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EARLY ELECTION PROJECTIONS: DO THEY AFFECT VOTER TURNOUT?

Shelley Snow*

The political emphasis in the United States is nominally on participatory democracy, and yet an increasing number of people are not taking advantage of their greatest opportunity to participate—the vote. Voter turnout in this country is declining, and everyone involved in the political process is concerned about that decline. One contribution to this decline, according to many politicians, voting rights groups, and others, is the influence of national television and radio broadcasts of early election predictions and projections on the voting behavior of the American electorate. Their concern seems to be that if Westerners, particularly those living in the five Pacific states (California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii), hear the projected outcome of an election before the polls close, they will be less likely to get out and vote. The early predictions, they feel, are not conducive to maintaining an atmosphere of fair elections and maximum participation. The networks, as well as many academicians, contend, however, that there is not enough evidence to show that early election predictions have any influence on voting behavior, and that any attempts to restrict the broadcasting would violate media rights guaranteed by the First Amendment. This paper will examine the arguments of both sides in order to determine what problems, if any, exist in early election broadcasts.

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History of Election Broadcasting

The changes in election reporting over the past sixty years can be attributed to the development of broadcasting, computer, and polling technologies—first in radio and later in television. In earlier election reporting, networks often hired field assistants to report newly counted returns in various jurisdictions. The process was slow and inaccurate, however, and the networks had to spend so much time gathering and analyzing the data that little air time was given to the returns.

The year 1952 brought the advent of both television and computer processing, changing the course of network election broadcasts. The computers, though primitive, could count and analyze votes more efficiently, and announcements could be made more quickly. However, the networks realized the potential inaccuracy of computer returns, and used the analysis with caution. In 1956, the networks began using more advanced video and computer technology, using for the first time elaborate visual aids such as maps that lit up to illustrate different voting regions for viewers. Two trends began in 1956: an increased emphasis on special reports, and the practice of commenting on a race and predicting its outcome.

Beginning in 1960, the networks subtly shifted their mode of election reporting and took on a more aggressive way of broadcasting election-night news: rather than passively reporting vote results, they began interpreting and analyzing the data for their viewers. In 1960, the race was not only between the two presidential candidates but also between the networks to see who could present the results of that close election race first.
The competition between networks increased in 1964, to the point that for the first time early election predictions were given even before the West Coast polls closed. A cooperative effort between the three networks, called the National (now News) Election Service (NEW), was established to promote efficiency in returns and analysis. The NEW sped up network returns considerably, enabling them to give early projections, and promoting extensive discussion over the merits and effects of such broadcasts. Nineteen sixty-four was also the first year that research was conducted into the problem of early election projections. Congressional hearings were held in 1967 to study the perceived problems.

The 1968 and 1972 elections were much the same, except that the 1972 race was so lopsided, the outcome was evident with or without news commentaries. One development which became clear, however, was that networks were relying less on actual vote count and more on other data such as sample data analysis and exit polls.

The 1980 election was characterized by cries of outrage from politicians and voting rights groups that the early projections are unethical and imposing. More hearings were held to again go through the arguments that had been heard since before 1960.

Criticism of the networks' projections ranges from mild comment to bitter diatribe. Most of the critics believe that the early election projections are disruptive to the electoral process, that early projections demean the value of the individual vote (particularly of those in the West), and therefore carry no useful societal purpose. Some witnesses in the 1981 hearings before Congress testified of the "terrible side effects" of the "modern reporting machines of 1980," and quoted some discouraged voters as saying, "We have
been cheated!" and "We don't count! Why bother to vote?"
Speaking of the "infection by projection" problem, San Francisco Mayor Diane Feinstein said, "Clearly, the vote of the West is not equal to the vote of the East." Marvin Field of San Francisco's Field Research Corporation called the networks' reporting "irresponsible." "My feeling is, whether there was a drop-off in turnout or not, it's psychologically wrong for quasi-officials to declare a winner before the polls are closed." On this note, Truman Campbell, Chairman of the California State Republican Party said, "I think the analogy is that nobody goes to a ballgame in the ninth inning when the score is 100 to nothing. And that's just about what's happened here." Some even claim that the predictions "are in the nature of a created event by the networks, seemingly for the sole purpose of fostering inter-network competition."

