

**College Student Participation in the 2008 Iowa Caucuses:
Assessing Turnout, Candidate Choice, and Sampling Techniques**

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Abstract

Youth voting is an important topic for Americans, both politically and philosophically. Traditional studies of voters who are 18-24 years old suggest that they have significant opinion differences from older voters, but that they vote in much fewer numbers. In this paper, we look at a specific group of younger voters in a specific context: college students in Iowa during the 2008 caucuses. Comparing them to a larger sample of registered voters in Iowa, we explore the ways in which their caucusing and candidate choice behavior differs from the larger population. Our results suggest that while younger voters' issue positions differ from the larger population, the way in which these interests are activated and mobilized in a primary campaign is very similar across age groups. Finally, we examine in more depth the challenges of surveying a sample of college students.

It is the accepted wisdom of both scholars and pundits that young people do not vote or participate in politics. As many observers have noted (Bennett 1991; Galston 2001, O'Loughlin and Unangst 2006), the lack of participation presents a problem for democratic representation. The opinions and attitudes of a large body of citizens are not being represented by government because they are not voting. Many suspect low participation rates of young adults privileges conservative policies and programs geared toward an older population (Bennett 1991; Wattenberg 2008). Many scholars believe the particular characteristics of the current generation of 18 to 24 year-olds, their disaffection with traditional politics and their focus on local and community change, make them less likely to vote (Skaggs and Anthony 2002; Wattenberg 2008). Young people seem to be more likely to volunteer in their communities, which represents an alternative to politics to create change in their communities (Longo and Meyer 2006; Shea and Green 2007, 4).

Some evidence from the 2004 and 2008 elections, however, suggest that contemporary 18-24 year olds may be voting at higher levels than their predecessors. Some candidates, particularly the Democratic candidates that seemed to be favored in public opinion polling of young adults, have sought to capitalize on this un-mobilized group of supporters by specifically targeting young voters – particularly through their concern for community-based action - both on college campuses and beyond. The phenomenon of low youth turnout has caused such consternation among political scientists and other observers of politics that the vast majority of scholarly research has focused on youth turnout. But there are further questions that should be important to

political scientists such as how those younger citizens who do vote select candidates to support.

In this paper, we look at a group of younger voters in a specific context: college students in Iowa during the 2008 caucuses. We seek to understand how voting rates of college students and other voters in a primary/caucus situation are related to differences in personal characteristics and policy issue opinions. Perhaps more important, we further examine the differences among these groups in their candidate choices and on what basis they seem to be making their candidate choices. Finally, we examine in more depth the challenges of surveying a sample of college students.

Across the nation, the 2004 and 2008 election cycles appeared to signal an increase in the pattern of youth voting. In 2008, the Obama campaign in particular made a significant effort to identify and mobilize new, young voters. Obama campaign organizations on college campuses across the country held rallies and more importantly, volunteer drives where students were explicitly brought into the campaign and given tasks that fostered ownership in the campaign's efforts. On the Republican side, Mike Huckabee and Ron Paul also made special efforts to attract younger voters to their campaigns. Most observers applauded these efforts as ways to engage a constituency that had traditionally been ignored. Of course, these candidates had perhaps the strongest appeal for younger people, but even candidates whose primary constituency seemed to be older or concerned about different issues made some attempt to mobilize 18-24 year olds into their campaigns. These efforts came to fruition on election day in November 2008 when 51.1% of young people voted, a higher percentage than any previous election since 1992 (Kirby and Kawashima-Ginsberg 2009).

In order to really understand how youth voters are mobilized to vote and join campaigns, we need to delve more deeply into their decision processes and how they respond to particular candidates and mobilization efforts. One way to do this is to observe younger voters in the smaller arena of primary elections. With more candidate choices and the short-hand of party identification removed, voters must make distinctions based on other candidate characteristics. Youth voting in primaries has historically been even lower than in general elections (Wattenberg 2008, 112). Primary voters tend to be older, more sophisticated, and more politically active because primaries tend to be lower information and lower interest elections. The situation in 2008 proved to be somewhat different, however, as the campaigns sought specifically to mobilize young voters even in the primaries, and presidential primaries and caucuses – at least on the Democratic side – remained important to the outcome of the nomination race far longer than is usually the case. Candidates concentrated on college students because these young voters participate at higher rates than do those who do not attend college. For these reasons, examining young voters who were active in a primary election should tell us much about what motivates and mobilizes young voters.

The Iowa caucuses differ from primary elections in that they require an even greater degree of time and political motivation. Caucuses are precinct-level meetings of partisan voters that take place on a single evening. Because caucuses are only held during one two-hour time period, some people are excluded from participation by work, family, or other obligations. The level of participation can seem somewhat daunting as well, depending on the political party. Republicans simply show up to their caucus, vote for a presidential candidate, as well as other party offices, and go home. But Democrats

have a much more complicated system in which presidential candidates' votes must reach a threshold of support in order to be viable. The supporters of those candidates not reaching threshold are then lobbied by the other groups in order to raise the remaining candidates' vote totals. In this way, Democratic caucus-goers votes are public, making the cost of participation even higher. But many people participate in caucuses and Iowa voters are generally well-informed and engaged during the caucus season (Winebrenner 1998). The Iowa Secretary of State reported 2008 as the highest level of attendance ever recorded for caucuses in both parties (Mauro 2008). Young Voters also turned out in record numbers (CIRCLE 2008), even though the caucuses were held on January 3, 2008, when most college students were at home and away from the social groups that have typically reinforced political behavior like caucus-going.

