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Polls and Voting Behavior: The Impact of Polling Information on Candidate Preference, Turnout, and Strategic Voting

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Polls and Voting Behavior: The Impact of Polling Information on Candidate Preference, Turnout, and Strategic Voting

By

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Public opinion polls have become an integral part of the coverage of presidential elections. The story of the campaign is often told through the lens of the horse-race; candidates are leading or trailing, gaining or losing ground in their efforts to capture the White House. These polls, which provides important information to the public about the views of their fellow citizens, may also serve to shape the opinions and actions of that public, particularly in determining which candidate to support, whether or not to show up on Election Day, and whether to vote sincerely or strategically. Using both an analysis of a well-established national survey over the past ten elections and the results of a set of experiments done at the University of Texas, this study examines the effects of polling information on those decisions, keeping in mind that not all individuals will to react to the same information in the same way. The results of this study indicate that while polls do have an impact on the opinions and behaviors of those exposed to them, the effects

themselves are minimal, and tend to largely reinforce existing predispositions. Those who have already chosen a candidate to support in an election tend to use the poll results to reinforce those preferences. Potential voters who are exposed to information suggesting a close election are more likely to participate, but only marginally so. Individuals who are considering whether or not to vote for a third party candidate do react to the strength of that candidate in the polls, but seem unimpressed by the strategic situation. Overall, this study indicates that the strong emphasis by the media on the relative popularity of the candidates does not seem to make a significant difference in the actions of individuals, and thus in the results of presidential elections.

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Chapter 1

At the heart of the democratic process is a belief that the will of the people should have a profound impact on the actions of those who govern them. For most of the history of the United States, that will has been explicitly expressed only at the ballot box, with elected officials relying upon the volunteered opinions of constituents, face to face contact with citizens of their districts, reason, and simple intuition to ascertain what that will was outside of any particular Tuesday in November. Over the past 70 years or so, however, efforts have been made to make this will more easily and scientifically manifest on a day-to-day basis. As the technical and political sophistication of polling houses has improved, the use and importance of polling information has increased dramatically. Like any advance in the political process, however, the introduction of this type of information has not been without a significant impact. Much of this impact is well studied and understood. It has become clear, both in academic research and in the popular press how government, media, campaigns, and even respondents have changed in response to polling information.[1] Its impact on the wider citizenry, however, has been sorely understudied, especially given the importance of those citizens in maintaining and directing the entire process.

In this project I evaluate the relationship between the public and the polls in greater detail. In order to understand the importance of polling in politics, I will first explore the growth and use of polling information over time and the problems internal to

[1] For examples see Broh 1983, Patterson 1994, Jacobs and Shapiro 2000, and Clausen 1968.

the industry. Second, I will review the existing literature on the impact of polling on individual citizens' decisions to vote, their preferences, and their strategic considerations in races involving more than two candidates and discuss its strengths and weaknesses. Next, I will examine public opinion about polling and the use of polls in politics. Finally, after reviewing several key principles from studies about how individuals process information, I will examine how these insights can add to our understanding of the impact of the polls on voters.

The Growth of Polling

From its origins in the unscientific straw polls of the nineteenth century, modern political polling operations have grown to an astonishing scale. While early attempts at polling came from commercial houses such as Gallup and Roper, the number of polls conducted and the number of enterprises conducting them has increased steadily over the past 70 years. Today, academic institutions, campaigns, government offices, and the media all rely upon polling information and many have created their own internal polling organizations. While Gallup concluded its final polling for the 1948 election in September, and thus incorrectly predicted a Dewey victory, the 2000 election saw a huge upsurge in the number and availability of polls. One source (www.pollingreport.com) reported 298 polls from 34 distinct sources or combinations of sources between August 3rd and November 6th 2000.[2] This source is not comprehensive, as it excludes private

[2] Some media outlets were involved in several different combinations, and each combination was counted separately. For example, CNN was concurrently involved in a polling effort with Time/Yankolevick and with USA Today/Gallup.

polls, but provides a good illustration of the sheer number of polls released over this three month period, all of which sought to measure public opinion on the same question. The mere existence of such a resource is itself telling. Clearly, at least among the elite, there are a number of people obsessed with following the race closely. The effects, however, are at least perceived to extend well beyond the elite. Although there is little systematic information about how the public views this process, it at least seems that the public believes that this matters – that reporting the results of the polls has an impact on voters. Of course, this is nowhere more evident than the discomfort of many with the reporting of exit poll results on the East Coast while polling places are still open on the West Coast. The difference, however, in the view of the public between that and pre-election day polls is probably one of degree.

Problems With Polling

The growth in the scope of and interest about polls has brought some problems with the polling enterprise into focus. First and foremost, evidence indicates that participation rates in polls are dropping, raising important questions about the representativeness of the remaining samples (Steeh 1981, Brehm 1993, CMOR 1997). In fact, Brehm found systematic differences between survey samples and the general population based on age, income, education, and gender. There are a number of possible explanations for this, but the most compelling involve the mode of interview. Early polls were conducted either through the mail or face to face. While some surveys are still conducted in these ways, the majority of polling is now done over the phone. The

penetration of phones into American households, the speed with which phone surveys can be completed, the relative inexpense of telephone surveys compared to sending pollsters across the country to the living rooms of respondents, the ease with which phone numbers can be randomly generated, and the subsequent improvements in sample representativeness all make telephone surveys a logical choice for polling houses. However, the increased reliance on telephone interviews, coupled with the overall increase in the number of polls conducted, has begun to crowd the field. To further complicate the situation, telemarketing organizations have grown in similar numbers, and combined there can be an annoying number of unsolicited phone calls made to the same household in any given week. It should not be surprising under these circumstances that individuals are less enthusiastic about participating. At the same time, technology has given individuals a greater ability to screen phone calls through answering machines and caller identification services, and thus avoid any unexpected phone calls altogether.[3]

Given this development, as well as the variety of methods used to analyze and weight survey results, there are noticeable problems with accuracy and stability in poll results. During the 85 days of the presidential campaign for which poll results are reported on pollingreport.com, there were 41 days in which the margin between Bush and Gore in various polls differed by greater than five percentage points. Included in that total were ten days in which the maximum and minimum margins reported differed by more than 10 percentage points. This disparity may have been completely understandable had it come early in the campaign. An argument could be made that in

[3] For a fuller account of the potential pitfalls, and the reactions of various pollsters, see Harwood and Leung (2002).

the late summer many voters were still undecided, and thus the responses which they gave to interviewers could be expected to vary in seemingly random patterns, which may make results less precise. Of course, if this were driving the phenomena, one would expect the disparities between polls to be dampened over the course of the campaign as more and more voters made up their minds. Yet this is not the pattern that emerges. The average weekly difference between the maximum and minimum gap projected by polls on any given day actually began at a fairly low level and if anything increased overall by the end of the campaign (see Table 1.1). Although several of these gaps were within a predictable margin of error, the media coverage stemming from different polls could

Table 1.1
The Average Daily Poll Disparity During the 2000 Presidential Campaign, By Week[4]

Week	Largest Disparity	Average Disparity
8/3 – 8/11	8	2.14
8/12 – 8/18	10	3.86
8/19 – 8/29	3	0.71
8/31 – 9/11	9	4.71
9/12 – 9/18	12	6.86
9/19 – 9/25	15	7.29
9/26 – 10/2	8	4.44
10/3 – 10/9	13	9.14
10/10 – 10/16	7	3.86
10/17 – 10/23	10	7.86
10/24 – 10/30	11	7.44
10/31 – 11/6	9	6.29

[4] Each period represents seven days on which polls were reported. Since polls were not reported every day during August, early "weeks" may not line up with the calendar.

differ dramatically. Thus, while a gap of 9 points may be completely unsurprising statistically, the presentation of information to the public can be problematic because of that disparity, especially because the media have not demonstrated a commitment to emphasizing the importance and interpretation of the margin of error. Additionally, of the 16 final predictions reported on the web site, two predicted a Gore lead in the popular vote, two predicted a tie, and twelve predicted a Bush lead, with three of these expecting a solid five point lead. Although it is true that most of these results were within the margin of error, it is troubling that 75 percent of them predicted the wrong result.

There are additional questions about the stability of individual polls. While some polls, such as those conducted by ABC News and Voter.com were relatively stable, others such as CNN/USA Today/Gallup and Newsweek varied wildly during the course of the campaign. ABC News had a standard deviation of 1.53 across its 20 polls reported, while Voter.com had a standard deviation of 2.82 for its 47 polls. Meanwhile, CNN/USA Today/Gallup had a standard deviation of 5.81 across 67 polls, and Newsweek had an even larger standard deviation of 7.87. Of course, variation across time in a single organization's poll results is not necessarily a problem. It may be that public opinion was particularly volatile during this campaign, and it was instead the more stable polls which were missing something important. However, the pattern of movement was in some cases so extreme as to be difficult to believe. For example, on October 4, CNN/USA Today/Gallup reported a Gore lead of 11 points. Two days later, the same organization reported a Bush lead of 7 points. Over the same span, no other organization reported a lead of greater than six points for either candidate. These

differences may have been the result of different methods used to contact respondents, different strategies or guidelines for reaching people who are not immediately available, or differences in the weights used in the analysis of the raw data. Even if there are understandable and predictable technical differences between the polls, however, consumers are not informed of them, much less about the magnitude or direction of the potential biases introduced by these differences.

Two other areas of concern about polling have become more important in recent years. The first is the appearance of "push polling." This innovation, which has been most noticeable in presidential primaries, involves campaigns calling targeted voters and presenting negative information about the opposing candidate under the guise of conducting a poll. Apart from the ethical concerns over this type of polling, this may only add to the lowered response rate and public opinion of legitimate surveys. Another polling problem which has gained great visibility recently is the reliability of exit poll data. Election Day coverage of the 2000 presidential race was shaped dramatically by errors in assumptions, problems in communication, and data entry mistakes within the Voter News Service and between it and its constituent media outlets. These problems led to the erroneous projection of Al Gore as the winner in Florida before the polls in the Panhandle had closed, the need for the networks to rescind that call shortly after, and the premature projection of George W. Bush as the winner in Florida in the early hours of the next morning, which was also quickly reversed.[5] These events sparked a renewal of the

[5] For detailed descriptions of the event of that evening, see Konner, Risser, and Wattenberg (2001) and Mason, Frankovic, and Hall Jamison (2001).

debate which had followed the 1980 election about the effect of election night projections prior to the close of voting in other parts of the country.[6]

Polling's Impact: Policy, Media, Candidates, and Respondents

Despite these concerns, polls have been and continue to be important sources of information for a variety of institutions and individuals. It has been clear since the Kennedy administration that polls have an impact on government policy. Every president since Kennedy has used a professional polling agency or had a professional pollster on staff, providing the administration with frequent updates on the popularity of both important political figures and policies in or soon to be on the agenda (Edwards and Wayne 1994). This reliance on polling information reached new heights during the Clinton administration, serving as a fundamentally important leg on which the triangulation strategy relied (Morris 1997).[7] Perhaps the most notorious use of polls by a sitting president was the decision by President Clinton not to admit his involvement with Monica Lewinsky after learning from poll that the American public was unlikely to forgive him for lying about it (Morris 1998). This does not mean that all government policy is guided by the polls, but it is still extremely important to understand the shape of public opinion on an issue when deciding how to approach that issue, even if the response is merely to place more of an emphasis on "educating" the public about the president's

[6] No strong evidence has ever been found to indicate that voters react to exit polling information when deciding whether to voter or whom to vote for. This relatively unsurprising, since the results are not known until very late in the day when most people who are going to vote have already done so, and the people who are likely to know at 4:00 pm Pacific Time who won Florida are disproportionately likely to vote anyway.

[7] The triangulation strategy involved finding a position on issues, most notably welfare reform, that incorporated the more popular portions of the traditional Republican and Democratic positions.

position or changing the ways that policy options are framed (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). Similarly, there is reason to believe that members of Congress may be influenced by the popularity of particular proposals or of a president who sends those proposals to them (Kernell 1996). Certainly, politicians in each branch are happy to point out to the media and to their opposition when their position is favored by a majority of the potential electorate.

The availability of polling information has also had a dramatic impact on the media. During the 2000 presidential election cycle, several different media outlets performed daily tracking polls over the last two months of the campaign, and countless others publicized, analyzed, and discussed that information. Although the pervasiveness of polling information may have been at an all time high, the difference was merely one of degree from other recent campaigns. In fact, "horse race" coverage has come to dominate election coverage, much to the chagrin of most academic observers (Broh 1983, Johnson 1993, Patterson 1994, Stanley and Niemi 1994, Just et al 1996, Just et al 1999). Even if the polls themselves have no impact on the results of elections, there is a concern that such coverage crowds out information about the candidate's positions on issues and qualifications, information which should be more useful to voters in reaching a decision about whom to support and whether or not to vote in the first place. If it does have an impact, however, then that creates an even larger problem. Not only is relevant information crowded out, but it is being replaced by information which most would agree *should not* influence voters. The media are one of the most important sources of information about elections for voters, if not the most important, and the quality of the

information which they present, particularly if that information is affecting important decision, is certainly worth of closer scrutiny.

It is not difficult, however, to see why the coverage of polls has become so prevalent. In an era in which journalists are often accused of an ideological bias in their reporting, information on the views of the public must have a strong appeal to journalists. After all, it is difficult to accuse the press of favoring one candidate or the other if its main focus is on what the audience thinks. Additionally, reporting poll results, especially those done by another organization, is cheap and easy compared to sending reporters out to research stories. The focus on the horse race may also represent the fundamental difference in the goals of the media and campaigns. While campaigns have an incentive to focus on a narrow message throughout the election season, news organizations are constantly looking for new information to present to their audience. Reporters who listen to a candidate give the same speech day after day are understandably more interested in talking about the results of the latest poll rather than the rehashing the details of the candidate's plan for Social Security reform.

The tenor of media coverage can also be traced to poll results, even if the polls themselves are not mentioned (Ratzan 1989, Patterson 1993). Candidates are seen as leading, trailing, stagnant, having or losing momentum, or facing an uphill battle, depending on the current state and recent trends reported in the poll. If a candidate who has enjoyed double digit leads in the polls suddenly finds himself running even with his opponent, the press is likely to focus their coverage of his campaign on what mistakes he has made or why he is running out of steam. Similarly, a candidate who makes great

gains in the polls is likely to receive media coverage of the strategy and the appeals which have helped her gain support. Again, if voters are influenced by this information, this phenomenon should be more closely analyzed and understood.

The candidates themselves are strongly influenced by polling information. Whereas 30 or 40 years ago it would have been difficult to convince candidates to pay for an in-house polling operation, now almost all major campaigns make extensive use of such services (Hamilton 1995). This information is invaluable in helping campaigns determine which issues to emphasize, which issues to avoid, which districts or states to campaign in, and what groups of people to target. It is also invaluable in keeping up with the success or failure of the campaign to persuade undecided voters and mobilize the support of core constituencies. In the 2000 campaign, it is unlikely that Bush would have emphasized Social Security reform or proposed a prescription drug plan without polling information telling him that he was vulnerable to Gore on those issues. Similarly, Gore might not have been as vocal about targeted tax cuts and his opposition to stricter gun control legislation if not for the advantage that Bush had over him on those issues. In neither case is it clear that the candidates embraced a position which he found unpleasant. However, these were certainly not their core issues, and it was clear from their discussions of them that these were not the issues that they were most enthusiastic about.

Finally, additional research has even shown the impact that being polled can have on respondents themselves. Several studies have indicated that individuals contacted for a survey before an election become more interested in the issues and more likely to vote than their counterparts (Crespi 1948, Clausen 1968). Being contacted by someone about

his opinion on the issues or on the candidates serves both to remind a voter about the election and the issues involved and to apply a subtle social pressure to become more informed and participate. People do not like to appear uninformed or derelict in their civic duties. Being put on the spot by a pollster seems to push respondents to study, perhaps to be ready in the event of another "pop quiz".

Polling's Impact on The Electorate: Preference, Turnout, and Strategic Voting

While these effects of polling are relatively well understood, the impact that this information has on voters is still a matter of dispute. Although there is support in the literature for the theory that polls have an effect on the behaviors of average citizens on Election Day, the nature of that effect is less certain. Several studies have indicated that voters tend to bandwagon with the majority in pre-election polls.[8] Others, however, have found just the opposite effect, with voters moving away from the leading candidate and gravitating toward the underdog.[9] Similarly, there is disagreement in the literature over what effect polling information has on voters. Some have argued that close elections should spur greater participation, since individual votes may become more important as the gap between the candidates narrow (Downs 1957, Fiorina 1976, Cox and Munger 1986). This conclusion, however, has been brought into question by others who argue that this increase is actually the result of increased candidate and party efforts to turnout likely supporters (Key 1949, Aldrich 1993), an artifact of the data (Gray 1976), or nonexistent (Wald 1985). Finally, there is a dispute over how polls impact strategic

[8] See for example Skalaban 1988, Holbrook 1996, and Gimpel and Harvey 1997
[9] See for example Fleitas 1971, and Ceci and Kain 1982

voters. The evidence seems to indicate that voters react to information about candidates' chances of winning when deciding how to vote (Cain 1978, Abramson, Aldrich, Paolino, and Rohde 1992, and Abramson, Abramson, Aldrich, Paolino, and Rohde 1995), but this evidence is not without its detractors (Abramowitz, McGlennon, and Rapoport 1981).

These debates in the literature may be the result of the way these studies treat voters. In general, scholars looking at how polls affect voters have tended to both treat all voters the same way, not allowing for the possibility that the information contained in polls may have a different impact on different individuals, and to rely on one empirical test in one election year, whether it be survey research or controlled experiments.

What Voters Think About Polls

Implicit in this discussion is the assumption that voters actually pay attention to polls and take their results seriously. Although there is less information available about public opinion about surveys than about other more standard political questions, there is some evidence to show that voters generally have a high opinion of polling, at least in general, and that potential voters are paying attention to the polls. Gollin (1987) found that public opinion about polls and polling had improved over time, and that citizens tended to view them as legitimate representations of public opinion. Schleifer (1986) also found voters had a positive opinion of the survey research industry in general, with over 80% of respondents agreeing that polls serve a useful purpose across four separate samples. They were not as pleased about participating in surveys, however, and Schleifer found a slight downward trend in the proportion of respondents who agreed that

participation in a survey was a pleasant experience. Respondents' attitudes toward participating, however, seemed to have less to do with real survey research than it did with concerns about sales pitches being disguised as surveys or privacy issues, neither of which applies as strongly to political polling, except as it may reduce their participation rates. A 1996 Gallup survey about the polling industry also showed a generally positive affectation toward polling by the public. Although public opinion and opinion polls are not completely synonymous to respondents, they are clearly linked. The survey asked half of the respondents if they believed that the country would be better off if national leaders more closely followed the views of the public, and asked the second half the same question but using public opinion polls instead. More people agreed that leaders should follow the views of the public, but the difference was relatively slight (80% to 73%). Responses to questions about whether polls work for the best interest of the public, are generally a good thing for the country, and about the accuracy of polls were also generally positive. In fact, the only area where faith in polls began to break down was in the area of statistical sampling, which seemed too improbable to the general public. However, since this was entirely independent of their faith in the reliability of polls themselves, even these doubts seems largely unimportant. These results should be read with some amount of caution, however, since people who do not like or trust polls almost certainly self-select out of surveys in the first place. Unfortunately, there is no way to know what people think about surveys without asking them, and no way to force individuals to answer if they object to the practice of asking them the question.

Another Gallup survey conducted that same year found that about 60% of respondents could recall seeing the results of a pre-election poll, and of those respondents, over 80% knew that Clinton seemed certain to win, with almost all of the remaining respondents believing that either Clinton or Dole could still win it. It is encouraging for this project that fewer than two percent of those who claimed to have seen a poll believed that Dole was the clear favorite. Information from the American National Elections Study also indicates that the information from polls is reaching potential voters (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2
Percentage of NES Respondents Correctly Predicting
The Winner in Presidential Elections, by Year

Year	Percent Predicting Correct Winner	Actual Margin of Victory (%)
1964	92.1	22.5
1968	69.2	0.7
1972	92.4	23.2
1976	50.7	2.1
1980	44.9	9.7
1984	87.2	18.2
1988	73.5	7.8
1992	64.7	5.6
1996	90.0	8.0
2000	48.0	0.5
Total	70.6	

While the percentage of respondents correctly predicting the winner in presidential elections varies widely from year to year, it varies in understandable ways.

The largest percentage of respondents were able to predict the winners in 1964, 1972, 1984, and 1996, years in which one candidate led by a considerable margin from the outset and never seemed to be in any danger. Respondents had the most difficult time predicting the winner in 1976, 1980, and 2000, years in which the polls themselves did not provide a clear or consistent expectation about the state of the race. In each of these years, both candidates spent some time as the leader in the polls, and the final Gallup poll was within the margin of error. The information from polls definitely seemed to be reaching the audience. This alone, of course, does little to explain why polls should have an impact on voters. A more thorough explanation of the rationale for relying on polls is therefore necessary.

How Voters Use Polls

Voters, of course, tend to fall short of our ideals. While the model democratic citizen devotes considerable effort to researching the relevant issues, understanding the candidates' positions on those issues, and analyzing the qualifications and characteristics of the candidates pursuing elected office, real citizens tend to be much less informed about and interested in the particulars of any given election, or even the political process in general. In fact, most citizens do not make use of the most basic form of participation available to them. Nearly half of all eligible voters stay away from the polls during presidential elections, with closer to 65 percent opting out of off year elections. The numbers are even lower for local or state races that take place at other times. Even those who do show up are not guaranteed to know much of anything about the candidates they

vote for or about the issue debates that may rage between those candidates. This may be disappointing in some respects, but it is not truly surprising. Although citizens do have a direct input into the system, that input is limited in its impact by the number of other votes cast. When presidential elections draw 100,000,000 voters, and even local elections draw participation in the thousands or tens of thousands, the impact of any one vote on the outcome of an election is clearly negligible. Additionally, the connection between casting a vote for a particular candidate and eventual policy outcomes which will impact the voter is so distant and convoluted that it becomes hard for even close observers to see. In addition to the near impossibility for any voter of finding a viable candidate who agrees with her on every important issue, the separation of powers and the federal nature of the American system make such connections almost impossible to find. Under these circumstances, it would be difficult to imagine voters devoting any great effort to the political process, when so many other areas of their lives demand attention.

People do still show up at the voting booth, however, and those who show up still make a choice. In doing so, however, many have incentives to minimize the cost of information necessary to make that choice (Downs 1957, Popkin 1994). One way to do this is to let other people do the work for you. Credible and respected opinion leaders can serve to inform and guide individual level opinion and candidate preference (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954, Downs 1957, Page, Shapiro, and Dempsey 1987). It is reasonable to believe that in a society in which individuals are taught from a young age the importance of the will of the people in guiding the state that a manifestation of that will should be seen as both credible and respected, as the discussion above would seem to

indicate. If this is the case, it would not be surprising if those with little information on a particular issue could be influenced by polling information. In fact, this idea has a long history, with discussions in political science going back almost 50 years (Simon 1954, Baumol 1957).

Additionally, the polls may provide important information to help guide behaviors without changing preferences. The closeness of the race, for example, should have a powerful impact on the value that an individual puts on his own vote, and thus should affect the probability that he will vote. In a tight race, an individual should be more likely to expect that her vote is needed, while an election in which one candidate is expected to win handily should discourage people from placing a high value on her own vote, and thus decrease the probability that she will vote. In elections in which there are more than two candidates, the polls can also affect the strategic decisions that voters make. A close race between the first and second place candidates, or a lack of support in the polls for the candidate in third place may spur individuals who prefer the last place candidate to abandon that candidate. While this may lead directly to strategic voting, which would involve voting for the next-most-preferred candidate in order to prevent the least preferred candidate from winning, it may also lead some to simply abandon the process altogether, or to be guided in their preferences in the same way that voters may be in two candidate elections.

Information Processing

To stop there, however, would be too simplistic. New information must be both received and assimilated into an individual's existing psychological framework in order to have any type of effect. Polling results with which a potential voter is unfamiliar will clearly have no impact on her, and neither will poll results that she dismisses or resists. To understand how polling information is received by the electorate, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of several arguments in the literature on information processing. The first factor to consider when attempting to understand how new information affects voters is a potential difference in the propensity to accept or resist the information. According to cognitive psychology, the way that new information is incorporated by an individual depends on how well the new information lines up with existing preferences, the strength of those preferences, and the reservoir of supporting or contradicting information which the individual has to draw on which may overwhelm any new information (Lodge and Hamill 1986, Zaller 1992, Popkin 1994, Morwitz and Pluzinski 1996, and Huckfeldt et al 1998). In other words, information which fits neatly with an individual's preconceptions or beliefs is readily accepted, while information that questions those preconceptions or beliefs is resisted or even ignored entirely. Additionally, the most informed are the most likely to be attuned to obscure messages, especially those that are favorable to their candidate, even when the vast majority of messages are not.[10] Thus identical exposure to identical information may not have the

[10] An example of this would be optimistic statements made by a candidate about his chances for victory in the face of poor showings in the polls, such as those made by both George H. W. Bush and Bob Dole during the 1992 and 1996 election campaigns, respectively.

same effect on different individuals. In fact, other insights from the literature on political psychology suggest that the same information may have exactly the opposite impact on different individuals.

The actual mechanism by which individuals process information to form evaluations is in dispute, but three distinct psychological theories are useful in this discussion. The first theoretical framework, the on-line model of candidate evaluation, posits that individuals keep and continuously update a net evaluation of candidates, which is then used to decide which candidate is preferred. In this model, the actual information that influences the decision becomes irrelevant once it has been incorporated into the overall evaluation, and thus is frequently forgotten (Graber 1984, Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh 1989, Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau 1995).[11] Under this model, then, it is clear that polling information can serve as such background information, having an impact on voting behavior, without necessarily being recalled as a contributing factor toward making a particular choice. It is not necessary, therefore, to find voters who agree or admit that the results of public opinion polls played a role in the formation of their opinions or in their behavior.

[11] It may seem contradictory to pull from both Zaller's understanding of opinion formation (his RAS model) and the on-line model, which Zaller presents as a competing hypothesis. I believe that the difference between the two models is not quite as clear as he presents. It makes great intuitive sense that individuals responding to an unexpected survey, expressing opinions about issues which are often relatively unfamiliar or unimportant to them, should answer based on a seemingly random sample of related facts which they carry in their heads. Elections, however, present a different type of choice. Even the most uninformed voters should know at some point ahead of time that they will be asked to make a choice on a given day, and have a general idea about the nature of that choice. Under these very different circumstances, it is much more reasonable to assume that they will incorporate information gleaned during the campaign into an overall evaluation which they can then use when entering the voting booth in November.

The second theoretical framework deals specifically with the role of the "impersonal other". This theory stresses the importance of mass opinion on individual opinion formation and change. Individual's beliefs about the opinions of others have become increasingly important to opinion formation over the past few decades. As the world which is seen as relevant becomes more and more detached from everyday experience, individuals have come to rely more and more on the opinions of others who are assumed to be effected either more directly or simply differently by events and issues that are important in politics (Mutz 1998). According to cognitive response theory, individuals presented with the results of public opinion polls often try to put those results in context. Thus, those who agree with the results try to understand the reasons that the majority believes what it does, and in the process can firm up their existing preferences. On the other hand, those who disagree with the poll results may strengthen their resolve by working through the reasons that they disagree with the majority, and thus further polarize themselves from the majority (Mutz 1997). Individuals without sufficient background information to come up with logical reasons for mass opinionation tend instead to use these results as a consensus heuristic, positioning themselves with the majority (Mutz 1998).

A final psychological concept that is necessary to introduce is the false consensus hypothesis. Due to either selective integration of information or a desire to believe that others share one's beliefs, individuals tend to overestimate the support for their own preferences and beliefs, both in their local environment and in the general population (Lee, Green, and House 1977, Mullen et al 1985). This holds true not only for a variety

of everyday subjects, but also directly for presidential preferences (Brown 1982). Although the introduction of contrary information can affect an individual's expectations, the response to new information is sluggish (Mutz 1998).

In general, therefore, we should expect that poll results should be most readily accepted by individuals who have weak or non-existent preferences, who have low levels of prior information, or who agree with the direction of reported opinion. They should be most strongly resisted by those with large amounts of background information, those who oppose the majority viewpoint, and those who are informed enough to be aware of obscure, but more favorable, information about the campaign. When internalized, polls should contribute to the overall evaluations of candidates and the election, while not necessarily being recognized as a particular reason for electoral choices. Those lacking information about the distribution of opinion, however, should generally assume that the majority will side with them.

Preference and Perception – An Aggregate Look

Although a thorough, individual level analysis is necessary to actually examine the effect of polls on voting behavior, an aggregate examination of perceptions can show that the respondents' preferences are helping to shape their beliefs. A simple analysis of the predictions that respondents made about the outcome of the elections demonstrates two things (See Table 1.3). First, it does show that the actual state of the race plays a role. The overall predictions do seem to move with the electoral situation. For example, more respondents predict a landslide victory in 1964, 1972, and 1984 than in any other years. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the respondents' preferences seem to help

Table 1.3
Electoral Prediction of ANES Respondents,
By Year and Pre-Interview Candidate Preference

	Respondents who Prefer the Leader			
	Trailing Candidate in a Landslide	Trailing Candidate in a Close Race	Leading Candidate in a Close Race	Leading Candidate in a Landslide
1964	0.5	1.6	42.6	55.3
1968	0.2	5.2	62.2	32.5
1972	0.1	0.3	27.1	72.5
1976	2.5	15.1	65.9	16.5
1980	2.2	17.9	65.1	14.8
1984	0.4	0.8	34.5	64.3
1988	1.0	4.9	59.6	34.6
1992	1.5	12.1	63.3	23.2
1996	1.1	0.0	98.9	0.0
2000	1.6	14.0	73.4	11.0
Total	1.1	6.7	57.0	35.3

	Respondents who Prefer the Trailer			
	Trailing Candidate in a Landslide	Trailing Candidate in a Close Race	Leading Candidate in a Close Race	Leading Candidate in a Landslide
1964	5.0	27.3	42.2	25.5
1968	8.2	54.8	26.7	10.3
1972	3.1	21.7	32.8	42.4
1976	13.5	68.3	16.0	2.2
1980	16.5	70.7	12.0	0.7
1984	3.6	26.5	42.1	27.8
1988	8.8	42.4	37.6	11.2
1992	7.3	62.5	25.1	5.1
1996	26.9	0.0	73.1	0.0
2000	11.5	71.0	15.4	2.1
Total	11.0	48.9	29.1	11.0

shape their predictions. In every case, more respondents who prefer the leading candidate predict a landslide victory for that candidate than do the respondents who

prefer the trailing candidate. The reverse is true for predictions of a landslide for the trailing candidate. And while there are never more than 20.1% of those who prefer the leading candidate predicting a victory for the opposition, there are never fewer than 24.8% of those who prefer the trailing candidate predicting victory for the underdog. Clearly, both polls and pre-existing preferences have some impact on voter perceptions. Whether or not those perceptions affect actual behavior is a more complicated question.

Evaluating the Impact of Polls on Voters

If polls do have an effect on voters' preferences and actions, it is not likely that that impact will be uniform throughout the electorate. At a minimum, potential voters who prefer the candidate leading in the polls should react differently to this information than those who are pulling for the trailing candidate. Those who are undecided should make use of this information in different ways than those who have already reached a preliminary preference. In more complicated elections, in which voters have more than two choices, the amount of information that voters have about their two less-preferred candidates should effect the way that these individuals make strategic decisions.

Establishing empirical evidence for this belief, however, is a difficult process. Although polls are very common in media coverage of campaigns, the amount of attention that individual voters pay can only be guessed at. While some polls have asked voters what their expectations are, and those expectations seem to have been correlated with the actual state of the race, this is hardly conclusive proof that public opinion polls are driving these results. This is especially true because pollsters so seldom ask their

respondents about polls. In polling, perhaps even more than in many other enterprises, time *is* money. The longer an interview takes, the more expensive it is to conduct. And in this enterprise, additional questions mean additional time. It is not surprising, therefore, that few commercial or academic pollsters have been concerned to ask how often their respondents see, pay attention to, or believe the results of public opinion polls. The difficulties, however, go beyond just good empirical measures of how much people pay attention to polls. Even if voters consciously rely on public opinion polls to help them reach rational decisions on Election Day, there would likely be a strong cultural bias against admitting that to an interviewer. The same sense of duty (and guilt) that leads many respondents to falsely claim to have voted probably causes voters to overreport the importance of issue positions, candidate experience, and past party performance as the major determinants of their vote choice. After all, good citizens *should* be paying attention to such things, and therefore respondents may well want others to believe that they are. The situation may, however, be even more complicated than that. If the on-line modeling theory of opinion formation is correct, polls are exactly the type of information which could have an effect and then be quickly forgotten. In other words, even if voters are not trying to hide their reliance on polls, they may not be aware themselves that the polls are having any effects.

This makes answering the questions posed in this study difficult, but not impossible. A thorough analysis, however, will require multiple methods which correspond to the realities of voting to varying degrees in order to gain any real traction. With this in mind, I chose to examine the potential effects of polls through a combination

of survey research and experimental data. Neither type of research alone is sufficient to adequately support these hypotheses. The effect of this type of information is likely to be modest, and modest effects are notoriously difficult to pinpoint in survey data, especially in cases where the impact is probably not a conscious one. However, survey research has the advantage of high external validity, since the survey measures actual voting behavior instead of predicted voting behavior and is based on a representative sample.

