

Engaging the Next Generation: An Exploration of State Party Membership and Youth Participation *

Matthew J. Geras[†]

The Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center,
The University of Oklahoma

August 22, 2019

Abstract

Using a new dataset of state political party bylaws, I examine whether the lack of youth representation in state party organizations, contributes to low levels of youth political participation. I operationalize youth representation within each party by counting the number of formal party members associated with either the state's College Democrats/Republicans, Young Democrats/Republicans, Teenage Republicans/High School Democrats, or otherwise identified as youth members by the party's bylaws and predict that state parties with higher levels of formal youth representation will lead to higher levels of youth political participation and younger candidates for Congress. I find that state Democratic parties are more likely to grant voting party member to the Young Democrats than state Republican parties are to grant voting party membership to the Young Republicans. However, the opposite is true of youth political organizations organized around college students and teenagers. While there is no evidence that variation in youth party membership influences levels of youth voter registration or voter turnout, I find that state Democratic parties are more likely to have youth nominees for the House of Representatives as they increase the degree of youth representation in their state central committees.

Keywords: political parties, youth political participation, congressional elections

*This is a working draft. Please do not cite without the author's permission.

[†]Direct correspondence to mgeras@ou.edu

Introduction

It is well known that even as Congress continues to grow more diverse, it remains unrepresentative of the United States. One way in which Congress is unrepresentative of the larger U.S. population is in respect to age. While strides were made in 2018 with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Abby Finkenauer both becoming the youngest women ever elected to Congress at the age of 29 and Congress becoming younger in general (Zhou 2019), young people remain underrepresented in Congress. At the start of the 116th Congress, the House of Representative was composed of 53.9 percent Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964), 31.5 percent Generation X (born 1965-1979), and 6 percent Millennials (born 1980-1996) (Desilver 2018). However, Baby Boomers made up only 25 percent of the 2017 U.S. labor force compared to 33 percent Generation X, and 35 percent Millennials (Fry 2018). Overall only some of this discrepancy can be explained by the constitutional requirement that members of the House of Representatives be at least 25 years of age because as of the start of the 116th Congress in 2019, most Millennials were eligible to serve in the House.

A recent stream of research identifies a lack of political ambition among young individuals as one leading cause of this underrepresentation (Lawless & Fox 2015, Shames 2017). The purpose of this paper is to examine whether the membership requirements of state Democratic and Republican parties, mainly the lack of youth representation within these formal party organizations, also contributes to members of Congress on average being much older than the general population. Moreover, I examine whether a lack of youth participation in party organizations is also associated with lower levels of other forms of political participation among young people. Specifically, I predict that state political parties with higher levels of youth representation will see higher levels of youth political participation compared to political parties who fail to prioritize youth representation within their formal party organization. Second, I expect that political parties with higher levels of youth representation will have younger candidates for Congress compared to political parties who fail to prioritize youth representation within their formal party organization. To test these hypotheses, I cre-

ate a new dataset of state party rules by collecting and coding provisions within the bylaws of all 100 state-level Republican and Democratic parties. I operationalize youth representation within each state party by counting the proportion of formal party members associated with either the state's College Democrats/Republicans, Young Democrats/Republicans, Teenage Republicans/High School Democrats, or otherwise identified as youth members by the party's bylaws.

I find that state Democratic parties are more likely to grant voting party member to the Young Democrats than state Republican parties are to grant voting party membership to the Young Republicans. However, the opposite is true of other youth political organizations. College political organizations, the College Republicans and College Democrats, and teenage political organizations, the Teenage Republicans and the High School Democrats are more likely to be granted voting party membership in state Republican parties compared to state Democratic parties. Finally, while I do not find evidence that this variation in youth party membership influences levels of youth voter registration or voter turnout, I find that state Democratic parties are more likely to have youth nominees for the House of Representatives as they increase the degree of youth representation in their state central committees.

Overall, this paper adds to the discipline's knowledge of youth representation by examining levels of youth representation in state political parties. Additionally, it shows that one way to increase youth representation in Congress, at least among Democrats, is for political parties to do a better job of recruiting young individuals to take part in their formal party organizations. Ensuring better representation for young people in political institutions is important because representation, in regard to age, influences policy outcomes (Curry & Haydon 2018). Additionally, increasing youth representation will also have a spillover effect on other areas of descriptive representation because younger generations are more racially and ethnically (Rosentiel, Keeter, Horowitz & Tyson 2008).¹

¹Descriptive representation occurs when a representative shares characteristics and/or past experiences with their constituents (Pitkin 1967).

Youth Political Participation

Political participation can take many different forms. In this paper, I focus on youth engagement in two forms of political participation, voting, which is probably the most common form of political participation, and running for office, which is probably one of the least common forms of political participation. In regard to voting, it has long been acknowledged that voter turnout is correlated with age such that younger individuals are less likely to vote than older individuals (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980, Leighley & Nagler 2014). Many explanations have been offered as to why this age gap exists. First, a recent meta-analysis of over 90 empirical studies on the individual determinants of voter turnout, identifies age and education as the two most common explanations of turnout (Smets & Van Ham 2013). Since education reduces the costs associated with civic engagement (Hillygus 2005), and high school and college students are still pursuing higher education, they fall into a category of individuals, young with still growing levels of educations, less likely to participate in the political process. Similarly young people often have lower levels of political knowledge (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995, Carpini & Keeter 1996, Carpini 2000, Milner 2010, Wattenberg 2012) which is often a skill necessary to fully participate in the political process.²

An argument could be made that young individuals are being rational in their decision not to vote (Downs 1957, Aldrich 1993). As with all voters, not only is it true that it is unlikely that their individual vote will be decisive, but their status as inconsistent or non-participators means politicians do not see them as a priority (Carpini 2000). Nor in comparison to some other groups, such as veterans and seniors, do they always have policy issues that consistently require them to become politically active (Mettler 2002, Campbell 2002).³ Finally, unless they were aloud to preregister (Holbein & Hillygus 2016, Hart & Youniss 2018), many young voters may not yet have had enough opportunities for voting to

²Also see Condon and Holleque (2013) who find that general self-efficacy, like political efficacy, also increases political participation among young individuals.

³This is despite the fact that young voters often have consistent policy agenda (Tedesco, McKinney & Kaid 2007).

become a habit (Plutzer 2002, Gerber, Green & Shachar 2003, Denny & Doyle 2009).

Recent scholarship has discovered an even more disturbing trend in regard to youth political participation. On the whole, younger generations have less political ambition than their predecessors. Specifically, while most high school and college students have the desire to help their communities and solve the problems facing society, they do not view politics as good way to achieve these goals (Lawless & Fox 2015, Shames 2017). High school and college students are turned off by the idea of running for elected office because they have a negative perception of modern politics, with many young people believing politicians are untrustworthy and only in politics for themselves (Lawless & Fox 2015, Shames 2017). Moreover, they believe that the costs associated with running for office, loss of privacy, the need to fund raise, etc., far outweigh the potential benefits of winning elected office (Lawless & Fox 2015, Shames 2017). This trend exists even among graduate and law students, whom would be expected to be among the youth most likely to be interested in a political career by the nature of their position (Shames 2017).