Many critics cite the Supreme Court decision in CBS vs. The Democratic National Committee which states:

Congress intended to permit private broadcasting to develop with the widest journalistic freedom consistent with its public obligation. Only when the interests of the public are found to outweigh the private journalistic interests of the broadcaster will government power be asserted within the framework of the Act. Is the public interest in this case outweighed by private journalistic enterprises? Is the public interest at stake at all? This criticism of the networks basically assumes that exposure to election predictions and projections immediately before voting is sufficient to make the potential voter act in a way somehow different from how he would have, had he not heard the projections.
The networks and the majority of academicians who have studied this problem argue differently. The networks say that there is no definitive proof whatsoever that projections have an effect on voting behavior--either to make a voter change his intended vote or to decide not to vote at all. Statistical evidence in study after study, beginning in 1964, shows no influence on voter behavior, or an influence so small that it can hardly be detected. William Leonard, President of CBS, said:

Our position is clear and uncomplicated. Our job is to report quickly and accurately as we can information we have on any subject, including election results. To . . . "exercise voluntary restraint" and withhold information we know to be true would be a violation of our fundamental responsibility.

Warren Mitofsky, Director of the CBS Election and Survey Unit, said in a telephone interview:

While you're suggesting that the people in California shouldn't know the votes in Florida (i.e., the Eastern States), what you're also saying is that people in Florida shouldn't know it either. Now I don't think these people would believe that there's a right not to know. California's wish to keep the votes secret really is infringing on Florida's right to know how they've done and what they've (the polling places) making publicly available.

The networks use not only broadcasts to make election-night projections, but also a number of other modes including telephone calls, telegrams, news wire services, and newspapers. "Are we to muzzle every possible avenue of information about the progress of the election for the entire election
day and night?\textsuperscript{13} The media have stated that they are willing to listen,\textsuperscript{14} but to solid evidence--not perceived notions.

Before one considers broadcasts and their effect, one must first consider basic theories concerning the media. First, for the media to have an impact on an individual, that individual must pay attention to it. In other words, not only must one watch the broadcast, one must also listen to it. It has been proven that both attention and recall of news is greatest among the highly interested--the most attentive and the strong partisans.\textsuperscript{15} One must consider also an effect called "selective exposure," which is the tendency to select out of broadcasts only information that conforms to ideas and values.\textsuperscript{16} Even an individual listening to the news might select only those things he wishes to hear and ignore those he does not wish to hear, such as the fact that his preferred candidate is purportedly losing. Even if the voter does listen to the news and does not subconsciously select out the information that his candidate is losing in certain states, it may not affect his behavior. Wolfinger and Rosenstone report that "regardless of how firmly a person believes his vote will not affect the outcome, the likelihood that he will vote increases with his interest in the election."\textsuperscript{17}

With this basic information, we can address the issue at hand by considering two points: first, whether there is a gross influence on individual behavior; and second, whether the early projections have a net result on the actual outcome of the election. These will be discussed by exploring three separate subtopics: (1) potential and actual level of exposure; (2) effects of exposure on the vote switching; and (3) effects of exposure on turnout.
Exposure to Returns and Time of Exposure

Ironically, this is the area in which "anti-projectionists" (those who criticize early election projections) feel they hold the strongest argument against early projections, and yet it is the one area in which there is the most agreement. The actual time the networks began their projections in any given election year is recorded and is therefore incontrovertible. In 1960, all three networks projected Kennedy as the winner by 10:30 p.m. EST (half hour before most polls close in the West). In 1964 the presidential victory was so lopsided (even before the election itself began) that calls were made fairly early, precipitating dissent from the West. In 1968, the race was so close it was difficult to make predictions until the race was completely over, long after all the polls had closed.

