

Two Field Experiments Testing Negative Campaign Tactics

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Abstract

Conventional wisdom holds that negative campaign messages decrease voter turnout and are more persuasive than positive messages. Academic evidence in favor of these two contentions has been mixed. However, prior studies may be limited by research design. Observational analyses capture real-world campaigns and behaviors, but cannot definitively rule out endogeneity as a source of potential bias. Laboratory experiments possess internal validity, but it is unclear the extent to which the results hold in broader real-world settings. Attempting to combine the strengths of both methodologies, we worked with two actual campaigns to conduct randomized experiments in the field. By randomly assigning subjects to be exposed to positive or negative campaign messages, we can estimate the effect of message tone on turnout and vote choice. In the end, we detect no difference between negative and positive messages with regards to turnout or vote preference.

Introduction

One of the most memorable aspects of the 2004 Presidential election was the *Swift Boat Veterans for Truth* campaign, which questioned John Kerry's stated record during and immediately after the Vietnam War. The 527 organization spent \$22,565,360 (OpenSecrets.org 2005) producing and airing nine television commercials, one book, and a DVD documentary. Prior to the first Swift Boat ad running on August 4th, nearly every poll had John Kerry ahead of George Bush by a couple of points. By the time the last round of advertisements were aired on October 13th, John Kerry was several points behind George Bush in every major poll (Realclearpolitics.org 2005). This negative advertising campaign was widely cited in the media as a major cause of John Kerry's fall in the polls.

Conventional wisdom holds negative advertisements accomplish two feats simultaneously: 1) negative messages drive down support for the target of the advertisement, and 2) turnout declines among supporters of the target. Colorful anecdotes about negative advertisements are certainly memorable, but it is far from clear how successfully negative messages accomplish these two goals. This paper draws upon two randomized field experiments to shed light on this issue.

The tone of campaign messages and voting behavior is one of the most researched topics in the fields of political science and communications. Despite intense effort, the research has proffered a spate of inconsistent findings. Different observational studies provide evidence for all of the three possible relationships between negative advertisements and voter turnout: negative messages decrease turnout (Ansolabehere, et al. 1994; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, and Simon 1999; Kahn and Kenney 1999), increase

turnout (Freedman and Goldstein 1999; Wattenberg and Briens 1999), and have no effect on turnout (Finkel and Geer 1998; Lau, et al. 1999). Laboratory experiments seldom show negative advertisements increase turnout (but see Clinton and Lapinski 2004), however, the results remain confused: Ansolabhere and Iyengar (1995) find negative messages decrease turnout; Garramone et al. (1990) find no effect of negative ads on turnout; and King, Henderson and Chen (1998) find negative ads decrease vote intention in some cases, but not others. Indeed, after conducting a meta-analysis of 52 separate studies, Lau and his coauthors conclude, “it appears that, ala Newton’s third law, for every research finding there is an equal and opposite research finding” (Lau et al. 1999, 859).

Theories about negative campaign messages are just as contested and debated as the research findings. Psychological studies consistently demonstrate that negatively framed messages are given more weight in opinion formation than positively framed messages (Lau 1982), but it is not altogether clear what implications such a weight differential has for the types of opinion individuals will form. Ansolabhere and Iyengar (1995) contend negative messages in political commercials evoke an emotional response from viewers that motivates them to support the sponsor of the ad, while at the same time alienating them from the political process and decrease their desire to vote. In contrast, Finkel and Geer (1998) argue that because viewers see the information contained in negative messages as more relevant, viewers’ distaste in negative advertising may be offset by a surge in how much they care about the outcome of the election. Finally, it is entirely possible that the citizenry does not pay sufficient attention to campaign advertisements to be turned off (Sigelman and Kugler 2003). To paraphrase Lau, it also

appears true that for every theory about negative campaign messages there is an equal and opposite theory.

This paper will not propose a new theory of how negative campaign ads affect voters. Plenty of plausible hypotheses exist, but the high quality data necessary to adjudicate between the competing theories is missing. Both observational studies and laboratory experiments possess strengths and weaknesses. Observational studies capture real-world campaign dynamics and voter response, but the utilization of negative campaign messages may be endogenous to political context so estimates may be biased. Laboratory experiments circumvent the endogeneity issue by randomizing exposure to the advertisements, but the external validity of the findings remains open to question. Prior authors have wrung as much data out of these two technologies as can be useful.

We propose a new methodological direction, namely, randomized field experiments that combine the exogenous application of treatment of laboratory experiments with the real world setting of observational studies. To that end, we conduct two separate experiments to test the efficacy of negative campaign messages. One experiment provided carefully targeted positive and negative phone messages to undecided young voters in Minnesota during the 2004 Presidential election. The second experiment randomly varied the use of positive or negative scripts during a face-to-face canvassing campaign in support of a ballot initiative in California. In both experiments, we find that negative campaign messages neither depressed turnout nor decreased support for the object of attack.

We begin by discussing how we define “negative” and “positive” messages, since the extant literature does not provide a single, commonly accepted definition. By doing

so, we are able to clarify the types of campaign messages to which our experimental data generalize. Next, we more fully describe the methodological approach used in this paper, contrasting it to previous approaches. In the subsequent sections, we detail the protocol and data collection for both field experimental studies, followed by a discussion of our results. In general, we neither find evidence that negative messages reduce turnout, nor do we find that they are more persuasive than positive messages. We conclude the paper with a discussion of how field experimental methods can be fruitfully applied to future research on this topic.

What is a Negative Message?

Comparing and interpreting studies of negative campaign messages is difficult because a consistent definition of precisely what constitutes a negative message is not applied. In fact, many scholars reject the term “negative” because it conflates “ads that are characterized as ‘negative’ because they are contentious and argumentative, challenging claims about the records, characters and platforms of opponents, and ads that are characterized as ‘negative’ because they are nasty, inaccurate, or unfair” (Bartels et al. 1998, p. 12). A popular alternative is to categorize messages as “advocacy,” which touts a candidate’s qualifications and the benefits of proposals, “attack,” which highlight perceived negative qualities of the opponent, or “comparative,” which explicitly compare the qualifications and proposals of the two candidates (Jamieson, Waldman, and Sherr 2000; see also Freedman and Goldstein 1999).