Experimental research has much higher internal validity, since the researcher can control the stimulus, but has problems with external validity, especially for issues such as voting behavior. It may be that immediately after exposure to polling information, an individual will feel more or less likely to vote or to vote for a particular candidate, but that the impact will fade by Election Day. The combination of the two methods promises a much stronger and more reliable test of the hypotheses. The mixed results of prior work in this area may be the result of reliance on a single one of these methodologies. Therefore, only by testing my hypotheses in both settings can I attempt to settle the debate. The details of these analyses are presented in later chapters.

Plan of the Dissertation

Clearly, polls are an increasingly important and ever-present part of the story of elections in the United States. While a desire to be able to predict important events is an understandable part of human nature, it is cliché to say that those predictions can become self-fulfilling prophecies. The hope in any democracy is that the people make important decisions based on their understanding of what will be best for themselves or for the

country. While we know that, understandably, few voters devote the type of time or attention to politics that we may wish that they did, it is clear that not all information shortcuts are created equally. While a reliance on party identification, positions on a small number of issues, or even the state of the economy are understandable, and possibly even entirely reasonable ways to make a choice, information about the relative popularity of the candidates would be much less defensible. Just as troubling, of course, is the concern that voters use this information to determine whether or not to vote. If poll coverage causes individuals to devalue their own participation in the system by predicting the outcome before they even have a chance to vote, then the subsequent loss of input by segments of the population is troubling. Finally, if polls cause people to abandon their true preferences and act strategically, this compounds the problems which candidates outside of the two major parties face. While it is not only rational, but perhaps even better for the system for voters to concentrate their efforts where they are most likely to have an effect, these actions may cause us to underestimate the support in the population for other ideas and other candidates, and thus limit the ability of those ideas to be represented in government.

All of these issues were raised during the 2000 election, and all are likely to be raised again during the 2004 election. If polls were common during the 2000 campaign, the very closeness of the 2000 election is only likely to spur greater interest in the polls this year. In fact, while daily tracking polls did not appear until August of 2000, at least one major organization began releasing daily numbers as early as March of this year.[12]

[12] See www.rasmussenreports.com/Presidential_Tracking_Poll.htm

Several others have started running weekly or bi-weekly polls.[13] If polls have an effect on voters, then, the potential is there for an even greater impact this year, with a more sustained emphasis on the state of the race than existed four years ago, when the electorate was likely polled more often and by more organizations than ever before. Obviously, with Ralph Nader running again as an alternative to Bush or Kerry, the topic of strategic voting will be very explicitly of concern to both the media and the Democratic Party, and should be much discussed this year.

The subsequent chapters will examine these concerns more directly. Chapter 2 examines how polls affect voters' candidate preferences, both in terms of the actual votes that they cast and the intensity of those preferences. Chapter 3 then turns to the question of voter participation, looking at how polls affect voters' perceptions about how close they expect the race to be and how those expectations affect the decision to vote. Chapter 4 more closely looks at the question of strategic voting, examining how polls may influence voters choices in situations in which their most-preferred candidate is trails two other major candidates. The results of these analyses, as well as their implications will be summarized and discussed in Chapter 5.

[13] See www.pollingreport.com

Chapter 2

The most intriguing question about the ways that polls may affect the electorate is whether or not information about the expected outcome of an election helps to shape the preferences of voters. In a society that values the voice of its populace, and which in some ways idealizes the voters as concerned citizens attempting to choose leaders who will push for policies that benefit the whole country, the process by which voters come to those choices is inherently interesting. Previous studies of voting behavior have largely deflated our idealized image, showing that things like party identification, the state of the economy, and group affiliations are more likely to drive vote choice than a careful and thoughtful comparison of the candidates' qualities and policy preferences.[14] An electorate driven by the relative popularity of the candidates', however, would be of even greater concern. If enough voters choose based simply on how others have already decided, then the candidate with advantages in name recognition and early popularity becomes much more difficult to defeat, even if he or she would not be the preference of a more informed majority.

An Ongoing Debate

Whether or not polls have such an impact on the general public is still a matter of debate. Several studies have tried to identify such an effect on the preferences of voters in an election, with conflicting results. Some found that voters were swayed toward the

[14] See for example Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960), Markus (1988), Gelman and King (1993), Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954).

candidate leading in the race, while others found that voters in fact reacted against the candidate in the lead.

Daniel W. Fleitas (1971) found mild support for the underdog effect in elections. In a 1969 experiment with 625 students, Fleitas used a hypothetical mayoral election as a testing ground for polling effects. Using successive surveys to gauge movement, he artificially inflated the support for one of the candidates in the previous polls to see if that information, which was the only additional information the students had to work with would move the actual survey results in the same direction. Instead he found movement away from the front-runner and toward the underdog. However, the introduction of party labels into the survey erased this effect. He concluded that polling information may serve as another cue for voters to determine their preferences, but only in low information elections.

Stephen J. Ceci and Edward L. Kain (1982) also found support for the underdog hypothesis. In their 1980 experiment during the presidential campaign, they used a combination of in-class surveys and phone calls to the same students from a fictitious polling organization to gauge the impact of polling information on vote choice. Although they found little movement toward better evaluations of the trailing candidate, they found that students reacted to the polling information by judging the leading candidate more critically, thus increasing support for the trailer.

Larry Bartels (1985), however, found the opposite effect. In a study of the 1980 NES panel data, he analyzed the effect of momentum in primary elections. Early in the campaign there was a strong impact of changes in polling data on vote choice. This

effect, however, tended to plateau later in the campaign. Of course, primary elections are very different from general elections. It may be more likely that primary voters will pay attention to a candidate's standing because they have an incentive to select the candidate who has the best chance of winning office for their party in the fall, as well as to narrow down the candidates that they learn about to those who seem viable (Lau and Redlawsk 2001). They may also be low information elections compared to general elections, and the diminishing of the effect over the course of the campaign suggests that additional information about the candidates may be weighed more heavily than horse-race information.

Other scholars have found a similar effect during the general election. Using CBS/NY Times polling data from the 1992 presidential election, James Gimpel and Diane Hollern Harvey (1997) conclude that there is a bandwagon effect. Like Bartels, they find that the effect is strongest early in the campaign and declines as voters become more informed about the candidates. However, they argue that this does not decrease the importance of this information, since new information is fit into existing evaluations of the candidates. If those evaluations of a particular candidate are more positive because of the candidate's popularity early in the contest, it will make it more difficult for that new information to drive out that positive evaluation. Thomas Holbrook (1996) finds evidence for momentum effects in a model of daily tracking poll results during the 1984, 1988, and 1992 elections. Andrew Skalaban (1988) also found evidence of a bandwagon effect in the general election using the 1980 NES panel data. Further, evidence from

Great Britain also indicates the presence of a bandwagon effect (McAllister and Studlar, 1991).

Finally, Vicki Morwitz and Carol Pluzinski (1996) find a more mixed story. They conducted a study of 214 graduate students during the 1992 presidential election and 91 graduate students during the 1993 New York City mayoral election. They argue that polling information can have a bandwagon effect on voters, but that that effect is tempered by preexisting preferences and expectations. Therefore, they only find evidence of a bandwagon effect in voters who expected the candidate they favored to lose and had those expectations reinforced by polling data. They found that those who expected the candidate they favored to win discounted contrary evidence from the polls.

Concerns About Prior Work

The work done on vote choice to this point has tended to suffer from some important shortcomings. Much of the work has been done purely with experimental data using college students. This work has external validity problems of two types. First, college students may not be representative of the general population in the way that they use polling information because of their age, education level, and weaker partisan attachments. Second, since experiments can only measure voting intention at some point prior to the election, and not actual voting behavior, it is impossible to say whether or not that effect is only short term. All of these studies have focused on a single election or elections taking place in the same year, which also limits the power of the model. Although it is certainly true that potential voters' evaluations of the state of the race will

vary, there is, in fact, an actual measure which these voters are exposed to in varying degrees. Therefore, their examinations are limited to one actual electoral situation, while a more comprehensive examination would need to look at multiple elections with different competitive balances. Additionally, with the exception of Morwitz and Pluzinski, these authors do not address the way that voters process polling information into their existing expectations. There is reason to believe that not all voters are affected by such information in the same way.

Theoretical Foundations

It is important at this point to recap exactly why we should expect the polls to have any impact on the decisions that voters make. Voters do not seem to have the desire to learn large amounts of information about the candidates and the relevant issues in order to improve their chances of choosing the better candidate. Given the basic characteristics of our electoral system, however, this is not surprising. In a two-party system, with a relatively narrow ideological range compared to many other industrialized democracies, the chances of guessing correctly are fairly high, and the costs of guessing incorrectly are fairly low. Even with no information, a voter should have a fifty-fifty chance of being able to choose the candidate that he would prefer if he did all of the research. Therefore, one must assume that with even a small amount of information about the candidates, those odds should improve significantly. Since Democrats and Republicans tend to argue over specifics, and not over the basic structure of government, the cost of helping to elect the wrong candidate are not prohibitive. Finally, of course,

each voter's actual impact on the outcome of the election is infinitesimally small, which only further reduces the costs of making the wrong choice. If this is true, it is not only unsurprising, but entirely rational for voters to rely on information shortcuts to help them reach a decision on election day.

Many information shortcuts are well understood and establish. Party identification, a candidate's position on a single issue of great importance to a particular voter, a candidate's race or gender, and the voter's evaluation of the state of the economy are commonly used and generally accepted information shortcuts for numerous voters. The relative popularity of the candidates would seem to be a very likely candidate as well. The fact that a candidate is popular means that millions of other citizens have decided to throw their support behind her. For a voter looking for a way to reduce the amount of time he has to spend learning about the candidates, that collective judgment should be persuasive. Not only is it likely that many of the people who have already decided to support a particular candidate have put more thought into the decision than those reaching a decision later in the race, thus adding to their credibility, but voters, even more than the average citizen, should be expected to place some weight on the preferences of the majority. Advertisers certainly believe that the popularity of a product can help to persuade consumers, frequently pushing their product as the one preferred by more people, more experts, etc.

As discussed in Chapter 1, however, knowing what is popular is not enough. Voters have pre-existing connections to particular parties and particular viewpoints which precede the election. New information must be filtered through these prior attachments.

Therefore, the impact of the same piece of information may be dramatically different on different individuals. The cognitive psychology and cognitive response theory literatures lead to very particular expectations about how people will react to such information. Cognitive psychology argues that individuals readily accept information that fits their view of the world and resist information that runs counter to that view. Cognitive response theory comes to similar conclusions, but posits a more active resistance to contrary information, with consumers of that information tending to remind themselves of the reasons that the majority is in fact wrong on a particular issue. It also suggests that those with no prior affect toward the majority or minority position will be persuaded by the position of the majority.

Expectations

The previous discussion leads to the following hypotheses:

H1: When exposed to information about the relative popularity of presidential candidates, individuals whose candidate preference is consistent with the majority opinion will generally intensify their support for that candidate.

Voters whose preferences are in line with those of the majority in a poll will have no affective resistance to that information. In fact, the knowledge that most other potential voters have come to the same conclusion that they have should only serve to firm up their support for that candidate. If the majority of the population agrees with them, they must be on the right track.

H2: When exposed to information about the relative popularity of presidential candidates, individuals whose candidate preference is not consistent with the majority opinion will resist this information, and generally tend to move in the opposite direction.

This hypothesis predicts that individuals will act in exactly the opposite manner that the Downsian framework would suggest. Instead of using information as a shortcut to determine or act on preferences, individuals use their preferences to determine which information is valid or worthy of consideration. Voters with preferences that are inconsistent with the majority may well be exposed to polling information, but will resist it on two fronts. First, they will have an affective reaction to the information, downplaying its importance because it does not fit into their view of the world. Second, cognitive response theory posits that their reaction to this information will be to remind themselves of the reasons for their current preferences, and thus further polarize them from the majority. In essence, they convince themselves that the majority is wrong, and thus convince themselves in the process that their original opinions are even more correct than they had first thought.

H3: When exposed to information about the relative popularity of presidential candidates, individuals who have not yet decided which candidate to support will tend to bandwagon with the majority.

Since these individuals have been unable so far to choose between the two candidates, information about the distribution of preferences in the electorate should serve as a valuable information shortcut. These voters will by definition have no strong affective resistance to this information – they favor neither candidate, and thus should be neutral toward their relative popularity, even if they

tend to identify with one party over the other. After all, those who identify with one of the two major parties, yet who still cannot decide whom to vote for, most likely fall in one of two categories. Either their partisan attachment is not strong enough to confer strong advantages to that party's nominee, or their doubts about the party's nominee are great enough to neutralize their partisan attachments.

Methods

I first analyze the impact of polls on vote choice by examining American National Election Studies data spanning the presidential election years from 1964 to 2000. Using multiple years with a variety of electoral situations allows for a much more thorough analysis of the problem than examining any one year. Setting up this analysis, however, required several important decisions which must first be outlined in some detail.

First, there are two ways in which the effect of a public opinion poll could manifest itself. The most obvious effect, of course, would be a change in an individual's preferences. A change from one candidate to another or a change from indecision to a preference would clearly be an important effect. However, this is not the only way that an individual can be affected. Someone who already prefers a candidate may move further in that same direction. A voter who becomes more certain of her choice is at the same time becoming less likely to vote for the other candidate. That effect may be less visible, but is certainly just

as important to the candidates seeking a majority of the electorate. Therefore, I measure effects in terms of both the vote choice of the respondents as well as the intensity of that preference, as measured by the difference in thermometer scores that the respondents give for the two candidates.

The second decision to be made is how to actually measure polls. The actual impetus may be either the information that one of the candidates is leading or the momentum that a candidate gains during the campaign. The fact that a candidate who is trailing is closing that gap or that a candidate who is leading is losing support may sway potential voters. Therefore, I use measures of both possibilities in the analysis. The measure of momentum reflects changes in support for the leading candidate over the course of the race. It is calculated by taking the gap between the two major party candidates in the final poll before the election, and subtracting the gap on the day that the respondent was first interviewed. Thus, if a candidate's lead in the final poll is 10 points, but he was leading by 15 points a month earlier when the respondent was first interviewed, the momentum score would be a –5, reflecting that the trailing candidate had narrowed the gap.[15] Since the actual lead of the candidate is identical within each year right before the election, and since it is arguably exposure to the message

[15] It is important to note here that a change of 5 percentage points across two polls would almost certainly be within the margin of error for the polls, indicating, in reality, no actual change. Unfortunately, however, the media are not particularly effective at communicating this information. While they tend to do a decent job of letting consumers know when the difference between two candidates is within the margin of error in one poll, it is much less common for them to mention the margin of error when comparing two or more polls. Thus, such a change of 5 points would be covered as if it did represent an actual 5 percentage point shift in the relative support of the two candidates, and therefore can be treated as such an exact change in the analysis.

that is most important anyway, the effects of polling are measured by the individual respondent's self reported attention to media coverage of the campaign. This variable is described in more detail below.

Third, since the basis of the psychological theories used in this analysis is that information is filtered through pre-existing preferences, a measure of those preferences must be employed. Again, there are two major possibilities, both of which are utilized in this project. First, in the pre-election survey, respondents are asked which candidate they prefer. They can therefore be broken into three groups – those who prefer the leading candidate, those who prefer the trailing candidate[16], and those who are still undecided.[17] This is a very straightforward way to classify respondents and would seem to line up neatly with the theory. The only disadvantage is that the preference for a particular candidate at a particular point in time may only be temporary, and may represent the effect of information gained during the campaign, and not just the filter through which the information passes. In addition, therefore, I use party identification to break respondents into Republican, Democratic, and Independent categories.[18] These do not line up as neatly with actual candidate preference, but party identification

[16] For elections in which one candidate leads throughout, the assignment of consistency is unproblematic. However, for elections in which a different candidate is leading at the time of the pre-interview and at the time of the election, it becomes more problematic. Since the focus of the analysis is how the individual's mindset at the time of the interview affects new information, individuals will be assigned to the category that they fit at the pre-interview.

[17] At the time of pre-election survey, there are generally still a large number of undecideds in the electorate. Individuals who prefer a different candidate are excluded from this portion of the analysis. However, they are discussed in the chapter on strategic voting.

[18] Individuals who identified themselves as Independents who leaned toward one of the two major parties were coded as partisans. See Keith, Magleby, Nelson, Orr, Westlye, and Wolfinger (1992).

is much more durable, and therefore more likely to act as a filter for incoming information in any given election.

Initially, I analyze the data with all of the cases pooled, which allows for the greatest variation in the independent variables. Next, I examine each year separately, to see if the effects change over time, or are vary from election to election. Finally, I perform the analyses based on the electoral conditions. Elections are grouped into three categories, based on the size of the gap between the two major candidates. Blowout elections include 1964, 1972, and 1984. The elections of 1988, 1992, and 1996 are grouped together as elections in which one of the candidates enjoyed a moderate lead. The elections of 1968, 1976, 1980, and 2000 are coded as close elections.

The two basic model which I use in the analysis are best represented as:

1. Pr (Vote = Leading Candidate) = $F(\beta_1 + \beta_2 * \text{poll movement} + \beta_3 * \text{media exposure} + \beta_4 * \text{poll movement} * \text{media exposure} + \beta_5 * \text{party identification} + \beta_6 * \text{education} + \beta_7 * \text{age} + \beta_8 * \text{income} + \beta_9 * \text{efficacy})$[19]

   where F is the probit cumulative density function.

and

2. Post-election difference in thermometer scores = $\beta_1 + \beta_2 * \text{poll movement} + \beta_3 * \text{media exposure} + \beta_4 * \text{poll movement} * \text{media exposure} + \beta_5 * \text{party identification} + \beta_6 * \text{education} + \beta_7 * \text{age} + \beta_8 * \text{income} + \beta_9 * \text{efficacy} + \varepsilon$

with appropriate modifications as needed. For example, in the pooled analyses, a dummy variable is added for all but one of the years included in the analysis.

[19] For a complete description of variables, see Appendix A.

Additionally, in the models in which respondents are grouped by their party affiliations, party identification is replaced by partisan intensity. Each model is run four times – on the whole sample, on those who prefer the leading candidate, on those who prefer the trailing candidate, and on undecided voters.[20]

A Note on Media Exposure

The need to rely on exposure to media coverage of the campaign as a proxy for exposure to polling information needs additional explanation. This is clearly not a perfect measure, and in fact there have been questions raised about the reliability of self-reported media exposure (Chafee 2001). However, as long as response error is not correlated with actual exposure, the effect should be minimal. Another concern, of course, is that other aspects of media exposure are actually driving effects. Although this is possible, the heavy emphasis in media coverage of elections on the horse-race makes it less likely. Evidence presented in several previous studies of media coverage indicates that between 15 and 47% of election coverage dealt with polls in some way, with a steady increase from 1968 on in absolute terms, in prominence, and as a proportion of the whole, with additional stories driven by the latest polls, even if they are not explicitly mentioned (Broh 1983, Stovall and Solomon 1984, Gollin 1987, Ratzan 1988). Additionally, an examination of the Campaign Mapping Project database (an ongoing project under the supervision of Rod Hart and Kathleen Hall Jamieson) found that in the period from 1964 to 2000, approximately 40% of all television and print stories about the presidential

[20] In the analyses in which respondents are grouped by party affiliation, the models are run for the whole sample, for Republicans, for Democrats, and for Independents.

election mentioned the results of horse-race polls (See Table 2.1). This should actually understate the frequency of poll coverage, as it neglects stories that discuss which candidate is expected to win or is gaining ground without actually mentioning the word "poll".

Experiments

The experiments used in this section of the analysis were conducted at the University of Texas at Austin with a relatively diverse group of 49 individuals who participated in 15 separate simulated two-candidate elections.[21] In these simulated elections, the participants were given information about the state of the race, limited information about the candidates' position on a series of fictitious issues, limited information about their own position on some of the same issues, and limited information

Table 2.1
Percentage of Campaign Stories Mentioning Polls[22]

Year	Poll Stories	Total Stories	Percent
1964	47	257	18.3
1968	60	179	33.5
1972	95	257	37.0
1976	54	143	37.8
1980	104	349	29.8
1984	136	269	50.6
1988	165	349	47.3
1992	198	421	47.0
1996	220	535	41.1
2000	136	258	52.7
Total	1215	3017	40.3

[21] For a full description of the experiments and participants, see the Appendix.
[22] Taken from the Campaign Mapping Project database.

about the payoffs that they would receive, depending on the results of the election. Thus, respondents had to use the information about issue positions to figure out which candidate would likely be worth more money to them. Just as in the real world, where voters can only estimate which candidate's victory will be better for them, the participants had better or worse information to figure out which candidate was associated with which payout. Any and all of these pieces of information could and did vary from election to election. Some simulations had poll results suggesting a dead heat, some suggesting that one of the candidates had a modest lead, and some presented an election that looked to be a blowout. Similarly, the respondents' payoff from the election could vary from $0.75 to $0.25, depending on which candidate one in some cases, while in other elections, the difference in payouts was only fro $0.55 to $0.45. Finally, in some cases, the information that respondents were given lined up neatly, thus allowing the participant to form a clear picture about which candidate's victory would result in the higher payout for them, while in other cases, they might have information that presented a much murkier picture. Participants were also informed that choosing to vote in any given election would cost them $0.05, but that they would receive the full payout after the votes had been tallied, regardless of whether or not they voted. At the end of each simulated election, they were then asked whether or not they wanted to vote, and which candidate they preferred, regardless of whether or not they intended to vote. Altogether, these conditions should have created voters with different preferences, different

intensities of preferences, and different levels of information, who faced different electoral situations.

Analysis

The major effect of polls on vote choice, when coded by pre-election preference, seems to be to polarize the electorate, with a slightly stronger push away from the leading candidate (See Table 2.2). While momentum does not seem to drive voter decisions in these cases, media exposure does play a very minor role in determining the vote choice of respondents. In the pooled analysis of all cases from 1964 to 2000, individuals who favor the leading candidate in the race become more likely to vote for that candidate the more they are exposed to media coverage of the race, and therefore information that that candidate is leading. However, the impact on the probability of voting for the leading candidate is extremely small, changing by about 2 percent across the range of self-reported media exposure. Those who prefer the trailing candidate react in the opposite way. The more they are exposed to information that the candidate they initially prefer is losing, the more strongly they react against that information. Again, however, the size of this effect is hardly impressive, although it is about twice as large as the effect on those who support the leading candidate. Surprisingly, those who are undecided going into the campaign are the least influenced by exposure to this information. The overall effect on the entire sample seems to favor the underdog, perhaps reflecting that those who prefer the trailing candidate are being more strongly influenced than anyone else.

Table 2.2
The Impact of Poll Movement on Vote Choice[23]

Variable	Whole Sample	Prefer Leader	Prefer Trailer	Don't Know/Other
Movement	0.001 (.011)	0.031 (.024)	-0.006 (.025)	0.183 (.035)
Media Exposure	-0.031* (.018)	0.073* (.041)	-0.109** (.047)	-0.029 (.056)
Movement * Media Exposure	-0.004* (.002)	-0.008 (.006)	0.002 (.006)	-0.012 (.008)
PID	0.907*** (.016)	0.475*** (.034)	0.548*** (.040)	0.540*** (.057)
Education	-0.089*** (.019)	-0.028 (.047)	-0.137*** (.050)	0.029 (.064)
Age	0.002 (.002)	0.014** (.005)	0.002 (.005)	-0.003 (.006)
Income	0.012** (.006)	0.004 (.013)	-0.011 (.015)	-0.012 (.018)
Efficacy	0.020 (.028)	0.005 (.065)	-0.033 (.074)	-0.075 (.093)
1968	-0.281 (.174)	-0.003 (.389)	0.918** (.472)	-0.103 (.512)
1972	0.437*** (.127)	0.354 (.249)	0.810** (.397)	0.344 (1.103)
1976	-1.287*** (.168)	-0.165 (.387)	0.173 (.444)	-0.525 (.623)
1980	0.155 (.145)	0.958** (.419)	1.345*** (.382)	0.825** (.367)
1984	0.080 (.127)	0.420 (.269)	0.578 (.398)	0.611 (.381)
1988	-0.455*** (.131)	-0.394 (.257)	1.040*** (.369)	-0.316 (.365)
1992	-0.676*** (.146)	0.882** (.384)	-0.084 (.449)	-0.324 (.416)
1996	-0.507*** (.153)	0.402 (.354)	-0.082 (.515)	-0.521 (.470)
2000	-0.674*** (.141)	0.167 (.342)	0.314 (.412)	0.122 (.391)
Constant	-1.716*** (.171)	0.281 (.370)	-3.297*** (.488)	-1.089** (.506)
N	10310	5505	3819	671
Pseudo R^2	.406	.122	.139	.136

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

[23] This probit analysis was performed with Stata version 7 using pooled American National Election Studies data from 1964 to 2000.

When the analysis of all of the pooled cases is scaled instead by party identification, rather than by pre-election preference, there is no measurable effect on the vote choice of the respondents (See Table 2.3). This, however, is not entirely surprising. The races including in the analysis involve four elections in which the Democratic candidate was leading and six elections in which the Republican candidate was leading. Since partisan supporters may be moving toward the leading candidate in some years and away from the leader in others, the effects may be masked in any pooled analysis.

When the analysis is run independently for each election year, the results are less consistent, but perhaps more interesting (See Tables 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7). In the analysis scaled by pre-election candidate preference, those who prefer the leading candidate still bandwagon, but only in three of the ten elections (1972, 1992, and 1996). Those who prefer the trailing candidate still only ever move toward the underdog, but again only in some of the elections (1964, 1968, 1972, and 1996). Once again, those who are undecided are entirely unaffected.

Table 2.3
The Impact of Poll Movement on Vote Choice
By Party Affiliation

Variable	Whole Sample	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Movement	0.003 (.005)	.003 (.008)	-0.013 (.010)	0.022 (.017)
Media Exposure	-0.008 (.008)	-0.020 (.013)	-0.019 (.016)	0.027 (.031)
Movement * Media Exposure	-0.001 (.001)	-0.005*** (.002)	0.004 (.002)	-0.006 (.004)
Intensity	-0.082*** (.014)	-0.161*** (.029)	0.021 (.035)	N/A
Education	-0.027*** (.008)	-0.060*** (.015)	-0.030 (.019)	-0.011 (.035)
Age	0.001 (.001)	0.002 (.001)	-0.001 (.002)	0.000 (.003)
Income	0.004 (.003)	0.005 (.004)	0.008 (.005)	-0.003 (.010)
Efficacy	0.030** (.013)	0.024 (.021)	0.028 (.028)	-0.117** (.050)
1968	-0.608*** (.077)	-2.460*** (.126)	2.062*** (.167)	-0.188 (.322)
1972	-0.253*** (.056)	-1.732*** (.090)	1.930*** (.113)	-0.235 (.233)
1976	-0.565*** (.074)	-0.755*** (.120)	-0.525*** (.148)	-1.023*** (.305)
1980	-0.375*** (.065)	-1.986*** (.101)	2.042*** (.141)	-0.229 (.265)
1984	-0.390*** (.055)	-2.170*** (.092)	2.218*** (.121)	-0.056 (.240)
1988	-0.496*** (.056)	-2.368*** (.097)	1.815*** (.106)	-0.419* (.249)
1992	-0.382*** (.063)	-0.166 (.111)	-0.632 (.125)	-0.350 (.268)
1996	-0.393*** (.066)	0.132 (.128)	-0.501*** (.124)	-0.845*** (.300)
2000	-0.652*** (.061)	-2.689*** (.111)	1.946*** (.123)	-0.768*** (.266)
Constant	0.744*** (.077)	1.897*** (.141)	-0.537*** (.161)	1.005*** (.299)
N	10310	5469	4108	733
Pseudo R^2	.019	.382	.485	.062

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 2.4
Vote Choice by Year, by Pre-Election Preference

Whole Sample

Variables	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980
Media Exposure	-0.062** (.029)	0.000 (.035)	-0.009 (.020)	0.049* (.029)	0.012 (.038)
PID	0.418*** (.023)	0.567*** (.033)	0.397*** (.022)	0.450*** (.026)	0.500*** (.034)
Education	-0.132*** (.034)	0.023 (.038)	-0.093*** (.027)	-0.028 (.033)	0.039 (.041)
Age	-0.011*** (.004)	0.005 (.004)	0.010*** (.003)	-0.006* (.003)	0.001 (.004)
Income	-0.020** (.010)	-0.007 (.013)	0.032*** (.009)	-0.028*** (.009)	0.009 (.012)
Efficacy	0.123*** (.045)	-0.033 (.049)	0.036 (.032)	-0.149*** (.051)	-0.301*** (.075)
Constant	0.361 (.278)	-1.453*** (.284)	-1.092*** (.189)	-0.734*** (.264)	-1.063*** (.314)
N	1150	796	1458	1013	685
Pseudo R^2	.379	.429	.251	.329	.374

Variables	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-0.017 (.031)	-0.072** (.035)	0.010 (.033)	0.012 (.039)	-0.044 (.039)
PID	0.558*** (.027)	0.527*** (.026)	0.599*** (.028)	0.618*** (.031)	0.686*** (.035)
Education	-0.054 (.035)	-0.038 (.034)	0.013 (.035)	-0.066 (.043)	-0.118*** (.043)
Age	0.003 (.003)	0.006* (.003)	-0.005 (.003)	-0.011*** (.004)	0.003 (.004)
Income	0.043*** (.009)	0.024** (.010)	-0.019** (.010)	-0.034*** (.013)	0.026 (.017)
Efficacy	-0.001 (.045)	0.124* (.066)	0.160** (.066)	0.129** (.063)	0.072 (.083)
Constant	-1.527*** (.245)	-1.869*** (.266)	-1.610*** (.283)	-0.529 (.334)	-1.845*** (.299)
N	1168	1056	1135	922	928
Pseudo R^2	.431	.435	.486	.552	.555

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.5
Vote Choice by Year, by Pre-Election Preference

Prefer Leader

Variables	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980
Media Exposure	0.032 (.049)	-0.021 (.073)	0.090** (.040)	0.064 (.067)	0.168 (.128)
PID	0.264*** (.041)	0.299*** (.063)	0.170*** (.037)	0.256*** (.064)	0.295*** (.105)
Education	-0.166*** (.061)	0.104 (.080)	-0.061 (.047)	0.100 (.080)	0.026 (.119)
Age	-0.003 (.006)	0.010 (.009)	0.009** (.005)	-0.001 (.007)	0.007 (.012)
Income	0.008 (.018)	-0.048** (.024)	0.013 (.015)	-0.043** (.021)	0.052 (.035)
Efficacy	0.156** (.077)	0.072 (.103)	-0.033 (.058)	-0.277** (.112)	0.100 (.277)
Constant	0.745 (.475)	0.091 (.638)	0.595* (.319)	0.840 (.620)	-0.688 (.920)
N	808	351	907	448	311
Pseudo R^2	.173	.190	.085	.160	.270

Variables	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-0.025 (.063)	-0.102 (.064)	0.159* (.093)	0.169** (.082)	-0.103 (.098)
PID	0.249*** (.051)	0.215*** (.049)	0.226*** (.079)	0.197*** (.067)	0.292*** (.089)
Education	0.072 (.077)	0.070 (.065)	-0.009 (.092)	-0.065 (.082)	-0.002 (.103)
Age	0.019** (.008)	0.012** (.006)	0.012 (.011)	-0.020** (.009)	0.023** (.009)
Income	0.026 (.019)	0.018 (.017)	-0.059* (.032)	-0.045 (.028)	0.132** (.058)
Efficacy	0.011 (.095)	0.124 (.128)	0.062 (.182)	0.079 (.117)	0.157 (.193)
Constant	-0.523 (.532)	-0.397 (.505)	0.974 (.801)	2.400*** (.821)	-1.330* (.746)
N	643	527	616	520	375
Pseudo R^2	.159	.118	.183	.118	.249

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.6
Vote Choice by Year, by Pre-Election Preference

Prefer Trailer

Variables	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980
Media Exposure	-0.185* (.105)	-0.131* (.076)	-0.106* (.059)	-0.011 (.063)	-0.036 (.070)
PID	0.160** (.076)	0.313*** (.084)	0.101 (.077)	0.288*** (.056)	0.317*** (.065)
Education	-0.193 (.132)	-0.044 (.086)	-0.164** (.073)	-0.015 (.069)	-0.008 (.076)
Age	-0.023* (.012)	0.004 (.008)	0.019*** (.007)	-0.006 (.007)	-0.005 (.007)
Income	-0.051 (.034)	-0.034 (.032)	0.026 (.026)	0.008 (.019)	-0.024 (.020)
Efficacy	0.081 (.149)	-0.071 (.102)	0.112 (.087)	-0.030 (.103)	-0.158 (.126)
Constant	0.832 (.876)	-1.102* (.576)	-2.233*** (.531)	-1.941*** (.577)	-0.814 (.550)
N	250	338	400	422	278
Pseudo R^2	.211	.141	.115	.154	.140

Variables	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-0.014 (.071)	0.032 (.070)	0.064 (.099)	-0.227* (.133)	-0.031 (.080)
PID	0.252*** (.072)	0.362*** (.057)	0.293*** (.072)	0.250** (.109)	0.424*** (.070)
Education	-0.112 (.076)	-0.053 (.066)	-0.120 (.101)	-0.039 (.126)	-0.079 (.085)
Age	-0.007 (.008)	-0.001 (.007)	-0.012 (.010)	0.008 (.011)	0.001 (.008)
Income	0.014 (.020)	-0.004 (.018)	-0.033 (.026)	-0.053 (.033)	0.055 (.034)
Efficacy	0.030 (.105)	0.205* (.123)	0.004 (.178)	-0.157 (.185)	-0.184 (.175)
Constant	-1.409*** (.536)	-2.268*** (.513)	-1.162 (.743)	-0.792 (.859)	-2.160*** (.603)
N	454	446	416	343	472
Pseudo R^2	.085	.181	.233	.182	.279

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.7
Vote Choice by Year, by Pre-Election Preference