Like 1964, the race in 1972 appeared from the start to be a landslide, so that all the networks were off the air by 2:00 a.m. EST, again precipitating cries of outrage. The 1976 election was much like the 1968 race--too close to call--and the first prediction came at 3:20 a.m. EST Wednesday morning. The 1980 presidential race, however, was different from the previous races; the race was deemed as close, but NBC predicted Reagan the winner at 8:15 p.m. EST. ABC declared Reagan the winner at 9:52 p.m., and CBS at 10:32 p.m. The interesting twist in this election was the concession of the race's incumbent--Carter--which came at 9:45 p.m. EST, before either ABC or CBS had predicted a winner. Thus, the only prediction that could possibly have influenced Western votes in the 1980 race was the NBC broadcast, given only an hour and a half before Carter's concession speech. The anti-projectionists claim that these early projections are the main problem in the issue of influence on voting behavior; at least in the case of the 1980 election, many more issues were centrally involved.
But while the times of the returns are incontrovertible, the actual effects of the exposure to returns are not. To determine actual effects of exposure on voting behavior we must first single out the potential effects of exposure on behavior. The potential for any voter to be exposed to returns can only arise, obviously, after the broadcasts have started. Since most voters in the United States have a television set or radio, or access to one, the potential for exposure to returns at any given time after they have started is fairly high. According to one study, two-thirds of the studied population recognized they had been exposed to predictions at one time during the elections day. Another study claimed that 92 to 96 percent of its studied population had been exposed. Therefore, in the course of the day a large proportion of the population heard or watched some kind of election news.

In determining the influence of voting behavior, we must look at that portion of the eligible voting population that voted after the broadcasts had begun. Most sources seem to agree that, particularly in 1964, about two-thirds of the voting population had voted by the time the projections started at approximately 7:00 p.m. EST, given time for pre-result commentaries, etc. (see Table 1 in Appendix). One regional breakdown indicates that by 7:00 p.m. EST, 95 percent of the East had voted, 89 percent of the Central region, 69 percent of the Mountain region, and 64 percent in the Pacific region. Thus, a maximum of only 33 percent to 36 percent of the Western voters could potentially have been influenced by the broadcasts, assuming that 100 percent of that one-third had been listening or paying attention to any election news broadcasts. However, a noted study done by Aage Clausen, Study Director, Survey Research Center, at the University of Michigan, concluded that nationwide only 5 percent had heard an election broadcast
and voted afterward, and in the Pacific States he found only 14 percent (this study will be discussed below). In California Harold Mendelsohn found only 12 percent who had heard and voted afterwards, and Douglas Fuchs found only 13 percent. The small deviations in these three studies' statistics tends to give credence to their findings, and support to their theory that there is a statistically small number of people that actually hear the reports and vote afterwards.

Professor John E. Jackson at the University of Michigan, however, stated in a study that the networks in 1980 commented on the results of the election long before they actual declared any official results, thus accounting for the number of people that believed they heard the predictions earlier than they possibly could have. Therefore, people were influenced in their behavior by the media even before the actual network declarations were made. The rebuttal for this argument is that in an upcoming election, comments or even preliminary survey results can be seen or heard days and even weeks in advance. Thus, network commentaries have no relation to projections in that viewers understand commentaries are opinions, and projections are (nominally) based on actual results. To prove that many people hear about the election before results are broadcasted, Kurt Lang did a study and found that 14 percent of Eastern voters, who were not susceptible to broadcast projections before voting, had heard or seen something that indicated to them how the election was going.

Thus, only one-third of the Western voters, according to most reports, is potentially affected by early election broadcasts, and only 14 percent at most have been found to have listened to the reports and to have voted afterwards. To determine the actual effect on behavior, actual voter behavior must be studied. The only way behavior can feasibly and with any degree of scientific
accuracy be measured is by survey polls (which of course can be problematic in themselves if they are poorly worded or have biased or inaccessible questions, etc.). To measure change in voting behavior due to election-day broadcasts, a poll must measure pre-election intent and actual election behavior. Changes in intended and actual behavior may give us more clues as to possible effects of media on voting decisions.

Effects of Exposure on Vote Switching

"Vote switching," otherwise known as the "bandwagon" or "underdog" effect, is the change between pre-election candidate preference and post-report of voting. Vote switching and turnout (discussed in the next section) are the two main areas of voter behavior that anti-projectionists are concerned with. Their claim is that early predictions influence people to either change their vote intentions to vote for the reported winner (bandwagon effect); to change their intentions and vote for the reported loser (underdog effect); or not to vote at all even though they had intended to do so.23 Anti-projectionists fear that change in preference intention could change the outcome of an election. Senator Hartke in front of a Senate hearing fielded this hypothetical example:

The late President Kennedy won the 1960 National election by a 112,692 plurality vote. If one voter in each of the 173,000 voting precincts in the U.S. had switched his vote from Mr. Kennedy to Richard Nixon, Nixon would have won the popular vote. However, this switch in votes cast would not automatically have meant a different president in 1960.

