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Rocking the Youth Vote: Political Socialization and Culture in the 2004 Elections

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Rocking the Youth Vote:

Political Socialization and Culture in the 2004 Elections

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Honors Requirement at Carroll College

Spring 2008
This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of Political Science.

Director

Date

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**Introduction**

When I first began researching youth voting in the United States I was initially interested in the reasons that youth vote and if youth were affected by factors unique to the voting year. The political air surrounding the 2004 election was different than the preceding presidential election year. The events of 9/11 and the Iraq war had significantly altered the country and perhaps it influenced voters as well. There was significant media coverage aimed at young voters from celebrities and “get out the vote” campaigns. John Isaacs notes some issues that interested youth voters were, “improving health care, stimulating the country's economy by increasing the supply of well-paying jobs, and helping students deal with the high cost of college.”¹ These issues were compounded by the immediate perceived threat of terrorism and the war in Iraq. The media focused on the polarizing factors such as the war which affected voters.

When looking at youth votes it is helpful to consider how many vote and for whom they typically vote for. John Maggs, writer for *National Journal*, cites a “New York Times/CBS/MTV poll [which] found that 17-to-29-year-olds [voters under the age of 30] are more likely to vote Democratic, to be much more liberal on immigration and gay marriage, and to support national health insurance.”² But can these young voters be counted on to make it to the polls? According to Maggs, “few from this age group tend to vote. Only 20 million 18-to-29-year-olds cast ballots in 2004, out of a total of 125 million

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voters -- their turnout rate was 43 percent, compared with 63 percent for the rest.”\(^3\) The low turnout rate of the youth and their general apathy is even parodied in pop culture. *Futurama*, the popular adult cartoon show by Simpson’s creator Matt Groening, parodies voting in an episode centered on voting and civic duty. In an episode from the second season, “A Head in the Polls,” Leela and Fry are arguing about the importance of registering to vote and the old, wizened professor enters the room.

Leela: One vote can make a difference and, even though it won’t, I’m taking you to get registered anyway.

Professor: That’s a capital idea, let’s all go register!

Fry: Professor, when did you become so obsessed with voting?

Professor: The very instant I became old!

Young people watching this show can relate to society’s lack of confidence in youth voting and the perceived unimportance of each vote.

However, other sources found a rise in the youth vote in the 2004 election. Thomas Patterson, who is in charge of the Vanishing Voter project, found that “turnout among eligible adults under 30 years old rose by 9 percentage points, pushing their voting rate to over 50 percent. Their turnout rate in battleground states—such as Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania—exceeded 60 percent.”\(^4\) This rise in votes can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Tobi Walker describes the differences in turnout between the two, “eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds increased by 11 percentage points, from 36 percent in 2000 to 47

\(^3\) Ibid.

percent in 2004. By comparison, turnout among all ages increased by 4 percentage points, from 60 percent to 64 percent” (Figure 2). She points out that the high youth turnout in the 2004 elections changed the way journalists speak of youth turnout; “it was too easy for journalists and political pundits to jump to the conclusion that young slackers had again remained on the sidelines.” These journalists and pundits did not predict this surge in the youth vote.

This paper attempts to uncover possible reasons for the rise in the youth vote and to discover if methods designed to raise youth voter participation were compatible with the accepted studies on political participation and creation of civic culture. Research on political socialization and a specific youth culture will be examined and then utilized to investigate the 2004 election. Specifically, how does research on political socialization relate to youth vote incentives in the 2004 election?

6 Ibid.
Figure 1: Voting Turnout Among Young Adults (Based on vote-eligible adults 18-29 years of age as opposed to all adults within this age group).  

Figure 2. Ages Eighteen to Twenty-Four and Twenty-Five-Plus, Voter Turnout in Presidential Years

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8 CIRCLE analysis of CPS November Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972–2004. Copyright 2005 CIRCLE (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement), found in Walker, p. 27.
Part I: Political Socialization and Culture

Political Socialization

According to David Jackson, Assistant Political Science Professor at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, political socialization is a process to attain knowledge about one’s political surroundings that “imparts beliefs, values, or norms.”

