They Don’t Stand for Me:

Generational Difference in Voter Motivation and the Importance of Symbolic Representation in Youth Voter Turnout

by

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Building from Hannah Pitkin’s work on forms of representative democracy, this thesis demonstrates how differing generational expectations of political representation affect participation in electoral politics. Consistent with earlier work, it confirms that youth voting decreases when young people are less educated, less interested, or when they lack a sense of responsibility. However, these factors only explain part—and not necessarily the most important part—of the younger generation’s motivations for voting. The analysis also shows that youth are markedly less likely to vote when young people feel that their values are not aligned with those of political leaders. The relationship between values—or symbolic representation—and voting remains significant and strong for young people even when the classic predictors of voting are included in the model. In fact, symbolic representation is a stronger predictor of voting than such factors as education, political interest, or the sense of responsibility to vote. This new variable is therefore important in understanding why the most recent decline in voting occurs predominantly among youth.

Issue campaigns are less likely to move young people one way or another with respect to voting, as the majority of issues do not affect young people directly, if at all. As a consequence
youth are left to rely on their own understanding of what political leaders actually stand for to pull them in or entice them to vote. But if the values that young people care about are not symbolically represented by political leaders and their electoral platforms, then youth will have less to vote for, and will likely just stay home and ignore elections altogether. Conversely, if political leaders make modest changes to their campaign strategies that also appeal to values—rather than strictly to interests—we could also see an increase in turnout among youth, and therefore an increase in democratic legitimacy.
As this project was largely inspired by young people and aimed at giving them voice, it is dedicated to the memory and unfinished work of three very special young people whose voices touched me and were lost during the writing of this thesis.

Kyle Welsh
1986 – 2007
Jaimie Anderson
1986 – 2010
The thesis is also dedicated to my children, Read and William, who gave me my voice.
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Chapter 1: The Puzzle of Waning Engagement
There is a well-developed, theory rich political science literature that focuses on the attitudes and electoral behaviour of today’s youth. This is for good reason. Voter engagement is waning in most democratic countries as a consequence of youth withdrawal, and with respect to electoral politics more generally, youth seem to be virtually “tuned out.”¹ In the 2000 federal election in Canada a staggering 75% of 18 to 34 year olds chose to remain home on election night.² This profound lack of enthusiasm and allegiance toward the democratic practice of voting among youth has decreased aggregate turnout rates, leaving them to hover around the 60% mark.³ Furthermore, this decline is not an aberration, but part of a consistent trend that has developed over time.⁴

Although not the only form of democratic participation, voting is considered to be the traditional type of participation which requires the least effort and commitment and is often used as an indicator or benchmark of institutional confidence and democratic legitimacy.⁵ For that reason, any continued pattern of decline in turnout constitutes a cause for concern.⁶ But a decline in youth voting is particularly troubling, as it also carries with it the risk of compounding

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³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ For example, see Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie, Participation in America, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), chapter 4.
⁶ There is by no means a consensus in the literature as to whether voter turnout should be considered a normative concern. For thoughtful alternative arguments regarding participation see, Benjamin Ginsberg, The Consequences of Consent: Elections, Citizen Control and Popular Acquiescence, (Ithaca, NJ: Cornell University Press, 1986) or Jean Baudrillard, In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotexte, 1978).
as this new generation ages. Additionally, clashes between First Nations youth and landowners in Caledonia, Ontario demonstrate that when disaffected youth choose to engage politically, they may not pursue traditional channels. The short-term costs of youth disengagement have possibly dangerous or even violent consequences, and long-term costs of loss of commitment are potentially significant for democratic health and legitimacy.

Where low turnout trends may pose a threat to the health of democracy, they do not necessarily threaten electoral health. Only voters are counted on election day, and politicians rarely pay much attention to portions of the electorate that do not have an impact at the ballot box. In some contexts appealing to apathetic youth could even be seen as risky, as catering to a potentially volatile segment of the population may serve to alienate or turn off more stable (older) people who otherwise can be reliably counted on to vote.

However, it would be a mistake to write off the benefit of engaging youth entirely. Encouraging young people to vote could positively impact election outcomes, as witnessed during the most recent American election. Barack Obama occupies the White House in part as a result of conscious efforts to appeal to those under the age of 35. When elections are won by a small fraction of votes, motivating youth to vote for your party can be highly advantageous. And this trend towards reaching out is not only successful in the States. Other cases are beginning to emerge in Canada as well. The mayor of Calgary, Alberta came from nowhere to increase turnout in a municipal election and win. He achieved this success by connecting and sharing his vision with young people over Twitter.

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This attentiveness to youth paid off in both these cases, yet a full understanding of the voting motivation in this new generation remains elusive, and, as a result, so too is the ability to construct meaningful policy suggestions to correct this decline in voting or to reap the benefits of engaging this new generation.

Youth voting behaviour is riddled with paradox. On the surface, attitudes toward politics are not all that different between older and younger voters, nor do youth seem significantly more negative toward politics; yet this generation of youth votes less than any other. Likewise, political and electoral structures have changed very little, and attitudes do not appear to have shifted dramatically in recent years, but voter turnout rates have, which is curious. Commitment to democratic values is higher than ever, yet obligation to electoral politics is in decline. Similarly, norms of civic participation have eroded for this generation, but youth have not entirely disengaged. They are more likely than their older counterparts to sign a petition or attend a protest rally and literally take to the streets, signaling greater commitment to political action and mobilization rather than abject apathy. But youth are less likely to vote. This means that, contrary to the theory, a populace with greater material wealth and education than previous generations does not manufacture greater political participation. Rising levels of education worldwide appear to be correlated with lower turnout rates, and Canada is no exception. This suggests that something else is going on. Such aggregate analysis may not accurately reflect or capture the processes operating underneath it, and correlation is not necessarily cause.

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The aim of this thesis is to delve beneath these paradoxes, separating and comparing voting effects within older and younger cohorts in search of differences that could explain the decline in youth voting. Current approaches in survey research miss the mark as they often assume homogeneity within the youth cohort by ignoring group and generational differences, or, more critically, assume that different generations are motivated and affected by the same factors in the same way, and to the same degree. This does not seem to be the case, or turnout would be consistent within the youth cohort, and in particular, across generations. There are no such consistencies. There has always been some degree of variance between generations, with young people voting less than their older counterparts; however, this particular generation of young people vote less than any other generation—they are different. Therefore it is imperative that we seek to understand the within and between group differences which may be contributing to the lack of consistency associated with the decline in youth voter turnout.

The literature is also limited as it focuses primarily on changes and shortcomings in the character of youth through the study of shifts in demographic makeup, consequent declining youth interest in politics, insufficiencies in knowledge acquisition, and waning civic obligation. It assumes that the problem is one of agency, and that the fault lies in shifting youth norms. I argue that understanding changes in values and attitudes and how they affect voting is critical, but insufficient. I do not dispute that informal structures—such as greater educational attainment, material satisfaction, or social networking and technological differences—may have caused changes in youth values, sense of obligation and attitudes toward participation. The literature has shown that those who have lower levels of education are less interested and committed and will vote less. It has also shown that this generation of youth is more likely than their older counterparts, or previous generations of youth, to be at home watching television, or surfing
online, and less often found volunteering in their communities or participating politically. This change in participation is also associated with non-voting.\(^\text{13}\) However, focusing solely on changes and deficits in youth character is problematic.

First, it assumes a causal direction, where none has been proven, and secondly, it reduces the range of public policy improvements. Are those less educated, less interested and not voting *because* of their lack of education? Do we need to increase levels of education to address this problem? Or is there something in the electoral context that makes it less interesting or salient to those less educated, thereby decreasing their motivation to vote? Similarly, does the fault lie with youth preferring to network and connect online, rather than volunteer in their communities, join a political party or vote? Or are youth turning to online networking because volunteering and voting are no longer satisfying or meaningful? Is the problem one of shortcomings in youth agency, or shortcomings in electoral politics or discourse, or perhaps both? Focusing exclusively on shortfalls in agency is too narrow, and it pushes solutions or remedies outside the electoral politics arena, producing prescriptions which are aimed at re-socializing the youth cohort. Re-socializing a generation of young people is all but futile. What’s more causation is unclear and cannot be presumed without understanding what motivates youth to vote. The socialization process is complex and perhaps not the only thing affecting voting motivation.

New informal structures such as Internet social networks, or online petitions, have no doubt influenced values and ensuing participatory behaviour, but these do not preclude perceptions or evaluations of present political institutions from also playing a role. It is unlikely that decisions are made in a vacuum. Instead, both pre-dispositions, or “standing decisions” as

well as contemporary information are involved in decision-making and political judgment.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore standing decisions (such as those surrounding a sense of responsibility, or duty), no doubt influence outcomes, but they cannot be credited with being the primary or exclusive cause. Evaluations of political context or contemporary information could and should be considered as well.

Moreover, it is helpful to include evaluations of contemporary information in our understanding of the problem, as they lend themselves to a broader array of policy choices. Current widely accepted prescriptions, such as improving civic education, making the voting process easier (e.g. online voting), or providing alternative means of engagement,\textsuperscript{15} are peripheral to the electoral contest, are difficult to implement, and have minimal—if any—impact on voting turnout. While perhaps noble, “Rock the Vote” or “Vote mob” suasion campaigns aimed at fostering new norms that celebrate participation have largely fallen flat.\textsuperscript{16} Online voting may allow for modest increases in turnout, as it makes the process easier, but it fails to increase necessary enthusiasm or interest in electoral politics, both of which are central to disengagement. And providing alternative opportunities to participate outside of voting only serves to increase the redundancy of voting and representative or electoral politics.

In order to improve youth voting participation, and democratic legitimacy, we also need to know how this new generation views electoral politics specifically, and how those views may affect their motivation. We need a better understanding of the role that perceptions of democratic representation may play with respect to voter motivation for this new generation, and how the


\textsuperscript{15} Ellen Quintellier, “Differences in Political Participation between Young and Old People,” Contemporary Politics 13, no.2 (June 2007): 177.

evaluation calculus or psychology employed by youth may differ from those of their older counterparts. To date, investigation and debate in the area has proven inconclusive as results are largely based on frequency analysis not generally tied directly to turnout and are often focused on satisfaction with interest representation alone. Further empirical investigation that also includes sustained focus on symbolic representation, and which is directly tied to turnout, is warranted.

This thesis builds on the current literature to demonstrate how expectations of representation affect participation in electoral politics. Consistent with earlier work, it confirms that youth voting decreases when young people are less educated, less interested, or when they feel less of a sense of responsibility. However these only explain part, and not necessarily the most important part, of the younger generation’s electoral motives. The analysis to follow will show that voting turnout is markedly lower when young people feel that their values are not aligned with those of political leaders. Additionally, the relationship between symbolic representation and voting remains significant and strong for young people when the classic variables are included in the model. Moreover, the association between voting and symbolic representation is of greater weight than other known variables such as education, political interest, or sense of responsibility in young people’s decision to vote or to stay home on election day. But this new variable is particularly important for our understanding of voting decline among youth as the negative effects of symbolic representation on voting are not found in the older cohort. This difference explains why the most recent decline in voting occurs predominantly among youth.

Satisfaction with what political leaders *stand for* is important to voting behaviour among young people, but it is not for those over 35. Comparing the two groups, the data show that the psychology underlying voting motivation is quite different for those over 35. Older voters are not influenced by their sense of satisfaction with symbolic representation. In fact symbolic representation is not a statistically significant predictor of voting among older people. Instead, satisfaction with interest representation is more significant for older voters than symbolic representation. This pattern differs from the motivation of those under 35, whose voting behaviour is influenced greatly by a lack of connection or symbolic affinity with political leadership, but not affected by the degree of satisfaction with interest representation. In other words, when it comes time to decide to vote, older voters are moved by the capacity of leaders to represent their interests, whereas younger voters care about what those same leaders symbolize or stand for. In both cases, evaluations of representative capacity affect voting motivation, but the value placed on representative capacity is different.

This finding corresponds to the post-materialist literature, where differences in values are central to understanding change in the youth cohort. Norms are different for this generation of young people. They care about different things than their parents or grandparents do. These differences are not confined to their sense of obligation to participate politically or to their interest in everyday political affairs, but can be expanded to include their expectations of representation and their perceptions of leaders Additionally, political leaders are usually older—they don’t dress the same, listen to the same music and do not appear to see the world in the same way that young people do. These differences exacerbate or reinforce a sense among young people that politicians don’t *stand for* or symbolize the same things they care about, and if there is no one who stands for what they care about, there is less reason to vote.
Furthermore, the literature suggests that the issues that may be important to young people are less likely to be included in political discourse.\textsuperscript{18} Many of the issues that make political headlines do not affect their lives in the same way they do for older people. As a consequence they are less interested or involved politically. For example, young people do not generally rely on the healthcare system to the same extent as their elders. Universal healthcare may matter as an abstract norm or value, but it is not as likely to affect them as directly or personally as it might an older voter, and accordingly is less likely to influence their rates of participation.

Conversely, older people are more likely than younger voters to have a vested interest in political affairs because the majority of political issues affect their lives directly. Political campaigns are more often than not geared toward finding and appealing to those interests, making values differences less important. Instead the absence of political leadership that acts on their behalf, should cause older people to vote less.

Symbolic representation emerges as a key difference influencing youth voting turnout. Understanding the differences underpinning each generation’s psychology of voting, and the importance of the role of symbolic representation in youth voter turnout, allows us to shed new light on the problem of voter decline.

However, not all age-related differences can be held responsible for the most recent decline. We know that young people have always voted less than older counterparts, but the drop in voter turnout witnessed since the mid-1990s is something new. For example, the literature shows that young people feel less responsible for voting than their elders. However this is also not a new phenomenon. Young people have traditionally been less likely to feel a sense of

responsibility. As there has been no change demonstrated to recent levels of responsibility, it cannot be credited with the most recent decline in voter turnout. For responsibility to have caused the decline in youth voting behaviour, youth would not only have to feel less responsibility for voting than older people, but young people would either have to feel less responsible than previous generations of young people, or responsibility would have to increase in its effect on non-voting for young people. And in the absence of data, a theoretical case to demonstrate changes in responsibility would need to be made to explain how or why responsibility is more or less important in voter turnout rates.

This is also the case for symbolic representation. As we do not have time series data we cannot demonstrate that symbolic representation is more or less important for voting turnout than it was for previous generations of young people, nor can we show that the variable has increased in its impact on voter turnout over time. After all lifecycle theory has also been a mainstay in the literature. But a causal case can be made nonetheless.

While we do not have data connecting the concept of dissatisfaction with symbolic representation and voting in young people over time, we do have ample data suggesting that this generation of young people possesses different values than those espoused by their older counterparts, and these differences could be in part responsible for the decline. Additionally, and more critically, we also know that during the early 1990s there was a fracturing of the party system in Canada and a shift away from values-based political campaigns. Absent Mandate demonstrates that political leaders have become increasingly focused on laying claim to general ability to govern effectively, or most recently, the lack of their opponents’ capacity to govern.19

Leaders thus increasingly distinguish themselves from other candidates by their presentation of an array of policy choices and campaigns based on benefits, rather than through the presentation of a fulsome platform driven by an overarching worldview that would underpin symbolic representation and inspire young people to vote. In fact, it is now difficult to distinguish what parties or leaders stand for at all, with “Vote Compass” style websites being constructed around the world to help voters navigate the labyrinth of issues in order to make an informed vote choice. Importantly this change in behaviour on the part of political strategists and actors coincides with the precipitous drop in youth turnout worldwide.

If there is little that government does that impacts young people directly, then issues campaigns are unlikely to move young people one way or another with respect to voting, and as a consequence youth are left to rely on symbolic representation, or the understanding of what leaders stand for, to fill the vacuum and guide them. But if what young people care about is not embodied by political leaders or symbolically represented, or if the electoral platforms are so muddy that it is hard to find any leader that stands for what youth care about, then there is less to vote for, and the propensity to stay home and ignore elections altogether increases, causing a decline in voter turnout.

This thesis argues that an important missing link in the youth voter decline story is found when we consider that political leaders have changed the way they conduct campaigns. Appeals designed to wedge voters or represent narrow interests may be successful for those over the age of 35, who have something to lose or gain through political action, but election campaigns crafted in this manner fail to speak to this new generation of young people. Instead, platform construction that is disconnected from overarching values is part of the overall voter turnout problem. This finding demonstrates the scholarly benefit of shifting the direction of study away
from cataloguing the deficits in behaviour, character, or socialization of a generation of young people, and towards understanding the consequences of misalignment in political leadership. A new direction of study is not only potentially more fruitful, as the data show that symbolic representation is important to youth voting, but additionally this knowledge can pay off for political leaders who are interested in mobilizing their votes and winning elections. As elections are often won or lost by the narrowest of margins, the leader or party that can successfully connect with young people also stands to gain—and perhaps the negative spiral of apathy can begin to reverse itself.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature
There have been a number of studies aimed at investigating the trend of low voter turnout, and each in its way has contributed to our current understanding of the many factors that depress turnout. In this chapter we will evaluate each approach in turn. The literature review will begin with the academic response that took place when the turnout decline first began in Canada and the comparative politics contribution that contextualizes the Canadian results. This will be followed by a review of the known variables associated with political engagement and their application to the problem of waning turnout. I will then evaluate the larger theoretical contributions explaining the patterns of change in political engagement, including social resource, social capital, post-materialism and representative capacity (a variant of rational choice theory). This chapter will thus put the problem of voter turnout in context, outline the critical variables that are important in turnout, review the major theories, and explain why they do not adequately solve the turnout puzzle. The review is aimed at understanding both the complexity of the problem and the contributions that have been made towards understanding it, as well as building a case for the introduction of a new approach to the study of voter decline, one that includes the examination of the differing effects that representative capacity can have on young and older voter turnout.

The Problem in Context

In the Canadian context, voter turnout crests during the late 1950s and early 1960s, followed by a period of relative stability from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s, when voter turnout began to decline precipitously (see Figure 2.1). In 1993, turnout rates began to fall and continued to decline to where they now hover, at around 60%. Initially, this drop was considered to be the
result of disaffection caused by a major shift in the Canadian party system and was believed to be an anomaly specific to the 1993 election.\(^{20}\)

**Figure 2.1: Turnout Percentages in Canadian Federal Elections, 1953-2011\(^{21}\)**

![Turnout in Canadian Federal Elections (1953 - Present)](image)

However, that initial assessment proved inaccurate. Instead, 1993 was the harbinger of turnout decline as the results at the federal level continued to erode, reaching bottom in 2000, with a modest positive bump in the 2006 election, only to fall again in 2008, and level off at 61.4% in 2011.\(^{22}\) In Canada, the sharp drop in voter participation is not isolated to federal

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politics since a parallel decline occurred at the provincial level during the same period. Turnout continues to be depressed at the provincial level—thereby further challenging the idea that there was something particular to realignment at the federal level which was responsible for the drop-off. Furthermore, turnout decline is by no means confined to Canada. During the same time frame this pattern has repeated itself internationally as well, making voter decline a worldwide phenomenon.  

To Whom is Politics not Meaningful?: Age Demographics

In order to address the worldwide problem of voting decline scholarship focused its attention to the study of socioeconomic and demographic change. This scholarship has found the age variable to be a critical factor in voting decline. And this finding certainly applies to Canada. Work conducted by Lawrence LeDuc and Jon Pammett has revealed the extraordinary impact of youth non-voting on the depression of overall turnout rates. They found a strong statistically significant relationship with age and vote, producing a Cramers V of .392. Those over the age of 30 are more likely to vote than not to vote, whereas those under 30 are more likely to abstain from voting than they are to cast their ballots on election day. Barely 20% of the youngest segment of the youth population (18- to 23-year-olds) votes, compared to more than 80% of those over the age of 68. And this generational difference is almost perfectly monotonic with every age decrease, producing a corresponding drop in turnout. The difference between these two cohorts is clear, as is the effect on overall turnout numbers. The decline in voter turnout is driven by youth and this continues to this day (see Figure 2.2 for percentage of voter turnout by age for the 2008 election). Additionally, this age relationship is not unique to Canada; as with the

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decline in turnout among enumerated citizens, it occurs in virtually all developed democracies and is understood to underpin the decline. It can be explained in a myriad of ways.