Realistically, had there been a switch of one vote in Nixon's favor in
each of the 10,400 precincts in Illinois plus a switch of nine votes in each of the 5,000 precincts in Texas, Mr. Nixon would have tallied the required 270 electoral votes and would have been our president.

The question is, how likely is a voter to change his vote? Unlike the hypothetical example given above, quite a bit of statistical evidence has been gathered about vote switching.

An important consideration in examining vote switching is the time the voter made his decision about election. Common sense would tell us that more newly formed decisions about who to vote for or whether to vote at all would be more susceptible to influence by election predictions than would be decisions that had been made, for example, since the convention. According to Aage Clausen, the popular idea that a majority of people make their candidate choice late in the game is a fallacy. He says that only 2 to 4 percent of voters actually make their decisions on election day according to pre- and post-election interviews (see Table 2). In an analysis of the 1964 election, scholars such as Clausen, Mendelsohn, Lang and Fuchs made various conclusions concerning vote switching. First, the percentage of voters found to have reached their decision on election day was very small: Clausen, 4 percent; Lang, 4 percent; Mendelsohn, 8 percent. Second, the voters who were found to have switched their vote according to their polled voting intentions was also small: Clausen, 5 percent nationwide; Fuchs, not more than 4 percent; Mendelsohn, 3 percent at the most.

Dr. Clausen's survey divided the studied voters into two groups: group A, those who voted before broadcasts or who voted after but did not hear the broadcasts; and group B, those
who had voted after they heard the predictions. If the predictions did cause a change in preference, then group B would have a higher deviation from intentions. In fact, the proportion of switches is the same in both groups: one out of twenty. Thus, although this does not prove the predictions had no effect, neither does it support claims that they do produce changes in behavior. Also, not one of his 1,074 respondents mentioned election projections in connection with the reasons for his vote.

Like Clausen, Mendelsohn found that 97 percent of his 1,212 respondents voted as they said they would, with only 1 percent switching (two percent refused to say). Of that one percent (14 people), 12 voted for Goldwater and two for Johnson, indicating if anything a slight underdog effect. Warren Miller found similar results: four out of five eligible adult voters carried out their intentions. He says that there is no evidence exposure is associated with changes in behavior; in comparing voters who developed expectations about the result of the election as a result of hearing the predictions with those who heard but did not develop expectations, there was no difference in consistency of behavior (see Tables 3 and 4).

According to statistical evidence, then, the bandwagon or underdog effect does not seem to exist, or if so, in very minute percentages. Further evidence comes in the fact that 97 percent of Southern Californians polled disagreed with the statement: "If I have no clear preference, I like to be for the man who is running ahead." Unfortunately, the anti-projectionists do not seem to have any statistical evidence arguing the existence of bandwagon or underdog effects, so there is little to which to compare the presented evidence. However, they argue that the early election projections do more than to simply make a voter change his preference; more
important, the projections influence him not to go to the polls at all. It is toward this issue—the effect of projections on turnout—that they point most of their arguments and criticisms.

Effects of Exposure on Turnout

Of these three sections of the issue of media influence, this one is the most hotly debated. Voter turnout has been consistently dropping since 1960 (see Table 5), and politicians and voting rights groups want to find out why. Turnout dropped to a near low in the most recent presidential election, to 53.9 percent; this figure translates into nearly 74 million Americans who were eligible but failed to vote, the largest number in a presidential election in the nation's history, despite the surge of participation in the South. Turnout particularly in the West has been declining at a faster rate than in the rest of the country. The recent outcry, of course, is that media election coverage is responsible—in part if not completely—for the decline. The argument is that no one will get out and go to the polls and vote in an election they believe is already decided:

Common sense seems to indicate that a man who sits down to dinner just before going out to vote, switches on the TV and hears that so and so has already been declared the winner, might not engage himself in an exercise in futility.