Previous Research

Traditional studies of voting in general and youth voting in particular separate into studies of turnout and mobilization and studies of vote-choice, though there are few of these for young voters. In this article, we try to address both of these issues in examining college-age participation in the 2008 Iowa caucuses. When Americans reduced the voting age to 18 in the early 1970s, many people believed it would be a great incentive for young people to vote. But election studies showed that younger voters aged 18-24 turned out at a much lower rate than people in other age groups (Green and Shea 2007, 9). This trend continued through the 2000 election, though rates of turnout for young voters did increase in 2004 (Wattenberg 2008). Studies of the newest generation of younger voters, called Millennials and generally defined as those born in the 1980s and

early 1990s, however, showed that these citizens were very different in their attitudes and approaches to politics and social action in general than their older counterparts. Studies have shown that they volunteer more than older generations did at their age (Shea and Green 2007, Wattenberg 2008), and perhaps more important, are mobilized to social action specifically by community-based organizations or ones that seek to solve grassroots problems. Some politicians have taken note of this change and some campaign manuals are even using these studies as guides for candidates and how they approach younger voters (Galston 2001; Skaggs and Anthony 2002). These findings led some to believe that younger voters could be mobilized to vote and be active, provided they were approached in the right way.

College students are a particularly rich vein for candidates to mine. They vote at higher levels than do others the same age (CIRCLE 2008), and they seem to be motivated to vote by psychological engagement such as partisan strength and frequency of discussing politics (Niemi and Hanmer 2010). They may be easily gathered in one location (on campus) and there is certainly room to increase their participation through mobilization efforts. While controversies have arisen about where college students ought to and are allowed to vote (Richman and Pate 2010), the growing focus on these citizens by campaigns have served to increase general awareness of the structural barriers to their voting. While scholars have long known that higher levels of education increase the likelihood of voting, recent findings suggest that it is the increased verbal skills and civic awareness that college provides that make college graduates more likely to vote – at least in their later years (Hillygus 2005).

We know quite a bit less, however, about how young voters and college students choose candidates than we do about why they turnout (or not) to vote. In many ways, knowledge about how young voters choose which candidate to support is theoretical. Evidence has mounted over the last decades that younger voters are more liberal on many issues than are older groups of voters (Wattenberg 2008, 141), but the issues they find important are similar to older voters (Skaggs and Anthony 2002; Tedesco, McKinney, and Kaid 2007). But there is no evidence that younger voters respond differently to issue-based appeals (Tedesco, McKinney, and Kaid 2007). So, theoretically, young voters should respond no differently to candidates' issues positions beyond viewing them through more liberal eyes. Even candidates who specifically target young voters need to do this on the basis of a platform that young voters can get behind. Good use of new media mobilization techniques will not make up for issue disagreements. But convincing young voters that a candidate's issue priorities, not simply issue positions, align with their beliefs may have some impact (Skaggs and Anthony 2002). Scholarly research is lacking in testing these propositions.

Perhaps because the focus has been on youth turnout as opposed to other facets of youth voting and opinion, there is also little in the survey research literature on appropriately sampling and contacting college students. Niemi and Hanmer (2010) purchased a random sample drawn from published university directories, while others have used data gathered in educational research (Hillygus 2005). For primary analysis, web-based contact seems to be the dominant mode because of the perceived higher likelihood of contact. There is essentially nothing in the survey research literature on student telephone surveys or sampling.

In this paper, we are primarily concerned with understanding how college students turned out and decided for whom to vote in the 2008 Iowa caucuses. This focus allows us to look very specifically at mobilized college students in a highly politicized setting in order to more clearly understand what motivates them and how issues might impact candidate choice. We accomplish this by examining the differences between college students and the larger population of Iowans to determine if and how college students behave differently in the caucus situation. Based on previous research, we believe that college students are very similar to their older peers in terms of motivations for turnout and how they make candidate choices. College students can be turned out by appropriately targeted messages, like most other voting cohorts. Most important, we believe their decision-making processes about candidates, based on issues and voter identities, are the same as others making the same type of decisions and test this using data from the 2008 Iowa caucuses. Finally, we comment on the difficulty of sampling young adults.

Data and Methods

In order to better understand college-aged participation and vote in primary nominations, compared a sample of Iowa college students who were registered to vote with a sample of the larger registered voter population in Iowa. A telephone poll was conducted by Iowa State University researchers to evaluate the caucus attendance, candidate preferences and opinions of adults sampled from the Iowa voter registration list and of adult degree-seeking college students sampled from Iowa State University and University of Iowa enrollment lists (Larson et al., 2008).