For our present purposes, the precise label placed on the “negative” or “attacking” message is irrelevant. The important concept is the difference between a campaign

trumpeting the benefits of its side and emphasizing the downsides of its opponent's positions. Furthermore, the message need not be false or constitute a personal attack. Glancing through the scripts used in the two experiments (see Appendix A), the contrast between the "positive" and "negative" scripts should be readily apparent. The specific scripts we tested were focused upon policy outcomes, and, while certainly negative and contested by opponents, would not be classified as the most inflammatory of attack ads. So it is possible that extremely viscious and personal campaign advertisements may reduce turnout and dampen support for the opponent, our experiments cannot test that more specific proposition. Instead, our scripts resemble more typical "negative" or "attack" messages utilized by campaigns.

In addition, the ability control the content of the scripts provides the key advantage of our approach over observational studies of negative campaign messages. Often times fitting campaign ads neatly into one category becomes difficult. An ad may start by attacking an opponent and end by advocating the candidate. Jamieson, Waldman and Sherr (2000) suggest breaking the advertisement into distinct ideas and categorizing each segment. Even then, whether an idea is negative or comparative might depend upon the subject decision of the researcher. We sidestep these concerns by crafting unambiguously "attacking" or "advocating" messages. For instance, the messages that criticize the President's handling of a topic area do not mention John Kerry or the Democrats as a point of comparison. Thus, there is little room for subjective interpretation on the part of the researcher or the voters as to the message's tone or intent.

How Should One Measure the Effect of Exposure?

Past research has relied upon two research methodologies to evaluate the effectiveness of negative campaign messages: observational studies and laboratory experiments. Observational studies search for correlations between the number and type of advertisements shown and the behavior of the residents during the election. Some studies measure voter behavior by analyzing aggregate rates of turnout and vote share (e.g., Ansolabehere, et al. 1994; Finkel and Geer 1998), while others survey residents within jurisdictions to capture behavior and psychological orientations (e.g., Freedman and Goldstein 1999; Wattenberg and Briens 1999)¹. Unfortunately, causality is difficult to establish using observational data. The primary hurdle for observational studies is that campaigns are strategic as to both the placement and the content of campaign advertisements. That is, the quantity and quality of the campaign messages aired in an area are endogenous, so estimates of the effectiveness of negative advertisements may be biased.²

Given the quantity of literature detailing the extent to which campaigns target specific populations, carefully craft messages, and employ extremely detailed tactics in response to political reality and moves by the opposition, the lack of attention paid to strategy in analysis in studies of negative campaigning is surprising. Often concerns about selection bias are highly abstract, but in the case of negative campaign messages such concerns are very direct. For example, Sigelman and Buell (2003) find that candidates are more likely to utilize attack ads when running behind in the polls. Thus,

¹ Some studies such as Lau and Pomper (2001, 2002) use both survey and aggregate analysis.

² In addition to the endogeneity bias created by the strategic imperatives of campaigns, there is also likely to be a correlation between watching (and reporting watching) political and political attitudes and behavior (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, and Simon 1999).

the lack of correlation many scholars find between electoral success and negative advertising may be caused by an underlying problem with the campaign or candidate rather than anything inherent in negative advertisements themselves. Simply controlling for early polls will not solve the problem because campaigns may be acting upon private information about the state of the campaign. These types of unobserved and unmodeled processes plague observational research.³

Laboratory experiments avoid this unobserved heterogeneity by randomly assigning subjects to view different types of carefully selected advertisements. The random assignment assures that, on average, the people exposed to a negative political advertisement are identical to the people viewing positive political advertisements (e.g., they reside in similar political contexts, share similar tastes with regards to politics, and possess similar behavioral patterns). Consequently, selection bias is not a problem in properly implemented experimental research designs because exposure to a negative campaign message is randomly determined rather than strategic.

Laboratory experiments also provide researchers a great deal more control over the measurement of the independent and dependent variables. The researcher does not need to infer what type of ads the subject viewed, because she showed the ads to the subject. The researcher also has control over the content of the advertisement. Rather than coding hundreds of messages and pigeonholing them into a particular category, the researcher can carefully select political advertisements that are archetypes of the desired concepts. In short, randomization and control over the experimental inputs affords the

³ Measurement error in the independent variables of interest is also a problem for observational studies. Not all political messages are created equally, yet content analyses of campaign messages implicitly assume that citizens weight all campaign messages equally by placing a diverse set of messages in discrete categories, thereby creating an illusion of uniformity.

laboratory researcher unparalleled internal validity in measuring the effect of campaign messages upon subjects.

Unfortunately, the extent to which laboratory findings generalize to the outside world is not always clear. Subjects are likely to pay far closer attention to an advertisement shown in the laboratory than they would during the course of their every day life (Sigelman and Kugler 2003). Surveying subjects immediately after exposure to the experimental message may also cause subjects to think more seriously or differently about the advertisement than they might have otherwise. Moreover, the type of person who agrees to participate in political laboratory experiments tends to be different from the average citizen. At worst, these considerations suggest that laboratory experiments are potentially biased in favor of finding treatment effects for negative campaign messages. At the very least, the external validity of laboratory findings is an open question that requires inquiry.

We pursue a new research strategy by combining the real-world setting of observational studies with the internal validity of laboratory experiments. Our field experiments worked closely with existing political campaigns to craft unambiguously positive or negative messages, and then randomly determine which citizens were exposed to the negative message. Just as in the laboratory setting, the random assignment assures that subjects exposed to the negative or positive messages possess similar baseline rates of turnout and support for the candidate. And just like the observational studies, the citizens targeted and reached by the campaigns are unaware they are being studied, in their natural habitat, typical of residents in the area, and will see genuine campaign materials delivered in an authentic manner. Since the campaigns are doing the work,

there is no question as to whether the treatment resembles real-world experiences. We then verify voter turnout for each subject by consulting the official state voting records, and measure vote choice by administering a short survey to subjects over the phone immediately after the election. Thus, measurement error in the key independent variable and the dependent variable is not a concern. The next section describes the two experiments in detail.

Experimental Design

We draw our data from two large field experiments, both conducted in conjunction with actual campaigns in the fall of 2004 prior to the general election. We discuss the protocols and data collection process for each below.

Study A: Minnesota

The voter mobilization campaign was conducted by the 21st Century Democrats, a 501(c)4 organization targeting young people in Minnesota. The 21st Century Democrats engaged in a number of election related activities, but only the phone campaign was evaluated experimentally. The campaign occurred in two phases. Beginning in early September, the first phase of the campaign involved collecting accurate contact information for young voters, identifying “undecided” voters, and determining the particular issue of concern for each undecided voter. The second phase of the campaign consisted of calling the previously identified undecided voters the week prior to Election Day and delivering a persuasive script specially tailored to the subject’s identified area of interest. Limiting the campaign to purely undecided voters decreased the number of subjects in the experiment, however, it minimized the noise associated with the estimate

by focusing only upon those subjects who could be persuaded to vote one way or the other.