Don't Know

Variables	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980
Media Exposure	-0.161 (.102)	0.116 (.092)	N/A	2.234 (1.719)	0.014 (.091)
PID	0.192** (.094)	0.361*** (.093)	N/A	2.149 (1.894)	0.251*** (.094)
Education	-0.030 (.099)	0.138 (.100)	N/A	-2.491 (2.540)	0.161 (.109)
Age	-0.211* (.012)	0.007 (.010)	N/A	-0.100 (.109)	0.001 (.010)
Income	-0.044 (.030)	0.011 (.033)	N/A	0.433 (.378)	-0.018 (.026)
Efficacy	-0.059 (.138)	-0.235* (.126)	N/A	3.516 (2.590)	-0.011 (.199)
Constant	1.725* (.920)	-1.685** (.679)	N/A	-8.326 (7.336)	-0.665 (.811)
N	77	104	4	24	92
Pseudo R^2	.131	.001	N/A	.679	.096

Variables	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-0.038 (.100)	-0.084 (.110)	-0.090 (.091)	-0.081 (.149)	-0.018 (.111)
PID	0.428*** (.138)	0.264*** (.100)	0.319*** (.085)	0.395*** (.136)	0.497*** (.117)
Education	-0.178 (.138)	-0.043 (.124)	0.080 (.107)	-0.005 (.161)	-0.184 (.129)
Age	-0.015 (.011)	0.008 (.010)	0.004 (.009)	0.013 (.013)	-0.003 (.010)
Income	0.075** (.032)	0.007 (.030)	-0.074** (.031)	0.017 (.051)	0.027 (.040)
Efficacy	-0.131 (.170)	0.091 (.199)	0.153 (.190)	-0.054 (.250)	0.129 (.212)
Constant	0.195 (.823)	-1.199* (.718)	-0.392 (.836)	-1.930 (1.188)	-0.636 (.822)
N	68	78	100	49	75
Pseudo R^2	.256	.077	.188	.167	.240

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

When the same analysis is run with respondents grouped by their partisan affiliations, important differences again emerge (See Tables 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, and

2.11). Democrats, when affected by media exposure (1976, 1988, and 2000), always move in a pro-Democratic direction. This is entirely consistent with the

Table 2.8
Vote Choice by Year, by PID

Whole Sample

Variables	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980
Media Exposure	-0.052** (.025)	-0.041 (.028)	-0.016 (.018)	0.083*** (.025)	0.030 (.032)
Intensity	0.064 (.048)	-0.389*** (.053)	-0.126*** (.038)	0.101** (.044)	-0.259*** (.055)
Education	-0.175*** (.028)	0.109*** (.030)	-0.035 (.023)	-0.087*** (.028)	0.088** (.035)
Age	-0.018*** (.003)	0.014*** (.003)	0.013*** (.002)	-0.012*** (.003)	0.005 (.003)
Income	-0.033*** (.008)	0.012 (.010)	0.039*** (.008)	-0.044*** (.008)	0.027*** (.010)
Efficacy	0.056 (.038)	0.028 (.040)	0.080*** (.029)	-0.185*** (.044)	-0.325*** (.063)
Constant	2.316*** (.240)	-0.262 (.247)	-0.433** (.174)	1.253*** (.219)	-0.038 (.284)
N	1150	796	1458	1013	685
Pseudo R^2	.079	.082	.038	.066	.084

Variables	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-0.012 (.025)	-0.082*** (.028)	0.043* (.026)	-0.014 (.027)	-0.014 (.027)
Intensity	-0.253*** (.042)	-0.012 (.043)	-0.008 (.041)	0.012 (.049)	-0.104** (.045)
Education	-0.005 (.027)	0.011 (.027)	-0.034 (.027)	-0.083*** (.030)	-0.052* (.031)
Age	0.005* (.003)	0.010*** (.003)	-0.005* (.003)	-0.008*** (.003)	0.001 (.003)
Income	0.049*** (.007)	0.039*** (.008)	-0.044*** (.008)	-0.053*** (.009)	0.060*** (.012)
Efficacy	0.059 (.037)	0.208*** (.052)	0.085* (.049)	0.119*** (.045)	0.049 (.059)
Constant	-0.232 (.204)	-1.087*** (.223)	0.948*** (.213)	1.579*** (.257)	-0.207 (.230)
N	1168	1056	1135	922	928
Pseudo R^2	.061	.043	.033	.054	.025

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.9
Vote Choice by Year, by PID

Democrats

Variables	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980
Media Exposure	-0.036 (.044)	-0.016 (.045)	-0.024 (.026)	0.093** (.039)	-0.027 (.049)
Intensity	0.359*** (.107)	-0.686*** (.107)	-0.335*** (.072)	0.278*** (.091)	-0.477*** (.104)
Education	-0.174*** (.047)	0.031 (.049)	-0.149*** (.034)	-0.004 (.045)	0.032 (.051)
Age	-0.013*** (.005)	0.008 (.005)	0.014*** (.003)	-0.006 (.005)	0.004 (.005)
Income	-0.026* (.014)	-0.017 (.018)	0.037*** (.011)	-0.037*** (.012)	0.004 (.014)
Efficacy	0.287*** (.068)	-0.064 (.063)	0.086** (.040)	-0.146** (.071)	-0.241** (.098)
Constant	1.658*** (.445)	0.506 (.423)	-0.167 (.282)	0.850** (.365)	0.384 (.461)
N	740	447	738	539	353
Pseudo R^2	.114	.111	.066	.056	.081

Variables	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	0.007 (.039)	-0.082* (.049)	0.004 (.048)	0.065 (.065)	-0.113* (.059)
Intensity	-0.259*** (.085)	-0.206** (.092)	0.238** (.097)	0.368*** (.134)	-0.667*** (.120)
Education	-0.066 (.044)	-0.079* (.048)	0.060 (.052)	-0.044 (.073)	-0.176*** (.064)
Age	-0.001 (.004)	0.003 (.004)	0.000 (.005)	-0.017** (.008)	0.001 (.006)
Income	0.036*** (.011)	0.027** (.014)	-0.025* (.015)	-0.042* (.023)	0.012 (.029)
Efficacy	-0.065 (.056)	0.042 (.091)	0.216** (.094)	0.210** (.105)	0.083 (.120)
Constant	-0.191 (.344)	-0.584 (.427)	0.488 (.450)	1.967*** (.690)	0.729 (.476)
N	571	495	621	481	484
Pseudo R^2	.037	.031	.041	.089	.159

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.10
Vote Choice by Year, by PID

Republicans

Variables	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980
Media Exposure	-0.100** (.044)	-0.033 (.072)	0.040 (.043)	-0.090* (.053)	0.017 (.074)
Intensity	-0.281*** (.106)	0.105 (.163)	0.361*** (.107)	-0.336*** (.118)	0.286* (.160)
Education	-0.093* (.054)	-0.045 (.076)	0.039 (.053)	-0.054 (.059)	0.143 (.090)
Age	-0.011** (.005)	-0.003 (.008)	0.004 (.005)	0.000 (.005)	0.004 (.008)
Income	-0.005 (.015)	-0.001 (.025)	0.024 (.017)	-0.030* (.015)	0.007 (.025)
Efficacy	-0.009 (.067)	0.176* (.104)	-0.053 (.067)	-0.107 (.091)	-0.334** (.141)
Constant	1.359*** (.441)	1.321** (.647)	0.165 (.393)	0.596 (.466)	0.314 (.712)
N	351	286	596	375	273
Pseudo R^2	.064	.026	.058	.079	.075

Variables	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-0.123* (.066)	-0.019 (.058)	0.026 (.057)	-0.020 (.053)	0.066 (.063)
Intensity	0.134 (.131)	0.534*** (.112)	-0.367*** (.106)	-0.422*** (.103)	0.439*** (.121)
Education	0.072 (.077)	0.095 (.059)	-0.084 (.057)	-0.117** (.059)	-0.055 (.068)
Age	0.012* (.007)	0.003 (.005)	-0.009* (.005)	-0.006 (.005)	-0.001 (.006)
Income	0.062*** (.019)	0.021 (.016)	0.004 (.017)	-0.013 (.017)	0.020 (.027)
Efficacy	0.107 (.096)	0.161 (.119)	0.078 (.110)	0.115 (.086)	0.221 (.141)
Constant	-0.066 (.527)	-0.918* (.494)	-0.002 (.439)	0.721 (.480)	0.236 (.503)
N	507	493	435	402	391
Pseudo R^2	.104	.117	.059	.078	.092

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.11
Vote Choice by Year, by PID

Independents

Variables	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980
Media Exposure	0.050 (.123)	0.146 (.129)	-0.005 (.061)	0.217** (.087)	0.312* (.164)
Intensity	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Education	0.136 (.182)	0.130 (.141)	-0.021 (.082)	-0.080 (.095)	-0.123 (.129)
Age	0.034 (.023)	0.023 (.017)	-0.009 (.008)	-0.015 (.011)	-0.009 (.125)
Income	-0.186*** (.064)	-0.005 (.044)	0.028 (.027)	0.019 (.027)	0.026 (.041)
Efficacy	-0.106 (.224)	-0.185 (.160)	-0.138 (.112)	-0.160 (.149)	-0.543** (.231)
Constant	1.623 (1.138)	-0.884 (.160)	0.903 (.590)	0.004 (.795)	0.875 (.926)
N	59	63	124	99	59
Pseudo R^2	.314	.095	.023	.090	.147

Variables	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	0.001 (.103)	-0.105 (.113)	-0.045 (.093)	-0.263 (.196)	-0.089 (.110)
Intensity	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Education	-0.058 (.103)	-0.280** (.136)	0.166 (.114)	0.314 (.231)	-0.216 (.154)
Age	0.002 (.011)	0.010 (.011)	0.001 (.009)	0.024 (.023)	0.020 (.014)
Income	0.037 (.029)	0.014 (.037)	-0.043 (.027)	-0.186*** (.071)	0.102* (.056)
Efficacy	0.132 (.141)	0.338 (.218)	-0.030 (.194)	-0.568* (.343)	-0.449* (.240)
Constant	0.080 (.744)	0.519 (.844)	0.513 (.716)	2.126* (1.111)	0.358 (.945)
N	90	68	79	39	53
Pseudo R^2	.029	.096	.041	.320	.153

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

theoretical framework presented earlier. Republicans, however, when they are affected (1964, 1976, and 1980), always move toward the underdog, regardless of

whether this is a Republican or a Democrat. Independents, on the other hand, react in the much more expected way. In the two elections during which Independents were noticeably affected by the polls (1976 and 1980), they moved toward the leading candidate each time, regardless of which party's nominee was in the lead.

When the respondents are grouped by the type of election, as well as by their pre-existing preferences, it is clear that size of the lead in the polls does make a difference (See Tables 2.12, 2.13, and 2.14). Those who prefer the leading candidate and those who prefer the trailing candidate follow their now-familiar pattern of polarization, but only in blowout elections. In races in which either candidate could conceivably still win by the time the campaign is underway, exposure to information about the state of the race is seemingly irrelevant. When the analysis is scaled along party lines, a slightly different pattern emerges (See Tables 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17). Democrats do not react consistently in any of the three categories of elections. We know that they were affected in particular elections, but those effects do not seem to be linked to the size of the lead in the polls. Republicans, however, still only move in the direction of the underdog in the race, but here it is clear that they most consistently do so in elections in which one of the candidate has a seemingly insurmountable lead. Finally, Independents finally show an effect in this portion of the analysis. Surprisingly, however, it is not blowout elections, when the message of the rest of the electorate is most clear, but rather in close elections,

when the polls themselves are muddled, that Independents seem to take their cues from the majority. Only in these close elections does media exposure lead them to favor the leading candidate over the underdog.

Table 2.12
Vote Choice by Electoral Condition and Pre-Election Preference

Blowout Years

	Whole Sample	Prefer Leader	Prefer Trailer	Don't Know
Media Exposure	-0.023 (.014)	0.054** (.027)	-0.102** (.040)	-0.085 (.067)
LPID	0.455*** (.013)	0.216*** (.023)	0.178*** (.042)	0.276*** (.069)
Education	-0.100*** (.018)	-0.076** (.033)	-0.156*** (.047)	-0.060 (.077)
Age	0.003 (.002)	0.007** (.003)	0.004 (.004)	-0.015** (.007)
Income	0.024*** (.005)	0.017* (.009)	0.006 (.013)	0.004 (.021)
Efficacy	0.044** (.022)	0.019 (.041)	0.074 (.059)	-0.064 (.101)
1972	0.257*** (.072)	0.219* (.128)	0.162 (.205)	-0.030 (.673)
1984	0.087 (.069)	0.248* (.130)	0.160 (.189)	0.379 (.237)
Constant	-1.047*** (.138)	0.279 (.247)	-1.509*** (.367)	0.433 (.597)
Pseudo R^2	.336	.114	.084	.132
N	3776	2358	1104	149

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.13
Vote Choice by Electoral Condition and Pre-Election Preference

Moderate Gap Years

	Whole Sample	Prefer Leader	Prefer Trailer	Don't Know
Media Exposure	-0.019 (.020)	0.036 (.041)	-0.010 (.049)	-0.081 (.061)
LPID	0.581*** (.016)	0.217*** (.034)	0.329*** (.040)	0.305*** (.056)
Education	-0.029 (.021)	0.018 (.043)	-0.057 (.048)	0.010 (.070)
Age	-0.003 (.002)	0.003 (.004)	-0.003 (.005)	0.007 (.006)
Income	-0.008 (.006)	-0.013 (.012)	-0.018 (.013)	-0.026 (.019)
Efficacy	0.126*** (.036)	0.089 (.074)	0.069 (.085)	0.109 (.117)
1992	-0.077 (.071)	0.543*** (.155)	-0.586*** (.168)	0.124 (.209)
1996	0.093 (.079)	0.343** (.149)	-0.430** (.198)	-0.025 (.254)
Constant	-1.398*** (.161)	0.278 (.345)	-1.436*** (.350)	-1.074** (.464)
Pseudo R^2	.482	.120	.198	.137
N	3113	1663	1205	227

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.14
Vote Choice by Electoral Condition and Pre-Election Preference

Close Years

	Whole Sample	Prefer Leader	Prefer Trailer	Don't Know
Media Exposure	0.009 (.017)	0.033 (.039)	-0.048 (.035)	0.078 (.052)
LPID	0.551*** (.015)	0.291*** (.035)	0.324*** (.032)	0.363*** (.054)
Education	-0.004 (.019)	0.083* (.044)	-0.031 (.037)	0.046 (.059)
Age	0.000 (.002)	0.008* (.004)	-0.001 (.003)	-0.002 (.005)
Income	-0.004 (.005)	-0.010 (.012)	-0.003 (.012)	-0.004 (.017)
Efficacy	-0.097*** (.029)	-0.045 (.064)	-0.112* (.058)	-0.096 (.085)
1976	-0.653*** (.081)	-0.171 (.165)	-0.517*** (.177)	-0.355 (.341)
1980	0.076 (.092)	0.501** (.232)	0.117 (.171)	0.309 (.233)
2000	-0.398*** (.084)	-0.034 (.189)	-0.385** (.175)	-0.078 (.224)
Constant	-1.023*** (.141)	-0.064 (.338)	-1.323*** (.276)	-0.989** (.409)
Pseudo R^2	.411	.165	.171	.156
N	3422	1485	1510	295

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.15
Vote Choice
Split Sample by Election Condition and Preference, Year Dummies

Blowout Years

	Whole Sample	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Media Exposure	-0.022* (.012)	-0.018 (.018)	-0.044* (.026)	0.021 (.046)
Intensity	-0.112*** (.024)	-0.158*** (.048)	0.066 (.062)	N/A
Education	-0.074*** (.015)	-0.125*** (.023)	-0.029 (.032)	-0.025 (.058)
Age	0.003** (.001)	0.003 (.002)	0.001 (.003)	-0.001 (.006)
Income	0.022*** (.004)	0.021*** (.007)	0.025*** (.009)	-0.001 (.017)
Efficacy	0.060*** (.019)	0.074*** (.029)	-0.014 (.041)	-0.042 (.077)
1972	-0.241*** (.060)	-1.635*** (.094)	1.920*** (.120)	-0.267 (.238)
1984	-0.366*** (.057)	-2.095*** (.092)	2.242*** (.123)	-0.099 (.241)
Constant	0.617*** (.117)	1.668*** (.203)	-0.783*** (.254)	0.984** (.441)
N	3776	2049	1454	273
Pseudo R^2	.025	.300	.385	.011

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.16
Vote Choice
Split Sample by Election Condition and Preference, Year Dummies

Moderate Gap Years

	Whole Sample	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Media Exposure	-0.011 (.015)	-0.013 (.030)	-0.018 (.031)	-0.080 (.060)
Intensity	-0.007 (.024)	0.077 (.058)	-0.093 (.057)	N/A
Education	-0.035** (.016)	-0.021 (.031)	-0.039 (.032)	-0.003 (.074)
Age	-0.001 (.002)	-0.002 (.003)	-0.004 (.003)	0.004 (.006)
Income	-0.017*** (.004)	-0.004 (.008)	0.002 (.009)	-0.044** (.019)
Efficacy	0.129*** (.028)	0.138*** (.053)	0.134** (.056)	0.030 (.120)
1992	0.147*** (.054)	2.356*** (.100)	-2.452*** (.111)	-0.081 (.220)
1996	0.173*** (.059)	2.655*** (.123)	-2.261*** (.112)	-0.541 (.272)
Constant	0.300** (.127)	-1.206*** (.268)	1.538*** (.256)	1.097** (.474)
N	3113	1597	1330	186
Pseudo R^2	.012	.502	.455	.052

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.17
Vote Choice
Split Sample by Election Condition and Preference, Year Dummies

Close Years

	Whole Sample	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Media Exposure	0.020 (.013)	0.012 (.022)	-0.005 (.030)	0.134** (.053)
Intensity	-0.127*** (.024)	-0.322*** (.049)	0.095 (.062)	N/A
Education	0.019 (.015)	-0.017 (.024)	-0.017 (.034)	-0.056 (.057)
Age	0.001 (.001)	0.000 (.002)	-0.001 (.003)	0.001 (.006)
Income	0.003 (.004)	-0.013* (.008)	-0.006 (.010)	0.031* (.018)
Efficacy	-0.078*** (.023)	-0.104*** (.038)	0.006 (.053)	-0.299*** (.086)
1976	-0.058 (.064)	1.628*** (.098)	-2.539*** (.147)	-1.091*** (.239)
1980	0.072 (.075)	0.217* (.112)	0.028 (.183)	-0.280 (.282)
2000	-0.121* (.066)	-0.526*** (.114)	-0.162 (.150)	-0.357 (.259)
Constant	0.243** (.121)	0.172 (.209)	1.467*** (.282)	0.575 (.439)
N	3422	1823	1325	274
Pseudo R^2	.014	.307	.488	.124

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

The second type of effect that polls may have on preferences is to affect the intensity of those preferences, rather than the actual vote choice. A respondent may be reassured by a poll that his original preference is correct, or even weaken his attachment to a candidate, without necessarily changing his

Table 2.18
The Impact of Poll Movement on Intensity of Candidate Preference[24]

Variable	Whole Sample	Prefer Leader	Prefer Trailer	Don't Know/Other
Movement	-0.064 (.152)	0.029 (.174)	0.039 (.226)	0.062 (.347)
Media Exposure	-0.529** (.209)	0.894*** (.235)	-1.851*** (.311)	0.222 (.520)
Movement * Media Exposure	0.026 (.038)	0.066 (.044)	-0.012 (.057)	0.011 (.084)
PID	12.753*** (.161)	4.655*** (.230)	5.522*** (.360)	5.144*** (.531)
Education	-0.895*** (.233)	0.151 (.268)	-0.813** (.335)	-0.600 (.595)
Age	0.131*** (.021)	0.165 (.024)	0.125*** (.031)	0.117** (.053)
Income	0.259*** (.065)	0.055 (.074)	0.237** (.099)	-0.087 (.155)
Efficacy	0.479 (.349)	0.051 (.392)	-0.018 (.524)	1.203 (.984)
1972	11.532*** (1.446)	18.175*** (1.507)	4.922** (2.257)	N/A
1980	N/A	6.098*** (2.089)	12.360*** (2.514)	-8.131 (7.501)
1984	3.878*** (1.446)	9.978*** (1.631)	11.232*** (2.235)	-8.139 (7.555)
1988	-1.070 (1.423)	3.290 (2.001)	15.693*** (2.594)	-12.495 (7.580)
1992	-7.631*** (1.714)	4.633*** (1.372)	3.639* (1.933)	-17.274** (7.461)
1996	-9.133*** (1.730)	N/A	N/A	-14.713* (7.561)
2000	-4.964*** (1.554)	9.970*** (1.917)	4.464* (2.402)	-16.622** (7.561)
Constant	-31.902*** (1.860)	0.222 (2.281)	-43.780*** (3.097)	-1.640 (7.879)
N	10529	5297	3741	1163
Adjusted R2	.387	.115	.093	.093

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

[24] This OLS regression analysis was performed with Stata version 7 using pooled American National Election Studies data from 1972 and 1980 to 2000.

behavior on election day. The effects of exposure to information about the state of the race on the intensity of candidate preference are very similar for the pooled analysis of all respondents. Individuals who initially preferred the leading candidate strengthen their support for that candidate the more they are exposed to media coverage of the campaign (See Table 2.18). Individuals who prefer the trailing candidate in the initial interview increase their attachment to that candidate the greater their exposure to information about the state of the race, and again the impact on those who prefer the trailing candidate is stronger than the impact on those who prefer the leading candidate, which is reflected in the overall negative effect on all respondent's net evaluations of the leading candidate over the trailing candidate. Finally, those who had not reached a decision by the time of the pre-interview were again unmoved by this information.

As in the analysis of vote choice, there are some differences in the effects on respondents' evaluations of the candidates when respondents are grouped by party affiliation instead of pre-existing preference (See Table 2.19). In this case, only Democrats are moved by media exposure, tending to shift in the direction of the trailing candidate. For the first time in this analysis, however, the momentum variable and the interaction term between media exposure and momentum take on significant meaning, but again in a polarizing fashion. The negative effect of media exposure on Democrats' evaluations of the leading candidate are further enhanced when the candidate is gaining momentum. In other words, not only do

Table 2.19
The Impact of Poll Movement on Intensity of Candidate Preference by Party Affiliation

Variable	Whole Sample	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Movement	-0.019 (.192)	0.288 (.228)	-0.510** (.236)	0.640 (.449)
Media Exposure	-0.458 (.263)	-1.311*** (.311)	0.334 (.323)	1.003 (.649)
Movement * Media Exposure	0.049 (.048)	-0.165*** (.058)	0.209*** (.058)	0.054 (.125)
Intensity	-1.967*** (.441)	-3.417*** (.655)	3.020*** (.659)	N/A
Education	-0.626** (.294)	-1.351*** (.345)	-0.147 (.366)	-0.466 (.742)
Age	0.182*** (.027)	0.180*** (.032)	0.086*** (.033)	0.165** (.069)
Income	0.351*** (.082)	0.300*** (.096)	0.289*** (.105)	-0.110 (.192)
Efficacy	1.794*** (.442)	0.532 (.513)	0.531 (.558)	0.335 (1.084)
1972	12.229*** (.182)	9.188*** (2.081)	15.465*** (.240)	14.527*** (4.107)
1984	4.509** (.183)	-0.888 (2.107)	8.440*** (2.340)	9.209** (4.268)
1988	0.483 (1.796)	-1.671 (2.098)	0.864 (2.227)	-1.375 (4.198)
1992	0.264 (2.161)	40.940*** (2.501)	-55.798*** (.274)	6.374 (5.129)
1996	-0.843 (2.179)	41.383*** (2.50)	-59.309*** (.275)	3.649 (5.426)
2000	-4.203** (1.961)	-14.443*** (2.259)	7.356*** (2.517)	-3.995 (4.603)
Constant	-1.242 (2.358)	-8.612*** (2.984)	17.159*** (3.102)	2.188 (5.128)
N	10529	5282	4126	1121
Adjusted R2	.023	.283	.450	.031

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Democrats tend to increase their support for the underdog, but they tend to do so more strongly the worse the campaign is going for that candidate. Republicans react in a different manner. While momentum in the campaign for one candidate actually seems to push Republicans in the opposite direction, the more exposure they have to media coverage of that momentum the more this effect is lessened. Thus, if the leading candidate is gaining steam during the campaign, we would expect Republicans to begin to increase their doubts about that candidate, yet the more they are paying attention to the campaign, and thus the more likely they are to be aware of that momentum, the more slowly they move away from him.

An examination of individual elections again reveals a limited, yet polarizing effect of exposure to information about the state of the race (See Tables 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, and 2.23). When affected (1972, 1980, and 2000), those who prefer the leading candidate always strengthen their attachment to that candidate. At the same time, when those who prefer the trailing candidate are affected (1972, 1984, 1988, 1996, and 2000), they become more firmly attached to their candidate. Yet again, undecided voters do not react at all to this information.

Table 2.20
Intensity by Year, by Pre-Election Preference

Whole Sample

Variables	1972	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-0.367 (.486)	0.310 (.653)	-1.479*** (.545)	-1.564*** (.549)	0.067 (.499)	-0.977* (.511)	-0.070 (.640)
PID	11.207*** (.456)	10.442*** (.520)	12.546*** (.406)	11.499*** (.392)	12.729*** (.379)	13.080*** (.381)	15.862*** (.479)
Education	-2.182*** (.617)	0.347 (.687)	-0.728 (.608)	-1.605*** (.570)	0.971* (.534)	-0.433 (.564)	-2.048*** (.715)
Age	0.314*** (.056)	0.219*** (.066)	0.203*** (.055)	0.154*** (.052)	-0.297 (.048)	-0.008 (.052)	0.112* (.066)
Income	0.800*** (.201)	0.826*** (.186)	0.730*** (.155)	0.593*** (.150)	-0.644*** (.138)	-0.626*** (.146)	0.754*** (.293)
Efficacy	1.166 (.754)	-5.530*** (1.260)	0.959 (.773)	1.971* (1.034)	1.483 (.957)	0.588 (.828)	1.416 (1.346)
Constant	- 27.103*** (4.056)	- 38.878*** (4.932)	- 35.028*** (3.863)	- 31.465*** (3.577)	- 32.871*** (3.772)	- 23.049*** (4.139)	- 45.809*** (4.661)
N	1920	1058	1586	1529	1833	1351	1253
Adjusted R^2	.270	.334	.402	.388	.406	.505	.480

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.21
Intensity by Year, by Pre-Election Preference

Prefer Leader

Variables	1972	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	1.162** (.475)	1.662* (.881)	0.374 (.549)	-0.263 (.704)	0.856 (.594)	0.457 (.541)	1.788** (.906)
PID	3.876*** (.475)	4.426*** (.794)	4.908*** (.482)	4.666*** (.653)	4.543*** (.632)	4.176*** (.564)	7.181*** (1.101)
Education	-0.151 (.606)	0.593 (.926)	-0.638 (.646)	-0.017 (.746)	1.732*** (.633)	-0.499 (.604)	-0.579 (1.056)
Age	0.251*** (.056)	0.122 (.086)	0.234*** (.057)	0.192*** (.066)	0.092 (.057)	0.084 (.057)	0.213** (.095)
Income	0.513*** (.191)	0.787*** (.265)	0.309* (.166)	0.038 (.196)	-0.623*** (.155)	-0.338** (.147)	0.439 (.402)
Efficacy	-0.010 (.737)	-1.103 (1.940)	0.604 (.792)	2.370* (1.374)	2.145* (1.119)	-1.610* (.864)	-1.854 (1.943)
Constant	12.952*** (4.096)	-4.392 (6.937)	6.792 (4.252)	3.485 (4.847)	5.715 (4.693)	17.760*** (4.725)	-1.197 (6.844)
N	1162	416	848	720	898	753	501
Adjusted R^2	.090	.122	.146	.091	.089	.098	.140

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.22
Intensity by Year, by Pre-Election Preference

Prefer Trailer

Variables	1972	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-2.053*** (.780)	-1.272 (.964)	-3.506*** (.829)	-1.343* (.802)	0.028 (.801)	-2.002** (.874)	-1.729** (.772)
PID	4.538*** (1.289)	3.663*** (.100)	3.990*** (1.024)	5.542*** (.843)	4.954*** (.789)	8.433*** (1.085)	7.010*** (.843)
Education	-2.929*** (1.025)	0.924 (.966)	-0.842 (.851)	-2.068*** (.802)	0.235 (.822)	0.897 (.973)	-0.764 (.835)
Age	0.249*** (.097)	0.223** (.096)	0.106 (.084)	0.120 (.075)	-0.012 (.075)	-0.005 (.088)	0.087 (.078)
Income	0.101 (.359)	0.596** (.258)	0.175 (.227)	0.733*** (.213)	-0.313 (.231)	-0.703** (.287)	1.034*** (.370)
Efficacy	1.321 (1.269)	-3.744** (1.589)	0.580 (1.164)	0.771 (1.448)	-3.239** (1.518)	2.312 (1.469)	3.254** (1.622)
Constant	-36.248*** (.707)	-41.439*** (7.041)	-25.306*** (5.912)	-32.576*** (5.443)	-28.026*** (6.127)	-36.596*** (7.106)	-51.250*** (5.769)
N	503	404	602	634	586	421	591
Adjusted R^2	.071	.062	.054	.085	.085	.145	.126

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.23
Intensity by Year, by Pre-Election Preference

Don't Know

Variables	1972	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-7.832 (5.462)	0.913 (1.205)	-0.071 (1.435)	-1.126 (1.306)	1.113 (.939)	0.201 (1.519)	1.290 (1.733)
PID	6.757 (8.056)	4.733*** (1.207)	3.057** (1.456)	2.779** (1.325)	5.642*** (.971)	7.391*** (1.501)	7.282*** (1.800)
Education	0.539 (7.417)	-1.393 (1.334)	0.030 (1.814)	1.230 (1.497)	-1.360 (1.141)	1.690 (1.546)	-3.129 (1.912)
Age	-0.516 (.781)	0.197 (.124)	-0.049 (.154)	0.129 (.127)	0.119 (.097)	0.052 (.144)	0.277 (1.837)
Income	-2.727 (2.233)	0.210 (.339)	0.458 (.417)	0.153 (.371)	-0.515* (.285)	-0.701* (.400)	0.373 (.705)
Efficacy	5.736 (9.807)	1.038 (2.653)	-0.371 (2.213)	0.143 (2.707)	3.207* (1.927)	-0.613 (2.377)	2.800 (3.467)
Constant	46.593 (50.912)	-14.514 (9.629)	-1.769 (11.547)	-11.806 (8.441)	-18.353** (7.794)	-17.264 (11.393)	-28.270** (12.132)
N	15	223	122	164	340	147	152
Adjusted R^2	.124	.065	.002	.007	.114	.134	.087

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

The year by year analysis of intensity of preference by party affiliation introduces some interesting patterns (See Tables 2.24, 2.25, 2.26, and 2.27). Democrats move in the direction of the underdog in all of the elections in which a Republican was in the lead except 1980 (1972, 1984, 1988, 2000). Republicans were most affected when a Republican was in the lead in a close election, increasing their support for the leader in 1980 and 2000. They also increased their support for the underdog twice, both in elections with a clear leader

throughout (1984 and 1996), even though in the former case this meant moving away from a popular Republican incumbent.