Political Parties and Youth Political Participation

Youth participation in formal political party organizations, and the effect of such participation on other forms of political participation, continues to be an understudied aspect of youth political engagement. This is likely due to the fact that young people rarely hold positions of power within political parties and in an international context young people are underrepresented in political parties (Cross & Young 2008, Scarrow & Gezgor 2010). While over time, most individuals have come to view themselves as being more ideologically extreme, they are also more likely to identify themselves as politically independent; this is especially true among young voters (Abramson 1976, Twenge, Honeycutt, Prislin & Sherman 2016). If young people do not wish to align themselves with a specific partisan affiliation, it is not surprising that they are underrepresented in party organizations.

Moreover, a cross-national study of 14 year olds reveals that most young people do

not view joining a political party as an important aspect of civic engagement (Torney-Purta 2001). In the context of Canadian political parties, young adults were most likely to join a political party when their parents were already members and when they held the beliefs that political parties provide a path towards change and are responsive to their grassroots members (Cross & Young 2008). In the United States, while local party leaders acknowledge that young people are not active enough in politics and they often have the capacity to mobilize young voters, they rarely prioritize doing so (Shea & Green 2007). In the remainder of this paper, I argue that if political parties, mainly state parties, were to commit themselves towards mobilizing young people, specifically by bringing them into their organizations, there would be an increase in youth political participation.

Theory

Overall, young people, like everyone else, become engaged in politics when they have the motivation, opportunity, and availability to do so (Carpini 2000). Currently, young adults lack the motivation to become involved in politics because they have a negative opinion of, and lack of faith in, governmental institutions, they lack the opportunity to become involved in politics because parties and candidates mostly ignore them, and they lack the availability to become involved in politics because they lack the information and knowledge necessary to become involved (Carpini 2000). I argue that if political parties were to grant young people formal roles in their organizations, young people would have more motivation, opportunity, and availability to become more politically active.

In regard to motivation, I argue that young people would have more positive views of governmental institutions, and thus be more motivated to participate in political activities, if they were better represented within them. It has long been known that descriptive representation leads to more trust in political institutions and greater substantive representation (Mansbridge 1999, Tate 2001, Swers 2013, Broockman 2013). Moreover, recent research finds

that voters are less likely to vote for co-partisan candidates, or even to vote at all, as the age gap between the voter and candidate increases (Pomante & Schraufnagel 2015, Webster & Pierce 2019). Similarly, newspaper coverage of presidential elections suggests that one of the reasons young voters participated at higher rates in 1992 and 2008 was because there were young candidates running for office who prioritized engaging young voters through new methods of get-out-the-vote appeals (Pomante 2017). Together these studies provide examples of increased youth participation in instances where young people felt better represented. This combined with the notion that representative institutions increase trust and substantive representation in government, lends credence to the theory that if political party organizations were more representative of the general public, in this case in regard to age, young people would be more politically active. Moreover, since negative views of political institutions in one of the reasons, young people often have low levels of political ambitions (Lawless & Fox 2015, Shames 2017), diverse parties would likely even spur more young people to partake in even advanced forms of political participation, such as running for elected office.

In addition to motivating more political participation among young voters, age diverse political party organizations would also increase the number of opportunities available young people. First, the mere act of joining a party organization provides individuals with more opportunities, as well as the political and social capital necessary to participation in politics. There is significant evidence that participation in community groups, organizations, and institutions lead to higher levels of political participation (Putnam 2001, Flanagan 2003, Quintelier 2008, Terriquez 2015). This is especially true when young people are given leadership opportunities (Flanagan 2003, Quintelier 2008). Moreover, I expect that this effect will be amplified when the organization in question is designed around a political purpose, as are political parties. Indeed, while it is a different case from the United States, at one point, as many as 41 percent of all city councilors in Belgium started their political careers in a political party's youth organization (Hooghe, Stolle & Stouthuysen 2004). That being

said, political parties and elites in the U.S. prioritize candidate recruitment in elections at most levels of government (Broockman 2014) and local party organizations seem like an obvious place to start. This means that if young people were better represented within party organizations, it is more likely that they would be viewed as viable candidates for office and thus recruited to run.

Finally, as party organizations gain more youth members, young people will have more availability to become involved in politics because they will have the opportunity to become better informed. Party organizations with strong youth memberships will be less likely to ignore young voters. In fact, as youth representation within party organizations increases, young voters would likely become a prime target of political parties. This is significant because research finds that peer to peer interaction, recruitment, and education increases political participation (Shea & Harris 2006). For example, get out the vote efforts lead by young individuals increases youth voter turnout (Bennion 2005, Ulbig & Waggener 2011, Costa, Schaffner & Prevost 2018). In fact, one of the most difficult aspects of turning out young voters is that they are much more difficult to contact than voters at-large (Nickerson 2006). However, this should be less of an issue for party organizations with a lot of youth involvement since their members would interact with other young voters on a daily basis at school, work, etc., and young people will be more receptive to the information and opportunities presented to them if they are being offered from their peers. This would include running for office since potential young candidates would be more likely to see a youth diverse party as an available resource than they would a party that does not represent them.

Ultimately, young people often lack the motivation, opportunity, and availability to become more active in politics (Carpini 2000). However, their lack of motivation, opportunity, and availability is at least in some ways a result of their current lack of political participation. In this sense, the problem of minimal youth engagement in politics seems like a self-reinforcing paradox with no end in sight. In the preceding section, I have laid the groundwork for why I believe age diverse state political party organizations are the solution

to this dilemma. In the remainder of the paper, I use the varying levels of youth membership in state political parties to evaluate this theory in the context of the 2018 midterm elections. Specifically, as seen in the formal hypotheses below, I first predict that state political parties with higher levels of youth representation will see higher levels of youth political participation. Second, I predict that state political parties with higher levels of youth representation will see younger candidates for Congress.

