

## **“You’ve Gone Too Far”:**

### **Social Pressure Mobilization, Reactance, and Individual Differences**

*Forthcoming in Journal of Political Marketing*

Richard E. Matland  
Department of Political Science  
Loyola University Chicago  
1032 W. Sheridan Road  
Chicago, IL 60660  
rmatlan@luc.edu  
773.508.7127

Gregg R. Murray  
Department of Political Science  
Texas Tech University  
Box 41015  
Lubbock, TX 79409  
g.murray@ttu.edu  
806.742.0167

#### **Abstract**

Important theoretical strides have been made in understanding how to mobilize voters. One especially promising technique encourages voting by suggesting to people their compliance with social norms to vote is being monitored. While several studies register increases in turnout with social pressure techniques, campaigns have failed to adopt them. Our previous research suggests this may be because of voter backlash against these techniques. In this article, we delve more deeply into partisan, sex, and age differences in voter backlash effects in an effort to identify subgroups that may not react to campaigns mobilizing their supporters by using these powerful techniques.

Key words: voter mobilization, turnout, social pressure, social norms, privacy, reactance, backlash, GOTV, campaigns, experiment.

## **“You’ve Gone Too Far”:**

### **Social Pressure Mobilization, Reactance, and Individual Differences**

Recent research shows social pressure can mobilize voters (Davenport, 2010; Gerber, Green, and Larimer, 2008, 2010; Mann, 2010; Panagopoulos, 2010).<sup>1</sup> In field experiments non-partisan get-out-the-vote (GOTV) mailers that include the individual’s recent voting history consistently yield turnout effects 4 to 6 percentage points above GOTV messages without a vote history. These effects persist regardless of whether the pressure exerted is a gentle nudge, as when presenting the individual’s voting record to them to suggest their voting history is public information, or the pressure is more akin to a strong twist of the arm, as when promising to shame non-voters publicly either by publishing their names in the local newspaper (Panagopoulos, 2010) or by sending a letter reporting who had voted (and not voted) to all neighborhood households after the election (Gerber, Green, and Larimer, 2008).

Despite the unambiguously positive effects of social pressure on turnout, practitioners have been hesitant to adopt these techniques (Issenberg, 2010). Normally we expect quick adoption of tools that effectively raise turnout. The likely reason for this hesitancy is a fear of psychological reactance or “backlash” from voters receiving the mailer (Green and Gerber, 2008; Mann, 2010). Campaigns are concerned such techniques will anger voters who may perceive the mailer as an invasion of their electoral privacy (Matland and Murray, 2012). We encountered backlash firsthand in conjunction with a mobilization field experiment using social pressure run during the 2010 general election. We received telephone calls from irate subjects who got a GOTV civic duty message which included a copy of their recent voting history, informing us that we had “gone too far” and that “this is none of your business.”

In this article we start by discussing the theoretical underpinnings of psychological reactance. In earlier work we found strong, negative reactance effects from social pressure mailers on electoral support and affective evaluations of the sponsor of the mailer (Matland and Murray, 2012). In this work we assess the sensitivity to social pressure mobilization of often-targeted subgroups. First, we provide theoretical reasons why one might expect differential backlash effects among specific subgroups against GOTV mailers using social pressure. Then, in an effort to identify viable, non-reactive targets for GOTV drives, we delve deeper to see if backlash differs across voters by party identification, sex, and age. We go on to describe our experimental research design, which uses jury pool participants to assess a hypothetical GOTV mailer that is manipulated to include or not include the application of social pressure. The paper ends with suggestions for further work.

