Awakened: The Potential for Mobilization to Reshape Interest in Politics

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May 08, 2018

Interest in politics has been shown to be one of the most substantively important predictors of political participation, providing necessary motivation for engagement. Yet, sources of its variation beyond childhood socialization remain largely under-explored. This is likely due to a belief that adult political interest doesn't change: 'You've either got it or you don't.' Nevertheless, this paper argues that there are several mechanisms through which political mobilization can shift political interest. The impact of mobilization on interest is then tested using a well-established case of mobilization: the 2012 presidential campaign. A difference-in-differences analysis finds that residents of battleground states exhibit a notable increase in political interest between 2010 and 2014, equivalent to a quarter of a million entirely disinterested North Carolinians becoming fully engaged who would have remained apathetic had they lived in neighboring Georgia. Moreover, the effect is concentrated among those without a college degree, indicating mobilization may compensate for demographic conditions which otherwise limit interest. Further evidence shows that the effect lingered into 2016. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that political mobilization can shift political interest and underscores the importance of identifying a larger class of 'mobilizing events' which may reshape the electorate.

Keywords: Mobilization, Political Interest, Motivation, Political Participation, Campaigns, Battleground States

Introduction

If an abstention from voting was counted as a vote for "Nobody," then Nobody would have won the 2016 US presidential election by 445 electoral votes. The great struggle in a democracy is not between left and right, it is between apathy and engagement. Political interest is one of the best predictors of all forms of political engagement, if not the very best (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). It is a key component of an individual's motivation, which is itself a necessary precondition for participation. Furthermore, it is an essential characteristic of democratic citizenship (Blais, Galais, and Bowler 2014). Yet, our understanding of how political interest, and motivation in general, changes remains underdeveloped, a fact which scholars have noted regularly for the past two decades (Brady 1999; Fiorina 2002; Han 2009; J. Miller and Saunders 2016).

Earlier work supposed that political interest may have an endogenous relationship with participation (e.g. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). Yet, since Prior's comprehensive panel analysis,

the dominant belief is that political interest, once formed during youth, is static: "You've either got it or you don't" (2010, 1). While acknowledging the general stability of political interest, I argue that we should resurrect and amend that earlier view: Political mobilization can change an individual's intrinsic interest in politics, acting as an engine for future political engagement.

After exploring the literature on political interest (section 2) and defining "political mobilization" (section 3), I identify for four potential mechanisms through which mobilization can augment political interest (section 4). First, having entangled individuals in the sport of politics once, politics will become what Hersh describes as a self-sustaining *hobby* (Hersh 2017). Second, by causing a citizen to evaluate one activity as political, they may be more likely to *politicize* other aspects of their life, increasing the importance they see politics playing in pursuing their interests. Third, mobilization may also cause individuals to reevaluate their ability to influence the state and cause them to view engagement with government as a less daunting and more fruitful activity. By causing an individual to become more confident in their ability to have a viable political opinion (*internal efficacy*) or to impact the state (*external efficacy*), mobilization may, in turn, cause them to see cultivating an interest in politics as a more viable investment. Through any or all of these mechanisms, I expect that political mobilization will be associated with increased interest. Finally, political mobilization may change an individual's context, creating stimuli which continually draw them into politics, which I call *constant cause*.

I evaluate political interest in the wake of a "most-likely" case of political mobilization: the 2012 presidential campaign (section 5). As presidential campaigns have a singular objective in terms of participation, i.e. increasing a candidate's vote share, the effectiveness of this type of mobilization is more easily demonstrated. Additionally, a plausible "counterfactual" exists due to variation in the relative competitiveness of different states, a strategy adopted by a large cohort of scholars (Bergan et al. 2005; Gerber et al. 2009; Gimpel, Kaufmann, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2007; Hill and McKee 2005; Lipsitz 2009; McDonald 2004; Panagopoulos 2009; Shachar and Nalebuff 1999). For the specific case of the 2012 election, previous research has established that campaign mobilization in hotly contested ("battleground") states resulted in an additional 7-8 percent of the electorate participating compared to low-competition ("spectator") states (Enos and Fowler 2016).

In section 6, using panel data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) and a difference-in-differences design, I show that living in a battleground state during the 2012 election

is associated with a notable increase in reported political interest in 2014 compared to 2010. This is likely the result of *active* mobilization by campaigns, as county-level campaign office placement predicts change in interest even within battleground states. I estimate that living in a battleground state in 2012 had an equivalent impact on subsequent political interest to that of acquiring an additional diploma or degree. This result is particularly important as the observed association is concentrated among the less educated, suggesting mobilization may in part compensate for disadvantageous socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, the political repercussions are significant: change in political interest is associated with an increased likelihood of becoming a voter in 2014.

I then provide evidence against several alternative explanations for observing an increase in interest which would not reflect a true change in intrinsic motivation. Finally, using cross-sectional data from the American National Election Studies (ANES), I demonstrate that the effects of the 2012 electoral campaign had endured into 2016, a finding robust to measurement error.

Given the well-documented importance of political interest for political behavior, identifying the factors that may alter it over an individual's lifetime is essential - in spite of, or perhaps because of, its general rigidity. I demonstrate that such factors may exist and can be man-made. In doing so, this paper motivates an agenda in which political interest is no longer simply a control, but rather an essential dependent variable responsive to political events.

Political Interest

Understanding variation in people's motivation to participate, and particularly their interest in politics, is substantively important to our understanding of political behavior. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman have shown that for all types of participation, interest in politics is a significant driver of engagement and is the single most consequential predictor of voting. In fact, the well-established impact of education on voting dissipates when properly accounting for political interest, indicating that the role of education in fomenting participation is entirely channeled through its effect on interest (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). The significance of political interest in determining who takes part in politics has been replicated many times in many different contexts (for example Carreras and Irepoglu 2013 in Latin America; Kuenzi and Lambright 2011 in Africa; Soderlund, Wass, and Blais 2011 in Europe). Indeed, the importance of political interest is reflected

in its ubiquity as a control in models of political behavior.

Political interest is further correlated with political knowledge (Galston 2001) and is, perhaps, one of its primary causes (Converse 1962). As a result, interest may foster greater coherence in political belief systems (Converse 1962). Furthermore, given its role in generating political knowledge and political engagement, it is perhaps unsurprising that some consider interest in politics to be one of the primary virtues necessary for democratic citizenship (Blais, Galais, and Bowler 2014).

Despite its notable role in shaping participation and citizenship, there is a relative dearth of theorization regarding contextual antecedents beyond childhood socialization. This reflects a more general lack of research on motivation compared to resources and recruitment, the other two drivers of participation from Verba et al.'s well-worn typology (1995). This is a gap which scholars have been periodically commenting upon for the past two decades (Brady 1999; Fiorina 2002; Han 2009; J. Miller and Saunders 2016). Furthermore, when authors do investigate variation in motivation they often narrowly examine changes in calculations of rational self-interest (as noted in Hersh 2017) and the activation of issue-publics (Han 2009) or role of apolitical considerations such as social pressure (Rogers, Gerber, and Fox 2013). Thus, potential political sources of change in underlying interest in politics are generally ignored.

The most significant reason for this omission is the perception that political interest is at the individual-level is extremely stable. It is seen as a "permanent disposition" (Sapiro 2004, 3), a static product of biography and socialization (as noted in Han 2009, 14), and a function of underlying personality traits (Mattila et al. 2011). During childhood, parents and peers may influence a person's interest in politics (Shehata and Amna 2017), but by adulthood, interest has calcified (Emmenegger, Marx, and Schraff 2016). Indeed, a thorough analysis of eleven panel surveys found remarkable consistency of political interest over time (Prior 2010). If interest is entirely unchanging, studying variation in interest becomes a fool's errand.

Yet, despite its general stability, we should be careful to rule out any potential for variation. The aforenoted and often-cited multi-panel study also showed that a particularly dramatic event - the reunification of Germany - did lead to a substantial shift in political interest (Prior 2010). Moreover, it is very well documented that as an adult ages, their interest tends to increase (Glenn and Grimes 1968; Goerres 2007) and that this effect is associated with political circumstances (A. L. Campbell

2003). Finally, empirically **some** variation does exist.[1] For example, as Table 1 demonstrates, panel data of 6,787 individuals' interest in politics in 2004 and 2010 shows that during this period 3.3% of the sample shifted between the most to the least extreme position, 16.6% shifted at least two positions, and 56% changed at least one position.[2] While this indicates that most people are generally stable, a non-negligible proportion of the population did notably change their interest in politics over only six years.