A random sample of 7200 registered voters (3600 from each party) was selected from the Iowa Democrat and Republican voter registration lists for a pre-caucus poll conducted in November 2008. The adjusted response rate (RR4, AAPOR 2008) for this survey was 22%, with a contact rate (CON2) of 44% and cooperation rate (COOP2) of 44%. The 1222 November poll respondents were recontacted for a second poll shortly after the Iowa caucuses were held in early January 2008, with 1036 completing an interview (85% response rate, 84% contact rate, 74% cooperation rate).

The student sample was drawn in December by each University from their respectively Fall 2008 registration lists, and these students were contacted shortly after the caucuses during the same period the November poll respondents were recontacted. A student was considered eligible if s/he was at least 18 years old, a US citizen, and registered to vote.¹ The adjusted response rate (RR4) for 1498 Iowa State sampled students was 41%, with 407 completing an interview; the contact rate was 56% and the cooperation rate 73%. For the 1780 University of Iowa sampled students, the adjusted response rate was 37%, with 288 completing an interview; the contact rate was 51% and the cooperation rate 74%. About 12% of each sample was unlocatable. Respondents from both samples were asked about their caucus participation, party affiliation, candidate preferences, top issue, opinions on individual issues, past voting behavior, political leanings, and demographic characteristics.

We approach turnout (i.e., whether or not the respondent attended a caucus) and candidate choice as two different dependent variables since they represent the two dimensions of the caucus participation process that we are interested in studying. The

¹ Because 95% of the eligible population was registered to vote in Iowa, this condition should not make a substantive difference in the results of our analysis.

dependent variable for analyzing turnout is the survey question asking whether or not a student attended a caucus. The dependent variable for candidate choice is the candidate the respondent ultimately supported at caucus time.² Further, in order to understand if and how students and registered voters more generally differ in their responses to political issues and respective demographic identities, we fit two models for each dependent variable, one based on college student data and the other based on data from the full sample of registered Iowa Republican and Democratic voters. The explanatory variables for all models include a variety of demographic characteristics including sex, partisan ID, self-identified born-again, and self-identified Hispanic (the largest minority group in Iowa at 4.3% of the population). For the registered voter sample, in all models we also add age, income, and union membership to the demographic variables.

To understand better how particular political issues impact both turnout and candidate choice, in the explanatory variables we further include opinions about the Iraq war, terrorism, the economy, the environment, immigration, healthcare, educational funding, abortion, and same-sex marriage. Finally, because previous research has shown that the best predictor of caucus attendance is previous attendance at a caucus, we include this variable since there are college students who are old enough to have attended previous caucuses.

Opinions about the length the United States should keep troops in Iraq are scaled from withdrawal in the next year (low) to indefinite deployment (high). Opinions about the how well the United States is combating terrorism are scaled from “not at all

² Because we are interested in how college students choose a candidate to support, the ultimate choice tells us much about how particularly Democratic students translate their issue positions into candidate choice because Democrats can change their vote during the caucusing process and must if their candidate does not meet the viability threshold. In the student sample, only 16 people’s ultimate candidate choice was different from their initial choice.

effective” (low) to very effective (high). Opinions about the economy are scaled from poor (low) to excellent (high). Support for educational funding is scaled as “much less” (low) to “much more” (high). Opinions about whether or not the US should build a fence to keep illegal immigrants out are scaled from strongly disagree (low) to strongly agree (high). Healthcare is scaled from strong opposition to government mandated insurance (low) to strong support (high). Opinions about how the government should respond to environmental issues is scaled as opposition to government controls (low) to full support for government intervention to save the environment (high). Support for abortion rights is scaled from totally legal (low) to opposition without exception (high). Opinions about same-sex marriage are scaled as total opposition to marriage or domestic partnerships (low) to full support for same-sex marriage (high). Where appropriate, responses corresponding to a “don’t know” or “no opinion” answer were scaled as a middle category between stronger assertions of agreement or disagreement. (Please see Appendix A for full question wording and disposition).

We model the relationship between turnout and the independent variables using simple logistic regression because turnout is a yes/no question. For candidate choice models, we use multinomial logit to compare the differences among the supporters of the various presidential candidates. Multinomial logit produces a series of comparisons between pairs of the categories in the dependent variable. These are more reliable than simple bivariate comparisons among each of the different candidate pairs because the technique takes into account all the information from the survey and thus creates more efficient standard errors. For those in both the college student and the full Iowa sample who identified themselves as Democrats, the candidates we examined were Obama (354

student supporters, 170 full Iowa sample supporters), Edwards (38 student supporters, 160 regular respondent supporters), Clinton (52 student supporters, 167 full Iowa sample supporters), with the supporters of the remaining candidates (Biden, Dodd, Gravel, and Kucinich), combined into an “other” category (7 students, 34 regular respondents). For Republican caucus-goers, we analyzed the differences among the supporters of Huckabee (65 student supporters, 146 full Iowa sample supporters), Romney (28 students, 81 regular respondents), Thompson (9 students, 37 regular respondents), and McCain (54 student supporters, 75 full Iowa sample supporters), with supporters of the remaining candidates (Guilliani, Hunter, Paul, and Tancredo) combined into an “other” category (40 students, 34 regular respondents).