Table 2.24
Intensity by Year, By Party Affiliation

Whole Sample

Variables	1972	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-0.400 (.557)	0.924 (.766)	-1.708** (.689)	-2.064*** (.688)	1.697*** (.637)	-1.328* (.704)	-0.359 (.878)
Intensity	-3.108*** (1.104)	-3.996*** (1.249)	-4.523*** (1.119)	-1.164 (1.056)	0.444 (.992)	-0.069 (1.164)	-3.096** (1.384)
Education	-1.232* (.705)	1.705** (.800)	-0.121 (.767)	-0.830 (.713)	-0.254 (.682)	-2.118*** (.770)	-1.528 (.978)
Age	0.490*** (.066)	0.307*** (.078)	0.281*** (.071)	0.207*** (.065)	-0.020	-0.555 (.072)	0.097 (.091)
Income	1.234*** (.229)	1.165*** (.217)	1.340*** (.194)	1.106*** (.186)	-1.342*** (.174)	-1.501*** (.198)	2.152*** (.396)
Efficacy	2.746*** (.860)	-8.421*** (1.468)	2.493** (.981)	5.451*** (1.301)	1.361 (1.223)	2.132* (1.137)	3.145* (1.851)
Constant	-9.819** (4.743)	-17.112*** (5.838)	-7.895 (4.956)	-13.601*** (4.594)	19.404*** (1.223)	40.902*** (5.332)	-10.427 (6.370)
N	1920	1058	1586	1529	1833	1351	1253
Adjusted R^2	.044	.087	.049	.042	.039	.069	.027

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.25
Intensity by Year, By Party Affiliation

Democrats

Variables	1972	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	-1.251* (.754)	-1.413 (.938)	2.349*** (.851)	3.210*** (.856)	0.458 (.688)	0.143 (.610)	-1.491* (.904)
Intensity	-12.066*** (2.04)	-10.308*** (1.977)	-8.113*** (1.841)	-6.798*** (1.618)	8.886*** (1.322)	9.716*** (1.215)	-11.660*** (1.686)
Education	-5.610*** (.977)	0.670 (.967)	-1.410 (.930)	-2.119** (.869)	2.016*** (.751)	0.232 (.673)	-2.957*** (.971)
Age	0.433*** (.091)	0.331*** (.096)	0.108 (.090)	0.204** (.083)	0.053 (.067)	0.058 (.063)	0.044 (.094)
Income	1.071*** (.318)	0.453* (.258)	0.613*** (.238)	0.872*** (.225)	-0.611*** (.190)	-0.437*** (.163)	0.698 (.435)
Efficacy	2.109* (1.160)	-4.283** (1.711)	-0.149 (1.226)	0.143 (1.571)	3.204** (1.287)	-0.535 (.971)	4.994*** (1.866)
Constant	10.581 (7.542)	-5.847 (7.962)	4.822 (6.679)	-2.832 (6.461)	2.219 (5.370)	13.841*** (5.025)	-3.161 (7.086)
N	969	543	772	728	925	714	631
Adjusted R^2	.088	.079	.040	.057	.073	.101	.089

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.26
Intensity by Year, By Party Affiliation

Republicans

Variables	1972	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	0.716 (.645)	1.945** (.999)	-1.301* (.755)	0.246 (.776)	0.907 (.815)	-2.528*** (.962)	2.230** (.990)
Intensity	8.341*** (1.614)	7.894*** (2.124)	7.477*** (1.449)	9.380*** (1.428)	-10.058*** (1.573)	-15.408*** (1.918)	14.142*** (1.890)
Education	1.353* (.813)	0.234 (1.111)	1.250 (.885)	-0.278 (.815)	-0.592 (.870)	-0.834 (1.060)	-0.720 (1.133)
Age	0.205*** (.077)	0.057 (.103)	0.314*** (.075)	0.077 (.071)	-0.074 (.078)	-0.011 (.097)	0.080 (.105)
Income	0.623** (.267)	1.247*** (.302)	0.815*** (.222)	0.173 (.219)	-0.377 (.239)	-0.861*** (.298)	0.630 (.429)
Efficacy	0.311 (1.009)	-7.547*** (2.112)	2.251** (1.084)	2.903* (1.562)	-1.062 (1.615)	2.938* (1.573)	-1.980 (2.168)
Constant	7.137 (5.849)	-4.535 (8.491)	-4.801 (5.818)	4.028 (5.549)	7.112 (6.075)	26.083*** (7.962)	2.643 (7.951)
N	714	383	655	652	700	527	496
Adjusted R^2	.070	.117	.097	.078	.064	.149	.124

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.27
Intensity by Year, By Party Affiliation

Independents

Variables	1972	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Media Exposure	1.568 (1.457)	1.535 (2.206)	1.926 (1.556)	-0.369 (1.640)	1.674 (1.540)	0.815 (1.632)	-2.080 (2.211)
Intensity	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Education	0.598 (1.786)	0.154 (2.164)	-2.296 (1.639)	-3.910** (1.897)	1.434 (1.856)	-0.430 (1.832)	-1.867 (2.741)
Age	0.126 (.171)	0.432** (.207)	0.160 (.175)	0.026 (.167)	0.152 (.158)	-0.013 (1.73)	0.574** (.228)
Income	0.213 (.553)	0.914 (.582)	0.740* (.425)	0.630 (.458)	-1.276*** (.364)	-0.962** (.492)	0.711 (.984)
Efficacy	0.654 (2.266)	-4.363 (3.971)	-0.259 (2.123)	5.976** (2.968)	1.946 (3.071)	-1.430 (2.784)	-5.229 (4.508)
Constant	10.004 (10.500)	-18.684 (13.423)	8.065 (10.386)	7.337 (9.211)	7.715 (9.291)	25.322** (10.184)	-1.642 (13.446)
N	237	132	159	149	208	110	126
Adjusted R^2	.010	.046	.024	.017	.048	.027	.038

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

The last pair of analyses again looks at responses grouped by the type of election (See Tables 2.28, 2.29, 2.30, 2.31, 2.32, and 2.33). Blowout elections once again produce the now familiar polarization of those who prefer the leading candidate and those who prefer the trailing candidate. At the same time, Democrats again move away from the leading candidate in a blowout election, but Republicans and Independents are unaffected. In elections in which the frontrunner has a moderate lead, the only effect is on those who support the

trailing candidate, who once again move in favor of the underdog. The polarization of the electorate can also be found in close elections, both among respondents grouped by preference and by party affiliation. Undecideds and independents, however, are not moved.

Table 2.28
Intensity by Electoral Condition and Pre-Election Preference

Blowout Years

	Whole Sample	Prefer Leader	Prefer Trailer	Don't Know
Media Exposure	-0.842** (.360)	0.890** (.356)	-2.833*** (.561)	-0.957 (1.388)
LPID	11.869*** (.309)	4.289*** (.343)	4.343*** (.801)	3.253** (1.460)
Education	-1.652*** (.437)	-0.411 (.444)	-1.867*** (.656)	0.152 (1.773)
Age	0.255*** (.039)	0.235*** (.040)	0.172*** (.062)	-0.041 (.153)
Income	0.780*** (.126)	0.405*** (.129)	0.152 (.193)	0.282 (.415)
Efficacy	0.948* (.540)	0.254 (.541)	0.826 (.849)	-0.221 (2.155)
1972	7.345*** (1.396)	8.014*** (1.422)	-8.059*** (2.137)	4.981 (7.598)
1984	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped
Constant	-34.200*** (2.994)	6.171* (3.205)	-26.940*** (4.684)	1.149 (11.481)
Adjusted R^2	.328	.113	.061	.000
N	3506	2010	1105	137

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.29
Intensity by Electoral Condition
and Pre-Election Preference

Moderate Gap Years

	Whole Sample	Prefer Leader	Prefer Trailer	Don't Know
Media Exposure	-0.489 (.302)	0.448 (.353)	-1.162** (.479)	0.260 (.679)
LPID	12.636*** (.219)	4.541*** (.355)	6.049*** (.505)	5.261*** (.689)
Education	-0.314 (.324)	0.597 (.379)	-0.595 (.496)	-0.009 (.781)
Age	0.031 (.029)	0.114*** (.035)	0.056 (.045)	0.108 (.068)
Income	-0.263*** (.084)	-0.339*** (.095)	0.068 (.138)	-0.384** (.197)
Efficacy	1.237** (.545)	0.597 (.632)	-0.130 (.858)	1.231 (1.305)
1992	-6.384*** (1.090)	-1.843 (1.289)	-11.568*** (1.718)	-5.238** (2.591)
1996	-7.011*** (1.210)	-5.900*** (1.375)	-14.475*** (1.964)	-2.492 (3.111)
Constant	-24.980*** (2.195)	11.839*** (2.796)	-26.526*** (3.387)	-12.202** (5.135)
Adjusted R^2	.421	.089	.122	.090
N	4713	2371	1641	651

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.30
Intensity by Electoral Condition
and Pre-Election Preference

Close Years

	Whole Sample	Prefer Leader	Prefer Trailer	Don't Know
Media Exposure	0.085 (.463)	1.695*** (.632)	-1.422** (.605)	0.982 (.982)
LPID	13.673*** (.355)	5.600*** (.636)	5.575*** (.649)	5.626*** (1.004)
Education	-0.899* (.500)	-0.002 (.704)	0.201 (.628)	-1.917* (1.078)
Age	0.151*** (.047)	0.171*** (.065)	0.139** (.061)	0.213** (.102)
Income	0.840*** (.161)	0.730*** (.225)	0.761*** (.211)	0.263 (.310)
Efficacy	-1.591* (.918)	-1.502 (1.342)	-0.310 (1.129)	1.633 (2.067)
1976	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped
1980	-1.118 (2.063)	-10.400*** (3.039)	4.812* (2.551)	5.919 (4.301)
2000	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped
Constant	-42.045*** (3.577)	2.719 (5.038)	-48.562*** (4.656)	-22.746*** (.785)
Adjusted R^2	.412	.137	.110	.091
N	2311	917	995	375

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.31
Split Sample by Election Condition and Preference, Year Dummies

Blowout Years

	Whole Sample	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Media Exposure	-1.020** (.429)	-1.823*** (.563)	0.011 (.483)	1.628 (1.065)
Intensity	-3.741*** (.788)	-10.568*** (1.391)	7.864*** (1.081)	N/A
Education	-0.845 (.518)	-3.866*** (.684)	1.219** (.594)	-0.515 (1.243)
Age	0.391*** (.048)	0.293*** (.064)	0.240*** (.053)	0.151 (.124)
Income	1.302*** (.149)	0.819*** (.196)	0.715*** (.172)	0.434 (.356)
Efficacy	2.526*** (.642)	1.136 (.844)	0.969 (.731)	0.505 (1.590)
1984	-7.757*** (.166)	-7.832*** (2.119)	-7.586*** (1.879)	-6.174 (4.002)
Constant	-5.113 (3.380)	12.920*** (4.995)	5.628 (4.129)	10.564 (7.483)
N	3506	1741	1369	396
Adjusted R^2	.050	.085	.089	.005

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.32
Split Sample by Election Condition and Preference, Year Dummies

Moderate Gap Years

	Whole Sample	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Media Exposure	-0.339 (.396)	-0.562 (.428)	-0.413 (.508)	1.088 (.942)
Intensity	-0.211 (.625)	4.582*** (.828)	-4.544*** (.973)	N/A
Education	-1.004** (.423)	0.220 (.456)	-0.708 (.543)	-0.539 (1.098)
Age	0.042 (.039)	0.103** (.043)	0.004 (.048)	0.053 (.098)
Income	-0.594*** (.109)	-0.105 (.115)	-0.322** (.150)	-0.743*** (.247)
Efficacy	2.915*** (.714)	0.972 (.752)	2.111** (.946)	2.257 (1.754)
1992	-0.862 (1.418)	46.221*** (1.545)	-58.636*** (1.811)	-1.923 (3.354)
1996	-0.308 (1.574)	46.177*** (1.688)	-59.637*** (2.016)	-1.640 (4.064)
Constant	14.239*** (2.284)	-29.260*** (3.374)	48.348*** (3.874)	14.895*** (5.793)
N	4713	2367	1879	467
Adjusted R^2	.012	.334	.430	.017

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 2.33
Split Sample by Election Condition and Preference, Year Dummies

Close Years

	Whole Sample	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Media Exposure	0.422 (.593)	-1.358** (.652)	2.095*** (.706)	-0.414 (1.547)
Intensity	-3.424*** (.952)	-11.429*** (1.285)	11.691*** (1.414)	N/A
Education	0.382 (.638)	-1.098 (.682)	-0.249 (.798)	-0.814 (1.677)
Age	0.194*** (.061)	0.165** (.067)	0.057 (.074)	0.506*** (.152)
Income	1.547*** (.204)	0.587*** (.224)	1.084*** (.251)	0.914* (.497)
Efficacy	-2.637** (1.178)	0.059 (1.257)	-4.670*** (1.511)	-5.718** (2.854)
1980	-8.177*** (2.626)	11.466*** (2.783)	-19.029*** (3.420)	-4.697 (6.316)
Constant	-9.841** (4.567)	-7.711 (5.449)	8.625 (6.014)	-6.900 (9.569)
N	2311	1174	879	258
Adjusted R^2	.039	.116	.122	.052

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

The experiments allowed for more precise control over the electoral conditions and the respondents exposure to information about the candidates and the state of the race. In the experiments, all participants were exposed to identical information about the state of the race, but the intensity of their preference for one candidate over the other, as well as their ability to differentiate between the candidates was systematically varied.[25] Several important patterns emerged from the examination of the results. First, there is no overall significant effect on the vote for the leading candidate as the poll results change (See Table 2.34).

[25] For a fuller discussion of the procedures used, see Appendix B.

Second, although there is no statistically significant effect, within each payscale, low information voters do seem to bandwagon with the leader when one is clearly indicated. Similarly, individuals with weak preferences also appear to bandwagon, although again the effects do not reach the level of statistical significance.

Table 2.34
The Effect of Polls on Candidate Preference*

	All	Voters	Non-Voters	N
Race Tied	65.7	67.9	57.7	245
5 Point Lead	67.8	67.8	67.7	245
15 Point Lead	66.9	72.2	55.3	245
Total	66.8	69.2	60.0	735
N	735	545	190	

*Figures represent percentage preferring the Plaid Party

Table 2.35
The Effect of Polls on Candidate Preference, By Payout

	All	.75 L, .25 T	.55 L, .45 T	.25 L, .75 T	N
Race Tied	65.7	81.6	81.0	32.9	245
5 Point Lead	67.8	82.5	88.9	33.3	245
15 Point Lead	66.9	79.3	85.5	35.0	245
Total	66.8	81.1	85.2	33.7	735
N	735	249	243	243	

Table 2.36
The Effect of Polls on Candidate Preference, By Information Level

	All	High Information	Low Information	N
Race Tied	65.7	65.0	66.4	245
5 Point Lead	67.8	65.3	70.2	245
15 Point Lead	66.9	62.6	71.3	245
Total	66.8	64.3	69.3	735
N	735	364	371	

Table 2.37
The Effect of Polls on Candidate Preference, By Experimental Condition

		Tied	5 Point Lead	15 Point Lead	N
.75 L, .25 T	High Information	91.1 N=45	80.5 N=41	80.0 N=40	126
	Low Information	71.4 N=42	84.6 N=39	78.6 N=42	123
.55 L, .45 T	High Information	85.7 N=35	94.9 N=39	87.8 N=41	115
	Low Information	77.3 N=44	83.3 N=42	83.3 N=42	128
.25 L, .75 T	High Information	17.5 N=40	22.0 N=41	21.4 N=42	123
	Low Information	48.7 N=39	44.2 N=43	50.0 N=38	120
N		245	245	245	735

Discussion

The results of this analysis indicate a marginal and polarizing effect of polls on the electorate's decisions about whom to vote for. Exposure to information about the state of the race seems to weakly reinforce pre-existing preferences over the course of the campaign. This is very consistent with the

theoretical expectations of the framework used in this study. Surprisingly, however, the least affected were those who could potentially gain the most by this information. Respondents who had not made up their minds by the time of the pre-election interview were completely unaffected by exposure to the polls.

The partisan effects did not follow a pattern that fits as neatly. During this period, Democrats were only moved by polls to reinforce their beliefs, following the general pattern found above. When their candidate was leading, exposure to that information tended to move them closer to the majority. When their candidate was trailing, they tended to react against the majority. Republicans, however, were only moved away from the leader, regardless of which party the leading candidate represented. They are the only group that ever acted in the exact opposite direction of the one predicted. The reasons for this are not clear, but may have something to do with a greater Republican distrust of government power. Since the strongest effects among Republicans were found in uncompetitive elections, they could represent a tendency to doubt anyone given too much credit by the rest of the electorate, even when that person is the standard bearer of their own party.

In general, the strongest effects were found in blowout elections, when the message that one candidate is expected to win should be the most strongly communicated. This was true, for almost all respondents. The only exception was among Independents. The only time that Independents seemed to react to media exposure at all was in close elections, when they moved marginally in

favor of the leading candidate. It is ironic that polls should have no effect on the group with the least prior attachments, except in the case when that information is the most muddled, and perhaps even meaningless.

The results are very similar when the intensity of candidate preference is measured. Again, there is an overall marginally polarizing effect on the strength of support for the two candidates, with respondents moving closer to their most preferred candidate with greater media exposure. For the party-scaled equations, the only meaningful effects occurred in elections when the Republican candidate was in the lead. This may be purely coincidence, since Republicans were more likely to be the leading candidate during the period studied. It may also suggest that Republicans were in general more favorably inclined toward their party's presidents than Democrats were toward Democratic presidents. One important difference between the vote choice and intensity of preference models is that Independents, while mildly affected during close elections in terms of their decision about whom to vote for, are unaffected in their net evaluations of the candidates. This suggests that whatever effect exists is purely a surface change, an indecisive voter making a decision she is not truly certain about. This would appear to be consistent with polls serving as a useful shortcut, rather than with persuasion by facts about the candidates positions on issues or character.

The experiments, of course, hint at some role for both uncertainty and ambiguity in the ability of polls to affect voters. Neither would be particularly surprising. In fact, it is hard to believe that participants with little information or

with weak preferences were not more likely to seek out polls as a solution to their dilemma.

Overall, these results point to a surprisingly small, and in many cases non-existent, impact of polls on the preferences and voting decisions of citizens. The marginal effects which can be found indicate that polls do more to reassure people who have already decided than to persuade those who have yet to decide. This is hopefully an indication that citizens take their decisions about whom to vote for somewhat seriously. Rather than relying on an easily accessible and increasingly prevalent shortcut which lets them know how the majority of their peers are planning to vote, voters are most often ignoring this information. Of course, this analysis itself says little about what, besides party identification, actually is driving these decisions. It does, however, reassure us that voters are not merely accepting what is popular as a substitute for what is best in politics.

Chapter 3

Tracking polls, of course, do more than simply indicate which candidate is more popular among the electorate at a given moment during the campaign. They also provide predictions about what is going to happen on election day itself. In fact, most pollsters, when attempting the gauge the popularity of the major party candidates in a presidential election ask respondents not which candidate they prefer, but whom they would vote for if the election were held on that day. If the polls provide a prediction about the likely outcome of the election, and if those predictions are viewed as relatively accurate, it is not unreasonable to assume that that information could affect the chances of an individual showing up at the voting booth. After all, if an election is predicted to be a landslide, individuals with better things to do on the day of the election could very possibly decide that voting would be a waste of their time. Either their favorite candidate is a lock to move into the White House the following January, or he is doomed to go down in defeat. In either case, no single vote is going to change the outcome. It is not difficult to imagine citizens who would be susceptible to this type of reasoning.

People do still show up to vote, obviously, and some supporters of the losing candidate are always surprised with the way the election turned out, even when their candidate had been trailing badly in the polls during the entire campaign. There are good reasons to believe that people vote for reasons other than just to affect the outcome of elections (Riker and Ordeshook 1986), which would explain a very large portion of turnout in uninteresting elections. However, individuals may still be reacting to the polls, but, as we have seen before, incorporating that information in different ways. Some

evidence we have already examined is instructive in this regard. In 1964, 1972, and 1984, election years in which it should have been obvious to anyone paying attention to the campaigns that the incumbent president was an overwhelming favorite, between one-fifth and one-third of the challenger's supporters still believed that the incumbent would be defeated (See Table 1.3). Clearly, these individuals were interpreting the coverage of the campaign differently than were the rest of the audience.

Previous Work on Closeness of the Race and Turnout

The idea that polls could affect turnout is not a new one. Anthony Downs' (1957) analysis of the rational voter model originally included three major components: the probability that an individual's vote will change the outcome of the election, the relative benefits to the individual of a victory by his preferred candidate, and the costs associated with becoming informed about the choices in the election and actually voting.[26] Since in most elections, the chance that an individual vote will change the outcome of an election is infinitesimal, he expected that few people would show up to vote at all, unless they did so out of fear that no one would come, thus disrupting the democratic process. An implication of his theory, however, is that the closer a given election is, the more likely an individual will be to vote, since the closer a race becomes, the greater the chances of affecting the outcome . Downs' work was continued by Riker and Ordeshook (1968), who added to the Downsian model the benefits that an individual receives from performing her civic duties by participating in the political process. This duty term is

[26] Down's equation is generally represented as R = P*B – C.

often credited with the surprisingly large turnout that actually occurs, despite Downs' original and more pessimistic model.

Subsequent authors have focused on the relationship between closeness of the race and turnout. Skeptics of the Downsian model have argued that the relationship between closeness and turnout is illusory. Some have posited that increases in turnout in close elections, rather than resulting from individual level calculations of the probability of affecting the outcome of the race, are instead driven by increased efforts on the part of elites to mobilize voters in competitive districts, where differential rates of participation can be decisive (Key 1949, Alrdrich 1993). Others, such as Virginia Gray (1976), argue that the relationship is actually an artifact of the data, and that time-series analysis of aggregate data do not show any significant relationship between the two, or that the relationship disappears when individual characteristics such as attention to the race are controlled for (Wald 1985). Additionally, alternative theories have also been suggested, such as the minimax regret model, which holds that voters show up to prevent their least favored outcome, even when it seems extremely unlikely (Ferejohn and Fiorina 1975). Subsequent studies, however, have found empirical evidence that citizens do show up at the polls in larger numbers when the race is close, even controlling for increased efforts by parties and candidates (Fiorina 1976, Cox and Munger 1989).

Problems with Previous Analyses

Although there are good theoretical reasons to believe that individuals should value their own vote more highly the closer an election is expected to be, the work done

so far examining this question suffers from several shortcomings. First and foremost, the tendency of these authors to measure the closeness of the race in terms of either the difference in percentage of the actual vote received or the difference in raw vote total is conceptually and operationally questionable.[27] It is conceptually questionable because it uses information which is only available after the election to model a decision made on election day. That information is simply not known to voters before election day. It is operationally problematic because, although these numbers are likely correlated with pre-election expectations, they are obviously not as accurate as those expectations themselves. If measures of actual expectations and the information available to potential voters on election day are available, it only makes sense to use them, rather than an imperfect proxy. The vote count variable is particularly problematic. Although it does provide the benefit of allowing for differences between races based on the relative number of voters, it is information which very few voters should be expected to know.[28] They may well realize that more people will vote for the president than for their governor, but are unlikely, even if pressed, to be able to accurately estimate the difference. The expectations about the race, and even the results of past races, are almost exclusively presented to media consumers in terms of poll percentages. It is therefore

[27] For examples and a defense of the raw vote count over percentage difference, see Cox and Munger (1989) and Cox (1988).

[28] Although I know of no study that has attempted to measure voter knowledge about the number of votes expected to be cast in any given election, a study of respondents' ability to estimate minority populations may be illuminating in this regard. Nadeau, Niemi, and Levine (1993) found that most respondents had great difficulty in determining the percentage of the population that was African American. In fact, over 50% of the respondents believed that African Americans made up over 30% of the population (more than twice the actual percentage), while almost 15% of the sample believed that this racial minority was actually a majority of the population. Obviously, this is not directly related to voting, but if it is any indication of the numerical abilities of the general population, it casts doubt on operationalizations of closeness that rely on very specific numerical information.

reasonable to assume that any rational calculations about the impact of an individual vote should be couched in the same units that the information is presented to them. If this is the case, it provides another reason that turnout would be higher than Downs expected, since a difference of 2 percent in an opinion poll does not sound nearly as daunting to potential voters as the realization that that may mean a vote count difference of up to two million votes, especially if the press are responsible and let consumers know that such a race is too close to call.

An additional problem with the literature on closeness and turnout is that it assumes that all voters react to the information in the same way. It ignores the fact that voters may process information about the closeness of the race in different, yet predictable ways. There are two very different reasons to expect that an individual's preference in the race may change the way that she reacts to information about the candidates' relative popularity. The first again draws on information from the information processing literature. As already discussed, cognitive psychology argues that the impact of any new piece of information on an individual's opinion or expectations depends on the information which that individual already has, as well as their beliefs about what should be the case. In other words, individuals who prefer the leading candidate should be much more likely to accept information that indicates that that candidate is winning. Independent confirmation that what we want to be true is actually true is rarely difficult to accept. On the other hand, individuals who want the trailing candidate to win will be much more likely to resist such information. New information which contradicts our hopes and expectations about an election is much more likely to be

dismissed, or at the least to be viewed much more critically. The legitimacy of the polls themselves may well be questioned, or their importance diminished, perhaps under the belief that, as people learn more about the challenging candidate, they will come around to the proper viewpoint.

Even if this is true, of course, it does not mean that these individuals will start with an optimistic outlook. They could believe from the start that their favorite candidate is likely to lose. This, however, does not seem to be the case. As the false consensus theory posits, people are much more likely to overestimate support for their views among the general population. If a voter has thought about the race and come to a firm conclusion about which candidate is better, then surely other reasonable people should be able to reach the same conclusion. Therefore, lacking any evidence to the contrary, we would expect that most people would predict that their favorite candidate will win, regardless of which candidate that is. In fact, Brown (1982) found exactly this in an analysis of voters' predictions about the outcome of presidential elections. This is also consistent with the predictions of respondents in the ANES survey.

We would expect, therefore, that the impact of the polls on potential voters would differ depending on which candidate they prefer. That difference should only increase, however, during the campaign, because there is always a political actor with an incentive to try to provide evidence that is contrary to the results of the polls. The best examples of this come from the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections. In both of those elections, it became increasingly clear as election day neared that Bill Clinton would be victorious over his Republican opponent. Theoretically, George H. W. Bush and Bob Dole could

have chosen to concede at some point prior to the actual election, yet understandably neither chose to do so. Both candidates remained publicly optimistic about their chances of victory. To do otherwise would be unfathomable for someone who had devoted as much time and effort over the previous year, if not over the course of their entire career, in an effort to win (or keep) the presidency. If a candidate is not ready to throw in the towel, yet is constantly faced with public opinion polls predicting his defeat in November, there is an obvious strategy which that candidate can pursue: attack the polls themselves. In fact, both Bush and Dole chose to attack the polls late in the campaign, urging their supporters to ignore the results and promising that the pollsters would be proven wrong by the voters on election day. For supporters of these candidates, or for supporters of any underdog, statements by the candidate calling into the question the evidence that the campaign is not going well can serve as a lifeline. These voters can grab hold of and lend more weight to this information than the information which they are already predisposed to resist. In fact, individuals do seem to engage in just such reasoning, looking for potentially obscure, but more reassuring information and using it to resist information which they do not want to be true (Zaller 1992).

Expectations

The effect of polls on voters, therefore, should follow three very distinct patterns. Most citizens who favor one of the two major party candidates should begin the election cycle with an optimistic outlook, expecting that their most preferred candidate should also be the favorite of the majority of the population. As information about the actual

state of the race begins to trickle in, the effect of that information should begin to diverge. Those who favor the candidate in the lead should readily accept this information. Since the candidate in the lead should be no less likely to be optimistic in his predictions as the candidate who is trailing, information from the campaign itself should only further reinforce the original expectation of a positive outcome on election day. These individuals should therefore become less and less likely over the course of the campaign to believe that the race will be close, and that their votes will subsequently be less needed to ensure that victory.

Individuals who have no preference entering the campaign may have no predisposition to predict a victory for either candidate. They will also, however, not have any reason to resist the information gleaned from public opinion polls. If the polls show one candidate consistently leading by a wide margin, these individuals should be very likely to accept that as the truth. They also, therefore, should become less likely to believe that their vote would matter as the campaign goes on.

The reactions of supporters of the underdog, however, should be vastly different. Since they begin the campaign with an expectation that their favorite candidate should win, they will resist information to the contrary. With reassuring messages coming from the candidate, the incentive and perhaps even the ability to resist contrary information will only increase. However, resisting such information does not mean completely ignoring it. As more and more evidence begins to accumulate over the course of the campaign that election day will not end well for them, it would be hard to avoid beginning to doubt their optimistic expectations. The transition from great confidence in

the outcome to despair, however, is unlikely to be a quick or a smooth one. It is much more reasonable to assume that such supporters will first begin to suspect that their candidate will not win by much, and then perhaps that they may lose, but clearly in a closer race than the polls are predicting. Only when the evidence is overwhelming and consistent in the long term would we expect that these individuals would change their expectations entirely, predicting that their favored candidate has no chance to win. Ironically, therefore, supporters of the trailing candidate should generally come to believe that their votes are even more important over the course of the campaign.

If an individual's evaluation of the importance of his vote does vary with his perception of how close the race is going to be, then, we should see that polls could lead to opposite pressures on individual citizens who are deciding whether or not to show up on election day. Since those who support the leading candidate or those who have no strong attachment to either candidate will believe the polls, and thus devalue the importance of their own votes, large margins in the polls should decrease the chances that these individuals will show up to vote. On the other hand, since supporters of the trailing candidate should only increase the importance which they place on their votes as their candidate falls further behind in the polls, they should actually become more likely to vote as the gap widens.

Put more formally, this theory leads to three hypotheses:

> *H4: As the margin in the polls increases, individuals who favor a candidate leading in the polls should become less likely to expect the race to be close, and thus less likely to vote.*

H5: As the margin in the polls increases, individuals who have not decided which candidate to support should become less likely to expect the race to be close, and thus less likely to vote.

H6: Individuals who favor the underdog in the polls should become more likely to expect the race to be close as the margin in the polls increases, and thus become more likely to vote.[29]

A comparison of the results of recent presidential elections with the predictions of the final Gallup poll before election day in each year provides some initial support for these hypotheses (See Table 3.1). In eight of the previous ten presidential elections, the final pre-election poll has overstated support for the leading candidate. In six of those cases, the difference was well within the margin of error of the poll, which could very well explain the discrepancies. The fact that error was in the same direction 80 percent of the time, however, raises the possibility that there is instead something systematic about the differences. If supporters of the trailing candidate have a greater incentive to vote than do supporters of the candidate in the lead, this could help to explain the consistency of these errors.

[29] The resistance which an individual has to the margin will likely vary with the intensity of their preference for that candidate, however, since major party presidential candidates in the United States are rarely separated by more than 15% of the vote, margins greater than that in the polls would likely begin to seriously erode hopes of victory among the trailing candidate's supporters.

Table 3.1
Actual Vs. Predicted Margin of Victory[30]

Year	Margin in Final Gallup Poll	Margin in Election
1964	35	22.5
1968	2	0.7
1972	26	23.2
1976	1	-2.1
1980	3	9.7
1984	18	18.2
1988	12	7.8
1992	8	5.6
1996	11	8
2000	2	-0.5

Methodology

To test these hypotheses, I use both the results of the experiments conducted in the fall of 2002, as well as an analysis of American National Elections Studies Data from 1972 to 2000. Just as with the analysis of candidate preference, such an analysis needs to incorporate multiple years to provide variation on the main independent variable. While the perception of the closeness of the race may vary from voter to voter within any one given election, the actual state of the race is constant for all respondents. These seven elections provide a wide range of poll results in the days leading up to the election.

When examining the impact of polling on candidate preference, it was possible to look directly at how the polls affected vote choice and intensity of preference, because in

[30] 1976 data represents margin for Gerald Ford, who was leading in the final Gallup poll, but lost in the election. 2000 data represents margin for George W. Bush, who was leading in the final Gallup poll, but lost the popular vote.

that case, one would expect that polls could affect the voters' perceptions of the candidates themselves, or at least the voter's confidence in their pre-existing preferences. The impact of polling on turnout, however, is an entirely different thing. Instead of polls providing information about which candidate the voter should prefer, polls are providing information about how likely it will be that any one person's vote will be important in determining the outcome of the election. Thus, it is actually the perceived closeness of the race that should have a direct effect on the probability that any given respondent would show up. In this model the polls themselves, and respondents' exposure to them, would instead drive the respondents' perceptions about how close the race actually is.

As with the previous chapter, there are two ways that the effects of polls can be measured. First, I will again use the respondents' exposure to media coverage of the campaign. The more that someone is paying attention to the campaign, the more likely they are to have been exposed to the true gap between the leading candidates. Obviously, however, the actual size of the lead of one candidate over the other must also play a role. Being exposed to the message that the race is too close to call should have a very different effect than being exposed to the message that one candidate is leading by a significant margin. Therefore, I also use the actual lead in the polls in the analysis. The question, however, is which lead to use. The race may vary over the course of the general election campaign in important ways. Additionally, there are methodological reasons for caution in choosing which gap to use. If, for example, I were to use the size of the lead immediately prior to election day, then all respondents within a given election year would have the exact same value in the analysis, which would make the effects of

polls indistinguishable from any other year-specific effects on voters. Just as importantly, however, there is a theoretical reason to try something else. Since the argument presented here is that polls affect potential voters' perceptions about how close the race is going to be, which in turn affect the decision to vote, it is clearly necessary to have some measure of the respondents' perceptions of the closeness of the race. Respondents are asked about their predictions for the upcoming presidential election during the pre-election interview, however, this question is asked over the two month period preceding the election. Therefore, the value assigned to each respondent for the difference between the leading and trailing candidates in the race is the gap in the latest poll to which the respondent could have been exposed at the time of the pre-election interview. For example, a respondent who was interviewed on October 6, 1996 would be assigned a value of 17, which was the size of Clinton's lead over Dole in the October 5th Gallup poll. Someone interviewed a week later would be assigned the value of the Clinton's lead in the October 12th poll, which was 13 points. Thus, the effect is measured by looking at the information which could have played a role in determining their perception of the closeness of the race on the one day for which that information is available.

The moderating effect of pre-election preferences is also examined in two different ways. As in the last chapter, potential voters may use their expressed preference between the two candidates as a filter. This would obviously be the most direct frame of reference for understanding information about the relative popularity of the two candidates. However, since those preferences may be transitory or even affected by the

polls directly, I also examine the same information using party affiliation to break the respondents into different groups.

The analysis of ANES data consists of two basic models. The first, a model of the perception of closeness of the race uses as the dependent variable the respondents' answer to a question asking them whether or not the race is going to be close. This probit analysis uses as independent variables the margin in the polls immediately prior to the date of interview, the respondent's self-reported media exposure, an interactive term between the two, as well as four other factors (education, age, income, and efficacy) which may be related to the respondent's experience and ability to make good predictions about the outcome of the race. This model is best represented as:

3. Pr (Prediction = Close Election) = $F(\beta_1 + \beta_2 * \text{poll movement} + \beta_3 * \text{media exposure} + \beta_4 * \text{poll movement} * \text{media exposure} + \beta_5 * \text{education} + \beta_6 * \text{age} + \beta_7 * \text{income} + \beta_8 * \text{efficacy})$[31]

   where F is the probit cumulative density function.

The model is first run with all respondents from all years pooled, thus requiring the addition of dummy variables for each year except 1972. It is then run on each individual year. In all cases, the model is run for the entire sample, for those who prefer the leading candidate, for those who prefer the trailing candidate, and for those who are undecided. Then it is run with respondents broken into Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

[31] For a complete description of variables, see Appendix.