Table 1: Political Interest Changes: Crosstab of political interest from 2004 and 2010 of a random sample of Americans born between 1980 and 1984, taken from the 1997 cohort of the NLS panel survey. Interest is measured by: "How much of the time would you say you follow what is going on in government and public affairs?"

	2010: most	2010: some	2010: now & then	2010: hardly at all
2004: most	655	479	162	145
2004: some	370	894	593	417
2004: now & then	104	385	507	485
2004: hardly at all	79	220	363	929

Even if political interest is highly consistent, the existence of factors which might produce shifts in interests becomes more significant and worthy of identifying. The question then becomes whether political mobilization is one such factor.

Mobilization

Political mobilization is a group-level phenomenon: the "organization of political action on a *large scale*" (Calhoun 2002) or "the process by which *a group* goes from being a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life [emphasis added]" (Scott 2015). Nevertheless, while it is something that occurs at scale, it is worth considering what is happening among the individuals that are part of the group being mobilized. As suggested by the cited definitions, es-

[1] Though Prior argues this is largely driven by measurement error (2010).

[2] This data is drawn from the *National Longitudinal Survey of Youth* 1997 cohort. This sample is randomly selected from those born in America between 1980 and 1984, with oversampling of minorities. The estimates in Table 1 are not adjusted to compensate for this oversampling. Moreover, while illustrative of the general point that interest can change, this cohort cannot be considered representative of the population beyond that age group.

sential to mobilization is an *increase in aggregate political participation*. Therefore, if a community is mobilized, at least some people within that community must participate more. Furthermore, these individuals are embedded within the networks that make up the community. As a result, "bystanders" within these networks are increasingly exposed to politically active individuals and to political ideas. This may or may not then alter that individual's political participation. Therefore, at the individual level, political mobilization might affect attitudes, such as interest in politics, through (1) changing an individual's level of political participation and/or (2) by altering an individual's exposure to politically active individuals and their political ideas.

This, in turn, begs the question, what is political participation? Verba et al. provide us with the most common conceptualization: "political participation is any activity that is intended to or has the consequence of affecting, either directly or indirectly, government action" (1995, 9). However, for our purposes, this definition is too broad. If the participation is expected to shape the attitudes of actors, as will be argued, it must be conscious or identifiable. Thus, it is only those actions generally believed to affect government action and not those which have the unintended consequence of doing so, which are considered political participation here. A more precise moniker might be "intentional political participation," however, having caveated the definition here, I will simply use the phrase "political participation."

As stated, a necessary component of political mobilization is a change in (at least some) people's political participation. One concern, when arguing that mobilization increases political interest, is that this may be tautological: That increased political participation is simply the result of increased political interest. However, this is not necessarily the case. Previous scholarship has shown that changes in political participation can result from variation in three classes of variables: motivation, recruitment, and resources (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). Motivation is a person's internal desire to participate, their reason for engaging, their "will." Recruitment is the intentional effort of others, generally political entrepreneurs, to engage an individual in politics, as well as the "choices and incentives" (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993) that these recruiters offer and the networks which connect individuals to recruiters. Finally, resources are the necessary "time, money, and civic skills" (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995) required to take part in politics (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). For example, imagine the political act of donating to a politician. The likelihood of this act is influenced by the disposable income available to make

the donation (resources), how often the individual is asked (recruitment), and whether or not the individual wants to (motivation).

Further, while political interest is an essential component of motivation it is not the only one. Rational self-interest is an obvious alternative. For example, a businessman may care little for politics as an individual, but find the financial rewards of lobbying sufficiently lucrative to justify the onerous task of hobnobbing with the political elite. A variation on this argument is provided by Han, who contends that when an issue which an individual cares about[3] becomes politically salient, the individual may become politically engaged around that issue, even if they care little about politics generally (Han 2009). Moreover, political participation may provide apolitical value to an individual, such as status signaling, the pleasure of social activity, or the upholding of a social norm. All of these motivations are orthogonal to an "interest in politics," but may result in increased political participation.

Thus, despite the previously discussed importance of political interest, "mobilization" may occur due to changes in any of these three factors without necessarily resulting from a change in political interest. The question then becomes, if a community becomes mobilized through changes in recruitment, resources, or non-political-interest based motivation, why might we expect this to in turn change interest?

Theory: Being Made to Care

I propose four mechanisms by which mobilization might result in an increased interest in politics: hobbyism, politicization, efficacy, and constant cause. Given the belabored point that interest in politics is generally stable, these shifts are expected to be semi-permanent, creating a new self-reinforcing baseline interest level. In other words, mobilization is expected to "ratchet up" political interest.

The first three mechanisms (hobbyism, politicization, and efficacy) described change "intrinsic" interest. Interest is considered intrinsic if it is independent of context. Constant cause, on the other hand, influences interest by changing the individual's environment, not by changing the individual. Thus, constant cause results in only a change in "extrinsic" interest, defined as interest

[3] I.e. they are a member of that "issue public."

dependent on external rewards and structures, such as social norms and networks. While I present some evidence indicating that mobilization likely changes intrinsic interest, I do not intend to adjudicate between these four mechanisms. I argue mobilization is a "bundle of treatments," with multiple pathways through which it might shift political interest.

Hobbyism

A growing perspective is that Americans experience the political arena as a *sport:* "a partisan behaves more like a sports fan than like a banker choosing an investment" (Mason 2015, 129). The idea that political interest is similar to sports fandom has recently been further developed by Hersh. He argues that politics is, for many, an activity done regularly, in one's free time, for pleasure; i.e. it is a hobby. Like a sport, it is emotional, time-intensive, and highly valued by its participants. Hersh does not, and neither do I, take the extreme position of believing hobbyism to be the only, or even the primary, motivation for participation. However, it may be sufficient to overcome the irrationality of cultivating an interest in politics (Downs 1957).

How might mobilization make political hobbyists? There are both psychological and rational reasons why it might do so. First, the mere exposure effect predicts that people will like those things which they have experience with solely due to the fact that they have experience with it (Bornstein 1989). Thus, merely by engaging people with politics once, mobilization may cause politics to "stick". However, one need not rely on cognitive biases for exposure to change interest. It may not be "mere" exposure, but rather any exposure. Having never considered politics, being forced to consider the political arena due to mobilization, an individual might realize a latent interest. "Awareness" is one cost of developing a hobby, however, there may be others.

Politics as a hobby may have informational "start-up costs" which prohibit engagement. Mobilization may overcome these costs, reducing the necessary time and resource investment of political interest, allowing the interest to then flourish. Returning to our sports metaphor, if I were to decide to become a rugby fan, I would have to learn the rules, choose a league to follow, familiarize myself with the players, and choose a team to root for. This drudgery may prevent engagement by those with other opportunities to fill their leisure time. However, if I were to move to South Africa, become friends with rugby enthusiasts, and go to parties where rugby is played in the background, I might get dragged into the hobby for non-rugby related reasons. Once this occurs,

a latent interest in rugby might be allowed to incidentally develop which could then be sustainable even after I leave the context.

A similar process is plausible for politics. Politics is confusing. The institutions of politics, especially in countries with federal systems and multi-branch governments, can be quite convoluted. The policy differences between the two parties are often purposefully vague (Downs 1957). There are hundreds of players just in the national "league," not to mention all of the state and local competitions. Thus, the costs of entry may be too high for someone with only a passing interest in politics to bother. However, if mobilization forces an individual to overcome these upfront time and effort costs, it may then seem worthwhile to them to further invest in their latent politics hobby.

Importantly, these hobbyism pathways do not require that a person actually change their political participation for mobilization to reshape their interest. Merely by exposing individuals to politics, by increasing the chance that CNN is on in the background or that people at the water-cooler are commenting on the most recent gaffe, mobilization can have an effect.