Results and Discussion

Caucus Attendance

The results of the turnout models demonstrate that college students turned out for the Iowa caucuses in 2008 for different reasons than did their counterparts in the full Iowa registered voter sample. Perhaps most interesting is the fact that political issues were unimportant to the full Iowa cohort turnout, but several are significant in the college student sample.

[Table one about here.]

Table one reports the logit models for both the student sample and the full Iowa sample. In both samples previous caucus attendance was important for predicting

turnout. In fact, for students, having attended a previous caucus made one over 34% more likely to participate in 2008 and for the regular sample, 39% more likely to attend. For the full Iowa cohort sample, party identification, sex, and level of education all have an impact on the likelihood of turning out for a caucus. Looking at it a different way, this analysis demonstrates that being a man increases one's likelihood of turning out to the caucus by almost 17%, being a Democrat as opposed to an independent made it almost 22% more likely, and having a post-graduate degree made it 36% more likely one would caucus than a person with less than a high school education. Thus, in the full Iowa sample, it seems that demographics play a bigger role in predicting caucus turnout than do issue positions.

For students, the picture is quite different. None of the demographic characteristics proves important. But opinions about healthcare and immigration have a significant impact on turnout. Students who strongly support efforts to build fences to control immigration were 13% less likely to caucus than those who strongly opposed it, while those who agree with the idea that government should ensure medical coverage to all citizens were more than 21% less likely to attend a caucus. For college student turnout, it appears that issues important to both parties, not just Democratic issues, were motivating students to turn out.

These results show that college students were motivated to turnout in the 2008 Iowa caucuses for different reasons than were the larger sample of Iowans. While demographic characteristics dominate the full Iowa sample of caucus-goers, it is several issues that impact student's motivation to turnout. Political Science research is ambivalent about whether issues are important to primary election vote choices

(Abramowitz 1987; Aldrich and Alvarez 1994; Bartels 1985, 1988; Brady and Johnston 1987; Norrander 1986), but it is unclear why students' caucus turnout would be affected by issues while their counterparts in the rest of the state would not. Previous research on young voters suggests that they will respond to issues in a similar way to that of other voters. So, perhaps it is the more issue-based focus of the 2008 caucus campaigns which made the difference for these college voters. College students were specifically targeted by a number of the campaigns, and most effectively by the Obama campaign. This may explain why healthcare was an important issue for many students. But since being opposed to government required health insurance actually increased the likelihood of student turnout, this may be linked to more Republican-leaning students.³

Certainly issues were important in the discussions that candidates held on campuses across Iowa. Overall it makes sense that issues in general are more important to predicting student turnout because studying students basically holds constant many personal characteristics that have consistently been important in predicting voter turnout, things like age, income, and education level. In addition, previous research (Niemi and Hanmer 2010) demonstrates the importance of psychological factors in college student turnout. Thus, non-demographic characteristics must bear the weight of predicting the difference between caucus attendance and staying home because demographic factors are held constant.

³ These results may also be an artifact of the specific questions used for healthcare and for immigration. The public conversation around healthcare concentrated more on single-payer options, even though many candidates concentrated more specifically on insurance reform. Further, immigration issues were discussed more broadly than just the building of a fence to keep out illegal immigrants. Thus, students may be responding more strongly to these specific proposals than indicating the importance of these issues to their overall political decision-making.

In both samples, previous caucus attendance significantly predicted turnout for the 2008 caucuses. Generally regarded as the best predictor of turnout, it is interesting to note that of the 691 students in the student sample, 70 had attended caucuses in the past. (Iowa holds caucuses every two years, so in some ways, this is not as surprising as it might be). Just over half of those previously attending students reported turning out for a caucus in 2008. So, clearly, these analyses reinforce previous studies of primary and caucus turnout, demonstrating that previous attendance is a very strong predictor of turnout regardless of one's demographic characteristics.

The full Iowa cohort reflects the general scholarly understanding of the motivations behind turnout, demographic characteristics matter and previous turnout matters the most. It is unclear why Democratic partisan identification is much more important for the regular sample than for students, but perhaps it is because a much larger proportion of the student sample self-identified as Democrats than in the full Iowa cohort. This suggests that being a Democrat meant more for the full cohort, and thus Democratic candidate appeals for caucus attendance had a more pronounced effect on the larger population.

Candidate Choice

Examining the caucus attendance factors that predicted turnout help us understand how college students approached the event of the caucuses differently from the full population. Next we examine how issues and identities impacted both college students and regular citizens' candidate choice in the 2008 Iowa caucuses. In these analyses we include all respondents, not just caucus goers, primarily because splitting each sample

into Republican and Democratic caucus-goers created such small proportions of the samples to make analysis either meaningless or impossible. To help understand the differences between caucus-goers and those who turned out, however, we control for caucus attendance in each of these analyses.

Table two reports the multinomial logit results for both Democrat and Republican college students.