Subjects were collected for the phone campaign via two mechanisms. First, the 21st Century Democrats harvested names by standing at sites where young people congregate (e.g., concerts, retail spaces, clubs, and bus stops). While collecting contact information, including cell phone numbers, the 21st Century volunteer would also identify the issue the subject felt was most critical to the nation and the subject's vote intention (i.e., strong Kerry, lean Kerry, undecided, lean Bush, strong Bush, lean Nader, undecided Nader).

Eligible young voters whose names and contact information were purchased from a vendor constituted the second set of subjects for the experiment. The purchased numbers were called early in the campaign to verify the accuracy of the contact information, collect cell phone numbers, and identify undecided voters. Issues the subjects found personally important were not ascertained initially, so the callers making the persuasive outreach during the second portion of the campaign had to inquire about issues.

The second portion of the campaign involved making calls to the undecided voters in order to persuade them to vote for the Democratic ticket.⁴ Callers used a positive or negative script depending upon the condition the subject was assigned to. The positive script stressed the solutions the Democratic Party had proposed to the problem the subject had earlier identified. The negative script emphasized the perceived failings of the Republican administration on the issue at hand. See Table 1 for a detailed

⁴ Campaign finance laws prevented the 21st Century Democrats from explicitly endorsing John Kerry as President. Despite this minor hurdle, the intent of the scripts was clear.

breakdown assignment to these groups. Otherwise, the scripts were identical (see Appendix A). Callers reported no difficulties in switching between scripts, reading the portion of the script dedicated to each issue, or encountering hostile subjects. By all measures, the calling went smoothly.

Immediately after the election, a survey was conducted to measure the vote choice of the subjects in the experiment (see Appendix B). The overall response rate was 22 percent.⁵ If this were an observational survey, such a low response rate would raise concerns of non-response bias. However, because treatment was randomly assigned, this is not a concern. Within the pool of survey respondents, the subjects receiving the positive script should have equal propensities to vote and support Bush as the subjects receiving the negative script. This, of course, does not obviate concerns about external validity, since it is impossible to know how non-respondents felt about the candidates. Yet, just as is the case with observational survey data, we can only make inferences about the impact of message tone on voting preferences to the population of survey takers. In contrast, we were able to verify voter turnout for all of the subjects in the experiment using the official turnout lists of the Minnesota Secretary of State. Consequently, our findings with regard to voter turnout unequivocally generalize to our full target population.

⁵ One fact that became immediately apparent was that the subjects remembered the call from the 21st Century Democrats. Over half of those surveyed reported being contacted by the Minnesota Young Voter Project (the name under which the 21st Century Democrats were calling), compared to one-third contacted by the Democrats and one-fifth by the Republican Party.

Table 1: Summary of Experimental Designs

| | Experimental Condition | | | Total |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | Positive | Negative | Control | |
| | N (Percent) | N (Percent) | N (Percent) | |
| Study A: Minnesota | | | | |
| Randomized List | 3,084 (49.7) | 3,122 (50.3) | NA | 6,206 (100.0) |
| Survey | 680 (49.1) | 705 (50.9) | NA | 1,385 (100.0) |
| Study B: Los Angeles | | | | |
| Randomized List | 29,694 (46.9) | 24,638 (38.9) | 9,022 (14.2) | 63,354 (100.0) |
| Survey | 107 (29.8) | 79 (22.0) | 173 (48.2) | 359 (100.0) |

Study B: Los Angeles

Study B was conducted in Los Angeles, CA where a different non-profit organization targeted minority voters in an effort to boost support for two statewide ballot propositions. One ballot proposition aimed at relaxing the “three-strikes” law, making it so that only a violent offense on the “third strike” would qualify for a life sentence. The other proposition would have required that large companies pay at least 80 percent of employees’ health insurance. We randomly assigned households on their target list into treatment and control groups (see Table 1 for a detailed breakdown). Their get-out-the-vote (GOTV) strategy unfolded in two stages. In the first stage, both paid and volunteer door-to-door canvassers attempted to contact subjects assigned to the treatment group to ascertain their level of support for the ballot proposition and deliver a persuasive message regardless of support. In the second stage, which occurred in the week of the election, canvassers returned to deliver the persuasive message only to supporters and undecided voters and encourage these individuals to vote on Election Day (see Appendix A for question wording of scripts). Canvassers were able to reach 15,083 subjects in the

treatment group (27.8 percent), which is a respectable contact rate in a door-to-door operation.

In order to facilitate the comparison of persuasive messages, we randomly assigned half of the precincts in the treatment group to be given a negative message and half to be given a positive message. Precinct-level randomization was useful for two reasons. First, it allowed the campaign to send out canvassers who specialized in one message, reducing errors that might be caused by asking canvassers to switch between messages in the field. Second, it kept message tone confined to a geographic area, reducing the possibility that subjects could hear the competing messages through cross-contamination (e.g., from a neighbor). Because the precincts were randomly assigned, it poses no threat to internal validity, but does require special care be taken when estimating the standard errors of the treatment effect estimates (see Arceneaux 2005).

Consonant with Study A, actual voter turnout was measured using official records obtained from the State of California after the election and vote choice was measured with a post-election survey conducted by a professional polling firm (see Appendix B for question wording). Given the sheer sample size of the experiment, we randomly sampled 6,756 individuals to be called by the polling firm (3,416 were drawn from the treatment group and 3,340 from the control). The overall response rate was quite low (5.3 percent), but as discussed above this does not compromise the internal validity of the experiment since random assignment ensures that subjects in even the survey sample are identical (within sampling error) save for the intervention of the campaign message.

Common Features and Benefits

To be clear, both Studies A and B test the effects of a *single* exposure to a negative campaign message. In contrast, many observational studies measure the overall content of election advertisements, which raises the concern that any potential effects in our study will be negated by other campaign messages and activates. We believe that this concern is misplaced because it is premised on a misunderstanding of the causal quantity of interest that we are estimating. Specifically, the design of our field experiments will furnish an estimate of the *marginal* effect of a campaign message on voting behavior, rather than the effect of an entire campaign.⁶ This quantity is identical to the causal estimate generated in laboratory experiments with the key exception, as discussed above, that we allow the real world to provide (random) background noise, which augments the generalizability of the study.

Even with the scope of our study in mind, some may be reasonably concerned that a single message is unlikely to have very strong marginal effects. We offer four responses to this concern. First, many laboratory experiments have shown large effects in the face of a single campaign messages (e.g., Ansolabhere and Iyengar 1995). Even if those estimates were biased upward in magnitude, there would still be empirical basis for an *a priori* expectation that a single message will be sufficient to influence voting behavior.

