

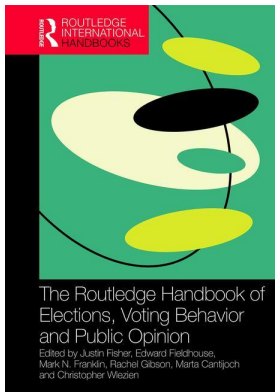
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 03 Oct 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Handbook of Elections, Voting Behavior and Public Opinion

Justin Fisher, Edward Fieldhouse, Mark N. Franklin, Rachel Gibson, Marta Cantijoch, Christopher Wlezien

The acquisition of voting habits

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315712390.ch9>

Elias Dinas

Published online on: 26 Sep 2017

How to cite :- Elias Dinas. 26 Sep 2017, *The acquisition of voting habits from:* The Routledge Handbook of Elections, Voting Behavior and Public Opinion Routledge

Accessed on: 03 Oct 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315712390.ch9>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

9

THE ACQUISITION OF VOTING HABITS

Elias Dinas

A stubborn stylized fact that has been established in the voting behavior literature is that young people vote at lower rates than older people. This age gap seems so persistent across a variety of political contexts and periods as to be often given the status of truism. Evidence abounds, both at the individual (Powell 1986; Highton and Wolfinger 2001; Wattenberg 2007) and the aggregate level (Franklin 2004).¹

Although there is hardly any disagreement about the presence of this gap, its origins remain contested. Even if implicitly, most explanations draw on the calculus of voting (Riker and Ordeshook 1968). According to the classic rational choice paradox, voting represents a collective action problem. On the one hand, individual votes cast cannot affect the outcome and thus any utility derived from the implementation of the desired policy remains independent from individual participation. On the other hand, casting a ballot has non-zero opportunity costs. Taken together, these two conjectures render voting irrational.

Seen from the perspective of rational choice theory, most attempts to account for the age gap in voting point to age-related differences in the cost attached to this action. For example, one set of studies attributes the importance of age to the role of resources (Blais 2007; Martikainen et al. 2005). As people move away from early adulthood, they accumulate life achievements (Plutzer 2002), extend their social networks (Zuckerman 2005), augment their stores of political knowledge (Jennings 1996) and develop their political skills (Glenn and Grimes 1968). These resources can potentially reduce the cost of collecting political information and turning out to vote. Since these attributes tend to correlate positively with age, older people are expected to vote more frequently than younger ones.

An alternative mechanism points to the role of residential mobility (Squire, Wolfinger and Glass 1987). People tend to be more mobile at early adulthood than in later stages of their life trajectory. Voting necessitates information about where and how registration and actual voting take place. This information remains constant for those residing in the same location but varies as individuals change residence. Moreover, residential mobility weakens social ties, which serve as catalysts of electoral mobilization (Franklin 2005). Taken together, these mechanisms explain why the cost of voting is likely to be higher among young voters than among their older counterparts.²

While still targeting the reduction in the cost accompanying the act of voting, a relatively recent literature on turnout has moved away from the standard cost–benefit framework, providing instead a more behavioral explanation for the age gap. The locus of these studies lies in their

conceptualization of voting as “habit forming.” Voting in one election facilitates voting in the next consequent election and thus makes turnout more likely (Fowler 2006). As elections accumulate, individuals, it is argued, gradually develop inertia, which results into continuity in their voting trajectories. Voting becomes then a habitual response to the same contextual stimulus (Cebula, Durden and Gaynor 2008; Aldrich, Montgomery and Wood 2011). Those who start participating in elections are thus likely to end up becoming regular voters. Those who do not will find it more difficult to develop such voting habits.

Using both observational and experimental data, various studies have tested the habit hypothesis and tried to unpack its underlying roots. Although most of the evidence is favorable to the habit thesis, the mechanism driving the habit hypothesis remains unclear. How are voting habits formed? Is this habit formation process symmetric, yielding regular non-voters in the same way as it yields regular voters? Finally, the idea that early electoral experiences leave a long-standing imprint on people’s voting records implies that shocks that may affect turnout at a given point in time are likely to also have long-term effects. This pattern invites a reappraisal of the role of period, life cycle and cohort effects on the probability of voting.

The chapter revisits these questions under the light of the new developments in the literature. The first section reviews the findings of the habit formation hypothesis. The second section builds on these findings to examine the role of early voting experiences. The third section draws on this evidence to assess interventions that have been either suggested or even adopted as an attempt to increase turnout and reduce inequality in electoral participation. As we will see, the habit thesis has informed the debate among policy analysts and commentators. The concluding section highlights a few new directions in this literature.