Put more clearly, political socialization is concerned with the “when”—at what age does socialization occur—the “how”—what are the methods by which political socialization is imparted—and the “who”—who has the greatest impact on socialization. At what point in life are political attitudes cemented? How are these political attitudes learned? Who is teaching these lessons?

David Jackson outlines the four classic models of political socialization in *Entertainment and Politics*. The Lifelong Persistence model asserts what children learn young remains with them and becomes more persistent as they age. The Lifelong Openness model claims that children remain open through their entire lives to outside influences. The Life-cycle model states that while early learning is tenuous, people are more open to change at certain times of their life. The Generational model holds that while political change is dubious, social change will influence political change heavily.

In my research I found that many studies focused on the political socialization of the youth were released in the 1950s. Most I read emphasized comparative political culture as a method of viewing the findings. Richard Niemi and Mary Hepburn recount the history of the study of political socialization: “Research on political socialization

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10 Ibid., p. 8.
began in the late 1950s as part of a broader shift in the focus of political science research to political behavior. Among other developments, there was increasing awareness that political behavior was learned behavior." Consequently, if political behavior is not viewed as learned behavior then society and culture does not have any influence on youth political views. Niemi and Hepburn's study elucidates the "when" of political socialization, "The important point was that political behavior, or at least the attitudes underlying such behavior, appeared to begin prior to formal adulthood." Before these studies political socialization was not even considered as a stage in youth development. Political socialization was thought to have been isolated to adulthood. After these studies socialization was thought to begin early on. It is important when studying youth political behavior to consider the path that socialization takes over the course of youth.

Political socialization is a "process" setting forth over time. There is no clear ending or beginning to the processes through which children learn to have positive and negative reactions to certain aspects of politics. According to a study done by Erica Weintraub Austin and Bruce E. Pinkleton on parental influence in political socialization, it may start as early as Preschool, "though discussions of abstract political issues may not occur until the child is older and thus developmentally better prepared." During the preschool age parents already have the most contact with their children and likely the

12 Ibid.
13 Jackson, Entertainment, p. 4.
most influence. According to Jeffrey Arnett, a change in “cognitive mode,” happens around the age of 12 and continues to the age of 15, when the child develops the ability to understand ideology and move beyond broad political systems.\(^\text{15}\)

As stated by Austin and Pinkleton, parents “do not directly mold the child's political views but instead place the child in a socio-political context that might provide some reinforcement of parental views.”\(^\text{16}\) This “molding” appears to come from general discussions of the media, rather than from specific discussions of abstract political issues and candidates. Beliefs are not consciously embedded in children by their parents; instead it is the off-handed remarks and attitudes towards certain political beliefs that affect a child the most.

Like other beliefs political beliefs differ depending on a person’s age. The so-called generational gap refers to the theory that the “attitudes older people adopted when they were young persist largely unchanged; because these attitudes are different from those being adopted by young people today, a generation gap develops.”\(^\text{17}\) Events in adolescence and early adulthood have lasting impressions. While David Myers calls this a generational model it is similar to the Lifelong Persistence model I discussed earlier in the section. In conjunction with Jackson’s aforementioned generational model it is relevant to considerations of the impact of 9/11 on youth votes.

Parents have a big influence on younger children, but other agents of socialization come into play as the child ages. Schools, churches and the media can also have a large


\(^{16}\) Austin, “Parental Mediation,” p. 221.

role in developing political attitudes; these agents usually work as a method of reinforcement of what was previously learned. Jackson hypothesizes that once a young person leaves a structured environment then they are more likely to be swayed by messages contrary to those previously learned. Jackson continues that instead of ignoring these messages they will change their opinions.\footnote{Jackson, \textit{Entertainment}, p. 30.} Young voters are most likely to adapt their political beliefs early on in their voting career. When children leave to attend college they are separated from the structured environment of home and high school and are susceptible to a myriad of cultural and societal forces.