Politicization

Nevertheless, one need not subscribe to the hobbyist conception of politics to suppose that mobilization might spur political interest. Huckfeldt & Sprague helpfully remind us, "It is often difficult for political scientists to remember that politics is not at the forefront of most choices that most individuals make" (1987, 1119)". Dahl takes an even stronger stand,"It would clear the air of a good deal of cant if instead of assuming that politics is a normal and natural concern of human beings, one were to make the contrary assumption that whatever lip service citizens may pay to conventional attitudes, politics is a remote, alien, and unrewarding activity" (Dahl 1961). Politics is not something most people think about and, importantly, most people do not think of most things in their life as political. Indeed, one study found that less than half of people consider space exploration, refugees, mortgage rates, or *laws* on importing foreign wine to be "political" (Fitzgerald 2013).

However, if mobilization causes one to begin to think of one issue as political, this may spillover onto other issues. This can be thought of as an application of the law of the instrument, "give a small boy a hammer, and he will find that everything he encounters needs pounding" (Kaplan

1964, 28). For example, in the 1980s, it might be natural for an individual to see their HIV infection as a "personal problem," a situation to be dealt with by themselves and their doctor. However, due to political mobilization by groups such as ACT UP, that individual may then come to see their diagnosis as a political problem. Having seen this aspect of their life as political, the individual may then more easily begin to see other "personal" aspects of their life as also entangled with politics. Work discrimination, abuse, and the right to marry may go from an individualized concern to a political grievance. Thus, an HIV/AIDS activist in the 1980s might become a Gay Rights activist in the 1990s. This process of thinking of more and more aspects of one's life as related to the state, of *politicizing* one's life, may then increase the perceived relative value of cultivating an interest in politics. Again, an individual need only be exposed to the mobilization for this re-framing to occur.

Efficacy

The acts of participation which mobilization encourages (and indeed is defined by) might increase an individual's sense of efficacy. Efficacy is "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process" (A. Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954, 187). It can further be broken down into internal efficacy, defined as "personal feelings of political competence" (Converse 1972, 334) and external efficacy which is "trust in system responsiveness" (Converse 1972, 334).

By engaging in politics once, an individual might update their beliefs about their own competence - their internal efficacy. Thus, they might come to view politics as an arena which they are generally capable of engaging in, thus fomenting an interest in the arena itself. Similarly, if they see "someone like them" engaging, this might also cause them to update their efficacy beliefs. A comparable process might occur for external efficacy. Having seen themselves, or people like them, successfully cause a change in the political system might cause them to believe that they can cause such a change in the future - thus validating the time and energy investment in cultivating a political interest. Thus, unlike the previous mechanisms, changes in efficacy are dependent on whether the mobilization experience was positive.

Constant Cause

As discussed in the previous section, mobilization may result from changes in resources or recruitment. Changes in these variables might have a direct effect on political interest, due to how they alter one's propensity to exposure to political stimuli. For example, a competitive election might create the party infrastructure in a state to continue to engage citizens' interest in future low-stakes elections. Similarly, participation in a protest might create a social network that continues to draw the individual into politics. Thus, while these institutions might cause the individual to have an increased interest in politics, this interest would be contingent on the continued recruitment and/or provision of resources by their networks and by political entrepreneurs.

Case Selection: The 2012 Campaign

To test whether mobilization impacts interest requires finding a case which meets three criteria. First, mobilization must have occurred. As increased participation is the tell-tale sign of mobilization, this can be reformulated as, "aggregate political participation must have risen." This criteria, in turn, requires a metric for evaluating changes in participation. Second, the cause of the mobilization must be plausibly exogenous.[4] Some "shock" which increases recruitment, augments availability of resources, or otherwise motivates engagement, is necessary for the identification of an effect. Finally, there must exist a reasonable counterfactual to compare the case against. Previous research has demonstrated that "battleground" state mobilization during the 2012 presidential campaign fulfills these criteria. Presidential elections are massive recruitment shocks, fueled by billions of dollars, disrupting people's lives. However, who is affected by these campaigns is not evenly distributed among the US population. Almost all of the time, effort, and financial resources of campaigns are targeted at a collection of "battleground" states. Due to their relative competitiveness and the structure of the US electoral college, these states have a disproportional influence on the outcome of the presidency. As a result, the United States is divided into a set of battleground states and a collection of "spectator" states, which are, for reasons discussed below plausible counterfactuals. Finally, these campaigns have been regularly demonstrated to have

[4]It is the difficulty of assessing changes in political interest independent of participation which made Brady et al. argue for a focus on resources and recruitment at the expense of motivation, despite their finding that motivation is substantively important (1995).

dramatically increased voter turnout, a clear metric of political participation.

Electoral campaign mobilization - compared to other types of mobilization such as a social movement or a disaster - allows for a clear standard by which to evaluate the extent of change in political participation. All political activity is channeled into a specific outcome, the vote count. Turnout is both a direct reflection of mobilization, as voting is a form of participation, and an indirect measure of other forms of political participation that led to turnout. Thus, turnout allows us to show that battleground campaigns tend to be mobilizing (Bergan et al. 2005; Enos and Fowler 2016; Gerber et al. 2009; Gimpel, Kaufmann, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2007; Hill and McKee 2005; Lipsitz 2009; McDonald 2004; Panagopoulos 2009; Shachar and Nalebuff 1999).

It may be overstating the case to call battleground states a "natural experiment," as Gerber, Huber, and Dowling do (2009), due to the fact that a state's battleground status is not strictly speaking random. Nevertheless, as Figure 1 demonstrates, 2012 battleground and spectator states are largely similar in demographic characteristics such as median income, voting age population, and racial composition[5]. However, a big caveat to this, also visible in Figure 1, is that these states do differ dramatically in terms competitiveness and turnout in 2008. In spite of this, three sets of facts allow for plausible causal identification.

First, the effect of battleground status remains even when the election under consideration changes and, thus, seems to be independent of which states are battlegrounds. Studies evaluating the effect of battleground status on turnout during all of the following years have found a positive impact: 1948 - 1988 (Shachar and Nalebuff 1999), 1980 - 2008 (Gerber et al. 2009), 2000 (Gimpel, Kaufmann, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2007; Hill and McKee 2005; Lipsitz 2009; Panagopoulos 2009), 2004 (Bergan et al. 2005; Gimpel, Kaufmann, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2007; Lipsitz 2009) and 2012 (Enos and Fowler 2016). This implies that it is not, at the very least, time-invariant characteristics of states which are driving the observed association.

Second, the dozen scholars who have defended using battleground status to test the impact of campaign mobilization have conducted a number of tests in that defense, demonstrating the following points: (1) Battleground voters are no more likely to express an intention to vote before the campaign begins than spectator states (Enos and Fowler 2016). (2) Competitive elections in general increase turnout, and not merely presidential battleground campaigns; states experi-

[5]The one exception being percent Hispanic, thus it is essential that models include this control.