Voting as habit forming

Although the habit thesis rests on a very simple premise – that voting once increases the chances of voting in the future – testing this idea has been methodologically challenging. People choose whether to vote or not and the factors that explain this decision in one election apply also in the next election. Disentangling their effect from that of previous voting experience is very difficult with observational data. Two different research designs have been employed to overcome this selection problem.³

The first strategy is based on the usage of the downstream benefits of experimentation (Gerber and Green 2002). The key idea here is that the selection problem can be addressed by randomly assigning a mobilization treatment (via a personal, telephone or mail Get-Out-The-Vote [GOTV] message) to induce exogenous variation in turnout in an election at time t_1 . If one is willing to assume that the mobilization impact of the treatment wanes after this election, any remaining gap in the turnout between the treated and the control group over the course of future elections can be attributed to prior voting experience. In other words, the initial boost to vote as a result of a GOTV message translates itself into a persistent gap in turnout rates as a result of the self-reinforcing nature of the act of voting. By responding to their treatment status, units receiving GOTV messages are also assumed to build voting habits.

Gerber, Green and Shachar (2003) were the first to put this idea to the test. They randomly assigned a GOTV message to induce turnout variation in New Haven in the 1998 midterm election. Those who received the treatment appeared approximately 10 percentage points more likely to vote in that election than the control group. What is more important, however, they also kept voting at higher rates in the 1999 local election, one year after the previous election and without any further treatment having been assigned between the two elections. While trying to rule out the possibility of the GOTV message having had lasting mobilization effects,

the authors attribute the 1999 difference to the self-reinforcing nature of the act of voting. They find that having voted in 1998 increases the chances of voting also in 1999 by approximately 50 percent. Similar effects were found in Britain, when Cutts, Fieldhouse and John (2009) replicated this design, looking at the long-term impact of a GOTV experiment. Bedolla and Michelson (2012) extend this evidence by tracing the long-term effects of GOTV campaigns among ethnic minorities in California. The authors look at a series of primary and general elections between 2006 and 2008 and find that a significant part of the mobilization effect that is evident in the former type of election lasts up until the general election. Contrary to this evidence, Michelson (2003) finds no evidence that voting in a municipal election in California (as a result of a successful GOTV campaign) increases turnout in the coming primary election (one year later). Hill and Kousser (2015) report similar null findings, combined with significant first-stage GOTV effects.

A key assumption in these studies is that of exclusion: the GOTV treatment does not impact turnout in election t_2 in any other way than by increasing the propensity to vote in election t_2 . This assumption can be problematic, especially when the GOTV treatment aims at inducing mobilization by triggering specific attributes that are deemed to correlate with high turnout. Examples include GOTV setups that attempt to induce social pressure or civic duty (Gerber, Green and Larimer 2008, 2010; Panagopoulos 2010). As a way to address this concern, a different research design has been employed to isolate the effect of prior voting on future turnout from possible confounders.

Instead of making use of randomly assigned mobilization shocks, a few studies have used the discontinuities arising from voter eligibility status. The key idea here is to compare two groups, the first of which being marginally older than the second, yet sufficiently older so as to be eligible to vote in election t_1 . If the age gap is small enough so as not to leave room for aging-related confounding, one can assume that in expectation eligibles and non-eligibles are similar in all other respects but for the fact that only the former could vote in election t_1 . Since some eligibles have voted in t_1 but none of the non-eligibles did, eligibility operates in a similar way as the GOTV treatment, that is, by inducing as-good-as-random variation in turnout at election t_1 . Comparing these two groups in the next elections could then allow researchers to examine the impact of turnout at election t_1 on voting at election t_2 . Once again, the key assumption upon which the design is based is that eligibility at election t_1 affects turnout at t_2 only via its effect on turnout in t_1 .⁴

The pioneering work in this strand of the literature belongs to Meredith (2009), who compares cohorts of voters in California, showing that cohorts just eligible to vote in 2000 were five percent more likely to vote in 2004 than those born only a few weeks later but not eligible to vote in 2000. Similar findings have been reported by Dinas (2012), who uses a class-cohort study to compare 21-year old survey respondents who were just eligible to vote in the 1968 presidential election with their classmates who were only a few months younger and thus not of age in that election. The author finds that the first group votes at higher rates not only in the 1970 midterm election but also in future presidential elections. Extending this line of research to the study of vote choice, Dinas (2014a) finds that voting in 1968 also resulted into an enduring increase in the strength of partisanship, which lasted at least until 1973. This finding echoes the results from Mullainathan and Washington (2009), who also employed eligibility-based comparisons to examine the attitudinal consequences of voting. The authors found that having voted in a presidential election strengthens support for the chosen candidate and reduces support for the non-voted alternative.

That said, few studies have also reported negative eligibility effects. In particular, using the Florida voter file, Holbein and Hillygus (2016) find that those narrowly ineligible to vote in

2008 voted at higher rates in 2012 than 2008-eligibles. A re-analysis of these data by Nyhan, Skovron and Titiunik (forthcoming) confirm this seemingly counterintuitive pattern.⁵ De Kadt (2017) provides an interesting qualification to previous studies by looking at heterogeneity in first-voting effects according to whether the first election was considered a positive or negative experience. He uses data from South Africa and finds that the relatively low average treatment effects of first-time eligibility in the 1994 South African election are driven by the negative effects among the white South Africans. As the author explains, if the first electoral experience is dominated by a negative emotional state, it can leave a demobilizing shadow on future voting patterns.