## **REACTANCE THEORY AND GOTV MOBILIZATION**

There have been extensive studies of attempts to use social pressure to encourage people to act “appropriately” with respect to collective goals such as energy conservation, trash collection, and noise pollution (see Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004, for a review). Those attempting to change behavior hope that when social pressure is applied individuals will align their actions with the desired outcomes (e.g., turn off the lights, recycle their trash, and turn down the volume). Being reminded of an obligation can move individuals in the direction of fulfilling that obligation because individuals desire to receive praise and avoid admonishment. Such reminders, however, also can stimulate negative reactions as individuals attempt to protect their personal freedom (Brehm, 1966; Brehm and Brehm, 1981). Wicklund (1974: 2) notes, “When freedom is infringed upon, the person will react in such a way as to reassert and protect that freedom.” Efforts to protect and reassert freedom can take a variety of forms: (1) Engaging in the undesired

behavior, (2) manifesting greater favorability toward the undesired behavior, (3) engaging in a behavior similar to the undesired behavior, and (4) manifesting aggression toward the source of the threat to the undesired behavior (Wicklund, 1974, 11). While a substantial number of psychological and communications studies present evidence of psychological reactance effects in a variety of domains (e.g., Burgoon et al., 2002; Bushman, 1998; Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004; Nije Bijvank et al., 2009), there has been little evaluation of backlash in response to the use of social pressure to mobilize voters.

Voting is widely seen as a civic duty and people readily acknowledge citizens have an obligation to participate in elections. They do not always follow through, however, on that obligation. Reminding people of the obligation to vote, then exerting even greater pressure by providing them with their voting record, thereby suggesting they are being monitored for norm compliance, may be viewed by some as a violation of a democratic citizen's expectation of political privacy. To some, this violation may warrant a behavioral or attitudinal response to restore freedom.

Mann (2010) presents a first look at reactance in the context of GOTV mailings by assessing variations in individuals' decisions to vote based on the application of different levels of social pressure. He finds that "gentler" social pressure is as successful as more forceful social pressure at mobilizing actual voter turnout. Mann's research, as well as the findings from other researchers, clearly indicates reactance in the first form described by Wicklund (engaging in the undesired behavior) does not occur. If this were true social pressure GOTV mailers would lead to decreased turnout, and we have ample evidence turnout increases when researchers use social pressure mailers.

The research community, however, has done little work analyzing whether reactance exists in terms of generating negative affect toward and reducing support for a candidate. It is the fourth form of reactance described by Wicklund, aggression toward the source of the message, our research addresses. This is an issue of major concern among candidates and political consultants. We (Matland and Murray, 2012) test for this form of reactance using an experiment where individuals treated with a generic GOTV mailer that included social pressure to vote using a hypothetical voting history were compared to those receiving just the generic GOTV mailer. We found those receiving the vote history, that is, the social pressure message, were less supportive of and expressed greater negative affect toward the candidate sponsoring the message than untreated subjects. Receiving a voter history reduced subjects' likely support scores for the candidate by a modest but statistically significant amount. Subjects treated with social-pressure were significantly more likely to say they would vote against the candidate and, in response to a separate measure, significantly less likely to say they would vote for the candidate. Further, the treated subjects exhibited uniformly greater negative affect towards the candidate-sponsor of the social pressure mailer. They showed a statistically significant drop in feeling thermometer score toward the candidate as well as significantly greater negative affect toward the candidate in the form of anger, fear, and likelihood of calling the candidate's campaign to complain.

### **SUBGROUP REACTANCE**

It is certainly possible for reactance effects to occur selectively across a sample. For example, in a study of the impact of a conservation program adopted by a California utility company, Costa and Kahn (2010) found that mailed inserts providing households with information on how their energy use compared to their neighbors' use and urging them to use energy wisely as part of a green energy message led to an overall drop in energy consumption of

1.2 percent. Costa and Kahn, however, took a further step and integrated public opinion survey data into their study. Surprisingly, they found political ideology dramatically mediated the effect of the energy consumption information. Among political liberals there was a 3.2 percent *decrease* in energy consumption, but among political conservatives there was a 1.1 percent *increase* in energy consumption.

Without detailed data on the subjects in the study it is impossible to know how widespread the reactance effect was, but it does seem reasonable to assume that conservatives tended to see the urgings to consume less energy as unwelcome pressure to act in a manner that others had decided was “socially appropriate.” For some conservatives, the reaction was to consume more energy (i.e., engage in the undesired behavior, the first form of reasserting freedom [Wicklund, 1974]). Liberals, on the other hand, tended not to perceive the message negatively. The energy consumption message emphasized the opportunity to save money and to help the environment. Neither message is likely to cause reactance among liberals, but pushing an environmental agenda apparently did among conservatives.