[Table two about here]

Multinomial logit tells us the change in importance of an issue or characteristic as one moves from the base category to the comparison category. For Democratic students, the base category is an Obama vote choice. For Republican students, the base category is a Huckabee vote choice. In both cases, these were the candidates who received the most support among students and won the caucuses overall. For student Democrats, there is not much to distinguish among supporters of different candidates. There is very little important difference on the issues, with only immigration reaching statistical significance in the Edwards-Obama dyad. This means that Edwards' supporters were significantly more supportive of building a fence to control illegal immigration, and implying that Edwards' supporters were more conservative on the issue. Also, supporters of the minor Democratic candidates (Biden, Dodd, Gravel, and Kucinich) were all significantly more positive about the economy than Obama supporters.

The demographic characteristics show only a bit more variation. Significantly more men than women supported Edwards over Obama, while significantly more people

who supported other Democratic candidates were Born-Again than were Obama supporters. Perhaps more interesting is the fact that significantly fewer Clinton supporters identified themselves as political independents than did Obama supporters, suggesting that Clinton had a stronger appeal to those who already thought of themselves as Democrats. Finally, only for Edwards' supporters was caucus attendance significant. This means that significantly more Edwards' supporters reported attending the caucuses than did Obama supporters. In some ways, this should be unsurprising since a large majority of student Democrats, whether caucus-going or not, supported Obama. So overall this points to the motivation of Edwards' supporters above and beyond Clinton and other Democratic candidate supporters, rather than a significant relationship with Obama supporters.

For student Republicans, the picture is somewhat different. More issues were important, but these still do not really seem to add up to a trend for student Republicans. Romney and McCain supporters were more supportive of abortion rights than Huckabee supporters, while the supporters of the other Republican candidates (Guilliani, Paul, Hunter, and Tancredo) were more supportive of gay marriage than Huckabee supporters. Both Romney supporters and supporters of the other Republican candidates were less supportive of leaving US soldiers in Iraq as long as necessary than were Huckabee supporters, and Thompson supporters were less positive toward environmental regulations than were Huckabee supporters.

There are some clearer patterns in the importance of demographic characteristics for student Republicans. Romney, Thompson, and McCain supporters were all significantly less likely to self-identify as born-again than were Huckabee supporters.

This is unsurprising given Huckabee's open Evangelical faith and appeal to religious voters. McCain supporters were much more likely to be men than Huckabee supporters, and both Romney and McCain supporters were more likely to be Hispanic than McCain supporters. Finally, only for the other Republican category were supporters more likely to report caucus attendance than were Huckabee supporters.

Overall, these demographic and issue trends suggest that student Republicans who supported Huckabee were more conservative than other student Republicans. This is a trend we expect to find in the larger population of Iowa as well, suggesting one area where students and the larger Iowa cohort were similar in their assessment of presidential candidates, at least on the Republican side.

In the full Iowa cohort, several patterns emerge, particularly among Republican respondents. For Democrats, both Clinton and Edwards supporters were more positive toward building a fence to control illegal immigration, and in every comparison respondents were significantly older than Obama supporters. Like in the student sample, Clinton supporters were significantly less likely to have independent partisan identification than were Obama supporters, and Edwards' supporters were more likely to be union members than were Obama's supporters. And interestingly, for none of the dyads was caucus attendance significant, suggesting that Obama supporters were more likely to turn out than supporters of the other Democratic candidates. Once again, we see demographic characteristics dominate the analyses of the differences among the supporters of different candidates.

For Republicans, issues played a bigger role, though demographics continued to be very important. The supporters of all other candidates beside Huckabee's found

American efforts to stop terror to be more effective than did Huckabee supporters; only for the Other Republicans category is the coefficient not significant. And supporters of all other Republican candidates were more supportive of gay marriage than were Huckabee's supporters. A variety of other issues were important in the various dyads between Huckabee and other candidates' supporters, but terrorism and same-sex marriage seemed to have the biggest impact across the board. Demographics seem to have played a key role in Republican candidate choice as well. In all comparisons, the supporters of all Republican candidates beside Huckabee were less likely to self-identify as born-again than Huckabee supporters, with only the McCain/Huckabee dyad remaining insignificant. In all comparisons, the supporters of all other candidates were older than Huckabee's supporters, though this relationship is only significant for Romney and McCain supporters. Several other demographic characteristics were important for particular dyads, but these are less obviously trends than religion and age. And only Thompson supporters were significantly more likely to attend a caucus than were Huckabee supporters. Even more strongly than in the student sample, the picture that emerges on the Republican side of the full Iowa cohort is that Huckabee supporters were significantly more conservative than their counterparts who supported other candidates.

The big picture that is evident in these results is that, at least for the 2008 Iowa caucuses, college students were making candidate decisions in ways that mirrored the process in the larger Iowa population. It is not that students were necessarily drawn to candidates for the same reason as the larger population, but overall, the conditions within the party battles seem to have affected students and the larger cohort in similar ways. For Democrats, there is little evidence that issues were important in the decision making of

any of the respondents, but that demographic identities played a bigger role. Even though these identities seemingly operated differently for college students and the larger Iowa cohort, it still seems that the candidate choice processes were based on demographic identities and other idiosyncratic factors.