Figure 2.2: Percentage of Voter Turnout by Age in the 2008 Federal Election

The Age-Old Interest in Politics

That demographics and social structures have an impact on agency can be taken as a given. Socioeconomic characteristics that are either produced or affected by those structures have a long-standing association with behavioural outcomes. The field of sociology is replete with examples, both formal and informal, and sociologists have undeniably had an impact on political science and vice-versa. Trends in voting are not sui generis. Moreover, the idea that youth are less engaged than older voters and that life circumstances and institutions influence the values

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espoused by individuals is no longer groundbreaking.\textsuperscript{26} We know that voter participation in the youth cohort is low and that it rises with age: this pattern is consistent over time and is well documented.\textsuperscript{27} Generational effects have a history in the voter turnout literature, and \textit{lifecycle} explanations continue to be important to this day as they account for generational variance witnessed in the past and to some degree in the present.\textsuperscript{28}

Influenced by institutional and rational choice scholarship, \textit{lifecycle} theory maintains that as a result of the stage in life, young people have less responsibility (jobs, mortgages, children), and as a result, are not as directly affected by politics. In other words, politics and political affairs are simply not an integral part of their lives, and therefore youth are understandably less interested and engaged politically. As youth mature, taking on more responsibility (paying more taxes and raising families), the world of politics becomes increasingly important and relevant to their lives. As a result they are more likely to be politically interested and involved as they age.\textsuperscript{29} Mark Franklin extends this argument to assert that the inclusion of young adults in voting occurs at a time in life when other things are much more important than politics (e.g. university, friends), and as a consequence, those under the age of 20 do not develop a habit of voting as would presumably be the case if they were given the right to vote at some later point in life.\textsuperscript{30} Franklin’s remedy would be to introduce voting at an age when young people would be more affected by government and interested politically.

\textsuperscript{26} The seminal work on changes in values and value difference in Canada was published some time ago. See Neil Nevitte, \textit{The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-National Perspective}, (Toronto, ON: Broadview Press, 1996).

\textsuperscript{27} Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie, Op. Cit.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., Chapter 9. Or, more recently, see Ellen Quintellier, Op.Cit., 177.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.

Interest in politics is unquestionably important as a motivation for voting. It has been a mainstay in the literature since 1944. But patterns of engagement have changed as well. This generation of young people is not only less likely to vote, but it is also less likely to pay attention to political affairs in general, and as a consequence, knows much less about what is going on. News consumption patterns have changed for this generation, and young people are much less likely than their older counterparts to read the newspaper, watch the nightly news, or pay attention during election campaigns or political affairs more generally. In fact, Canada ranked second from the bottom on a cross-national comparison with only 13% of 18 to 29-year-olds admitting that they follow politics in the news. Relative levels of political knowledge suffer as a result, leaving this generation to be characterized as “the least knowledgeable generation ever.” According to this argument, if youth were more interested in politics, or if political affairs were more germane, youth would also be more likely to participate and vote. Expecting to solve the problem of voter decline by increasing the voting age is politically untenable. Furthermore, the lifecycle effect is not new and cannot explain the recent decline in engagement within the youth cohort. Interest is important for every age group, and politics is understandably less important for the majority of youth. However, the critical question is not why do youth participate less than older people, but why are youth voting less now? More specifically, what accounts for the dramatic differences that we are currently witnessing?

33 Ibid., 83.
34 Ibid., 75.
Social Resource Theory

Education is the classic place to look for the source of this difference in turnout. In 1972 (well before voting decline was a problem; see Figure 2.1), Wolfinger and Rosenstone determined that differences in social status affected voting, and more specifically, they identified education as the leading socioeconomic characteristic associated with voter participation.\textsuperscript{35} Their study found that those possessing a university education were 38\% more likely to vote than those with less than 5 years of schooling.\textsuperscript{36} Subsequent cross-national logistic analysis conducted by André Blais confirmed this finding, making education the preferred proxy for socioeconomic status in voting research. The connection between education and voting participation is thus clear. However, as both studies employed only socioeconomic indicators (leaving out attitudes) and did not stratify by age, their findings rest on a narrow set of variables which does not explain the mechanism connecting education to participation.\textsuperscript{37}

Other studies conducted in 1972 by Sidney Verba and Norman Nie included a range of variables, thereby expanding our understanding of the effect of education. Verba and Nie made the case that age, education, and social status afford not only resources such as time, knowledge and income required for participation, but also civic orientations or attitudes which make those with greater levels of education more likely to be interested or involved in political matters.\textsuperscript{38} Verba and Nie’s study demonstrated that those who are young and lower-ranking in terms of status are also less likely to vote, as they possess fewer material resources and orientations toward participation when compared with older, more educated voters. In this case the socioeconomic status index is comprised of education, income, and occupation, and the civic

\textsuperscript{35} André Blais, \textit{Op. Cit.}, 49.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{38} Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie, \textit{Op. Cit.}, 133.
orientation index is constructed using political interest, efficacy, information about politics, and a sense of obligation to engage or make a contribution to civic life.

Verba and Nie found that when socioeconomic status is the sole predictor, it has a moderately strong effect on voting. However, when civic orientations are added as the intervening variable, they found a reduction in the direct effect of socioeconomic status on voting and a sharp increase in explained variation (see Figure 2.3 below). Clearly then, socioeconomic status does not predict voting to the same degree as status coupled with the civic orientations variable, which is correlated to and in theory influenced by status.

Figure 2.3: Linking Education, Civic Orientations and Participation

However, the direct relationship produced by socioeconomic position is also not fully absorbed by this model. It is reduced substantially but does not fully disappear. This suggests that there is more going on, and that civic orientations may not be the only means by which socioeconomic status affects voting. Political interest, efficacy, information about politics, and a sense of responsibility to engage or make a contribution are all affected by social status, and, in turn, affect voter engagement. However, this is not yet a full account: the mechanism by which the remaining influence of socioeconomic status (SES) impacts voting is unspecified.

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39 Ibid., 135.
Later researchers focusing specifically on education concur and expand on these findings. Nie et al. also find that status, and education in particular, increases material resources as well as support for democratic values or norms. They demonstrate that those who are educated are more likely to be interested, and that interest in political matters is important to voting. But they go beyond reinforcing these intervening effects by demonstrating that greater educational attainment also provides the cognitive capacity and confidence necessary to navigate the complexities of politics, while at the same time connecting those with more education to social networks which aid in, and foster commitment to, political engagement. These ideas find resonance in much of the literature.

We now know that education not only affects civic orientations, but also cognitive capacity, interest, confidence, efficacy, and a sense of democratic or civic responsibility, which in turn all affect voting engagement, making these variables critical for further investigations of turnout motivation and decline.

**Changes in Civic Orientations**

Unbundling these orientations, we find that interest in politics has a longstanding connection to voting and emerges in many theories; this is also the case for commitment to civic life and a sense of responsibility or duty. For example, in Downs’ 1957 study, he demonstrates how both short-term interest and long-run benefit of support for norms—such as sense of responsibility to

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democracy—have an impact on voting. More recently, major theories in political science have linked each variable to changes in civic engagement and voting. Social capital theory rose in response to changes in civic participation and commitment to civic life, and post-materialist theory surfaced to allow us to understand generational value change.

Social capital scholars argue that there have been noticeable shifts both in interest in politics and in feelings of obligation to vote. But unlike education scholars, they see the cause as due to a change in civic behaviour, holding that shifting patterns of engagement in the community at large are responsible for the decline of interest in and commitment to politics. Robert Putnam asserts that social structures and networks have changed, causing an erosion of community commitment or norms of social responsibility that are then transferred to relationships with government institutions. In other words, kids today are not hanging out at church dances or contributing to their communities as they might have done in previous generations. Instead, they are less social and more disconnected from their communities and are likely to be watching MTV or surfing alone on virtual networks or in chat rooms. As a result of this, they view social participation and citizenship differently. For Putnam, the conception of community has changed and citizens have become more passive, more likely to stay home and watch television or chat on the net than engage in their communities or vote. Furthermore, when civic participation does take place, the emergence of a bonding culture (groups closely aligned in values or special interest) has replaced former broader-based cultures that bridged difference through exposure to diverse ideas, community involvement, or service.

Putnam argues that as a consequence of these new network patterns, youth are less likely to be interested in politics or to feel a sense of responsibility or attachment to the project of

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community service or traditional institutions. Instead, they are more likely to focus their energies in a narrow manner, if at all. As a consequence, younger generations are generally less interested in community participation. In the absence of their specific interests being served, they do not participate in traditional politics such as joining a political party, or voting, because special interest networks and organized protests are more effective as means of articulating opposition and getting things done.

Borrowing from the work of Benedict Anderson, attachment to community also emerges here as possibly important in youth voter motivation. As captured by Paul Howe, “The key insight...is that attachments to large-scale communities do not emerge solely from lived experiences but instead reflect an abstract feeling of connectedness among their members generated by a shared sense of themselves as a people.” The sense of belonging or lack thereof may also play a role in youth voting behaviour. Much work has been done to explain how attachments and sense of nationalism are created. Young people are less likely to be attached to their country, province or local community than their older counterparts. However, as time series data were not used in this investigation, we cannot claim that this attachment has changed over time. Nor have direct connections been made between a sense of connectedness and voting, or more specifically between a sense of connectedness and youth voting turnout. This is an avenue that is yet to be fully explored.

Nevertheless, early connections to voting behavior have been established. There is support for social capital theory in Canada since connectedness and responsibility norms are less important to the current generation than to older voters, and since, without a doubt, active

participation in public affairs has *changed*. Conceptions of citizenship influence both attitudes toward participation and voting mobilization. Young people who feel that citizenship includes both rights and responsibilities are more likely to vote. However, youth who feel that citizenship is solely rights-based are less likely to vote. Young people today are more likely to protest or join Greenpeace, rather than join the Liberal party—this too separates them from older voters, who remain more committed to traditional forms of participation. Social capital scholars explain change through the inclusion of both interest and responsibility variables, which are taken to be important. Still, this explanation tends to generate further questions. Have all youth—educated and less educated—been affected by technology uniformly? If new forms of technology have affected norms and ensuing interest in politics, what accounts for the variance within this new breed of voters? And, if interest and responsibility norms have changed, have values changed as well? For answers to those questions we turn to Ronald Inglehart and post-materialist theory.

**A New Breed with New Values**

Ronald Inglehart’s Maslowian-based post-materialist theory explains shifting behavioural change by appealing to underlying generational value difference. In the Canadian context, scholars such as Neil Nevis show that as a result of material satisfaction during formative socialization, as well as greater access to education and changes in the workplace, values have shifted in this manner:

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new generation, influencing expectations of government and participation.\textsuperscript{50} As a result of greater levels of education, this generation of young voters is less likely to defer to authority, is more autonomous, and is less likely to have confidence in institutions. Holding such post-materialist values, young people are unlike previous generations who were not as well educated, and who were more likely to defer to political authority.\textsuperscript{51} Consequently, post-materialist youth are less likely to engage in traditional political practices, such as voting, and are more likely to engage in protest as they seek more direct and instrumental routes to influence government.

Through empirical investigation of post-materialist indicators, we see ample evidence that youth do not view democratic participation in the same way as their more materialist elders.\textsuperscript{52} Post-materialist youth may be less likely to join political parties and more likely to be found at protest events, but surprisingly, they also still seem to vote. There has only been a marginal decline in participation among university-educated youth who are the very group most likely to hold post-materialist values.\textsuperscript{53} In contrast, it is less educated youth who are least engaged in the political process, and there is little data to suggest post-materialist change in values for this portion of the youth cohort. Youth on the whole may be more likely to be post-materialist, but post-materialism does not hold for all youth. The portion of the youth cohort least likely to vote is the least educated, with their participation in voting having declined most dramatically in recent years. But little is known as to why this is so.

\textsuperscript{50} Neil Nevitte, Op. Cit.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 38; 60.
\textsuperscript{52} Including an increase in non-traditional political action such as protest behaviour, signing of petitions, and membership in interest organizations as documented by Nevitte and debated in several works of Norris. See Neil Nevitte, \textit{Op. Cit.}, and Pippa Norris, Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism, (Cambridge, UK: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2002).
Beyond Blaming it on Youth

Although post-materialist and social capital theories may contribute to our understanding of non-youth voting, neither theory currently clarifies the recent decline in voting among young people more specifically. Perhaps it comes as no surprise then that policy prescriptions based on these theories are largely ineffective, as they attribute the decline in turnout almost exclusively to flaws in youth character and focus on making youth better people, without understanding the reason for the change in their attitudes or behaviour. Attempts to persuade young voters of their duty to vote, resulting Vote mobs, and civics education programs are no doubt important. Attempting to inculcate a more positive understanding of the role of a citizen is never a bad thing, but it is difficult to shift existing norms since values by their nature are resistant to change. Moreover, most of these policy prescriptions assume shortfalls on the part of youth, but they do not get under what is driving this change. Part of the difference in voter motivation between generations is undoubtedly that young people are less interested and feel less responsible or committed than older voters, but only in politics would the decline in interest and passion be blamed on shifting norms. Taking this position is akin to McDonald’s scolding young people for wanting healthier foods, or the Gap blaming young people if their jeans do not fit. Blaming youth without attempting to better understand this change in voting behaviour also limits the range of policy solutions to those aimed at shifting norms that are embedded, unlikely to change, and likely to increase over time as the ripple effect takes hold.

Drilling down in the individual data we find that age emerges as the major player in the most recent decline, but again the cause in the decline in youth voting is unclear. Education appears to play both a direct and indirect role in voting, affecting capacity to participate, interest in politics, a sense of civic duty, and voting. However, these variables are so intertwined that separating cause from consequence is challenging, and the source of the variances within the youth cohort and between youth and older voters gets clouded. We know that young people are less likely to be interested in politics or feel a sense of obligation to participate politically when compared with older voters, but we do not know what makes this generation of youth feel less interested or responsible. Research into value change over time shows that this generation is more likely to hold values that differ from older cohorts and previous generations of young people, yet post-materialist theory is incomplete because it does not explain the observed effect. While the corresponding segment of youth population as described in post-materialist explanations is more likely to engage in new forms of participation and protest than any previous generation of young people, this segment is also just as likely to vote, i.e. voting has not declined for the younger generation as a whole. Nevertheless, we know that values are different for the youth cohort and that voting behaviour has changed, therefore it stands to reason that a better understanding of values is important. However, it should not be assumed that changes in youth values or character are solely to blame for the decline in youth voter turnout.

As mentioned in the introduction, arriving at political judgment—or the decision to vote or not to vote—does not exclusively involve pre-dispositions or standing decisions, such as values, but rather is dynamic, with contemporary information or evaluations of context playing an important role.\(^58\) If values have changed, then evaluations of the political context and actors

within it are likely to have changed as well. And the capacity of political actors and of the electoral context to respond to new expectations is also germane. Going back the McDonald’s example, not only is it important to understand that youth are less interested and feel less responsible, but it is also important to understand what it is about political affairs today that makes them less interested and feel less responsible. If young people hold different values than previous generations of youth, and if political leadership does not articulate these values, then young people will not see political institutions or actors as capable of responding to their expectations. This dim view is not only likely to affect young peoples’ judgment, but also their motivation for engaging in politics. Although this capacity approach is not a mainstay of political science literature, it finds it roots in the larger rational choice literature and has emerged most recently in discussions surrounding the decline in confidence and trust in government. It also can be found in comparative investigations aimed at shortfalls in institutional performance.59

Comparative Investigations
As a result of these cross-national similarities in electoral performance, the comparative focus of study began in earnest, and attempts to attribute cause of voter apathy to formal institutional structures or other country-specific characteristics emerged.60 Scholars shifted their attention from youth character to the character of elections,61 demonstrating that context does indeed play a role.62 However, those investigations also fell short of revealing the causal underpinnings of the erosion in youth participation specifically. Broadly speaking, the investigations reinforced the

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61 Ibid. 151.
62 Ibid, see chapter 6.
concern over youth withdrawal as importance of voting as a habit was revealed as important for future voting, and the threat to democratic legitimacy became more real. Otherwise few variables reached levels of significance, and those that do show only marginal or weak effects on turnout rates. For example, turnout deficits may be less dramatic in countries that employ proportional representation (PR) electoral systems, such as Sweden. But PR systems cannot be seen as a panacea, since turnout is on average only 3% higher in countries employing PR, a differential that has been consistent over time. Moreover, where these studies found electoral competitiveness important in elevating turnout, this elevation does not explain the trend toward disengagement among young people. Tight races matter, but they cannot account for the overall trend away from voting, nor do they guarantee that any given election has meaning for young people.

Outside of the imposition of compulsory voting, electoral salience, or the perceived consequence of the election itself, became the most important variable correlated in cross-national elections with high turnout levels. Institutional structures themselves were not the answer to this global epidemic. Beyond any given institutional configuration, if voters have a sense that the individual election is meaningful or salient, then they are significantly more likely to participate. This information is invaluable as it raises the question—what makes an election (and by extension, politics itself) meaningful? And it also places itself between character of elections and the individual citizen to determine if there is a deficit in representative capacity.

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63 For a thorough overview of country specific or institutional debate, see André Blais, To Vote or Not to Vote: The Merits and Limits of Rational Choice Theory (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), Chapter 1.
64 Ibid., 29.
Representative Capacity

Capacity scholars agree that education, interest in politics, a sense of responsibility, and other values have changed, but they further nuance their position, arguing that voter turnout decline is a consequence of the failure of both formal and informal institutions to respond to the changing expectations of the populace. And most critically, this approach accounts for evaluations of political context rather than changes in the character of citizens. For example, in a 2003 study conducted by Jon Pammet and Lawrence LeDuc, 68% of Canadian respondents cite negative attitudes toward politics and politicians, and 32.5% attribute the meaninglessness of participation as reasons for non-participation in voting, compared to only 39.2% of the population who believe the root cause is apathy.

This approach is aimed at exposing the current political structure’s lack of capacity for reacting to public dissatisfaction with institutions and to increased demand for greater participatory avenues. Influenced by rational choice theory, capacity scholars believe that values and interests have changed, yet political institutions and leaders have not adapted accordingly. The capacity approach argues that youth voter turnout has declined specifically as a result of lack of commitment on the part of political leaders and strategists to engage youth, or even to include youth issues and interests in political discourse. For example, Lawrence LeDuc and Jon Pammett believe that this lack of inclusion has, in part, already caused lower levels of youth turnout and has the potential to spiral negatively over time. The less young people engage, the less

66 A Canadian example of a capacity approach can be found in Harold D. Clarke, Jane Jenson, Lawrence LeDuc and Jon H. Pammett, Op. Cit. For an example of a capacity approach aimed specifically at youth voter turnout, see André Turcotte, Op. Cit.


politicians will pay attention to young people, and the less politicians cater to young people, the less young people participate. Others maintain that political structures are antiquated and require reform in order to accommodate or reflect these new demands or expectations.69 Concerns over the lack of ability to express individual autonomy, absent mandate politics,70 and limited or restricted choice71 surface in the capacity debate.

