, be able to find time for voting? It is not possible to know with CPS data. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the same holds true for divorced and widowed parents, both of whom vote at higher rates than do otherwise comparable childless adults. Only separated adults, at a special disadvantage presumably due to their recent marital transitions, suffer a noteworthy (4%) turnout penalty by virtue of being parents.

Even after controlling for major demographic differences, substantial gaps remain in Table 7, so we might add family structure to age, education, and residential mobility as the fourth important predictor of voting behavior.

CONCLUSION

Our most evident finding is confirmation—which we venture to claim is definitive—of the higher turnout of married citizens, irrespective of demographic differences. Married people, 58 percent of all adult citizens, accounted for 65 percent of voters in 2000. Earlier reports of this advantage usually attributed it to spousal encouragement and shared influences (R. Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980: pp. 44-46).[6] Today, perhaps influenced by rational choice thinking, we add that marriage offers this advantage: one member of the couple can act for both when it comes to essential administrative details: remembering the need to register to vote at their current address if they are in the one-third of the population who have moved within four years, obtaining absentee ballots if they anticipate being out of town on election day, and learning where to vote if they will be at home then.

The other noteworthy finding in Table 7 is the inclination toward lower participation by people whose marriages have ended, whether by death, divorce, or separation. Registering and voting doubtless were not priority tasks for those who separated, whose emotional bruises were recent. The assumption of a recent trauma is not a sure thing for widows and divorces. Perhaps formerly married adults became habituated to the assistance of spouses in the voting process. Alternately, their failure to vote may reflect the reduction in emotional well-being often accompanying the loss of a spouse (Waite and Gallagher 2000). If people are depressed and otherwise not functioning well, voting presumably seems unimportant.

Our results are generally consistent with previous research in showing little relationship between children and turnout in presidential elections (cf. Jennings 1979; Plutzer 2002). The two exceptions concern widowed and separated parents. Spousal bereavement with minor children present is uncommon; only about one quarter of one percent of CPS participants. We are loath to speculate on its consequences for turnout. Separation, reflecting in most cases recent marital disruption, has the predictable detrimental effect on turnout for parents. Voting is presumably a low priority for people struggling to cope both with the loss of a spouse and life as a single parent.

Social and demographic differences between respondents explain much of the relationship between family structure and turnout, but noteworthy differences remain. Therefore we suggest that turnout cannot be fully understood without taking family structure into account. The zero order differences in turnout by family structure are far more dramatic, which may be useful to those attempting to understand the results of recent presidential contests.

REFERENCES

Allison, Paul D. 1999. *Logistic Regression Using the SAS System*. Cary, NC: SAS Institute.

Bramlett, Matthew D. and William D. Mosher. 2001. *First Marriage Dissolution, Divorce, and Remarriage: United States*. Advance data from vital health statistics; Number 323. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

Brehm, John. 1993. *The Phantom Respondents*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Burns, Nancy, Donald R. Kinder, Steven J. Rosenstone, Virginia Sapiro, and the National Election Studies. 2002. *American National Election Study 2000: Pre- and Post-Election Survey* [computer file]. 2nd ICPSR version. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Center for Political Studies [producer], 2001. Ann Arbor. MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2002.

Citrin, Jack, and Benjamin Highton. 2002. *How Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Affect the California Electorate*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.

Day, Jane Lawler. 2005. *Fertility of American Women: June 2004*. Current Population Reports, P20-555. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Glaser, William A. 1959. "The Family and Voting Turnout." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 33:563-575.

Highton, Benjamin, and Raymond E. Wolfinger. 2001. "The First Seven Years of the Political Life Cycle." *American Journal of Political Science* 45:202-209.

Huber, P. J. 1967. "The Behavior of Maximum Likelihood Estimates under Non-Standard Conditions." Proceedings of the Fifth Berkeley Symposium on Mathematical Statistics and Probability 1:221-233.

Jennings, Jerry T. 1990. "Estimating Voter Turnout in the Current Population Survey." *Studies in the Measurement of Voter Turnout*. Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 168:21-9. Washington: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Jennings, M. Kent. 1979. "Another Look at the Life Cycle and Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 23:755-771.

Korenman, Sanders, Robert Kaestner, and Theodore J. Joyce. 2001. "Unintended Pregnancy and the Consequences of Nonmarital Childbearing." Pp. 259-287 in *Out of Wedlock: Causes and Consequences of Nonmarital Fertility*, edited by L. L. Wu and B. Wolfe. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lichter, Daniel T. and Deborah Roempke Graefe. 2001. "Finding a Mate? The Marital and Cohabitation Histories of Unwed Mothers." Pp. 317-343 in *Out of Wedlock: Causes and Consequences of Nonmarital Fertility*, edited by L. L. Wu and B. Wolfe. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

McKeever, Matthew and Nicholas H. Wolfinger. 2001. "Reexamining the Economic Consequences of Marital Disruption for Women." *Social Science Quarterly* 82:202-217.