For Republicans, it seems clear that both students and the larger Iowa cohort were reacting to the perceived conservatism and Evangelical identity of Mike Huckabee. In both samples, it is very clear that Huckabee supporters were more conservative than the supporters of the other candidates. For college students, the issue linkage is less obvious than in the larger Iowa cohort, but the born-again identity of many of Huckabee's supporters is clear in both samples.

The bottom line seems to be that college students are behaving in the ways that we expected. In terms of candidate choice, they do not seem to be behaving differently from the larger population. This is an important finding because much of the literature on youth voting has concentrated on turnout and on the ways in which this age group may be motivated differently to participate than its older counterparts. But little research has addressed the ways in which younger voters, in this case college students, might be making candidate choices. Our research addresses both of these phenomenon and finds that, indeed, turnout appears to be motivated differently for college students but candidate choice and students' response to issues is not.

Our research requires a few cautions that, while qualifying our results, do not undermine their general conclusion. First, it was difficult to effectively sample and contact the college student sample. Today, most college student surveys are conducted with a combination of paper advance notification and/or email contact to conduct a web

survey. Studies show that this approach can yield a good response rate (Pealer, et al. 2001, Kypir, et al. 2004). However, our concern was comparability with the general sample of registered voters, and thus we opted to pursue a telephone-based interview methodology with the possibility of email follow-up. The largest problem faced in using student registration rolls is that phone numbers and addresses may not be that of the student, but of the parent or guardian or an unused or disconnected dorm room number, resulting in a 50% contact rate. Surprisingly, less than 5% of email contacts resulted in completed interviews, and thus the follow-up use of email addresses to recruit respondents was ineffective. Students were by and large cooperative with over 70% agreeing to be interviewed once contact had been made. The general voter registration list was similarly flawed. Resources were not available to obtain updated address-matched telephone numbers, which may have resulted in a contact rate larger than 44% if addresses were of reasonable quality (this remains unverified). However, registered voters in our sample were less cooperative (49% for the November survey) than college students, perhaps because of large number of telephone polls received by most households during the pre-caucus campaign season. Although the survey dispositions are not ideal, nonresponse bias is generally less of a concern with model-based estimates than with direct survey estimates under these conditions, as long as the model is a reasonable approximation of the relationships among variables.

Second, we should be cautious to generalize to all young voters from a sample of college students. We know that turnout and motivation appear to be different for students and non-students. However, approximate 70% of public high school graduates now start college (US Dept. of Education 2006), making this group a significant component of the

18-24 year-old demographic. Thus, college students and their voting patterns are important in their own right in addition to being a representative of the larger youth population.

Conclusion

In this article, we have offered concrete evidence of two important conjectures in the study of younger voters. First, young voters seem to be motivated to go to the polls for different reasons than their older counterparts. Some issues seem to trump the demographic characteristics that are so important in turnout decisions of older voters. Qualitative evidence from the 2008 caucus campaigns confirms that different candidates approached young voters in differing ways (Norris 2008), and those that focused specifically on demonstrating their relevance to young voters' opinions and commitments were more successful in bringing young voters to the caucuses. Campaign consultants have been justified in their assertions that youth are able to be mobilized under the right circumstances (Skaggs and Anthony 2002).

Second, and perhaps more important, we confirm that while young voters are more ideologically liberal than their older counterparts, they respond to campaign dynamics similar ways and choose candidates based on a similar set of characteristics and issue commitments. So, once younger voters have been mobilized to turnout, candidates and their campaign staffs can generally expect college students to react to campaign messages in ways that are similar to older voters. This is not to say that the opinions and priorities of younger voters mirror older voters, but that in the context of the campaign,

they will find the same issues and identities to be important, even if their opinions on those issues are more liberal than older voters.

This study represents a good first step in understanding how young voters are motivated to turnout and choose candidates. Because of the intimate relationship between candidate choice and the choice to turnout, further work needs to examine the interplay of candidate choice and turnout. Obama won the Iowa caucuses because he turned out more young voters, but he was more likely to attract them because of his issue commitments. So it is clear that the candidate choice and turnout decisions are not wholly unrelated and this relationship needs to be explored more comprehensively. Further, the turnout and candidate choices of young voters and college students needs to be examined beyond the Iowa caucuses. As discussed earlier, the Iowa caucuses are very unique both in format and in the attention paid by most Iowans to presidential nomination campaigns. Finding similar results about turnout and candidate choice in other states and in other contexts would bolster the idea that youth are differently motivated to turn out, but similarly motivated in their voting choices.

The crisis of the underrepresentation of youth among voting adults in the United States has been the focus of pundits and researchers since 18-year-olds were given the vote. But the evidence of recent elections suggests that youth voting is not the disaster we once feared. Perhaps the increases in youth voting evident in the 2008 election cycle will usher in a new interest in young voters themselves and not simply how to get them to turn out to vote.

Appendix A

1. As you know, the Democratic and Republican Caucuses were held in Iowa on January 3rd of this year to assist in selection candidates for the Presidential election in November. Did you attend an Iowa Caucus on January 3rd?

1 = Yes, 0 = No
2. Which candidate did you originally plan to support when you went to the caucus?