Young people are perhaps not more negative about political affairs than their older counterparts, but they are more negative than previous generations, and importantly, negative evaluations of traditional politics are correlated with less participation. Dissatisfaction with the ease of voting, or the system’s administrative capacity (e.g. registration problems, voting while being out of town), and widespread disenchantment with the performance of the political class, political actors, and the array of political choice, or simply frustration toward politics and politicians more broadly, as well as a disinterest in political affairs, are growing among young people.72 New patterns influencing voter turnout have surfaced, including the increase of regionalization, decreasing competitiveness in the electoral system, changing modes of participation, and the erosion of the culture of voting. All underscore newly emerging vicious circles of turnout decline.73 Capacity scholars maintain that the traditional structures of government fail in their ability to represent youth interests, and in turn, youth withdraw, perpetuating the spiral of decline. But here too the literature remains wanting as it almost

73 Ibid., 10.
exclusively focuses on interest and fails to capture much of the generational value change; where it does capture values, it does not control for the effect of changing expectations by age.

André Turcotte argues that the young generation is turned off politics as opportunities for participation and greater reflection of interest in everyday life are limited or non-existent in archaic political structures, which largely cater to median or older voters. Turcotte maintains that the creation of new avenues for participation in which youth are able to pursue their interests more directly would alleviate the decline in turnout. This approach is perhaps most instructive as it acknowledges consequences in voter motivation that result from the interaction between a new generation with new expectations and relatively old or stable political structures.

However, this research relies on frequency analysis that does not attach these new attitudes to non-voting specifically. Youth may be interested in a different set of issues than that of their older counterparts, but this does not mean that those interest variances affect voting. At the very least that assumption requires cross-tabulation or some form of regression analysis where voting is the dependent variable. Moreover, apart from arguing for the integration of new participatory mechanisms as a means to engage young citizens, proponents of capacity theory do little to demonstrate that young people desire avenues for greater participation or that dissatisfaction with the way their interests are being represented by political institutions is directly related to lower youth turnout. They may be correct in stating that dissatisfaction with representation is related to lower turnout, as there is evidence to suggest that youth have slightly different issue priorities than older people and that politics is less salient to this generation.

75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
Additionally, there are data which demonstrate that political discussion is lacking in meaning for youth.⁷⁹ But non-voting youth do not appear to be knocking at the participatory door.⁸⁰ In contrast, young non-voters are more characteristically detached or unaware, are markedly less likely to seek political information, and are less knowledgeable about politics than previous generations.⁸¹ There is an unmistakable symbiosis between dissatisfaction, signs of apathy, lack of knowledge, and a feeling that politics is meaningless, which is perhaps most telling of all.⁸² Yet, there is little investigation into what electoral politics means to youth specifically, how they view representation, or how youth evaluate broader performance, including values.⁸³

**Interest Representation**

The current focus in the capacity literature ties meaning to interest representation and satisfaction, or more accurately dissatisfaction to institutional incapacity.⁸⁴ Responsiveness in government and interest representation are no doubt integral and necessary for the functioning of a healthy democracy. As a result, interest representation can be found in the current public policy discourse.⁸⁵ As lifecycle theory suggests, it is understandable that youth would be not only more interested in issues that affect them, but also more motivated by having their interests

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⁸³ Although not directly attached to electoral politics or voting behaviour, see Douglass North, Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) for evaluation of institutional performance, and more specifically, the inclusion of informal structures.
⁸⁴ André Turcotte, “‘What Do You Mean I Can’t Have a Say?’,” Op. Cit.
represented and dissatisfied or turned off by circumstances that do not represent their interests. Interest representation is the basis of rational choice. But there are limits to rational choice’s focus on interests. It explains little with respect to motivations for voting. Additionally, the focus on interest representation assumes a substantive view of political representation in which representatives are evaluated primarily based on the extent to which policy outcomes advanced by the representatives serve the best interests of their constituents.

This narrow view of representation is particularly problematic for understanding youth voter turnout for several reasons. First, there is no evidence to suggest change in the political interests of youth, nor are there data to suggest change in the behaviour of political actors which could be considered causal. To be sure, there are marginal generational differences in interest evaluations. As in every generation, youth are constrained by the array of political choices available to them. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that this new generation has suddenly become interested in a range of issues that are excluded from political debate, or that issues that are of specific concern to youth are threatened. As lifecycle theory has outlined, young people rarely consider political discourse germane to their lives. In fact, when young people were recently asked about what issues were important to them, the list was quite short and included

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86 This thesis will not expand on rational choice or its merits but acknowledges that rational choice theory sees an important place for interest representation. For more information on the subject see Anthony Downs, Op. Cit., Chapter 14.
87 A critique of rational choice is beyond the scope of this thesis. For a fuller account of voter turnout specifically see André Blais, Op. Cit., particularly the conclusion.
only jobs, school tuition, and legalizing marijuana.⁹¹ And there is evidence that youth rank their issue priorities very similarly to older voters.⁹²

It is true that political leaders have become increasingly focused on laying claim to the general ability to govern effectively. And they distinguish themselves based on specific policy choices rather than a fulsome platform designed to attract young people.⁹³ Moreover, politicians may be less likely to cater to youth interests since young people are less likely to vote than their older counterparts. This response may in turn lead to a spiral of apathy by both young people and politicians.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, there are serious kinks in the causal chain.

If leaders do not focus on youth because youth do not vote, the lack of responsiveness by political leaders cannot be responsible for the most recent decline in non-voting as non-voting preceded the lack of responsiveness. Interest representation is no doubt important in voting motivation, but it is not the whole story and is unlikely to have caused the decline in voting. Youth may have different expectations regarding political representation than their older counterparts; however, interest representation is not the only means of understanding political representation.

**Symbolic Representation: A Gap in the Literature**

*Symbolic representation* is a highly useful alternative conception of representation that expands the definition of representation beyond interest-based calculation.⁹⁵ Unlike conceptions of

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substantive representation, where satisfaction with interest representation is the standard for
evaluation, symbolic representation concerns the way in which the representative is perceived to
stand for the represented. Rather than acting on the citizens’ behalf, or representing any specific
issue, or set of issues, representatives are seen to be symbols. Evaluations of their worth are thus
made according to what they stand for. This conception of representation does not require and is
not contingent on action. Instead, political officials symbolize the values and beliefs of the
represented. This concept is rather holistic and rooted in a values calculus, rather than in action.
Symbolic representation considerably expands the understanding of political representation to
include meaning as perceived by those who are being represented, i.e. the citizenry.

The conceptualization of symbolic representation also differs from the conceptualization
of descriptive representation. Where the concept of descriptive representation relies on
satisfaction with the representation of appearance and rests in descriptive characteristics such as
gender, age, class or ethnic background, symbolic representation rests in values understanding
that often transcends descriptive characteristics. There is undoubtedly some overlap between the
two concepts: if you share descriptive characteristics with someone, you are also more likely to
share some form of worldview with that individual. And many who argue for greater social
representation believe that greater diversity in descriptive characteristics will lead to greater
symbolic representation. However, this is not always the case. One may share characteristics of
appearance or class, without representing symbolic understanding, or standing for or embodying
an overarching set of values. Descriptive similarity does not directly translate into shared values.
Young people are not a homogenous group.
The conception of symbolic representation becomes particularly salient with the well-discussed shifts in values that are evident across generations. There is ample data demonstrating a shift in values for this new generation of voters, but the shift in values is not uniform among young people. The impact that the shift in values has on voting, and the corresponding lack of meaning or misalignment between some young voters and politicians, has not been fully investigated. Similarly, research into the perceived capacity of politicians to stand for or represent values to their public is also potentially beneficial.

There has been a shift in political discourse corresponding to the recent youth withdrawal in electoral participation. The late 1990s ushered in political appeals that lacked any overarching views and were instead aimed at delivering specific messages to specific portions of the population. Immigrant populations and suburban soccer moms are among the growing list of those courted by political strategists, while young voters are largely ignored. The practice of brokerage or retail politics is not entirely new, but its prominence during the late 1990s in Canada is well documented. Therefore, understanding the perceptions of alignment between the values and beliefs held by citizens and politicians should be illuminating for voter motivation, specifically for youth.

Conclusion

Acknowledging and expanding on the present literature, this thesis will deepen the current understanding of the decline in youth voter turnout through the employment of a capacity approach that focuses on the importance of evaluations of action provided by political

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representatives—or satisfaction with interest representation—as well as with the public’s assessment of the perceived alignment of their values and beliefs with the symbolic capacity of political leaders. Evaluations of representation differ from evaluations of institutions or democracy. Where institutional performance is measured in terms of confidence in parliament, the courts, etc., and where support for democratic norms are often a proxy for democratic approval, a measure of symbolic representation focuses instead on the assessment of politicians. And as I will show in this thesis, the concept of symbolic representation is particularly useful for understanding youth voter motivation. Furthermore, analysis of symbolic representation in the project is a crucial addition to the current debate, which too often focuses only on the ability of political leaders’ to represent interests. The theoretical delineation between interest and symbolic representation is thus central to this thesis and will be unpacked in greater detail in Chapter 3.
Chapter 3: Conceptualization and Operationalization
Delineating the Representative Forms in Theory and Practice

Evaluations of representation take a number of forms, including formalistic, substantive, descriptive, and symbolic. As its name confers, the concept of formalistic representation makes evaluations of legitimacy based strictly on the actor holding formal power. Substantive representation expands that assessment and involves some form of benefit, remuneration, or reward that is derived from action on the part of the political representative—or the resulting policy outcome—and is based on serving the interest of the constituent. This evaluation goes beyond the conception of formalistic representation, which merely requires the representative to hold office as a measure of legitimacy. According to Pitkin, formalistic representation is also the narrowest measure of representation. In contrast, substantive representation—or what I call in this thesis interest representation—evaluates performance based on action on behalf of the citizen. Political leaders and actors are judged and held to account on the basis of their ability to act on the behalf of their constituents and satisfy their interests. A political interest can be almost any thing or issue that requires government action of some kind in order to benefit citizen interests. This list includes such things as tax reduction, economic stimulus, job creation, building public transit, parks, hospitals, daycares, schools, and so forth. The list of political interests is extensive, mutable, and differs from person to person and from group to group, often making interest representation a point of political contention. Even the underlying calculus is contentious.

The calculus behind the evaluation of representation of interests varies. It can be derived, for example, from perceptions of congruency of electoral promise in which leaders are judged by the number of promises kept. Or it can be a result of the way leaders manage. In such cases,

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99 Ibid. Chapter 2.
100 Ibid. Chapter 6.
politicians are rewarded by the degree to which they do what they say they are going to do. For example, if they campaigned to build new hospitals, did hospitals get built? If they campaigned to win the war in Afghanistan, is the war over? And which side won?

But the capacity to represent interest can also be calculated by the degree of responsiveness of political leadership, where evaluations of interest representation are based on the ability of political actors to adapt, anticipate need, and respond to the mood of the electorate while governing. In other words, political leaders’ performance can also be assessed based on how well they keep their promises, or it can be an evaluation of how well the leaders manage matters such as the economy. In such cases election promises become less important than the leaders’ ability to respond and react on behalf of citizens.

Regardless of which form of performance analysis used, interest representation is always rooted in action and results. Leadership, in this model, is thus also evaluated based on action and results. Underpinning this calculus is an assessment of performance—the ability of politicians to act and deliver for their constituents; in other words, citizens judge politicians based on what they have done for them.

This understanding of representative accountability based on interest representation is the origin of retail politics as we know it. Interests are wedged, and public policy platforms are tailor-made according to what is believed will benefit targeted voting blocks, in order to mobilize their vote. This conception of representation dominates electoral discourse today. Since voting blocks are seen to be up for grabs by anybody, this model of politics affords leaders a measure of partisan flexibility. As a result, electoral campaigns tend to focus less on overarching principles and more

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on satisfying a diversity of interests in an effort to woo a fickle electorate. This has been a mainstay of electoral politics in Canada since the mid-nineties, when turnout began to fall among young people.\textsuperscript{103} Elections are now won or lost in large part as a consequence of preparing narrow policies that work to address the concerns of specific groups of voters, or alternatively, around interest themes such as health care or the economy. Underlying each strategy is the unspoken premise that the voter should select the party that is best equipped to govern effectively, or that is best able to manage or support the voter’s interests. Questions such as, “Are you satisfied with the way your interests are represented?” are key indicators that substantive representation is at play. This measure of satisfaction is instrumental in nature and rooted in evaluating action or performance. Satisfaction with the way interests are being represented requires action on the part of the representative that delivers some external reward or gain to those represented. It does not, however, capture or inform us about the underpinning factors of symbolic representation.

Whereas substantive representation aims to represent the form itself or action, symbolism aims at symbolizing ideas.\textsuperscript{104} Assessments of \textit{symbolic representation} and \textit{descriptive representation} occur without direct reference to action or performance. According to Pitkin, just as a country’s flag represents or \textit{stands} as a symbol of the country, a political leader stands for or embodies ideals which citizens interpret, and accept or reject.\textsuperscript{105} Assessments of symbolic representation do not hinge on action taken, nor are they based on likeness alone. Instead they are manifested through the values and beliefs, or the magic connection, between the politician and the citizen.\textsuperscript{106} The evaluation of symbolic representation is thus the product of a heuristic shorthand based on values affinity or congruency, and which is largely symbolic.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 108.
The evaluation of symbolic representation is based on the perceived symbolism that politicians or political actors represent or reflect. It can involve some form of identity projection, although it may not necessarily be descriptive in nature. Descriptive representation is based solely on descriptive likeness or social reflection by the politician. Asking the question, is he or she described in the same terms as I am described? Or more clearly is he or she, young or old, black or white, Aboriginal, new immigrant, male or female, Protestant, Catholic or Jew? Descriptive representation can even extend beyond physical or racial likeness, to include such things as occupation, income, or lifestyle (married, single, gay, straight or transgender). Whereas descriptive representation consists of accurately mirroring the represented, symbolic representation is less narrow and is based instead on perceived alignment or affinity in values between representatives and those they represent.

As previously noted, descriptive representation can be seen as part of the makeup of symbolic representation and can exemplify values given that associations with physical description, identity and values are in many ways intertwined. But descriptive likeness is insufficient and not necessary for assessments of symbolic representation. Political leaders do not have to look like citizens in order to reflect or symbolize their values. Therefore descriptive representation is insufficient in its ability to fully embody symbolic representation or values. Descriptive likeness may be part of symbolic understanding in some cases, but symbolic representation transcends mere physical similarity or identity.

The practice of symbolic representation is evidenced in ideological positioning or the building of the party brand and leader image as symbolic forms. Where the elephant symbolizes dignity, strength, and intelligence for Republicans in the United States, the donkey symbolizes humility, intelligence, and courage for the Democrats. Evaluations of symbolic representation are

based on the ability of political leaders to represent their referent—to stand for something, usually an idea or value. The Canadian flag is not Canada, nor is it meant to be. But it is a symbol of Canada. There are maple leaves in Canada, and symbolic representation can be based on some of the leaf’s characteristics—such as Canadian identification with the outdoors, the colorful changing of seasons in Canada embodied in the red of the leaf, or the wholesome sweetness of maple syrup that the tree produces in spring. Nevertheless, the flag is not a symbol of Canada because Canada resembles the maple leaf. “Symbols are not proxy for their objects, but vehicles for their conception of what they symbolize.” 108 Standing for is thus an expressive feeling that can be differentiated from an activity that is bringing about an end or serving a goal.

The Prime Minister of Canada is both a symbol of the nation and the leader of a party, but the two roles are not the same. As a symbol of Canada the Prime Minster is more than an agent who acts on its behalf, but an expression of it. 109 Similarly, evaluations of the Prime Minister’s capacity for symbolic representation are found in the character of his expression—not his action. However, as with descriptive representation there is undeniable overlap between the two concepts, particularly as a leader can be both an expression of the party—or if she or he is the Prime Minister, the country—as well as being the primary agent who acts on the party’s behalf. And political campaigns are evaluated through assessments of both symbolic and substantive messaging.

Satisfaction with symbolic representation comes through in answers to the questions, Does this politician see the world the way I do? Does he or she, share my values? Do they stand for what

108 Ibid., 97.
109 Ibid., 103.
I believe in? Perceived generational schisms can influence the answer to these questions and the perception of values alignment. Youth can struggle to identify with leaders not only because they are older and are therefore not descriptively representative, but also because they symbolize differing generational outlooks or worldviews (symbolic representation). Older leaders can be seen as out of touch, uncool, or disconnected from young people, symbolizing values of bygone days particularly when compared with hip young leadership. Therefore age can be a factor. But it is not age that is misaligned, but worldview.

To some degree this lack of generational identification can be overcome in part by the relative ability of older leaders to open up, connect, or bond with young people by tapping into youth culture through singing songs or listening to music that young people relate to, or by attending sporting events that young people attend. Or simply by wearing clothes or adopting emblems that young people can identify with thereby scaffold[ing] the generational difference. Assessments of perceived satisfaction with symbolic representation for youth can be derived and affected by a number of descriptive factors, but it is not quite that easy, as evaluations of symbolic representation are rooted or attached to values alignment of some kind.

Symbolic misalignment is often deeper than merely being a question of age, music, sports or clothes. Regardless of the clothes they wear or the songs they sing, a candidate or a party that articulates values (e.g. conservative, social, or traditional family values) with which youth cannot identify is likely to push young people away. A candidate that appears to live by or embody values that youth hold deeply can motivate youth engagement. This is evidenced by the Green Party’s success with the younger generation in Canada and abroad. Ralph Nader did not play the saxophone on the Late Show to achieve his success, nor did he sport the apparel of P Diddy. He

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110 These questions are all possible items for a future index that measure the conception of symbolic representation.
merely tapped into environmental (Green) values that are shared by a large cross-section of youth. The success of Green party brand appeal to young people is not a result of looking or sounding like youth, but of standing for and symbolizing a movement in which young people believe. The form or shape that the symbol takes is not as important as what the symbol stands for, or the values it represents.

Politicians who try to transcend those boundaries fall short if they reach out in incongruent or superficial ways. Preston Manning was rebuked with chants calling him a racist, sexist, and homophobe after an appearance on Much Music during the 1996 federal election campaign. He was unsuccessful at reaching out to youth because he was seen as a religious extremist who supported radical views that were repugnant to young people, and thus not as someone who symbolized youth values. This stands in stark contrast to the mark that Barak Obama made in his run for the United States’ presidency. Obama’s call for a more conciliatory politics founded in the audacity of hope resonated with young people and in part propelled him into the highest office. It was not just that he was younger and more hip, or that he was promising to cater to youth interest—it was that he ‘stood for’ something that young people believed in. Values alignment is a likely underpinning and perhaps even a pre-condition of satisfaction with symbolic representation, albeit not sufficient to capture all aspects of what a politician stands for.\textsuperscript{111}

In contrast, interest representation asks the questions, Does this institution protect or represent my interests? Will the candidate be of material benefit to me? Whereas interest representation is focused on action, values alignment or symbolic representation requires no action per se. It is an expression that is irrespective of personal gain or benefit, although not exclusively

\textsuperscript{111} Therefore ‘values alignment’ can be seen as a proxy for symbolic representation and or, what a politician stands for, but it is insufficient in capturing the concept of symbolic representation in its entirety. A more robust measure would also include elements as well.
so, as intrinsic and extrinsic benefits both influence motivation and have their own reward.\textsuperscript{112} Voting for a candidate that articulates values of equality may provide an intrinsic benefit that has little to do with direct material gain. For example, affirmative action programs that produce greater equality of opportunity for society are often supported by those who receive little or no direct material benefit or extrinsic reward—confounding many a rational choice scholar, as it appears to be contrary to interest. But this is a limited understanding of benefit, as it does not weigh or entertain the potential of intrinsic benefit. It may seem irrational for anyone to support an abstract or idea that does not provide direct benefit, and in some cases is at odds with one’s interests or is costly. However, the intrinsic reward of being part of a society that reflects greater equality may in fact be more desirable for some. Moreover, supporting a candidate that reflects your values may lead to action that is beneficial, even when no particular policy recommendations are forwarded. In short, while interest representation is rooted in the evaluation of material benefit produced by action, symbolic representation also produces its own intrinsic rewards, albeit of a different sort.