The second model then analyzes the impact of perceiving the race to be close on the probability that a respondent will turnout to vote, while controlling for age, education, income, efficacy, partisan intensity, and length of residency, all of which are expected to be positively correlated with voting. This model is best represented as:

4. Pr (Voting) = $F(\beta_1 + \beta_2 * \text{close race} + \beta_3 * \text{age} + \beta_4 * \text{education} + \beta_5 * \text{efficacy} + \beta_6 * \text{income} + \beta_7 * \text{partisan intensity} + \beta_8 * \text{length of residency})$

   where F is the probit cumulative density function.

Experiments

In addition to analyzing the experiments described in Chapter 2, I also looked at the results of a separate set of experiments run during the same weekend, with a different set of participants.[32] These 91 individuals participated in a very simple experiment in which they were given a pre-treatment survey, exposed to one of three instruments, and then given a post-treatment survey. The pre-treatment survey asked for their party affiliation, as well as asking a series of demographic and otherwise unrelated questions, but did not ask specifically about their vote intention, as questions which were too explicitly tied to polling or voting behavior may have primed the participants to view the information that thy were given differently. After completing the pre-treatment survey, each participant was given a packet of articles to read. These articles, which were taken from the *Austin American Statesman*, covered a wide variety of subjects, from an NCAA hearing about the eligibility of a college swimmer to a group of

[32] For a complete description of the experiment, see the Appendix.

well-established novelists who had begun to write stories aimed at children. Those in the control group received only the packet of explicitly non-political articles. The second group received the same packet, but with the addition of a fictitious article about the Texas gubernatorial election campaign, which was then less than a month from completion. This article reported that the latest poll of likely voters indicated that incumbent Governor Rick Perry and his Democratic challenger Tony Sanchez were in a statistical tie, and that no one knew who would win. The third group received the same basic packet, but with the addition of a fictitious article stating that Perry had a large lead over Sanchez in the latest poll. When they finished reading the packets, the participants were then given the post-treatment survey, which asked them, among other unrelated questions, about their voting intentions and expectations about the race.

Results

The results of the survey analysis reveal a surprisingly small effect of polls and media exposure on the predictions of respondents. In the pooled analysis in which individuals were separated by their pre-election preferences, there was no impact of any of the key variables except for a statistically significant but extremely small negative effect of the interactive term on the perceived closeness of the race (See Table 3.2). In other words, as the gap between the two candidates grew and as respondents paid more attention to it, those who prefer the leading candidate moved very slightly toward expecting a landslide election. The

Table 3.2
The Impact of Polling Information on Perception of the Closeness of the Race
Dividing the Sample by Pre-Election Preferences

Variables	Whole Sample	Prefer Leader	Prefer Trailer	Don't Know
Poll Margin	0.004	0.005	0.005	-0.015
	(.004)	(.006)	(.007)	(.017)
Media Exposure	0.016	0.022	0.013	-0.028
	(.014)	(.021)	(.023)	(.042)
Poll Margin * Media Exposure	-0.001*	-0.003**	-0.001	0.001
	(.000)	(.001)	(.001)	(.003)
Education	0.034***	0.006	0.063***	0.050
	(.009)	(.013)	(.015)	(.034)
Age	0.001	0.000	0.003**	0.005*
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.003)
Income	-0.006**	-0.005	0.004	0.010
	(.003)	(.004)	(.004)	(.008)
Efficacy	-0.024*	-0.011	-0.000	0.043
	(.013)	(.019)	(.023)	(.055)
1976	1.398***	1.546***	0.900***	2.278***
	(.079)	(.113)	(.132)	(.527)
1980	1.465***	1.700***	0.973***	1.669***
	(.113)	(.170)	(.181)	(.510)
1984	0.414***	0.331***	0.381***	0.975***
	(.058)	(.082)	(.100)	(.352)
1988	1.023***	1.057***	0.759***	1.473***
	(.086)	(.124)	(.141)	(.446)
1992	1.312***	1.386***	1.048***	1.658***
	(.066)	(.093)	(.117)	(.383)
1996	1.684***	2.927***	0.429***	2.194***
	(.068)	(.144)	(.111)	(.392)
2000	1.461***	1.695***	1.041***	1.655***
	(.110)	(.164)	(.175)	(.515)
Constant	-0.480***	-0.653***	-0.379*	-1.022*
	(.120)	(.176)	(.196)	(.539)
N	11948	6027	4299	1183
Pseudo R^2	.157	.250	.067	.103

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 3.3
The Impact of Polling Information on Perception of the Closeness of the Race
Dividing the Sample by Party Affiliation

Variables	Whole Sample	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Poll Margin	0.004	-0.001	-0.000	0.031**
	(.004)	(.006)	(.007)	(.013)
Media Exposure	0.016	0.007	-0.005	0.075
	(.014)	(.020)	(.029)	(.046)
Poll Margin * Media Exposure	-0.001*	-0.000	-0.001	-0.006**
	(.000)	(.001)	(.001)	(.003)
Education	0.034***	0.045***	0.024	0.024
	(.009)	(.013)	(.015)	(.029)
Age	0.001	0.000	0.003**	-0.001
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.003)
Income	-0.006**	-0.006	-0.002	0.006
	(.003)	(.004)	(.004)	(.007)
Efficacy	-0.024*	0.004	-0.033	-0.059
	(.013)	(.019)	(.022)	(.041)
1976	1.398***	1.147***	1.740***	1.599***
	(.079)	(.109)	(.140)	(.231)
1980	1.465***	1.332***	1.594***	1.642***
	(.113)	(.159)	(.192)	(.333)
1984	0.414***	0.512***	0.282***	0.560***
	(.058)	(.082)	(.096)	(.178)
1988	1.023***	0.994***	0.989***	1.478***
	(.086)	(.123)	(.142)	(.264)
1992	1.312***	1.006***	1.712***	1.410***
	(.066)	(.092)	(.113)	(.194)
1996	1.684***	2.128***	1.434***	1.699***
	(.068)	(.120)	(.106)	(.215)
2000	1.461***	1.211***	1.751***	1.828***
	(.110)	(.156)	(.185)	(.339)
Constant	-0.480***	-0.316	-0.642***	-1.034***
	(.120)	(.172)	(.203)	(.350)
N	11948	6027	4554	1239
Pseudo R^2	.157	.250	.219	.134

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

substantive effect, however, is negligible. In fact, few of the variables in the analysis had any effect, except for the year dummy variables. The exceptions were that, for those who prefer the trailing candidate, education and age are positively correlated with expecting the race to be close. It would not be surprising if experience and knowledge help to dampen the false consensus effect.

In the partisan-scaled pooled analysis, the results again show very little effect (See Table 3.3). In fact, Democrats and Republicans were completely unmoved by the key independent variables. Counter intuitively, as the gap between the candidates widens, Independents become more likely to expect that the race will be close, although the interactive term again shows a weak, negative relationship with expecting a close race.

A closer look, in which the analysis is repeated for each election from 1972 to 2000, again shows only a sporadic relationship between the polls and voter expectations. When all respondents are considered as a whole, the interactive term is only significant in 1972, and then with an unexpected sign (See Table 3.4). Media exposure is also only significant in 1972, and in this case the impact is comparatively sizeable and in the expected direction. Since this election was never close, this is perhaps not surprising. On the other hand, the actual gap between the candidates has a positive effect on predicting a close race in both 1984 and 2000. If the polls moved in a linear fashion during either of those races, this could be construed as simply a time effect. So, for example, if the gap narrowed slightly over the course of the campaign, it could be that people interviewed earlier were more likely to expect a close race than those interviewed later. However,

this is clearly not the case, since in both years the poll results fluctuate over the course of the campaign, with each candidate gaining support at various points during the race.

For those who prefer the leading candidate, there is again almost no effect (See Table 3.5). In fact, only one of the three key independent variables, poll margin, has any effect, and then only in one election – 1976. Those who are undecided going into the campaign are also almost entirely unaffected (See Table 3.7). Again, there is only one significant effect for this group, a positive impact of the interactive term in 1996. Finally, those who prefer the trailing candidate have an almost identical set of results to the sample as a whole, suggesting that it is this group that is driving those results (See Table 3.6). The only difference is a positive and significant effect by the interactive term in 1984.

Table 3.4
The Impact of Polling Information on Perception of the Closeness of the Race in Each Election, from 1972 to 2000
Dividing the Sample by Pre-Election Preference

Whole Sample

Variables	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Poll Margin	-0.019 (.015)	-0.016 (.011)	0.001 (.029)	0.042* (.022)	-0.027 (.043)	-0.022 (.041)	-0.026 (.028)	0.030** (.015)
Media Exposure	-0.365** (.180)	-0.017 (.042)	0.032 (.032)	0.125 (.107)	0.065 (.083)	-0.055 (.166)	-0.147 (.145)	-0.025 (.030)
Poll Margin * Media Exposure	0.014** (.007)	0.003 (.003)	0.003 (.009)	-0.008 (.006)	-0.014 (.012)	0.001 (.012)	0.007 (.009)	-0.002 (.005)
Education	-0.036* (.019)	0.139*** (.033)	0.058* (.033)	-0.048** (.024)	0.026 (.025)	0.089*** (.025)	0.058* (.035)	0.151*** (.035)
Age	0.006*** (.002)	0.001 (.003)	-0.002 (.003)	0.001 (.002)	0.004* (.002)	0.004* (.002)	0.007** (.003)	0.008*** (.003)
Income	0.032*** (.006)	0.023*** (.008)	0.003 (.009)	0.031*** (.006)	-0.001 (.007)	0.016*** (.006)	0.007 (.009)	0.010 (.014)
Efficacy	0.062*** (.023)	0.106** (.049)	0.018 (.061)	0.029 (.029)	-0.064 (.045)	-0.001 (.044)	0.070 (.050)	0.086 (.063)
Constant	0.998** (.414)	0.219 (.236)	0.824*** (.236)	-0.149 (.398)	0.756** (.323)	0.612 (.605)	1.226** (.5060	-0.030 (.208)
N	2169	1243	1037	1564	1509	1824	1332	1270
Pseudo R^2	.025	.054	.009	.025	.015	.021	.013	.050

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 3.5
The Impact of Polling Information on Perception of the Closeness of the Race in Each Election, from 1972 to 2000
Dividing the Sample by Pre-Election Preference

Prefer Leader

Variables	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Poll Margin	-0.007 (.020)	-0.028* (.017)	0.052 (.045)	0.031 (.031)	-0.061 (.062)	0.023 (.056)	-0.001 (.071)	0.007 (.022)
Media Exposure	-0.390 (.239)	-0.019 (.062)	0.046 (.053)	0.078 (.152)	-0.014 (.116)	-0.016 (.215)	0.090 (.546)	0.020 (.047)
Poll Margin * Media Exposure	0.013 (.009)	0.005 (.004)	-0.015 (.014)	-0.007 (.009)	-0.008 (.016)	-0.003 (.015)	0.005 (.033)	0.005 (.007)
Education	0.072*** (.025)	0.112** (.047)	0.045 (.052)	-0.075** (.035)	0.009 (.036)	0.083** (.034)	0.068 (.105)	0.116** (.055)
Age	-0.003 (.002)	-0.001 (.004)	-0.007 (.005)	0.003 (.003)	0.004 (.003)	0.002 (.003)	0.010 (.010)	0.008 (.005)
Income	0.026*** (.008)	0.044*** (.013)	0.003 (.015)	0.027*** (.008)	0.003 (.009)	0.000 (.008)	0.006 (.022)	0.007 (.021)
Efficacy	-0.011 (.031)	0.104 (.076)	0.063 (.115)	0.027 (.042)	-0.103 (.066)	0.076 (.059)	-0.075 (.135)	0.120 (.096)
Constant	0.288 (.549)	0.229 (.347)	0.964*** (.0376)	-0.275 (.573)	0.980** (.463)	0.006 (.809)	1.295 (1.252)	-0.057 (.319)
N	1343	571	407	842	710	894	752	508
Pseudo R^2	.024	.077	.018	.026	.024	.015	.071	.005

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 3.6
The Impact of Polling Information on Perception of the Closeness of the Race in Each Election, from 1972 to 2000
Dividing the Sample by Pre-Election Preference

Prefer Trailer

Variables	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Poll Margin	-0.034 (.028)	-0.005 (.016)	-0.031 (.048)	0.070* (.039)	0.037 (.073)	-0.070 (.092)	-0.053 (.044)	0.052** (.025)
Media Exposure	-0.687* (.359)	-0.003 (.063)	0.069 (.054)	0.306 (.189)	0.130 (.136)	-0.144 (.382)	-0.224 (.212)	-0.036 (.046)
Poll Margin * Media Exposure	0.028** (.013)	0.000 (.005)	0.021 (.014)	0.018* (.011)	0.022 (.019)	0.006 (.027)	0.013 (.013)	-0.007 (.008)
Education	-0.030 (.036)	0.142*** (.049)	0.093* (.054)	-0.022 (.038)	0.045 (.041)	0.109** (.050)	0.134*** (.050)	0.194*** (.052)
Age	-0.005 (.003)	0.003 (.004)	0.002 (.005)	0.000 (.004)	0.006 (.004)	0.007 (.004)	0.011** (.004)	0.011** (.005)
Income	-0.025** (.013)	0.003 (.013)	-0.002 (.014)	-0.011 (.010)	0.005 (.010)	0.032** (.012)	0.027** (.014)	0.017 (.023)
Efficacy	-0.083* (.045)	0.124* (.071)	-0.068 (.088)	0.071 (.051)	0.091 (.072)	0.026 (.088)	-0.008 (.074)	-0.031 (.096)
Constant	1.705** (.766)	0.196 (.365)	-0.743* (.394)	-0.610 (.676)	0.015 (.524)	1.157 (1.369)	0.029 (.789)	-0.136 (.325)
N	583	501	403	586	636	585	411	594
Pseudo R^2	.024	.037	.028	.011	.015	.054	.042	.067

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 3.7
The Impact of Polling Information on Perception of the Closeness of the Race in Each Election, from 1972 to 2000 Dividing the Sample by Pre-Election Preference

Don't Know

Variables	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Poll Margin	0.071 (.345)	Dropped	-0.080 (.071)	0.056 (.069)	-0.171 (.135)	-0.048 (.095)	0.081 (.108)	0.063 (.051)
Media Exposure	Dropped	Dropped	-0.046 (.074)	-0.114 (.339)	-0.239 (.298)	0.375 (.444)	1.152 (.763)	-0.155 (.095)
Poll Margin * Media Exposure	Dropped	0.614 (178.955)	0.013 (.020)	0.007 (.020)	0.045 (.043)	-0.023 (.031)	0.074* (.042)	-0.015 (.015)
Education	0.086 (.371)	7.791 (20377.58)	0.005 (.081)	-0.058 (.095)	0.061 (.094)	0.073 (.068)	0.147 (.150)	0.112 (.104)
Age	-0.012 (.043)	1.733 (3181.382)	0.004 (.008)	-0.002 (.008)	0.003 (.008)	0.011* (.006)	0.014 (.014)	0.000 (.009)
Income	-0.152 (.126)	-8.761 (.)	0.017 (.020)	-0.020 (.022)	0.021 (.023)	0.024 (.016)	0.003 (.034)	0.012 (.039)
Efficacy	0.278 (.669)	-11.810 (.)	0.341* (.192)	0.048 (.113)	-0.141 (.165)	0.263** (.111)	0.330 (.231)	0.402** (.201)
Constant	-1.373 (7.736)	25.403 (.)	0.608 (.543)	-0.308 (1.273)	1.500 (1.047)	1.051 (1.368)	-1.143 (1.979)	0.403 (.587)
N	14	12	212	122	153	337	142	157
Pseudo R^2	.119	1.000	.034	.031	.033	.065	.164	0.115

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

The story is similar when the sample is divided along partisan lines (See Tables 3.8, 3.9, and 3.10). For Democrats, all three variables are significantly correlated with expectations in 1972. While they become less likely to expect a close race as the gap widens, and as they are exposed to more information about the race, the interactive term is positive, suggesting that they were resisting the message. The effect is similar, if

weaker in 1976. Then, however, they are entirely unaffected until the 2000 race, when only the actual gap on the date of the interview has an effect, as they became more likely to believe the race would be close as the gap widened. For Republicans, as for those who prefer the leading candidate, there is only one significant effect across the range of the analysis, this time a positive and significant effect of the poll margin in 1984. This in counterintuitive, since their party's nominee was in the lead, and this information should have been readily accepted. Independents had more mixed results. The interactive term was negative and significant in 1988, but positive and significant in 1992. This is surprising because the poll results were actually closer in 1988. It would seem logical that exposure to the larger gap would have the more expected effect of leading respondents to expect a landslide. Just the opposite was true. Meanwhile, media exposure itself had exactly the opposite effects in the two elections. The more someone paid attention to media coverage in 1988, the more likely they were to expect a close race, while the more someone paid attention to media coverage in 1992, the less likely they were to expect a close race. Finally for Independents, the larger the gap and the more they paid attention to the media, the more likely respondents were to expect the race to be close.

Table 3.8
The Impact of Polling Information on Perception of the Closeness of the Race in Each Election, from 1972 to 2000
Dividing the Sample by Party Identification

Democrat

Variables	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Poll Margin	-0.042** (.021)	-0.030* (.016)	-0.014 (.042)	0.029 (.033)	0.032 (.068)	0.035 (.058)	0.029 (.056)	0.050** (.023)
Media Exposure	-0.614** (.2633)	-0.081 (.056)	0.036 (.047)	0.199 (.161)	0.115 (.127)	0.054 (.223)	0.183 (.301)	-0.051 (.043)
Poll Margin * Media Exposure	0.024** (.010)	0.007* (.004)	0.009 (.013)	-0.011 (.009)	0.021 (.018)	-0.007 (.016)	-0.011 (.017)	-0.010 (.007)
Education	-0.022 (.027)	0.130*** (.044)	0.086* (.048)	-0.052 (.033)	0.031 (.038)	0.107*** (.035)	-0.006 (.076)	0.186*** (.050)
Age	-0.006** (.002)	0.003 (.004)	-0.000 (.005)	-0.001 (.003)	0.005 (.004)	0.003 (.003)	0.008 (.007)	0.009** (.004)
Income	0.039*** (.009)	0.033*** (.012)	0.002 (.013)	0.023*** (.009)	0.001 (.010)	0.003 (.009)	0.002 (.017)	0.033 (.023)
Efficacy	-0.034 (.032)	0.077 (.068)	-0.013 (.084)	0.050 (.043)	0.089 (.067)	0.037 (.059)	0.212** (.109)	0.045 (.088)
Constant	1.650*** (.570)	0.335 (.329)	0.719** (.359)	0.186 (.594)	0.187 (.493)	-0.184 (.857)	0.719 (1.003)	-0.221 (.311)
N	1115	669	534	754	722	913	709	634
Pseudo R^2	.024	.056	.015	.016	0.011	.018	.041	.070

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 3.9
The Impact of Polling Information on Perception of the Closeness of the Race in Each Election, from 1972 to 2000
Dividing the Sample by Party Identification

Republican

Variables	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Poll Margin	-0.002 (.025)	0.018 (.020)	0.024 (.049)	0.066* (.035)	-0.099 (.066)	-0.075 (.083)	-0.047 (.041)	-0.019 (.262)
Media Exposure	0.023 (.279)	0.120 (.084)	0.042 (.054)	0.120 (.166)	-0.059 (.124)	0.084 (.352)	-0.245 (.206)	-0.037 (.050)
Poll Margin * Media Exposure	-0.001 (.011)	-0.008 (.006)	-0.006 (.014)	-0.011 (.010)	0.002 (.018)	-0.009 (.024)	0.013 (.012)	0.011 (.007)
Education	0.067** (.032)	0.112* (.061)	0.052 (.057)	-0.039 (.039)	0.051 (.038)	0.081* (.045)	0.136*** (.048)	0.064 (.057)
Age	-0.003 (.003)	-0.000 (.005)	-0.008 (.005)	0.006* (.003)	0.005 (.003)	0.011*** (.004)	0.009** (.004)	0.006 (.006)
Income	-0.023 (.010)	0.024 (.015)	-0.005 (.016)	0.031*** (.010)	0.007 (.010)	0.028** (.011)	0.006 (.012)	-0.019 (.021)
Efficacy	-0.054 (.040)	0.159* (.088)	-0.038 (.108)	0.031 (.048)	0.229*** (.072)	0.051 (.080)	0.023 (.070)	0.134 (.107)
Constant	0.228 (.712)	-0.011 (.422)	1.262*** (.427)	-0.947 (.633)	1.230** (.499)	1.044 (1.218)	0.594 (.745)	0.699* (.369)
N	785	418	373	647	637	689	512	493
Pseudo R^2	.024	.074	.017	.038	.033	.056	0.032	.024

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 3.10
The Impact of Polling Information on Perception of the Closeness of the Race in Each Election, from 1972 to 2000
Dividing the Sample by Party Identification

Independent

Variables	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000
Poll Margin	0.051 (.050)	-0.033 (.032)	-0.053 (.087)	-0.033 (.076)	0.113 (.148)	-0.125 (.103)	0.032 (.090)	0.108** (.047)
Media Exposure	-1.256 (.850)	-0.033 (.155)	-0.059 (.100)	-0.352 (.404)	0.530* (.322)	-0.795* (.471)	0.465 (.565)	0.257* (.148)
Poll Margin * Media Exposure	0.045 (.033)	0.013 (.012)	0.018 (.028)	0.022 (.023)	-0.083* (.048)	0.057* (.034)	-0.031 (.034)	0.008 (.026)
Education	0.024 (.058)	0.178 (.096)	-0.062 (.094)	-0.096 (.076)	0.038 (.100)	0.042 (.077)	-0.096 (.131)	0.414** (.168)
Age	0.012** (.006)	0.001 (.010)	0.003 (.009)	-0.013 (.008)	-0.001 (.009)	-0.005 (.007)	0.003 (.012)	0.026** (.012)
Income	-0.012 (.019)	-0.017 (.024)	0.027 (.024)	-0.017 (.019)	-0.013 (.0220	0.024 (.015)	0.055* (.033)	0.076 (.052)
Efficacy	0.171** (.073)	-0.042 (.146)	0.221 (.182)	0.068 (.102)	0.110 (.154)	-0.327 (.133)	0.024 (.185)	-0.038 (.252)
Constant	-0.788 (.133)	0.740 (.717)	0.544 (.571)	1.388 (1.333)	-0.073 (1.043)	2.950** (1.489)	0.194 (1.603)	1.739** (.753)
N	247	148	122	147	138	206	105	126
Pseudo R^2	.057	.054	.030	.028	.051	.052	.057	.272

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

All of the above, of course, has focused on how the polls affect an individual's perceptions about the state of the race. This begs the question, obviously, of whether or not the respondents' perceptions about the state of the race affect turnout. The result is that there is surprisingly little effect (See Table 3.11). Although believing that the race will be close is positively and significantly correlated with turnout, the actual effect of

predicting a tight race is to increase the probability that a given respondent will vote by about two percent, holding other variables to their means.

Table 3.11
The Impact of Perception of the Closeness of the Race on Turnout

Variables		Variables	
Close Race	0.088*** (.033)	1976	0.071 (.058)
Age	0.014*** (.001)	1980	-0.089 (.063)
Education	0.228*** (.010)	1984	-0.113** (.054)
Income	0.042*** (.003)	1988	-0.266*** (.055)
Partisan Intensity	0.246*** (.015)	1992	-0.116** (.054)
Efficacy	0.171*** (.015)	1996	-0.285*** (.060)
Residency	0.013*** (.001)	2000	0.023 (.061)
		Constant	-2.081*** (.074)
N	11749	Pseudo R^2	.174

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

The first experiment, which used information about the actual Texas Governor's race as the backdrop for gauging voter decisions, shows a pattern that is consistent with the aggregate survey analysis of respondents' expectations about the outcome of the race (See Table 3.12), if it does not approach the level of statistical significance. It is clear

that the participants in the experiment were affected by the results of the polls presented to them. The control group was fairly evenly split in its expectations about who would win the governors race. Those who were told that Perry was slightly in the lead, but well within the margin of error, were more convinced that Perry would win the election, while those in the last group overwhelmingly

Table 3.12
Respondents' Predictions of the Outcome of the Gubernatorial Election[33]

	All				Democrats			
	PB	PC	SC	SB	PB	PC	SC	SB
Control	9.7	38.7	38.7	3.2	30.0	50.0	20.0	0.0
Race Tied	3.3	56.7	40.0	0.0	0.0	61.5	38.5	0.0
Perry Big Lead	43.3	50.0	6.7	0.0	41.7	50.0	8.3	0.0
Total	18.7	48.4	28.6	1.1	22.9	54.3	22.9	0.0
N	17	44	26	1	8	19	8	0
N	91				35			

	Republicans				Independents			
	PB	PC	SC	SB	PB	PC	SC	SB
Control	0.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	56.3	6.3
Race Tied	0.0	80.0	20.0	0.0	8.3	41.7	50.0	0.0
Perry Big Lead	57.1	42.9	0.0	0.0	36.4	54.5	9.1	0.0
Total	23.5	58.8	11.8	0.0	12.8	38.5	41.0	2.6
N	4	10	2	0	5	15	16	1
N	17				39			

[33] PB – Perry wins in a blowout. PC – Perry wins in a close race, SC – Sanchez wins in a close race, SB – Sanchez wins in a blowout. Some rows do not add up to 100%, as some respondents predicted that someone else would win the election.

predict a Perry victory. Democrats and Republicans in the control group show surprisingly few differences in their expectations. There are, however, slight differences in the way that they react to information about the race, with a larger percentage of Republicans predicting both a Perry victory, and a Perry landslide than Democrats in each group. Self-identified Independents are surprisingly confident of a Sanchez victory. Whether this was because of a lack of information about the race, or because these Independents were disproportionately likely to lean toward the Democratic Party is unclear.

An analysis of the participants turnout intentions shows a much clearer pattern, although one that, again, does not reach the level of statistical significance, except in one case. Self-identified Democrats and Republicans react in very different ways (See Table 3.13). For Democrats who were told that Tony Sanchez was running in a virtual tie with Rick Perry in the latest poll, expected turnout increased dramatically over those in the control group, from 60 to 85%. Those who were told that Perry enjoyed a large lead in the race, however, expected to turnout to vote at a 75% rate. Meanwhile, Republicans acted in just the opposite directions. Those who were told that the race was tied were less likely to predict that they would vote, dropping from 80 to 60%. Every Republican in the group which was told that Perry was well ahead in the polls expected to vote in November. Why would these differences result? The most likely explanation has to do with the respondents expectations. Although few poll results were released during the course of the campaign, Perry seemed comfortably ahead for the bulk of the campaign. (In fact, he won the election by a very comfortable margin, despite being outspent by his

opponent.) To Democrats, then, who were told that their candidate had managed to pull into a tie, the poll results would only increase the chances that they would want to show up. The article gave them hope that their candidate could win. For Republicans, however, the result was just the opposite. A candidate they felt would win easily suddenly seemed in trouble. It is possible that this was disheartening for them, and therefore fewer of them wanted to show up on election day. The other experimental condition, in which they were given an article which told them that Perry was well in the lead would have confirmed for Democrats what they most likely expected to be true anyway, while for Republicans, it confirmed what they wanted to be true. Thus, a smaller percentage of Democrats felt the urge to vote than did when they were told that the race was close. At the same time, Republicans, encouraged by the results were perhaps more motivated to show up. In both cases, however, respondents from this group were more likely to want to plan on voting, which is most likely the result of being reminded about the election itself, something that the control group did not come across until being asked this question near the end of the second survey.

Table 3.13
The Effect of Polls on Turnout, By Party
Experiment 1

	All	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	N
Control	61.3	60.0	80.0	56.3	31
Tied	60.0	84.6	60.0	33.3	30
Perry Big Lead	70.0	75.0	100.0 *	45.5	30
Total	63.7	74.3	82.4	46.2	91
N	91	35	17	39	

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

The second set of experiments also reveal some interesting differences. When all participants are considered as a whole, their behavior follows a very Downsian pattern, with a neat and statistically significant decline in turnout as the gap between the two candidates widens (See Table 3.14). This pattern is replicated by the first group, which had a strong incentive to support the candidate of the plaid party. For those in the second group, which had a significantly weaker incentive, turnout does not decline until the race is clearly out of reach, with statistically significant declines as the gap moves from zero to fifteen points, and as the lead moves from five to fifteen points. Moving from a tied race to a five point lead for their candidate, however, produced no effect on turnout. The

Table 3.14
The Effect of Polls on Turnout, By Payout
Comparison within Payout
Experiment 2

	All	.75 L, .25 T[34]	.55 L, .45 T	.25 L, .75 T	N
Race Tied	78.8	85.1	77.2	73.4	245
5 Point Lead	74.7**	77.5**	79.0	67.9	245
15 Point Lead	69.0*** ***	72.0* ***	71.1** *	63.8 ***	245
Total	74.1	78.3	75.7	68.3	735
N	735	249	243	243	

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

[34] In these tables, the figures in this row represent the payout for the participants, depending on the outcome of the vote. Thus, .72 L, .25 T translates to 75 cents for the participant if the leading candidate wins and 25 cents if the trailing candidate wins. For more information about how the experiments were conducted, see Chapter 2.

results are even weaker for the third group, which had a strong incentive to support the trailing candidate. For this group, the only significant decline comes in the comparison between a deadlocked race and a race in which their candidate is trailing by fifteen points.

Discussion

From the survey data, we can conclude that when polls have any effect on individuals' decisions about whether or not to vote, they do so to a surprisingly small degree. The impact of the state of the race on an individual's perceptions about the closeness of the election is generally very small and extremely sporadic. Although there are some instances, especially in 1972, a race in which a popular incumbent president had a large lead from start to finish, in which there is a notable effect, those effects do not carry over to comparable elections like 1984, or to a slightly lesser extent, 1996. Furthermore, the impact itself is not very predictable. If, for example, an increase in one candidate's lead over another always caused people to doubt that the race were going to be close, it would be clear that people were reacting directly to the information presented in the press. If the impact varied systematically with the respondents' expressed preferences or party identification, it would be easy to argue that those preferences were effectively filtering new information from the campaign, and thus helping to shape each individual's reaction to that new information. Instead, we find little, if anything. This fact is in and of itself extremely surprising. If the actual measure that is available to voters of the relative standing of the candidates is not driving their perceptions, we are left to wonder about what is driving citizen's perceptions. It is clear from the aggregate

picture that people, if they do not just believe what they want to believe, are at least affected in their beliefs by what they want to believe. Just as surprising is the weak affect that the individual's perception of the closeness of the race has on the turnout decision. There is an undeniable logic to the argument that individuals should give more weight to their votes when an election is close than when the outcome is easily predicted. Clearly, however, something else is driving the decision.

The experiments, which allowed for much greater control over the poll results and the participants exposure to them, present a slightly different effect. Here, visible differences did emerge, correlated with respondents' preferences. In the first election, Democrats and Republicans reacted very differently to reports about the state of the race in the Texas gubernatorial election. Although the small number of participants kept the results below the threshold of statistical significance, the results make a lot of sense. Democrats who were given unexpectedly good news seemed energized, while those who received more realistic news were less enthusiastic about showing up to vote. Republicans given unexpectedly bad news were deflated, while those who were told that their expectations were accurate were very likely to show up on Election Day. Similarly, the second experiment showed a different reaction to the same information. Those with a clear preference for the candidate in the lead made the rational decision to abstain as the gap between the candidates increased. Those with weaker preferences or those with a strong preference for the trailing candidate reacted more slowly to the same information. This hints at a resistance to the information, born out of either uncertainty or a resistance to negative information.

How, then, can we explain the discrepancies in the results? The most likely explanation is that the tendency to be affected by polls and to consider how close the race is going to be before deciding whether or not to vote is present in average citizens. They very likely could recognize the Downsian prediction in their own thoughts. It also seems, from the experiments and from the aggregate analysis, that their preferences do play a role in helping to shape those perceptions and decisions. However, those tendencies are swamped in an actual election by other considerations. Whether it is an attachment to one of the political parties, an attachment to one of the candidates, or simply, as Riker and Ordeshook posit, a sense of duty that is ingrained in them as part of their political socialization, the real impetus about whether or not to vote is influenced by something other than our ability to actually affect the outcome of an election. In the experiments, in which these things were either weaker or entirely lacking because of the artificial environment, individuals were more free to act in accordance with these expectations. In some ways, this is actually encouraging. If one assumes that, all else being equal, higher turnout is better than lower turnout in an election, then the fact that there is some factor creating a base of voters in presidential elections, regardless of the actual circumstances of elections is a positive one. It also means that the heavy emphasis by the media on the horse-race during presidential election campaigns is not likely a contributing factor in the decline in turnout over the past half century. Since polls are unlikely to go away any time in the near future, and since presidential elections are won by a comfortable margin at least as often as they are within the margin of error on the eve of the elections, this can only be a positive finding.

Chapter 4

The intense media coverage of public opinion polls may also affect those who are considering voting for someone other than the two major party candidates in an election, particularly because that information may increase the chances that voters may act strategically in presidential elections. An individual is considered to have voted strategically when he weighs not only his relative preferences among the candidates, but also their relative viability among the rest of the electorate. If a voter's most preferred candidate is unlikely to win, he may opt to vote for his second choice if doing so can help prevent his least preferred candidate from winning. Strategic voting is often explained either as an individual level phenomenon, in which voters attempt not to waste their votes on a candidate with no chance of winning or a system level phenomenon, in which the electoral structure (SMSP) forces minor parties out of the running. In fact, it is likely that both are at work.

Logically, voters are more likely to act strategically as their preference for the second candidate in the polls increases over the leader, and as the gap between these candidates decreases. The more that an individual fears a victory by the leading candidate, the more incentive he has to try to prevent that victory, and the best way to do that is to turn to the most viable alternative. Additionally, the closer the race becomes between the top two candidates, the greater the chance that a third party's supporters will be able to influence the outcome. These ideas fit well into the Downsian vote model used in earlier chapters, since it includes both comparative preferences and the probability of influencing the outcome (Ordeshook and Zeng,1997). Obviously, this concept is not limited to political

science, as evidenced by the arguments made by many Democrats in 2000 that Ralph Nader's supporters cost Al Gore the election.