Hypothesis 1 *State political parties with higher levels of youth representation will see higher levels of youth political participation.*

Hypothesis 2 *State political parties with higher levels of youth representation will see younger candidates for Congress.*

Methodology

In order to evaluate my theory that state political parties with higher levels of youth representation will see higher levels of other forms of youth political participation, I use three different measures of political participation as my dependent variables. My first two dependent variables measure two common types of political participation, registering to vote and actually voting in an election. Specifically, I collect the percentage of individuals, between the ages of 18 and 34, who were registered to vote and who voted in the 2018 General Election, according to the United States Census Bureau (United States Census Bureau 2019).⁴

My final dependent variable measures a less common form of political participation, running for elected office. Ideally, I would be able to collect the age of every candidate who filed to run for Congress in 2018 and determine both the age of the youngest candidate running in each primary election as well as the average age of all the candidates in each primary election. However, while databases of declared candidates are maintained (Kamarck & Podkul 2018), each candidate's age is not as readily available. In order to collect each

⁴All of these individuals would meet the age requirements for both the Young Democrats and the Young Republicans.

candidate's age, I used a variety of sources including, but not limited to Ballotpedia, Vote Smart, news articles, campaign websites, and Wikipedia. Despite using such a variety of sources, I was not able to identify the age of every candidate. Since there is a good chance that there is systematic bias in this missing data, mainly that the youngest and oldest candidates are less willing to report their age out of fear of ageism, I determined the best measure of age available to me was the age of each party's nominee in each congressional district. Overall, I was able to determine the age of all but 23 major party congressional nominees in 2018.⁵

Since the benefits of incumbency often lead to careerism in Congress, it is safe to assume that on average, party nominees who are incumbent members of Congress will be older than most other party nominees. During the 2018 midterm elections, this proved to be the case, especially among Democratic candidates, as seen in Figure 1. In both political parties, the youngest nominee was 25 years of age. In the Democratic Party, the oldest nominee was 82 and in the Republican Party, the oldest nominee was 85 years of age. Among all Democratic nominees, the average age was 54, but among incumbents it was closer to 62 and among non-incumbents it was closer to 48. Among all Republican nominees, the average age was 55, with there only being a few years difference between incumbents (57) and non-incumbents (53).

Since it is doubtful that varying levels of youth party membership have a linear effect on youth candidate emergence, my final dependent variable is a binary measure of whether or not each nominee is less than or equal to 40 years of age. The selection of 40 as the cutoff point for identifying youth candidates, is not arbitrary. The Republican party identifies Young Republicans as being 18 to 40 years of age and the Democratic Party identifies Young Democrats as individuals under the age of 36. Since I needed a measure that is consistent across both parties, and all members of the House of Representatives need to be at least 25

⁵The fact that it was difficult to find the ages of many congressional candidates means it would likely be difficult to replicate this study on more localized elections, such as elections for state legislatures, where it would be even more likely for younger candidates to run for office.

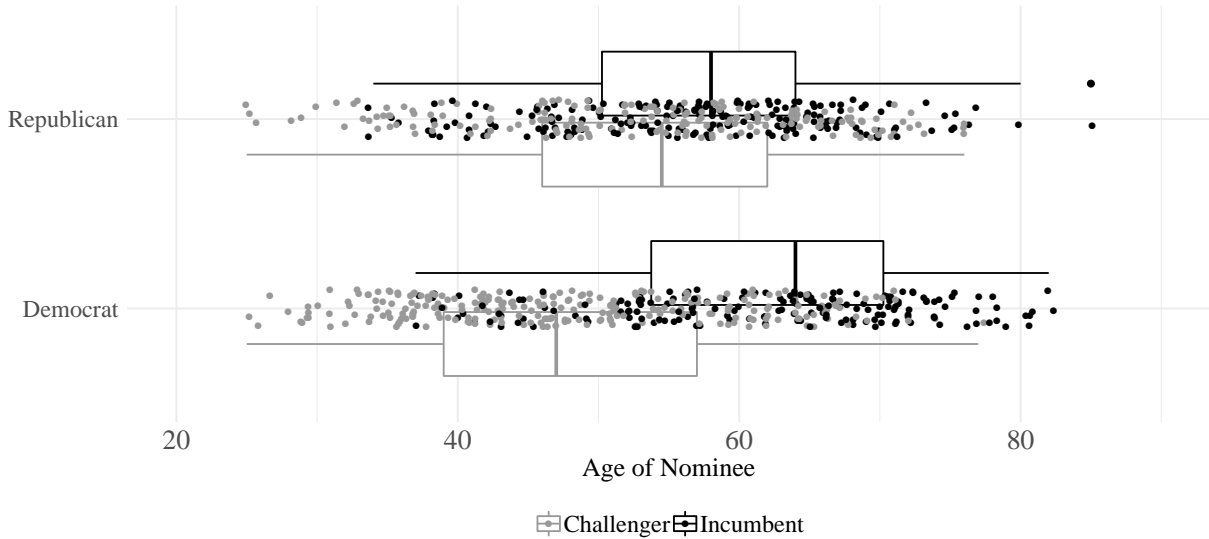


Figure 1: Age of Nominees for the House of Representatives

Note: This figure displays the distribution of the age of each major party nominee for the House of Representatives broken down by party and incumbency status.

years of age, I selected the more conservative measure of a youth candidate. Additionally, the vast majority of youth party members and youth candidates, as defined in this paper, would be classified as a Millennial, which is the generation most underrepresented in Congress. Overall about 12 percent of all Republican nominees and about 20 percent of all Democratic nominees were 40 years of age or younger.

In order to account for other factors that may influence the age of each nominee, I control for the median age of voters in each congressional district. Next, I consider whether each primary has a party incumbent, an opponent incumbent, or is taking place in a district with an open seat. I also consider whether each nominee was chosen via a contested primary, an uncontested primary, or a convention. In order to control for the ideological leanings of each congressional district I control for Trump’s 2016 district-level vote. Finally, I control for legislative professionalism using the Squire index (Squire 2017) and the type of primary used in each state according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (National Conference State Legislatures 2016).

Youth Engagement in State Political Party Organizations

There are at least six groups, whose purpose is to encourage greater political participation among young voters, aligned either formally or informally, through similar goals and value, with the national Democratic Party or the nation Republican Party. First, both parties have ally groups dedicated to encouraging participation among college students. The College Democrats describe themselves as the official student arm of the Democratic National Committees and meet on campuses across the country (Democratic National Committee 2018); similarly, the College Republican National Committee is an Independent 527 PAC with state federations in all 50 states and over 250,000 total members (College Republican National Committee 2019). Second, both parties have ally groups focused on activating young voters more generally. The Young Democrats of America are a non-federal 527 political organization dedicated to mobilizing individuals under the age of 36 and to elect Democrats (Young Democrats of America 2018). On the conservative side of the ideological spectrum, the Young Republican National Federation, also a 527 organization, engages Republicans between the ages of 18 to 40 (Young Republican National Federation 2016). Finally, both parties have ally groups intended to recruit individuals who are not yet old enough to vote or who are newly registered to vote. The High School Democrats of America are currently active in 47 states and territories with a goal of providing a outlet for high school students active in politics (High School Democrats of America 2019) and the National Teen Age Republicans a political group targeted at high school students that has clubs in every state (National Teenage Republicans 2019).

At the state-level, political parties vary in regard to whether they recognize the state-level chapters of these organizations as auxiliary groups and whether these groups are granted party membership within the formal party organization. Some state parties grant the organization's president, or another member, representation with the power fo vote on matters before the party. Other parties allow representative(s) from these organizations to attend party meetings without granting them voting rights. Still other parties set quotas for the

number of youth members, but without formally granting these positions to members of auxiliary organizations. Finally, a fourth group of state parties do not grant any form of representation to these youth political groups, nor do they require certain party members to be younger than a specified age requirement.