With this and our earlier finding of general backlash against social pressure mobilization techniques in mind, a logical next step is to assess how persistent reactance is across subgroups in an effort to identify viable, non-reactive targets for social pressure techniques. Especially for campaigns and consultants, this is likely to be quite important as social pressure mailers still may be an effective tool for a subsample of registered voters. Campaigns frequently target voter mobilization messages using information in voter registration files. These files often contain information on voters’ party identification, sex, and age (Green and Gerber, 2006; McDonald, 2007), which are among the characteristics typically used to segment political markets or

electorates (Rees and Gardner, 2005) and which are the subject of this research. For each of these we believe there are reasons to conclude that reactance may differ.

Cued by Costa and Kahn's (2010) findings regarding the mediating effect of political ideology on reactance to energy conservation appeals, *we hypothesize Republicans will show greater reactance than Democrats in response to a social pressure GOTV message*. Although ideology and party identification are not perfectly correlated, conservatives and Republicans share a concern about an overbearing state intruding on individual freedoms. Liberals and Democrats are less likely to see this as an intrusion, as they are more willing to accept public institutions providing public information as part of their general duties and see the implications of such actions as largely benign.

There has been a fair amount of research regarding gender differences in reactance. A number of scholars have found men tend to score higher in reactance than women (Joubert, 1990; Seemann et al., 2004; Woller, Buboltz, and Loveland, 2007), while Hong and his co-authors report null differences between the sexes (Hong, 1990; Hong et al., 1994). In related work, Cohen and Nisbett (1995) find a much stronger reaction among males than females to challenges to honor in the American South. Furthermore, the political science research literature is replete with studies showing noticeable differences between men and women in terms of campaign effects (Chang and Hitchon, 2004), voting behavior (Kaufmann and Petrocik, 1999, Norrander, 1999, 2008), ideology (Norrander and Wilcox, 2008), public opinion (Huddy, Cassese, and Lizotte, 2008), issue salience (Welch and Hibbing, 1992), and a variety of other conditions. Based on the political science and psychology literatures, we suspect the sexes may differ in reactance to social pressure messaging. Since there is little to no evidence that women manifest reactance more strongly than men, yet there are a number of theoretical and empirical

indications that men manifest reactance more strongly than women, *we hypothesize males will show greater reactance than females in response to a social pressure GOTV message.*

Finally, despite more than 40 years of research on psychological reactance, study of the relationship between reactance and age is limited and the reported results are mixed. Hong and his co-authors (1994) found a negative relationship such that reactance decreased as age increased. Woller and his co-authors (2007), on the other hand, detected a curvilinear relationship between reactance and age such that middle-aged subjects manifested lower reactance to social pressure than either older or younger participants.

If we look specifically at issues concerned with personal privacy, Leary (2011) suggests that younger citizens, in particular so called “digital natives,” who have never known a world without the internet, demonstrate lesser expectations of privacy. As such we would expect a greater tolerance among this group for public use of information that some may deem as private. A recent Pew Research Center for the People and the Press poll (2012) confirms this suggestion. It indicates striking differences across age groups in tolerance for the use of personal information. In response to a question about internet companies using private information to target advertisements in exchange for the provision of search and social networking tools there is a dramatic distinction across age groups.<sup>2</sup> While 18-29 year olds are split evenly between seeing this as an unjustified use of private information versus a fair exchange for free services (47% to 46%), 30-49 year olds strongly object to the practice (59%-36%) and those 50 and older are even more opposed (64%-25%). Following these data on privacy, *we hypothesize younger individuals will show less reactance than their elders to a social pressure GOTV message.*

## **EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN**



To assess these expectations, we collected data from a pool of citizens in Lubbock County, Texas, who were called to jury duty in January and February 2011. Potential jurors are randomly selected from lists of individuals 18 and older who are either registered to vote in Lubbock County or hold a driver's license or identification card issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety with a Lubbock County address. Subjects were recruited to the study through voluntary participation while they awaited assignment to a trial or dismissal.