The young voters in the 2004 election were subject to many different forms of socialization especially from the media. In the section on the 2004 elections I will uncover these agents that were most prevalent and influential during the 2004 elections.

**Political Culture**

Political Culture and Political Socialization are directly linked. What people learn affect the culture and in turn, the culture contributes to what is learned. Unfortunately recent discourse on the topic is sparse.

In the early 1960s Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba did an extensive study on the nature of political culture. They completed a cross-national study on 5 countries to uncover the basics elements of democracy. They discovered three pure forms of political culture. First, there is the Parochial Political Culture: This has no set authoritarian roles but the roles are a political-economic-religious mixture. A Parochial system does not demand anything from the political system or interfere with the individuals living under
the system. Secondly, is the Subject Political Culture: This system is centered on the subject or individual. The individual is oriented around what the system can give him. Thirdly, is the Participant Political Culture, in which the individuals are turned towards not only what comes out of the system but what goes into said system. They tend to have an “activist” role in society. At any given point in time a culture will have all these elements in some degree within it. These are characteristics found in Almond and Verba’s study of civic culture but there is another aspect contained within this civic culture. Almond and Verba call this the “rationality-activist” model. Participation in this model is informed and rational in its decision making. This model stresses the informed participant aspect of civic culture which turns individuals towards the input and output of the political system. Subject and parochial orientations are not substituted by this model but exist alongside it.¹⁹

There has been discourse on the validity of this study to the current political culture. Alan Abramowitz wrote a follow-up to the study in the 1980s. He noted that the study discovered that there was an allegiant and participatory political culture which is activist toward the government and politics. This meant that Americans felt that they were able to directly affect governmental decisions. But the time at which the study was conducted is vastly different than the political milieu that directly followed. The 1970s

were especially conducive to a decrease in governmental trust. The strong positive feelings towards government decreased and have never returned with the same strength.

Forms of political culture as part of a greater participatory culture presented themselves in the 1950s. A participatory democracy would seek to distribute decision making powers among the general populace. According to Terrence Cook and Patrick Morgan’s Participatory Democracy, there are two patterns of decision making, the first is decentralization or dispersal of authoritative decision making and the second is the direct involvement of amateurs in the political process. Cook and Morgan continue by saying that these are both key to establishing a participatory democracy; without both the dispersal of responsibility and the involvement of the population citizens will not participate. These patterns have two models, the co-determinate model and self-determinate model. The co-determinate model is a mixture of participation of amateurs and non-amateurs in the political system. The self-determinate model is the sole participation of amateurs in the political process.

Thomas Bridges’ “postmodern civic culture” is a contemporary source considering what political culture could mean in the modern world. He argues that civic good is the focal point of civic participation in culture because “the inherent benefits of full cultural citizenship outweigh the burdens that come with it.” But he also acknowledges that many members of the culture might not yet be at that level of

understanding. Civic education should be “aimed at motivating nominal citizens to acquire the moral powers and highest-order interests that define citizenship.” This holistic approach to the assertion of political culture as stemming from the full maturity and cultivation of moral powers is a counter-cultural stance. Voting should come out of the maturation of the whole person. Youth programs attempt to help the whole person grow and mature, so it would be considered a valid form of civic education. These programs can work to give youth a positive view of government and voting. Positive political socialization and civic education would increase youth participation in civic culture, according to Bridges’ model. A nurturing environment might bring about a culture comparable to the political views held during the Civic Culture studies.