Nevertheless, conceptions of symbolic representation include a values component that is independent, that can even be at odds with instrumental gain, or that can infringe on an external reward or action that is integral to interest representation.\textsuperscript{113} For example, beliefs in equality can increase taxation, which is costly, but aligned with values. Further, political actors do not necessarily have to symbolize meaning in order to represent interests. But there is undeniably common ground or characteristic shared among the forms of representation, as they are evaluations of politicians. The assertion that symbolic representation is important to motivation, and to political participation specifically, is not entirely new. It is a part of the behaviouralist canon.

\textsuperscript{113} This is not to say that values themselves do not conflict at times. There are often competing values as well.
During the 1950s Katz and Lazarsfeld conducted extensive research into the relationship between the values connection and civic engagement or participation.\textsuperscript{114} Although not aimed specifically at voter turnout,\textsuperscript{115} their investigation confirmed that participation increases when an individual’s values align with those of the social actors.\textsuperscript{116} On one hand, participation decreases and subjects are pushed away or turned off by actors that do not support their values. On the other hand, they are pulled toward or attracted by an alignment of values and beliefs—sense of affinity—with relationships or situations that reflect their values.

This thesis thus asks the question: Does satisfaction with symbolic representation affect voter turnout in youth, and if so, is there a difference between youth and older cohorts in this regard?

\textbf{Thesis Statement}

As shown in the literature review, demographic and psychological variables matter. Lower levels of education, political interest, and sense of personal responsibility are correlated with lower levels of turnout. And as the habit of voting has yet to be established, these variables produce relationships which are stronger in the youth cohort than in older generational counterparts. Education and personal responsibility should correlate with—and perhaps even cause—interest in politics and ensuing voter turnout. Consequently, the three variables will be included in the models developed here.

Democratic representation theory predicts that symbolic representation and the feeling of having interests represented or supported should also produce a greater likelihood of voter

\textsuperscript{114} Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, \textit{Op. Cit.}
\textsuperscript{115} This investigation was aimed at understanding how networks influence norms in the process of persuasion, or the influence of personal networks on decision-making.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
turnout. Those who feel that their values are aligned with values embodied by politicians are likely to be satisfied with symbolic representation, and in turn, those who are satisfied will be more likely to vote compared to those who feel that politicians do not reflect their values. Similarly, those who feel that political leaders represent their interests will be more apt to vote than those who feel their interests are not being represented.

Values shift over time, and as a result, this thesis posits that values misalignment is more pronounced in young people than in older generational counterparts. That is to say that young people are more likely to feel that political actors do not reflect their values, or that actors don’t stand for what they believe in, and that this misalignment has a real impact on motivation for voting. Conversely, younger voters are less likely to be affected by dissatisfaction with interest representation than their older generations, as the political issues being discussed are not as germane or salient to the younger cohort. Therefore, interest representation is less important for youth voter motivation than it is for older voters who are directly affected by lack of satisfaction with interest representation. The lack of salience of issues for younger voters places greater weight on symbolic capacity as well, as it is a proxy for representation which can be meaningfully evaluated.

The central thesis of this work is that lower levels of satisfaction with symbolic representation is correlated with non-voting, particularly among young people. And these effects remain when other known predictors are included in the model. The opposite pattern should emerge with respect to interest representation. Satisfaction with interest representation is less important in youth motivation, but it plays a larger role in turnout for those over 35. As I am attempting to explain a difference in behaviour between groups, the relationship between symbolic representation and voter turnout will be weaker for those over 35, and this pattern
reverses itself with respect to interest representation, where interest representation has a stronger effect on voting motivation for those over 35.

The analysis will show that youth and older people will, for the most part, follow different paths to voting. On the one hand, youth are pushed away from voting by a lack of affinity of values or failure in symbolic representation. They are also not pulled in because their interests are not as relevant to dominant political discourse and/or are not discussed. Older people on the other hand are affected differently by both symbolic and interest representation. Older people are more likely to be satisfied with the symbolic representation of political leaders, and they are also more likely to have their interests included in the discourse. As a result, the relationship between symbolic representation and voter turnout will be weaker for those over the age of 35. However, that does not necessarily mean that those over 35 are entirely satisfied with the caliber of interest representation. Instead, because interest representation affects their welfare more directly, they rely more heavily on interest representation as an evaluation proxy. Interest representation is thus a significant predictor of voter turnout in older voters, thoroughly eclipsing satisfaction with symbolic capacity in the older cohorts. In sum, I argue that the understanding of the decline in voter turnout can benefit from adding measures of symbolic representation to standard voting models, and that this is particularly the case when attempting to explain why youth vote less than their older generational counterparts.
Hypothesis

Part 1: Symbolic and Interest Representation and Voting

H1: Symbolic Representation

H1a: Compared with older people, youth are significantly more likely to perceive their values as different from those of political leaders.

H1b: Satisfaction with symbolic representation is a statistically significant predictor of voter motivation for youth. It is less important for older people.

H1c: These differences remain statistically significant after control variables are introduced.

H2: Interest Representation

H2a: Older people are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the way their interests are represented in politics than younger voters.

H2b: Satisfaction with interest representation is a statistically significant predictor of voter motivation for older people and younger people are not.

H2c: These between group differences remain statistically significant after control variables are introduced.

These hypotheses will be tested empirically through crosstabulation, logistic regression, and structural equation methods. In crosstabulation, I anticipate that a significant relationship between each of the variables and voter participation rates will be observed. As previously noted, control variables will be used. This thesis argues that the relationship between interest representation, symbolic representation, and voter turnout will be maintained after those variables are introduced in logistic regression. This model will then be tested using structural equation modeling in order to evaluate possible indirect effects as well as the significance of between group differences. The final step of testing will be to trim the model to construct a parsimonious explanation of the psychology of youth voter turnout.
The Fireweed Data Set

The Fireweed Democracy Barometer will be the data set employed for this investigation. This data set was chosen specifically because of the symbolic and interest representation questions that it poses, which are not available elsewhere. Ideally, the question of values affinity would be investigated cross nationally to allow for comparison and greater generalizability. However, cross national data sets do not explore this question and we are confined to single case study. Where this limitation disallows cross national comparison, the Fireweed data has its merits. Not only does it ask the central question under investigation, but it also allows for stratification by age, which is imperative for the investigation comparing younger and older voters. Notably, as the critical change in voting which needs to be explained is the difference between age cohorts, rather than the difference between countries, cross national analysis is less important for this investigation. This data set is also relatively recent, having been conducted in 2006.

Stratification by Age

An important and consistent element of this research is stratification by age. Stratification allows differentiation among youth predictors that may be lost in aggregate analyses that treat all voters as homogenous. It is the difference between young and older voters that this thesis seeks to capture. For example, education may be an important predictor for of voting youth, but not so for those over the age of 35. The stratification process allows us to separate effects for those 35 and under. As the recent decline in voter turnout is not consistent across all ages, stratification allows

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117 The poll was conducted by Allan Gregg and André Turcotte. Access to this data set was granted courtesy of Rick Anderson of the Fireweed Democracy Project. This national telephone survey was conducted in both English and French (where applicable), and consists of 1,000 interviews taken between March 10th and March 19th 2006. The margin of error is +/- 3% with a 95% confidence level. There was a 43% response rate. This study does not always reflect the national Census, but is compared where applicable in discussion.
for invaluable comparison of age cohorts that have not been affected in the same way. Nevertheless, in using this data set, fewer non-voters are captured than we might like—reducing the N of the survey dramatically—thereby making stratification for age challenging. To address this issue and increase the N for analysis purposes, I intentionally expanded the youth cohort recoding to include those up to the age of 35. This recoding decision is not traditional practice in the literature, where the youth cohort is most often understood as encompassing the 18- to 24-year olds or the 18- to 30-year olds.

**Dependent Variable**

For the purpose of this investigation, I use the question, “Who did you vote for?” as my dependent variable. Those respondents who selected a specific political party are converted into the “yes” response. Those indicating, “did not vote” are coded as “no.” Here I find just under 60% of the respondents voting, 8% of the population not voting and 29% did not know if they voted in the previous election or refused to answer the question.

**Figure 3.1: Dependent Variable: Vote**

![Bar chart showing 2006 Election: Did You Vote?](#)

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118 This is in reference to the 2006 Federal election occurring at that time.
Declaring dk/refused as missing and stratifying for age, this number changes somewhat with 92% of those over the age of 35 reporting having voted in the last election, and 80% of those 35 and under. The between group variance is significant, producing a significant Chi square of 18.875.\(^\text{119}\) Simply put, young people are less likely to vote than their older counterparts, and this between group difference is statistically significant. This pattern is repeated in survey after survey. However this distribution is not entirely representative of the Canadian population where voter turnout hovers at around 60%, and where youth turnout is expected at roughly 30%. Inaccuracies in reporting and refusals to answer are to be expected in survey responses that involve voting. Voting intention is notoriously over-reported in the literature.\(^\text{120}\) These accuracy difficulties tend to be compounded as the data are also likely to over-represent interested and older people because they are more likely to answer the phone in the survey context.\(^\text{121}\) This is of specific concern when researching young people, since they are less likely to pick up the phone and are underrepresented in samples as a result. Furthermore, this problem is no doubt exacerbated since this sample was not taken at election time, but between elections, forcing respondents to reflect back and identify not only whether they voted, but also for whom they voted. As a consequence the data created an unusually high number of respondents (295) who select the “don’t know” or “refused category,” further reducing the numbers for analysis purposes.

“Do not know” refers to those who could not identify a party and/or if they could, could not recall if they voted. “Refused” refers to those who did not respond to the question, but instead refused to answer. I opted to remove those coded under the “did not know” and “refused”

\(^{119}\) p=.000 df=1


\(^{121}\) André Blais, Op. Cit., 49.
categories from the data analysis. Although it might be useful to include “dk/refused” in the research (assuming that they too chose not to vote), there is no guarantee that this group did not refuse because they were intending to mask partisan allegiances or simply could not recall for whom they voted. As it turns out, including them in the analysis produces inconsistent results across age groups and across variable dimensions. In the case of the symbolic representation variable, the don’t know/refused category behaves in parallel to non-voters for the youth cohort, but it does not follow the same pattern for older people. Conversely, when entering interest into crosstabulation we find that the “don’t know” respondents appear to resemble voters in the youth cohort, but they are not the same for non-voting youth (see Appendix 2). Therefore, to ensure validity we must rely exclusively on the smaller, but more accurate account of the answers coded under the “yes” and “no” categories. Nevertheless, the “who did you vote for?” question allows us to effectively isolate and understand those who did not vote, and as this is the focus of our research, it remains critical. Acknowledging these limitations, we must underline the benefit of comparing voting and non-voting behaviour.

**Independent Variables: Education**

In the literature, level of education has been organized in a number of ways. Classic work in the area measures level of education by high school dropouts, high school graduates, college graduates and university graduates. Our data allows for high school or less, college, university, or post-graduate.\(^{122}\) Although not optimal, these classifications allow us to differentiate between behaviour of those who have high school, college, and university educations. Creating a separate category for high school dropouts, as well as a distinction between those who have graduated

\(^{122}\) See Appendix 1 for question wording.
university and those who are currently attending or have some university training would enable further refinement and would be optimal for future investigations of this kind.

Figure 3.2 (below) shows that 37% of the youth sample report having attended high school or less, 26% having attended some college, and 38% having some university education. This can be compared with 32% of older people who have high school or less, 24% having some college, and 44% having some university education. As less of the population attends college than university, I expected to find—and did indeed find—a non-monotonic distribution for both age cohorts. Normally, however, we should not expect a greater number of the older population to have attended university as shown in Figure 4.2 below.

**Figure 3.2: Education by Age Comparison**

![Education by Age Comparison](image)

Youth N=237   Older N= 593

Apparently, university education is slightly more overrepresented in this sample among the older cohorts. Whereas roughly 29% of the total Canadian youth population has a university education, the sample shows 38% having some university. And whereas a total of 18% of the
older cohort possesses a university education, 44% of that same cohort in the sample was said to have some university.\textsuperscript{123} Notably these data are not directly comparable with the census data since the latter measures university attainment as opposed to having some university. As with most samples, those possessing high school or less, are likely underrepresented in this sample. Weighting the data to accurately reflect education levels found in the population can control for this discrepancy, but re-weighting will not yield different results to frequencies.\textsuperscript{124} In fact, when the data are weighted accordingly, the impact on frequency results falls within the margin of error and will not affect the results of this study.

**Political Interest**

The question, “First would you say that you are very interested, fairly interested, somewhat interested or not at all interested in politics?,” will be used as an indicator of political interest. This question provides a gauge of subjective political interest that is consistent with measurements in the literature. Interest in politics is also traditionally measured through indexing interest in general along with print media, television, radio, and internet engagement as found in the Canadian election study data, providing an objective measure of interest as well. However, these questions were not included in the Fireweed data set. Therefore for the purpose of this investigation, only subjective interest will be measured.

As fairly interested and somewhat interested categories produced a non-monotonic distribution within the older cohort, these two middle categories were combined.\textsuperscript{125} Reviewing

\textsuperscript{123} See Appendix 3 for Education comparator.
\textsuperscript{124} See Appendix 4 for variable frequency comparisons.
\textsuperscript{125} Theoretically, if one is fairly interested or somewhat interested, they can also be seen as falling in the middle range between not interested and very interested. When somewhat and fairly categories in interest in politics were not combined, Youth Cramer’s V=.304 p=.000; Older Cramer’s V=.288 p=.000. When the categories were combined, Interest Youth Cramer’s V=.297 p=.000; Older Cramer’s V=.270 p=.000.
the frequency table, we find that the interest patterns in each cohort mirror one another with the youth mean at .558, and slightly below .598 for older people and this between cohort difference is statistically significant, producing a Chi square value of 10.592.126 This demonstrates that youth are on average less interested in politics than their older counterparts (see Figure 4.3). But they are not completely disinterested. Youth are actually very similar to their older counterparts with 13% of youth considering themselves as “not interested” compared to 15% of those over the age of 35. Looking more closely, we find that youth are less likely than older counterparts to be very interested, but more likely to show some interest. A full 62% of youth see themselves as having “some interest” in politics compared with 51% of their older counterparts. But fewer youth, 25%, consider themselves as being “very interested,” compared with 34% of the older generation

**Figure 3.3: Political Interest by Age Comparison**

![Political Interest Chart](chart.png)

Youth N=318  Older N= 690

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126 p=.005, df=2.
Sense of Personal Responsibility

The question, “Do you feel a sense of responsibility to improve how democracy is working in this country or is this an area that government should deal with on your behalf?,” will be used as an indicator of personal responsibility. Respondents were able to choose between personal or government options. This question is important as it reaches beyond obligation measures currently used in the Canadian National Election Survey data and moves toward an understanding of ownership or responsibility for government outcomes. In the Canadian National Election Survey, the question, “It is every citizen’s duty to vote in federal elections” and the question, “If you did not vote would you feel personally [very guilty, somewhat guilty, not guilty at all]?” are posed to gauge sense of obligation. While these questions are good measures of a sense of duty or obligation, they may also fall prey to social desirability effects. When the question is framed by a choice between taking personal responsibility and government taking responsibility, some of the desirability effect may be mitigated while still remaining a good measure of sense of responsibility.

Figure 3.4 shows that only 40% of those under the age of 35 believe it is their responsibility to contribute to bettering democracy, compared with 52% of older people. This between cohort difference is statistically significantly different, producing a Chi square value of 10.72. The majority of youth thus believe that it is the government’s responsibility to fix problems relating to democracy. This is not the case for those over the age of 35, who are more evenly split on the question.

127 See Appendix 1.
129 p=.001, df=1
Youth N= 290  Older N= 627

**Interest Representation**

Satisfaction with representation of interests is measured using the question, “[Are you satisfied with] the way your elected representatives represent your interests?” When reviewing the frequency results we find parallel distribution patterns for both young and older people. The mean for satisfaction is actually higher in the youth cohort at .513, compared with .495 for older voters, indicating that youth are slightly more likely to feel satisfied with interest representation than older people. Importantly though, only 8% of the youth population feel satisfied that their interests are represented in politics, which is identical to those over 35. A large number of both groups see themselves as “somewhat satisfied” with the way their interests are being represented, and this is larger than the number that see themselves as being “not very” or “not at all satisfied.” This finding would thus signal that some interests are being represented and would also challenge capacity scholars’ assertions that youth are less likely than older people to
be satisfied with the way that their interests are represented, as this relationship is not significant, producing a Chi square of only 1.12.\textsuperscript{130}

**Figure 3.5: Interest Representation by Age**

![Interest Representation by Age](image)

**Youth N=290  Older N = 649**

Of course, that is not say that interest representation is entirely unimportant to youth voting or that youth are satisfied with the way their interests are represented: a full 92\% report that they are other than very satisfied. Moreover, as the youth cohort has a small N (sample size), the ability to reach level of significance is decreased.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{130} p=.772, df =3. \\
\textsuperscript{131} Notably, this point can be made for most of the analysis, as the youth sample is much smaller than those over 35, thus requiring greater attention to non-significance among young people.
Symbolic Representation

As an indicator of alignment of underlying beliefs and values, symbolic representation is measured using the question, “Generally speaking, do you feel that the values of people who run for elected office tend to be identical, the same, different or opposite of your own?” This question enables an understanding of the perception or evaluation of political leaders’ ability to stand for or symbolize values that are similar to, or aligned with, the respondent’s values. This measure differs from the interest representation question as it does not evaluate action on the part of the political leader. Nor does it evaluate confidence in political institutions or democracy. Rather, it is aimed directly at a sense of values affinity between the politician and citizen. Although subjective in nature, this question is in fact useful because of its simplicity. It captures the subjective perceptions of political leaders’ values by citizens, in comparison to values held by the citizens themselves, which are the essence of symbolic representation. In other words, it measures perceptions of what leaders stand for in relation to citizens, but it is by no means perfect.\textsuperscript{132} There are limitations when single items are employed, and future study would benefit from a robust index.

It could be argued that the concept of *symbolic representation* is the same as *interest representation* as it measures some form of representative satisfaction. As discussed in the conceptualization section, there may in fact be overlap between symbolic and interest representation. This is an important concern, one that goes directly to the heart of the thesis: if interest representation and symbolic representation can be considered the same measure, then we cannot assert that they take divergent paths for each cohort. As a test of validity of their

\textsuperscript{132} Identical and the same categories were combined, as theoretically there is no compelling difference between these categories. Different and opposite categories were not combined as this is an important, if not critical, theoretical distinction. It is safe to assume that there is a meaningful difference between different and opposite responses which would be otherwise lost.
independence, however, this relationship is not strong enough to suggest multicollinearity.\textsuperscript{133} When tested, I found a certain correlation between interest representation and symbolic representation. But with .21 for youth and .17 for those over the age of 35, the two cannot be regarded as measuring the same underlying concept.\textsuperscript{134} In sum, the relationship between interest representation and symbolic representation is significant, but insufficient to suggest multicollinearity.

A similar charge could be made to the effect that symbolic representation is merely a measure of valence regarding perceptions of the \textit{character of politicians}. Or simply put, symbolic representation is just another measure of political character. However, when symbolic representation is placed alongside measures of character such as competency, honesty, and principle, here too, a relationship is present, but the strength of this relationship is modest and indicates some covariance,\textsuperscript{135} but no multicollinearity. As a consequence, the symbolic representation measure is found to be relatively independent of other variables.