Jurors are to be at the Courthouse by 8 a.m., and they remain in the jury pool waiting room until they are assigned to a jury or dismissed. Prior to jurors arriving we place clipboards with a pencil, a cover letter, instructions including guarantees of confidentiality, and randomly ordered survey-experiments on the first 100 seats. A researcher collects the surveys as subjects complete them. Our sample includes 580 subjects, which represents a response rate of 82 percent. The response rate is calculated as the number of returned questionnaires divided by the total number of distributed questionnaires. Using a jury pool sample gives us a subject pool that is vastly more diverse than a student sample, as there is wide dispersion in terms of age, marital status, income, and education levels (Murray et al., forthcoming). The sample is, however, only from one conservative county in a heavily Republican state. Nevertheless, there is substantial diversity, and we see our sample as well suited for testing for reactance.

We used a 2×2 experimental design varying the strength of social pressure and the party of our hypothetical candidate. Each subject read a vignette about a hypothetical candidate for the U.S. Senate and viewed a postcard mailer. All postcards included identical civic duty messages, but a random two-thirds included the subject's hypothetical voting history<sup>3</sup>, while the other one-third did not. Furthermore, half the time the candidate was described as a Democrat and half the time as a Republican. This allows us to control for subject-candidate party congruence. It was

not possible to use actual voting histories for the jury pool participants or to address the mailers to them personally. Instead mailers were addressed to “Your Name” at “Your Street Address” in “Your City, State Zip Code” from the candidate. After reading the vignette and viewing the postcard, subjects responded to a series of questions (see Appendix for the vignette and sample mailers). A comparison of the treatment and control groups using probit and standard socio-demographic and political predictors (i.e., subject sex, age, age-squared, education, income, race, marital status, and party identification) suggests the subjects do not differ across control and experimental groups in any meaningful way ( $\chi^2 = 21.74$ ,  $df=23$ ,  $p=.54$ ).

Third-party monitoring of an individual’s voting history can be viewed as violating a democratic citizens’ normative expectation of political privacy, warranting a behavioral or attitudinal response to restore balance.<sup>4</sup> We therefore expect stronger reactance among voters who receive a voting history. We expect subjects assigned to the social pressure treatment groups will evaluate the candidate more negatively than control group subjects in terms of support for the candidate and affect toward the candidate.

In our analyses, we employ seven dependent variables, three measuring support for the candidate-sponsor of the social pressure message and four measuring negative affect toward the candidate-sponsor.<sup>5</sup> The first dependent variable representing support asks, “How likely or unlikely would you be to support John Harper for U.S. Senate?” Likely support is a 7-point scale coded 1 when the subject was “very unlikely” and 7 when the subject was “very likely” to support the candidate. The second and third dependent variables use the same 7-point scale and ask, “If you received the postcard sent by the Harper for Senate campaign, how likely or unlikely would it be to motivate you to vote [for] Harper” or “vote [against] Harper?” The first dependent variable measuring affect is a conventional feeling thermometer. We have taken the feeling

thermometer, which was originally measured on an 11-point scale coded 0 for maximally unfavorable to 10 for maximally favorable toward the candidate, and transformed it into the traditional 101-point scale (0-100). The next dependent variables measuring negative affect tested the mailers' ability to "make you angry?" and "make you afraid?" The final dependent variable asked about the likelihood that an individual calls the campaign to complain about the postcard. The final three items are measured on 7-point scales coded 1 for "very unlikely" to 7 for "very likely" to indicate greater negative affect.

Treatment effects are estimated using OLS regression with robust standard errors. The regressions include socio-demographic and political controls. The socio-demographic control variables include subject age and age-squared (in years), sex, education, race, and income. The political controls include subject-candidate party congruence and political knowledge.

## **RESULTS: THE UNIFORMITY OF REACTANCE EFFECTS VIA VOTE HISTORY**

Following the literature and evidence presented above, we expect Democrats, females, and younger individuals to be less likely to respond negatively to social pressure GOTV techniques than Republicans, males, and older individuals. This suggests the former subgroups may be more viable targets for social pressure mobilization than their counterparts.