There are a number of studies done focusing on the role of youth programs in political socialization. Dorothy Stoneman of YouthBuild USA Somerville, Massachusetts, studied the efficacy of youth involvement in political socialization. Her discovery was that youth programs inspired leadership among youth that increased their involvement in politics.24 Another study done by Michelle L. Frisco, Chandra Muller and Kyle Dodson, argued that “[v]oluntary institutions form a foundation for democracy by promoting civic participation.”25 Youth programs for positive political socialization are most important in under-privileged neighborhoods because they have a history of low

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23 Ibid., p.167
involvement and poor political attitude.\textsuperscript{26} Bridges holds that once a citizen is made a part of the civic culture political participation makes sense.\textsuperscript{27} Youth programs paint a positive picture of government but I did not find conclusive evidence that any youth programs specifically factored into the 2004 elections even though many were at work around the country prior to 2004 the connection is tentative at best.

\textbf{Part II: Modern Interpretations of Youth Culture}

Studies of youth as a subculture in the new millennium might help shed light on youth voting. A subculture is a clearly defined set with in the larger culture. Youth culture is separate from the larger American culture by the age of the subset, but there are other factors that set it apart.

There are two studies that I have used to understand youth culture. The first is by Gordon Lynch and the second is by Ken McCulloch, Alexis Stewart & Nick Lovegreen. McCulloch, Stewart, Lovegreen study subcultures in youth culture,

There have been many studies of youth culture and subcultures, attending to the ways young people create meaning systems, modes of expression and style. "Identity is constructed from the nexus of social relations and meanings surrounding us, and from this we learn to make sense of ourselves including our relation to the dominant culture."\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\end{thebibliography}
How is it that young people create meaning out of their surroundings? Lynch relies on the work of a social scientist named De Nora. De Nora’s 2000 study examined the way that youth made meaning out of their surroundings.

De Nora has argued that music plays an important role as a cultural tool through which people actively manage their identities, environments, and emotional states—and that the meanings associated with listening to music are formed through a complex interplay between the musical sound, the quality of the listener’s attention, the spatial and relational environment in which it is heard, and particular memories and other associations attached to the music through the individual’s specific biography.29

One part of youth culture is created by music.

Martin Wattenberg examines the newspaper readership of youth and the political ramifications. He found that the youth are steadily declining in daily newspaper readership. Only 34% of American youth aged 18-29 read the campaign news in the newspaper regularly in 2004 according to American National Election Studies.30 This readership drop is not due to a decline in literacy; in fact literacy has increased in this country. There is a gap in the number of youth and older people that read the newspaper, an example of the generational gap theory. The youth in this country have not grown up reading the newspaper and so they are not continuing this trend whereas the older generations are persisting in the newspaper reading habits from their youth. Wattenberg then suggests that a decline in paper newspaper reading could result in an increase in electronic newspaper readership. But the statistics say that only 7% of respondents under

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30 regularly use news websites.\textsuperscript{31} If newspapers and electronic news sources do not have a strong role in forming youth culture, where are young people getting their political information and subsequently forming political culture? One theory set forth by Dick Morris argues that the internet is replacing television as “the locus for political campaigns.”\textsuperscript{32} The internet will be considered in the next section.

Another traditional source of political information is television, in particular television news. Wattenberg has discovered that with the advent of cable with many different channels to choose from, the youth has become more easily distracted or prone to spreading their interests thinly. Wattenberg asserts that “it has become much easier to avoid exposure to politics altogether by simply grabbing the remote control. It has become particularly difficult for political programming on television to get through to a generation who has channel surfed all their lives.”\textsuperscript{33} One could surmise that this MTV generation is not one of cultural literacy but of pure entertainment. Being politically informed is a significant feature of the rationality-activist model. Because youth do not read the newspaper for political news this raises concerns regarding the model, since it stresses an archetypical and ideal version of how political society should function. By ignoring the traditional news sources, they are not participating in the political culture through rational information driven methods. This is seen as being contrary to fostering a strong democracy.