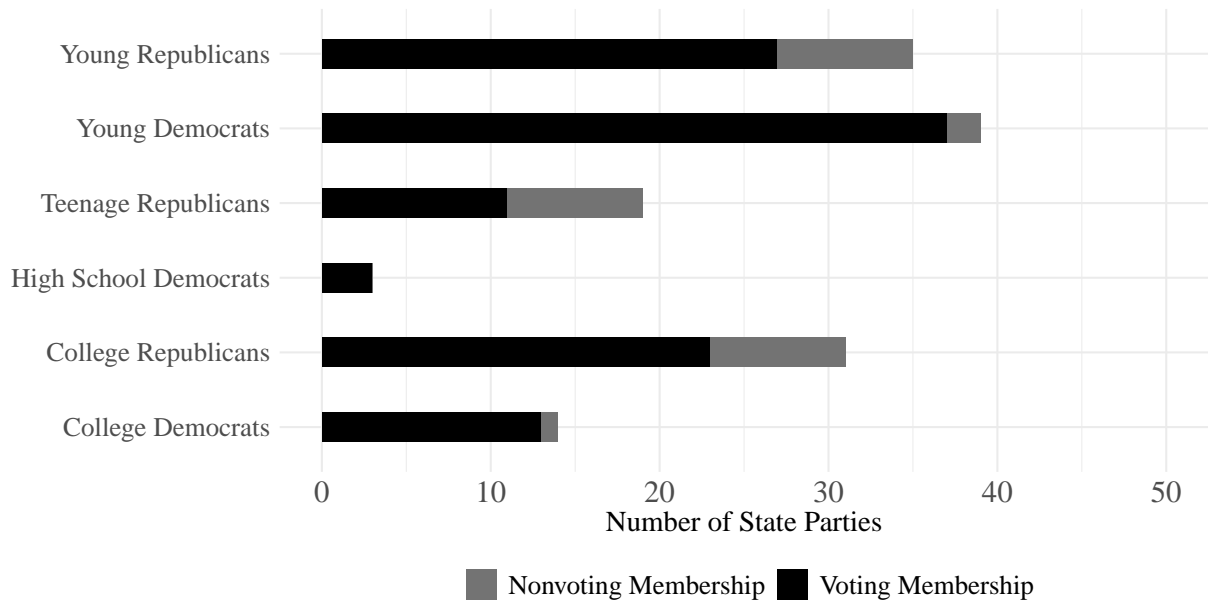


Figure 2: State Party Membership Status of Youth Organizations

Note: This figure displays the number of state Democratic and Republican parties that grant either voting or nonvoting party membership to their state’s youth in politics organizations. The Rhode Island Republican Party is excluded because their bylaws are not accessible.

Figure 2 displays the number of state Democratic and Republican parties that grant party membership to their state chapter of the Young Democrats/Republicans, College Democrats/Republicans, and/or High School Democrats/Teenage Republicans. Furthermore, it differentiates between parties that grant these organizations voting membership and parties that grant these organizations nonvoting membership. Overall, state Republican parties are more likely than state Democratic parties to grant any form of membership to a college group or a high school/teenage group, but Democratic parties are more likely to grant party membership to the young Democrats than Republican parties are to grant membership to the young Republicans. 23 Republican state parties grant voting party membership to the

appropriate state federation of the College Republicans and 8 Republican state parties grant nonvoting party membership to the appropriate state federation of the College Republicans. In comparison, 13 state Democratic parties grant voting membership the College Democrats and 1 party grants nonvoting membership. 11 state Republican parties grant voting membership to the Teenage Republicans and another 8 parties grant nonvoting membership. On the Democratic side, the High School Democrats do not receive much representation in state Democratic parties with only 3 parties granting voting membership. Finally, 35 state Republican parties grant membership, 27 voting and 8 nonvoting, to the state federation of the Young Republicans and 39 state Democratic parties grant membership, 37 voting and 2 nonvoting, to the state federation of the Young Democrats. In most cases, when one of these groups is granted formal party membership, either the organization president or another representative from the organization represents the organization at party meetings.

Some state political parties are so committed to increasing formal youth representation in the party that they go beyond partnering with the Young Democrats/Republicans and actually require a certain number of formal party members to be meet an age requirements. For example, not only does the Idaho Republican Party grant voting membership to both the state chapters of the Young Republicans and College Republicans, and nonvoting membership to the state chapter of the Teenage Republicans, each county elects a state youth committee member, someone between the age of 18 and 40, to represent the county on the state central committee. Similarly, in the Alaska Democratic Party, the party committee from each state house district elects a Young Democrat, can be up to the age of 36, to serve on the party's state central committee. Given this variation in how committed each party is to maintaining formal youth membership, Table 1 displays summary statistics for the number of youth members in each state political party with the power to vote on party affairs.⁶ As seen in the table, the number of voting youth members in the Idaho Republican

⁶I determine the number number of voting youth member in each party by adding up the number of voting members from one of the organizations outlined in Figure 2 and any other members explicitly identified as youth members in the party's bylaws.

Party (46) and the Alaska Democratic Party (42) are outliers and not the norm. The mean number of voting youth members in state Democratic parties is 2.84 and mean number of voting youth members in state Republican parties is 2.63. Moreover the median number of voting youth members in state political party is one, and in almost every case this lone youth member is a representative from one of the organizations outlined in Figure 2. In order account for outliers, when I run my analysis, my main independent variable is the number of voting youth members in each party capped at 5. There are only 10 state parties with five or more voting youth members and only 5 state parties with more than 10 voting youth members.

Table 1: Voting Youth Members of State Political Parties

	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	N
Democrats	2.84	1	0	42	6.19	50
Republicans	2.63	1	0	46	6.75	49

Results

Figure 3 displays the relationship between the degree of youth diversity in each state political party and two forms of youth political participation. Specifically, the y-axis displays the percentage of individuals, between the ages of 18 and 34, who were registered to vote and who voted in the 2018 General Election, according to the United States Census Bureau. Unfortunately, since these measures are available at the state-level and are not broken down by political party, it is necessary to also aggregate my measure of youth diversity in each state political party to the state-level. As a result, the x-axis displays the number of voting youth party members in either of the two major political parties in each state. Since, as stated previously, my measure of youth diversity in each party ranges from zero to five, the aggregated score for each state ranges from zero to ten. While this means it is not possible to examine the theory at the party-level, Figure 3 should still give some indication of whether states with youth diverse parties see higher levels of youth political participation.