### *Party Identification: Do Republicans React More Strongly than Democrats?*

Table 1 presents the results for our seven dependent variables for the three classes of voters: Republicans, Independents, and Democrats. The table presents only the unstandardized regression coefficients, which indicate the treatment effects.<sup>6</sup> The Ns for the regressions vary from 270 to 278 for Republicans, 120 to 126 for Independents, and 98 to 102 for Democrats. While our total sample includes more than 500 respondents, when we divide it into subsamples we lose a substantial amount of statistical power. As a result, the treatment effects need to be

quite large to be detectable statistically. To take this into account, we present the statistical significance tests, but we also consider the differences across subsamples in the sizes of the effects, as these may reveal consequential substantive differences that fail to achieve statistical significance due to the lack of statistical power.

**<TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>**

When comparing Republicans and Democrats all seven coefficients have the same sign. Furthermore, for none of the variables is the difference between the coefficients for Republicans and Democrats sufficiently large to be statistically significant. This may be, at least partially, a function of sample size (note the larger standard errors for the Democratic model), but the effects on support are broadly consistent across the two parties. When we look at support, the results suggest reactance among Democrats makes them significantly less likely to support and to *vote for* the candidate, while for Republicans, the results suggest reactance makes them significantly more likely to *vote against* the candidate. When we turn to the scores on the affect measures, there is some indication of a distinction. The coefficients are statistically significant for all the Republican estimates but only for the feeling thermometer for the Democratic estimates. In every case the coefficients for the Republican sample are noticeably larger; they are more than double for three of the affect measures and 66 percent larger for the fourth.

Although Independents are the least likely of the partisan groups to be the targets of mobilization effort, perhaps just as interesting is their relative lack of reactance. Only for the feeling thermometer and weakly for overall support does the social pressure treatment have a large enough effect to be statistically significant. For all the other dependent variables the impacts are not significant. This is not only because of limited statistical power due to sample size, but also because the treatment has little impact on independent voters. If we compare the

impact of the mailer on independents and partisans (pooling Democrats and Republicans) using an F-test to test if the unstandardized coefficients are significantly different, we find partisans are significantly more likely to react. Partisans are more likely to call to complain ( $p < .01$ , 2-tailed test), they are more likely to be afraid ( $p < .02$ , 2-tailed test), and they are more likely to be angry ( $p < .10$ , 2-tailed test). These effects are not strong, but do indicate Independents are less impacted than partisans. A significant portion of this we suspect is driven by political interest and knowledge. Partisans score much higher on both interest and knowledge, and consequently we are unsurprised to find them reacting more strongly to political information.

*Sex: Do Men React More Strongly than Women?*

The results in Table 2 show the reaction to the treatment is largely equivalent for men and women. None of the coefficients is sufficiently different that it meets standard tests of significance. The measure of anger comes closest as males are more likely to be angered by the social pressure mailer ( $p < .09$ , 1-tailed test). Otherwise both men and women show a large drop in feeling thermometer scores. Women who receive the social pressure mailer are significantly more likely to vote against the candidate, while for men the coefficient is also positive, but the effect is not statistically significant. In general we see little indication there is any difference in sensitivity to the message associated with the sex of the recipient

**<TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE>**

*Age: Do Older Voters React More Strongly than Younger Voters?*

Table 3 presents the results for our multiple dependent variables for three different age groups: 18-32, 33-49, and 50-88 years old. Subjects in the middle range of ages manifest substantial drops in likelihood of voting for the candidate-sponsor and feeling thermometer scores toward the candidate-sponsor. Subjects in the older range demonstrate lower feeling

thermometer scores, lesser likelihood of supporting the candidate, and greater likelihood of calling the campaign to complain. Consistent with our expectation based on Leary (2011) and Pew's (2012) polling regarding privacy issues, Table 3 shows that in no case does the youngest age group manifest statistically significant backlash against the mailer. With the exception of being angered by the mailer, their effects are noticeably smaller than the effects for the other age groups. These results suggest that younger voters may be less likely to view these techniques as intrusions into their electoral privacy and, therefore, may be less reactive to social pressure messaging.

**<TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE>**

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

While our previous research found that voter mobilization techniques using social pressure can stimulate negative backlash against candidate-sponsors of such techniques, this research focuses on targetable individual differences that may mediate the effects. In particular, we assess theoretically and practically important differences in reactance toward sponsors of social pressure messaging by party identification, sex, and age. The results indicate reactance effects are fairly broad and most of the results find limited differences across subsamples, although there is a need to be cautious because of limited statistical power.