_____. 2005a. "Shifting Fortunes in a Changing Economy: Trends in the Economic Well-Being of Divorced Women." Pp. 127-157 in *Fragile Families and the Marriage Agenda*, edited by L. Kowaleski-Jones and N. H. Wolfinger. New York: Springer.

_____. 2005b. "From Troubled Teens to Murphy Brown? Changing Characteristics of Never-Married Mothers since 1982." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Philadelphia.

McLanahan, Sara S. 1983. "Family Structure and Stress: A Longitudinal Comparison of Two-Parent and Female-Headed Families." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 45:347-357.

McLanahan, Sara S. and Gary Sandefur. 1994. *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Miller, Warren E. and J. Merrill Shanks. 1996. *The New American Voter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
New York Times. 2004. "W.M.'s Seek S.F.'s for Fall Affair." June 6, 2004.
Oliver, J. Eric. 1996. "The Effects of Eligibility Restrictions and Party Activity on Absentee Voting and Overall Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 40:498-513.
Ono, Hiromi. 1995. "Expanding on Explanations of Recent Patterns in U.S. Divorce Rates." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Sociology, UCLA.
Paul, Christopher, Daniel McCaffrey, William M. Mason, and Sarah A. Fox. 2003. "What Should We Do about Missing Data? A Case Study Using Logistic Regression with Data Missing on a Single Covariate." Unpublished Paper, RAND, Santa Monica, CA.
Plutzer, Eric. 1998. "Family Structure and Political Participation of African-American Women." Pp. 187-203 in *Competence and Character through Life*, edited by A. Colby, J. B. James, and D. Hart. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
_____. 2002. "Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood." *American Political Science Review* 96:41-56.
Plutzer, Eric and Julianna Sandell. 2005. "Stay in School, Don't Become a Parent: Teen Life Transitions and Cumulative Disadvantages for Voter Turnout." Paper presented at the 2005 annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.
Plutzer, Eric and Nancy Wiefek. 2006. "Family Transitions, Economic Status, and Voter Turnout among African American, Inner City Women." Unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, The Pennsylvania State University.
Proctor, Bernadette D. and Joseph Dalaker. 2003. *Poverty in the United States: 2002*. Current Population Reports, P60-222. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
Rosenstone, Steven J. and John M. Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
Sandberg, John F. and Sandra L. Hofferth. 2001. "Changes in Children's Time with Parents: United States, 1981-1997." *Demography* 38:423-436.
Sandell, Julianna and Eric Plutzer. 2005. "Families, Divorce and Voter Turnout in the US." *Political Behavior* 27:133-162.
Sayer, Liana C., Emily Passias, and Lynne M. Casper. 2006. "Are Single Mothers Time Poor? Living Arrangement Differences in Mothers' Housework, Child Care, and Free Time." Paper presented at the 2006 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal.
Speare, Alden Jr. and Frances Kobrin Goldscheider. 1987. "Effects of Marital Status Change on Residential Mobility." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 49:455-464.
Squire, Peverill, Raymond E. Wolfinger, and David P. Glass. 1987. "Residential Mobility and Voter Turnout." *American Political Science Review* 81:45-66.
Stoker, Laura and M. Kent Jennings. 1995. "Life-Cycle Transitions and Political Participation: The Case of Marriage." *American Political Science Review* 89:421-433.
Stoops, Nicole. 2004. *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2003*. Current Population Reports, P20-550. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
Straits, Bruce C. 1990. "The Social Context of Voter Turnout." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 54:64-73.
Strate, John M., Charles J. Parrish, Charles D. Elder, and Coit Ford III. 1989. "Life Span Civic Development and Voting Participation." *American Political Science Review* 83:443-464.

Timpone, Richard J. 1998. "Structure, Behavior, and Vote Turnout in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 92:145-158.

United States Bureau of the Census. 2000. Current Population Survey: Voting and Registration Supplement. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of the Census (http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/cpsmain.htm).

Waite, Linda J. and Maggie Gallagher. 2000. *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially*. New York: Doubleday.

Wallerstein, Judith S. and Joan B. Kelly. 1980. *Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce*. New York: Basic Books.

Weisberg, Herbert F. 1987. "The Demographics of a New Voting Gap: Marital Differences in American Voting." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51:335-343.