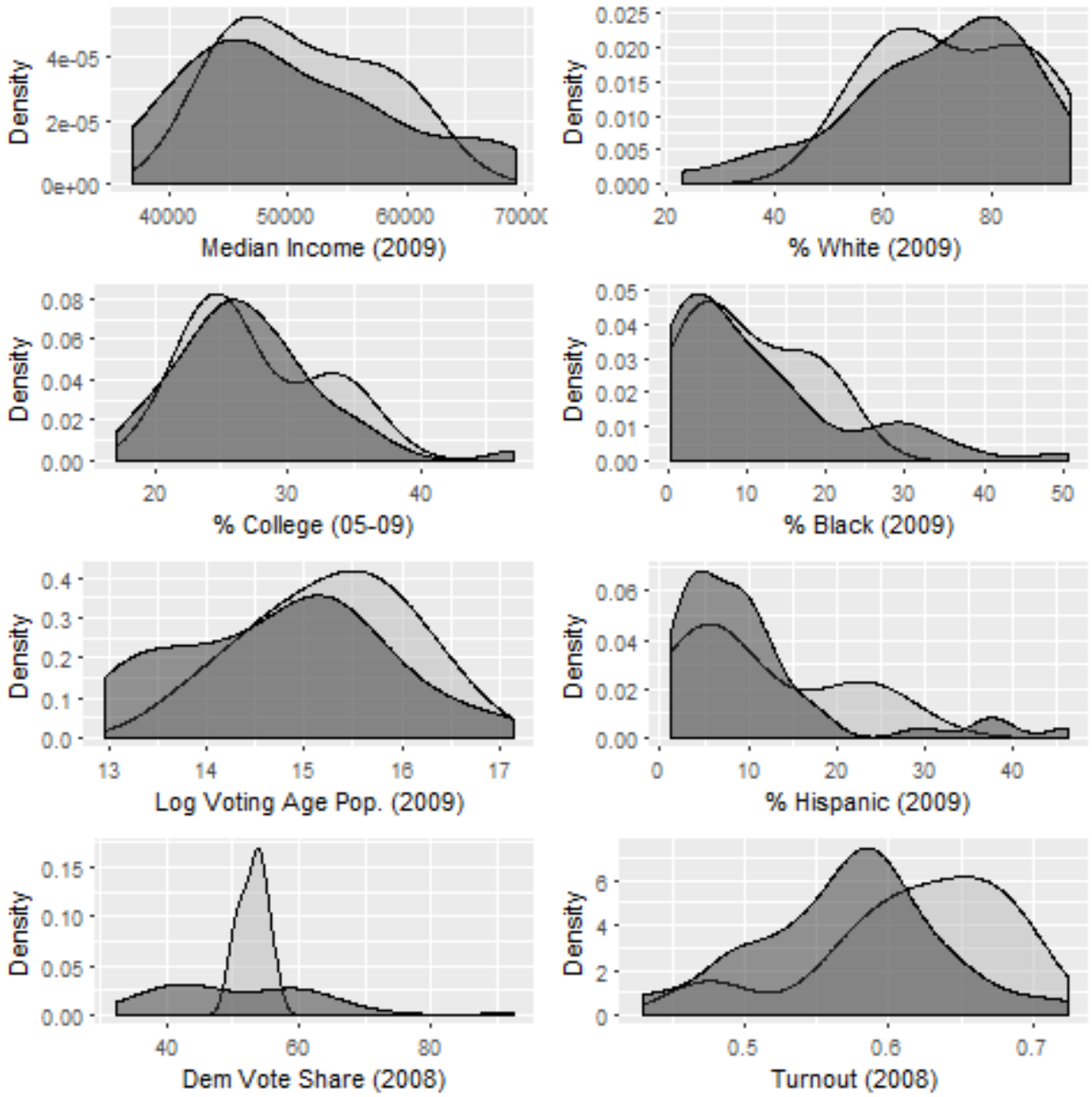

Figure 1: **Battleground States in Comparison:** Distribution of key demographics taken from the US Census in nine battleground states and forty-one spectator states. Battleground states are represented in light gray and spectator states are represented in dark gray.

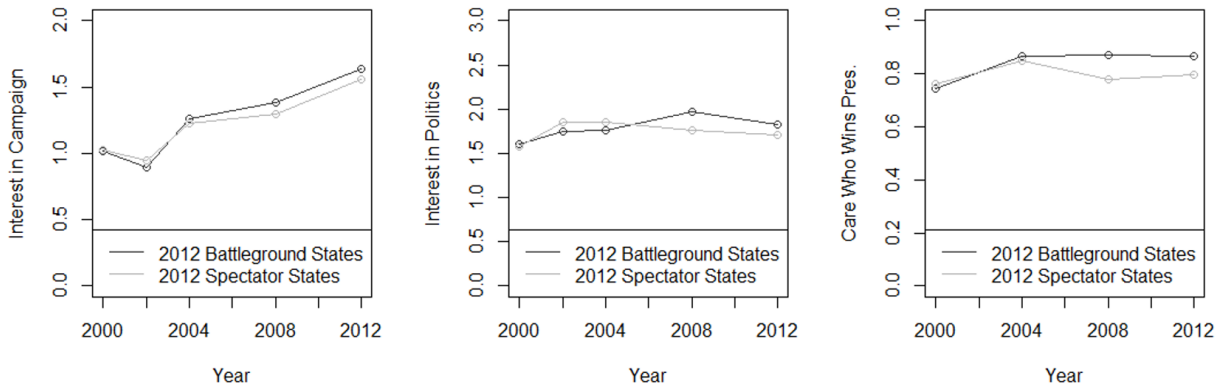

Figure 2: **Parallel Interest:** Trends in average political interest in the nine battleground and forty-one spectator states of the 2012 presidential election. Data is taken from the ANES time series studies and reflects *pre-election* interest levels. All variables are recoded to run from zero to their maximum with greater magnitude indicating greater average interest. Panel 1 is average interest in the presidential campaign, panel 2 is average general interest in politics, and panel 3 is percent of respondents who care about the outcome of the presidential election. Battleground states are represented in black and spectator states in gray.

encing interesting Senate elections and the presence of amendments to ban gay marriage exhibit similar effects (McDonald 2004). (3) Battleground states receive substantially more media expenditure and candidate visits (Hill and McKee 2005). (4) The effect of battleground status on turnout is greatest where campaigning is greatest (a finding I replicate), indicating it is the campaign itself which is changing behavior (Enos and Fowler 2016). (5) The effect of battleground status is contingent on a well-organized "modern" campaign (Enos and Fowler 2016). (6) The addition of controls does not erase the effect when adopted in any the aforenoted studies.

Third, this project adopts a difference-in-difference strategy. Thus, it need not be the case that battleground and spectator states are identical before the 2012 campaign, merely that they are following parallel trends. While battleground states do see an increase in interest between the 2004 and 2008 elections, three measures of political interest taken from American National Election Studies (ANES) data indicate that on average 2012 battleground states and spectator states followed parallel trends from pre-election 2008 to pre-election 2012 surveys (Figure 2).

As a result of these factors, if mobilization does increase political interest, then we would expect that a state's battleground status in the 2012 presidential election should reflect in a change in political interest among residents of those states. Nevertheless, there are additional factors which make using campaigns an appropriate first step in the analysis of mobilizing events. First,

one reason why mobilization might be interesting in general is that they can be man-made. In this sense, campaigns, as purposeful mobilization, are a more useful test case for practitioners. Second, the ready availability of voting and campaign data makes campaigns the low-hanging fruit in terms of data analysis of mobilizing events. This type of fairly efficient initial analysis, before engaging in costly experiments or data collection projects, is a necessary and undervalued step in the research cycle, especially when approaching a less evaluated topic (Lieberman 2016). Finally, the long-term effects of campaigns on political behavior is an interesting question in its own right beyond its representativeness of the broader concept of mobilization.

Method

To evaluate the effect of battleground campaigns on political interest I use data sets produced by the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) and the American National Election Studies (ANES). The first is a three-wave panel conducted in 2010, 2012, and 2014. This data include 9500 individuals and is designed to be representative of the US electorate when properly weighted. These data allow me to estimate the change in interest in politics[6] due to the battleground campaigns through a difference-in-differences design. Due to the comprehensive nature of the CCES panel, several robustness tests are possible. Additionally, cross-sectional ANES data is used to evaluate the durability of the effect of the 2012 presidential election on interest in 2016. While not causally identified, it is revealing and increases our expectation that the effect is durable.

Political interest and controls are measured at the individual level, however, treatment is at the state level. A simple binary indicator of 2012 battleground status is taken from Enos and Fowler (2016). They identified battleground states[7] as those that "received the vast majority of media attention, television ads, and campaign field offices" and were "the states identified by news organizations and political consultants as the key swing states (Enos and Fowler (2016), 4)." To further demonstrate that it is mobilization from the campaigns causing the shift in interest, I use

[6]The question measuring political interest is: "Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs…" And allows for four answers ranging from "Hardly at all" to "Most of the time." Descriptive statistics for this variable are included in the supplementary materials.

[7]Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Alternative specifications of battleground status are also tested, resulting in similar point estimates, available in the supplementary materials.

a county-level measure of the number of field offices per person, taken from a dataset produced by Darr and Levendusky (2014). The county-level analysis further includes US Census data for controls.

Analysis

Primary Analysis

A simple bi-variate regression of change in interest[8] on 2012 battleground status (Column 1 of Table 2) reveals that living in a battleground state increased political interest by 0.064 points.[9] Including individual pre-treatment (2010) controls for a standard set of demographics (Column 2 of Table 2) produces nearly an identical point estimate, though slightly more precisely estimated.[10] To put the magnitude of this estimated effect into context, this is the equivalent of 1 out of every 16 people who lived in a battleground state increasing their political interest by 1 point, e.g. going from caring about politics "some of the time" to "most of the time." Similarly, it is the equivalent of 1 out of every 47 people going from the minimum of caring about politics "hardly at all" to the maximum of caring about it "most of the time." To put this in context of the American electorate, it is the equivalent of a quarter of a million eligible voters in North Carolina who "hardly" cared now following politics "most of the time" - a quarter of a million people who wouldn't have had they lived across the border in Georgia.