Research seems to indicate that many voters do act strategically. In both general elections and primaries with crowded fields, voters seem to react to the viability of candidates when deciding whom to vote for (Cain 1978, Abramson, Aldrich, Paolino, and Rohde 1992, and Abramson, Abramson, Aldrich, Paolino, and Rohde 1995). There are doubters, however, as other authors have failed to find strategic voting in primary elections, particularly when voters cross over to the other party's primary (Abramowitz, McGlennon, and Rapoport 1981). The very idea of strategic voting, of course, relies on the voter having the necessary information to act strategically, information which most commonly comes through the results of tracking polls publicized during the campaign.

Although the literature on strategic voting does more explicitly deal with polling information than the work on turnout or candidate preference usually does, it is somewhat limited. First, most of the work in this area deals with primary elections. This is both useful and reasonable, since primary elections are themselves interesting and important events, and because primary elections are more likely than general elections to have more than two nationally known candidates. However, there is reason to believe that general election voters faced with multiple candidate fields may act differently than primary electorates. In a primary, all of the candidates are of the same party, decreasing the chances of voters have strong preferences among the candidates on the order of the differences possible in a general election. Certainly, the differences between the Republican and Democratic candidates are more likely to matter to voters than are the

differences between two members of the same party. Additionally, this literature still assumes that people react to the polls in the same way. Strategic voting should really be considered to be a three-fold decision – first to abandon the third place candidate, second to choose to show up on election day and cast a vote anyway, and finally to support the candidate in second place in the election. While some voters undoubtedly act in this way, information about the state of the race can just as easily have other effects on these potential voters. Some may instead simply opt out of the election, while others may, in fact, abandon the trailing candidate and instead use the polls as an information shortcut to decide which of the two major party candidates they should support. Therefore, I will examine these decisions in more detail.

Three Key Decisions

There are several reasons to abandon a third party candidate in an election, even if a voter likes that candidate. Some potential third party supporters may have their normal party affiliations reawakened during the campaign by the actions of their party's nominee. For example, some Democrats who flirted with the idea of voting for Nader in 2000 may have improved their evaluations of Gore during the campaign, and thus simply decided to return to their habitual party support. Others may abandon the last place candidate because, after learning more about that person's policy positions and background, they realize that they would not prefer that that person become president. John Anderson, Ross Perot, and Ralph Nader were all public figures to varying degrees before they announced their bids for the presidency, but undoubtedly much of the public learned far more about them during the course of the campaign than they knew

beforehand. It is extremely unlikely that everyone who was initially intrigued by these candidates maintained a positive view of them by Election Day. Potential third party supporters may also abandon a candidate because of a realization that this person is simply not going to win. Although people may well be able to fool themselves into thinking that their candidate has a chance to win despite the contrary evidence, this is probably much easier to do for supporters of a candidate with double digit support in the polls than for supporters of a candidate whose level of support in the latest polls is lower than the margin of error. In fact, many third party candidates try to deal with this expectation directly, as Anderson did in a campaign brochure sent to potential supporters in 1980 which informed them that "Most polls show that if people believe John Anderson can win, he will win"[35] This reasoning, of course, would be entirely consistent with voting strategically, but it is not necessarily strategic in and of itself. If an individual simply wants to avoid wasting her vote, there is no reason that she cannot just as easily vote for a candidate with a comfortable lead, as easily as she could vote for a candidate with a small deficit to overcome in the polls. Finally, a third party supporter may abandon a candidate because the race between the two leading candidates tightens, and he does not want his vote to cost his second most preferred candidate the race.

Abandoning a third party candidate, however, does not guarantee that an individual will then throw her support behind one of the other candidates. Some third party supporters may simply become disillusioned by their candidate's inability to win support among the rest of the electorate and decide to abandon the election altogether.

[35] http://www.4president.org/brochures/andersonlucey80.pdf

Individuals who most strongly prefer the last place candidate would seem to be the most likely to refuse to participate once they had decided that voting for the candidate they like the most is not worth the effort. The state of the race may also play a role here. If the two major party candidates are locked in a tight race, it should increase the incentive for former third party supporters to stay involved. If, on the other hand, the results of the election seem inevitable, they should be more likely to choose not to get involved.

Finally, those who do decide to vote must then choose from the two remaining candidates. They could, of course, fall back on party identification, which would be very likely for those whose latent partisanship was activated by one of the two major party candidates during the election. They may also act purely strategically, opting for the candidate who is closer to them on the issues or whom they prefer for other reasons, such as charisma, character, or experience. It is also possible, however, that some voters in this category may look to the polls as a guide to determine which candidate to prefer. Not only can this serve as an information shortcut to determine which candidate is better, but people who abandon a candidate that they have become convinced cannot win may also simply want to jump on the winner's bandwagon.

Methods

In order to examine these decisions I again utilized both National Election Studies data, as well as data generated from experiments. Perhaps even more than in the earlier chapters, the use of multiple methods is essential to a study of potential strategic voters. Since voting for someone other than one of the two major party candidates for president

is strongly discouraged, both by partisan attachments and by the realities of a system which lead many to argue that voting for a third party is the equivalent of wasting a vote, identifying those who would consider voting for a third party in the real world is tricky, and finding vastly different real elections involving more than two nationally recognized candidates is extremely difficult. Experiments, therefore, which allow these potential third party voters, as well as the varying situations which third party supporters may face, to essentially be created, provide an opportunity to judge how people would act in a range of situations, with much greater control over the information affecting their decisions. Experiments alone, however, are not enough. Those who do vote for third party candidates, or even seriously consider voting for third party candidates are acting in an unusual fashion in American elections. Their behavior may suggest either a very strong attachment to candidates, parties, or ideas generally outside of the mainstream, or a particular dislike of the major party candidates. In either case, the intensity of their feelings about the candidates is not something that can be sufficiently replicated in an experimental setting. Real citizens, with real preferences need to be examined in a strategic voting context, something that can best be done by survey research. While both of these methods have their limitations, the combination of the two can provide a much greater insight into the way that these individuals act.

For the survey research portion of the analysis, I used a pooled sample of voters from the 1980, 1992, 1996, and 2000 elections, the most recent elections in which a third

party candidate received a significant amount of media attention during the campaign.[36] These candidates, John Anderson, Ross Perot, and Ralph Nader, clearly had varying levels of success, and also competed in very different situations. Anderson was a long time Republican Congressman, and, alone among these third party candidates, had competed and lost in his party's primaries. His campaign was also unique in its attempt to cast itself as the only centrist campaign in the race, painting Reagan as too conservative, and Carter as too liberal to meet the demands of the mainstream. His campaign generated a level of support that is historically significant for a third party candidate, but which fell short of preventing Reagan from winning a majority in the election. Interestingly, however, his supporters may have felt more pressure than those most to switch, as polls showed that the race between Reagan and Carter remained within the margin of error until the weekend before the election. Perot was a very different type of candidate, and his supporters faced a much different situation in 1992. Unlike Anderson or Nader, Perot essentially positioned himself as a contrast to both the Democrats and Republicans on a platform of reform and government responsibility, rather than as either more liberal, more conservative, or more centrist than the other candidates. Perot also entered the race as an outsider, who had been involved in political issues, but never served in government, and relied on his business credentials in favor of any direct political experience. Perot, of course, had the best showing of any third party candidate since Teddy Roosevelt, and, at least over the summer, even seemed like a truly viable candidate. Certainly, his 19% of the vote was enough to tip the election toward

[36] The 1968 election is not included because several key questions used in this analysis were not asked by the NES at that time.

George Bush, or to ensure a Bill Clinton landslide, had his supporters defected and thrown their support behind one or the other. However, because of his relatively high level of support, his backers probably were best able to convince themselves that victory was possible of any third party supporters in recent memory. Perot's campaign in 1996, however, faced a much different situation. Rather than facing a relatively unpopular incumbent, and a relatively unknown challenger, Perot faced a popular incumbent and a relatively well known challenger. For this reason, as well as perhaps because of his failure in 1992, he was able to generate less than half of the support in 1996 that he did in 1992. His supporters probably felt the least pressure to defect, however, since the coverage of the race throughout the campaign focused on the almost inevitability of Clinton's reelection. Nader, on the other hand, presented a classic example of a situation ripe for strategic voting – he was very clearly on the same side of the ideological spectrum as the candidate in second place for most of the campaign, and the race between the two major parties was so close that his supporters, though relatively few in number, could either tip the election toward Gore if they acted strategically, or cost him the election, as they likely did, if they voted strictly based on their preferences. The voters in this pooled analysis, therefore, faced essentially the entire range of possible scenarios for third party supporters.

This analysis is based on three models, each relating to one of the decisions mentioned above – the decision to abandon a third place candidate, the decision to vote, and the choice of which major party candidate to support. The first model starts with all voters who considered voting for a third party candidate at some point during the

election.[37] I examined the probability that they would abandon this candidate, either by voting for one of the two major party candidates or by deciding not to vote in the election at all. Several key independent variables were included in the analysis. First, I included the lead of the first place candidate over the second place candidate in the most recent Gallup poll on the day of their pre-election interviews, as and indication of the closeness of the race. Second, I included the gap between the second and third place candidates in the race from the same poll, which indicates the viability of the third place candidate. If these respondents are acting strategically, then they should be more likely to abandon a third place candidate the smaller the gap between the first and second place candidates, but less likely to abandon him as the distance in the polls between the second and third place candidates narrow. After all, if a third place candidate can surge ahead of one of the two major party candidates, it is no longer strategic to abandon him. As noted above, those who abandon a third party candidate may be responding to their prior party affiliation or become interested in supporting one of the two major party candidates, rather than acting from any strategic considerations. Therefore, I also include the respondents' partisan intensity and their feeling thermometer ratings for all three candidates. Stronger partisans, and those who like one or both of the two major party candidates should be more likely to abandon a third party candidate, while those who favor the third party candidate the most intensely should be less likely to abandon him. Of course, candidate preference may also come from issue positions, rather than a feeling

[37] These respondents reported voting for a third party candidate, expressed a preference for a third party candidate during the pre-election interview, or listed a third party candidate as someone they considered voting for, or would have voted for if they had been allowed to cast more than one vote.

of "warmth" toward a particular candidate. For that reason I also include a measure of issue distance from the leading and trailing candidates.[38] Finally, I include a dummy variable identifying those respondents who reported that they were either "extremely liberal" or "extremely conservative". Since our system tends to force both major parties toward the center of the ideological spectrum (Downs 1957), individuals who not only have opinions that put them on the wings of the American ideological spectrum, but who also are willing to identify themselves as "extreme" should be less likely to abandon a third alternative. These are likely to be among the same people who are unhappy with the two party system itself, and would therefore have an incentive to try to prop up third parties in an attempt to make them viable in the long term. I also control for education, income, age, efficacy, media exposure, and political knowledge, all of which could affect an individual's ability to act strategically in an election. This model is best represented as:

5. Pr (Abandon 3rd Party = 1) = F(β_1 + β_2 * Gap between 1st and 2nd place candidates + β_3 * Gap between 2nd and 3rd place candidates + β_4 * Partisan intensity + β_5 * Feeling Thermometer (Leading Candidate) + β_6 * Feeling Thermometer (Trailing Candidate) + β_7 * Feeling Thermometer (3rd Party Candidate) + β_8 * Issue Distance to Leading Candidate + β_9 * Issue Distance to Trailing Candidate + β_{10} * Education + β_{11} * Age + β_{12} * Income + β_{13} * Efficacy + β_{14} * Political Knowledge + β_{15} * Self-described extreme ideology + β_{16} * Media Exposure + β_{16} * year dummy variables)

   where F is the probit cumulative density function.

[38] This scale is created by summing the absolute value of the respondents' differences, on a 1 to 7 scale, of the respondents' self reported positions on government services, abortion, and ideology from the mean score of all respondents in that year for each of the candidates on each of the issues.

The second model then looks at those who have abandoned the third party candidate and examines whether or not they vote on Election Day. This model again looks at the information available to respondents about the state of the race. I expect that as the race between the top two candidates in the election tightens, individuals who have abandoned the third place candidate should be more likely to remain part of the process by voting, as the strategic voting literature would predict. I also expect that turnout should decline as the gap between the second and third place candidates increases. The further the third party candidate falls behind, the more likely that some of these voters are abandoning him, not out of strategic considerations, but because they have given up. For some reason, whether it be the ignorance of the masses, the bias of the media, the fact that their candidate was excluded from the debates, or unfair advantages in fundraising available to Democrats and Republicans, their most preferred candidate seems doomed to failure, and they give up on the process entirely. Since those who abandoned a third party candidate may actually come to prefer one of the two major party candidates, I also include partisan intensity and the feeling thermometer ratings for these two candidates. I expect each of them to be positively related to turnout, since individuals with strong party attachments or positive opinions of one or more of the remaining candidates should be more likely to vote. I also include the respondents' feeling thermometer rating of the third party candidate. I expect this to be negatively related to turnout, since those who like the third party candidate the most, but have still abandoned him are more likely to be despondent than to be acting strategically. I also control for a series of variables

generally considered to be related to turnout – education, age, income, efficacy, length of residency, party contact, and political knowledge. This model is best represent as:

6. Pr (Turnout = 1) = F(β_1 + β_2 * Gap between 1st and 2nd place candidates + β_3 * Gap between 2nd and 3rd place candidates + β_4 * Partisan intensity + β_5 * Feeling Thermometer (Leading Candidate) + β_6 * Feeling Thermometer (Trailing Candidate) + β_7 * Feeling Thermometer (3rd Party Candidate) + β_8 * Education + β_9 * Age + β_{10} * Income + β_{11} * Efficacy + β_{12} * Residency + β_{13} * Contacted by one or more of the parties + β_{14} * Political Knowledge + β_{15} * year dummy variables)

   where F is the probit cumulative density function.

The final model then examines the vote choice decisions of those who do decide to participate in the election. If these are voters who have simply abandoned a losing cause, they may well be influenced by the popularity of the candidates. Therefore, the model, which has as its dependent variable whether or not the individual voted for the candidate who is leading in the polls, includes the measure of the leading candidate's margin over the trailing candidate on the day of the pre-election interview. If this is positively correlated with voting for the leading candidate, then it would indicate that bandwagoning was driving at least some of these voters, rather than strategic considerations. The model also tests for strategic voting by including the measures of issue distance and thermometer scores for each candidate. If these are significant and in the expected direction, it would lend support to the hypothesis that these individual are acting in a strategic fashion. Of course, again, this in and of itself would not disprove the

theory that they were moving instead to support a major party candidate that they have decided they prefer over the third party candidate. The model also controls for other correlates of vote choice – party identification, education, age, income, and efficacy. It is best represented as:

7. Pr (Vote for leading candidate = 1) = F(β_1 + β_2 * Gap between 1st and 2nd place candidates + β_3 * Issue distance to the leading candidate + β_4 * Issue distance to the trailing candidate + β_5 * Feeling Thermometer (Leading Candidate) + β_6 * Feeling Thermometer (Trailing Candidate) + β_7 * Party ID (scaled toward the leading candidate) + β_8 * Education + β_9 * Age + β_{10} * Income + β_{11} * Efficacy + β_{12} * year dummy variables

   where F is the probit cumulative density function.

Experiments

In addition to the survey results, I also examined the results of a series of simulated elections run as part of the same experiments described in Chapter 2.[39] After the participants had completed the 15 simulated elections involving two-candidate races, they then used the same procedure to run 10 additional simulated elections involving three candidates. While the basic procedure for these simulated elections was the same, there were some key differences between these and the two-candidate races. First, in contrast to the earlier experiments, these participants were explicitly told that the candidate in third place was closest to their views on issues and would carry for them the

[39] For a full description of the experiments, along with examples of the instrument used, please see the Appendix.

highest payout if elected. Second, of course, the poll results had to change from the earlier set of elections. In some of the elections, the polls indicated a relatively tight three-way race, in which their most preferred candidate had substantial support, but was still clearly in last place. In others, the polls showed a close race between the first and second place candidates, in which the third place candidate had very little support, but enough to swing the election to the second place candidate. Finally, some polls reflected a large gap between the first and second place candidates, with the third place candidate trailing without enough support to affect the outcome. Third, the payouts were also different. While the participants knew in each case that the highest payout was associated with a victory by the third place candidate, they still had to determine which of the other two candidates was associated with which payout. In each election, one group was given a payout schedule in which a victory by the third place candidate would be worth $0.75, with the other two candidates worth either $0.15 or $0.50. A second group was also told that a victory by the third place candidate would be worth $0.75 to them, but that victories by one of the other two candidates would either be worth $0.20 or $0.30 to them. For the third group, a victory by the third place candidate would only be worth $0.50, while a victory by one of the other candidates would be worth either $0.35 or $0.40.

The rest of the procedure was identical to the previous simulated elections. Once again, they were given limited information about the issue preferences of the first and second place candidates, as well as limited information about their own preferences on the same set of issues, so that some respondents would easily be able to tell which

candidate should be their second choice and which their third, while others had much less useful information to work with. Once again, they were told that voting would cost them $0.05, but that their payout would be determined solely by the results of the election, regardless of whether or not they participated. Finally, they were again asked at the conclusion of each simulated election whether or not they would vote and which candidate they would choose, if they were to vote.

Expectations

This preceding discussion can be summarized through the following eleven hypotheses:

> *H7: As the gap between the first and second place candidates narrows, individuals considering voting for the third place candidate should become more likely to abandon that candidate.*
>
> *H8: As the gap between the second and third place candidate increases, individuals considering voting for the third place candidate should become more likely to abandon that candidate.*
>
> *H9: Individuals with strong partisan attachments and individuals who have positive views of or shared opinions with one or both of the major party candidates should be more likely to abandon the third place candidate.*
>
> *H10: Individuals with positive evaluations of the third place candidate should be more likely to continue to support that candidate.*
>
> *H11: Individuals who consider themselves to be ideologically extreme should be more likely to continue to support the third place candidate.*
>
> *H12: As the gap between the first and second place candidates narrows, individuals who have abandoned the third place candidate should be more likely to turnout to vote.*

H13: As the gap between the second and third place candidate increases, individuals who have abandoned the third place candidate should be less likely to turnout to vote.

H14: Individuals with strong partisan attachments and individuals who have positive views of one or both of the major party candidates should be more likely to turnout to vote.

H15: Individuals with positive evaluations of the third place candidate should be less likely to turnout to vote.

H16: As the gap between the first and second place candidates increases, individuals who have abandoned the third party candidate should be more likely to vote for the front runner.

H17: The more positively that an individual who has abandoned the third party candidate feels about a candidate, and the closer the individual is to a candidate ideologically, the more likely he will be to vote for that candidates.

Results

The results of the first model show no support for the idea that the tightness of the race at the top influences the decision to abandon the third place candidate (See Table 4.1). The gap between the first and second place candidates seems to have no impact on the probability that an individual who considered the third party candidate will abandon that person during the campaign. The other key independent variables in the model, however, are much more significant. The gap between the second and third place candidate in the race does have a strong effect on the probability that an individual will abandon the third party candidate, but it is a surprising one. Instead of meeting the expectation that viability would encourage further support, it instead seems to discourage it. In fact, a change from a candidate with Perot-like support to a candidate with Nader's level of support decreases the probability that an individual will abandon the third party

candidate by about 12%. And individual's thermometer rating of the third party candidate, on the other hand, is significant and acts in the expected direction. Those who like the third party candidate the most are, in fact, the least likely to abandon him. Those who are neutral toward the third party candidate are roughly 30% more likely to abandon him than those who give him a rating of 100. Similarly, those who identify themselves as politically extreme are also significantly less likely to abandon the third party candidate, as expected. Partisan intensity and the thermometer ratings of the two leading candidates are also significantly correlated with abandoning the third party candidate and act in the expected fashion. Stronger partisans, as well as those who feel positively about one or both of the two major party candidates are more likely to choose to do something other than vote for a third party candidate. The major party candidates' issue proximity to the participant, however, acts in a way that contradicts my expectations. The issue distance to the leading candidate has no significant impact on the decision to abandon the third place candidate, while the distance to the trailing candidate is actually negatively related to abandoning the third party candidate. So, respondents' distance from the leading candidate, which would seem to be an important part of the strategic voting calculus, is unimportant, while individuals who are ideologically close to the trailing candidate are actually less likely to leave the third party candidate than are those who differ greatly from the trailing candidate. In fact, moving across the range of the sample, from those who were virtually indistinguishable from the trailing candidate's positions on issues to those who differed from that candidate by an average of four points on a seven point

Table 4.1
The Probability of Abandoning the Third Party Candidate

Variables	Respondents who considered voting for the third party candidate
Gap Between 1st and 2nd Place Candidates	-0.002 (.013)
Gap Between 2nd and 3rd Place Candidates	-0.012** (.006)
Partisan Intensity	0.252*** (.044)
Thermometer Rating of 3rd Place Candidate	-0.015*** (.002)
Thermometer Rating of Leading Candidate	0.007*** (.002)
Thermometer Rating of Trailing Candidate	0.005*** (.002)
Issue Distance to Leading Candidate	-0.016 (.022)
Issue Distance to Trailing Candidate	0.045** (.022)
Ideologically Extreme	-0.303* (.179)
Education	0.077** (.031)
Age	0.004 (.003)
Income	-0.011 (.008)
Efficacy	-0.055 (.052)
Political Knowledge	-0.052 (.051)
Media Exposure	0.042 (.027)
1992	-0.019 (.223)
1996	0.230 (.249)
2000	0.809*** (.195)
Constant	0.519 (.391)
N	1521
Psuedo R^2	.138

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

scale, increases the probability of abandoning the last place candidate by about sixteen percentage points.

The second model also produces mixed results (See Table 4.2). This table presents both the results for those who abandoned the third party candidate, as well as for all respondents, to gauge not only what the impact is of these independent variables, but also to see if the effect is different on those who have abandoned the third party candidate than it is for all respondents. Once again, the gap between the two leading candidates in the race has no effect on the decision to vote. Individuals who have abandoned the third party candidate do not seem to be weighing the chance that their vote will influence the election in deciding whether or not to show up in November. This holds true for both groups. The gap between the second and third place candidates, however, matters, although again it acts in an unexpected manner. Instead of discouraging people who have abandoned the third party candidate from voting, a large gap between him and the second place candidate instead seems to encourage participation. The impact, while relatively small, is greater for those who have abandoned the third party candidate than it is for all respondents. As you move across the range in the sample, the increase in the probability of turning out to vote for all respondents is about 3 percentage points, while it is about 8 percentage points for those who have abandoned the third party candidate. The respondent's partisan intensity is also positively and significantly related to turnout for both groups. The thermometer ratings of the candidate, however, present a contrast between the two groups. While the thermometer ratings of the leading and trailing candidates show a weak, but positive and statistically significant effect on the

Table 4.2
The Probability of Turning Out to Vote

Variables	Respondents who abandoned the third party candidate	All Respondents
Gap Between 1st and 2nd Place Candidates	-0.001 (.013)	0.006 (.007)
Gap Between 2nd and 3rd Place Candidates	0.023*** (.008)	0.007* (.004)
Partisan Intensity	0.348*** (.046)	0.208*** (.026)
Education	0.119*** (.034)	0.146*** (.019)
Age	0.013*** (.003)	0.010*** (.002)
Income	0.021** (.008)	0.028*** (.005)
Efficacy	0.154*** (.054)	0.112** (.029)
Length of Residency	0.012** (.005)	0.014*** (.003)
Contacted by Parties	0.518*** (.127)	0.447*** (.067)
Political Knowledge	0.450*** (.054)	0.382*** (.029)
Thermometer Rating of Leading Candidate	0.008*** (.002)	0.000 (.001)
Thermometer Rating of Trailing Candidate	0.004** (.002)	-0.000 (.001)
Thermometer Rating of 3rd Place Candidate	-0.012*** (.002)	-0.000 (.001)
1980	-0.196 (.201)	0.034 (.102)
1992	0.172 (.271)	-0.125 (.135)
1996	-0.693 (.285)	-0.306** (.146)
Constant	-3.193*** (.468)	-2.642*** (.243)
N	1791	4405
Psuedo R^2	.341	.226

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

probability of voting for those who have abandoned the third place candidate, these variables have no impact whatsoever on the sample as a whole. Similarly, the thermometer rating of the third place candidate has the expected negative and statistically significant impact on the probability of voting for those who have abandoned the third party candidate, but is insignificant for the sample as a whole. The other controls, education, age, income, efficacy, length of residency, political knowledge, and party contact, are all positively and significantly related to turnout in both sets of results, as would be expected.

The results of the third model continue this theme (See Table 4.3). While the gap between the two leading candidates does have a slight underdog effect for the entire sample (which is consistent with the findings in Chapter 2), it is entirely unrelated to the vote choice decisions of those who have abandoned a third party candidate. Instead, they, like the entire sample, are moved most by party identification, issue distance, and thermometer ratings. For both samples, the issue distance variables have a very strong impact on vote choice. Moving across the range of the sample from being essentially indistinguishable from one candidate to disagreeing strongly with that candidate on every issue decreases the chances that the respondent will vote for that candidate by about 50 percentage points, for both the leading and trailing candidates, and for the whole sample, as well as for those who have abandoned the third party candidate. The thermometer rating scores have an even more powerful effect, particularly the respondents' feeling thermometer ratings of the trailing candidate. For both sets of respondents, a change from being indifferent to the leading candidate to giving that candidate a 100 rating on

Table 4.3
The Probability of Voting for the Leading Candidate

Variables	Respondents who abandoned the third party candidate	All voters
Gap Between 1st and 2nd Place Candidates	-0.023 (.022)	-0.025* (.014)
PID, Scaled to Leading Candidate	0.273*** (.045)	0.320*** (.030)
Education	0.022 (.054)	0.030 (.037)
Age	0.003 (.005)	0.002 (.003)
Income	-0.004 (.016)	-0.006 (.011)
Efficacy	0.045 (.090)	-0.026 (.063)
Issue Distance to Leading Candidate	-0.134*** (.038)	-0.128*** (.027)
Issue Distance to Trailing Candidate	0.170*** (.043)	0.129*** (.028)
Thermometer Rating of Leading Candidate	0.058*** (.005)	0.050*** (.003)
Thermometer Rating of Trailing Candidate	-0.051*** (.005)	-0.045*** (.003)
1980	0.708** (.283)	0.763*** (.190)
1992	0.751** (.380)	0.615** (.254)
1996	0.160 (.445)	0.520* (.290)
Constant	-1.607** (.625)	-1.488*** (.434)
N	1356	2612
Psuedo R^2	.788	.789

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

the thermometer scale increases the chances of voting for the candidate by at least 35 percentage points. The impact is even greater for the trailing candidate's thermometer

ratings. The same move, from indifference to complete approval decreases the chances of voting for the leading candidate by 80 percentage points for those who have abandoned the third party candidate and by 70 percentage points for the entire sample.

The experimental results tell a different story. When examining all participants in the study, it is clear that the poll results do matter, at least in an experimental setting (See Table 4.4). In these experiments, the viability of the third place candidate had a major impact on the likelihood that an individual would abandon the third place candidate. Participants whose most preferred candidate had a significant level of support (28%), were far less likely to abandon that candidate than those whose most preferred candidate had single digit support. Interestingly, however, the distance in the polls between the top two candidates did not have any impact, as there was no significant difference between the race in which the leading candidates were separated by two percentage points and the race in which the first place candidate was likely to win in a blowout. As in the survey analysis, the impact of preferences on the decision to abandon the third place candidate is also mixed (See Table 4.5). The intensity of preferences for the first and second place candidates does not seem to matter, but the intensity of preferences for the third place candidate has a powerful impact. A significantly larger percentage of the sample chose to abandon the third place candidate when the payout for a victory by that candidate shrank to 50 cents from 75 cents. The difference in payouts between the first and second place candidates, however, did not lead to any change in behavior. Finally, the level of information that individuals had about the candidates did not significantly affect the decision to stay with or abandon the third place candidate (See Table 4.6). These

differences remain, even in a multivariate analysis in which poll results, payouts, and information levels are all considered (See Table 4.7).

Table 4.4
The Effect of Poll Results on the Chances that Experiment Participants Would Abandon the Third Place Candidate[40]

All Participants:

Poll Result	Defected	Voted for 3rd Party	N
37, 35, 28	19.70	80.30	147
49, 47, 4	38.87***	61.13	195
55, 40, 5	35.81 ***	64.19	148

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 4.5
The Effect of Payoff Levels on the Chances that Experiment Participants Would Abandon the Third Place Candidate

All Participants:

Payoff	Defected	Voted for 3rd Party	N
20 L, .30 T, .75 3rd	28.57	71.43	161
.15 L, .50 T, .75 3rd	27.67	72.33	159
.35 L, .40 T, .50 3rd	40.00** **	60.00	170

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

[40] (*)'s next to a figure indicate the significance of the relationship between that figure and the one immediately above it. (*)'s below a figure indicate the significance of the relationship between that figure and the one two lines above it. This convention will be used in all tables stemming from the experiments.

Table 4.6
The Effect of Information Levels on the Chances that Experiment Participants Would Abandon the Third Place Candidate

All Participants:

Information Level	Defected	Voted for 3rd Party	N
High	33.98	64.02	256
Low	30.34	69.56	234

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 4.7
The Effect of Poll Results, Payout, and Information Level on the Probability of Abandoning the Third Party Candidate

Variable	
Poll Result – 49, 47, 4	0.569*** (.150)
Poll Result – 55, 40, 5	0.484*** (.160)
Payout – 20 L, .30 T, .75 3rd	-0.308** (.145)
Payout –.15 L, .50 T, .75 3rd	-0.344** (.146)
High Information	0.093 (.121)
Constant	-0.691*** (.154)
N	490
Psuedo R^2	.039

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

For the turnout analysis, I examined the impact of the different experimental conditions on all participants, on those who had decided to abandon the third party candidate, and on those who still said that they preferred the third party candidate, regardless of whether or not they actually voted. The last two groups overlap, as anyone

who still preferred the third party candidate but decided not to vote would be counted in both groups. Given the results from the first set of tables, it is not surprising that those who had the option to support a seemingly viable third place candidate are more likely to vote than those in the true strategic voting scenario (See Table 4.8). This relationship holds true, both for the participants as a whole, and for those who still expressed support for the third party candidate. This relationship disappears, however, when examining those who chose not to cast a vote for that candidate. What is also surprising is that, across the board, those who were given the option of an insignificant amount of support for their own most preferred candidate, and a large gap between the first and second place candidates at the top seem to turnout at a level in between those two groups.[41] Just as in the first set of results, it is only the payoff structure in which the third place candidate offered the lowest payout that there is a significant effect on turnout (See Table 4.9). Again, with a less intense preference for the third place candidate, participation decreases significantly, even though there is no difference in turnout when the intensity of preference remains constant and the difference in payout from the first and second place candidates is varied. The level of information that a participant has in the experiment only mattered for the group of defectors, with low information participants being more likely to drop out of the election (See Table 4.10). Finally, these differences remain present in the probit analysis, as well (See Table 4.11).

[41] Technically, there is no significant difference between this group and either of the other options. However, since it is clear that more people voted in the first scenario than in the second, if the third group are indistinguishable from either, it is most likely that it falls somewhere in between.