White, Halbert. 1980. "A Heteroskedasticity-Consistent Covariance Matrix Estimator and a Direct Test for Heteroskedasticity." *Econometrica* 48:817-830.

Wolfinger, Nicholas H. 2005. *Understanding the Divorce Cycle: The Children of Divorce in Their Own Marriages*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wolfinger, Raymond E., Benjamin Highton, and Megan Mullin. 2005. "How Postregistration Laws Affect the Turnout of Citizens Registered to Vote." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 5:1-23.

Wolfinger, Raymond E. and Steven J. Rosenstone. 1980. *Who Votes?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Wolfinger, Raymond E. 1994. "The Rational Citizen Faces Election Day or What Rational Choice Theorists Don't Tell You About American Elections." Pp. 17- in M. Kent Jennings and Thomas E. Mann, eds., *Elections at Home and Abroad: Essays in Honor of Warren E. Miller.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Wu, Lawrence L., Larry L. Bumpass, and Kelly Musick. 2001. "Historical and Life Course Trajectories of Nonmarital Childbearing." Pp. 3-48 in *Out of Wedlock: Causes and Consequences of Nonmarital Fertility*, edited by L. L. Wu and B. Wolfe. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

ENDNOTES

[1] The CPS uses a sample in which one respondent reports for all members of the household. This proxy reporting seems not to affect estimates of turnout (J. Jennings 1990).

[2] The choice of words in this sentence illustrates two data management decisions that differ from those made by the Census Bureau in its biennial reports on registration and voting: 1) We deleted cases where information on registration and voting was not ascertained, while the Census Bureau coded them as nonvoters. 2) Our analysis is confined to citizens. Among other advantages, this precludes substantially underestimating the participation of Latinos and Asian-Americans, not to mention turnout in states—like California—where these groups are a significant proportion of the voting-age population but a smaller share of adult citizens (Citrin and Highton 2002).

[3] The "non-response rate" for the basic November CPS was 7.5 percent; an additional 5.8 percent failed to respond to the VRS (U.S. Department of Commerce 2001, 17-2).

[4] Of the 2,982 people selected in 2000, the NES completed pre- and post-election interviews with 1,555. Completion rates in 2000 for both surveys were lower than in the last decades of the 20th century: 95 percent for the CPS and 70 percent for the National Election Studies (Brehm 1993, p. 16).

[5] Our results differ from those of Stoker and Jennings (1995) perhaps because of sample size limitations or cohort variation. They studied participation in the 1980 presidential election with a sample of high school seniors drawn in 1965, while we analyze the 2000 contest with a large and nationally representative sample.

[6] A generation earlier, one scholar attributed higher turnout by married people to ". . . similar motivations, outside stimuli, and social norms which affect husband and wife simultaneously but independently . . . . interaction within the family is probably an additional force which supplements the other predispositions of the individual members." (Glaser 1959, p. 566).

Table 1. Turnout by Family Structure.

	Percent voting	Percent of sample
Married	74	58
Widowed	66	7
Divorced	60	10
Separated	52	2
Never married	51	22

Notes: **N** = 73,541. Percentages in second column do not sum to 100 due to rounding error.

Source: Current Population Survey, 2000, November Voting and Registration Supplement.

Table 2. Zero order predicted probabilities of voting, by family structure.

	Children	No children
Married	70%	78%
Widowed	62%	66%
Divorced	56%	61%
Separated	45%	56%
Never married	44%	52%

N = 73,541

Source: Current Population Survey, 2000, November Voting and Registration Supplement.

Table 3. Predicted probabilities of voting by family structure, controlling for age.

	Children	No children
Married	72%	72%
Widowed	60%	55%
Divorced	58%	55%
Separated	49%	53%
Never married	57%	66%

N = 73,541

Source: Current Population Survey, 2000, November Voting and Registration Supplement.

Table 4. Predicted probabilities of voting by family structure, controlling for education.

	Children	No children
Married	72%	83%
Widowed	68%	79%
Divorced	61%	68%
Separated	54%	66%
Never married	56%	57%

N = 73,541

Source: Current Population Survey, 2000, November Voting and Registration Supplement.

Table 5. Predicted probabilities of voting by family structure, controlling for residential mobility.

	Children	No children
Married	71%	76%
Widowed	63%	63%
Divorced	59%	63%
Separated	50%	63%
Never married	49%	55%

N = 73,541

Source: Current Population Survey, 2000, November Voting and Registration Supplement.

Table 6. Predicted probabilities of voting by family structure, controlling for age, education, and residential mobility.