In the three House hearings and one Senate hearing that have been held over the past 26 years, many have come forward to testify against the prediction procedures the networks use. March Fong Eu, California Secretary of State, testified that in 1980 her staff closely watched hour to hour percentages of voters going to the
polls, and based on those percentages judged the total percentage for the day to be 79.3 percent. However, only 77.24 percent actually voted, "suggesting a significant fall-off of participation after 5:00 p.m." She also cited a Field Institute Survey which found that 10 percent of those who said they were registered but failed to vote specifically blamed their failure on early projections. "That translates into some 401,000 non-voters." Former Congressman James Corman (CA) and Al Ullman (OR) both testified they believe their defeats were caused by early election projections, because, they said, participation declines hurt incumbents and media coverage cause that decline. A Los Angeles Times poll in 1980 showed that 2.4 percent of registered voters claimed they did not vote because of early projections, and an L.A. county registrar said turnout was down 1 percent from the 1976 election in hours after the broadcast time. The Director of the Committee for Study of the American Electorate also testified that turnout declined in three out of five Western states most affected by broadcasts, and therefore some elections were decided by a little as 25 votes (in the case of a County Supervisor) and 800 votes (in the case of some Congressmen). Not only does turnout potentially affect the outcome of presidential races, it also affects (and more drastically) outcomes in local elections.

Dr. John Jackson gives a fairly convincing argument for effect of exposure on turnout. In his study done in 1980, he defines the intent to vote as the probability of voting. He estimates the probability of a person voting after 6:00 p.m. EST as a function of their stated intent, time left to vote, region, and exposure. Using probability statistics he shows that the probability of turnout is less after six than before six. The media, he concludes, are responsible for that drop in probability. The two problems with this study, however, are (1) Can one use probability to
determine human behavior? and (2) While there may indeed by a drop in probability in turnout, there are many factors besides solely media influence that could account for the drop—particularly Carter's concessions at 6:45 PST in 1980.

The same basic problems are inherent in a Wolfinger study done in 1980. He tries to show that a 2.7 percent deviation from expected turnout to actual turnout "suggests that the networks did indeed affect Pacific voting in 1972." The problems other than equating the perceived drop in turnout with effects of the media are (1) in 1972 the only election on the California ballot was the presidential; and (2) the census data he used was gathered weeks after the election and represents only one random member per household.

The networks and the majority of academicians completely disagree with the claims of these politicians and voting rights groups. The networks are as concerned as anyone about declining voter turnout, but they have found no conclusive evidence to prove that their projections contribute to the decline. When dealing with the effect of exposure on turnout, as with the last section, it must be remembered that we are dealing with 12 to 14 percent of the eligible Western voters—those who had been exposed and voted afterwards. Also, we are only dealing with the 1964, 1974, and 1980 elections (the only ones in which early predictions were made), even though the 1980 race was an anomaly due to Carter's concession.

A number of studies done after 1964 show that the effect of influence, if any, was negligible. Miller found that the great majority of the voters were stable on preference and participation (according to intent). The proportions of those who changed either preference or participation were the same for those who were exposed and unexposed (see Table 3).
Mendelsohn found that of his 1,074 respondents, approximately 1 percent did not vote though they had intended to, and in a one-hour post-interview not one of them mentioned exposure to election broadcasts. Fuchs and Lang both found similar results using pre- and post-election interviews and statistics.

Epstein and Strom in particular have developed an interesting argument. They say that the West's declining voter turnout relative to the rest of the country is only indicative of a trend, since in five out of six past presidential elections (both with and without early projections) Western turnout has been less than in non-Southern non-Western states (see Table 6). In 1960 when the suspense was high, the rest of the country voted 4.4 percent more than the West. However, in 1964, with the broadcasts, the rest of the country only voted 1.5 percent more. And in 1972 Western turnout was actually higher than the rest of the country. If the assumption that network projections are reducing Western turnout is true, then in years when early predictions are made turnout should decrease substantially more. However, the opposite is true. In 1964, 1972, and 1980 Western turnout declines were less than for the rest of the non-Southern country. He concludes that "if anything, these data seem to indicate the perverse notion that early network projections cause Western turnout to increase!"

John Jackson criticizes the "unrealistic assumptions about elections and turnout" that these studies make, and says that many variables including salience of issues and candidate appeal "dominate these aggregate turnout statistics and thus obscure any impact on individual turnout for early reporting." This may be true; however, it does show that Western turnout in general is not declining simply because of media influence.
The big concern among voting rights groups now is that networks depend more on exit poll predictions instead of actual election returns. The problem with this, the critics say, is that exit poll results are prone to large error, and an inaccurate prediction could mislead viewers. While in 1980 only one network used exit polls to make projections, in 1982 all networks did. This indicates a growing trend in the use of exit polls, enabling networks to make earlier and earlier projections even further impairing the voting process.