⁶ In contrast, observational studies often attempt to test whether negative advertising influences voting behavior in some holistic sense. For instance, a campaign that is predominated by negative messages may affect voting behavior through agenda setting and by shaping public discourse. The field experiments reported in this paper is not designed to speak to this specific question, and as explained above, we believe there are strong reasons to doubt the veracity of observational studies that speak to the question. An optimal design would randomly assign entire media campaigns to adopt a particular tone. Of course, such a tactic would not only prove difficult, expensive, and infeasible, it is also well beyond the scope of this inquiry.

Secondly, the technology through which we deliver the campaign messages should be more potent than the television advertisements typically studied. There is little reason to expect that political commercials will do much to affect citizens' propensity to vote (Krasno and Green 2005), while there is substantial evidence that door-to-door canvassing and phone banks can (Green and Gerber 2004; Nickerson forthcoming). By delivering political messages through personal contact, we are able to study the effects of message tone in situations where political communication is most likely to be influential. Additionally, the target population in Study A was young voters who were undecided a month prior to the election and contacted with a message specifically tailored to the issue they identified as most important in our country. It is precisely the group one would expect to be swayed by negative messages.

Thirdly, as mentioned in footnote 5, subjects in Study A remembered the call from the campaign.⁷ Despite all of the electoral activity in Minnesota during 2004, subjects were far more likely to report being contacted by the Minnesota Young Voters Project than either of the two parties. The paucity of subjects who recalled being contacted by the mainstream political campaigns further suggests that the 21st Century Democrats were targeting individuals largely ignored by the two Presidential campaigns.

Finally, contact from the face-to-face campaign in Study B did lead to a statistically significant increase in knowledge about the ballot propositions in Los Angeles. Subjects in the treatment groups were on average eight percentage points more likely to answer questions concerning the ballot proposition correctly than were subjects in the control group. The single shot treatment was sufficient to generate a detectable effect on information, and we see no reason *a priori* to expect turnout and vote choice to

⁷ Subjects in Study B were not asked this question on their post-election survey.

be any different. While we cannot measure the effects of an attack campaign, we do feel that our two experiments are capable of offering useful information on the marginal effects of exposure to negative messages.

Our experimental design also offers other benefits worthy of emphasis. With over 6,000 subjects in Study A and 63,000 in Study B, the sample sizes of these studies is enormous compared to both laboratory experiments and observational studies. Of the studies that focused on turnout and affect toward the sponsor (the key dependent variables in our analysis) surveyed in Lau, et al.'s (1999) comprehensive meta-analysis, the average sample of lab experiments is 289 (median=163) and for observational studies, it is 1,911 (median=405). In addition to massive sample size, the messages in our studies are genuine. We played a minor role in developing these messages, allowing the political groups to create their own messages.

Results

Study A: Minnesota

The random assignment of the messages allows the analysis of the experiment to rely upon simple means comparisons.⁸ A quick glance at Table 2 reveals that there is scant evidence of demobilization from receiving the negative campaign message. For the group of subjects harvested by the 21st Century Democrats, turnout is actually 3.1 percentage points higher among those receiving the negative message (see Table 2 column 2). The relationship is in the expected direction for those subjects whose names and numbers were purchased, but the effect size, -0.5%, is only a third of the standard

⁸ Both the harvested and purchased experiments satisfy randomization checks.

error associated with the estimate, 1.5% (see Table 2, column 3). Pooled together, the experiments indicate that the group receiving the negative campaign message were 0.6 percentage points *more* likely to vote than subjects exposed to the positive campaign message (see Table 2, column 4). Thus, the two experiments indicate that subjects were unlikely to be demobilized by exposure to a negative message from the campaign rather than a positive one.

Table 2: Voter Turnout by Randomly Assigned Message Tone

| | Harvested | Purchased | Pooled |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Turnout in Negative Group | 55.7% [911] | 39.3% [2211] | |
| Turnout in Positive Group | 52.5% [910] | 39.8% [2174] | |
| Difference | +3.1% (2.3) | -0.5% (1.5) | +0.6% (1.3) |
| p-value (one-tailed) | 0.90 | 0.37 | 0.67 |

Numbers in brackets represent N.

Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

The picture is much the same for voter preference and attitudes about the candidates. The positive message group in the harvested sample was 2.3 percentage points more likely to have voted for Kerry (see Table 3 column 2), but there was no difference whatsoever among the purchased group (see Table 3, column 3). Pooled together, positive messages outperformed negative messages by less than a percentage point, 0.8, and one-third the size of the standard error, 2.5 (see Table 3, column 4). Thus, it appears unlikely that negative messages are substantially more effective than positive messages at swaying voters.

Table 3: Voter Preference by Randomly Assigned Message Tone

| | Harvested | Purchased | Pooled |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Percent Voting Kerry in Negative Group | 57.3% [262] | 72.9% [443] | |
| Percent Voting Kerry in Positive Group | 59.6% [277] | 72.9% [403] | |
| Difference | +2.3% (4.3) | +0.0% (3.1) | +0.8% (2.5) |
| p-value (one-tailed) | 0.71 | 0.50 | 0.63 |

Numbers in brackets represent N.

Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Unsurprisingly, the positive and negative messages exhibit no differences in how voters view the candidates. Table 4 presents the favorable/unfavorable ratings of respondents for John Kerry. There is no difference whatsoever between subjects who were exposed to positive campaign messages and those subjects exposed to negative campaign messages.

Table 4: Kerry Favorable/Unfavorable Ratings by Message Tone

| | Harvested | Purchased | Pooled |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Average Favorable Kerry Rating in Negative Group | 2.19 [254] | 2.03 [436] | |
| Average Favorable Kerry Rating in Positive Group | 2.19 [267] | 2.04 [397] | |
| Difference | +0.00 (0.07) | -0.00 (0.06) | -0.00 (0.05) |
| p-value (two-tailed) | 0.98 | 0.95 | 0.99 |

Numbers in brackets represent N.

Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Rating scale is 1 = Very Favorable; 2 = Somewhat Favorable; 3 = Somewhat unfavorable; 4 = Very Unfavorable.

Table 6 presents a similar story for Bush's Favorable/Unfavorable ratings. The existing literature suggests that negative messages should lower a voter's opinion of Bush, but evidence of such opinion change cannot be found. In the harvested sample, the group receiving the negative pitch held a slightly more favorable opinion of the President

(see Table 5 column 2). Among those subjects whose name was purchased, there was essentially no difference in opinion between the two groups (see Table 5, column 3). Pooled together no difference in opinion between the two groups is exhibited (see Table 5, column 4). Thus, the experiments fail to support the hypothesis that negative campaign messages will drive down support for the target of the messages.