1=Biden 2=Clinton 3=Dodd 4=Edwards 5=Gravel 6=Kucinich 7=Obama 8=Richardson
13=Giuliani 14=Huckabee 15=Hunter 17=McCain 18=Paul 19=Romney 20=Tancredo
21=Thompson
3. Which candidate did you ultimately support or vote for?

1=Biden 2=Clinton 3=Dodd 4=Edwards 5=Gravel 6=Kucinich 7=Obama 8=Richardson
13=Giuliani 14=Huckabee 15=Hunter 17=McCain 18=Paul 19=Romney 20=Tancredo
21=Thompson
4. If you had to decide today, which of the candidates seeking the [Republican/Democratic] nomination for President would be your first choice?

1=Biden 2=Clinton 3=Dodd 4=Edwards 5=Gravel 6=Kucinich 7=Obama 8=Richardson
13=Giuliani 14=Huckabee 15=Hunter 17=McCain 18=Paul 19=Romney 20=Tancredo
21=Thompson
5. Which of the following options best describes what you think should be done about US troops in Iraq? Should the US...

1=Withdraw troops within one year 2=Withdraw troops over next 2 years 3=Maintain troops in Iraq for the next 3-4 years 4=Maintain troops in Iraq for as long as it takes 5=None/Other
6. How effective do you think the United States has been in combating terrorism?

1=Very effective 2= Somewhat effective 3=Not very effective 4=Not at all effective 5= Don't know
7. How would you rate the condition of the US economy today?

5=Excellent 4=Very good 3=Good 2=Fair 1=Poor
8. Do you think that abortion should be ...

4=Legal in all cases 3=Legal in most cases 2=Illegal in most cases 1=Illegal in all cases

9. Do you think that the federal government should spend...

1= Much less on public education 2= Somewhat less 3= About the same 4= Somewhat more 5= Much more on public education

10. The federal government should do more to improve the nation's environment.

5=Strongly agree 4=Agree 3=No opinion/Don't know 2=Disagree 1=Strongly disagree

11. The federal government should build fences or other barriers to keep people from entering the country illegally.

5= Strongly agree 4= Agree 3= No opinion/Don't know 2= Disagree 1= Strongly disagree

12. The Federal Government should make sure that more people are covered by health insurance, even if it means raising taxes.

5= Strongly agree 4= Agree 3= No opinion/Don't know 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree

13. Same-sex couples should be allowed to legally marry.

5=Strongly agree 4=Agree 3=No opinion/Don't know 2=Disagree 1=Strongly disagree

14. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

1=Democrat 2=Republican 3=Independent 4=Something else

15. How would you describe your views on most political matters? Would you say you are Very Liberal, Somewhat Liberal, Moderate, Somewhat Conservative, or Very Conservative?

1=Very liberal 2=Somewhat liberal 3=Moderate 4=Somewhat conservative 5=Very conservative

16. Have you participated in past Iowa presidential precinct caucuses?

2= More than once 1= Once 0= Never

17. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1= <High School 2= High School 3= Some college 4= Bachelor's 5= Postgraduate

18. Are you or anyone else in your household a member of a labor union?

1= Yes 0= No

19. What is your current age? _____

20. Recorded Gender

1= Male 2= Female

21. If Protestant or Christian, ASK: Do you consider yourself born-again?

1=Yes 0=No

22. Are you Hispanic?

1= Yes 0=No

23. Would you say your total household income before taxes last year was...

1= <\$25,000 2= \$25,000-\$50,000 3= \$50,000-\$75,000 4= \$75,000-\$100,000
5= >1000,000

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Table 1: Logit Analysis of Student and Full Iowa Sample Turnout Predictors

	Student Sample	First Difference Effect	Full Iowa Sample	First Difference Effect
War in Iraq	.048 (.065)	.069	.022 (.059)	.022
Terror Effectiveness	-.131 (.079)	-.124	.046 (.080)	.045
Economy	.104 (.117)	.100	.062 (.099)	.062
Abortion	-.027 (.080)	-.026	-.009 (.073)	-.009
Education Funding	-.036 (.109)	-.034	.107 (.091)	.105
Environment	.154 (.125)	.137	.033 (.097)	.033
Immigration	-.144 (.071)*	-.134	-.088 (.061)	-.087
Health Insurance	-.224 (.085)**	-.215	.007 (.080)	.007
Same-Sex Marriage	-.029 (.086)	-.027	.035 (.079)	.035
Born-Again	.184 (.247)	.044	.169 (.185)	.042
Sex	.154 (.174)	.036	.372 (.166)*	.092
Hispanic	-.791 (.528)	-.163	-.254 (.819)	-.062
Democratic PID	.234 (.219)	.055	.896 (.235)***	.219
Republican PID	.241 (.281)	.057	.282 (.239)	.070
Ideology	-.206 (.124)	-.189	.002 (.105)	.002
Previous Caucus Attend	.718 (.235)**	.343	.827 (.095)***	.390
Age	--		.088 (.103)	.065
Income	--		.098 (.071)	.097
Education	--		.385 (.086)***	.361
Constant	.617 (1.009)		-4.14 (.943)***	

*p< .05, **p< .01, ***p<.001; two-tailed

Standard Errors in Parentheses.