In an attempt to systematically combine the two strands of this literature, Coppock and Green (2015) assemble evidence from both GOTV experiments and eligibility-based discontinuity designs. In both sets of analysis, the authors test the impact of voting in the upstream election (in which the encouragement-to-vote treatment has been applied) on the probability of also voting in the downstream election. They find overwhelming evidence in favor of the habit formation thesis. Although voting effects seem stronger when both upstream and downstream elections are of similar type, they hold for all combinations of elections – midterm to midterm; midterm to presidential; presidential to presidential; and presidential to midterm. The authors also try to explore whether the self-reinforcing pattern in turnout is due to internalized habit or alternative mobilization effects stemming from induced vote in election t_1 .⁶ Voting in the upstream election might increase political engagement, which in turn leads to information-seeking behavior and attitudes. Such change is sufficient to encourage turnout in future elections even in the absence of habit. To test this possibility, Coppock and Green (2015) look at heterogeneity in eligibility effects according to the saliency of the upstream election. Being of age to vote in a more salient election should be accompanied by higher mobilization effects. However, there seems to be no substantive difference in the magnitude of eligibility effects on voting in subsequent elections between low- and high-saliency elections. By the same token, the authors report results from previous analyses (Rogers et al. 2014; Dinas 2012) showing negligible change in turnout-inducing campaign contact as a result of voting in election t_1 . Taken together, these findings lend support to the idea that at least in part continuity in voting patterns is driven by internalized habit.

An intriguing finding from Coppock and Green (2015) is that the eligibility analysis denotes more durable effects than the GOTV analysis. A meta-analysis of eligibility-based discontinuities reveals enduring voting habits, which persist over a period of at least 20 years. The GOTV effects, on the other hand, appear to dissipate over time. As Coppock and Green note, a potential explanation for this divergence relates to the subgroup affected by the encouragement-to-vote treatment. By definition, eligibility thresholds apply to first-time voters. In contrast, mobilization messages are assigned to the electorate as a whole. As a consequence, eligibility estimates voting effects for young voters whereas GOTV experiments provide a weighted average of treatment effects across the full range of age.

The question that naturally follows from this explanation is why voting treatments exert stronger influence on young voters than older ones. The next section addresses this question, looking at new developments in social psychology, sociology and the voting behavior literature.

Early voting experiences

Applying the standard intuition of Bayesian inference, past research on political change has envisioned political attitudes as evolving through a process of continuous updating. Individuals,

it is argued, weight the information available to them and form political preferences based on this information (Achen 1992). More recent shocks are weighted more heavily than earlier information that has accumulated into individuals' mental storage (Gerber and Green 1998). Under this perspective, change is likely to occur at any point during the life cycle and to reflect more vividly the impact of current events, which gradually replace past experiences (Grynaviski 2006).

This idea has been challenged by a strand of literature that sees non-trivial differences in the propensity for attitude change across different stages of the life trajectory. Individuals, according to the so-called impressionable years hypothesis, are more likely to change their political attitudes and voting patterns when they are still in their adolescence and early adulthood (Sears and Funk 1999, Krosnick and Alwin 1989, Osborne et al. 2011). Two reasons have been provided. The first is related to changes in the social and political environment. Early adulthood is characterized by increased levels of residential mobility, often accompanied by change in peers and the social context within which individuals operate. More often than not, these life developments introduce new political stimuli, which might question people's priors (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). The second explanation points to age-related differences in the weight attached to political messages. Being still in the process of attitude formation, young individuals are more susceptible to new information and thus more likely to alter their views under the light of new political influences (Dinas 2014b).

Empirical evidence seems to provide considerable support to this hypothesis. Sears and Valentino (1997) show that electoral campaigns serve to crystallize political attitudes among adolescents, especially toward salient political objects, such as parties and their candidates. In so doing, elections operate as periodic catalysts of political socialization, leaving an enduring imprint on young individuals' attitudinal and behavioral outlooks. Similar evidence is provided by Bartels and Jackman (2014), who use presidential elections as political shocks and develop a flexible model to allow differential weights on people's partisan profiles. They find that shocks taking place in earlier stages of the life span are more powerful in coloring people's partisanship. As they argue, the weight of the past is simply too heavy to be accounted for by tidy Bayesian learning models. This conclusion is echoed also in Ghitza and Gelman's (2015) generational analysis, which shows that the dominant partisan tides during teenage and early adult years are pivotal in shaping enduring partisan predispositions. Looking at a more concrete example of the impact of political environment during early adulthood, Erikson and Stoker (2011) have demonstrated the long-term implications of policy interventions. The authors show that young individuals with higher probability of being drafted to join the American army in the Vietnam war developed long-standing anti-Republican sentiments.