Table 5: Bush Favorable/Unfavorable Ratings by Message Tone

| | Harvested | Purchased | Pooled |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Average Favorable Bush Rating in Negative Group | 2.80 [255] | 3.23 [434] | |
| Average Favorable Bush Rating in Positive Group | 2.69 [271] | 3.26 [399] | |
| Difference | +0.10 (0.09) | -0.03 (0.07) | +0.02 (0.06) |
| p-value (two-tailed) | 0.25 | 0.70 | 0.73 |

Numbers in brackets represent N.

Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Rating scale is 1 = Very Favorable; 2 = Somewhat Favorable; 3 = Somewhat unfavorable; 4 = Very Unfavorable.

The two experiments conducted with the 21st Century Democrats contain two useful lessons. First, exposure to a negative campaign message did nothing to decrease turnout among the young people in this study. Young voters might be disenchanted with the political process, but the marginal effect of a negative campaign message is essentially zero. Second, young people find negative campaign messages no more persuasive than positive messages. So while negative messages may not demobilize youth, they also offer no additional persuasive power. These findings are replicated in the entirely different electoral context and experimental design of the California ballot initiative experiment, whose results are described next. Unlike study A, the research design in Study B included a control group, which will allow us to estimate the overall

effect of negative messages in addition to its effect relative to positively framed messages.

Study B: Los Angeles

Because random assignment took place at the precinct level in Study B, it is necessary to adjust the individual-level standard errors to account for the fact that individual-level outcomes are correlated within clusters. Failure to do so will result in *underestimating* the standard errors, biasing t-statistics upward. Following the practice of scholars who conduct cluster-randomized experiments in education and medical research, we use a robust sandwich estimator to adjust the standard errors (see Arceneaux 2005). To compensate for the loss in effective N, we include covariates (age, indicator for females, indicator for newly registered voters, and previous voting behavior in the past five elections) to increase the precision of these estimates. Note that the inclusion or exclusion of these covariates does not affect the treatment effect estimates themselves because treatment assignment is orthogonal to these variables.

The campaign, like all campaigns, was not able to deliver a message to everyone in the treatment group. An inappropriate analysis strategy would be to compare those whom the campaign contacted to those whom it did not (see Gerber and Green 2005). These individuals may be different in ways that are confounded with outcome variables of interest, which raises the issue of endogeneity bias inherent in observational studies.⁹ Our approach is to utilize the experimental design by comparing all individuals of the treatment to those in the control group, regardless of contact. This causal estimate is commonly referred to as the intent-to-treat (ITT) effect. Substantively, this quantity

⁹ Indeed, to take this approach ignores the experimental design and treats these data as if they were observational.

indicates how many individuals the campaign induced to vote (or support a proposition) given the total number of individuals it *attempted* to contact. We believe this quantity is of particular interest in this context since it highlights the reality that no campaign can reach everyone on its target list. Moreover, no campaign is even sure about how many individuals they will be able to contact before the campaign begins. In contrast, campaigns routinely have a good estimate of the number of individuals it will attempt to contact.

The ITT estimates for voter turnout and vote preferences regarding both ballot propositions are shown in Table 6. In terms of turnout, neither the positive nor the negative message had a statistically significant effect. It should be noted that the combined effect for both treatment groups is statistically insignificant, suggesting that the overall GOTV campaign did little to boost voter turnout. In light of the fact that the baseline turnout rate was so high in 2004 (turnout in the control group was roughly 75 percent), it is understandable that the campaign was unable to boost turnout any further. Notwithstanding these apparent ceiling effects, though, these data still provide an excellent test for whether negative messages demobilize subjects. The evidence reported in Table 7 does not support this hypothesis. While subjects in the negative message treatment group were approximately 1.2 percentage points less likely to vote than subjects in the control group, this quantity is not statistically different from zero ($p = 0.2177$, one-tailed t -test). Moreover, turnout in the negative message group is not statistically different from those in the positive message group ($p = 0.594$).

Table 6: ITT Estimates for the Causal Effect of Message Tone on Turnout and Voting Preferences in Los Angeles

| Treatment Group | Voter Turnout | Voter Preferences on Propositions | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| | | Three-Strikes | Health Care |
| Negative Message | -0.025 (0.0323) | 0.339 (0.189) | 0.115 (0.222) |
| Positive Message | -0.003 (0.0266) | 0.201 (0.198) | 0.0002 (0.2005) |
| N | 63,354 | 333 | 306 |
| Pseudo-R ² | 0.18 | 0.04 | 0.06 |

Note: Parameters were estimated with probit regression. Covariates for age, gender, recency of registration, and past voting history were included, along with fixed effects for randomization strata. These variables were included to merely increase the precision of the ITT effect estimates and account for the experimental design. Consequently, their parameter estimates are of little importance for the evaluation of the model and are suppressed. Numbers in parentheses represent robust standard errors.

In regard to voter preferences, there is evidence that the negative message increased support for the three-strikes proposition by roughly 13 percentage points over support in the control group ($p = 0.0367$, one-tailed t -test). Again, however, this quantity is not statistically different from the treatment effect in the positive message group ($p = 0.5658$). Moreover, it does not appear that any of the messages had an appreciable effect on support for the health care proposition. Consequently, these data neither support claims that negative messages demobilize voters, nor do they support claims that negative messages are particularly effective at influencing voting decisions.¹⁰

Conclusion

The central contribution of this paper is to demonstrate the utility of randomized field experiments to the study of negative campaign messages. While we hold laboratory experiments in high esteem for their ability to identify psychological mechanisms

¹⁰ As shown in Appendix B, the post-election survey for Study B also included items tapping subjects' factual knowledge about both ballot propositions. Since the impact of message tone on issue knowledge does not fall in the scope of this paper, it is not reported in Table 7. Nevertheless, these findings do not depart from those with respect to turnout and voter turnout. To summarize, while these messages had an overall effect on boosting knowledge about these propositions, negative messages were not particularly effective at increasing (or diminishing) knowledge.

underlying attitude formation, we concur with Iyengar and Simon (2000: 164) whom argue that “no matter how realistic their designs, [laboratory] experimenters must strive to replicate their results using alternative sources of evidence.” Up to this point, the “alternative source” of choice has been the use of observational data. Unfortunately, these data do not convincingly overcome threats to internal validity, especially unavoidable issues of endogeneity bias that arise from the strategic choices of campaigns and the micro-level selection process that governs exposure to campaign messages. Randomized field experiments overcome these issues in real-life contexts, making them a highly valuable “alternative source of evidence.”