Table 4.8
The Effect of Poll Results on the Chances that Experiment Participants Would Choose to Vote

All Participants:

Poll Result	Voted	Did Not Vote	N
37, 35, 28	88.44%	11.56%	147
49, 47, 4	77.95**	22.05	195
55, 40, 5	83.78	16.22	148

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Defectors:

Poll Result	Voted	Did Not Vote	N
37, 35, 28	41.38	58.62	29
49, 47, 4	43.42	56.58	76
55, 40, 5	54.72	45.28	53

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Participants who listed the third party candidate as their first choice:

Poll Result	Voted	Did Not Vote	N
37, 35, 28	90.77	9.23	130
49, 47, 4	75.32***	24.77	158
55, 40, 5	82.61 *	17.39	115

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 4.9
The Effect of Payoff Levels on the Chances that Experiment Participants Would Choose to Vote

All Participants:

Payoff	Voted	Did Not Vote	N
20 L, .30 T, .75 3rd	85.71	14.29	161
.15 L, .50 T, .75 3rd	85.53	14.47	159
.35 L, .40 T, .50 3rd	77.65**	22.35	170

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Defectors

Payoff	Voted	Did Not Vote	N
20 L, .30 T, .75 3rd	50.00	50.00	46
.15 L, .50 T, .75 3rd	47.77	53.23	44
.35 L, .40 T, .50 3rd	44.12	55.88	68

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Participants who listed the third party candidate as their first choice:

Payoff	Voted	Did Not Vote	N
20 L, .30 T, .75 3rd	84.56	15.44	136
.15 L, .50 T, .75 3rd	85.82	14.18	134
.35 L, .40 T, .50 3rd	76.69*	23.31	133

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 4.10
The Effect of Information Levels on the Chances that Experiment Participants Would Choose to Vote

All Participants:

Information Level	Voted	Did Not Vote	N
High	85.16	14.84	256
Low	80.34	19.66	234

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Defectors

Information Level	Voted	Did Not Vote	N
High	56.32	43.68	87
Low	35.21***	64.79	71

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Participants who listed the third party candidate as their first choice:

Information Level	Voted	Did Not Vote	N
High	84.50	15.50	200
Low	80.30	19.70	203

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 4.11
The Effect of Poll Results, Payout, and Information Level on Turnout

Variable	All Respondents	Defectors	Preferred 3rd Party Candidate
Poll Result – 49, 47, 4	-0.423** (.170)	0.061 (.278)	-0.657*** (.190)
Poll Result – 55, 40, 5	-0.231 (.185)	0.233 (.3010	-0.406** (.208)
Payout – 20 L, .30 T, .75 3rd	0.297* (.164)	0.104 (.244)	0.296 (.180)
Payout –.15 L, .50 T, .75 3rd	0.301* (.165)	0.082 (.249)	0.357* (.184)
High Information	0.187 (.137)	0.498** (.210)	0.177 (.151)
Constant	0.929*** (.172)	-0.516* (.282)	1.048*** (.191)
N	490	158	403
Psuedo R^2	.030	.037	.049

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

I next looked at the actual vote choice of participants who decided to cast a vote for either the first or second place candidates. Since a significant majority of the respondents decided to support the third party candidate, regardless of all other variables, this analysis contained a significantly smaller sample than the others (74 participants, as compared to 490 – itself a telling statistic), which raises problems for finding statistical significance. While this raises questions about the validity of several of the results below, they still suggest some interesting findings. First, while there is not statistically significant difference in support for the leading or trailing candidate based on the poll results, there was a larger majority supporting the leader in the blowout election scenario than in either of the others, which is at least consistent with the idea that voters may

bandwagon with the majority (See Table 4.12). Similarly, the largest percentage seemed to support the leading candidate in the scenario in which the difference in payoffs between the first and second place candidate was the smallest (See Table 4.13). Third, low information voters were more likely than their counterparts to bandwagon with the majority (See Table 4.14). Although these findings are not statistically significant, they are consistent with the idea that polls may guide some types of voters to bandwagon in multi-candidate elections. In fact, in the multivariate analysis, the level of information does reach statistical significance, although none of the other variables do so (See Table 4.15)

Table 4.12
The Effect of Poll Results on the Chances that Experiment Participants Would Vote for the Leading Candidate

Of Defectors:

Poll Result	Voted for Leader	Voted for Trailer	N
37, 35, 28	58.33	41.67	12
49, 47, 4	51.52	48.48	33
55, 40, 5	65.52	34.48	29

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 4.13
The Effect of Payoff Levels on the Chances that Experiment Participants Would Vote for the Leading Candidate

Of Defectors:

Payoff	Voted for Leader	Voted for Trailer	N
20 L, .30 T, .75 3rd	52.17	47.83	23
.15 L, .50 T, .75 3rd	52.38	47.62	21
.35 L, .40 T, .50 3rd	66.67	32.33	30

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 4.14
The Effect of Information Levels on the Chances that Experiment Participants Would Vote for the Leading Candidate

Of Defectors:

Information Level	Voted for Leader	Voted for Trailer	N
High	53.06	46.94	49
Low	68.00	32.00	20

* p<.1, ** p<.05, *** p<.01

Table 4.15
The Effect of Poll Results, Payout, and Information Level on Vote Choice

Variable	
Poll Result – 49, 47, 4	-0.168 (.442)
Poll Result – 55, 40, 5	0.509 (.484)
Payout – 20 L, .30 T, .75 3rd	-0.440 (.367)
Payout –.15 L, .50 T, .75 3rd	-0.510 (.384)
High Information	-0.609* (.353)
Constant	0.783* (.456)
N	74
Psuedo R^2	.064

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Discussion

These results generally do not support the idea that individuals who are considering voting for the third party candidate in a presidential election act strategically and throw their support behind their second most preferred candidate in order to prevent

their least preferred candidate from winning. If voters are acting strategically, we would expect that the closeness of the race between the top two candidates, the viability of the third party candidate, and the issue positions of the leading candidates should all influence these third party supporters. The survey respondents and experiment participants analyzed in this study only seem to follow part of this pattern.

One thing that is very clear from the results is that the closeness of the race at the top did not spur individuals to abandon the third place candidate. This is particularly surprising, and damaging to the strategic voting theory, because strategic voting decision must include some indication of the value of the vote. It only makes sense to act strategically if the respondent believes that there is some chance, even if minor, that his or her vote will matter. The larger the value of the vote, therefore, the more that one should consider using it strategically, rather than simply opting for the candidate that is most preferred. Since that value is determined solely by the closeness of the race, the difference in the poll numbers between the first and second place candidate should matter.[42] This does, not however, seem to be the case.

This study does present some evidence that the other two influences on a strategic decision do seem to have some effect. The viability of the third place candidate definitely matters in the experiments, as participants who were given reason to believe

[42] As discussed in Chapter 3, I do not believe, as do some who study the impact of the closeness of the race on turnout, that voter's perceive the value of their vote to be essentially zero. While this may be true in most elections that do not involve voting by raised hands, voters do not have the knowledge to accurately estimate the number of votes that will separate the two candidates, and are instead given this information in the form of percentages, and percentages with a margin of error. Since these numbers are significantly smaller than the vote total difference, and since poll results are not infrequently within the margin of error, and thus a statistical dead heat, it only makes sense that individuals who choose to vote *should* be overestimating the value of their own vote.

that the third place candidate could be competitive were significantly less likely to abandon that candidate than those who were told that this candidate had only a small base of support among their fellow likely voters, regardless of the distribution of support for the top two candidates. This would support the idea that those who abandon the third party candidate are concerned about the possibility of throwing their votes away by supporting a candidate who cannot win, an idea which is certainly consistent with strategic voting. The survey respondents, however, reacted quite differently. Instead of meeting the expectation that less viable candidates should see even more of their potential support slip away as it becomes clear that they cannot win, these supporters actually became less likely to abandon the candidate as his viability declined. Although at first counterintuitive, this result does make sense, even given the experimental result. While the experiment participants were acting in an entirely artificial world, with no particular attachment to a candidate outside of monetary incentives, the survey respondents were making decisions in the real world, where the attachment to a candidate can become much more than a simple economic calculation. Every candidate with any noticeable level of support is likely to have a core of followers who are committed to the cause, or to the candidate personally, or both. As the level of support for a candidate falls, you are essentially clearing away the dead wood. In other words, a larger percentage of Nader's supporters in 2000 were likely true believers, who would not even consider abandoning his campaign, than were Perot's supporters in 1992 or 1996, even if Perot had a larger number of core supporters. Therefore, those who are prone to act strategically are probably long gone from less popular campaigns before the general

election campaign even begins, making their actions more difficult to measure. In the experiments, of course, there are no true believers.

The last thing that should matter, according to the strategic voting model, is the individual's relative evaluations of the three candidates. Individuals who are indifferent between the first two candidates, or who feel positively about all three should be the least likely to abandon the third place candidate. The evidence, here, is again mixed. The experiment participants did not seem to react to the difference in value between a victory by the first place candidate and a victory by the second place candidate in deciding whether or not to abandon the third place candidate. The survey respondents, however, did react based on their partisan intensity and their thermometer ratings of the two leading candidates. The more intensely they identified with one of the two major parties and the more warmly they felt toward the two major party candidates, the more likely they were to abandon the third party candidate. Interestingly, however, the differences between the respondents and the candidates on issues did not play the expected role in encouraging people to abandon the third place candidate. Instead, the distance to the leading candidate, which would seem to be a very important influence on strategic voting, had no effect, while the distance to the trailing candidate had the opposite effect from the one anticipated. While the latter is perhaps more surprising, the former is probably more damaging to the strategic voting model. The incentive, after all, to accept a second choice candidate in the strategic voting model is to prevent some unacceptable option from reaching the White House. The issue distance to the leading candidate, therefore, should play a very powerful role in determining who abandons ship. Instead, it

does not influence this decision at all. In contrast, those who are furthest from the second place candidate are most likely to abandon the third party candidate. This is completely counterintuitive, and suggests that something other than strategic considerations are driving these voters.

Two other factors which are consistent with voting strategically, but which are not necessary for strategic voting, do seem to influence this decision. In both the experiments and the surveys, respondents who had stronger preferences for the third party candidates were less likely to defect from that candidate. This is hardly surprising, and would certainly fit within the strategic voting model. Additionally, survey respondents who identified themselves as being ideologically extreme were also less likely to defect. Since strategic voting, and even simply the desire to not waste a vote, require that the voter believe that there is something to be gained by electing one of the two major party candidates over the other, those who are on the ideological wings should be less likely to defect. As stated above, the American political system tends to be focused on the ideological center, which likely leaves the relative few at either extreme feeling ignored by the parties and the government. For these individuals, which should definitely include individuals willing to identify themselves as "extreme," voting for the third party candidate is possibly more than just a statement about which candidate they prefer. It may also be a statement about the two-party system, and particularly an attempt to try to broaden the two party system by making a third party viable in the long run, or even just an expression of alienation.

Overall, the decision to abandon a third party candidate seems to be driven most powerfully by the respondents' preferences and party attachments, rather than by strategic considerations. While the evidence does suggest that voters do not want to "waste" their vote by supporting a candidate with no chance of winning, the chance of actually influencing the outcome of the election does not seem to play any role in this decision, either for respondents in the real world, or for participants in an experimental setting.

Once individuals have abandoned the third party candidate, they then must decide whether or not to still participate in the election. If these voters are acting strategically, they should be driven to participate by a closer election, as well as by their relative evaluations of the candidates. If they are simply abandoning a losing cause, then not only would their intensity of preferences for the two major candidates matter, but likely their feelings about the third party candidate would still matter. Strong supporters of the third party candidate who have abandoned someone they do not believe can win should be more likely to stay home than to turn to one of the other candidates instead. Again, the evidence from the turnout analysis is mixed. The closeness of the race played no role in determining whether or not survey participants who had abandoned the third place candidate voted in the general election. This held true in the experiments, as well, where defectors were not significantly affected by the closeness of the race, and when the results at least suggested that the closeness of the race might matter, it was in the opposite direction. The viability of the third place candidate still played a role in determining whether or not these individuals voted in the fall. Those who abandoned a candidate with

little support from the general public were actually more likely to show up. This is consistent with the idea that these voters are committed to participating, but simply trying to avoid throwing away their votes. In other words, the decision to abandon the third party candidate was made because that person was seen as a lost cause, and thus the next decision for these voters was actually about whom else to support, not whether or not to support anyone. On the other hand, individuals who abandoned a third party candidate with more support would appear to be more disillusioned about the process, and thus more likely to give up their chance to influence the outcome. Again, the experimental results were consistent with these findings. The viability of the third place candidate was much more closely related to the turnout decision than the closeness of the race, and it was actually those in a blowout election who at least seemed more likely to still vote.

The respondents' feelings about the candidates also played a role in their turnout decision. Partisan intensity, as expected, strongly influenced participants to vote, both when examining all voters, as well as when only looking at those who had abandoned the third party candidate. While the thermometer ratings for the three candidates were insignificant predictors of turnout for the sample as a whole, they did play a role in determining the decision to vote for those who had abandoned the third party candidate. Respondents who felt positively about either the leading or trailing candidates were more likely to vote, which certainly makes sense. The most interesting thing about this finding, though, is not that these variables have an impact, but that they have no impact on the sample as whole. For most voters, we would assume that a positive rating of one of the candidates would be coupled with a negative rating of the other, and thus there

would not be an overall effect. Among those who have abandoned the third party candidate, however, there are likely to be significant numbers who dislike both of the major party candidates. These individuals will be very unlikely to participate in the election. If, however, an individual has a positive evaluation of one or both of the major party candidates, they are instead only more likely to remain part of the process. The participants' evaluations of the third party candidate are also significant for those who have abandoned him, but in the opposite direction. Individuals who like the third party candidate, but have chosen not to vote for him anyway, are among the most likely to be acting out of disillusionment, rather than out of strategic considerations. In the experiments, the participants' relative strength of preferences between the first two candidates had no effect on the decision to vote. The strength of their preference for the third place candidate, however, did still play a role. The less intensely that they favored that candidate, the more likely they were to choose not to vote.

The final decision to look at is the choice between the first and second place candidates. The strategic voting model would predict that this decision would be driven by issue proximity and relative evaluations of the candidates. If on the other hand, voters were coming in with no predispositions toward either candidate, then the state of the race may itself serve as an information shortcut to determine which candidate to support. The evidence for the latter is decidedly weak in this study. While the survey respondents who had abandoned the third party candidate, but still decided to vote were entirely unmoved by the results of the polls (even though the entire sample moved slightly in favor of the underdog), there was an indication that experiment participants did bandwagon with the

majority. Although this finding did not reach the level of statistical significance, it is at least consistent with other studies which have found that bandwagoning is most likely in low information elections (Fleitas 1971). Issue distance and evaluations, on the other hand were strongly related to vote choice among the survey respondents, and seemed to play a role in the experiments. These findings, of course, are entirely consistent with the strategic voting model. That model, however, is not the only explanation for the vote. Supporting the candidate who is closer to you on the issues among the two remaining candidates you are considering does not necessarily mean this is all part of a strategic decision. It may, in fact be completely separate from any strategic considerations

Conclusions

These findings do not seem to support the idea that voters in multi-candidate races are acting in a strategic fashion. Although it does seem that potential voters are concerned with the possibility of wasting their votes, the chance that they could actually influence the outcome does not seem to play any role in deciding to leave the third party candidate or to vote once that candidate has been abandoned. Instead, the most powerful influences on all three decisions analyzed in this study would seem to be partisan attachments, relative evaluations of the three candidates, and issue proximity to the two leading candidates. For many who consider voting for the third party candidate, then, that consideration would seem to be more of a flirtation than a serious commitment. This candidate presents an interesting alternative worth pursuing, but only as long as the two major party candidates do not present attractive alternatives, or as long as the third party

candidate seems to have any shot of winning. These voters can easily be turned off by what they learn about this new and exciting alternative, or have their party commitments reawakened over the course of the campaign. For the core supporters of the third party candidate, however, the most likely alternatives seem to be to stick it out, even in the face of certain defeat, or to give up on the election altogether. Although some individuals undoubtedly do act in the manner described by the strategic voting model, neither the survey results nor the experiments were able to find significant numbers of them. This does not, of course, mean that these voters are in any way irrational or acting in a non-strategic fashion. Supporting a candidate who is doomed to fail can still serve an important purpose by sending a message of support for that party, or of dissatisfaction with the two major parties. Realizing that the third party candidate is not as attractive an alternative up close can be a very powerful sign of rationality – certainly it is better to admit to yourself that you have made a mistake and go back to a safer choice than to persist with a candidate you no longer approve of. The lack of evidence for pure strategic voting, however, suggests one of two things. Either voters put so little value on their own vote that they rarely believe that it is worth acting to try to prevent their least preferred candidate from voting, which I find unlikely, given that so many people show up to vote at all, or that those strategic considerations are less important, or simply less commonly used than are issue preferences and candidate evaluations in determining voting behavior.

Chapter 5

Coverage of American presidential elections has changed dramatically over the past 70 years. The advent of television, cable, and the internet have reshaped the way that citizens learn about the candidates and issues in an election. Improvements in transportation and communication technologies have allowed candidates to cover a much larger portion of the country in a much shorter period of time. At the same time, the ability of candidates, the media, and the voters themselves to guess what the public is thinking has grown by leaps and bounds. The increase in the frequency with which polls are conducted and the attention paid to them during the campaign has been almost exponential. It is nearly certain that anyone who has paid even a moderate amount of attention to the 2004 presidential election campaign has seen a poll, if not several polls, reflecting the support for Bush, Kerry, and Nader, even six months before the actual election.

It would be hard to imagine that so much money would be spent conducting polls, and so much air time and so many column-inches used to report and discuss them if the public were not interested. After all, the media are a business. Their primary goal is to make a profit, and that entails giving the audience what it wants. Polls do that. People are always interested in what their fellow citizens think about the world. Whether the topic is sports, entertainment, or politics, learning what our fellow citizens think allows us to feel vindicated, feel superior, or even just satisfy our curiosity. That interest, however, does not just stop with the audience. The media are themselves interested in

the polls. Presidential campaigns are somewhat monotonous affairs for those following them closely. Each candidate will likely give the same stump speech dozens, if not hundreds of times. Even when the speech changes, several core themes are likely to be carried over to the new version. The candidates themselves are generally guarded in their comments and interviews, trying to avoid mistakes or stick to the central messages of the campaign. The polls present both a measuring stick for the success of these efforts and a way to tie these events to a larger, often more interesting story – the battle for the support of the voters. In almost every recent presidential election, the state of the race has fluctuated significantly over the course of the campaign, whether the two candidates trade leads, or a large lead suddenly shrinks, making a prohibitive favorite suddenly seem vulnerable. And, since one of the goals for any media outlet is not just to get the big story, but to get it first, any instrument which can help you predict what is going to happen months ahead of time is worth paying attention to.

Given all the attention paid by the media to polls during presidential elections, it is reasonable to wonder whether this type of information has any impact on the electorate. After all, most of the information that citizens have about the candidates and issues is, by necessity, mediated – whether through news organizations or paid advertisements – so the information that the press chooses to cover will represent a significant percentage of what most people know about the election. As discussed in the previous chapters, it is not difficult to imagine the type of effects that this information could have. Information about who is leading in the race could easily serve as an information shortcut, allowing individuals to rely on the collective wisdom of other likely

voters to figure out whom to vote for, or reinforcing their own beliefs. Voters do not have the best reputation when it comes to gathering all of the pertinent information during a campaign and objectively weighing that evidence to decide which candidate would be the best fit for their interest or that of the country as a whole. By their very nature, polls aim to spoil the surprise on election day, predicting days, weeks, or months ahead of time who will win. With only about half of the electorate showing up at the voting booth, and most Americans showing little enthusiasm for politics in general or for our nearly permanent campaign season, it is reasonable to question whether this information discourages some people from showing up, by making their actions seem less valuable through predicting the outcome. Clearly, if polls have consistently shown one candidate with a large lead over the other during the entire campaign season, it would be rational for some potential voters to decide not to waste their time going to vote when they already know what is going to happen. Finally, in cases in which an individual is considering voting for someone other than the two major party candidates, polls could have an impact on their strategic considerations, independent of their true preferences. The knowledge that the candidate they most want to win has no chance may spur them to focus on supporting the lesser of the two remaining evils.

If polls did have these kinds of effects on voters, we would have grounds to be very concerned. First, as illustrated in Chapter 1, the polls themselves provide potentially flawed information. The very frequency of polls, the competition from telemarketers for the attention, time, and good will of the public, and the increased ability of individuals to avoid unwanted or unexpected phone calls altogether has decreased the response rate of

most polls to the point where some now question the representativeness of the remaining samples.[43] Whatever the reason, the last election cycle illustrated that there can be a very large disparity from one day to the next, and from one poll to the next, in the results, suggesting the possibility that at least some of these polls were completely wrong. If the public uses these polls to help guide their behavior, it would be a cause of concern if the information that they are using were not accurate. Of course, the accuracy of the information is far from the most important concern that this possibility raises. In a system in which the public gets to select their officials, voters who are influenced by a candidate's popularity, rather than their qualifications or ideas would be troubling. Not only would that completely fall short of our democratic ideals, but it would also give even greater advantages to incumbents, celebrities, and candidates who are able to raise and spend money early in the race. Candidates at a disadvantage in name recognition, money, or media attention would not only have to worry about those problems, but also that their very lack of popularity was weighing them down even further. Second, while it is extremely unlikely that all eligible voters will ever participate in American elections, in general it is better for the system to have more people show up on election day. The larger the electorate, the more legitimacy the government has and the more that elected officials have to worry about balancing different interests within the country. Any phenomenon which serves to discourage this participation would certainly be worth study. Finally, while strategic voting is far less problematic to the system as a whole than

[43] The National Do Not Call list may actually help to improve the situation if potential respondents lose their sense of irritation about these phone calls as they decrease in volume. However, it is also possible that people who sign up for the list now expect not to get *any* phone solicitations, and thus may resent each one that comes that much more.

either low turnout or voting based on popularity, it does tend to dampen the legitimacy of candidates outside the two major parties and overvalue the support for Democrats and Republicans in our system.

Given these concerns about the potential impact of polling information on the electorate, it is perhaps good that this analysis turned up only minimal effects of polls on the decisions of potential voters, as described in the previous chapters.

Candidate Preference

The results of the analysis presented in Chapter 2 nominally support two of my hypotheses. It is true that, for those who already prefer the candidate leading in the polls, exposure to this information tends to reinforce that support. At the same time, those who already prefer the candidate trailing in the polls tend to have exactly the opposite reaction to the same information. These findings held true both for the probability that an individual will vote for the leading candidate, and for the intensity of the individual's preferences for one candidate over another. The size of the effects, however, was extremely small, and not enough to make any real difference in an election. This is particularly true because the effects, not surprisingly, were most visible in elections in which one of the candidates had a nearly insurmountable lead over the other. In other words, the information makes the strongest difference when the difference in the polls is most pronounced. However, when the difference in the polls is most pronounced, the chances that any small change in preferences, in either direction, could matter in the election are essentially nonexistent.

A more surprising finding was that only undecided voters were entirely unmoved by the polls. These individuals, who have not yet been able to choose a candidate to support, and who thus have the most need for an information shortcut, are the least likely to be moved by the results of the polls. This is particularly surprising given that there is an effect, albeit a very minor one, on those who have already made up their minds. If anyone were to be affected by the position of the majority, it would seem that undecided voters would be the most likely candidates. Instead, they seem to completely ignore this information. The only exception to this finding was that voters who do not identify themselves with either party seem to bandwagon slightly in close elections, the elections during which the polls provide the least useful information to help someone pick a candidate.

Turnout

The effects of polling information on turnout were also very weak. Perhaps the most surprising finding in this study is that there is no consistent impact of the state of the race on individual's perceived closeness of the race. In other words, the best measure we have of reality has no discernible impact on the subjective assessment of what is likely to happen. This is not to say that individuals simply make up their assessment randomly, or always predict the same outcome, regardless of the actual state of the race. As the Table 1.3 illustrates, there is some connection between the race, preferences, and predictions about the election, at least at the aggregate level. More people predict a close election during a close election. Surprisingly, though, that relationship does not show up

at the individual level when examining the actual results of election polls. Of course, this could still mean that these perceptions are shaped, for example, by the elite level discussions about the race. Since these discussions are likely driven by the polls, that would mean that the polls would still matter in the larger picture, even if the exact relationship is hard to find. Even if this is the case, however, the individual's perceptions about the state of the race do not seem to matter much in determining whether or not that person will vote. Much like with the evidence for bandwagon and underdog affects discussed above, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between believing that the race will be close and showing up to vote on election day. That relationship, however, is substantively negligible. The experiments, on the other hand, did provide some evidence that poll results had an effect on turnout, with closer races yielding more participation. They even demonstrated a difference in the propensity to be affected by this information based on candidate preference. This, coupled with the relationship found in the surveys, indicates that the Downsian notion that potential voters react to the probability that their participation could influence the outcome of the election has some validity. These forces do seem to be at work on voters. It even supports the idea, derived from cognitive psychology, that the impact of information about that probability must be mediated through existing preferences. However, it appears that in real elections in the real world, the effects are dwarfed by other factors. Whether voters are reacting to a sense of duty, to an attachment to one of the candidates, to a desire to register their disapproval of one of the candidates, or simply to social pressure to

participate, other things are much greater influences on the decision of whether or not to vote. The polls do not matter.

Strategic Voting

The polls also had little effect on those facing the possibility of acting strategically in an election. Contrary to expectations, the closeness of the race between the first and second place candidates had no impact on the decision to abandon the third party candidate or the decision to remain part of the process and vote once that candidate had been abandoned. If potential third party supporters were truly acting strategically, then the strategic situation that the election presented to them should certainly affect their decisions. It is much more rational to act strategically when there is a greater chance that that action will have an effect. If an individual votes for a candidate trailing almost as badly as the candidate her most-preferred candidate, it realistically gets her no closer to a desired result. In that case, it makes more sense to simply stay with the candidate she really wants to win, or perhaps to even stay away from the election altogether. These types of calculations do not seem to have any influence on the survey respondents or experiment participants.

The evidence was more mixed on whether the other key piece of information presented in the polls had any effect. The chance that the third party candidate could at least catch the second place candidate, or even win the election, did have an effect on the survey respondents and experiment participants. The immediate results, however, were contradictory, although the explanations for these differences may not be. Candidates

that had little support actually had a greater chance of holding on to their supporters in the survey analysis than did candidates with stronger showings in the polls. While this could indicate an odd inclination to flock to a sinking ship, it may instead represent a something else. A candidate with two or three percent support in the polls may be more likely to only attract core supporters and less likely to find voters who flirt with the idea of supporting them. In effect, the candidate's obvious lack of popularity may prevent people from even considering voting for him in the first place unless they are truly committed to doing so, and thus unlikely to act strategically. Additional support for this idea is found in the analysis of turnout among those who have abandoned the third party candidate. The greater the gap between the second and third place candidates, the more likely it is that those who have considered and then rejected the idea of voting for the third party candidate will vote. This is consistent with the idea that these individuals are leaving behind a campaign they believe has no chance, and instead looking to play a role in the more meaningful choice – the choice between the two candidates with some realistic chance of winning. The level of support that a third party candidate has much more clearly influenced the decision of voters in the experiments. Participants were more likely to stick with a candidate if he had enough support to allow them to convince themselves he had a chance, something that single digit support in the polls made much more difficult. As noted in Chapter 4, however, these decisions show that the impetus to act in this fashion is present, but the decisions themselves, coming in an artificial setting, lacked the emotional attachments to candidates and the chance to use the vote to signal disapproval of the system that can exist in the real world.

The evidence from this analysis, however, does indicate some support for the idea that voters do not want to "waste" their vote on a lost cause. This, however, should be considered to be distinct from acting strategically, which would require some concern about the strategic situation that the election presented, something that was entirely lacking. Once they have abandoned the third party candidate and decided to vote for one of the two remaining candidates, however, their decisions are entirely consistent with those of other voters. Candidate evaluations, party identification, and issue distance are all important factors in the choice of which candidate to support. Additionally, just as with the voters considered in Chapter 2, the polls themselves do not provide any significant guidance for these individuals on how to vote.

Implications

The results of this analysis should largely be comforting to those concerned about the decisions of an electorate that falls short of our ideals. The decision to vote, and the choices that voters make once they get their ballots, are ones that should be taken seriously, and once that we would hope are driven by relevant and useful information. While this study cannot completely exonerate voters of the charge that they may use irrelevant or poor information to make decisions, it does at least indicate that the results of public opinion polls are not widely used as such. Clearly, the most popular candidate early in the race may not be the best, particularly given that important information about the candidates may not yet be available to the voters, much less widely known voters. Voters who are not influenced by polls are at least not falling into this trap, and the

effects that are present largely serve to reinforce their pre-existing ideas anyway. While this thought may not be a particularly welcoming one to the candidate who is trailing in the race, since it merely reinforces the status quo, but it is a much less troubling result for the system as a whole. While the choice of which candidate to support is clearly important, there is also a benefit to participating in the system that goes beyond simply influencing the results of elections. Larger electorates both increase the legitimacy of the governments they elect and create more pressure on government to watch what it does, by increasing the chances that someone will object to your actions. Poll results likely do nothing to improve the relatively low turnout in American elections, but at least they do not appear to be part of the problem. Finally, the analysis of potential third party voters indicates both that those who are the most committed to third party candidates are likely to stick with those candidates, at least allowing those opinions an opportunity to compete with the more mainstream platforms, as well as that many voters care enough about who wins to want to be a part of the real battle in an election, even if the actual odds in that battle have no effect on them.

These findings are particularly comforting because polls are unlikely to become less of a part of election coverage anytime soon. Already, during the first half of this election year, polls asking voters for their presidential preferences are ubiquitous, long before many have even truly started paying attention. As the number of media outlets available to cover the campaign has increased, the outlets available for different polls has only increased. And with the increase in competition between media outlets, the desire of these outlets to not only report the key stories, but to have some piece of exclusive

information, should only encourage more polls to be taken. The rise of cell phone use, which will only make people more available to pollsters, once the companies that manage these services begin to sell lists of their working numbers to polling organizations, something that seems inevitable. Now, more individuals within the same household are likely to have their own numbers, and thus to be reached independently in a random sample. Even the spread of internet access is only likely to increase the ease and decrease the costs of doing surveys. As more and more people use the internet as part of their daily lives, the chances of being able to generate a nationally representative sample of likely voters through e-mail, for example, increases dramatically. Since this would allow thousands of surveys to be conducted at the same time, with little or no cost to the polling organization, it would be nearly impossible to imagine that someone will not figure out ways to make it work more generally than the few sustained attempts that have been made already. If anything, therefore, this type of information should only become more common and more readily available to voters in future elections.

The lack of strong findings in this study, therefore, should perhaps lead us to give voters more credit than we do. While they are clearly far from perfect democratic participants, I consistently found that the most powerful influences on their decisions were at least reasonable ones. Certainly, party identification and major issue positions are more likely to get voters to the "right" candidate than is knowing who is leading in the latest poll, and by how much. The decision to vote seems much more closely related to characteristics that affect the costs of voting or the perceived benefits of a victory by one candidate over the other, such as age, education, length of residency, and partisan

intensity, than to considerations about the chances that any single vote will affect the results of the election. On the whole, therefore, voters seem to be doing a reasonable job, and the introduction of and emphasis on interesting, but ultimately less useful information does not seem to be changing that.

Appendix A

Variables Used

Vote Choice – coded 1 if the respondent voted for the candidate leading in the polls and 0 if the respondent voted for the candidate trailing in the polls. Non-voters and third party voters were excluded from the analysis.[44]

Intensity of Candidate Preference – the respondent's thermometer rating of the leading candidate minus the respondent's thermometer rating of the trailing candidate in the post-election interview.

Movement – the gap between the leading and trailing candidate in the final pre-election poll minus the gap between the leading and trailing candidate in the most recent pre-election poll on the day that the respondent was interviewed. Polling data were taken from the gallup survey (Gallup 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996), as well as from www.pollingreport.com (2000).

Media Exposure – The respondent's self-reported media consumption of television, newspaper, and radio were all scaled 0 to 7 and then the three scores were averaged.

PID – standard party identification scale, rescaled as necessary so that 0 represents a strong partisan of the party of the trailing candidate and 6 represents a strong partisan of the party of the leading candidate.

Education – the respondent's highest level of formal education, from 1 (less than 8th grade) to 7 (advanced degree)

Age – the respondent's age in years

Income – the respondent's total family income, rescaled from 1 to 22 for all years.

Efficacy – an additive scale created by summing the respondent's answers to four questions, such as "people in government care what I think" and "most people can be trusted". Each question was scaled from 0 to 1, with 1 being the more efficacious response before being added.

Candidate Preference – individuals were classified into three categories based on their pre-election interview voting intention: those who favored the leading candidate, those who favored the trailing candidate, and those who had no preference or

[44] All data except the poll results taken from the American National Election Studies.

favored a different candidate.

Year – a dummy variable was created for each year in the analysis, with individuals assigned a 1 for the year in which they were interviewed and a 0 for all other years. In each analysis the first year included in the pooled sample was excluded and serves as the basis for comparison.

Appendix B

Description of Experiments

The final part of the study involved a series of experiments conducted in October of 2002 on the campus of the University of Texas campus at Austin. The experiments were broken into three groups. The first aimed to test the impact of exposure to polling information in the context of a genuine election campaign, to come as close as possible to examining these effects in real life. The second set of experiments dealt with simulated two candidate elections in which the participants' preferences and level of information about the candidates were systematically varied along with the results of public opinion polls in order to test for candidate preference and turnout effects. The final experiments involved simulated three candidate races and examined the impact of polling information on strategic voting behavior. The simulated experiments lacked the characteristics of a real campaign, but allowed for a better manipulation of polling results, preferences, and information levels. When combined with the NES survey data, these experiments allow me to examine how polls affect voters first in actual voting situations, second in a controlled setting, but maintaining all of the "baggage" that voters carry with them into real voting booths, and third in a perfectly clean environment, where partisan attachments, real issue preferences and issue salience, and characteristics of candidates provide no meaningful information for voters to use as a guide. This allows for a much fuller analysis of the question, and hopefully a better understanding of the direction and magnitude of any effects.

Participants

In an attempt to bring a wider variety of individuals into the sample and avoid the potential pitfalls of doing experiments simply on college sophomores enrolled in an introductory government class, I sought participants for the study by placing classified in the part-time employment sections of both the campus newspaper, *The Daily Texan*, and the local newspaper, *The Austin American-Statesman*. The ads ran concurrently over a total period of about a week and read as follows:

> Earn $25 to $40 in 1 hour. UT grad student seeks volunteers to participate in research survey on a weekend afternoon. Must be at least 18 to participate. For more information, call ###-####.

Individuals who responded to the ad were asked pick one of five times over the course of the weekend of October 19 and 20.[45] To avoid any self-selection bias respondents were not told about the differences between the sessions until after they had chosen a time. Therefore, among those who replied to the ad, the assignment to a particular section was essentially random, unless there is a distinction between choosing to participate on a Saturday afternoon, as opposed to a Sunday afternoon.[46] All respondents were told that they would be asked to read over some information and to fill out a series of surveys. They were then informed about the amount of money that they would be paid (see below), and given directions to the campus and building if necessary. A surprisingly small percentage of the respondents asked what the purpose of the research was, or what

[45] This weekend was chosen to be near Election Day in order to provide the most difficult test of my hypotheses by increasing the chances that individuals had prior information about the candidates for governor. It was also chosen as a weekend on which the University of Texas football team was playing an away game in the evening, well after the last session had finished, to minimize the potential effects of excluding large percentages of local football fans from the sample.

[46] As will be explained below, the choice of a particular session was irrelevant to the assignment of a particular condition within the same day.

type of information they would be asked about. Those who did were told that I was examining "the way that individuals react to certain types of information presented in the media." If they asked for more specific information, I informed them that I could not go into any greater detail until after they had completed the surveys. Thirty-five respondents were signed up for each section, for a total of 175 potential participants. In order to increase the actual participation rate, each respondent was either phoned or e-mailed during the two days before the sessions began to remind them about the sessions.