Including a control for political interest in 2010 to allow for a ceiling effect only mildly reduces the point estimate (Column 3, Table 2).[11] There also does not appear to be a strong association between pre-treatment interest level and effect size, given the insignificance of the interaction term in Column 4, however, the direction of the effect is what would be anticipated were there

[8] Interest in 2014 minus interest in 2010.

[9] All models referred to in this paper are available in the supplementary materials in their entirety, including point estimates of controls. All standard errors are clustered at the state level unless otherwise specified.

[10] The individual level controls are income, education, gender, party id, age, race, Hispanic, born-again Christian, marital status, immigration status, and union membership. Descriptive statistics for these variables are available in the supplementary materials. Removing one control at a time to test the robustness of this association to control selection reveals that it is statistically significant at the p = .05 level in all cases except for the exclusion of party ID and Hispanic, in which cases the effect is just shy of significance: 0.061 and 0.056 respectively. A figure demonstrating this is included in the supplementary materials. Further, there are strong reasons for including both party ID and Hispanic as control variables. Race is associated with voting behavior and the two treatment conditions exhibited different distributions of Hispanic populations (Figure 1). There is also reason to believe that the Obama campaign had a more substantial effect (discussed in heterogeneous treatment effects), justifying the inclusion of party ID.

[11] It is also worth noting that most demographic controls have an insignificant effect on 2014 interest when including 2010 interest, as would be expected if the role of demographics were stable over time (in supplementary materials).

Table 2: Primary Analysis: Association between battleground status and change in political interest; with and without standard individual controls; with and without controlling for pre-treatment interest in politics.

	Dependent variable:			
	Change in Political Interest Between 2010 and 2014			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Battleground 2012	0.064** (0.031)	0.065** (0.029)	0.058** (0.028)	0.148 (0.131)
Interest 2010			−0.306*** (0.022)	−0.297*** (0.026)
Battleground:Interest 2010				−0.037 (0.046)
Constant	−0.044** (0.019)	0.247 (0.199)	0.623*** (0.158)	0.605*** (0.164)
DF	9428	7385	7384	7383
Demographic Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
All standard errors are clustered at the state level
Weights are included, making the sample nationally representative

a ceiling effect: the higher one's pre-treatment interest, the less the campaign can increase one's interest.

Bars 1 and 2 of Figure 3 show, a comparison of the bi-variate association of 2012 battleground status on political interest in 2010 (a placebo) and 2014 respectively. As theory predicts, living in a battleground in 2012 has no relationship with interest in 2010 but a strong relationship in 2014.[12] Bar 3 of this figure shows the bi-variate association of interest in 2014 with pre-treatment education level[13]. Education is one of the best-established causes of interest (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995), yet living in a battleground state is estimated to have had an equivalent association with interest in 2014 as acquiring an additional diploma or degree.[14]

Heterogenous Treatment Effects

While the effect is substantial for the general population, it is possible that not all members of the community are equally affected and that this variation in impact is associated with the demographic characteristics of individuals. This is particularly plausible because there is some

[12]Given the overlap between states which were battlegrounds in 2008 and 2012, this is actually not necessarily what would be expected - as 2008 mobilization should have carried over into 2012 interest. However, a peculiarity of the 2010-14 CCES panel is that part of its sample selection frame is matching to a set of "known" demographics of the population. One of these variables is political interest, measured in 2007. As a result, the CCES effectively erases the effect of the 2008 election on political interest in the process of selecting its sample population.

[13]The education levels are: (1) no high school, (2) high school graduate, (3) some college, (4), 2-year college, (5) 4-year college, and (6) post-grad.

[14]The association of education with 2014 interest rather than change in interest is adopted as there was not sufficient variation in education levels between 2010 and 2014 to estimate the effect of change in education on change in interest.

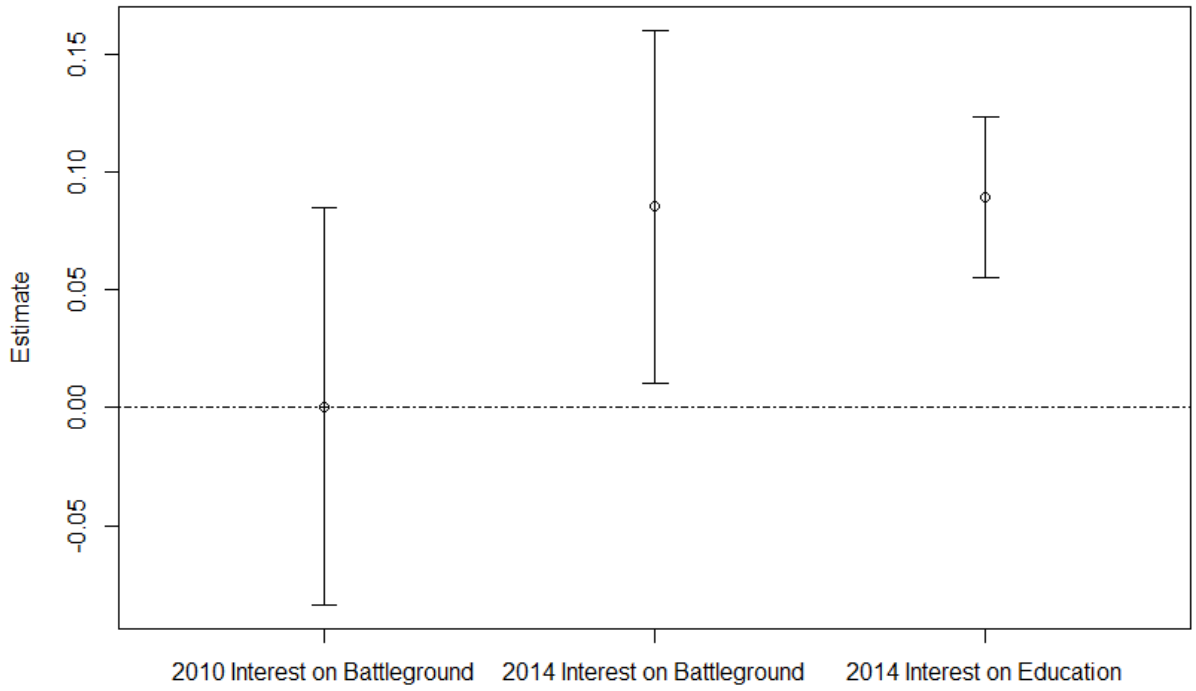

Figure 3: **Mobilization Effect Size in Comparison:** Estimated association of 2012 battleground status with political interest in 2010 and 2014; estimated association of 2010 education with political interest in 2014. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Battleground status is binary. Political interest ranges from 1 to 4, with 4 indicating greater interest. Education ranges from 1 to 6, 1 indicating no high school and 6 indicating a post-graduate degree.