According to Warren Mitofsky, though, exit polls are a "red herring." CBS has been using exit polls since 1967, and they only use the information gathered in the polls to supplement raw election results. While they will gauge the progress of a race using exit polls, they "never, ever call on election based or exit polls--period." While exit polls have the potential for abuse, they have been used fairly cautiously by the media, and do not presently appear to be a factor in changes in voter behavior.

Solutions and Conclusions

The solutions politicians have come up with to solve this perceived problem are many and varied. The networks themselves have suggested uniform polling hours, but some argue that some regions would sacrifice desirable voting times and there would be added expense in keeping polls open in late hours. Besides, the problems of exit poll predictions would still exist and would probably get worse. Some have suggested Sunday elections, but this might conflict with religious and recreational activities, would eliminate churches as polling places, and would entail substantial costs in opening public buildings on Sunday. A voting holiday has been proposed, but holidays cost the government $18 million per day, and
recreational alternatives would doubtless be more attractive than voting. Congressmen have also suggested prohibiting the release of any election results until all polls are closed, but voting rights groups say that will force networks to rely more heavily on exit polls. One last proposal would prohibit any broadcasting of predictions before all polls were closed, but the obvious First Amendment violations would prohibit this proposal from being passed.

The question is, should legislation be passed on a perceived notion? No completely conclusive evidence on either side of this debate has been drawn to date. Congress has been debating this issue for at least 20 years and has not passed any legislation on it, indicating strong doubt that a problem really exists. All the researchers and voting rights groups have been able to conclude is that maybe there is an influence on voter behavior from early election projections. One voting rights group study states that, while they found "sufficient evidence to warrant concern," the "evidence of impact of projections on voter turnout was indicative rather than conclusive" (emphasis added). While studies done to prove there is no relationship between early projections and voter behavior are inconclusive in the sense that they have not proven so beyond a shadow of a doubt, they are still highly reliable since one can never really demonstrate nonexistence scientifically. Overall, research has found little individual change in voter participation or preference during a campaign, and these findings have led to the generalization that the media has no discernible effect on voter behavior.

Besides the statistics, a close look at the logic—the basic assumptions—used by anti-projectionists will reveal a major discrepancy. The report done by the Committee on the Study of the American Electorate consists almost entirely of "proofs" that early election projections exist, and
therefore voter behavior is affected. The net-
works, though, fully concede to the allegations
that they project early results, but do not con-
cede to their effect on behavior. The logic of
the anti-projectionists runs like this: the decline
in voter turnout obviously results from the effect
of early election projections, since many people
will doubtless hear them, pay attention, and be
influenced in their behavior. Since there are so
many other potential long- and short-term forces
at work on turnout, the assumptions made about
the association between broadcasts and influence
are incomplete, and therefore are not valid. The
logic therefore is faulty.

One must also consider the three elections in
which early predictions were made--1964, 1972,
and 1980. In 1964 and 1972, the races were so
lopsided that a landslide had been predicted for
quite some time, and their outcomes were foregone
conclusions. As Warren Miller says, it is useful
to remember that election night broadcasts are
simply an extension of all the coverage that has
been going on during a campaign, and the crea-
tion of expectation concerning election results has
gone on for months before any national election.
The 1980 race was a bit different, however; the
race was deemed as close until the election start-
ed, and then the outcome was made readily ap-
parent. While the projections were indeed rela-
tively early, any statistics that might show that
the projections affected outcome are skewed by
Carter's concession, which came only an hour and
a half after the first network prediction, and
before the other two networks' predictions.