Student n = 648; Iowa n = 841

Student Log Likelihood = - 412.44; Iowa Log Likelihood = -477.39

Student Pseudo R² = .043; Iowa Pseudo R² = .177

Table 2: Student Candidate Choice in the 2008 Iowa Caucuses: Multinomial Logit Model

	<u>Clinton vs. Obama</u>	<u>Edwards vs. Obama</u>	<u>Other Dems vs. Obama</u>	<u>Romney vs. Huckabee</u>	<u>Thompson vs. Huckabee</u>	<u>McCain vs. Huckabee</u>	<u>Other Reps vs. Huckabee</u>
War in Iraq	.040	.079	-.113	-.390*	.083	.190	-.406*
Terror Effective	-.127	-.161	.050	-.268	.505	-.187	-.514
Economy	.102	.182	1.832*	.077	.346	-.093	-.257
Abortion	.170	.179	.493	.686**	.590	.463*	.380
Education Funding	.164	.321	1.662	.216	.106	-.228	-.488
Environment	-.440	.122	-.176	-.277	-.851*	-.201	-.498
Immigration	-.082	.319*	-.629	.236	.174	-.033	.637*
Health Insurance	-.105	.321	.019	.005	-.160	.160	-.207
Same-Sex Marr.	.071	-.085	.021	.274	-.502	.101	.777**
Caucus Attendance	-.066	1.341**	.524	.643	1.013	-.945	1.221*
Independent PID	-.846*	-.161	-.195	-1.390	.802	.082	.747
Born-Again	.363	.947	3.458**	-1.451*	-2.426*	-1.266**	-.914
Sex	-.564	.935*	.600	.658	-.550	1.606*	1.597*
Hispanic	-.101	.911	-32.065	21.205***	-8.896	20.869***	21.601
Ideology	.286	.032	-1.160	.872	.400	-.114	.285
Constant	-1.041	-8.423**	-14.059	-4.475	-3.627	.646	-.310

*p< .05, **p< .01, ***p< .001, two-tailed

Student Democrats n = 423; Student Republicans n = 189

SD Log Likelihood: -265.376; SR Log Likelihood: -201.21

SD Pseudo R² = .107; SR Pseudo R² = .275

Note: For Student Democrats, the dependent variable is candidate choice among self-identified Democratic voters. The “Other Dems” category includes Biden, Dodd, Gravel, and Kucinich. For Student Republicans, the dependent variable is candidate choice among self-identified Republican voters. The “Other Reps” category includes Guilliani, Paul, Hunter, and Tancredo

Table 3: Full Iowa Sample Candidate Choice in the 2008 Iowa Caucuses: Multinomial Logit Model

	<u>Clinton vs. Obama</u>	<u>Edwards vs. Obama</u>	<u>Other Dems vs. Obama</u>	<u>Romney vs. Huckabee</u>	<u>Thompson vs. Huckabee</u>	<u>McCain vs. Huckabee</u>	<u>Other Reps vs. Huckabee</u>
War in Iraq	-.196	-.118	-.024	.077	-.020	.251*	-.132
Terror Effective	.129	-.053	-.129	.519*	.787*	.490*	.085
Economy	-.053	-.114	.573*	.060	-.298	-.212	-.620*
Abortion	.040	.152	.321	.232	.068	.240	.063
Education Funding	-.207	-.115	.158	.167	-.488*	-.056	-.468
Environment	-.153	-.243	-.152	.268	.123	.560**	-.165
Immigration	.244*	.239*	.056	.145	.457	-.165	.517*
Health Insurance	.126	.076	-.355	-.496**	-.207	-.096	-.320
Same-Sex Marr.	.173	.062	.098	.635**	.872**	.605*	.956**
Caucus Attendance	-.099	.259	.052	-.108	1.179*	-.087	1.027
Independent PID	-.965**	-.473	.170	-.553	-.069	.130	.111
Born-Again	.034	-.111	-.147	-1.001**	-1.768***	-.672	-1.171*
Age	.925***	.529**	1.022**	.629**	.185	.762**	.426
Income	-.201	-.043	.095	-.070	-.351	-.009	-.191
Union-Member	.615	.945**	.610	-.151	.218	-.578	.747
Sex	-.328	.027	-.189	.233	.644	.969*	.640
Hispanic	1.140	-30.784	-30.118	-31.076	2.426	-30.533	-30.124
Ideology	-.261	.053	.393	.174	.806*	-.033	-.633
Constant	-2.087	-.843	-6.467	-7.098**	-8.269**	-8.131***	2.951

*p< .10, **p< .05, ***p< .01, ****p<.001; two-tailed

Democrats n = 441; Republicans n = 305; D Log Likelihood: -488.16; R Log Likelihood: -358.56; D Pseudo R² = .119; R Pseudo R² = .192

Note: For Democrats, the dependent variable is candidate choice among self-identified Democratic voters. Obama is the base category. The “Other Dems” category includes Biden, Dodd, Gravel, and Kucinich. For Republicans, the dependent variable is candidate choice among self-identified Republican voters. The “Other Reps” category includes Guilliani, Paul, Hunter, and Tancredo