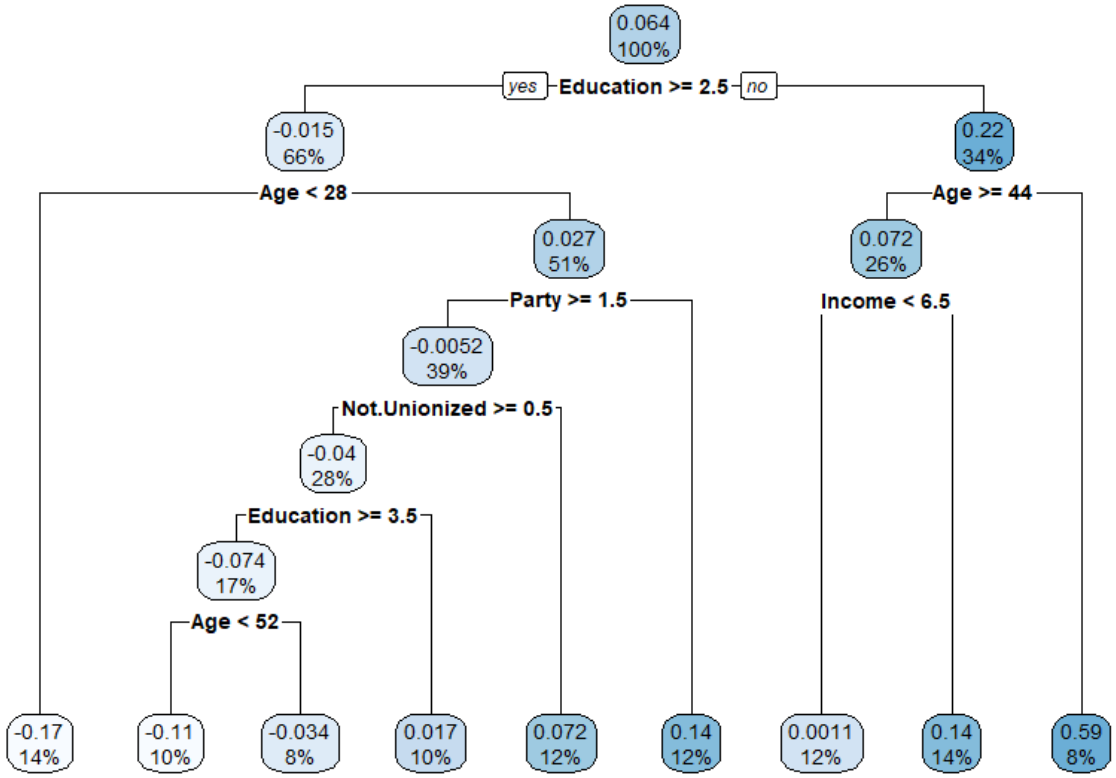

Figure 4: **Heterogenous Treatment Effects:** A causal tree estimating heterogeneous treatment effects of 2012 battleground status on change in political interest (2010-2014). All covariates are pre-treatment (2010). "Education" ranges from 1 to 6, age from 18 to 91, "Income" from 1 to 14, "Party" from 1 (strong Democrat) to 7 (strong Republican), and "Not.Unionized" is a binary variable indicating that the respondent has never been a member of a union. Each oval contains the size of the effect for the indicated subgroup and the percent of the (weighted) population in that subgroup. All individual-level demographic covariates were included in the identification of appropriate segmentation of the population.

debate about who in battleground states are being mobilized - those who are high propensity voters, i.e. the rich and educated (Enos, Fowler, and Vavreck 2013), or the more marginalized (Gimpel, Kaufmann, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2007). To test this, I implement an "honest tree" (Athey and Imbens 2015), a machine learning technique which allows for the identification and estimation of heterogeneous treatment effects.[15] It is honest in that "one sample [of the dataset] is used to construct the partition and another to estimate treatment effects for each sub-population" (Athey and Imbens 2015, 1), thus avoiding the traditional "data mining" concerns when using data-driven approaches to identifying heterogeneous treatment effects.

[15]I adopt a minimum sub-population size of 200 out of 9500 and 20-fold cross validation for this analysis.

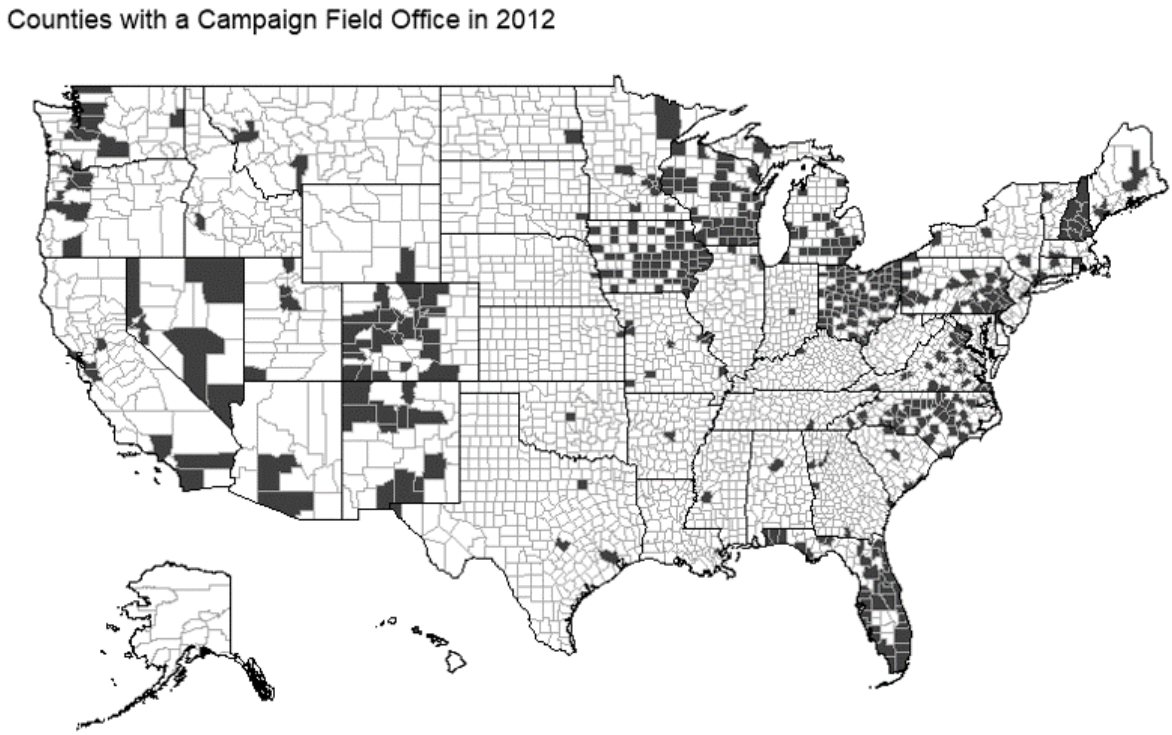

Figure 5: **Distribution of 2012 Campaign Field Offices:** US counties with at least one field office of either the Democratic or Republican presidential campaign in the lead up to the 2012 election. Counties with a field office are in black, counties without one are in white.

As Figure 4 demonstrates, the effect is principally experienced by the 34% of the (weighted) sample without any college education. For this group, the effect size is three and a half times greater than the effect for the general population. For those with at least some college, there appears to be no effect. Within this group, the effect is even stronger among the 8% of the sample under 44 in 2010. Therefore, it is *unlikely* that this effect is concentrated among already high propensity voters. Instead, it seems that campaign mobilization is compensating for demographic characteristics which otherwise would make one unlikely to be interested in politics. By this account, *one out of every two people* without a college education in battleground states increased their interest in politics one level (out of four) as a result of 2012 political campaigns.

The Importance of the Campaign

A further consideration is whether it was the campaign mobilization which produced the observed association or merely a sense that "my vote matters" in battleground states. One way to get at this question is to see if there is variation based on the presence of a formal campaign. To assess this, I use data on the number of field offices per 100,000 people at the county level (taken from Darr and Levendusky (2014)). As we see in Figure 5, while field offices cluster in battleground states, there is definitely variation within states.[16] This method is further a means of corroborating the effect established in the previous section, as an unobserved confounder would have to predict battleground status, change in political interest, AND the number of field offices. This is particularly unlikely as the simple correlation between 2010 interest and field offices per capita is a paltry 0.02.[17]

Table 3: Field Offices and Interest: Association of field offices per 100,000 in a county with change in political interest, including individual level controls; with and without 2012 batteground status; with and without county level controls.

	Dependent variable:			
	Change in Political Interest Between 2010 and 2014			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
2012 Field Offices	0.056*** (0.021)	0.056** (0.027)	0.062** (0.028)	0.070** (0.032)
2012 Battleground		−0.001 (0.058)		0.001 (0.062)
Constant	0.563 (0.359)	0.563 (0.360)	0.992** (0.415)	0.803 (0.534)
DF	7369	7368	1815	6096
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County Controls	No	No	No	Yes
Sample	Full	Full	Battleground Only	Full
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
				All standard errors are clustered at the county level
				Weights are included, making the sample nationally representative

As visible in Column 2 of Table 3, the inclusion of field offices per 100,000 people completely absorbs the effect of living in a battleground state: every 1 field office per 100,000 persons is associated with a statistically significant increase of 0.056 points in political interest, while the main effect becomes indistinguishable from 0 in this model. Moreover, as seen in Column 3, if the sample is limited to only battleground states, the estimated effect of field office is unadulterated. Finally,

[16] The figure reflects a binary coding for clarity, however, the analysis uses the ratio coding. Using a ratio coding, the variation is even greater.

[17] As before, this may be in part an artifact of the CCES sampling strategy.

when a set of county-level controls[18] are included in the model (Column 4), the association just becomes stronger. This further adds credibility to the finding that it was 2012 mobilization that increased political interest.