The problem in discussing an issue like this
is the vast discrepancy in reports; some scholars
using fairly similar techniques come up with
completely different findings. However, one
conclusion that can be drawn is that there is no
immediate emergency, and no qualified evidence to
call for a change in the present system. While
the networks should constantly be on guard to produce accurate results and to be certain that guesses are labeled as such, little can be done legislatively that would not infringe upon the media's First Amendment rights. The notion that "perception may be at least as important as the proof" should not dominate legislative motivation for action. In comparison with influences on voter turnout such as registration procedures or interest in the election, the influence of election night coverage seems small indeed. Instead of worrying about problems that might exist, Congress should invest its time and money into more pressing problems concerning voter turnout.
APPENDIX

TABLE 1

CUMULATIVE VOTING IN ALAMEDA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
NOVEMBER 3, 1964

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8 A.M.</th>
<th>9 A.M.</th>
<th>10 A.M.</th>
<th>11 A.M.</th>
<th>12 P.M.</th>
<th>1 P.M.</th>
<th>2 P.M.</th>
<th>3 P.M.</th>
<th>4 P.M.</th>
<th>5 P.M.</th>
<th>6 P.M.</th>
<th>7 P.M.</th>
<th>8 P.M.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POTENTIALLY AFFECTED VOTES

FULL NETWORK COVERAGE STARTED AT 1 P.M. P.S.T.

NOTE: PERCENTAGES BASED ON A SAMPLE OF 378,882 VOTERS OUT OF A TOTAL OF 435,255.

*Taken from Douglas Fuchs, "Election-day Radio-Television and Western Voting," Public Opinion Quarterly 30 (Summer 1966):229.
### TABLE 2
(In percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Decision</th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1964</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before the conventions</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the time of conventions</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the conventions</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last 2 weeks of campaign</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On election day</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE 3

*Turnover in pre-election intentions and election day behavior*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. No change from pre-election choice for President and pre-election intention to vote (or not to vote)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Changed in preference only; no change in participation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Changed, participation only (intended to vote but didn't or didn't intend to vote but did); no change in preference</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Changed on both preference and participation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=1383)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 4
(In percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>respondents felt he knew the outcome on election day because of information from the predictions he heard</th>
<th>Stable on preference and participation</th>
<th>Participation changed</th>
<th>Preference changed</th>
<th>Changed, on both</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: see above.*
TABLE 5

FIGURE 1-2 Turnout of Eligible Voters in Presidential and Congressional Elections, 1868-1980

*Taken from Wm. Flanigan and Nancy Zingale, Political Behavior of the American Electorate, 5th ed., p. 12.
### TABLE 6

Turnout in the South, West, and the Rest of the U.S., 1960-1980*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Southa (Change)</th>
<th>Westb (Change)</th>
<th>Non-South, Non-Westc (Change)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+5.2</td>
<td>-.1</td>
<td>-3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+5.4</td>
<td>-4.8</td>
<td>-2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+6.4</td>
<td>-.9</td>
<td>-5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+3.2</td>
<td>-6.8</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+1.9</td>
<td>-.7</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Regional turnout was calculated by dividing the estimated regional voting age population into the number of votes cast in the region. The data is taken from Statistical Abstract, 1979; Census Bureau, 1980, and Federal Election Commission 1981 as reported by Associated Press.

a. South includes the 11 former Confederate States.
b. West includes Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington.
c. The District of Columbia is included after 1960.

*Taken from Epstein and Strom, "Election Night Projections and West Coast Turnout," American Politics Quarterly 9 (October 1981): 482.
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 153.

3 Ibid., p. 154.


8 Ibid., p. 159.

ELECTION PROJECTIONS


16 Ibid., p. 155.


26 Clausen, pp. 164-65.

27 Miller, p. 212.

28 Lang, p. 245.

29 However, decline in turnout is not new to this country: between 1872-1920, turnout dropped from an all time high of 95 percent to a low of 48 percent.

30 Senate Report, p. 7.

31 However, Carter's concession speech at 6:45 p.m. PST doubtless contributed a great deal to the decline in after-six turnout.

32 Hearings 1981, pp. 115-16. The value of this survey is placed in doubt, however, when one considers that it was taken a full two and a half months after the election; and that the 10
percent mentioned only constituted 71 respondents, a hardly representative figure. There was also a high overreport of voting in this survey: 76.5 percent surveyed said they voted, an overreport of 25.9 percent.

33However, Epstein and Strom have proven that drops in participation usually help incumbents, and that the median range in turnout (of high and low turnouts in Western States' districts) was 39 percent in years with and without early predictions.

34Jackson, p. 633.


36Miller, p. 212.

37Mendelsohn, p. 224.


39Ibid., pp. 480-81.

40Jackson, p. 615-16.

41Non-Voter Study, p. 8.

42Mitofsky Interview.

43Non-Voter Study, p. 3.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