Turning to the results below (see Figure 3.6), we see inconsistent differences between youth and older respondents that do not fully accord with theoretical expectations. To be sure, young people are more likely than older respondents to say their values are opposite to those of people running for elected office. But the difference in comparing the left most columns for younger and older respondent, at less than 6 percentage points, is relatively modest (19.7 vs 14.1%).
So at first blush the anticipated difference in the responses of younger and older people to the symbolic representation question does not seem very substantial. Moreover, comparing the centre columns for younger and older people in Figure 3.6, it appears that older people are more likely than the younger to see their values as different from those held by office seekers. This too is quite unexpected. The discrepancy at about 9 percent points (38.0 vs 47.2%) is again not substantial, but the direction of difference is not what one would expect given the emphasis in the literature placed upon generational value change. Moreover, looking at the right hand columns, youth appear slightly more likely than their older counterparts to see themselves as having the same values as politicians. This too is surprising. But the percentages of younger and older people who say their values are the same as those of candidates for public office are actually very similar, differing by less than 4 percentage points (42.5 vs 38.7%).
Overall, the results in Figure 3.6, suggest relatively small and inconsistent differences. Nevertheless, they combine to produce statistical significance with the unweighted data set. Using weighted data, however, the differences shrink to insignificance not only in statistical terms but also practically (see appendix 4). We should therefore perhaps conclude only that the two cohorts do not differ as expected.

**Summary: Between Group Chi Square Comparison**

Are older voters different with respect to education than younger voters? Do young people actually feel less responsible? Are they less interested? Are they more or less satisfied with the way their interests are represented? Do younger voters feel their values are actually different? And if so, is this difference significant? Beyond reviewing univariate distributions, I was able to differentiate between groups through the use of Chi square testing. Chi square uses cell counts to determine if the probability of between group differences is beyond chance.

**Table 3.1: Chi Square Age Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>CHI SQUARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td><strong>10.57</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td><strong>10.72</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Representation</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Representation</td>
<td><em>8.42</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p<.05    ** = p<.005
Reviewing the Chi square results in Table 4.1, I note that although there are modest differences in distribution patterns, between group differences are not found in education, nor are they found in interest representation. And caution should be taken in considering the between cohort difference in symbolic behavior. However, I find that youth differ from their older counterparts in two respects: political interest, and sense of responsibility. In short, there are in fact two real between group differences.

Conclusion

Reviewing the data, I find that hypothesis H1a and H2a do not hold. Youth are only modestly more likely than older people to identify their values as being opposite to the values reflected by political leaders. But youth are also just as likely to see their values as the same as their older counterparts, and those over 35 are more likely to view their values as different. Similarly youth are not less likely to feel satisfied with interest representation when compared to their older counterparts. In order to better understand real differences between each group’s predictive capacities in voting motivation, we turn next to crosstabulation.
Chapter 4: Generational Differences in Voter Motivation
The Role of Crosstabulation

Youth are more likely to diverge from their older counterparts, with respect to interest in politics and sense of responsibility. And the differences on symbolic representation are inconsistent. To say as much tells us nothing about whether these variables influence the motivation to vote or not vote. In order to understand whether these factors can predict voter turnout, we need to evaluate them in relation to voting. Through crosstabulating each independent variable (symbolic representation, interest in politics, etc.) with the dependant variable (voting), we can understand something of the independent variable’s predictive power in explaining voting. Crosstabulation can also help us understand how other known variables influence voting as well, beginning with education.

Education and Voting

The story further unfolds with crosstabulating the relationship between education and voting to assess impact, strength of relationship, and significance. Crosstabulation provides a preliminary glimpse of the differing effects that independent variables produce in terms of the voter turnout.

Perhaps not surprisingly in the case of education, there is a weak, but significant relationship in the sample, with a Cramer’s V of .175. This finding confirms that education does matter in relation to voter turnout: those with high school education or less do not vote at the same rate as those with a college education, and the college education population is also less likely to vote than those who received a university education. But the weakness in this relationship also suggests that there something else is going on here, as the relationship is more modest than the literature would lead us to expect. This is particularly the case with respect to
youth voting where the literature shows that those with a high school education or less are virtually tuned out and are responsible for the largest proportion of voter decline (see Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1: Percentage Decrease in Voting 1990 to 2000**

![Figure 4.1: Percentage Decrease in Voting 1990 to 2000](image)

We also know that this decline is almost exclusively felt in the youth cohort. Therefore investigations among the population as a whole may mask the importance of education on the youth cohort more specifically. Or, simply put, as young people are less likely to vote and because it has been previously found that education plays a role in non-voting, we should expect to see greater predictive power of education among younger voters as compared with older voters (where the relationship should be more modest).

When controlling for age, a distinct pattern emerges: the relationship between education and voting is strengthened in the youth cohort, producing a Cramer’s V of .354 (see Table 4.1).

---

This relationship is not only strong, but also significant with only 67% of those with a high school education reporting voting, 81% of those with a college education, and a full 97% of those having attained a university education.

Table 4.1: Crosstabulation of Vote by Education, Controlled for Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YOUTH N=167</th>
<th>OLDER N=437</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Vote</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cramer’s V =.354  Cramer’s V=.081
Chi Square= 20.9 df=2 p =.000  Chi Square=2.86 df=2 p=.239

Notably, there is a 30% difference in voter turnout between high school and university educated young people. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) confirms that the differences between high school and university, and between college and university, were both significantly different. Only 3% of youth with a university education reported staying home on election night compared with 19% of college-educated individuals, and 33% of those with high school educations.137

This can be compared with those over the age of 35, where education is not of great import in predicting voting, producing a Cramer’s V of .081—which can only be considered a weak correlation. Possessing an education greater than high school only produced a 5% change in voting in those over the age of 35, and thus no practical difference in the effects of a college or university education.

137 There is no significant difference between a high school and college education with respect to voter turnout in this sample.
university education was observed. A scant 7% of the university educated did not vote, compared to 8% of those with a college education, and 12% of those with a high school education.

Taken together, these findings suggest that differing levels of education do matter with respect to voting among young people, but that for those over the age of 35, education does not play a central role in predicting voter turnout. The greatest difference in the youth cohort is found in those with a university education, who are more likely to vote than those with a college education or those with a high school education.

Interest in Politics

A different pattern emerges when we turn to interest in politics, where youth do not differ from their older counterparts with respect to the impact of political interest on voter turnout. Instead, there is remarkable similarity across groups. When interest in politics is entered into crosstabs, a moderately strong significant relationship emerges in older and younger people alike, with Cramers V of .297 and .270 respectively (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Crosstabulation of Vote by Interest, Controlled for Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YOUTH N=223</th>
<th></th>
<th>OLDER N=493</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Very Interested</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Vote</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cramer’s V = .297  Cramer’s V = .270
Chi Square = 19.6  df=2  p = .000  Chi Square = 36.00  df=2  p = .000
The overall pattern found in both groups confirms the literature’s assertion that those who are interested in politics are much more likely to vote and that this variable is undoubtedly important in voting. Virtually all youth report voting if they are “very interested,” but the number of those who reported voting drops to 63% for those who are “not at all interested.” The same pattern is evident in those over the age of 35, where 98% report voting if they are “very interested,” and only 74% report having voted among those who are “not at all interested.” However, this between group difference is not quite the whole story.

When analysis of variance tests is conducted, we discover that the significant differences among youth are limited to those who are “very interested” on the one hand, and to those “somewhat interested” and “not at all interested” on the other hand.138 There is no significant difference between those who are “somewhat interested” and “not at all interested” for the youth cohort.139 For those over the age of 35, there are significant differences among all three groups, indicating that each incremental increase in interest affects voting motivation.140 Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that interest plays a role in the age difference observed in voter turnout rates each election day.

**Personal Responsibility as Stronger Predictor for Youth**

Turning to the responsibility variable, an age difference reemerges. It is clear that not only are youth less likely to feel a sense of personal responsibility, but youth also vote less than older voters if they do not feel a sense of responsibility. The responsibility variable is strongly correlated with voting behaviour in youth, producing a Phi of .325 that easily reaches

---

138 The significance level for those not and very interested .006, somewhat and very interested .026.
139 Again, we must be careful with non-significance in the youth cohort, as this may be as a result of the sample size limitations. More specifically, the small N.
140 There are significance differences among all three groups.
significance. A staggering 97% of youth who feel a sense of personal responsibility for improving democracy also report that they vote, compared with only 71% of youth who feel that it is the government’s responsibility to fix democratic problems. The strength of this relationship is not maintained in the older cohort, where a modest albeit significant relationship emerges (Phi .104).

Table 4.3: Crosstabulation of Vote by Perceived Responsibility, Controlled by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YOUTH N=201</th>
<th>OLDER N=448</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Vote</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>129</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phi=.325  p=.000                       Phi=.104  p= .027
Chi Square= 21.6  df=1            Chi Square= 4.88 df= 1

Much like younger voters, 94% of the older cohort votes if they feel a sense of responsibility, but this drops to 88% of older voters when it is seen as the government’s responsibility. Having a sense of personal responsibility is thus of note for both groups, but it appears to be of greater import to young people. There is an obvious between group difference, which is twofold. First, as reported earlier youth are more likely to lack a sense of ownership or responsibility toward democracy. Second, the lack of ownership, when felt, is also more likely to reduce voting motivation in the youth cohort. In sum, youth vote less if they do not feel responsible for bettering democracy.
Interest Representation as Insignificant for Young People

For youth, the relationship between voting and satisfaction with having interests represented is insignificant and modest, producing a Cramer’s V of .158. In comparison, a slightly stronger and significant relationship (Cramer’s V of .174) holds for those over the age of 35 (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Crosstabulation of Vote by Interest Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YOUTH N= 207</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>OLDER N=466</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Not Very</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Not Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Vote</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cramers V =.158  Cramers V=.174
Chi Square= 5.19  df=3 p =.159  Chi Square=14.1  df=3 p=.003

The pattern produced by interest representation among youth can perhaps be better described as higgledy-piggledy, or non-monotonic. The pattern goes up from 12% of those “not at all satisfied” having not voted to 26% of those “not very satisfied,” and down to 13% of those “somewhat satisfied” and back up to 24% of those who were “satisfied” having not voted. Moreover, analysis of variance reveals that there is no significant difference in mean scores for youth (F=1.739, p=.160). This result is different for older people, where 19% of those “not at all satisfied” did not vote, compared to 10% who were “not very satisfied,” with 5% and 3% of those who were “somewhat” and “satisfied” reporting having not voted. The mean scores are all significantly different for those over the age of 35 (F=4.79, p=.003), but these are inconsistent across groups. Older people who were “not at all satisfied” with how their interests were
represented voted less than those who felt that they were “somewhat satisfied” or “satisfied,” and the differences between mean scores were significant in this case. This finding suggests that a sense that their interests are being represented is a motivating factor for voting for those over the age of 35. However, this is not the case for youth, which confirms this thesis’s prediction.

Symbolic Representation as Statistically Significant for Youth Only

In terms of symbolic representation, there is a moderately strong, significant relationship in youth, (Cramer’s V=.345) and a very weak relationship (Cramer’s V=.087), which is not significant, in those over 35 years of age. Youth are much less likely to vote if they perceive their values to be “different” or “opposite” to those held by political leaders. However, having values reflected by political actors does not affect those over the age of 35 as strongly, and the relationship does not differ beyond chance (see Table 4.5). Perceived value difference and opposition are significantly more likely to result in non-voting behaviour in young people than in older voters, where the relationship is not only weak, but insignificant.

Table 4.5: Crosstabulation of Vote by Symbolic Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YOUTH N=212</th>
<th></th>
<th>OLDER N=450</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opposite</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Vote</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cramer’s V=.345  Cramer’s V=.087
Chi Square=25.2 df=2 p=.000  Chi Square=3.41 df=2 p=.181

77
When symbolic representation and voting are crosstabulated, results show that 45% of the youth sample did not vote when they felt that their values were “opposite” to those espoused by political leaders, and 23% did not vote if they felt their values were “different” from the political class. However, only 7% of youth who felt that their values were the “same” as those held by political leaders chose not to vote, and these differences are significant ($F=14.1$, $p=.000$). The Tukey HSD test indicates significant differences among all three groups. These differences do not occur in the older population, where the relationship is modest, mildly non-monotonic, but insignificant. Only 13% of those over the age of 35 chose not to vote when they felt that their values were “opposite” to political leaders’ espoused values, and this did not change significantly when they felt their values were “different” from politicians or the “same” as those held by the political class. Differences in perceived symbolic representation thus matter more for youth in terms of voting behaviour than they do for older people.

**Crosstabulation Summary**

In sum, much has been learned from the crosstabulation exercise. Crosstabulation allows us to see how individual variables affect voting, and in turn how these effects may vary between older and younger cohorts. Crosstabulation has confirmed that the variables found in the literature—such as education, interest, and a sense of personal responsibility—affect voting, but not in the same way for each cohort (see Table 4.6). What is significant in predicting voter turnout in the younger cohort is not always significant for those over the age of 35.

Youth who have higher levels of education—university in particular—are more likely to vote. So too are youth who are interested in politics, who possess a sense of personal responsibility, and who feel that their values are aligned with the values held by political actors
or are satisfied with what the political class stands for. Satisfaction with interest representation does not motivate youth voting. It does, however, influence voting for those over the age of 35, as does interest in politics, and a sense of personal responsibility.

Table 4.6: Crosstabulation Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>YOUNGER</th>
<th>OLDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.354**</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.292**</td>
<td>.270**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>.325**</td>
<td>.104**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Representation</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.174**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Representation</td>
<td>.345**</td>
<td>.082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p=<.005

Yet, for those over the age of 35, the relationship between voting and possessing a higher level of education and feeling that political leaders reflect their values are both much weaker and insignificant. It can thus be said that generational differences in voter motivation are at play. What is important for youth voting motivation is not necessarily important for those over the age of 35, and this could in part explain why youth are voting in fewer numbers than older people. Crosstabulation tells us much, but it does not help explain how these variables work when controlling for other variables. To accomplish that task, we now turn to logistic regression.
Understanding Logit Regression

The technique of logistic regression allows us to assess the influence of each variable while controlling for the other variables in the model, thereby helping us see how the variables work together in order to evaluate the effect and overall fit of the model. Unlike crosstabulation, here the effect of individual variables can be compared, and the combined influence of the model on voting can be measured. Logit regression also allows us to measure the relative influence of each variable in the model, and in this case the increased likelihood of voting produced by each of the variables.

Logistic or logit regression is employed when the dependent variable is dichotomous (e.g. win/lose, yes/no, etc.), and does not assume linearity as in ordinary least squares regression. With logit we are also able to calculate an odds ratio for each independent variable. Model strength and fit are gauged through a range of measures or tests, including the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test, the Cox and Snell R Square, the Nagelkerke R square, as well as the Chi square. The Hosmer-Lemeshow measurement indicates goodness of fit, with poor fit producing a significance value of less than .05. A value of greater than .05 is therefore optimal. The Cox and Snell R square and the Nagelkerke R square indicate the amount of variance explained by the model. However, this output is not directly comparable to (true) R square produced in ordinary least square (OLS) regression and is instead termed a pseudo R square. Logit also produces probability scores or B values that are positive or negative, demonstrating directionality. But once again, they are not directly comparable to those produced in OLS. Instead, expected (B) values determine the odds of one outcome category when the value of the predictor increases by one.\[^{141}\] All of the above measures will be reported for both youth and older voters respectively.

\[^{141}\] Confidence intervals (CI) are also reported for the Expected (B) values, indicating lower and upper value range with 95% confidence.
The Motivational Psychology of Young People

Turning our attention to the model for the youth cohort in logit, the findings suggest that the fit is acceptable, with a non-significant Hosmer and Lemeshow of 6.138. The model also produces a respectable Cox & Snell pseudo R square of .258, and a Nagelkerke of .445. The data show that the level of education, political interest, responsibility, and symbolic representation are all moderately strong relationships and are thus significant predictors of voting for youth in the model. These relationships are all positive, indicating that the likelihood of voting increases as the level of education, political interest, sense of responsibility, and symbolic representation increase. A sense of responsibility produces the strongest relationship, followed by symbolic representation, level of education, and political interest which also produces similarly strong results. However, as witnessed in crosstabs, interest representation is not a significant predictor of voting among the younger cohort.

Of note is that the responsibility variable produces an unusually high standard error, as does political interest and symbolic representation. This is somewhat expected, as standard errors tend to be inflated in logit when the coefficient is large. Nevertheless, the same regression exercise was executed in OLS, where tolerance and VIF scores were reviewed in order to check for possible problems with multicollinearity. There were none.

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143 As there are is no measure of collinearity available, Menard suggests that OLS regression be employed. For further discussion see Scott Menard, Logistic Regression: From Introductory to Advanced Concepts and Applications, (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publishing, 2009), 126-129.
144 Tolerance scores showed no sign of multicollinearity ranging from .902 to .983, and VIF scores followed suit ranging from 1.018 to 1.108.
Table 4.7: Logistic Regression of Decision to Vote for Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Young N=147</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B  SE   Exp (B) Confidence Intervals Exp(B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.282** 0.375  3.604  1.516 – 6.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>1.157* 0.585  3.910  1.363 – 6.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>2.193* 0.863  8.959  1.353 – 41.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests Represented</td>
<td>0.187 0.398  1.205  0.127 – 20.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Representation</td>
<td>1.316** 0.421  3.729  1.585-8.589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.98** 1.34  .018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hosmer and Lemeshow - 6.138, Cox & Snell - .258, Nagelkerke - .445, Chi Square – 43.87*** df=5, % correct – 84.4

What is crucial in understanding the effect of these variables is the change in expected odds or (B), and these reveal themselves most clearly to us when converted into percentage increases in odds or likelihood. Youth are 78% more likely to vote if they are highly educated; 79% more likely to vote if they feel a sense of values correspondence with political actors (symbolic representation); 80% more likely to vote if they are interested in politics; and 90% more likely to vote if they feel a personal sense of responsibility toward helping improve democracy. These are not modest effects, and the pattern is unmistakable. Personal attributes such as level of education, interest and a sense of responsibility matter in voting turnout for youth, and so too does their perception of symbolic representation. However, this pattern is by no means the same for those over the age of 35.

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145 This conversion is produced through the use of the formula: $Y=\text{odds}/1=\text{odds}$.  

The Motivational Psychology of Older People

Reviewing the model for older voters, the findings suggest that the Hosmer and Lemeshow of 21.93 is not significant. Thus the model does not fit with the data. Unlike youth, these variables do not provide a good explanation for non-voting in those over the age of 35. Instead this model explains very little variance with the Cox & Snell at .124, and the Nagelkerke of .272. Level of education and sense of symbolic representation produce very weak relationships, both of which are not beyond chance (B=.183, and .219 respectively). Political interest, responsibility, and interest representation variables remain significant, resulting in moderate and modest outcomes. Interest in politics produces the strongest relationship with a B of 1.705, followed by sense of responsibility (B= 1.31). Interest representation is, however, much weaker (B=.816). As with the youth cohort, we find that the standard errors produced when measuring the adult cohort are large, although less so. Through the review of tolerance and VIF statistics produced in OLS, we find that multicollinearity can also be ruled out for the older cohort. ¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Tolerance scores showed no sign of multicollinearity ranging from .954 to .981, and VIF scores followed suit ranging from 1.019 to 1.059.
Table 4.8: Logistic Regression of Decision to Vote for Respondents Over the Age of 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Over the Age of 35 N=353</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>1.705***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>1.310*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests Represented</td>
<td>0.816**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Representation</td>
<td>0.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.535</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Older Cox and Snell - .124, Nagelkerke - .272, Chi Square – 46.7*** df=5, % correct – 90.9, Hosmer and Lemeshow – 21.93**

Group Comparison: Demographic Change and Sensitivity

What cannot be ruled out in these findings are the between group differences, which are quite distinct from one another when the increase in odds or likelihood percentages is examined. These are the percentage increase in voting that are attributable to any given variable, or more simply, the increase in odds of voting if one is educated, interested in politics, has a sense of responsibility, feels one’s interests are represented, or is satisfied with symbolic representation.