The respondents for the first set of experiments, which took place on Saturday, were asked to fill out a pre-experiment survey which, among other things, asked a series of demographic questions, the results of which are summarized below (See Table B.1, B.2, B.3, B.4, and B.5). Although the participants on the second day were not given a similar survey, there was no obvious demographic difference between them and the first day's participants. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that these numbers are at least somewhat representative of the entire sample.

Table B.1
Age

	Frequency	Percent
18-24	43	47.3
25-29	15	16.5
30-39	18	19.8
40-49	9	9.9
50-59	3	3.3
60-69	3	3.3
Total	91	100.0

Table B.2
Race

	Frequency	Percent
African American	9	9.9
Asian	14	15.4
Caucasian	46	50.5
Hispanic	20	22.0
Other	2	2.2
Total	91	100.0

Table B.3
Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Female	64	70.3
Male	27	29.7
Total	91	100.0

Table B.4
Highest Level of Education

	Frequency	Percent
High school diploma	8	8.8
Some college	38	41.8
College degree	35	38.5
Advanced degree	10	11.0
Total	91	100.0

Table B.5
Years Lived in Austin

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	11	12.1
1-2 years	11	12.1
2-5 years	24	26.4
5-10 years	16	17.6
10-20 years	13	14.3
more than 20 years	16	17.6
Total	91	100.0

A quick examination of these numbers illustrates some of the strengths and weaknesses of the sample. First, although 18 to 24 year olds do represent a plurality of the sample, a majority of the participants were above the normal college age. Second, the sample is fairly diverse racially, with almost 50% of participants categorizing themselves as something other than Caucasian. The participants' length of residence also varied considerably, with a significant number of both new and long-time Austin residents. On the other hand, the sample is clearly heavily dominated by women and by individuals with above average levels of education.

Experiment 1

The first experiment was designed to measure the impact of information about polls on respondents' expectations about the outcome of the upcoming gubernatorial elections, their preference among the candidates in the race, and their intention to vote in the November elections. The experiments followed a very basic format, with respondents filling out a survey, then being given the experimental treatment, and finally being asked

to fill out a second survey. The easiest way to approach this would have been to ask respondents for their expectations, candidate preferences, and turnout intention in both the pre- and post-treatment surveys, however, this would have presented a serious problem within the theoretical framework of the study. The benefit of the experiment, of course, is that the experimenter controls which information the participants are given. In this case, the only information relating to politics or to the specific race that I wanted to give them was information about the results of public opinion polls. To provide them with other types of political information during the experiments would only confuse the results. However, if the respondents were aware before being given the treatment that the purpose of the study was to measure their political preferences and intentions, the reported polls would have clearly stood out to the participants as the crucial piece of information they were supposed to react to. This would create two problems. First, it might lead to an overstatement of the power of polls, since participants would likely place an extra emphasis on this information when filling out the final survey. Second, since it is likely that the effect of polls is best explained by the on-line model of information processing, the thought processes involved in such an experiment would be very different from those I expect take place in the real world. Therefore, the pre-experiment survey asked only one explicitly political question, asking respondents to identify which party they felt closest to. This provided a baseline that is highly correlated with vote choice without making it obvious what the point of the experiment was. Additionally, to further confuse the purpose of the study, a series of questions completely unrelated to the gubernatorial campaign was also asked in the preliminary survey,

covering such topics as their reading habits, interest in sports, and participation in the Texas lottery.[47]

The treatments in this experiment involved three packets of newspaper articles given to the participants after they had completed their preliminary survey. Participants in the first condition received six newspaper articles taken from the *Austin American-Statesman*'s web site in the week before the sessions. These articles covered generally non-political issues, such as a canceled youth soccer trip, an NCAA hearing about the eligibility of a college swimmer, and a group of well-established novelists who had begun to write stories aimed at children. Participants in the second and third experimental conditions were given the same set of articles as the first, but with an extra (and fictitious) article included in the middle of the packet. For the second group, this article presented the results of a public opinion poll which showed the race for governor to be in a statistical dead heat. The remainder of the article emphasized how close the contest was, as well as the fact that both candidates were still confident of their ability to win the election. The third group received an article which showed that Rick Perry, the incumbent, had a 12 point lead over the challenger, Tony Sanchez, and emphasized that it would be very difficult for Sanchez to make up that ground in the few weeks remaining before the election.[48]

The post treatment survey then contained four political questions, along with a series of unrelated questions, in order to maintain the participants uncertainty about the point of the experiment. The survey asked respondents about their intention to vote, their

[47] The full survey is reprinted in the appendix.
[48] The text of the manipulated articles is included in the appendix.

candidate preference, their expectations about who would win the election, and whether or not they expected to race to be close. The unrelated questions were connected to the non-political articles in the packet, so as to make sure that those other articles seemed just as important as the political one.[49]

Of the 105 individuals who signed up to participate in the Saturday session, 91 showed up over the course of three different sessions. As participants entered the classroom, they were greeted, their names were checked off on the sign up sheet, and they were given a consent form which more fully explained what they would be asked to during the experiment. Participants were asked to read and sign the consent form, and encouraged to ask any questions they may have had at that time. The form described the process of the experiment and described the purpose of the experiment as an attempt to understand the way that different people react to the news articles.[50] After they had had their questions answered and signed the consent form, a research assistant then gave them the preliminary survey and asked them to fill it out. Upon completion of the preliminary survey, the participants returned it to the research assistant and were given their packet of articles to read. After they had finished reading the articles, they were then given the final survey to complete. When they had returned the final survey, they were then paid $30 for their participation. Because no interaction among participants was required, and was in fact discouraged, participants began the process when they arrived and finished at their own speed. In order to avoid any bias in the assignment of conditions and to maintain an equal number within each condition, the packets were alternated so that the first participant was

[49] The complete post-treatment survey is included in the appendix.
[50] The complete consent form is included in the appendix.

assigned to the first condition, the second participant to the second condition, and the third participant to the third condition. This was then repeated for each successive group of three participants.

Experiment 2 and 3

The second and third experiments were conducted in the same sessions with the same participants, and were designed to measure the impact of polling information on voters in a completely neutral setting through a series of simulated elections. The first 15 simulated elections involved two-candidate races, while the final 10 elections involved three-candidate races. Of the 70 individuals who had signed up to participate in the two Sunday sessions, 49 actually participated. Each participant provided 25 separate cases, reporting both a turnout and vote-choice intention for each election.

The actual experiments were conducted as simulated elections in which all of the participants were given a short period of time to read over some information about the candidates' issue positions, the poll results, and the candidates' positions on a series of fictitious and unidentifiable issues. The problem in this experiment was to create both a set of pre-existing preferences for the participants, as well as to leave them with sufficient uncertainty about how to apply those preferences, that the poll results might matter in a two-candidate race, as they should in real life. Although voting strategically is completely rational when more than two candidates are running for the same office, there is no reason to vote strategically in a two-way race where preferences are completely clear. At most, a potential voter who believes that his or her preferred candidate will not

win may simply choose not to vote. In order to create the more realistic situation, in which many voters may know what they want from politicians, but not know who will give it to them, all of the information about the candidates' stands on the issues was incomplete. In each case, the candidates' positions and the voters' positions were compared across five issues.[51] For each candidate, as well as for their personas in each particular election, participants were given information about three of the issues. In some cases, the information lined up well enough that it should have been easy for participants to come to a decision about which candidate they were ideologically closer to. In other cases, the information presented to them was significantly more difficult to use to choose a candidate.

In order to give participants an incentive to take their task seriously, as well as to vary the intensity of their preferences, they were given information for each election about the possible payoffs they could get in each election, although not told which candidate corresponded to which payoff.[52] As in a real election, they had to try to figure out whose victory would be better for them. In the two-candidate elections, participants were assigned to one of three conditions for each election. In the first condition, they would get .75 if the leading candidate won and .25 if the trailing candidate won. In the second condition, they would receive .55 if the leading candidate won, and .45 if the

[51] The five issues were intentionally worded in such a way as to not convey any actual information about their content which might trigger the participants' personal preferences, and thus confuse the results. The issues were presented as: the treaty currently being considered by the Senate, the Miller Bill which is under consideration in the House of Representatives, a recent Supreme Court decision, a proposal to reform the current budget process, and recommendations of the current administrations panel on government reorganization

[52] It is not uncommon in voting experiments to assign payoffs to participants based on the outcomes of the session. See for examples McKelvey and Ordeshook (1990) and Dawes et al (1986).

trailing candidate won. In the third and final condition, they would get .25 if the leading candidate won and .75 if the trailing candidate won.[53] Of course, they were not given all of this information, but merely told that in a particular election a victory for one of the candidate's would be worth .75 to them, while a victory for the other candidate would be worth .25, and so on. Therefore, the wording on the instrument was identical for the first and third conditions. In the three candidate elections, all of the participants were told that a victory by the candidate who was in third place was worth the most to them, and then given one of three payoff conditions. The first group was told that one of the candidates was worth .20 to them, a second was worth .30, and the third place candidate was worth .75 to them. The second group was told that one candidate was worth .15 to them, a second was worth .50, and the third place candidate was worth .75. The final group was told that one candidate was worth .35 to them, a second worth .40, and third place candidate .50.

Participants were also given the results of the latest public opinion polls for each election. These were varied from election to election, but constant for all participants within each election. In the two-candidate elections, the results either indicated that the race was tied, that one of the candidates had a 5 point lead, or that one of the candidates had a 15 point lead, although the actual numbers varied in different elections. In the three-candidate elections, the results either showed a very close race between the first two candidates, with the third place candidate drawing a very significant share of the vote, or a very tight race at the top, with the third place candidate with a very small share of the

[53] All of the conditions are outlined in the appendix.

vote, yet enough to change the outcome, or in the third category, a large lead by the first place candidate over the second, with the third place candidate far behind and lacking the support to make a difference.

Finally, participants were told that voting in any given election would cost them .05. This was done to simulate the cost of voting, and thus provide them with some incentive to consider not voting in any given election. They were also told that they would receive the payoff based on the results of the election, regardless of whether or not they actually voted.

The candidate and party names used in the experiment were chosen carefully in order to prevent this information from providing the participants with clues about whom to vote for. Therefore, within each election, candidates were all given names implying the same gender, thus eliminating gender as a voting cue. The candidates names were also chosen to ensure that they did not suggest differences in race or ethnicity between the candidates. The names of the parties were also chosen to avoid any connection to real politics, and thus the elections pitted candidates of the Plaid Party against candidates of the Striped Party, with third party candidates of the Spotted Party participating in some of the elections.

Examples of the information presented to the participants is presented in the appendix, but a summary of the different possible conditions would be helpful. For each experiment, participants could fall in any of 18 different experimental conditions (See Table B.6) Thus, in the two-candidate races, some individuals should have preferred the candidate leading in the polls, with varying degrees of intensity, which others should

have preferred the trailing candidate. Some elections were very close, increasing the importance of any given vote, but giving no real guidance about which might be the better candidate, while other elections had a clear leader without a safe lead, and

Table B.6
Two-Candidate Elections

Condition	Pay Scale[1]	Sample Poll Result[2]	Level of Information
1	.75, .25	45, 45, 10	High
2	.75, .25	45, 45, 10	Low
3	.55, .45	45, 45, 10	High
4	.55, .45	45, 45, 10	Low
5	.25, .75	45, 45, 10	High
6	.25, .75	45, 45, 10	Low
7	.75, .25	47, 42, 10	High
8	.75, .25	47, 42, 10	Low
9	.55, .45	47, 42, 10	High
10	.55, .45	47, 42, 10	Low
11	.25, .75	47, 42, 10	High
12	.25, .75	47, 42, 10	Low
13	.75, .25	52, 37, 11	High
14	.75, .25	52, 37, 11	Low
15	.55, .45	52, 37, 11	High
16	.55, .45	52, 37, 11	Low
17	.25, .75	52, 37, 11	High
18	.25, .75	52, 37, 11	Low

[1]Payout if the leading candidate wins, payout if the trailing candidate wins
[2]Percent supporting leading candidate, percent supporting trailing candidate, percent undecided.

still others presented a likely blowout. Finally, some voters had relatively useful information to help them choose a candidate, while others did not.

In the three-candidate races, all of the participants should have most preferred the candidate in third place, with the second place candidate being their next best option.

However, the difference in payouts between the candidates varied, with some having strong incentives to act strategically and others not. The polls created three scenarios. The third party supporters might be able to swing the outcome by voting strategically, but

Table B.7
Three-Candidate Elections

Condition	Pay Scale[1]	Sample Poll Result[2]	Level of Information
1	.20, .30, .75	37, 35, 28	High
2	.20, .30, .75	37, 35, 28	Low
3	.15, .50, .75	37, 35, 28	High
4	.15, .50, .75	37, 35, 28	Low
5	.35, .40, .50	37, 35, 28	High
6	.35, .40, .50	37, 35, 28	Low
7	.20, .30, .75	49, 47, 4	High
8	.20, .30, .75	49, 47, 4	Low
9	.15, .50, .75	49, 47, 4	High
10	.15, .50, .75	49, 47, 4	Low
11	.35, .40, .50	49, 47, 4	High
12	.35, .40, .50	49, 47, 4	Low
13	.20, .30, .75	55, 40, 5	High
14	.20, .30, .75	55, 40, 5	Low
15	.15, .50, .75	55, 40, 5	High
16	.15, .50, .75	55, 40, 5	Low
17	.35, .40, .50	55, 40, 5	High
18	.35, .40, .50	55, 40, 5	Low

[1]Payout if the leading candidate wins, payout if the trailing candidate wins, payout if third place candidate wins
[2]Percent supporting leading candidate, percent supporting trailing candidate, percent supporting third place candidate.

their candidate had enough support that they could persuade themselves that he or she could still win. The third party supporters sometimes faced a pure strategic voting scenario – their candidate had enough support to change the outcome, but not nearly enough support to be expected to win. Finally, they may have found themselves in an

election where strategic voting would not pay off – their candidate trailed badly and did not have enough support to threaten the leading candidates margin of support. Here, again, some voters had relatively useful information to help them choose a candidate, while others did not.

As participants arrived for the actual sessions, they were greeted by one of the three research as assistants whom I hired to run the session and signed in. They were then given a consent form to read and sign after asking any questions they may have had about the experiment. The consent form explained that the purpose of the experiment was to try to understand how voters make decisions about elections with limited information.[54] As before, the exact nature of the research was not revealed to the participants in order to prevent them from placing any extra emphasis on the poll results presented that they would not have otherwise. Additionally, the research assistants who ran the sessions were also kept in the dark about the true purpose of the experiments, in order to prevent them from placing any undue emphasis on my expectations when instructing the participants.

When all of the participants had arrived and signed their consent forms, one of the research assistants provided them with verbal instructions about how to participate in the experiment and walked them through a sample experiment.[55] He then answered participants questions, and began the experiment. Each participant was given a packet of 25 election worksheets. Each packet was unique, and the participants' experimental condition in any given election was random. After reading the information about that

[54] The complete consent form is presented in the Appendix D.
[55] The text of the verbal instructions is presented in the Appendix D.

particular election, the participants were then asked to answer two questions each time – whether or not they wanted to vote, and which candidate they would prefer, regardless of whether or not they actually intended to vote. At the end of each election, participants passed the worksheet for that election to the side where they were collected and the votes tallied by another research assistant. I then kept track of how much money each participant earned based on the outcome of each election. For the two-candidate races, the expressed preferences of all participant who had chosen to vote were simply added up. In the three candidate races, only votes for the top two candidates were counted, since the third place candidate was not in a position to win any of the elections. After the last election results were tallied, participants were asked to present the research assistants with a slip of paper with their participant number on it, and were paid for their participation. Each participant earned $20 for participating, plus whatever they earned based on the results of the elections. At this time, participants were debriefed about the actual purpose of the experiments and given a chance to ask any questions.

Summary

Combined, these experiments included 140 participants, who provided data on 1366 individual voting decisions. The controlled circumstances of the experiments, as well as the variation in experimental design allow for a much more thorough and difficult test of the possible effects of polling information on the voting behavior of average citizens than an analysis of survey data alone could provide. The next three chapters will

make use of this data to examine how information about the state of the race in a presidential election may affect candidate preference, turnout, and strategic voting.

Appendix C

Experiment 1

IRB# 2002-09-0004

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

The University of Texas at Austin

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) or his/her representative will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study:

Media and Information Processing: How Different Individuals React to the News

Principal Investigator(s) (include faculty sponsor), UT affiliation, and Telephone Number(s):

Joseph D. Giammo, Graduate Student, Department of Government, 471-5121
Daron Shaw, Professor, Department of Government, 471-5121

Funding source:

Personal funds

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to try to understand the way that different people react to the news articles. This survey will involve approximately 90 individuals total.

What will be done if you take part in this research study?

If you agree to participate in this research study, you will be given a survey that will ask you for some basic information about yourself. You will then be given a packet of current newspaper articles to read on a variety of subjects that may interest you. After you have

read through the articles, you will be given a second survey to fill out, which will ask you some questions about your opinions about the subjects that these articles talk about.

What are the possible discomforts and risks?

This study involves only minimal risks to you. The tasks which you are asked to complete will be similar to those you might carry out in a classroom or office on an average day.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others?

Although this study will hopefully help to improve our understanding of how people react to different types of information in the media, there are no other particular advantages to the participants.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?

There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

You will receive $30 upon completion of the second survey.

What if you are injured because of the study?

There is no reason to believe that any injury will result from participation in this study. However, should any injury occur during your participation in this research, no treatment will be provided for research related injury and no payment can be provided in the event of a medical problem.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to

you?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin.

How can you withdraw from this research study and who should I call if I have questions?

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should contact: Joe Giammo at (512) 471-5121 . You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time

without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, 512/232-4383.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. If the research project is sponsored then the sponsor also have the legal right to review your research records. Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.

Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?

No.

Signatures:

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent **Date**

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name of Subject **Date**

Signature of Subject **Date**

Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

Participant # _____

Preliminary Survey

Please answer the following questions by circling the response that is most appropriate:

1. How old are you?
    a. 18 – 24
    b. 25 – 29
    c. 30 – 39
    d. 40 – 49
    e. 50 – 59
    f. 60 – 69
    g. 70 or older

2. What is your race or ethnicity?
    a. African American
    b. Asian
    c. Caucasian
    d. Hispanic
    e. Native American
    f. Other. Please specify _____

3. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female

4. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
    a. Less than high school
    b. High school diploma
    c. Some college
    d. College degree
    e. Advanced degree

5. How long have you lived in Austin?
    a. Less than 1 year
    b. More than 1 year but less than 2 years
    c. More than 2 years but less than 5 years
    d. More than 5 years but less than 10 years
    e. More than 10 years but less than 20 years
    f. More than 20 years

6. Where do you get most of your news?
    a. Television
    b. Newspaper
    c. Radio
    d. The internet
    e. Conversations with friends or coworkers

7. How often do you pay attention to the news?
    a. Every day
    b. At least 3 days a week
    c. Once or twice a week
    d. Rarely
    e. Never

8. How closely do you follow local sports?
    a. Very closely
    b. Occasionally
    c. Rarely
    d. Never

9. Which of the following statements most closely describes you?
    a. I generally consider myself to be a Democrat
    b. I generally consider myself to be a Republican
    c. I generally consider myself to be a member of a political party other than the Democrats or Republicans
    d. I generally consider myself to be an independent
    e. I am not interested in politics

10. How often do you play the Texas Lottery?
    a. Every week
    b. Once a month
    c. A couple of times a year
    d. Never

11. How many books would you guess that you read in a year?
    a. 1 – 5
    b. 6 – 10
    c. 11 – 15
    d. 15 – 20
    e. More than 20

12. Do you own a computer?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Second Experimental Condition

Governor's Race Too Close to Call

By Erich Rakestraw
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF
Tuesday, October 15, 2002

With one month left before the November elections, the race for governor is as tight as any in recent memory, leaving experts unwilling to make predictions about who will emerge the victor in this hard-fought campaign. A Texas News Service poll released today indicates that voters are split between Republican Rick Perry and Democrat Tony Sanchez.

The telephone survey of 886 likely voters showed 43 percent supporting Perry, with 42 percent supporting Sanchez. That slim lead is well within the polls four percent margin of error, resulting in a statistical dead heat.

A spokesman for the Perry campaign said that the Governor is still confident that the people will choose him over his opponent, but the Sanchez campaign is not so sure.

"This is still anybody's ballgame," said Mark McKenzie, Information Director for the Sanchez Campaign. "We believe that the upcoming debate will be crucial in persuading independent voters to support Mr. Sanchez."

Brian Brox, Government Professor at the University of Texas, who has been closely following the campaign, agrees. "The important thing that this poll tells us," he said, " is that almost one in seven likely voters is still undecided. Any major development in the next month, from a bad performance in the debate, to a last minute scandal, or even just a particularly effective ad campaign could make the difference either direction."

Third Experimental Condition

Perry Maintains Lead in Latest Poll

By Erich Rakestraw
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF
Tuesday, October 15, 2002

With one month left before the November elections, Democratic candidate Tony Sanchez faces an uphill battle in his attempt to unseat Republican Rick Perry in the race for governor.

A Texas News Service poll released today shows Perry maintaining a double-digit lead over his opponent as the two candidates reach the home stretch of the campaign. The telephone survey of 886 likely voters showed 50 percent supporting Perry, with only 38 percent supporting Sanchez. The poll has a four percent margin of error.

A spokesman for the Perry campaign said that the poll illustrates that the Governor's message is resonating with voters. "Clearly, the people are happy with the job that Governor Perry has done over the past two years and want to give him a chance to continue to help improve the lives of all Texans," said Eric Stroupe, Media Relations Director for the Perry Campaign.

Mark McKenzie, Information Director for the Sanchez campaign disagrees. "This race is far from over. Obviously we have a tough job ahead of us, but we believe that when the voters get a chance to see the candidates debate the issues head to head later this month, they will realize that Mr. Sanchez is the better choice for Texas."

Brian Brox, Government Professor at the University of Texas, who has been closely following the campaign, sees little hope for Sanchez. "It is not impossible to imagine Sanchez gaining ground at this point, but he really needs some help. Although the debate will give him a chance to reach undecided voters and to try to persuade some Perry supporters to change sides, it will be extremely difficult to make up a 12 point deficit in the time left without some grave mistake by the Governor."

Participant # _____

Final Survey

Please answer the following questions by circling the response that is most appropriate:

1. Should athletes who transfer from one university to another be required by the NCAA to sit out for a year before they can participate in athletic competitions at their new schools?
    a. Yes
    b. No

2. Do you believe that athletic departments at major colleges and universities are more concerned with winning or with following the rules?
    a. Winning
    b. Following the rules

3. Do you intend to vote in the November election for Governor of Texas?
    a. Yes
    b. No

4. If the election for Governor were held today, whom would you vote for?
    a. Rick Perry
    b. Tony Sanchez
    c. Someone else

5. Who do you think will be elected Governor of Texas in November?
    a. Tony Sanchez
    b. Rick Perry
    c. Someone else

6. Do you think that the November election for Governor of Texas will be close, or do you think one of the candidates will win by a lot?
    a. It will be close
    b. One of the candidates will win by a lot

7. How important do you think it is for children under the age of 13 to read regularly outside of school?
    a. Very important
    b. Somewhat important
    c. Not important

8. Some novels aimed at children contain political messages. When thinking about these types of books, which of the following statements is closest to your own opinion?
    a. Parents need to closely watch which novels children are reading to make sure that they are not being exposed to messages that the parents do not approve of.
    b. Parents should allow their children to experience a broad range of views, even if they differ from the parents' own beliefs.

9. In light of the events of the previous week, where a sniper has killed several individuals in the Washington, D.C. area, do you believe that large events should be cancelled until this individual is caught?
    a. Yes, it is necessary for public safety
    b. No, we cannot let criminals intimidate us

10. What should be the punishment for fleeing from a police officer who has stopped you for speeding?
    a. A fine of less than $100
    b. A fine of more than $100
    c. Less than a month in jail
    d. More than a month in jail

11. Which type of computer do you prefer?
    a. Macintosh
    b. PC
    c. No preference

12. Over the past decade, Austin's economy has become increasingly driven by high tech companies like Dell, IBM, and Motorola. These companies have helped to bring economic growth and jobs to the area, but this growth has also increased our traffic problems and driven up the cost of housing. In your opinion, has the impact of these high tech companies been more beneficial or more harmful to the residents of Austin and the surrounding areas?
    a. more beneficial
    b. more harmful

Appendix D

Experiments 2 and 3

IRB# 2002-09-0004

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

The University of Texas at Austin

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) or his/her representative will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study:

How Voters Make Decisions With Limited Information

Principal Investigator(s) (include faculty sponsor), UT affiliation, and Telephone Number(s):

Joseph D. Giammo, Graduate Student, Department of Government, 471-5121
Daron Shaw, Professor, Department of Government, 471-5121

Funding source:

Personal funds

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to try to understand the way that individuals make decisions about voting in different situations. Voters rarely know everything there is to know about candidates in an election. Some voters may care more about the results of a particular election than others. Additionally, some races may be more interesting than others. This study will attempt to study these decisions by having you put yourself into the shoes of

different types of voters with limited information and asking you to make the best decisions you can in those situations. Approximately 60 people will participate in this study.

What will be done if you take part in this research study?

If you agree to participate in this research study, you will be given a series of different scenarios which will offer you limited information about fictitious elections. You will then be asked to decide whether or not you would vote in each election, and if so, how you would vote. After all of these elections are completed, the results will be tabulated and you will be compensated for your participation.

What are the possible discomforts and risks?

This study involves only minimal risks to you. The tasks which you are asked to complete will be similar to those you might carry out in a classroom or office on an average day.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others?

Although this study will hopefully help to improve our understanding of how voters make decisions about elections, there are no other particular advantages to the participants.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?

There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

You will $20 for participating in this survey. You will then have an opportunity to earn between $5 and $20 on top of that, depending on the results of these simulated elections.

What if you are injured because of the study?

There is no reason to believe that any injury will result from participation in this study. However, should any injury occur during your participation in this research, no treatment will be provided for research related injury and no payment can be provided in the event of a medical problem.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin.

How can you withdraw from this research study and who should I call if I have questions?

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should contact: Joe Giammo at (512) 471-5121 . You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, 512/232-4383.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. If the research project is sponsored then the sponsor also have the legal right to review your research records. Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.

Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?

No.

Signatures:

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent **Date**

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name of Subject **Date**

Signature of Subject **Date**

Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

Explanation

I. Thanks for being here. Taped to the desk in front of you is your participant number. It should match the number that will be on the packet you will receive in a moment. That number is very important. You need to bring it with you at the end of the session in order to get paid. You will not be paid without it.

II. We will conduct a series of 25 simulated elections. You will be given different situations and then asked how you would act in those situations. The outcome of the elections will determine how much money you make.

III. For each election, you will be given several pieces of information:
   A. The candidates' names and the parties they belong to (all fictional)
   B. The candidates' standings in the latest polls. Assume for the purpose of this exercise that this was a poll of your fellow participants taken just before we begin. In other words, the poll represents our best guess at how the group will vote in the election.
   C. Limited information about the candidates' positions on some fictitious issues
   D. Limited information about your positions on some fictitious issues.

IV. In each election, one of the candidates will be worth more to you than the other. Part of your job is to decide which candidate is better for you. Sometimes, that may fairly easy to figure out. Sometimes, it may be very difficult.

V. You then need to make 2 decisions for each election:
   A. Do you want to vote? Voting will cost you .05. You will get paid for the election regardless of whether or not you vote, but not voting may hurt your candidate's chances of winning.
   B. Regardless of whether or not you choose to vote, you must decide who you would want to vote for. It is very important that you answer BOTH questions for each election.

VI. 15 of the elections will have 2 candidates, 10 of the elections will have 3 candidates.

VII. At the end of each election, tear off the page and pass it to the side when asked to do so, so that we can tally the votes and figure out how much money you will be paid. We will spend about 2 minutes on each election. If you are not finished when we ask you to pass your ballot, please let us know.

VIII. Now we are going to give you a sample to look at and a chance to ask any questions about how the simulated election will work.

Participant #_____

Election 1

In the election for president, you must choose between John Smith, candidate for the Plaid Party, and Mark Johnson, candidate for the Striped Party. In the latest survey, Smith leads Johnson by a margin of 52% to 37%, with 11% of voters undecided. You must decide if want to vote in the election, and if so whom you want to vote for. Voting will cost you 5 cents, but choosing not to vote may hurt your candidate's chance of winning. Below you will find some information to help you reach a decision.

You will receive 75 cents if one of the candidates wins, but only 25 cents if the other candidate wins.

Issues	John Smith	Mark Johnson	You
The treaty currently being considered by the Senate	Opposed to	In favor of	Opposed to
The Miller Bill which is under consideration in the House of Representatives	?	In favor of	In favor of
A recent Supreme Court decision	?	?	?
A proposal to reform the current budget process	In favor of	?	?
Recommendations of the current administrations panel on government reorganization	Opposed to	In favor of	Opposed to

1. Will you vote?
    a. yes
    b. no

2. Whether or not you are actually planning to vote, whom would you vote for?
    a. Smith
    b. Johnson

Participant #_____

Election 2

In the election for president, you must choose between Cynthia Martin, candidate for the Plaid Party, and Melissa Jackson, candidate for the Striped Party. In the latest survey, Martin and Jackson are tied at 45%, with 10% of voters undecided. You must decide if want to vote in the election, and if so whom you want to vote for. Voting will cost you 5 cents, but choosing not to vote may hurt your candidate's chance of winning. Below you will find some information to help you reach a decision.

You will receive 55 cents if one of the candidates wins, but only 45 cents if the other candidate wins.

Issues	Cynthia Martin	Melissa Jackson	You
The treaty currently being considered by the Senate	?	In favor of	In favor of
The Miller Bill which is under consideration in the House of Representatives	In favor of	?	In favor of
A recent Supreme Court decision	?	Opposed to	?
A proposal to reform the current budget process	In favor of	?	In favor of
Recommendations of the current administrations panel on government reorganization	Opposed to	In favor of	?

1. Will you vote?
    a. yes
    b. no

2. Whether or not you are actually planning to vote, whom would you vote for?
    a. Martin
    b. Jackson

Participant #_____

Election 3

In the election for president, you must choose between Anthony Stewart, candidate for the Plaid Party, and George Martins, candidate for the Striped Party. In the latest survey, Stewart leads Martins by a margin of 47% to 42%, with 10% of voters undecided. You must decide if want to vote in the election, and if so whom you want to vote for. Voting will cost you 5 cents, but choosing not to vote may hurt your candidate's chance of winning. Below you will find some information to help you reach a decision.

You will receive 75 cents if one of the candidates wins, but only 25 cents if the other candidate wins.

Issues	Anthony Stewart	George Martins	You
The treaty currently being considered by the Senate	Opposed to	In favor of	In favor of
The Miller Bill which is under consideration in the House of Representatives	?	In favor of	Opposed to
A recent Supreme Court decision	?	?	?
A proposal to reform the current budget process	In favor of	?	?
Recommendations of the current administrations panel on government reorganization	Opposed to	In favor of	In favor of

1. Will you vote?
    a. yes
    b. no

2. Whether or not you are actually planning to vote, whom would you vote for?
    a. Stewart
    b. Martins

Participant #_____

Election 16

In the election for president, you must choose between Brett Anthony, candidate for the Plaid Party, Thomas Largent, candidate for the Striped Party, and Neal Lucas, candidate for the Spotted Party. In the latest survey, 37% of respondents said they intended to vote for Anthony, 35% said they intended to vote for Largent, and 28% said they intended to vote for Lucas. You must decide if want to vote in the election, and if so whom you want to vote for. Voting will cost you 5 cents, but choosing not to vote may hurt your candidate's chance of winning. Below you will find some information to help you reach a decision.

You will receive 75 cents if Lucas wins, but less if Anthony or Largent wins. Victory for one will pay you 20 cents, while victory for the other will pay you 30 cents.

Issues	Anthony	Largent	Lucas	You
The treaty currently being considered by the Senate	?	In favor	?	?
The Miller Bill which is under consideration in the House of Representatives	Opposed	In favor	In favor	In favor
A recent Supreme Court decision	?	?	Opposed	Opposed
A proposal to reform the current budget process	In favor	?	Opposed	Opposed
Recommendations of the current administrations panel on government reorganization	Opposed	In favor	?	?

1. Will you vote?
    a. yes
    b. no

3. Whether or not you are actually planning to vote, whom would you vote for?
    a. Anthony
    b. Largent
    c. Lucas

Participant #_____

Election 17

In the election for president, you must choose between Elizabeth Davis, candidate for the Plaid Party, Mary Burke, candidate for the Striped Party, and Amy Patterson, candidate for the Spotted Party. In the latest survey, 49% of respondents said they intended to vote for Burke, 47% said they intended to vote for Davis, and 4% said they intended to vote for Patterson. You must decide if want to vote in the election, and if so whom you want to vote for. Voting will cost you 5 cents, but choosing not to vote may hurt your candidate's chance of winning. Below you will find some information to help you reach a decision.

You will receive 75 cents if Patterson wins, but less if Davis or Burke wins. Victory for one will pay you 15 cents, while victory for the other will pay you 50 cents.

Issues	Davis	Burke	Patterson	You
The treaty currently being considered by the Senate	In favor	In favor	Opposed	Opposed
The Miller Bill which is under consideration in the House of Representatives	In favor	?	?	?
A recent Supreme Court decision	?	Opposed	Opposed	Opposed
A proposal to reform the current budget process	In favor	?	Opposed	Opposed
Recommendations of the current administrations panel on government reorganization	?	Opposed	?	?

1. Will you vote?
    a. yes
    b. no

2. Whether or not you are actually planning to vote, whom would you vote for?
    a. Davis
    b. Burke
    c. Patterson

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