Relying on two large and high statistically powered field experiments, we find little evidence that exposure to a negatively framed message either reduces turnout or that it is especially effective at persuading individuals to support the sponsor of the message. It is important to note that we find a lack of evidence for such effects among undecided and politically unattached voters, which is a subpopulation among whom negative campaign messages are supposed to be particularly pernicious (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995: 111-12).

Consistent with numerous laboratory experiments that do uncover large treatment effects, our experimental design exposed subjects to a single message (potentially two in the case of Study B). Nevertheless, we are sympathetic to the claim that a negatively themed campaign (i.e., one that features repeated negative messages) may be more likely to influence voting behavior. Extant observational research cannot test this hypothesis, because the theme of a campaign is inextricably intertwined with other variables that influence voting decisions (e.g., the relative baseline popularity of the candidates).

Because we limited our focus to replicating key facets of laboratory experiments in the field, we did not test this possibility. However, field experimental methods can readily be applied to this question, suggesting an open avenue for future research.

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Appendix A

Scripts used in Study A

Negative

1. Hi, is this _____? Hi, _____, my name is _____ and I am a volunteer with the Minnesota Young Voter Project.

How are you tonight? Great, I am calling you tonight because you signed a pledge with us to cast your ballot in the upcoming election and when we last spoke, you mentioned you were still not sure who you were planning on supporting this November.

2. **If the election were held today, who would you support?**
(If they have changed their mind, notate it under id on call sheet. Do not continue script with those who identify as strong Bush- say thank you, and hang up. Feel free to continue w/ lean Bush)
- 3.
- *If "I don't know: Are you leaning in a particular direction? (If still undecided, or only leaning, go to talking point below.)*
 - *If a strong Kerry supporter (1): Thanks, that's fantastic. As young people, we need to make our voice heard for change on November 2nd. Please remember to Vote.*
 - *****If still leaning Kerry, or undecided – 2,3,4,6,7:
I just wanted to take a minute to talk a little about _____ (their issue) _____. This election will have major implications for young people and we are calling you tonight to share with you how this decision will impact the issues that affect our lives:*

(Please go to the issue that corresponds to the issue identified on your call sheet. If they do not have an issue- Use Jobs/Wages)

Jobs/Wages- 1

Do you know someone who has lost a job? You know the job market is really tight for young people because we've lost 1.8 million jobs over the past 4 years and now it's even harder to find good paying jobs that provide health insurance. Minnesota's unemployment rate is up by 33% and nationally there are fewer young people working now than at any time since the government began tracking such data in 1948. This will be the first since the Great depression that any president will lose jobs over the course of his term. As young people, we deserve good jobs with good wages and health insurance. We deserve better

Positive

1. Hi, is this _____? Hi, _____, my name is _____ and I am a volunteer with the Minnesota Young Voter Project.

How are you tonight? Great, I am calling you tonight because you signed a pledge with us to cast your ballot in the upcoming election and when we last spoke, you mentioned you were still not sure who you were planning on supporting this November.

2. **If the election were held today, who would you support?**
(If they have changed their mind, notate it under id on call sheet. Do not continue script with those who identify as strong Bush- say thank you, and hang up. Feel free to continue w/ lean Bush)
- 3.
- *If "I don't know: Are you leaning in a particular direction? (If still undecided, or only leaning, go to talking point below.)*
 - *If a strong Kerry supporter (1): Thanks, that's fantastic. As young people, we need to make our voice heard for change on November 2nd. Please remember to Vote.*
 - *****If still leaning Kerry, or undecided – 2,3,4,6,7:
I just wanted to take a minute to talk a little about _____ (their issue) _____. This election will have major implications for young people and we are calling you tonight to share with you how this decision will impact the issues that affect our lives:*

(Please go to the issue that corresponds to the issue identified on your call sheet. If they do not have an issue- Use Jobs/Wages)

Jobs/Wages- 1

Do you know someone who has lost a job? The job market is really tight for young people because we've lost 1.8 million jobs over the past 4 years. We need to change that. Looking at the alternative, Clinton created more than 22 million new jobs when he was in office and Democrats have pledged to create 10 million new jobs by closing tax loopholes that encourage foreign outsourcing. As young people, we deserve good jobs with good wages and health insurance.

leadership.

[Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2001 & May 2004; Northeastern University youth unemployment study 2004 National Economic Council, October 2000.]

Cost of College/2:

Do you know someone who is paying college loans? In the last four years tuition at public universities has skyrocketed- Minnesota students and their families are paying over 35% more in tuition than they were just four years ago. Over 4 years, the Republicans have refused to fund over 33 billion dollars for public education and on top of that, here in Minnesota the Republican budget denied the 102.5 million dollars in tuition grant money that had been promised to the state. We deserve a quality education that we can afford. We deserve better leadership.

[Source: Congressional Budget Office, February 2004, "Another Education President?" National Association of College and University Business Officers, February 2001; "From Capitol to Campus," National Education Association, May 2001; "FY04 Education Funding Charts: State-by-State Information," "Bush's Tax Shakedown," Progressive Policy Institute, June 30, 2003; "Public College Tuition Soars, Higher Education Appropriations Plummet – College Affordability in Jeopardy," National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education, 2/11/03; USA Today, 1/4/04].

Economy/3:

In the last four years, we've lost 1.8 million jobs and Minnesota's household income has declined by \$1,251 since 2000. Republicans claim that huge tax cuts for the rich are helping boost the economy, but the economy is 2 million jobs short of what was promised. In 6 of the past 7 months, wages have actually decreased and the jobs that are being created make 23% less and are less likely to have health benefits. Additionally, Republican leadership opposes raising the minimum wage for the more than 17.3 million U.S workers. We deserve good quality jobs and opportunities for the future. We deserve better leadership.

[Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2001 to June 2004, <http://jec.senate.gov/democrats/ber.htm>, Economy.com, July 2004 and the U. S. Census Bureau, Economic Policy Institute, July 16 2004, Economic Policy Institute, March 2001 through March 2004].

Education/4:

Over four years, Minnesota has been deprived of over \$344 Million in federal education funding. Republicans failed to fund their own "Leave No Child Behind" law and stuck Minnesotans with the cost. Over the last four years, nearly one-third of American students are allowed to dropout of high school and on top of that funding for after-school programs, vocational education and

[Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2001 & May 2004; Northeastern University youth unemployment study ,004National Economic Council, October 2000.]