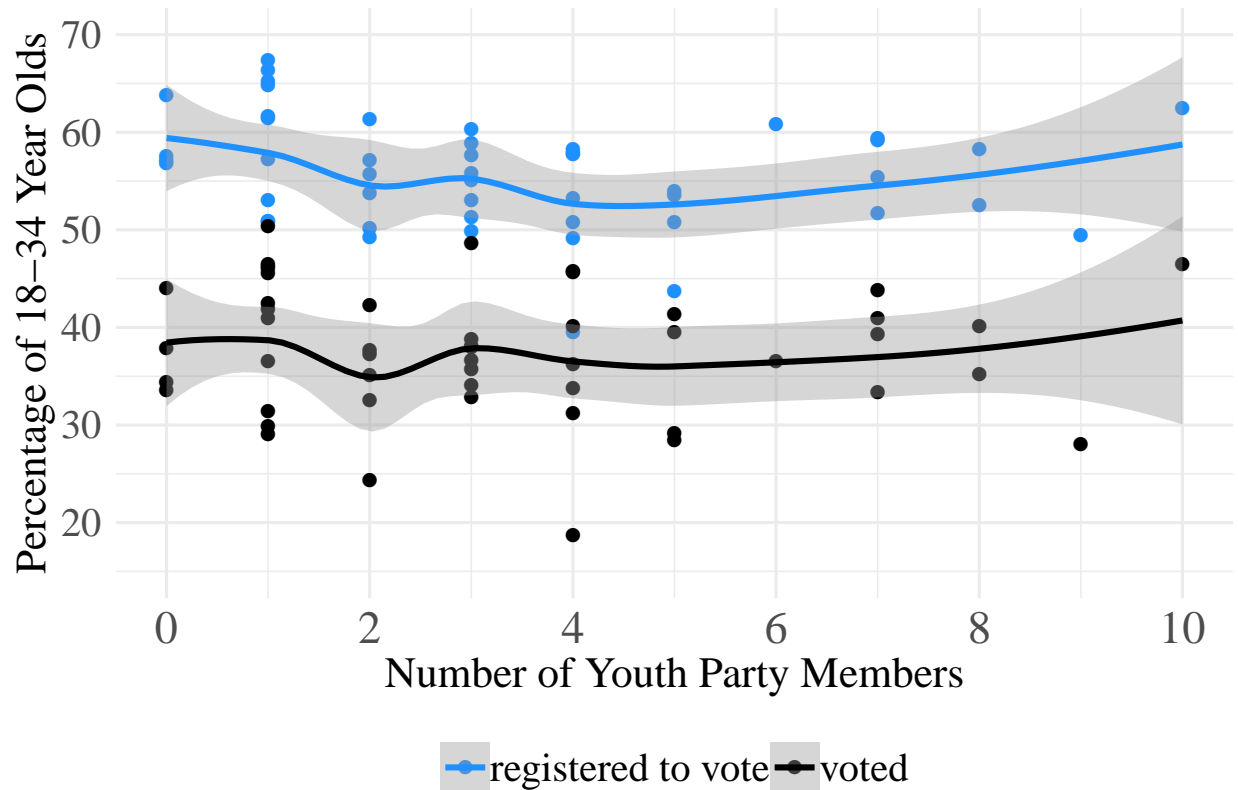


Figure 3: Youth Political Participation During the 2018 General Election

Note: This figure displays a scatterplot of the percentage of individuals between the ages of 18 and 34 who were registered to vote and who voted in the 2018 general election compared to the degree of youth diversity in the two major political party organizations in each state.

Overall, there appears to be no relationship between youth diversity in state party organizations and youth voter registration, displayed by the blue fit line, and youth voter turnout, displayed by the black fit line. While Virginia, which is the only state where both political parties guarantee voting membership to at least five youth members and thus is the only state in Figure 3 to receive a score of 10, ranks high in both youth voter registration, about 62 percent, and youth voter turnout, about 46 percent, there are states with less youth diverse parties that saw similar rates of youth political participation. In 2018, youth voter registration ranged between 50 and 60 percent and youth voter turnout ranged between 35 and 45 percent across each state. On average, these estimates were stable across my measure of youth party members.

While there appears to be no relationship between party diversity and youth political participation, even when only considering a bivariate relationship, it is possible that using data that has been aggregated to the state-level masks any true relationship. For example, my examination of each state party's bylaws revealed the Idaho Republican Party has made a strong commitment to incorporating youth individuals in to their party's formal membership; however, the Idaho Democratic Party's bylaws reveal they have not done the same. As a result, theory would predict that young Republicans would be more politically active in Idaho than would be young Democrats, but examining this possibility is not possible with aggregated data. Unfortunately, data on political participation broken down by both political party and age is difficult to collect. For example, scholars have long noted the difficulties of measuring voting turnout during congressional primary elections (Boatright 2014, p. 85) and doing so does not even need to consider the factor of age. Future research needs come up with creative ways of measuring youth political participation while also considering party identification.

Table 2 displays three logistic regression models which estimate whether state political parties with more youth members are more likely to have younger nominees for Congress, as measured by whether the nominee is up to the age of 40.⁷ The first column displays the results of all observations in the aggregate, the second column displays the results for Democratic primaries and the third column displays the results for Republican primaries. Overall, it seems that the degree of youth diversity in state political parties is only influential on the emergence of young candidates in Democratic primaries. Specifically, as state Democratic parties grant formal voting party membership to more youth members, their likelihood of

⁷Before running the analysis, I removed all observations for primaries where no candidates filed for office. Additionally, I removed observations from all districts in black primary states where the general election ended up being contested between two members of the same party or between a third party candidate and a major party candidate. As seen in the appendix, I run several different iterations of this analysis and across all of them, my findings are consistent. Specifically, I restrict my analysis to only states using traditional partisan primaries as opposed to blanket primaries or conventions (see Table 3), I restrict my analysis to only primaries where there was no party incumbent (see Table 4), and I restrict my analysis to remove districts with an open seat (see Table 5) and the results in each model are consistent.

Table 2: Congressional Nominees up to 40

	All	Democratic	Republican
Constant	-3.01*	-3.05	-2.99
	(1.34)	(1.77)	(2.20)
Party Youth Members	0.09	0.26*	-0.14
	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.14)
Democratic Primary	0.27		
	(0.23)		
Median Voter Age	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Opponent Incumbent	1.62*	2.06*	1.35*
	(0.26)	(0.55)	(0.54)
Open Seat	1.21*	1.55*	1.19*
	(0.34)	(0.57)	(0.50)
Uncontested Primary	-0.25	-0.30	-0.13
	(0.24)	(0.34)	(0.37)
Convention	1.04	1.22	1.42
	(0.65)	(1.08)	(0.94)
Trump Vote	0.02*	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Professionalism	1.72	1.30	3.05
	(1.17)	(1.63)	(1.79)
Partially Closed	-0.56	-0.68	-0.29
	(0.54)	(0.70)	(0.92)
Partially Open	-0.09	0.23	-0.31
	(0.39)	(0.53)	(0.60)
Open to Unaffiliated Voters	0.20	0.98*	-0.91
	(0.39)	(0.49)	(0.83)
Open	0.46	0.69	0.38
	(0.33)	(0.44)	(0.51)
Blanket	-0.07	0.22	-0.17
	(0.52)	(0.74)	(0.76)
N	787	411	376
AIC	643.85	374.21	281.08
BIC	923.94	599.25	501.13
$\log L$	-261.92	-131.11	-84.54

Standard errors in parentheses

* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

seeing a youth nominee increases.⁸ Additionally, since incumbent members of Congress are

⁸This finding remains even after controlling for the potential that some states may be predisposed to seeing younger candidates for office. I replicate all of my findings three times, once while controlling for Elazar's eight subclassifications of political cultures (Elazar 1966) and twice while controlling for each state's geographic region. Specifically, I use the geographic regions used by the Census Bureau as well as the regions

on average older than other candidates for office, as expected, either party is more likely to see a youth nominee in districts where there is an open seat, or in districts where the incumbent represents the opposite party. Finally, in comparison to states that hold closed primary elections, Democratic parties in states with primaries that are open to unaffiliated voters are more likely to see youth nominees.