Television does disseminate news to youth but not through the traditional news sources. The phenomenon of the “fake news” program has become a way for youth to

\textsuperscript{31} Wattenberg, “Is Voting for Young People?” p. 29.
\textsuperscript{33} Wattenberg, “Is Voting for Young People?” p. 34.
receive news. Aaron McKain studied the effect of the “fake news” program, The Daily Show, on how youth receive news. According to McKain, in 2004, 23% of 18-29 year olds “stated that they regularly learned something about the election from the nightly network news, down from thirty nine percent in 2000.” McKain found that 29% said that they received their “regular campaign news” from shows like Saturday Night Live and The Daily Show. The Daily Show was even given a “Peabody for its coverage of the 2000 election. … [A]nd Newsweek crowned “fake host” Jon Stewart one of the twenty-five biggest influencers of the 2004 election.” This indicates that when news can be disguised as entertainment then youth will be interested in it.

The new trend in entertainment that characterizes this generation's culture is one of hands-on entertainment. Self-expression is the form of hands-on entertainment that most youth ascribe to. Jeff Leeds claims “the impulse for self-expression and the new outlets for it — from YouTube’s user-generated content to video chats on Stickam.com — are reshaping how consumers interact with television programs, music, film, video games and other entertainment media.” These programs can have an effect on creating a civic culture as seen in the next section.

Suzanne Soule in her paper, “Will They Engage? Political Knowledge, Participation and Attitudes of Generations X and Y,” summaries the focus of younger

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35 Ibid.

generations termed X and Y. She found that these young people value “self-fulfillment” more than any institution or societal value.

On average, these Generations X and Y possess less information about public affairs. Their understanding of what it means to be a citizen in a democracy is shallow, and emphasizes rights rather than responsibilities. In contrast to previous generations, Generations X and Y are less interested in politics. They pay less attention to news. It is likely that this will change over their life cycles, but no generation measured in the last forty years began at such a low level. Given the low starting point, how much will their interest in and attention to the political process increase? 37

Part III: 2004 Elections

A whole generation of MTV watchers came of age in the 2004 elections. MTV was born in 1981. The first-time presidential voters in 2004 were born in between 1982 and 1986, without ever knowing a world in which cool was not readily available in entertaining doses. The network that pioneered the music video had also dabbled in the politics and world news sectors in sections called “MTV world news.” The most memorable example of a political figure using MTV to reach voters was during the 1992 election in which Bill Clinton answered burning questions on his campaign like “boxers or briefs?”38 The 2004 election was a different time, though. Tobi Walker’s assessment of young voters in the 2004 election included the “noted observer of youth political participation,” Bill Galston of the University of Maryland. He describes the 2004 election as a “perfect storm” when it came to youth voting. Galston explains that an array of issues created “a surge” in youth voting.

Important policy issues being debated in a close presidential campaign, a record level of grassroots and media activity directed to young people, and a data-based outreach strategy that attracted serious media attention all contributed to high turnout; equally important, political journalists and campaign professionals paid real attention to the youth vote.\textsuperscript{39}

This “perfect storm” of factors will be examined in light of the previous theories of political socialization and creation of civic culture.

The Internet is a tool for rapid communication and a facilitator for dissemination of political information. In 2000, Christopher Kush wrote a book titled \textit{Cybercitizen} as a handbook for people who wanted to use the internet to affect political policy. He writes, “I do think the Internet can have a profound effect on the relationship between everyday Americans and their government, their knowledge of and participation in the issues that affect or interest them.”\textsuperscript{40} By 2004 the use of the internet had grown. Among that growth was the advent of “web logs” shortened to “blogs.” Blogs in the political arena were relatively new in 2004 as major news sites were covering this new phenomenon. These blogs were a way that the average citizen could put in his own opinion and often blogs were way ahead of even the major news organizations.\textsuperscript{41} Though these were not considered legitimate news sources given the amorphous nature of the internet, they still were a popular way to discuss and critique the government. This new medium not only fulfills the need of the youth for self-expression it also facilitates the creation of a participatory democracy as outlined by Cook and Morgan. The second type of participatory democracy is the direct involvement of amateurs in the political process.