Research in social psychology has explicitly tried to unpack the psychological mechanism explaining why young adults are more prone to attitudinal change. Schuman and Corning (2012) have used surveys in which respondents are asked which political events come closer to mind. On the one hand, Bayesian updating would lead to the expectation that more recent events are more easily sampled from the storage of political information. The formative years hypothesis, on the other hand, would lead to the expectation that events taking place during the period of adolescence and early adulthood exert a more notable impact on attitude crystallization and are thus more likely to remain rigid in people's memories. They provide ample evidence in favor of the second hypothesis. Even at the advent of 9/11, respondents socialized during the 1960s referred to political events from that period. Dinas (2013) uses the Watergate scandal as a way to isolate the increased sensitivity mechanism from the change in social environment mechanism. He finds that the Watergate scandal altered people's beliefs and attitudes about Reagan and the Republicans, but its effect was markedly more prominent among young adults (aged between 18 and 30 in 1972). Taken together these studies seem to provide solid evidence about the increased sensitivity of young adults to political stimuli.

This research has important implications about the habit formation thesis. It suggests that early electoral experiences are critical in establishing long-term voting patterns. Anticipating this idea, Plutzer (2002) developed a growth curve model of turnout that allows key predictors to exercise a differential impact on the probability of voting across different stages in people's life trajectory. He found that all key predictors of turnout, such as life achievements, socioeconomic background and parental influence, play a fundamental role in bringing young voters into the polls. After a series of electoral experiences, however, their importance diminishes under the weight of inertia, generated by applying the same response to the same electoral stimuli. Using aggregate data, Franklin (2004) extends this evidence, showing that contextual predictors of turnout are more important among young adults, operationalized as those having experienced up to three general elections. More significantly, Franklin illustrates the gradual but long-term implications of policy interventions for aggregate turnout rates. Indicatively, he shows how the lowering of voting age from 21 to 18 increased the pool of first-time abstainers. Since some of them developed into habitual non-voters, this policy was partly conducive to the gradual decline in turnout rates that has been frequently reported and commented upon by media analysts and political commentators alike.

Extending further this idea, Hobolt and Franklin (2011) reverse the logic of habit formation by examining the long-term effect of early low-mobilization experiences. Applying the logic of the vote eligibility design, the authors make use of variation in the saliency of first-eligible elections to explore the long-term impact on turnout of early low-saliency elections. In particular, they compared European voters according to whether their first-eligible election was a national general election or whether it was an election for the European Parliament (EP) – also known as a second-order election (Reif and Schmitt 1980). The key hypothesis is that early electoral experiences matter not only positively, by boosting turnout, but also negatively, by suppressing it. A national election, which attracts media attention, generates a context that favors turnout to a higher extent than an election of less importance both for elites and for the media. Consistent with the idea of negative early voting experiences, the authors found that, all else being equal, coming of age to vote in an EP election lowers the probability of voting in such an election later in the life span than when coming of age during a national election. Extending the field of enquiry to encompass party choice, Dinas and Riera (forthcoming) report similar findings. Using a similar identification strategy, the authors find that EP eligibles are more likely to vote for small parties in national elections than those first eligible to vote in a national election.

The importance of early voting experiences becomes particularly evident when we compare the impact of policy interventions among younger and older cohorts. A classic example in this respect relates to the study by Firebaugh and Chen (1995), who use theoretical insights from the socialization literature to account for the evolution of the gender gap in turnout in the US. The authors find that women socialized well before the nineteenth amendment (enacted in 1920), were not affected very much by the policy, hence retaining high levels of abstention. Younger cohorts, socialized during and after this important policy intervention, however, were particularly affected, denoting significantly higher levels of turnout. According to this logic, the closing of the gender gap in turnout is the result of generational replacement, with the younger cohorts, socialized in an environment in which women have the right to vote, gradually replacing their older counterparts, who were socialized without voting rights. Dinas (2014c) extends this evidence, looking at the downstream impact of electoral disenfranchisement. He finds that the offspring of women socialized before 1920 denote lower levels of turnout than offspring of women socialized after the nineteenth amendment was enacted.

Taken as a whole, these studies point to the same conclusion. Similar to partisanship and other attitudinal responses, turnout levels are marked by cohort effects, conceptualized as the

interaction between age and period effects. Shocks, which can take the form of elections, political events or policy interventions, hit the young members of the electorate to a greater extent than the rest of the population (cf. van der Brug and Franklin in this volume). In so doing, these influences generate snowball effects, leaving a long-term shadow on young people's political outlooks. Even if other influences intervene later in life, the long-term shadow of these initial experiences remains often apparent in people's turnout profiles. This pattern leads to the formation of distinctive cohorts, which might keep their commonalities, even if partially eroded, over their life span. The next section reviews the lessons we can draw from these findings about the long-term impact of policy interventions designed to combat the decline in turnout and the associated rising inequality in electoral participation.

Policy interventions and habit formation

Irrespective of its analytical vigor, academic research often fails to disseminate its findings within the public discourse. This is not the case for the habit formation literature, however. Perhaps an indication of its policy relevance, the findings from this research seem to have informed policy proposals, sparking an interesting interchange between academics, the media and policy makers. Two increasingly popular policy changes have been frequently discussed among political elites and the media: compulsory voting and lowering voting age.⁷ In what follows I illustrate how the habit formation literature has informed the public discussion on both policies.