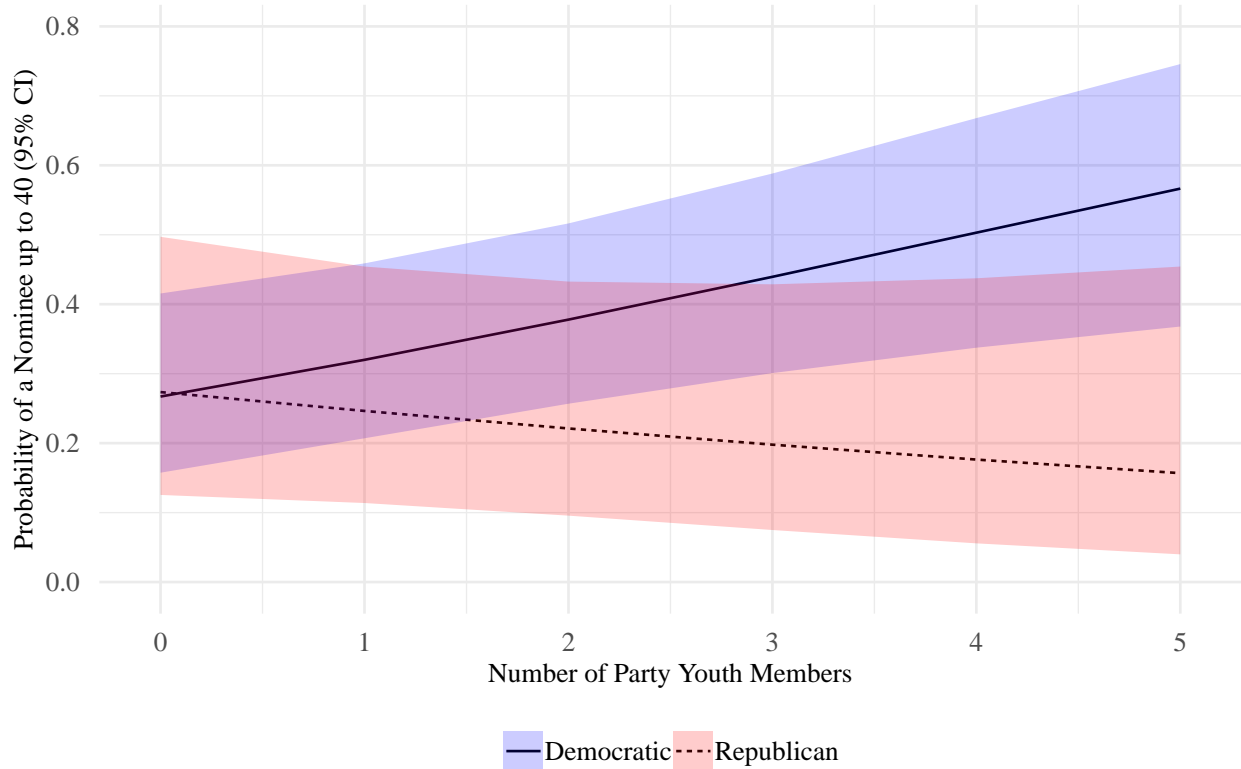


Figure 4: Predicted Probability of Nominee up to 40

Note: This figure displays the predicted probabilities and corresponding 95 percent confidence intervals of a state party organization have a youth nominee broken down by party and the degree of youth diversity in the state party organization. All other variables are held at the medians or modes.

In order to get a better idea of the magnitude of this effect, Figure 4 displays the predicted probabilities and corresponding 95 percent confidence interval of each party having a youth nominee based upon the number of youth members given formal voting membership in used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014). While I do not present these results for the sake of estimating predicted probabilities later in the paper, in all three cases my findings remain consistent.

their party. These predictions are calculated based upon models 2 and 3 in Table 2. Overall, when a state party does not guarantee voting membership to any youth members, that party, regardless of whether it is Democratic or Republican, has close to a 30 percent chance of having a youth nominee. However, as the number of voting youth members in a Democratic party increases, so does the probability of having a youth nominee. A state Democratic party with 5 voting youth members is predicted to have an almost 60 percent chance of having a youth nominee. This reveals that the influence of granting voting party membership to young individuals has the potential to be quite meaningful. While the confidence intervals on these predictions are quite large since they are based on a single election cycles, this relationship is statistically significant, as seen in Figure 2 and the likelihood of a Democratic youth nominee increase by about 6 percentage for each additional youth member in the party. In contrast, if anything, the likelihood of a state Republican party having a youth nominee slightly decreases as their number of voting youth members increases; although as seen in Table 2 this relationship is not statistically significant.

Discussion

Overall, I find that state Democratic parties are more likely to grant voting party membership to the Young Democrats than state Republican parties are to grant voting party membership to the Young Republicans. However, state Republican parties are more likely to grant voting party membership to the College Republicans or the Teenage Republicans than state Democratic parties are to grant voting party membership to College Democrats or the High School Democrats. Additionally, there is no evidence that this variation in youth state party membership influences levels of youth voter registration or voter turnout.

As the onset of the paper, I hoped to determine whether a lack of diversity in state political parties contributed the under representation of young people in Congress. I found this to be the case, albeit only indirectly. Specifically, I find that state Democratic parties

are more likely to have youth nominees for the House of Representatives as they increase the degree of youth representation in their state central committees. This finding is meaningful because assuming these youth nominees win as often as the party's other nominees, maintaining age diversity in state Democratic party organizations can be one way to increase youth representation in Congress.

The validity of these findings can be greatly approved upon in future research. First, this analysis should be expanded to cover multiple election cycles and potentially even elections for other offices. Moreover, as stated previously, new measures of political participation that take into account both an individual's partisan identification and their age need to be examined. In this regard, the best path forward likely revolves surveys and interviews of members of youth political organizations such as the Young Democrats or the College Republicans. Finally, future research should consider what drives specific state political parties to partner with youth political organizations and/or prioritize diverse memberships while other parties do not. Ultimately both Democratic and Republican parties should be making more of an effort to engage and mobilize young individuals in the hope to remain competitive in future elections.