\textsuperscript{39} Walker, “Pay Attention,” p. 28.
\textsuperscript{40} Christopher Kush, \textit{Cybercitizen: How to use your computer to fight for all the issues you care about.} (New York, NY: St. Martin’s, 2000), pp. 3-4.
Blogging involves both amateurs and professionals. Since anyone can have a blog and participate in this type of dialog which transcends generation and physical location, this is a co-determinate model of participation. Blogging could be seen as facilitating the creation of a more participatory culture through the second type of participatory democracy under the co-determinate model.

The 2004 elections were a milestone in electronic ease for those looking for information on candidates. One initiative called “Rock the Vote” had information on each candidate available on MTV’s website. The visitors to the site could click on the issues and receive the stance of each candidate/party. There was even a phone project for voters-on-the-go through Motorola. This program was a free download that outlined the opinions of the presidential candidates. According to an IEE article, “the 'Find Your Candidate' program has been created in collaboration with Rock the Vote, a US initiative trying to persuade young people to get involved in the election.” The program would ask for the user’s opinion on different issues and then they would be given the name of the candidate that best represented them. “Young people are constantly on the go, and Rock the Vote (RTV) Mobile provides them with the tools they need to stay informed,” said RTV chief executive officer Jehmu Greene. 42 This technology is attractive to youth and gives them access to political information which will increase the likelihood of their participation in politics. The rationality-activist model is applicable here since youth are expected to use information to make a rational political decision. But the information can only be made accessible to youth with the hope that the youth will use it to participate in the political process because no such participation can be forced.

It has become increasingly important to uncover relevant ways to attract the youth vote, as was made apparent in the RTV or Motorola approach. Tobi Walker points out, “Six of the largest nonpartisan efforts—the New Voters Project, Declare Yourself, Hip Hop Summit Action Network, MTV, Rock the Vote, and World Wrestling Entertainment’s Smackdown Your Vote!—devoted nearly $40 million to youth vote efforts.”

Youth voting turnout did rise. Patterson also acknowledges “[t]urnout among eligible adults under 30 years old rose by 9 percentage points, pushing their voting rate to over 50 percent. Their turnout rate in battleground states—such as Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania—exceeded 60 percent.”

A method frequently used by “get out the vote” programs is door to door campaigns. Byron York accompanied America Coming Together as they worked on moving voters to the polls shortly before the election. These political activists went door to door to remind voters of the impending day. Some of the volunteers York saw were young but the effects of the campaign to reach voters that he saw were less than impressive. Though this type of campaign might affect older voters it had very little effect on young voters. Thomas Patterson cites the unlikelihood of young voters to have a permanent residency or to put their names on any party list as possible reasons that door to door campaigns are inadequate to reach young voters. According to Patterson, head of the Vanishing Voter Project, young people respond more to personal contact than campaigns designed to increase their vote.

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43 Walker, “Pay Attention,” p. 28.
44 Patterson, “Young Voters,” p. 5.
Personal contact influences young and older voters but in different ways; “three times as many young voters (54 percent versus 18 percent) said that a reason they voted was because ‘my family or friends encouraged me to vote.’ On the other hand, young voters were less likely than older ones to say that campaign or group contact had influenced their turnout decision.” 46 This is consistent with Erica Weintraub Austin and Bruce E. Pinkleton’s theories that parents have an effect on the political behavior of youth. Campaigns can not hope to reach young voters the way family and friends can. Personal contact can help create what Almond and Verba set out as a participant political culture. In this “individuals are turned towards not only what comes out of the system but what goes in. They tend to have an “activist” role in society.” 47 Personal contact may be instrumental in creating a participant culture through family and friends.

The events of 9/11 and the War in Iraq were key factors in a presidential election for the first time in 2004. David Myer’s generational gap theory might be considered when discussing these two events. This theory claims that the events from young adulthood have a lasting affect and help shape the person well into late adulthood. 48 Repercussions of this theory are felt in every generation. According to Myers’ generational theory, just as the Second World War shaped this generation’s grandparents and the Vietnam War shaped their parents, 9/11 and the Iraq War should have lasting effects on this generation. One possible outcome of 9/11 is an increased sense of patriotism that might have led young people to the polls. If it is an accepted fact then a more participant civic culture has also been created.