	Children	No children
Married	76%	78%
Widowed	70%	65%
Divorced	68%	65%
Separated	64%	68%
Never married	72%	71%

N = 73,541

Source: Current Population Survey, 2000, November Voting and Registration Supplement.

Table 7. Predicted probabilities of voting by family structure, controlling for age, mobility, education, sex, employment, income, and race.

	Children	No children
Married	76%	77%
Widowed	71%	65%
Divorced	68%	66%
Separated	64%	68%
Never married	74%	72%

N = 73,541

Source: Current Population Survey, 2000, November Voting and Registration Supplement.

Appendix A. Coding of variables.

Turnout	Dummy variable coded zero if individual did not vote and one if s/he voted.
Family structure	Ten-category nominal variable, measuring whether individuals are married, divorced, separated, widowed, or never married; for each of these five family types we differentiate adults with and without co-resident minor children.
Age & age squared	Continuous variables
Education	Five-category nominal variable, measuring whether individuals are not high school graduates, high school graduates, attended some college, have four year college degrees, or have postgraduate degrees.
Residential mobility	Six-category nominal variable, measuring whether invididuals had lived in their current location for less than a month, one to six months, seven to twelve months, one to two years, three to four years, or over four years.
Sex	Dummy variable
Race	Four-category nominal variable, coded white, Black, Latino, other.
Income	Eight-category nominal variable measuring whether family income is less than $10,000, $10,000-$19,999, $20,000-29,999, $30,000-$39,999, $40,000-$59,999, $60,000-$74,999, or $75,000 or greater. An additional dummy is coded for missing data.
Work status	Three-category nominal variable, measuring whether individuals are not working, working between one and 34 hours, or working 35 or more hours.

Appendix B. Logit estimates of voter turnout on family structure.

Family structure							
	Married, no kids	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Married, kids	-.41***	.01	-.61***	-.30***	-.05	-.03
	Widowed, no kids	-.57***	-.77***	-.22***	-.63***	-.60***	-.60***
	Widowed, kids	-.77***	-.57**	-.82***	-.68***	-.45*	-.33
	Divorced, no kids	-.80***	-.77***	-.83***	-.67***	-.61***	-.55***
	Divorced, kids	-1.02***	-.65***	-1.11***	-.81***	-.49***	-.42***
	Separated, no kids	-1.01**	-.84***	-.91***	-.78***	-.47***	-.44***
	Separated, kids	-1.47***	-1.00***	-1.41***	-1.21***	-.67***	-.64***
	Never married, no kids	-1.17***	-.29***	-1.30***	-1.00***	-.36***	-.29***
	Never married, kids	-1.48***	-.66***	-1.32***	-1.21***	-.30***	-.29***
Age		--	.10***	--	--	.06***	.05***
Age^2		--	-.001***	--	--	-.0002***	-.0002***
Education							
	No H.S.	--	--	--	--	--	--
	H.S. graduate	--	--	.69***	--	.83***	.73***
	Some college	--	--	1.31***	--	1.55***	1.39***
	College graduate	--	--	2.03***	--	2.28***	2.08***
	Postgraduate	--	--	2.46***	--	2.56***	2.30***
Time since last move							
	< 1 month	--	--	--	--	--	--
	1-6 months	--	--	--	.35***	.27**	.30**
	7-12 months	--	--	--	.40***	.33***	.33***
	1-2 years	--	--	--	.80***	.64***	.62***
	3-4 years	--	--	--	.96***	.81***	.77***
	5+ years	--	--	--	1.33***	2.56***	1.08***
Male		--	--	--	--	--	-.17***
Ethnicity							
	White	--	--	--	--	--	--
	African-American	--	--	--	--	--	.45***
	Latino	--	--	--	--	--	-.23***
	Other	--	--	--	--	--	-.78***
Hours worked per week							
	0	--	--	--	--	--	--
	1-34	--	--	--	--	--	.24***
	35+	--	--	--	--	--	.09***
Income							
	< $10,000	--	--	--	--	--	--
	$10,000-$19,999	--	--	--	--	--	.13**
	$20,000-$29,999	--	--	--	--	--	.28***
	$30,000-$39,999	--	--	--	--	--	.44***
	$40,000-$59,999	--	--	--	--	--	.50***
	$60,000-$74,999	--	--	--	--	--	.60***
	$75,000+	--	--	--	--	--	.77***
	Missing data	--	--	--	--	--	.42***
Constant		1.25***	-1.78***	.26***	.12	-3.03***	-3.37***
Log-likelihood		-45095.51	-43844.83	-41791.32	-44080.69	-39771.65	-39162.44

N = 73,541 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Source: Current Population Survey, 2000, November Voting and Registration Supplement.