Cost of College/2:

Do you know someone who is paying college loans? In Minnesota students and their families have seen tuition costs rise by 35% in just 4 years! We need to change that. Democrats will help college students and their families afford tuition by offering a college opportunity tax credit of up to \$4000 for every year of college. They plan on offering four years of tuition-free college for people willing to serve America for 2 years in a school, healthcare center or strengthening America's security. We need leadership that will make college more affordable, so Minnesota students can attend and complete college.

[Source: Congressional Budget Office, February 2004, "Another Education President?" National Association of College and University Business Officers, February 2001; "From Capitol to Campus," National Education Association, May 2001; "FY04 Education Funding Charts: State-by-State Information," "Bush's Tax Shakedown," Progressive Policy Institute, June 30, 2003; "Public College Tuition Soars, Higher Education Appropriations Plummet – College Affordability in Jeopardy," National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education, 2/11/03; USA Today, 1/4/04].

Economy/3:

In the last four years we have gone from record surpluses to a record deficit of over \$420 billion dollars (US Treasury Department) and as young people, we will be left to pay for this mounting debt. We need to change that. Democrats will work to improve the economy by ending the tax cuts for the rich and getting rid of corporate give-aways. Also, Democrats are going create 10 million new jobs and closing tax loopholes that encourage foreign outsourcing. As young people we deserve a healthy economy, good jobs and the opportunity to succeed.

Education/4:

Quality public education is the foundation for a strong economy and a successful future. By fully funding the No Child Left Behind Act, Democrats, plan to provide more resources, smaller class sizes and more textbooks to public schools. They will invest 1.5 billion additional dollars in after-school programs giving 3.5 million kids a safe and quality place to go after-school. We need to insure that every child receives a good education.

Iraq/Draft/Security/5:

The situation in Iraq has had a huge impact on our generation. We are the ones fighting the war and we are the ones who will pay the costs. In order to

bilingual educational programs has been slashed. We deserve good quality public education and opportunities for the future.. We deserve better leadership.

[Source: "Passing Down the Deficit," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 5/12/04, <http://www.cbpp.org/5-12-04sfp.htm>, Education Week, 7/28/04].

Iraq/Draft/Security/5:

The war in Iraq has cost Minnesotan's \$3.4 billion dollars, that's money that could have been invested here at home. As young people we are the ones fighting the war and we are the ones who will bear the burden of paying for it. With that 3.4 billion dollars, we could have provided healthcare for almost 1.5 million children or hired more than 64,000 elementary school teachers.

And instead of finishing the job in Afghanistan to capture Bin Laden, Republican leadership redirected troops to Iraq. We have still not caught Osama Bin Laden and Iraq has been growing more instable and violent by the month. We need to change the direction of this country. As young people, we need leadership that will protect our future at home and abroad.

["Growing Pessimism on Iraq: Doubts Increase Within U.S. Security Agencies" by Dana Priest and Thomas E. Ricks
Washington Post *Wednesday, September 29, 2004; Page A01*.

"Federal Budget Trade-Offs" National Priorities Project, May 2004)

Environment/6:

In the last four years, the Republicans have gutted the Clean Air Act and abandoned federal regulations meant to protect endangered species, selling public lands to oil and logging company's and allowing polluting industries to write the laws that are meant to their activities. And here in Minnesota, rising mercury levels in our lakes and rivers are having a severe impact on our economy and our way of life. As young people, we deserve water we can drink and air we can breath. We deserve better leadership.

[*Published by the December 11, 2003 issue of [Rolling Stone](#) Crimes Against Nature by Robert F. Kennedy Jr.*]

Tolerance/Equality Issues/7:

In the last four years, the equal rights of gay Americans has been under attack. By advancing the Defense of Marriage Act, Republican leadership wants to pass a constitutional amendment denying more than 1,100 rights, protections and benefits to millions of devoted couples and their children. Additionally, Republican leadership has begun working to remove hard won protections for gay and lesbian workers from civil service labor contracts. As young people, we deserve leadership that honors and protects the rights of all of its citizens. We deserve better leadership.

stabilize the situation and to prevent more deaths, we need to build alliances around the world, not bully and alienate our allies. To do this we need a change in leadership. Democratic leadership will reach out and rebuild alliances to help share the burden in tracking down Al-Qaeda and rebuilding Iraq. As young people, we deserve to live in a safe world.

Environment/6:

Today, almost 50% of our water does not meet "drinkable, swimmable and fishable" standard set out by the Clean Water Act 30 years ago. We're back tracking and we need to change that. Democrat's have a strong record on the environment and plan to implement a "Restore America's Waters" campaign to protect our precious, limited water resources. And they will close loopholes in the Clean Air Act to reduce acid rain and mercury emissions. As young people, we deserve clean air and water and need to protect our quality of life.

Tolerance/Equality Issues/7:

In the last four years, the equal rights of gay Americans has been under attack. As young people we need to change that. Democrats have introduced legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and have played a leadership role in protecting the rights of all Americans in their workplace and in their communities. As young people, we deserve a nation that honors and protects the rights of all of its citizens.

Health Care/8:

Do you know someone without healthcare? 17.9 Million 18-35 year olds don't have health insurance and we need to change that. Well, Democrats have a plan to cover over 95% of all Americans and provide healthcare to all children. According to an independent analysis done by Emory University, their plan would provide health insurance coverage to nearly 27 million Americans who now to not have health insurance. They will push to reduce the price of prescription drugs through the re-importation of cheaper drugs from Canada. As young people, we deserve to have access to quality and affordable health insurance.

4. **At this point, do you know who you'll be supporting in the upcoming presidential election?**

(Let them respond, and be sure to re-id them as necessary. Be precise in choosing an ID code, and don't be afraid to ask again.)

- **If No Issue Identified:** And what issue is most important to you in the upcoming election?

5. **Just two more questions:**

- What is your current address? Are you registered to vote at this address? And, what is your date of birth?
- The situation in Iraq has had a huge impact on our

Health Care/8:

Do you know someone without healthcare? In the last four years, more than 3.8 million Americans have lost their health insurance. In 2002 alone, the number of uninsured increased by 2.4 million- the largest one-year increase in a decade. And 18-35 year olds are the most under-insured population- 17.9 million of us (18-35) do not have health insurance and those of us who do have insurance have seen premiums increase by an average of \$2,600. As young people, we deserve to have health insurance that we can afford. We deserve better leadership.

[Sources: Census Bureau, Sept. 2003 report; "Census Finds Many More Lack Health Insurance," Washington Post, 9/30/03, Kaiser family foundation, 2004,].

4. **At this point, do you know who you'll be supporting in the upcoming presidential election?**

(Let them respond, and be sure to re-id them as necessary. Be precise in choosing an ID code, and don't be afraid to ask again.)