We find both Democrats and Republicans react similarly in terms of support. While the differences between Democratic and Republican reactance is not statistically meaningful, the differences between partisans and independents tends to be meaningful. As the purpose of GOTV mailers is primarily to get out your own voters, this presents a dilemma for campaign strategists. Those most likely to be the targets of GOTV mailers, strong partisans, are precisely the group most likely to react negatively to social pressure mailers. On the other hand,

Independents, who are usually targeted for persuasion and not simply turnout, are perhaps more amenable to social pressure mailers.

Moreover, despite the abundance of research suggesting important differences between men and women in political behavior and attitudes, our results suggest reactance against social pressure mobilization does not differ by sex. Male and female voters responded similarly to the message. Finally, our young subjects stood out in their lack of reactance to the social pressure mailer. The two older age groups demonstrated reactance on a variety of dependent variable measures, but in no case did reactance appear among the youngest group. Although these results are not statistically definitive, they do suggest the use of social pressure in voter mobilization efforts targeting younger voters may be effective. Younger voters are often difficult to get to the polls yet are apparently not bothered by the social pressure, so campaigns may be tempted to use social pressure tools to mobilize these voters.

The political community has been interested but hesitant about the potential for mobilizing voters using social pressure techniques. While the effects on turnout appear positive and large, these efforts may be counterproductive if campaigns anger voters and turn them out to vote against their candidates. Social pressure does create backlash against its sponsors, and the results here indicate the effect is fairly broad based and not the result of a limited portion of the population reacting intensely.

This need not mean, though, that social pressure techniques would result in a net negative result for a campaign. While it is not surprising the technique may spark negative reactions in some voters, it may still have a strong enough positive mobilization effect that it turns out a greater number of sympathetic voters than it turns against a candidate. Future research should

directly measure the tradeoff between mobilization gains and vote choice losses, which this research design does not permit.

Even if candidates may be leery of using social pressure mobilization techniques, the electoral terrain often includes other actors who may be interested in mobilizing specific segments of voters. Both non-partisan and partisan interest groups abound, and they can have disproportionately large effects on the dynamics of a campaign. Further, they may not be as vulnerable to or concerned about backlash against social pressure techniques. For instance, community organizations may believe that targeted voters will perceive their application of social pressure as a good-hearted attempt to improve the community and not a self-interested grab for political power. On the other hand, well-funded and professionalized political action committees (PACs) and Super PACs may see themselves as electoral players without reputations to protect and, therefore, immune from any long-term consequences of angry citizens. Moreover, with ambiguous names full of positively valenced words, epitomized by Stephen Colbert's "Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow" Super PAC, it is often impossible for voters to know which candidate they should direct their ire towards should they get such an objectionable message. These types of organizations, then, may be more willing to pursue potentially provocative techniques since they may be able to achieve their mobilization goals without substantial fear of backlash. This, too, is an important dimension of social pressure mobilization that should not be overlooked in future research.

Beyond the conventional calls to establish external validity by confirming the results in different contexts (e.g., geographic regions), these findings should be confirmed using different, more realistic stimuli. Our results were obtained with highly impersonal treatments. It is reasonable to conclude that more realistic stimuli may yield stronger effects and identify



noticeable differences. One issue we are unable to disentangle with these data is that the groups which show the least reactance (Independents and younger voters) may also be the groups that are least likely to be motivated by social pressure to vote. It may be that reactance is so strongly intertwined with social pressure that when social pressure is effective it generates reactance and when it is ineffective it does not. Needless to say, if the social pressure fails to generate a mobilization effect among a group, it will be very meager satisfaction in knowing it does not generate a reactance effect either.

In the end, because of concerns with reactance, it may be strategically preferable for campaigns to produce messages praising voters for their previous votes rather than confronting them with negative information (Panagopoulos, 2011). That said, there are groups that appear less affected by social pressure. If a campaign were interested in using these techniques to mobilize voters, the most likely targets would be Independents and young voters, both of whom appear relatively unaffected by social pressure in this context. Party identification and age are readily extractable targeting measures in many states' voter files and theoretically interesting variables for scholars of political behavior. These results give both practitioners and researchers a great deal to think about in regard to voter mobilization.