In those over the age of 35, interest in politics makes voters 85% more likely to vote; a sense of personal responsibility increases the likelihood of voting by 79%; and satisfaction with the way in which interests are being represented increases the odds of voting by 69%. Level of education and a sense of contentment with symbolic representation are not statistically significant and therefore do not affect the odds of voting for those over the age of 35.
In Table 4.9 (see below), youth and those over the age of 35 are both shown to have similar increases in odds with respect to political interest and responsibility variables. Youth are 80% more likely to vote if they are interested in politics, whereas older voters are 85% more likely to vote. In addition, youth are 90% more likely to vote if they feel a sense of responsibility, compared to those over the age of 35 who are roughly 80% more likely to vote. However, the similarity ends there.

Table 4.9: Percentage Increase in Likelihood of Voting for Youth Compared to those Over the Age of 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Over the Age of 35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Representation</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Representation</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The youth and over the age of 35 groups are not motivated and affected by the same variables in the same way or to the same degree. Odds of voting increase dramatically for youth with higher levels of education (78%), as is the case for youth who view their values as being aligned with those of political leaders (79%). However, these same variables do not increase the odds of voting for those over the age of 35. Conversely, older voters are 69% more likely to vote if they feel that their interests are being represented, but this increase in likelihood does not occur beyond chance for youth.
Conclusion

As the analysis progresses, the between group variances occur in some cases at the univariate level and in others at the bivariate level, the latter being maintained at the multivariate level. Moving forward in the analysis, some relationships do not materialize as expected, and little between group differences are found. Other relationships seem to be compounded, however, and some between group differences not as evident in univariate analysis are now seen to emerge. In the case of interest in politics, or personal responsibility, univariate differences are clearly present: youth are less interested and less likely to have a sense of responsibility than their older counterparts. This is not consistent across variables—or between cohorts—as some variables matter more to voting turnout than others.

In both cohorts, we find a lack of interest in politics that is in sync or parallel and has a similar impact on voting, although youth are slightly less likely to be interested in the first place. Likewise, both groups show a marked decline in odds of voting if a sense of personal responsibility is not felt, and youth are much less likely to feel this sense of responsibility. Therefore attitudinal differences between these two cohorts are likely to explain some of the decline in voting. However, the differences between voting and non-voting are not strictly due to differences found at the univariate level, or group differences in perception. These differences also emerge at the bivariate level and remain at the multivariate level.

As shown in Table 4.9, between group differences in attitudes, which account for variances in voting motivation, are in fact present, but differences in variable effects with respect to voting are also present. Older people are just as likely to be on the lower end of the education spectrum as younger people, but their voting behaviour is not affected by educational attainment, whereas education levels do matter to youth voting motivation. Similarly, older people and
younger people are not far apart in their perceptions of values alignment or symbolic representation. However, values alignment matters when it comes to voting for youth, but it does not for those over the age of 35. Youth are significantly less likely to vote if they perceive their values as being opposed to or different than those of political leaders. They are thus pushed away or de-motivated as a consequence of seeing disharmony in values. Yet this pattern of differences in motivations reverses itself with respect to interest representation. Here there is also little between group attitudinal difference; however, effects on voting are dramatically different in the two groups. On the one hand, those over the age of 35 are only slightly more likely than their younger counterparts to feel that their interests are being represented in the political discourse. But they are also significantly less likely to vote if they feel their interests are not being properly represented. On the other hand, youth are only somewhat less likely to feel that their interests are being properly represented, but this does not seem to affect whether they vote or not. Education, symbolic representation, and interest representation produce differences in voting between the two groups, which highlights that differences in evaluation of the electoral context matter.

Contentment with symbolic representation is more important for youth. The output from logit regression provides strong evidence in support of this thesis. However, logit regression does not allow us to consider the indirect effects among variables, nor does it readily allow us to test for significant differences between the two cohorts with the inclusion of indirect relationships. As a result of this limitation, the full picture is not yet clear. What is now required is an understanding of how these variables relate to one another and of whether these two groups are in fact statistically significantly different with respect to symbolic representation. For that, an examination of the potential for indirect relationships within the model will be taken up.
Chapter 5: Unpacking Indirect Relationships
The Question of Indirect Influences

Any given variable that has a direct influence on the dependent variable may also affect the outcome indirectly as well—sometimes serving to increase its influence and sometimes having a moderating or dampening effect. In order to fully grasp the meaning of the outcomes, an understanding of how these variables not only affect the dependent variable but also affect one another’s outcomes is required. Techniques for looking at indirect effects using logistic regression are not as well developed as those using SEM. So despite violating assumptions regarding the level of measurement, the use of SEM offers considerable insight into possible indirect effects not readily available with logistical regression analysis. Nevertheless, the SEM results presented here, even though they closely mirror those obtained with logistic analysis, are considered preliminary pending the broader availability of similar techniques with logistic modeling.

The SEM technique not only allows us to investigate the effects of indirect relationships, it also permits us to directly compare each parameter within the youth cohort with the corresponding one for older voters to determine if the divergent cohort patterns are in fact significantly different. Where similarities between the two groups are expected (as young people share characteristics with the older generation to some respect) these similarities cannot explain differences in outcome at the ballot box. Voter turnout has been relatively stable for those over the age of 35, but it has plummeted in those less than 35. To explain that drop, we thus seek between group variance. At a minimum, building any causal case requires variance between older and younger voters, and the difference must be beyond chance.

We will begin the analysis using standardized B coefficients which will allow us to understand the direct and indirect effects within each cohort model. However, these two groups
cannot be directly compared using standardized B, nor can we make assertions regarding significant differences between the groups. In order to directly compare and test for significance, we must constrain the unstandardized b coefficients parameters and review the resulting change in Chi square value (to follow in chapter 6).

**Building a Case for Causation**

When developing a model that contains either direct or indirect connections, in some instances, it is safe to assume directionality, and in others, it is not. For instance, when one event precedes another (assuming spuriousness is ruled out), it is reasonable to attribute cause to the event that came first. A classic example is that of an economic recession being causally linked (at least in part) to subsequent election results. In contrast, election results could not have caused the economic downturn, which occurred prior to the election.\(^{147}\) Following that logic, it is relatively safe to assume, for example, that educational attainment is not caused by choice to vote. Instead, we can be confident that in this case the education is an exogenous variable in the model.

However, the education variable’s exogenous nature does not mean that it works in a purely independent manner, influencing only voting motivation. In fact, as mentioned previously, Verba and Nie assert that education levels not only influence voting behaviour but also influence a range of variables, including interest in politics and a sense of responsibility to participate in political affairs.\(^{148}\) And in turn these variables then lead to a greater propensity to vote. By extension, those with higher levels of education may be more likely to possess a sense of shared values with political actors as they are more likely part of the same elite social network. However, the link between education and interest representation is not reported


anywhere in the literature; therefore, it is not expected that this relationship between these two variables will emerge.\textsuperscript{149}

One expectation, however, is that symbolic representation and interest representation will be shown to be related. More specifically, it is anticipated that increases in symbolic representation are to some degree related to increases in the likelihood of satisfaction with interest representation. Simply put, when people feel that leaders stand for what they believe in, they are also more likely to be satisfied with the way their interests are being represented. The reverse could also be possible—that when people feel that their interests are being represented, they are also more likely to feel that their values are being represented. The causal arrow could in principle go both ways. However, it is less plausible to infer a covariant relationship here. Assuming that standing decisions—such as positions on equality or fairness for example—underpin or provide the basis for evaluations of context it is unlikely that satisfaction with interest representation leads to a sense of values alignment.\textsuperscript{150}

Therefore the model will be constructed to assume a directionality moving from education to symbolic representation, and symbolic representation to interest representation (see Figure 5.1 for example below). This model will then be tested accordingly using structural equation modeling.

\textsuperscript{149} This relationship was tested and no relationship was present.
The Structural Equation Approach

Structural equation modeling (SEM) allows us to view regression relations, while at the same time testing for indirect pathways and the significance of relationships between variables that may ultimately affect voter turnout. For example, through SEM the relationship between education and political interest as well as their combined effect on voting can be explored. This is not unlike the Verba and Nie work previously discussed regarding intervening variables between education and participation (see page 28). SEM is crucial to the work of this thesis given that several variables in the model are expected to influence one another, and these indirect relationships require scrutiny in order to fully understand generational differences in voting.
The SEM technique allows for measuring the goodness of fit (Chi square, RMSEA, and CFI)\(^{151}\) and amount of explained variance (R\(^2\)). Goodness of fit measurement is important as it enables us to see how closely the model reflects reality as represented by the data set as a whole. And it is of particular import in gaining insight into indirect relationships, or the relationships between endogenous variables. However, overall fit measures show us whether the model can reproduce the observed correlations or covariances, but they do not tell us if substantial portions of the variance of the endogenous variables are explained. The first step here is to review the model fit for all respondents, grouping youth and older cohorts together. This will show how the model fits the data for all respondents—both young and old, and is referred to as a grouped model fit. The second step is to review, the standardized B results of the model for the younger cohort derived from a two group model constraining the model for both younger and older cohorts to represent the same connections. This will be assessed in order to understand how the individual variables influence voting in young people. This will be followed by a review of the older cohort outcomes from the two group model. Standardized B results are reported because they allow for an understanding of the relative effect of dependent variables on voting within the cohorts, painting a picture of each cohort’s unique voting psychology, or more specifically, how the variables affect voting motivation within each cohort. As previously mentioned, unstandardized coefficients will be considered in the next chapter examining the differences among the two groups, as standardized B disallow such comparison.

\(^{151}\) Chi square, RMSEA and CFI measures illustrate the goodness of fit for the model and allow comparison between different models. Chi square produces measurement of fit relative to the degrees of freedom within model, with lower scores indicating a better fit. RMSEA (or root mean square error of approximation) measures are used to judge goodness of fit, and are considered to reflect a good fit at less than .05, and should be rejected if in excess of .10. RMSEA measures are accompanied by upper and lower bound range at 90% confidence, as well as p-values. Finally, CFI measures goodness of fit as well, with measures of greater than .95 being acceptable. For further discussion of fit see, Niels J. Blunch, Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing 2008), 110-119.
The Model Fit for All Respondents

Measuring the fit of the model for all respondents allows us to appreciate how the model fits the data for older and younger populations combined; this is important as it tells us if the model is good for explaining voting in general. In this grouped model, there are 10 degrees of freedom and a Chi square at 14.140 producing a $p=.225$, and a CFI of .984. This suggests a good fit of the model with the data. The RMSEA score is .017, with a lower bound of .000 and a higher bound of .041, easily falling below the .05 threshold. In SEM, it is desirable for the model to be non-significant as this demonstrates that there is not a statistically significant difference between the data and the model. This suggests that there is a good fit between the data for all respondents (young and old combined) and the model, which includes education, political interest, sense of responsibility, interest representation, and symbolic representation variables with respect to voting. Therefore this model is fit for further analysis. However, measures of fit do not tell us how the variables in the model affect voting among young people. Nor does this tell us much about possible indirect relationships within each cohort. Each will be reviewed in turn, beginning with young people.

The Model Effects for the Youth Cohort

There are four variables that can be considered as having a strong direct influence on voter turnout in young people. As with previous crosstabulation and regression results, the data show that education ($B=.30$), political interest ($B=.24$), personal responsibility ($B=.24$), and symbolic representation ($B=.31$) variables produce moderately strong, significant direct relationships to voting among young people. And as noted previously, for youth there is no significant relationship between interest representation and voting ($B=.07$).
In terms of youth voting and its indirect relationships, there is, perhaps not surprisingly, a significant connection between personal responsibility and political interest (B=.22). As long established in the literature, youth who have a sense of responsibility are more likely to be interested in politics. Similarly (although not currently established in the literature) there is also a relationship between symbolic representation and interest representation (B=.21), and the analysis shows that this relationship is beyond what one would expect due to chance. This supports the assertion that young people who perceive their values as being aligned with those of...
political leaders are also more likely to feel satisfied by the way their interests are being represented politically. Perceived alignment in values or symbolic representation influences evaluations of interest representation, but the relationship is not strong enough to raise concerns of multicollinearity. Consistent with earlier findings, there is no significant relationship between interest representation and voting here. It can thus be said that interest representation has no effect beyond that expected by chance on voting motivation in youth.

There is also no statistically significant relationship between level of education and satisfaction with symbolic representation. Youth who possess a higher level of education are not more likely to feel satisfied with the way their values are reflected by political leaders when compared with their less educated counterparts. This is somewhat surprising as it challenges the connection between education and values that is well established in the post-materialist literature. Instead, symbolic representation effectively emerges as an exogenous variable in the youth model. Education is thus not a driving force among young people for the perceived alignment of values with those of political leaders; symbolic representation can thus be said to work independently.

Equally surprisingly is that in the youth cohort there is no statistically significant relationship between educational attainment and interest in politics. Nor is there a relationship between education and a sense of personal responsibility. Rather, in the youth cohort, education only has a direct effect—and thus no indirect effect—on voting via other variables. This finding challenges Verba and Nie’s previous assertion that education (as a component of socioeconomic status) is the underpinning that leads to political interest (as part of civic orientations), which in turn affect participation. The finding shows how Verba and Nie’s model may not generalize to youth. The indirect connections found by Verba and Nie appear non-existent within this sample
of young people when controlling for this set of variables. Education has no significant effect on the other variables in the model and is thus only seen to affect voting.

Likewise when indirect effects are included in the model there is a modest shift from the previous logistic results in the relative importance of only two of the variables. Symbolic representation increases in strength to become the strongest direct predictor of voting in the model, and personal responsibility becomes a somewhat weaker predictor. This is likely a consequence of the (insignificant) indirect relationship that connects education with symbolic representation. The increase in total effect resulting from indirect relationships is minimal for the model with education (B= .037), symbolic representation (B=.014) and responsibility (B=.062) all producing very weak or negligible incremental effects. Overall, when the variables are on their own, they produce strong direct effects with little diffusion. Education may be weakly associated with other variables in the model such as symbolic representation, sense of personal responsibility, and political interest for the youth cohort, but increased levels of education undoubtedly play a direct role in youth voting.

Some of the previous connections between variables as found in the literature do not appear to hold for young voters, and there is no significant effect on voting produced by indirect relations.\textsuperscript{152} However the Verba and Nie study, for instance, did not stratify the samples by age, nor did it focus on voting alone but included other forms of participation that might have mitigated the results. Additionally, their research did not delineate between differing forms of socioeconomic status and their effects on responsibility, political interest predispositions, and values or standing decisions. Education was only one aspect of SES in the Verba and Nie study, and four variables (political interest, efficacy, information about politics, and a sense of

\textsuperscript{152} Once again this result may have been caused by the relatively small sample of young people, which make reaching level of significance more difficult, but the size of the coefficients are all relatively small.
obligation) were combined to produce a single “interest and civic orientations” factor as well (see page 22 of this thesis). Perhaps this combination obscured a more focused understanding of the role of education on voting, one that only emerges when separated from other variables.

Furthermore, as the underlying socialization theory forwarded by Verba et al. asserts that socioeconomic status fosters democratic norms and values and creates social networks, it is understandable that these connections would not be instantaneous. As a proxy for socioeconomic status, the expected increases in social stature and networking benefits are likely to form over time. Therefore, the expectation of finding such connections in young people who may be presently in school or have only recently graduated may be somewhat misguided. In fact, a non-finding in the youth cohort is in many ways aligned with socialization theory, which is itself a process-oriented concept. If the theory is correct, however, these indirect relationships should thus be seen to emerge in older voters.

The Model Effects for the Older Cohort

As noted in the structural equation model for older respondents analysis, the model produces an R square of .10, explaining only roughly 10% of the variance in voting among those over the age of 35. This would suggest that the model is not particularly effective at explaining voter turnout in the older cohort. As with crosstabulation and regression, the only significant predictors of voting found among those over the age of 35 are political interest (B=.23) and satisfaction with the way interests are being represented (B=.16). The strength of the direct relationships does not change when compared with previous crosstabulation or regression results. Interest in politics thus remains strong in predicting turnout. Satisfaction with interest representation becomes slightly weaker, but it remains significant. Education, sense of personal responsibility, and
symbolic representation do not have significant direct effects on voting for those over the age of 35.

**Figure 5.3: Direct and Indirect Pathway Grouped Model: Over the Age of 35 Effects only**

As seen in Figure 5.3, the model for the older cohort reveals that a host of other significant relationships are at play. Having a sense of personal responsibility produces a statistically significant though relatively modest increase in political interest (B=.18) in older people. Symbolic representation has a similarly modest relationship to interest representation (B=.17), underlining once again that perceptions of values or symbolic representation lead to a sense of satisfaction with interest representation, with no indication of problems with
multicollinearity. In those over the age of 35, there is also a weak, but significant relationship between education and symbolic representation (B=.09), and a moderate relationship between education and political interest (B=.16), which is evidence of some form of socialization effect. However, there is no evidence of a relationship between education and personal responsibility in the older cohort. A sense of personal responsibility is thus effectively exogenous in the model for older people.

Furthermore, for those over the age of 35, there are indirect effects of education on voting are indirect, via increases in interest in politics and symbolic representation and interest representation. While symbolic representation produces no significant direct increase in voter turnout for those over the age of 35, but it does have a significant effect on satisfaction with interest representation, which in turn increases voting motivation. When the direct effects of education and satisfaction with symbolic representation disappear in older voters, the direct effect of satisfaction with interest representation emerges.

Two Psychology of Voting Motivation

Two distinct psychologies of voting motivation emerge in the cohort differences separating youth and those over the age of 35. These differences occur most sharply when the total effects of each variable are reviewed. Whereas education, interest, responsibility, and symbolic representation produce strong total effects for the youth cohort, in those over the age of 35, substantial total effects are limited to political interest and interest representation (see Table 5.1 below). But as these measures are standardized, the coefficients for the two age groups cannot be compared directly, one cannot assess whether these differences between the two groups are statistically significant. This will be taken up in the next chapter. However, looking for patterns
of indirect and direct relationships within each cohort remains an instructive exercise, since these relationships are included in the total effects.

Table 5.1: Total Effects on Voting Among Youth and those Over the Age of 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B YOUTH</th>
<th>B OVER 35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Representation</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Representation</td>
<td>.326</td>
<td>-.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A close look at the data in Figures 5.2 and 5.3 reveals that the mediating effects which were reported at the aggregate level in Verba and Nie’s study, referred to above, are not entirely uniform across both age cohorts. Young people's educational attainment has no statistically significant effect on political interest or personal responsibility, and its effect on symbolic representation only borders on significance. The direct relationship between education and voting is strong in the youth cohort (B=.30). This is not the case, however, for those over the age of 35. The socialization effect of education—once taken for granted in the literature—emerges in those over 35 but extends only to interest in politics, and to a much lesser extent, to symbolic representation. A sense of responsibility is not increased by a rise in educational attainment for those over the age of 35. Most critically, the direct effect linking education and voting is insignificant and all but disappears for those over 35 (B=.06). Conversely in youth, indirect effects of education are not present, but educational attainment has a direct effect on increasing
voting in young people. This difference between young and older people is the first, but not the only evidence of divergence.