Statistics provided by the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) suggest that voting has fallen across OECD countries from around 85 percent in the 1940s to around 65 percent in 2015 (The Economist 2015). Apart from the fact that this decline is in itself worrisome, it also generates rising concerns because it drives increasing inequality in electoral participation. Differential abstention rates among various socioeconomic strata can significantly affect the quality of policy representation. Since resources tend to correlate positively with turnout, abstention is unevenly distributed, mainly affecting below-median-income citizens. In mean-tested welfare worlds, these citizens would be in favor of redistribution and thus more likely to support the left. As a consequence, the idea of introducing (or reviving) compulsory voting has acquired significant support. Bechtel, Hangartner and Schmid (2016) demonstrate nicely the long-term policy implications of compulsory voting by comparing Vaud, a Swiss canton that retained compulsory voting until 1948, with other cantons, in which compulsory voting was abolished in the early twentieth century. They find that leftist proposals put into federal referendums received stronger levels of support in this canton than in cantons without compulsory voting. Similar evidence is provided by Miller (2008), who showed that women's enfranchisement caused a shift in legislative behavior, resulting in growth in public health spending which in turn reduced child mortality by up to 15 percent.

The problem with compulsory voting, however, is that to be binding it requires the activation of sanctions to non-compliers. Monitoring of compliance and application of sanctions are both costly. Applying the findings from the habit formation research can be potentially helpful in reducing such costs. Limiting compulsory voting to individuals' first-eligible election can save resources while ensuring that the first-time voting boost will apply to most of the electorate. Without necessarily approaching the very high levels of turnout observed under compulsory voting, this idea can still generate habitual voters who might have otherwise failed to develop such habits.

Building on the habit formation research, Lodge, Gottfried and Birch (2014), among others, suggested the enactment of compulsory first-eligible voting as a way to increase participation and reduce inequality of participation in the British general elections. This idea has been

given serious consideration by think-tanks and political commentators, sparking a fruitful debate and coming close to becoming Labour's official policy proposal in its 2015 manifesto (Guardian 2014).

Another policy suggestion that has drawn on the literature of voting as habit formation is the lowering of the voting age to 16. This idea has been also popular among pundits and electoral analysts and is based on the assumption that, if voting is habit forming, bringing individuals earlier into the polls will accelerate the formation of voting habits. The problem with this line of argument, however, is that it tends to neglect the mirror image of voting habits, that is, the formation of non-voting habits. As discussed in the previous section, evidence from low-saliency elections points to the long-term repercussions of early demobilizing experiences. Since age appears to correlate negatively with turnout, lowering voting age could exacerbate the problem it is designed to address, especially if the voting age is lowered only for certain types of elections, as has been enacted in Estonia and as was the subject of a government-sponsored experiment in Norway (in both countries voting age was lowered only for municipal elections).

There is, however, a missing parameter that, if taken into consideration, qualifies the pessimistic prediction about the impact of lowering the voting age on aggregate levels of turnout. Focusing on the very first years of adulthood, Bhatti, Hansen and Wass (2012) find a monotone negative relationship between age and turnout. Turnout is higher among eligibles aged 18 or 19 than those aged 20 or 21. Their analysis is based on government records from Denmark, which contain turnout information about the whole population of eligible residents in 44 municipalities. The authors have tried to account for this seemingly counterintuitive pattern, pointing to the importance of parental and peer influence in the decision to cast a ballot in these elections. The first group appears significantly more likely to reside still in their parental home. Parental mobilization seems to be a key factor in explaining turnout during this age. In contrast, those aged 20 or 21 are more likely to have left their parental home and their turnout is now influenced more by the turnout of their peers – typically of approximately the same age (Bhatti and Hansen 2012). Establishing voting age at 16 enhances the chances of finding first-eligible voters in their parental home, thus being more likely to be mobilized to vote. Most of them are still at school, which also serves as an additional force of mobilization. Without having many examples of voting age set at 16, a recent example from Austria seems to confirm this view, showing remarkably high rates of turnout among first-time eligible voters (Zeglovits and Aichholzer 2014). Following the logic of habit formation, this policy might help not only in boosting turnout among first-time voters but also in forming new cohorts of habitual voters. In so doing, it might have significant downstream effects on overall turnout rates.

New directions

Having sparked a voluminous literature, the idea of voting as habit forming, opens a wide array of new questions about the impact of the political context on the formation of voting regularities. Most of the empirical evidence stems from established democracies, characterized by relatively stable party systems, in which political actors have a long history in party competition and easily predictable issue stances and coalition strategies. Extending this evidence to new democracies would help to examine the impact of elections under conditions of uncertainty about the issue stances and coalition strategies of political elites. Since many of these democracies have adopted a semi-presidential system, this research might also help to shed light on the heterogeneity in treatment effects according to different types of elections. While retaining their statues of high-saliency elections, direct elections for the head of state invite more majoritarian electoral systems and often result in ad hoc coalition strategies among parties (Kitschelt 1995).

These characteristics allow researchers to draw inferences about the varying effect of voting beyond a binary distinction between low- and high-saliency elections.