➤ **If No Issue Identified:** And what issue is most important to you in the upcoming election?

5. **Just two more questions:**

- What is your current address? Are you registered to vote at this address?
- And, what is your date of birth?

Thanks, have a great day!

Thanks, have a great day!

Scripts used in Study B

Negative

Hello, my name is _____, I'm with *Neighborhoods United*. We're talking to our neighbors today about the November election and how it will impact our communities.

Of course there is the Presidential election, but there are also some Statewide Propositions on the ballot that will have a major impact on our community. Here are some things you should know about Prop 66:

- Proposition 66 gives us a chance to slow down the mass incarcerations in our community caused by the Three Strikes Law.
- The Three Strikes Law is discriminatory and criminalizes our community.
- It sends people to jail for 25 years to life for non-violent offenses such as shop- lifting.
- Currently 30,000 second and third strikers have been sentenced for petty crimes!
- The additional cost to tax payers for all of this is \$500,000 per year.

WE URGE YOU TO VOTE YES ON PROP 66. IF THE ELECTIONS WERE HELD TODAY, HOW WOULD YOU VOTE ON THIS PROPOSITION?

And here's what I want you to know about Prop 72:

Positive

Hello, my name is _____, I'm with *Neighborhoods United*. We're talking to our neighbors today about the November election and how it will impact our communities.

Of course there is the Presidential election, but there are also some Statewide Propositions on the ballot that will have a major impact on our community. Let me tell you this about Prop 66:

- Proposition 66 for us is a chance to bring fairness to sentencing requirements that are adversely affecting our community.
- Strengthen the community's voice in creating positive judicial reforms.
- Ensure that non-violent offenders are protected from excessive sentencing.
- Voting "yes" on 66 will save California tax payers \$500 Million per year.

WE URGE YOU TO VOTE YES ON PROP 66. IF THE ELECTIONS WERE HELD TODAY, HOW WOULD YOU VOTE ON THIS PROPOSITION?

This is what I want you to know about Prop 72:

- "Yes" on Proposition 72 will guarantee over 1 million working Californians will receive health insurance through their employers.

- Big business supporters want to confuse people and make them vote no on providing health care for working Californians.
- The idea is that most people don't get educated on the ballot issues and so are less inclined to vote yes, even on something like Prop 72 which will benefit them.
- There are over one million working families without health insurance in California.
- Prop. 72 will require billionaire companies like McDonalds and Wal-Mart to give their workers and their families' affordable health insurance.

**AGAIN, WE URGE YOU TO VOTE YES ON PROP 72.
CAN WE COUNT ON YOUR YES VOTE ON THIS
IMPORTANT PROPOSITION?**

- In so doing, a burden will be kept off of an already stretched healthcare system.
- "Yes" on Prop. 72 will make for a healthier California.

**AGAIN, WE URGE YOU TO VOTE YES ON PROP 72.
CAN WE COUNT ON YOUR YES VOTE ON THIS
IMPORTANT PROPOSITION?**

Appendix B

Study A Survey Questions

Hi, may I speak with _____. I'm calling on behalf of researchers at Yale University with a short four-question survey that takes about one minute.

1) In Tuesday's election, which candidate did you prefer [rotate] George Bush or John Kerry?

- a) John Kerry;
- b) George Bush;
- c) Nader [Volunteered];
- d) Neither [Volunteered];
- e) Other [Volunteered];
- f) Don't know [volunteered].

2) Would you say that your impression of John Kerry was very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

- a) very favorable;
- b) somewhat favorable;
- c) somewhat unfavorable;
- d) very unfavorable;
- e) Don't know [volunteered].

3) Would you say that your impression of George Bush was very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

- a) very favorable;
- b) somewhat favorable;
- c) somewhat unfavorable;
- d) very unfavorable;
- e) Don't know [volunteered].

4) Parties and organizations often contact people like yourself over the phone during the campaign. Could you please tell me whether the following groups contacted you by phone (yes, no, not sure)?

- 4a) The Minnesota Democratic party;
- 4b) The Minnesota Republican party;
- 4c) The Minnesota Young Voter Project.

Thank you for completing our survey. I hope you have a pleasant evening.

Study B Survey Questions

Hello, My name is _____. I'm calling on behalf of election researchers at Yale University. We are conducting a very short public opinion survey that will take no more than a minute of your time. Are you: [PERSON 1].

[If the person says no then ask, may I speak with PERSON 1, and read introduction again]

[If unavailable]

Thanks, we'll try back later.

[If you get PERSON 1 and PERSON 1 refuses to participate then say]

Sorry to disturb you. Have a nice evening/day. See instruction sheet for further instructions.

[If PERSON 1 agrees to take the survey]

I want to let you know that this survey is strictly confidential and will be used only for research purposes, and you do not have to answer any question you do not wish.

Q1. As you know there were a number of propositions on the ballot this year. We want to ask your opinion on two. Did you support or oppose proposition 66, which would amend the state's three strikes law? [If respondent says s/he didn't vote: We just want to know your preference – it doesn't matter if you didn't vote.]

1. Support
2. Oppose
3. No opinion [DON'T READ]
8. Don't Know [DON'T READ]
9. Refused [DON'T READ]

Q2. And what about proposition 72, which was about employee health insurance. Did you support or oppose this proposition? [If respondent says s/he didn't vote: We just want to know your preference – it doesn't matter if you didn't vote.]

1. Support
2. Oppose
3. No opinion [DON'T READ]
8. Don't Know [DON'T READ]
9. Refused [DON'T READ]

Q3. Now, we want to ask you just a few factual questions about these propositions. I'm going to read some statements. Tell me which one is true.

1. A YES vote for Proposition 66 gets rid of the three strikes rule.
2. A YES vote for Proposition 66 only requires the three strikes rule to be applied in cases when the conviction is for a violent or serious felony.

3. A YES vote for Proposition 66 requires the three strikes rule to be applied in all cases, both misdemeanors and felonies.
4. Other [DON'T READ]
8. Don't Know [DON'T READ]
9. Refused [DON'T READ]

Q4. Now let me read a few statements about proposition 72. Again, tell me which one is true.

1. A YES vote for Proposition 72 allows companies to decide whether or not they want to provide health insurance to their employees.
2. A YES vote for Proposition 72 requires companies to pay all the health care cost of their employees.
3. A YES vote for Proposition 72 requires that employers pay at least 80% of coverage cost.
4. Other [DON'T READ]
8. Don't Know [DON'T READ]
9. Refused [DON'T READ]

Thank you for your time. Have a nice day/evening.