Similarly, a greater level of educational attainment does not increase the likelihood of being interested in politics among young people, nor does it influence their sense of responsibility. Education’s effect on satisfaction with the way values are reflected also does not reach a level of significance, but it does increase the likelihood of voting for this generation of young people. For youth, there are no signs that the indirect socialization effect of education is taking hold, but education undoubtedly remains important to voting. On the other hand, among those over the age of 35, there is essentially no relationship between symbolic representation and voting, and a moderate relationship between education and political interest, but an insignificant relationship between education and voting, which also to some degree challenges previous assumptions regarding the socialization effect of education. If the relationship between education and voting is evidenced in young people without any increased effect on political interest, symbolic representation, or personal responsibility, it is hard to make the causal case for the socialization effect of education on values, responsibility, and interest. However, the possibility that this generation of young people is somehow different, or that this generation is responding to some change in the political context, cannot be ruled out. This is important, as the decline in voting among young people is a relatively recent phenomenon, one that has taken hold in the past 15 years. Moreover, the current decline in voting does not affect all youth uniformly but is instead almost exclusively confined to those with less than a university education.

This divergence repeats itself with respect to sense of personal responsibility. Sense of responsibility is not affected by education in either cohort, and it increases interest in politics in both but has divergent effects on voting. Older people who feel a sense of responsibility are
scarcely more likely to vote as older people who do not; however, younger people are significantly more likely to vote if they feel a sense of responsibility. This divergence highlights, once again, that two different psychologies of voting are at play—one for those over the age of 35, and another for youth. But we cannot conclude that this generation of young people is less likely to feel a sense of responsibility than previous generations because we do not have time series data recorded in the literature as we do for education. What we can say, however, is that if this generation of young people does not feel a sense of responsibility, it is less likely to vote.

Differences between the age cohorts continue to surface when symbolic representation and interest representation variables are reviewed. The relationship between symbolic representation and interest representation is moderately strong and significant in both cohorts. However the direct relationship between symbolic representation and voting is vastly different in the two groups. Where the relationship between voting and satisfaction with symbolic representation is strong and statistically significant among young people (B=.31), it is almost non-existent for those over the age of 35 (B=-.03). Young people are thus more likely to vote if they feel that their values are aligned with those of political leaders, but the same cannot be said for those over the age of 35.

Interestingly, young people who do feel a sense of affinity with the values espoused by political leaders are more likely to also feel satisfied with interest representation. And in this case, the same can be said of those over the age of 35. But while voting is modestly affected by the degree of interest representation satisfaction in older people, there is no such significant relationship for the youth cohort. In both cases the underlying psychology is the same: a sense of values affinity or symbolic representation leads to greater satisfaction with interest representation. However, the on-the-ground reality is not the same for both groups.
First, older people are more likely to see their interests being discussed in election debates. And second, politicians do not just stand for what older voters care about, they also act on their behalf. It is thus reasonable to expect older people to be more motivated by satisfaction with interest representation than younger people who, as a group, are not affected by as many political issues. For instance, young people are, on average, less concerned or affected by tax reductions on hydro, gas or capital gains when compared with their older counterparts. As a result, it can be said that youth are less motivated by the actions typically taken by political leaders in the current electoral context (interest representation). Rather, they are more inclined to rely on a sense of values affinity when deciding on whether to vote or not than is the case with older people, who are, on average, more affected when their interests are thought to be represented.

On reflection, this divergence makes sense as political campaigns are not aimed at providing advantages to young people. The current array of election goodies is designed to entice or attract older people who can be counted on to weigh in on election day, leaving young people largely out of the conversation. On the whole, it is rare to find a political leader or party that specifically targets young people, or even a platform that includes policy action that affects young people one way or another. Importantly, as there is no material benefit for them, young people are more likely than their older counterparts to rely heavily on their predispositions or values to guide their choice, and when political leaders fail to stand for young people, young people are less motivated to vote.
Chapter 6: Building a Final Model of Youth Voting
Measuring Between Cohort Difference

Unmistakably, there are two differing psychologies at play in voter motivation: one voter psychology for those over the age of 35, influenced primarily by political interest and satisfaction with interest representation, and another for youth, which is influenced by level of education, political interest, sense of personal responsibility, and satisfaction with symbolic representation. However further investigation is required in order to see the full picture, to determine what is, in fact, significantly different between these two cohorts, and to establish where there might be some overlap. As discussed previously, these two groups cannot be directly compared using standardized coefficients, nor can assertions be made regarding significant differences between these two groups. In order to directly compare and test for significance, we must first constrain the unstandardized b coefficients to equality and re-estimate the model. We can then review the resulting change in Chi square value. Measuring the effect of constraining the variable parameters one by one in the two groups produces a rigorous test of parameter differences across groups. If the model Chi square changes significantly as a consequence of constraint, we can then say that there is a significant difference between the two groups with respect to the variable parameter.

This is an important step in building a case for cause: in order for a variable to be established as causing a decline in youth voter turnout, it must not only influence voting among youth, but it also must produce a difference between the cohorts. However, meeting this requirement is necessary, but not sufficient in establishing cause. The second step in building a case for cause involves the development of theoretical connections. In this chapter we will isolate those variables that are statistically significantly different between the two cohorts, and then extend the causal argument through a theoretical framework.
Testing Between Cohort Differences in Direct Relationships

Reviewing the change in the Chi square value, when we constrain the parameters to equivalence across the cohorts for the direct relationships in the model, we find three statistically significant differences (see Table 6.1 below).

The weakest of the significant differences between cohorts is found in the link between sense of personal responsibility and voting, producing a modest change in Chi square of 7.9 with 1 degree of freedom $p = .0049$. As seen in looking across the first row of Table 6.1, young people who feel a sense of personal responsibility are more likely to vote, whereas a sense of personal responsibility does not influence voting among those over the age of 35. Constraining these two effects to equivalence reduces the overall fit of the model, increasing $\chi^2$ from 13.5 to 21 while losing 1 df. This difference is clearly significant ($\Delta \chi^2 = 7.9; 1$df, $p=.005$). It also opens up a significant difference between the model and the data. While this difference is beyond chance, its effect on the fit of the model to the data is relatively modest. It does significantly reduce the fit of the model to the data, but this difference has markedly less effect on model fit than other differences between the cohorts. For this reason, the link between having a sense of responsibility and voting while no doubt different across the two groups cannot be said to be the primary difference between the younger and older cohorts.

The next most significant change in model fit ($\Delta$ Chi square of 13, 1df; $p =.0003$) is produced by constraining the education→voting parameter. This constraint of the model to the data, confirms that education has a greater impact on voting among the younger respondents than among older cohort and requiring them to be the same significantly reduces the fit of the model to the data. Young people are more likely to vote if they attain a post-secondary education, compared to older people who do not experience an education-induced increase in voting. The
impact on model fit, as measured by the resulting difference in Chi Square is almost twice that of the previous parameter constraint. The overall Chi square measure of fit of the model increases to 26.54. The model can no longer be said to fit the data in so far as $p=.005$, meaning that there is a significant difference between the model predicted covariances and those generated by the data as a whole. There are between cohort differences with respect to the path from education to voting, and these differences are consequential. While educated youth are more likely to vote, the same cannot be said for their older counterparts. Education is a predictor of political participation; however, when the cohorts are analyzed separately, this relationship is significant among youth, but not among those over the age of 35. Forcing the link between education and vote to be consistent across cohorts yields a statistically significant change in overall model fit ($\Delta$Chi square of 13, 1 df, $p=.003$), thus making education an important element in the story of youth voter decline. But it is by no means the most important variable.

The greatest between cohort difference is witnessed when constraining the symbolic representation and voting parameter to equivalence in the two samples. This constraint produces a change in Chi square of 24 (1df; $p=.000$), this is again nearly double the effect on $\Delta$Chi Square of the previous constraint and tripling the $\Delta$Chi Square parameter for the overall model. The resulting Chi square is 37.41 (with 11 df; $p=.000$) indicating again that changing this one parameter produces a significant difference between the model predicted covariances and those produced by the data as a whole. The effect of the constraint reaffirms that symbolic representation is more important in predicting voting among the young cohort than it is among the older. Young people vote less when they are dissatisfied with values alignment or symbolic representation, while older people remain unaffected. Eliminating this significant cohort difference has by far the greatest effect on the model, reducing the fit most dramatically.
The between cohort difference in the link between symbolic representation and voting is an essential element in the model explaining vote. The older and younger cohorts differ dramatically with respect to the effect of symbolic representation on vote, making it a stronger candidate for explaining the decline in voter turnout among young people than either education or a sense of responsibility.

Interestingly, we find no significant difference in model fit when we constrain young and older people to the same degree of connection between interest in politics and voting. The overall fit of the model is not significantly reduced for the model Chi square = 16.1 (compared with 13.5 of the original). The model remains insignificant indicating that even with constraint in place the model predicted programs is to not differ significantly from those generated by the data as a whole. Old and young alike vote less as a consequence of being less politically interested. Similarly, the influence of satisfaction with interest representation does not differ between younger and older samples beyond what you would expect by chance. There is no change in the Chi square ($\Delta \chi^2 = .5$). As a result of this, no statistically significant between cohort difference is produced. The previously noted differences between these groups are thus not beyond chance.

In sum, the between cohort differences in direct on voting effects are confined to personal responsibility, education, and symbolic, with symbolic representation leading the others in influence.

**Testing Between Cohort Differences in Indirect Relationships**

In reviewing the between cohort differences in the parameters making up the indirect relationships in the model, Table 6.1 shows that only the relationship between education and political interest variables has a significant impact on the overall fit of the model, and this
between cohort difference is relatively minor. There is no relationship between greater levels of education and political interest among young voters, but education does modestly increase the likelihood of being interested in politics for those over the age of 35. Therefore while it is a significant aspect of the model, it would be difficult to view this difference as a key to explain cross generational differences in voter turnout. All other indirect parameters in the model do not differ across cohorts (see Panel B of Table 6.1).
Table 6.1: Comparing the Effect of Significant Differences between Age Cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARAMETER</th>
<th>YOUTH (Unconstrained Estimate)</th>
<th>OVER 35 (Unconstrained Estimate)</th>
<th>Model Fit when a the parameter is constrained to equivalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=322</td>
<td>N=692</td>
<td>Δ in Chi sq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Panel A: Direct Influences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility → Vote</td>
<td>.192*** .24</td>
<td>.037 .07</td>
<td>7.9, 1df, p=.0049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education → Vote</td>
<td>.137*** .30</td>
<td>.020 .06</td>
<td>13.0,1df,p=.0003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Representation → Vote</td>
<td>.165*** .31</td>
<td>-.013 -.03</td>
<td>24.0, 1df, p=.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest → Vote</td>
<td>.325*** .25</td>
<td>.192*** .24</td>
<td>2.6, 1df; p=.1068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Representation → Vote</td>
<td>.103 .07</td>
<td>.159*** .16</td>
<td>.3, 1df, p =.5838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Panel B: Indirect Influences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education → Political Interest</td>
<td>-.010 -.03</td>
<td>.061*** .16</td>
<td>6.5, 1df; p=0107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility → Political Interest</td>
<td>.155*** .25</td>
<td>.120*** .18</td>
<td>.5, 1df,.p=4775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Representation → Interest Representation</td>
<td>.043*** .21</td>
<td>.032*** .17</td>
<td>0, 1df; p=1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education → Symbolic Representation</td>
<td>.060 .09</td>
<td>.051* .09</td>
<td>.5 1df,.p=4775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Unconstrained Model 2 Group Model Chi²= 13.5 df=12 p=.288)
*=>.05 **=>.005, ***=>.000
Between Cohort Differences in Review

A review of the results in Table 6.1 reveals four differences between the age cohorts that significantly affect the fit of the model to the data; however, only three affect voting outcomes in youth. Personal responsibility toward politics, education, and satisfaction with symbolic representation are more strongly related to voter turnout among youth than among older people. These differential effects on voting have been established as beyond what we would expect due to chance, meaning that all three must be considered in explaining voting among the younger cohort and as possible factors implicated in the decline in voter turnout.

While a sense of personal responsibility and level of education are associated with turnout among youth more than among older people, the difference between age groups in the linkage between symbolic representation and voting is the most indispensable element in the fit of the model to the data. And as a new variable in the research scene it may well be a key to explaining the phenomenon of declining voter turnout. And as we shall see, symbolic representation may thus also provide us with the greatest potential for reversing course on voter decline.

However, in order to go beyond between group difference and determine which variables have the largest effect on youth voting behaviour, we can take the additional step of removing all extraneous variables from our analysis. While uncovering the differences between older and younger peoples’ voting motivation is important (as it explains how youth differ from the rest of the population), an understanding of youth voter engagement remains the primary concern of this investigation. For this reason, we now turn to a more focused analysis of youth voting behaviour.
Isolating a Model for Young People

The aim of the project is to zero in on a more refined final model for youth voting behaviour, and this is best achieved by removing non-significant variables from the model. This process allows for a better understanding of the strength of the relationship between each independent variable and voting by determining how the overall fit of the model is affected by the removal of any given variable. In order to achieve this, we will focus solely on the variable pathways that are known to be significant for youth, thus removing other non-significant variables from the analysis. In working with only the youth cohort we report standardized coefficients in order to focus upon the relative import of each variable. Insignificant relationships involving interest representation have been removed from the youth model, as well as the paths linking education and interest and symbolic representation. The pared down model is as follows in Figure 6.1.

Notably, the fit of this model to the youth cohort data is optimal, producing a Chi square of 3.7, 5 df, p = .595, RMSEA = 0.000 (.000-.066), and CFI of 1.00. Moreover, this leaner, more parsimonious model maintains much of the predictive power of the previous untrimmed model, producing an R square of .34, compared with the .37 of the previous model, whereas the fit is relatively unchanged.\footnote{The previous model produced Chi square of 4.4 for youth only compared with the current 3.7 indicating a difference of only .7, and having very little impact on the model fit.} As expected, the B coefficients remain virtually unchanged from the previous model. Symbolic representation is the strongest predictor of voting among youth, followed by education, interest in politics, and personal responsibility. All variables in the model are significant.
Having settled on a final model, we can now remove variables one by one to compare their effect on the model as evidenced by changes in R square, Chi square. This process allows us to isolate the importance of each variable, and its impact is revealed in three important ways: first, we look to determine the change in overall model fit by reviewing the change in Chi square. Second, we look to determine if the change in Chi square is significant (p value), indicating whether the removal of a relationship affects the overall fit of the model. This offers us an indication of the relative importance of each variable in the model fit. Finally, we review the change in R square for the model, the reduction in the variance explained by the model again offering in indication of the relative importance of each variable in the model.
Reviewing Table 6.2, we see that the largest change in Chi square is produced by the removal of the symbolic representation variable, (ΔChi=3.6, df=1 p=.021). The removal of the symbolic representation variable also reduces the explained variance by .08. The second largest change in the R square of the model is shared by education and political interest, which produce reductions of .06 when removed, and changes in Chi square change of 2.5 and .7 respectively. However, neither of these changes reach the level of significance meaning that their removal does not significantly reduce the overall fit of the model to the data. The smallest change in R square is produced by the removal of the personal responsibility variable (Δ of .04). While this change decreases the Chi square by 2.9, this change is not significant. Symbolic representation is the only variable in the model that produces a significant difference upon its removal. In sum, we can conclude that the symbolic representation variable is the most essential of the variables considered here. Moreover, the R square decrease is the largest, underscoring its importance to future discussions of youth voter turnout.

Table 6.2: Change in Fit, Predictive Strength and Significance for Parameter Removal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARAMETER</th>
<th>Δ Chi SQUARE</th>
<th>New Chi-sq value</th>
<th>p Value of Δ Chi²</th>
<th>ΔR²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.5 w1df</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>.7 w1df</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>2.9 w1df</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Representation</td>
<td>3.6 w1df</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Original Chi=3.7, df=5, R²=.34 p=.872
Conclusion

I close the quantitative analyses with a very simple model for youth voting, including only political interest, personal responsibility, education, and symbolic representation variables. Nevertheless this model has explanatory heft, accounting for roughly 34% of the variance in voter turnout. Of the four variables, satisfaction with symbolic representation is the strongest and the only one which produces a significant change in the model fit when removed. This newcomer variable is important because it is unlike the others in that it does not signal a shortfall in youth as a generation. Rather, it indicates a capacity deficit on the part of political leaders. It also presents a real opportunity for those who are interested in turning around the trend in voter decline and for those seeking to hold office. Not only is addressing youth values in elections possible, but the opportunity for increasing voter turnout is also quite significant. The data show that 8% of the youth voter turnout problem could be affected if leaders’ values were to be aligned with those of youth. Compare that with an estimated 4% through encouraging youth to feel a greater sense of responsibility, and 6% through extending their levels of education—two rather difficult tasks that also reach beyond any single policy initiative. Because the responsibility and education variables explain less of the model variance, improvements of that kind would have less of an impact on the overall voter turnout rate than an upswing in satisfaction with symbolic representation could produce.
Chapter 7: They Don’t *Stand for Me*
They Don’t Stand for Me

The youth vote decline puzzle is complex, troubling, and yet to be fully solved. Youth are voting less in Canada and around the world, and there is no sign of this trend abating. Young people appear to be disaffected, and this political disaffection continues to negatively impact overall turnout rates—calling into question the legitimacy of the electoral and political processes. Although much work has been done to understand what has changed in this generation of young people, and many solutions have been offered to reverse this troubling pattern, few studies have focused on how this new generation of youth evaluates the political context, and what these evaluations mean in terms of voter motivation. As a result of this, little progress has been made in stemming the tide of turnout decline. Instead much of the literature and popular discourse assign blame to a lack of sense of responsibility among young people today.

Outside the perception of illegitimacy of the democratic process, the spotlight does not fall on actions or evaluations of political actors or the capacity for politicians to represent young people. Rather, deficits in youth’s character are identified as causes. Moreover, the electoral contest remains largely unaffected by youth non-participation: there is seemingly no political price to pay for their non-involvement. If youth do not participate, it is of little consequence to the fate of political leaders, as only voters are counted at the polls. As a result of this, political actors pay little attention to youth, and political strategists in turn never need concern themselves with how best to represent youth values and/or interests. In other words, young people who do not participate are ignored, and young people who are ignored do not participate, creating a
vicious spiral of decline\textsuperscript{154} or worse yet, a government that is only reflective of the values and interests of those over the age of 35.\textsuperscript{155}

Youth behaviour is curious, and this problem is not unique to Canada. The problem of waning youth voter turnout is a worldwide phenomenon affecting developed democracies, and is one that transcends any particular institutional structure. We know that differences in youth character have an effect on turnout; however, very few differences have been observed between older and younger people with respect to attitudes, and with them come several contradictions as well. Commitment to democratic values is higher than ever—even among youth—yet obligation to electoral politics appears to be waning.\textsuperscript{156} Likewise, youth today participate less in electoral politics than in any previous generation, but they are more likely to participate in political protest. They are thus not entirely disengaged or disaffected. Those with higher levels of education remain committed to voting, and while youth are more educated than ever before, this does not translate into greater voter participation.\textsuperscript{157} Young people are less likely to feel a sense of responsibility or duty when it comes to voting, and while a sense of duty is important to their decision to vote, we do not know why their duty is lagging when their commitment to democratic values is the highest on record. These contradictions challenge the answers put forth by the dominant literature and discourse. And in focusing the blame solely on youth moral fiber, these answers also fail to capture the processes operating underneath the trend of voter decline. They cannot tell us why young people feel less responsible now and thus leave us unable to produce effective policy to address the decline. To be sure, some scholars have attempted to investigate political actors’ capacity to represent the interest of young people. But as these investigations

\textsuperscript{155} Martin P. Wattenberg, Op. Cit.
have relied largely on frequency analysis and have looked exclusively at interest and not values, they too have fallen short in their answers.