A related line of research involves a closer insight into the mechanism driving continuity in voting patterns. According to Gerber, Green and Shachar (2003), voting habits stem from a process of social identity formation. By casting their vote, individuals come to classify themselves as voters and thus respond to the next electoral campaign by following their group identity. Dinas (2014a) offers a complementary mechanism of group identification. The author finds significant gains in the strength of partisanship as a result of voting in one's first-eligible election (see also van der Brug and Franklin in this volume). Partisanship is well-known to induce turnout (Clarke et al. 2004). It might thus be that both partisanship and turnout represent two habits, formed hand-in-hand. Future research on the interplay between the attitudinal and behavioral consequences of voting would help to disentangle further the mechanism of habit formation. Indeed, given the importance of partisanship in guiding the acquisition of policy preferences (Heath, this volume; Bowler, this volume) it is possible that the act of voting is central to the formation of attitudes and even of ideological beliefs.

Extending the attitudinal implications of early voting experiences beyond partisanship could allow researchers of democratic representation to explore the potential impact of electoral participation on attitudes toward democracy. Does voting in early democratic elections leave an imprint on people's perceptions of regime legitimacy? Even more interestingly, how does the electoral experience affect people's views on subsequent attempts to break the democratic rule? To name just one example, it would be interesting to examine whether voting in the 2012 Egyptian election generates polarization in people's views about the subsequent military regime. Finding that this is the case would constitute interesting evidence about the possible normative implications stemming from the act of voting.

Notes

- 1 The binary distinction between young and older voters should not be interpreted as a monotone relationship between aging and voting. This relationship is in fact curvilinear, as the gains in the probability of voting that accompany increases in age have a threshold, beyond which aging leads to lower turnout rates. This threshold appears in late adulthood, typically due to physical infirmities (Milbrath 1965).
- 2 More than reducing the cost of voting, social ties increase the probability of voting mainly by introducing selective incentives for participation, via peer pressure and the diffusion of social norms (Gerber and Rogers 2009).
- 3 The rationale behind my focus on these two designs – Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) experiments and eligibility-based discontinuities – is that they capture the dominant trend in the literature and are based on more solid identification assumptions than most other studies. That said, this categorization ignores alternative designs that have been employed to address identification concerns. There are at least two such studies, falling outside either of the two categories, which need to be mentioned. Denny and Doyle (2009) use residential mobility before a general election in Britain as an instrument of voting in that election to explore the impact of voting on future turnout rates. They find that voting in one election significantly increases the likelihood of also voting in subsequent national elections. Similar findings are reported by Green and Shachar (2000), who use perceived closeness of the race and ideological distance of candidates as instruments of voting in the treatment election.
- 4 Both GOTV- and eligibility-based designs can be treated as ways of instrumenting turnout at election t_1 . Seen in this way, the instrument in GOTV campaigns satisfies ignorability by design and denotes stronger first stage in low-saliency elections. Eligibility satisfies ignorability in an as-good-as-random fashion (by construction, the two groups differ in terms of age, but such differences are typically non-consequential) and typically performs better in terms of first stage in high-saliency elections. Exclusion can in principle be violated in both designs (both the GOTV message and eligibility itself might exert a long-term impact on turnout).

- 5 Nyhan, Skovron and Titiunik (forthcoming) find similar negative eligibility effects when using voter file data from 42 states (plus the District of Columbia), but as they show, these effects are sensitive to differing registration rates between the two groups. Assuming that eligibles were only 5 percent more likely to register than non-eligibles would turn this negative effect into a positive one.
- 6 It is worth emphasizing that these tests do not directly address problems of exclusion; instead, they try to disentangle the habit mechanism from other alternative mechanisms through which voting in the upstream election might have induced higher turnout rates in the downstream election.
- 7 As an indication of the saliency of these proposals, it might be worth noting that: a) Barack Obama has suggested that it might be a good idea to consider making voting mandatory (The Economist 2015); and b) both the Electoral Reform Society and the Labour Party in the UK suggested the lowering of voting age to 16.