Epiphenomenal Interest

One concern is that measures of political interest might not be capturing the intended concept of "interest in politics." Instead, people may be reflecting back on their engagement in politics and summarizing this political behavior in their evaluation of their interest in politics. An individual might think: "I voted and I took part in a protest, so I must have an interest in politics, as that is what people interested in politics do." Thus, if the mobilization changed levels of political participation in a manner independent of interest in 2012, this would create an *epiphenomenal interest* in politics. This is of particular concern due to the well-documented finding that having voted once increases one's propensity to vote again in the future due to "habit" (Brody and Sniderman 1977; D. Green and Shachar 2000; Kadt 2017). However, one can ameliorate this concern by controlling for political participation.

The CCES matches individuals to their voting records, making it possible to control for whether the individual voted. It further includes self-reported measures of political activity: attending meetings, putting up lawn signs/bumper stickers, working for a campaign, and donating money. Finally, it includes voter registration status. I ran six regressions of battleground status on change in interest including controls,[19] adding alternately measures of: (1) voting in 2012, (2) voting in 2014, (3) voting and all measures of self-reported participation in 2012, (4) voting and self-reported participation in 2014, (5) registering to vote between 2010 and 2014, and (6) all available participation variables in 2012 and 2014. In these models, the coefficient on 2012 battleground status range from 0.062 to 0.070 and is always significant at conventional levels. Thus, it is unlikely that this observed association is the result of "epiphenomenal interest."

[18] County-level measures include: median income in 2009, poverty rates in 2009, the log of total population in 2010, log of voting age population in 2010, Democratic vote share in 2008, electoral turnout in 2008, unemployment in 2010, percent white in 2010, percent black in 2010, and percent Hispanic in 2010. These controls are taken from US Census data.

[19] Regression tables available in the supplementary materials.

Social Desirability Bias

There is a known *social desirability bias* with questions of political interest: Few people "are willing to confess a very low level of interest for arts, science, and politics. These are 'worthy' domains that the 'good' citizen should say she has at least a modest degree of interest in" (Blais, Galais, and Bowler 2014, 9). It is possible that mobilization makes the social desirability of political interest even greater. Thus, measured changes in political interest may reflect only a change in beliefs about social expectations. To evaluate this, I adopt two strategies. First, as mentioned above, the CCES includes *administrative data* on whether or not someone voted. It further includes *self-reported data* on whether or not someone voted. This allows for the construction of a measure of over-reporting, which can be thought of as a measure of susceptibility to social desirability. Second, the CCES includes six "tests" of political knowledge: Whether or not the respondent can correctly identify the party of their governor, their congressman, and each of their senators, as well as if they can identify which party controls the Senate and the House. These binary variables are aggregated to create a "political knowledge" index. Because political knowledge is an elective affinity of political interest, but is more difficult to fake, a "true change" in political interest would reflect in a change in knowledge.

Given the panel has three waves during which individuals were asked if they voted, and for which we have matched voting records, it is possible to create several configurations of over-reporting: (1) *Current Over-Reporter*: The individual over-reported in 2014, regardless of whether they over-reported previously. (2) *New Over-Reporter*: The individual did not over-report in 2010 but did over-report in 2014. (3) *Ever Over-Reporter*: the individual over-reported at least once during the three waves of the panel. (4) *Always Over-Reporter*: the individual over-reported in all three waves. Controlling for each of these measures individually and in concert has little effect on the point estimate of the coefficient on battleground status (including controls). The point estimate ranges from 0.060 and 0.066 and is significant at conventional levels in all cases.[20]

Turning to political knowledge, the first two bars of Figure 6 show the point estimate for the association of 2012 battleground status with change in the index of political knowledge between 2010 and 2012 (including individual level controls), with and without standard errors clustered

[20]Regression tables available in the supplementary materials.

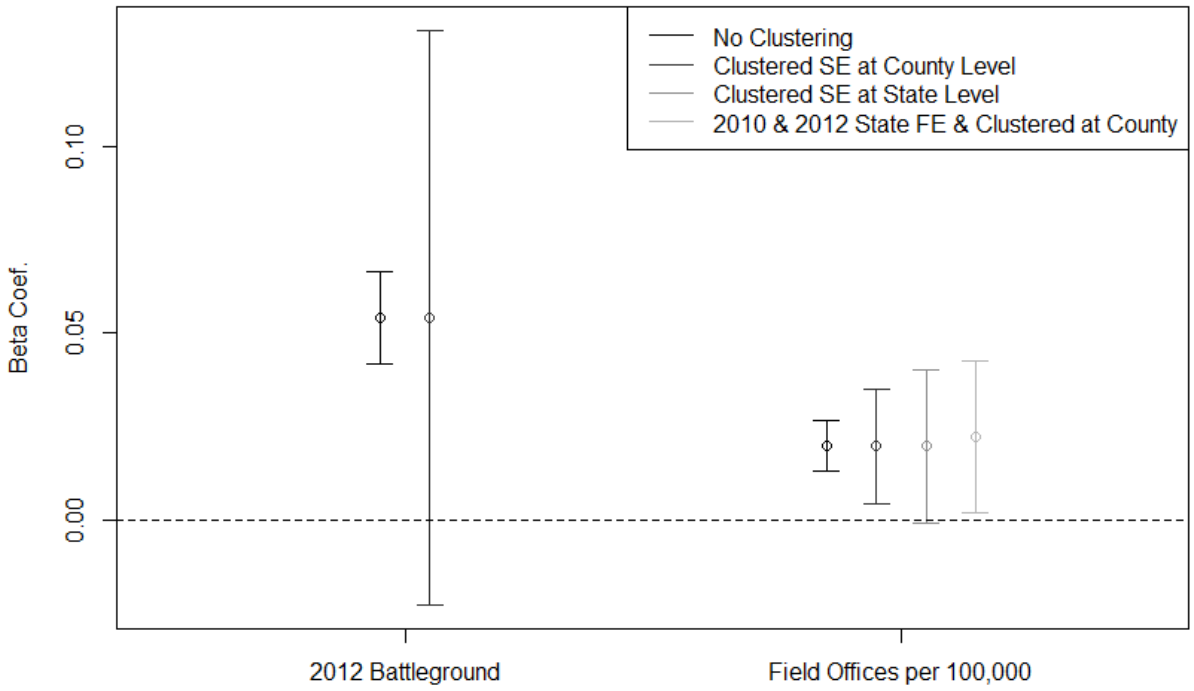

Figure 6: **Impact of Mobilization on Political Knowledge:** Estimated association of 2012 battleground status and change in political knowledge; estimated association of field offices and political knowledge. Change in political knowledge is the difference in the number of correct answers to six questions about party control of political offices between 2010 and 2014. All models include standard individual demographic controls. Confidence intervals are at 95% level.

at the state level. As expected, the estimate is positive. Unfortunately, given the nature of the questions, standard errors increase substantially when clustered at the state level (Bar 2). This is likely due to the fact that the difficulty of the questions vary at the state level. For example, it is much easier in Texas to know that the governor is a Republican (given it has been a Republican since 1995) than in New Jersey or Arkansas where the governor's mansion has switched parties in recent memory.

Fortunately, as demonstrated above, the number of field offices per person at the county level is a near equivalent measure of 2012 battleground mobilization. Regressing political knowledge on this measure again produces a positive coefficient. However, in this case, it is unclear at what level it is appropriate to cluster standard errors: treatment is correlated at the county level (Bar 4, Figure 6) but the outcome is correlated at the state level (Bar 5, Figure 6). A compromise model which clusters standard errors at the county level and uses 2010 and 2014 state fixed-effects (Bar 6, Figure 6) produces a statistically significant positive estimate. Thus, it appears that the 2012 presidential campaign mobilization did increase political knowledge. This adds further confidence that the effect of the campaign on interest is not merely a reflection of change in social desirability bias.

Intrinsic Interest

Three of the proposed mechanisms by which mobilization shifts interest would cause a change in *intrinsic* interest, while the fourth (constant cause) results only in a change in *extrinsic* motivation. To reiterate, intrinsic interest is independent of the individual's context, as it stems from a desire within the self, and is thus more resistant to changes in the environment. Extrinsic interest, however, is dependent on constant environmental stimuli to be maintained. Fully distinguishing between these two forms of interest is unnecessary to establish the main thesis of this paper. However, to interpret the long-term impacts mobilization might have on interest, it is useful to disentangle these effects.