References

- Abramson, Paul R. 1976. "Generational change and the decline of party identification in America: 1952–1974." *American Political Science Review* 70(2):469–478.
- Aldrich, John H. 1993. "Rational choice and turnout." *American journal of political science* pp. 246–278.
- Bennion, Elizabeth A. 2005. "Caught in the ground wars: Mobilizing voters during a competitive congressional campaign." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 601(1):123–141.
- Boatright, Robert G. 2014. *Congressional Primary Elections*. Routledge.
- Broockman, David E. 2013. "Black politicians are more intrinsically motivated to advance blacks' interests: A field experiment manipulating political incentives." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3):521–536.
- Broockman, David E. 2014. "Mobilizing candidates: Political actors strategically shape the candidate pool with personal appeals." *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 1(2):104–119.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2014. "Bureau of Labor Statistics, Geographic Information." <https://www.bls.gov/regions/home.htm>. [Online; accessed 12-August-2019].
- Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2002. "Self-interest, social security, and the distinctive participation patterns of senior citizens." *American Political Science Review* 96(3):565–574.
- Carpini, Michael X Delli. 2000. "Gen. com: Youth, civic engagement, and the new information environment." *Political communication* 17(4):341–349.
- Carpini, Michael X Delli & Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. Yale University Press.
- College Republican National Committee. 2019. "College Republican National Committee: History." <http://www.crnc.org/about/history/>. [Online; accessed 28-January-2019].
- Condon, Meghan & Matthew Holleque. 2013. "Entering politics: general self-efficacy and voting behavior among young people." *Political Psychology* 34(2):167–181.
- Costa, Mia, Brian F Schaffner & Alicia Prevost. 2018. "Walking the walk? Experiments on the effect of pledging to vote on youth turnout." *PloS one* 13(5):e0197066.
- Cross, William & Lisa Young. 2008. "Factors influencing the decision of the young politically engaged to join a political party: An investigation of the Canadian case." *Party Politics* 14(3):345–369.
- Curry, James M & Matthew R Haydon. 2018. "Lawmaker Age, Issue Salience, and Senior Representation in Congress." *American Politics Research* 46(4):567–595.

- Democratic National Committee. 2018. "Young People and Students." <https://democrats.org/people/young-people-and-students/>. [Online; accessed 28-January-2019].
- Denny, Kevin & Orla Doyle. 2009. "Does voting history matter? Analysing persistence in turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(1):17–35.
- Desilver, Drew. 2018. "Millennials, Gen X increase their ranks in the House, especially among Democrats." <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/11/21/millennials-gen-x-increase-their-ranks-in-the-house-especially-among-democrats/>. [Online; accessed 10-January-2019].
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. "An economic theory of political action in a democracy." *Journal of political economy* 65(2):135–150.
- Elazar, Daniel J. 1966. *American federalism: A view from the states*. Crowell.
- Flanagan, Constance. 2003. "Developmental roots of political engagement." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 36(2):257–261.
- Fry, Richard. 2018. "Millennials are the largest generation in the U.S. labor force." <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/>. [Online; accessed 10-January-2019].
- Gerber, Alan S, Donald P Green & Ron Shachar. 2003. "Voting may be habit-forming: evidence from a randomized field experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(3):540–550.
- Hart, Daniel & James Youniss. 2018. *Renewing democracy in young America*. Oxford University Press.
- High School Democrats of America. 2019. "High School Democrats of America." <https://hsdems.org/>. [Online; accessed 29-January-2019].
- Hillygus, D Sunshine. 2005. "The missing link: Exploring the relationship between higher education and political engagement." *Political behavior* 27(1):25–47.
- Holbein, John B & D Sunshine Hillygus. 2016. "Making young voters: the impact of pre-registration on youth turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(2):364–382.
- Hooghe, Marc, Dietlind Stolle & Patrick Stouthuysen. 2004. "Head start in politics: The recruitment function of youth organizations of political parties in Belgium (Flanders)." *Party Politics* 10(2):193–212.
- Kamarck, Elaine C & Alexander Podkul. 2018. "Political Polarization and Congressional Candidates in the 2018 Primaries." <https://www.brookings.edu/multi-chapter-report/political-polarization-and-congressional-candidates-in-the-2018-primaries/>. [Online; accessed 12-March-2019].

- Lawless, Jennifer L & Richard Logan Fox. 2015. *Running from office: Why young Americans are turned off to politics*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Leighley, Jan E & Jonathan Nagler. 2014. *Who votes now?: Demographics, issues, inequality, and turnout in the United States*. Princeton University Press.
- Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent 'yes'." *The Journal of Politics* 61(3):628–657.
- Mettler, Suzanne. 2002. "Bringing the state back in to civic engagement: Policy feedback effects of the GI Bill for World War II veterans." *American Political Science Review* 96(2):351–365.
- Milner, Henry. 2010. *The internet generation: engaged citizens or political dropouts*. UPNE.
- National Conference State Legislatures. 2016. "National Conference of State Legislatures, State Primary Election Systems." http://www.ncsl.org/documents/Elections/Primary_Types_Table_2017.pdf. [Online; accessed 1-May-2019].
- National Teenage Republicans. 2019. "National Teen Age Republicans: About." <https://teenagerepublicans.org/about/>. [Online; accessed 29-January-2019].
- Nickerson, David W. 2006. "Hunting the elusive young voter." *Journal of Political Marketing* 5(3):47–69.
- Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1967. *The concept of representation*. Univ of California Press.
- Plutzer, Eric. 2002. "Becoming a habitual voter: Inertia, resources, and growth in young adulthood." *American political science review* 96(1):41–56.
- Pomante, Michael. 2017. "An Examination of US Presidential Candidates and How They Mobilize Youth." *Open Journal of Political Science* 7(04):473.
- Pomante, Michael J & Scot Schraufnagel. 2015. "Candidate age and youth voter turnout." *American Politics Research* 43(3):479–503.
- Putnam, Robert D. 2001. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.
- Quintelier, Ellen. 2008. "Who is politically active: The athlete, the scout member or the environmental activist? Young people, voluntary engagement and political participation." *Acta sociologica* 51(4):355–370.
- Rosentiel, Tom, Scott Keeter, Juliana Horowitz & Alec Tyson. 2008. "Young Voters in the 2008 Election." <https://www.pewresearch.org/2008/11/13/young-voters-in-the-2008-election/>. [Online; accessed 15-MArch-2019].
- Scarrow, Susan E & Burcu Gezgor. 2010. "Declining memberships, changing members? European political party members in a new era." *Party Politics* 16(6):823–843.