References

- Achen, C. H. (1992) "Social Psychology, Demographic Variables, and Linear Regression: Breaking the Iron Triangle in Voting Research," *Political Behavior*, vol. 14, no. 3, September, 195–211.
- Aldrich, J., Montgomery, J. and Wood, W. (2011) "Turnout as a Habit," *Political Behavior*, vol. 33, no. 4, December, 535–563.
- Bartels, L. M. and Jackman, S. (2014) "A Generational Model of Political Learning," *Electoral Studies*, vol. 33, March 7–18.
- Bechtel, M. M., Hangartner, D. and Schmid, L. (2016) "Does Compulsory Voting Increase Support for Leftist Policy?," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 60, no. 3, July, 752–767.
- Bedolla, L. G. and Michelson, M. R. (2012) *Mobilizing Inclusion: Transforming the Electorate through Get-Out-the-Vote Campaigns*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Bhatti, Y. and Hansen, K. M. (2012) "Leaving the Nest and the Social Act of Voting: Turnout Among First-Time Voters," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Elections*, vol. 22, no. 4, November, 380–406.
- Bhatti, Y., Hansen, K. M. and Wass, H. (2012) "The Relationship Between Age and Turnout: A Roller-Coaster Ride," *Electoral Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, September, 588–593.
- Blais, A. (2006) "What Affects Voter Turnout?," *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 9, June, 111–125.
- Cebula, R. J., Durden, G. C. and Gaynor, P. E. (2008) "The Impact of The Repeat-Voting-Habit Persistence Phenomenon on the Probability of Voting in Presidential Elections," *Southern Economic Journal*, vol. 75, no. 2, October, 429–440.
- Clarke, H., Sanders, D., Stewart, M. and Whiteley, P. (2004) *Political Choice in Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coppock, A. and Green, D. P. (2015) "Is Voting Habit Forming? New Evidence from Experiments and Regression Discontinuities," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 60, no. 4, October, 1044–1062.
- Cutts, D., Fieldhouse, E. and John, P. (2009) "Is Voting Habit Forming? The Longitudinal Impact of a GOTV Campaign in the UK," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, vol. 19, no. 3, August, 251–263.
- De Kadt, D. (2017) "Voting Then, Voting Now: The Long Term Consequences of Participation in South Africa's First Democratic Election," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 79, no. 2, April, 670–697.
- Denny, K. and Doyle, O. (2009) "Does Voting History Matter? Analyzing Persistence in Turnout," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53, no. 1, January, 17–35.
- Dinas, E. (2012) "The Formation of Voting Habits," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Politics*, vol. 22, no. 4, November, 431–456.
- Dinas, E. (2013) "Opening 'Openness to Change': Political Events and the Increased Sensitivity of Young Adults," *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 4, December, 868–882.
- Dinas, E. (2014a) "Does Choice Bring Loyalty? Electoral Participation and the Development of Party Identification," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 58, no. 2, April, 449–465.
- Dinas, E. (2014b) "Why Does the Apple Fall Far from the Tree? How Early Political Socialization Prompts Parent-Child Partisan Dissimilarity," *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 4, October, 827–852.
- Dinas, E. (2014c) "The Long Shadow of Parental Political Socialization on the Development of Political Orientations," *The Forum*, vol. 12, no. 3, October, 397–416.
- Dinas, E. and Riera, P. (forthcoming). "Do European Parliament Elections Impact National Party System Fragmentation?," *Comparative Political Studies*.

- Erikson, R. S. and Stoker, L. (2011) "Caught in the Draft: The Effects of Vietnam Draft Lottery Status on Political Attitudes," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 105, no. 2, May, 221–237.
- Firebaugh, G. and Chen, K. (1995) "Voter Turnout of Nineteenth Amendment Women: The Enduring Effect of Disenfranchisement," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 100, no. 4, January, 972–996.
- Fowler, J. H. (2006) "Habitual Voting and Behavior Turnout," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 65, no. 2, May, 335–344.
- Franklin, M. N. (2004) *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Franklin, M. N. (2005) "You Want to Vote Where Everybody Knows Your Name: Anonymity, Expressive Engagement, and Turnout Among Young Adults," Paper presented to the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington DC, August 31–September 3.
- Gerber, A. S. and Green, D. P. (1998) "Rational Learning and Partisan Attitudes," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 3, July, 794–818.
- Gerber, A. S. and Green, D. P. (2002) "The Downstream Benefits of Experimentation," *Political Analysis*, vol. 10, no. 4, Autumn, 394–402.
- Gerber, A. S. and Rogers, T. (2009) "Descriptive Social Norms and Motivation to Vote: Everybody's Voting and So Should You," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 71, no. 1, January, 178–191.
- Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P. and Larimer, C. W. (2008) "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-scale Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 102, no. 1, February, 33–48.
- Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P. and Larimer, C. W. (2010) "An Experiment Testing the Relative Effectiveness of Encouraging Voter Participation by Inducing Feelings of Pride or Shame," *Political Behavior*, vol. 32, no. 3, September, 409–422.
- Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P. and Shachar, R. (2003) "Voting May Be Habit-Forming: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 3, July, 540–550.
- Ghitza, Y. and Gelman, A. (2015) "The Great Society, Reagan's Revolution, and Generations of Presidential Voting," Unpublished Manuscript, Columbia University.
- Glenn, N. D. and Grimes, M. (1968) "Aging, Voting, and Political Interest," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 33, no. 4, August, 563–575.
- Green, D. P. and Shachar, R. (2000) "Habit Formation and Political Behavior: Evidence of Consuetude in Voter Turnout," *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 30, no. 4, October, 561–573.
- Grynaviski, J. (2006) "A Bayesian Learning Model with Applications to Party Identification," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol. 18, no. 3, July, 323–346.
- Guardian (2014) "Labour Plans to Lower Voting Age to 16," January 23, 2014, available online: www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/23/labour-voting-age-16-mayoral-elections.
- Highton, B., and Wolfinger, R. E. (2001) "The First Seven Years of the Political Life Cycle," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 45, no. 1, January, 202–209.
- Hill, S. J. and Kousser, T. (2015) "Turning Out Unlikely Voters? A Field Experiment in the Top-Two Primary," *Political Behavior*, vol. 38, no. 2, June, 413–432.
- Hobolt, S. and Franklin, M. (2011) "The Legacy of Lethargy: How Elections to the European Parliament Depress Turnout," *Electoral Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1, March, 67–76.
- Holbein, J. B. and Hillygus, D. S. (2016) "Making Young Voters: The Impact of Preregistration on Youth Turnout," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 60, no. 2, April, 364–382.
- Huckfeldt, R. and Sprague, J. (1995) *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jennings, M. K. (1996) "Political Knowledge Over Time and Across Generations," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 2, Summer, 228–252.
- Kitschelt, H. (1995) "Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies Theoretical Propositions," *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 4, October, 447–472.
- Krosnick, J. A., and Alwin, D. F. (1989). "Aging and susceptibility to attitude change." *Journal of personality and social psychology*, vol. 57, no. 3, 416.
- Lodge, G., Gottfried, G. and Birch, S. (2014) *The Political Inclusion of Young Citizens, Policy Report*, London: Democratic Audit.
- Martikainen, P., Martikainen, T. and Wass, H. (2005) "The Effect of Socioeconomic Factors on Voter Turnout in Finland: A Register Based Study of 2.9 Million Voters," *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 44, no. 5, August, 645–669.
- Meredith, M. (2009) "Persistence in Political Participation," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, vol. 4, no. 3, October, 187–209.