This thesis reaches beyond evaluations of *kids these days*. It turns the table and extends the elevation of representative capacity. It does so in order to understand how it might influence voter motivation among youth. It does so by comparing the effect in voter motivation among older people who have remained committed to voting. Borrowing from Hannah Pitkin’s work on forms of representative democracy, this thesis demonstrates that in the absence of debate or discourse on issues that are relevant to young people, and leadership that young people can believe in, youth voter motivation suffers. In other words, when political actors do not reflect youth values, youth are turned off politics, and as consequence, vote less.

Evaluations of representation take a number of forms, including formalistic, substantive, descriptive, and symbolic. But for young people, symbolic representation is more important than interest representation.\(^{158}\) Formalistic representation refers to evaluations that are made based on the actor holding formal power, while substantive representation or what I refer to here as interest representation, evaluates performance based on action or the production of material benefit to the citizen (e.g. tax reductions, job creation, building hospitals, etc.). Interest representation has been the cornerstone of electoral campaign strategy since the late 1990s and is the basis for retail politics and virtually all political contest as we know it today. As such, party platform construction is designed to deliver specific messages to specific portions of the voting public, and campaigns are now seen to focus less on overarching principles and more on specific outcomes.

\(^{158}\) Hannah Fenichel Pitkin, *Op. Cit.*, see Chapter 6 specifically.
In contrast to this, symbolic representation is rooted in the perceived symbolism that political actors represent or reflect. Symbolic representation involves some form of identity projection, but goes deeper than descriptive appearance. The practice of symbolic representation is evidenced in ideological positioning or the building of the party brand and leader image as symbolic forms. Evaluations of symbolic representation are thus based on the ability of political leaders to represent their referent—to *stand for* something, usually an idea or value. This thesis thus asks and answers the following questions: Does satisfaction with symbolic representation affect voter turnout in youth, and if so, is there a difference between youth and older cohorts in this regard? Does symbolic representation retain its influence on voting when other known variables are introduced? And finally, how important is symbolic representation in motivating voting in relation to these other variables?

This thesis finds that dissatisfaction with symbolic representation is more pronounced in young people than in the older generation. As a result, young people are more likely to feel that political actors do not *stand for* them. This dissatisfaction has a real impact on motivation for voting, and the effect does not recede when other variables are considered. Moreover, as the political issues addressed in electoral campaigns are less salient to younger voters, youth are less likely to be affected by dissatisfaction with interest representation. Older people, however, are more directly affected by lack of satisfaction with interest representation. But this imbalance places an even greater weight on symbolic capacity in younger voters as it becomes the only form of representation that is meaningful.

The hypotheses in this thesis and their assumptions are largely supported by the data. First, and as predicted, there is a covariance between symbolic representation (values affinity) and interest representation. This relationship is significant, but insufficient in strength to suggest
multicollinearity, i.e. that the two variables are measuring the same underlying concept.\textsuperscript{159} Second, although youth are not more likely to perceive their values as being different than those of older voters, perceived lack of affinity in values is strongly related to non-voting in youth. A sense of affinity with the values espoused by political leaders matters in motivating youth to vote, but it has little impact on older voters. This relationship remains strong and statistically significant even after control variables are introduced in the regression model. Evaluations of symbolic representation differ between older and younger cohorts, and the difference is statistically significant. Third, older people are more not more likely to be satisfied with interest representation than younger people. Nevertheless satisfaction with interest representation is related to voter motivation in those aged 35 and over, and the same cannot be said for youth. Finally, the removal of the symbolic representation variable from the model not only has the greatest effect compared with the elimination of other variables, but the effect is also statistically significant, or beyond chance. Values affinity thus clearly matters to youth voter motivation.

As a consequence of this analysis, we have learned that symbolic representation and interest representation variables share some common ground; however, their underlying meanings differ somewhat. Because they do not co-vary to any large extent, it cannot be said that they are conceptually identical. When individuals attest to being satisfied with the way their interests are represented in the political context, that does not necessarily translate to mean that they feel a sense of values affinity with political actors. Values affinity and interest representation therefore should not be combined into a factor or indexed. Although much work remains to be done in understanding how the public, and youth in particular, differentiate these ideas more concretely, it is clear that the notions of symbolic and interest representation should

\textsuperscript{159} Multiple indicators which measure symbolic representation would be optimal in future study.
not be conflated or seen as one singular concept of representation valence. The picture is rather more complex.

This complexity is further unpacked when the two age cohorts are separated for analysis purposes. The data show that each cohort responds differently to symbolic representation and interest representation propositions. A sense of satisfaction with symbolic representation increases voter motivation among young people. But as political interest discussions are less salient in general to youth, satisfaction with interest representation does not correlate with greater voter turnout. In the absence of political discourse that touches young people, values affinity plays a larger role in voter motivation for this cohort. However, the same pattern is not found in those aged 35 and over: in fact, the two age groups are almost diametrically opposed. Because the issues contained within the political discourse do impact the daily lives of older people, dissatisfaction with interest representation is correlated with non-voting in the older generation. Moreover, as a consequence of the salience of political issues in their daily lives, interest representation eclipses values in motivating older voters to engage. In short, the push and pull mechanism is the same for both cohorts, but differing contexts—both political and generational—produce different outcomes. Because young people are less affected by the entire spectrum of political issues at play, and because they are also less likely to hear issues of concern to them discussed in the political discourse, interest representation is less relevant to their voting motivation. Regardless of education, interest in politics, or sense of responsibility, young people who feel an absence of values affinity with political leaders thus have little that connects them to their leaders, which in turn means that they are less likely to vote. The rationale could thus be summed up as, “They don’t stand for me—so why should I vote?”
Critically, this relationship is not present in older people where interest representation eclipses values affinity at the ballot box. “S/he may not be like me, but s/he will represent my interests.” Whereas older people are drawn in as major issues tend to concern them more directly, there is less to pull in or motivate youth. As I argue here, this between cohort difference is at least in part responsible for the present decline witnessed in youth voting. And once again, this difference is independent or irrespective of youth’s sense of responsibility, interest in politics, or levels of education. In other words, even when youth are more educated or feel a sense of responsibility, they will still vote less if they feel that their values are misaligned with those of political actors. It would thus appear that youth need someone to stand for them—for whom to vote—when there is no extrinsic reason to vote.

However, what should also be clear about this finding is that the opportunities afforded by a better understanding of this push and pull mechanism, as it were, are not limited to values propositions, but include interest representation as well. While the relationship between interest representation and voting is significant in those aged 35 and over and not significant in youth—the level of difference separating these two cohorts does not itself attain significance. Said differently, the between cohort difference we see here could be a product of not much more than chance. Therefore, if political discussion and debate were more salient to youth (e.g. their interests were being threatened or were being supported) as they generally are for those over the age 35, we should expect to see greater political engagement on the part of youth. This means that scholars who argue for the inclusion of youth issues and greater representation of young people in political discussions are thus likely correct in their assumptions. Moreover, it would seem that the opportunity to increase youth engagement is there for politicians to take: increasing youth voting may be as simple as discussing issues that are important to youth, or framing
political opponents as being counter to those issues that youth care about. However, as there is no significant between cohort difference to be found, it is unlikely that shortfalls in interest representation are actually causing the current decline in voter turnout. Rather, the difference maker in this story is that of symbolic representation.

As we now know, when youth feel that their values are opposite or different than those reflected by political actors, they are less likely to vote. Symbolic representation is both the strongest predictor of youth voting (B=.33) and the variable that has the largest and most statistically significant effect when removed from the model. Sense of values affinity is not a variable of consequence for those over the age of 35, however, and this between group difference is beyond chance. This between cohort difference with regard to values affinity is thus a possible candidate for explaining decline in youth voter turnout and presents a tremendous opportunity for addressing the problem of disaffected youth.

**Extending the Causal Argument for Symbolic Representation**

However, having data that demonstrate that symbolic representation and voting are important to young people and less so to those over the age of 35 is not in itself sufficient for establishing a causal argument for youth voter decline. Between cohort variance is necessary but not enough. Building a causal case also requires some form of theoretical bridge, or underlying structure, that explains the differences in the relationships. The between group variances thus need to be closely attached to theory in order to warrant the consideration of a leap to causation. Additionally, in this case, as we are seeking to explain change, the explanation forwarded must in some way demonstrate variance over time. Longitudinal data would be optimal, but as it is not available in this case, we must rely on theory.
Tracing differences in values has been a mainstay of the literature that seeks to explain social change. It is perhaps unsurprising then that evaluations of values produce different results in older and younger voters. This post-materialist breed of youth is different than previous generations. They were raised in and have experienced different things, and their values have been shaped accordingly. To be sure, the effects of these differences extend beyond their commitment to vote. But their commitment to vote is also likely shaped by their values, and as a result of this, they view political affairs in a different light than older generations. But we also must be careful here, as the between cohort differences in values affinity are inconsistent. Instead, it is in the effect of symbolic representation where the difference lies. Or, simply put, young people and older people share similar attitudes with respect to values affinity, but young people vote less when their attitudes are different.

Addressing the Youth Voter Turnout Problem

This thesis’s findings regarding symbolic representation broaden our understanding of the sources of youth voter decline beyond blaming deficits in youth character. That political leaders do not stand for young people cannot be said to be the fault of young people. And while assigning blame is beyond the scope of this research, it is likely that the source of voter decline is something of a combination between differences in youth values, and the intentional change in strategy toward issues-based campaigning by political operatives and leadership.

Policy recommendations that do not call for the re-socialization of a generation may thus hold more promise and yield better results than those that do. More specifically, policies that are

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aimed at correcting the values disconnect are likely to find more success in that they do not require radical shifts in norms that are considered to be stable—a feat akin to a sea change. But understanding the role that symbolic behaviour plays in youth voting offers an interesting opportunity for political leaders too: parties that make efforts to connect with young people and stand for what they believe in can hope to increase the turnout rate at the same time as they can improve their election prospects. Similarly, party leaders that choose not to make value appeals that inspire youth only stand to lose if their opponents are able to connect with young people. Because elections are now won at the margins, any leader who can motivate an inactive portion of the population is poised to win a large payoff for herself or himself. In short, this new understanding of voter motivation has the potential to not only boost voter turnout, but also to spell success at the ballot box.

The data strongly suggest that focusing on mobilizing otherwise disinterested youth by standing for their values would be an effective means to engage, especially when compared to less than successful initiatives that aim at correcting youth character. Turning around attitudes held by a particular constituency is not something that happens overnight. The ocean of change that has marked this generation, including greater levels of education and developments in technology, has had a profound impact on youth. Not to mention the more subtle changes in sense of responsibility for democracy or citizenship found in non-voting youth. Direct, top-down appeals to civic obligation are tough sells once we understand that the norms of this new generation do not include voting as a requirement for being a good citizen.

Future Research

Regardless of how encouraging these results may seem, and how much we appear to have learned through this exercise, the results must be accepted with a note of caution for several reasons. First and foremost, the concept of symbolic representation is complex, and here we have a single item measure. As discussed previously in this thesis, optimally research should construct and index or factor using multiple measures, which is not only more conceptually robust, but also easily accommodated using structural equation modeling. This is recommended as one suggestion for future research. Secondly, this model looks at only two dimensions of representation—symbolic and interest representation. Along with symbolic and interest representation, future research should and could also include measures of descriptive representation, and or expand or explore alternative conceptions of satisfaction with representation; for example satisfaction with opinion representation. We must also recognize that the SEM techniques assumes that the dependent variable is measured at the interval (or ordinal with many categories) level. And in this case voting is a dichotomous variable, therefore, the present results should be further investigated as path analytic techniques become more readily available for logistic regression.

Furthermore, there are a number of known variables that were omitted in the data set. For instance, important variables such as, Did you vote last time?, were not included. This is noteworthy as previous voting behaviour is known to be the largest predictor of voter turnout. The introduction of this variable could very well skew the results presented here. However, the

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relationship itself could be mis-specified, as previous behaviour of any kind is likely to be related to future behaviour but is not necessarily causal. Second, the personal responsibility measure is framed somewhat differently in the Fireweed data set than what is traditional for such studies. Therefore we cannot definitively say that the same quality is measured. Ordinarily the measure asks, Do you feel a sense of responsibility to vote? or, Do you feel a sense of duty to vote?, both of which center more directly on voting and are less open-ended. Thus we do not know if using those more traditional questions would produce the same result as found here. Moreover, interest in politics, interest representation, and symbolic representation variables are undeniably thin measures of the underlying concepts. Ideally multiple questions would be to ensure a fuller or more robust test of the concept, and of course, these would be measured over time.

And similarly, as this data disallows the appreciation of why young people might feel that their values differ from political leaders, but focuses on voting motivation, a shift towards a new dependent variable could prove useful. Focus groups that aim at understanding how young people feel about politics and democracy, and how they view political leaders should aid in the development of quantitative metrics that get underneath what is going on for youth voters. And data sets that include allow for a more robust exploration of the effects of the representative forms as well as an investigation into of values differences are recommended.

**The Way Forward**

In order to understand how to represent youth values more meaningfully, it is necessary to better understand what causes youth to view their values as being different or opposite to those of older citizens. More pointedly, why it is that young people are unhappy with the way they are
represented symbolically? Why do young people think that their political leaders do not stand for them? What is it that youth do not like? Finding policy mechanisms which enable or include youth in the political debate—whether around a kitchen table chatting or while deliberating at a young citizens’ assembly—is also critical. These kinds of conversations can serve as means or catalysts in building bridges for those who are otherwise alienated, not to mention providing a sounding board and ensuring that the message gets through. Much work needs to be done both on the part of researchers, in order to better understand the underpinning of values misalignment, and on the part of politicians, in order to forge connections with and stand for youth. However in the meantime, findings in the data are encouraging. If politicians decide in earnest to consider how to reach out to young people and construct a campaign that resonates with what young people care about, a campaign that leads youth to believe that “s/he stands for me,” it will likely provide a (for some, very first) reason to vote.
Appendix 1: Fireweed Survey, Question Phrasing

Q2: Age: Which of the following age groups best describes your age?
Youth – 18 to 35
36+ - 36+

Q9A: Interest:
First would you say that you are very interested, fairly interested, somewhat interested or not at all interested in politics?

Q10: Responsibility:
Do you feel a sense of responsibility to improve how democracy is working in this country or is this an area that government should deal with on your behalf?

Q37: Values:
Generally speaking, do you feel that the values of people who run for elected office tend to be identical, the same, different or opposite of your own?

Q12: Electoral System:
In general, would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very or not at all satisfied with each of the following?

The way the electoral system works in Canada

Q13: Interest representation:
In general, would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very or not at all satisfied with each of the following?

The way your elected representatives represent your interests

Q14: Way we Elect:
In general, would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very or not at all satisfied with each of the following?

The way we elect Members of Parliament in Canada

Q43: Level of Education: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

High school or less
College
University
Post Graduate
Appendix 2: Crosstabulation of Interest and Values Variables Including Don’t Know and Refused

Crosstabulation of Vote by Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YOUTH INTEREST</th>
<th>OLDER INTEREST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not Vote</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dk/Refused</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth: Cramer’s V = .198 p = .000  Chi Square = 24.9 df = 4
Older: Cramer’s V = .241 p = .000  Chi Square = 40.1 df = 4

Crosstabulation of Vote by Values Affinity (Symbolic Rep)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YOUTH VALUES</th>
<th>OLDER VALUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opposite</td>
<td>Different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not Vote</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dk/Refused</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth: Cramer’s V = .220 p = .000  Chi Square = 29.16 df = 4
Older: Cramer’s V = .104 p = .152  Chi Square = 6.70 df = 4
Appendix 3: Educational Attainment by Age, Census 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adults (55 to 64)</th>
<th>Youth (25 to 34)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Frequency Comparison after Data Re-Weighting to Reflect Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Weighted%</th>
<th>Un-Weighted%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not-Vote</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>719</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Older</th>
<th>Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weighted%</td>
<td>Un-Weighted%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest in Politics</th>
<th>Older</th>
<th>Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weighted%</td>
<td>Un-Weighted%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest Representation</th>
<th>Older</th>
<th>Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weighted%</td>
<td>Un-Weighted%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Satisfied</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very Satisfied</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>649</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values Affinity</th>
<th>Older</th>
<th>Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weighted%</td>
<td>Un-Weighted%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposite</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>617</td>
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</table>
Appendix 5: Institutional Satisfaction Factor Analysis Cohort Comparison

Institutional Satisfaction
Youth Voters

Institutional Satisfaction
Older Voters
Appendix 6: Comparison of Values Affinity and Character of Politicians

Character of Politicians vs. Values Affinity
Youth Voters

Character of Politicians

Honest

Competency

.51

Principled

.18

Values

.46

Character of Politicians

.05

Character of Politicians vs. Values Affinity
Older Voters

Character of Politicians

Honest

Competency

.40

Principled

.31

Values

.56

Character of Politicians

.08
Appendix 7: Final Recode Syntax

missing values Q2 (0).
missing values Q10 (3).
missing values Q37 (5).
missing values Q43 (5).
missing values Q42 (8).
missing values Q9A (5).
missing values Q12 (5).
missing values Q13(5).
missing values Q14(5).
missing values Q22 (5).
missing values Q25 (5).
missing values Q28 (5).
missing values Q48 (0).
recode Q42 (1 thru 6=1)(7=0) into Vote.
value labels Vote 1 'voted' 0 'did not vote'.
recode Q43 (1=1)(2=2)(3,4=3) into Edcat.
value label Edcat 1 'high school' 2 'college' 3 'university'.
recode Q37 (1,2=2) (3=1) (4=0) into Values.
value labels Values 2 'same' 1 'different' 0 'opposite'.
recode Q2 (1,2,3=0)(4,5,6=1) into Age.
value labels Age 0 'youth' 1 'older'.
recode Q10 (1=1) (2=0) into RespB.
value labels RespB 1 'personal' 0 'government'.
recode Q9A (1=2) (2, 3=1) (4=0) into Inter2.
value labels Inter 3 'very' 2 'fairly'
    1 'somewhat' 0 'not'.
recode Q13 (1=1) (2=.66) (3=.33) (4=0) into Repint.
value labels Repint 0 'not at all' .33 'not very'
    .66 'somewhat' 1 'satisfied'.
compute WEIGHT=0.
if (Edcat=1 & Age=0) WEIGHT=1.2973.
if (Edcat=2 & Age=0) WEIGHT=0.8846.
if (Edcat=3 & Age=0) WEIGHT=0.0763.
if (Edcat=1 & Age=1) WEIGHT=1.5349.
if (Edcat=2 & Age=1) WEIGHT=0.6667.
if (Edcat=3 & Age=1) WEIGHT=0.0562.
Appendix 8: OLS Regression for Youth and Over the Age of 35, Including Tolerance and VIF Measures

### OLS Regression of Decision to Vote for Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>.983</td>
<td>1.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Interest</strong></td>
<td>.222*</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.902</td>
<td>1.108</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>.216*</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.947</td>
<td>1.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
<td>.190**</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.972</td>
<td>1.029</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interest Representation</strong></td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>1.092</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>.303</td>
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$R^2 = 258$

### OLS Regression of Decision to Vote for Older voters

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<td>.009</td>
<td>.974</td>
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<td><strong>Political Interest</strong></td>
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<td>.944</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>.099</td>
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<td>.954</td>
<td>1.049</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
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<td>.977</td>
<td>1.023</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interest Representation</strong></td>
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<td>.981</td>
<td>1.019</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
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<td>.056</td>
<td>.639</td>
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$R^2 = .122$
Appendix 9: Direct and Indirect Pathway Model

<table>
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<th>Parameters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edcat→Vote</td>
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<td>.137</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest→Vote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resp→Vote</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>RepInt→Values</td>
<td>.215***</td>
<td>.043</td>
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