- Shames, Shauna L. 2017. *Out of the running: Why millennials reject political careers and why it matters*. NYU Press.
- Shea, Daniel M & John Green. 2007. "Local Parties and Mobilizing the Vote." *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties* pp. 217–30.
- Shea, Daniel M & Rebecca Harris. 2006. "Why bother? Because peer-to-peer programs can mobilize young voters." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(2):341–345.
- Smets, Kaat & Carolien Van Ham. 2013. "The embarrassment of riches? A meta-analysis of individual-level research on voter turnout." *Electoral studies* 32(2):344–359.
- Squire, Peverill. 2017. "A Squire Index Update." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 17(4):361–371.
- Swers, Michele L. 2013. *Women in the club: Gender and policy making in the Senate*. University of Chicago Press.
- Tate, Katherine. 2001. "The political representation of blacks in Congress: Does race matter?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* pp. 623–638.
- Tedesco, John C, Mitchell S McKinney & Lynda Lee Kaid. 2007. "On the young voters' agenda: exploring issue salience during the 2004 presidential election." *American Behavioral Scientist* 50(9):1290–1297.
- Terriquez, Veronica. 2015. "Training young activists: Grassroots organizing and youths' civic and political trajectories." *Sociological perspectives* 58(2):223–242.
- Torney-Purta, Judith. 2001. "Civic knowledge, beliefs about democratic institutions, and civic engagement among 14-year-olds." *Prospects* 31(3):279–292.
- Twenge, Jean M, Nathan Honeycutt, Radmila Prislina & Ryne A Sherman. 2016. "More polarized but more independent: political party identification and ideological self-categorization among US adults, college students, and late adolescents, 1970-2015." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 42(10):1364–1383.
- Ulbig, Stacy G & Tamara Waggener. 2011. "Getting registered and getting to the polls: The impact of voter registration strategy and information provision on turnout of college students." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44(3):544–551.
- United States Census Bureau. 2019. "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2018." <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-583.html>. [Online; accessed 1-August-2019].
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman & Henry E Brady. 1995. *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press.
- Wattenberg, Martin P. 2012. *Is voting for young people?* 3 ed. Pearson.

- Webster, Steven W & Andrew W Pierce. 2019. "Older, younger, or more similar? The use of age as a voting heuristic." *Social Science Quarterly* 100(3):635–652.
- Wolfinger, Raymond E & Steven J Rosenstone. 1980. *Who votes?* Vol. 22 Yale University Press.
- Young Democrats of America. 2018. "About the Young Democrats of America." <https://www.yda.org/about>. [Online; accessed 29-January-2019].
- Young Republican National Federation. 2016. "Young Republican National Federation: About." <http://yrnf.gop/about/>. [Online; accessed 29-January-2019].
- Zhou, Li. 2019. "A historic new Congress will be sworn in today." <https://www.vox.com/2018/12/6/18119733/congress-diversity-women-election-good-news>. [Online; accessed 19-August-2019].

Appendix

Table 3: Congressional Nominees up to 40 (No Blanket Primaries or Conventions)

	All	Democratic	Republican
Constant	-4.27*	-3.61	-5.04
	(1.53)	(1.97)	(2.69)
Party Youth Members	0.12	0.29*	-0.39
	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.27)
Democratic Primary	0.36		
	(0.27)		
Median Voter Age	0.00	-0.01	0.03
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.07)
Opponent Incumbent	1.44*	2.02*	0.87
	(0.30)	(0.61)	(0.66)
Open Seat	1.24*	1.44*	1.52*
	(0.36)	(0.61)	(0.54)
Uncontested Primary	-0.05	-0.15	0.18
	(0.26)	(0.35)	(0.44)
Trump Vote	0.01	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Professionalism	1.42	0.06	3.46
	(1.45)	(1.90)	(2.39)
Partially Closed	-0.67	-0.86	0.59
	(0.63)	(0.77)	(1.39)
Partially Open	0.04	0.34	-0.13
	(0.40)	(0.54)	(0.62)
Open to Unaffiliated Voters	0.21	0.93	-0.62
	(0.39)	(0.49)	(0.85)
Open	0.60	0.88	0.52
	(0.34)	(0.47)	(0.56)
N	640	337	303
AIC	520.53	316.32	206.43
BIC	752.53	499.68	384.69
$\log L$	-208.26	-110.16	-55.21

Standard errors in parentheses

* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

Table 4: Congressional Nominees up to 40 (No Races with Party Incumbent)

	All	Democratic	Republican
Constant	-1.88 (1.56)	-1.60 (2.05)	-1.06 (2.78)
Party Youth Members	0.11 (0.08)	0.22* (0.11)	-0.12 (0.18)
Democratic Primary	0.44 (0.32)		
Median Voter Age	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.09 (0.07)
Open Seat	-0.30 (0.29)	-0.50 (0.39)	-0.33 (0.60)
Uncontested Primary	0.00 (0.28)	0.09 (0.37)	-0.07 (0.48)
Convention	1.31 (0.71)	1.37 (1.17)	1.43 (1.06)
Trump Vote	0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Professionalism	1.64 (1.36)	0.27 (1.80)	5.29* (2.51)
Partially Closed	-0.04 (0.58)	-0.29 (0.73)	0.78 (1.05)
Partially Open	0.16 (0.46)	0.56 (0.57)	-0.44 (0.90)
Open to Unaffiliated Voters	0.47 (0.46)	0.99 (0.58)	-0.21 (0.90)
Open	0.86* (0.38)	0.95 (0.49)	1.17 (0.67)
Blanket	0.36 (0.61)	1.05 (0.82)	-0.37 (1.07)
N	423	246	177
AIC	471.54	305.97	177.89
BIC	698.20	488.25	343.05
$\log L$	-179.77	-100.99	-36.94

Standard errors in parentheses

* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

Table 5: Congressional Nominees up to 40 (No Open Seat Races)

	All	Democratic	Republican
Constant	-2.71 (1.47)	-3.44 (1.97)	-1.85 (2.42)
Party Youth Members	0.13 (0.08)	0.27* (0.11)	-0.02 (0.16)
Democratic Primary	0.27 (0.26)		
Median Voter Age	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.06 (0.06)
Opponent Incumbent	1.64* (0.27)	2.22* (0.60)	1.42* (0.59)
Uncontested Primary	-0.22 (0.25)	-0.32 (0.36)	0.09 (0.40)
Convention	1.74* (0.75)	2.19 (1.21)	2.03 (1.12)
Trump Vote	0.02* (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Professionalism	1.96 (1.34)	2.63 (1.88)	1.77 (1.98)
Partially Closed	-0.82 (0.62)	-0.85 (0.79)	-0.98 (1.11)
Partially Open	-0.23 (0.44)	0.12 (0.59)	-0.46 (0.67)
Open to Unaffiliated Voters	0.27 (0.43)	1.11* (0.55)	-0.87 (0.87)
Open	0.26 (0.37)	0.72 (0.50)	-0.22 (0.61)
Blanket	-0.24 (0.59)	-0.25 (0.84)	-0.24 (0.84)
N	668	350	318
AIC	524.09	309.79	228.40
BIC	776.33	510.41	424.02
$\log L$	-206.04	-102.90	-62.20

Standard errors in parentheses

* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$