- Michelson, M. R. (2003) "Dos Palos Revisited: Testing the Lasting Effects of Voter Mobilization," Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.
- Milbrath, L. W. (1965) *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics?*, Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Miller, G. (2008) "Women's Suffrage, Political Responsiveness, and Child Survival in American History," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 123, no. 3, August, 1287–1327.
- Mullainathan, S. and Washington, E. (2009) "Sticking With Your Vote: Cognitive Dissonance and Political Attitudes," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, vol. 1, no. 1, January, 86–111.
- Nyhan, B., Skovron, C. and Titiunik, R. (forthcoming) "Differential Registration Bias in Voter File Data: A Sensitivity Analysis Approach," *American Journal of Political Science*, available online: www-personal.umich.edu/~titiunik/papers/NyhanSkovronTitiunik2017-AJPS.pdf.
- Osborne, D., Sears, D.O., and Valentino, N.A. (2011) "The end of the solidly democratic South: The impressionable-years hypothesis." *Political Psychology*, vol 32, no. 1, 81–108.
- Panagopoulos, C. (2010) "Affect, Social Pressure and Prosocial Motivation: Field Experimental Evidence of the Mobilizing Effects of Pride, Shame and Publicizing Voting Behavior," *Political Behavior*, vol. 32, no. 3, September, 369–386.
- Plutzer, E. (2002) "Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources and Growth in Young Adulthood," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 96, no. 1, March, 41–56.
- Powell, G. B. (1986) "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 80, no. 1, March, 17–43.
- Reif, K., and Schmitt, H. (1980) "Nine Second-Order National Elections – A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results," *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 8, no. 1, March, 3–44.
- Riker, W. H. and Ordeshook, P. C. (1968) "A Theory of the Calculus of Voting," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 62, no. 1, March, 25–42.
- Rogers, T., Green, D., Ternovski, J. and Ferrerosa-Young, C. (2014) "Social Pressure and Voting: A Field Experiment Conducted in a High-Salience Election," Working Paper, Harvard Kennedy School and Columbia University.
- Schuman, H. and Corning, A. D. (2012) "Generational Memory and the Critical Period: Evidence for National and World Events," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 76, no. 1, Spring, 1–31.
- Sears, D. O. and Funk, C. L. (1999) "Evidence of the Long-term Persistence of Adults' Political Predispositions," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 61, no. 1, February, 1–28.
- Sears, D. O. and Valentino, N. A. (1997) "Politics Matters: Political Events as Catalysts for Preadult Socialization," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 91, no. 1, March, 45–65.
- Squire, P., Wolfinger, R. E. and Glass, D. P. (1987) "Residential Mobility and Voter Turnout," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 81, no. 1, March, 45–65.
- The Economist (2015) "Mandatory Voting: Want to Make Me?," May 20, 2015, available online: www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2015/03/mandatory-voting.
- Wattenberg, M. P. (2007) *Is Voting for Young People? With a Postscript on Citizen Engagement*, Great Questions in Politics Series, New York: Pearson/Longman.
- Zeglovits, E. and Aichholzer, J. (2014) "Are People More Inclined to Vote at 16 than at 18? Evidence for the First-Time Voting Boost Among 16- to 25-Year-Olds in Austria," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Politics*, vol. 24, no. 3, August, 351–361.
- Zuckerman, A. S. (2005) *The Social Logic of Politics: Personal Networks as Contexts for Political Behavior*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.