---

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank the reviewers for comments on the manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey for February 2012 asked the following question: “As you may know many companies that offer email, search, and social networking services on the internet collect information from their users to target advertisements toward them. Do you think this is an unjustified use of peoples’ private information or a fair exchange for the free services these companies provide?” The poll had a national sample of 1501 interviews.

<sup>3</sup> Gerber et al. (2010) and Panagopoulos (2010) find different effects for frequent (pride inducing) and infrequent (shame inducing) vote history treatments. We tested for this effect by presenting one-third of the subjects with a frequent voting treatment (hypothetically voted in five of six elections) and one-third of the subjects with an infrequent voting treatment (hypothetically voted in two of six elections). The final third represents the controls who only received the civic duty message. Statistical analyses found only minor differences between the social pressure pride inducing and the social pressure shame inducing messages. We suspect the stimuli (i.e. the postcards) have sufficient impact to relay the message that campaigns have individuals’ voting history, but the hypothetical voting records used to assess different effects for high- and low-turnout records have insufficient impact on the individual respondent to produce different effects. Therefore, to simplify the analyses and to focus as directly as possible on the key relationships, we pool the two treatments in our analyses.

<sup>4</sup> To confirm the GOTV mailer with vote history represented enhanced monitoring and is perceived as a greater threat to personal freedom, we presented through online survey instruments the same postcard treatments to 440 undergraduate students at a local university. In regard to monitoring, subjects were asked “If you received the postcard sent by the Harper for Senate campaign, how likely or unlikely would it be to” (1) “make you feel like someone is watching whether or not you vote,” and (2) “make you feel like the Harper campaign is monitoring you.” Both measures were coded 1 for “very unlikely” to 7 for “very likely.” Treatment subjects indicated they were more likely to feel like someone was watching whether they vote (4.3 vs. 3.3;  $p < .001$ ) and more likely to indicate they feel the campaign is monitoring them (3.8 vs. 2.9;  $p < .001$ ). In regard to personal freedom, subjects were asked two additional questions: “If you received the postcard sent by the Harper for Senate campaign, how likely or unlikely would it be to make you feel” (1) “like your right to privacy has been violated,” and (2) “the Harper campaign has too much information about you.” Again, subjects treated with social pressure indicated they were more likely to feel their right to privacy has been violated (3.8 vs. 3.0;  $p < .001$ ) and more likely to feel the campaign has too much information about them (3.9 vs. 3.2;  $p < .001$ ).

<sup>5</sup> The questions and coding are available from the authors on request.

<sup>6</sup> The complete regressions with control variables are available from the authors on request.

**TABLE 1: Effect of Receiving Vote History Treatment across Seven Dependent Variables: PARTY DIFFERENCES**

	N	-(Support)			-(Affect)			
		Support	Vote For	Vote Against	Feeling Guilty Therm.	Angry	Afraid	Call to Complain
Republicans	270-278	-.09	-.21	-.40**	-1.06***	-.63**	-.53**	-.50**
	Trt Eff							
	(SE)	(.19)	(.22)	(.22)	(.26)	(.25)	(.25)	(.25)
	N	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Independents	120-126	-.33*	-.08	-.13	-.76***	-.04	-.31	-.38
	Trt Eff							
	(SE)	(.24)	(.27)	(.28)	(.32)	(.35)	(.34)	(.33)
	N	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Democrats	98-102	-.56**	-.63**	-.30	-.57*	-.10	-.15	-.30
	Trt Eff							
	(SE)	(.33)	(.36)	(.38)	(.38)	(.38)	(.36)	(.39)
	N	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Note: Treatment effect represents difference between subjects receiving and not receiving a vote history treatment. The models include control variables for: age, age squared, sex, education, race, income, and political knowledge.

\* p < .10 \*\* p < .05 \*\*\* p < .01 (one-tailed test)

The models include control variables for: age, age squared, sex, education, race, income, and political knowledge.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brehm, Jack W. (1966). *A Theory of Psychological Reactance*. NY: Academic Press.