48 Myers, Social Psychology, p. 263.
Yet generational theory is one that has been challenged in the political science community. Bennett, Craig and Rademacher offer a critique of generational theory with some significant points. First, no specific age can be pinpointed as the age that events have the greatest affect on a person. Secondly, widespread events, like 9/11 and the Iraq War, affect the entire population. The separate affect on one group of people cannot be shown as being more significant than the affect on the rest of the population. People naturally become more inflexible as they age and the event might move younger people while being only slightly affective to older people. But 9/11 and the Iraq War are not slight events.

Various factors, the War in Iraq, the holdover from the contentious 2000 election as well as the rising unemployment levels all contributed to the level of election media coverage in 2004. The polls before the election showed that the candidates were extremely close; no winner could be accurately predicted.

The media closely followed the mobilization efforts by the 527 organizations, breathlessly reported on the legal maneuverings that would decide how ballots would be cast and counted, and drudgingly stood in long lines with early voters. Election uncertainty, the memory of the outcome in 2000, and the belief that the election was one of the most important in a generation helped shape voter's perceptions that their vote would count. This “perfect storm” of events surrounding the 2004 election aimed at voters could have a positive result when the youth actually went to vote. The media painted a participant culture in which activist stances were natural. This could have had an affect on voters.

But these products of the election were significant for the entire culture. Referring to Figure 2, the difference in voting between 2000 and 2004 jumped significantly for the under 25 vote but raised a smaller amount for the over 25 vote. While both age groups were subject to the same amount of media coverage voters under the age of 25 showed a greater net change in voter participation. Some of the other forces at work must have gotten through to the young voters.

**Conclusions:**

The forces at work in the 2004 election impacted the increase in youth votes. Models of political socialization and the creation of political culture are two considerations surrounding youth vote. The different methods and theories of political socialization and political culture set forth have a similar message. Bridges claimed the youth needed to be nourished as a whole to be accepted into civic culture. Though young people were impacted the most by personal contact, the combined forces of the political milieu and the youth oriented voter projects might have made a difference. Youth culture is oriented towards giving youth the ability to express themselves, voting is another form of this expression.

There are many aspects of political socialization at work and creation of a civic culture in the 2004 elections. Though all the methods of increasing the youth vote lend to the creation of a civic culture there is not one theory or model that is seen consistently supported. This might mean that a more fragmented or a brand new model is needed to explain the civic culture coming out of the 2004 elections. But another problem is that no method of increasing the youth vote can be directly linked to the highest reason for youth voting; though some might be more effective than others according to theories of political
socialization. While this paper sheds light on how civic culture is created and how political socialization can be at work to increase the youth vote, there are no iron-clad conclusions that can be made.

More voter participation from young people is a good sign but the real issue is how to keep young people involved. Whether this positive outcome can be duplicated is yet to be determined in following elections. Walker argues that the youth will continue to remain active as long as steps are taken to reach them and they are convinced they have a place in the political culture.51 A look at the 2006 elections shows that, for midterm elections, there was a rise in youth votes. According to CIRCLE, “the turnout of 18-to-29 year-olds was somewhere between 22% and 24%, clearly up from 2000 when youth turnout was 20%.”52 This shows a possible trend in youth voting increase. Patterson points out that voting participation in the twentieth century followed a “cyclical pattern” with times of high voter turnout circling into times of low voter turnout. But he does construe that gripping issues will most likely bring high numbers to the polls.53 Speculating on media coverage thus far, though it might not be a “perfect storm” for youth votes a few storm clouds are gathering. Voter interest might be peaked by this election, especially if this is the first election where a woman or an African-American is running for president. This might be an indication of a positive trend in youth voting participation.

51 Walker, “Pay Attention,” p. 31-32.
53 Patterson, “Young Voters,” p. 7.
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