The most obvious way by which campaign mobilization might create a "constant cause," manifesting in a change in interest, is by creating party infrastructure. However, adding a control for whether an individual was contacted in any way by a campaign in 2014 produces no notable change in the point estimate or its significance. Neither does a control for a change in the level of contact between 2010 and 2014. However, in 2010, 80% of individuals in the sample had been

contacted in some way by a campaign, so this variable may be too close to its ceiling to have relevant variation. Furthermore, it may be that the only contacts which matter are in-person contacts, which are far rarer (only 17% experienced an in-person contact in 2010). However, again, neither personal contacts in 2014 nor change in whether one was personally contacted produced a notable difference in the estimated effect of living in a battleground state on interest.[21]

Yet, it may not be campaign infrastructure but the general ethos of a community which changes. To tackle this question I evaluate the effect of moving states between the 2012 and 2014. Column 1 of Table 3, shows that moving does have a dramatically negative effect on one's interest, however, the effect of living in a battleground state does not notable change. Moreover, when these two variables are interacted, the interaction term is far from significant (column 2).

The lack of significance of the interaction term may be due to the small number of cases of moving – only 2.8% of the sample moved states between 2012 and 2014 and only 0.6% moved out of a battleground state (267 people total). The fact that this sample provided enough power to estimate a statistically significant association between moving and change in interest does partially ameliorate this concern. Nevertheless, to increase the sample of people who moved, I consider all those who changed counties between 2012 and 2014, of which there are 487 cases. Given, that we know that the effect of the campaign was localized to that level of the county (see above) and that "moving" is meant to capture the effect of leaving one's politicized network, this is a useful test. Again, the interaction term is not statistically significant (Column 4 of Table 3).

This obviously does not rule out the possibility that the effect is partially or even entirely driven by extrinsic motivation, especially as who moves is not random. Nonetheless, in combination with the fact that campaign contacts did not influence the battleground effect, this provides provisional support for the idea that it is intrinsic interest being influenced.

Relevance

So far, I have provided evidence that 2014 political interest increased as a result of campaign mobilization. However, the importance of this effect is linked to whether this, in turn, manifests itself in changes in behavior. To test this, I evaluate whether a change in interest is associated with a change in voting behavior. I create a binary "New Voter" variable which takes on a 1 if the

[21] Regression tables available in the supplementary materials.

Table 4: Moving, Mobilization, and Interest: Association between 2012 battleground status and change in political interest controlling for moving states or counties; with and without interactive effects.

	Dependent variable:			
	Change in Political Interest Between 2010 and 2014			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
2012 Battleground	0.068** (0.030)	0.072** (0.032)	0.069** (0.029)	0.055** (0.027)
Moved States	−0.184* (0.094)	−0.160 (0.130)		
Moved Counties			−0.127 (0.083)	−0.177* (0.095)
Battleground:Moved State		−0.077 (0.150)		
Battleground:Moved County				0.156 (0.177)
Constant	0.248 (0.200)	0.247 (0.200)	0.253 (0.201)	0.254 (0.202)
DF	7384	7383	7384	7383
Cases of Moved	267	267	487	487
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
All standard errors are clustered at the state level
Weights are included, making the sample nationally representative

individual voted in 2014 but not in 2010. Regressing this variable on the change in interest and demographic controls indicates that a one-point increase in political interest is associated with a 4.6% increase in the probability of being a new voter in 2014.[22]

Durability

Having shown the effect to be sizable in 2014, we might finally ask if it endures. Unfortunately, the CCES panel data only covers two years after the 2012 campaign. Therefore to evaluate whether the association lasts, I turn to the ANES 2016 time series survey. One of the benefits of the ANES is that it includes several measures of political interest. This allows for aggregation, a method that has been shown to reduce measurement error with latent attitudinal variables (Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008), such as political interest.

The ANES includes six questions that reflect a "general interest" in politics, three measured before the 2016 election and three after. I combine these to create a "General Interest" measure. In addition, the ANES includes 15 variables which capture how much political media the respondent consumes. These are likewise combined to create a "Political Media Consumption" measure. Then both sets of variables are combined into a "Total Interest" measure. I use principal component

[22]Both a logit and probit model produce statistically significant positive effects. The results of the linear model are presented due to ease of interpretation.

analysis[23] to aggregate the data, taking this first identified component (i.e. the component which explains the plurality of the variance) to be a measure of latent interest. I then re-scale this measure to range between 0 and 1, with 1 signifying maximum possible interest.

Table 5: Durablity: Association between 2012 battleground status and 2016 political interest, controlling for 2016 battleground status.

	Dependent variable:		
	General Interest	Political Interest Media Consumption	Combined
	(1)	(2)	(3)
2012 Battleground	0.021** (0.009)	0.023** (0.010)	0.020** (0.009)
2016 Battleground (Subj.)	−0.042*** (0.011)	−0.020* (0.011)	−0.030*** (0.010)
Constant	0.285*** (0.036)	0.296*** (0.033)	0.295*** (0.033)
DF	3323	2837	2831
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
			All standard errors are clustered at the state level
			Weights are included, making the sample nationally representative

I regress these three outcomes on 2012 battleground status, the results of which are reported in Columns 1-3 of Table 4. I use an equivalent set of demographic controls to those used in the panel analysis. Furthermore, because of the close overlap between battlegrounds in 2012 and in 2016, I control for whether the respondent thought their state was a battleground in 2016.[24] Interestingly, living in a battleground in 2016 (i.e. increased exposure to the 2016 campaign) is associated with a *decline* in interest. Given that both parties' candidates were the most disliked in over 30 years, this is perhaps unsurprising. Nevertheless, 2012 battleground status has a statistically significant positive association with all three measures, indicating that the association is durable. However, the effect has somewhat attenuated. In 2014, 2012 battleground status was associated with an increase in interest of a tenth of a standard deviation, in 2016 the effect size was about half that.

[23]Principal component analysis is a method which finds the linear projection that explains the maximum variance among multiple variables.

[24]I alternatively test for controlling for a media assessment of 2016 battleground states. Using media assessment rather than individual assessment produced an even larger estimated association between 2012 status and 2016 interest; I report the more conservative model. Available in the supplemental materials.

Conclusion

I challenged a "hard" interpretation of the argument that interest is either something you have or you don't. In doing so, I may have created a straw-man, a fringe position that no political scientist wholly believes. But if that is the case, then the importance of demonstrating the faultiness of this position is even more important. Unchecked, believing interest immutable damages our ability to accurately understand and even measure the world. For example, one of the most large-scale and comprehensive data sets on political behavior available to political science, the CCES, uses the distribution of political interest in 2007 to develop their sampling frame for 2016. This is a behavioral implication of the belief that interest does not change.

By analyzing the role of the 2012 presidential election in reshaping political interest, I show that mobilization can have an effect on this supposedly intransigent attitude. The above findings demonstrate that this mobilization engaged those unlikely to have a demographic predisposition to take an interest in politics, specifically those without a college degree. The increase in interest in battleground states manufactured by campaigns was estimated to have a similar magnitude to acquiring an additional degree or diploma. Furthermore, this rise in measured interest is likely a reflection of a change in true interest, given evidence against the arguments that it was epiphenomenal, merely the result of social desirability bias, or a product of measurement error. Moreover, cross-sectional data from 2016 indicates that the effect has some staying power, though attenuated.

To explain how mobilization creates interest, I presented four possible mechanisms: hobbyism, politicization, efficacy, and constant cause. While I generally did not adjudicate between these theories, I did provide some evidence that at least one of the "intrinsic" mechanisms was at work - indicating that the change in interest is plausibly context independent. Nevertheless, further research is necessary to address through which of these pathways mobilization is impacting motivation.

Nevertheless, this was only an examination of a single instance of a specific type of mobilization. Yet, mobilization and the mobilizing events that spark them are a fairly common political phenomenon happening at all levels of politics: from the local, to the national to the international; from a school shooting, to a coup; to an epidemic. Whether the finding here extends to any of

these other types of mobilization, sparked by other sources of increased participation, is an open question. One which before this analysis may have been thought not worth asking. My hope is that more scholars will start asking it; that political interest will move from the right side to the left side of the equation.

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