Brehm, Sharon S., and Jack W. Brehm. (1981). *Psychological Reactance: A Theory of Freedom and Control*. NY: Academic Press.

Burgoon, Michael, Eusebio Alvaro, Joseph Grandpre, and Michael Voulodakis. (2002).

“Revisiting the Theory of Psychological Reactance: Communicating Threats to Attitudinal Freedom.” In *The Persuasion Handbook: Developments in Theory and Practice*, edited by James Price Dillard and Michael Pfau, 213-32. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bushman, Brad J. (1998). “Effects of Warning and Information Labels on Consumption of Full-Fat, Reduced-Fat, and No-Fat Products.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 83(1): 97-101.

- Chang, Chingching.C., and Jacqueline C. Bush Hitchon. (2004). "When Does Gender Count? Further Insights into Gender Schematic Processing of Female Candidates' Political Advertisements." *Sex Roles* 51(3): 197-208.
- Cialdini, Robert B., and Noah J. Goldstein. (2004). "Social Influence: Compliance and Conformity." *Annual Review of Psychology* 55: 591-621.
- Cohen, Dov, and Richard J. Nisbett. (1996). *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South*. New York: Westview Press.
- Costa, Dora L., and Matthew E. Kahn. (2010). "Energy Conservation 'Nudges' and Environmentalist Ideology: Evidence from a Randomized Residential Electricity Field Experiment." National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 15939.
- Davenport, Tiffany C. (2010). "Public Accountability and Political Participation: Effects of a Face-to-Face Feedback Intervention on Voter Turnout of Public Housing Residents." *Political Behavior* 32(3): 337-68.
- Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. (2008). "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 33-48.
- Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. (2010). "An Experiment Testing the Relative Effectiveness of Encouraging Voter Participation by Inducing Feelings of Pride or Shame." *Political Behavior* 32(3): 409-22.
- Green, Donald P., and Alan S. Gerber. (2006). "Can Registration-based Sampling Improve the Accuracy of Midterm Election Forecasts?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70(2): 197-223.
- Hong, Sung-Mook. (1990). "Effects of Sex and Church Attendance on Psychological Reactance." *Psychological Reports* 66: 494.
- Hong, Sung-Mook, Effy Giannakopoulos, Debbie Laing, and Nicole A. Williams. (1994). "Psychological Reactance: Effects of Age and Gender." *Journal of Social Psychology* 134(2): 223-228.
- Huddy, Leonie, Erin Cassese, and Mary-Kate Lizotte. (2008). "Gender, Public Opinion, and Political Reasoning." In *Political Women and American Democracy*, edited by Christina

- Wolbrecht, Karen Beckwith, and Lisa Baldez, 31-49. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Issenberg, Sasha. (2010). "Nudge the Vote." *New York Times Magazine* October 29.
- Joubert, Charles. E. (1990). "Relationship among Self-esteem, Psychological Reactance, and Other Personality Variables." *Psychological Reports* 166: 1147-1151.
- Kaufman, Karen M., and John R. Petrocik. (1999). "The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap." *American Journal of Political Science* 43(3): 864-887.
- Leary, Mary Graw. (2011). "Reasonable Expectations of Privacy for Youth in a Digital Age." *Mississippi Law Journal* 80(3):1033-1092.
- Mann, Christopher B. (2010). "Is There Backlash to Social Pressure? A Large-Scale Field Experiment on Voter Mobilization." *Political Behavior* 32(3): 387-407.
- Matland, Richard E., and Gregg R. Murray. (2012). "An Experimental Test for 'Backlash' Against Social Pressure Techniques Used to Mobilize Voters." Unpublished manuscript.
- McDonald, Michael P. (2007). "The True Electorate: A Cross-validation of Voter Registration Files and Election Survey Demographics." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71(4): 588-602.
- Murray, Gregg R., Cynthia R. Rugeley, Dona-Gene Mitchell, and Jeffery J. Mondak (forthcoming). "Convenient Yet Not a Convenience Sample: Jury Pools as Experimental Subject Pools." *Social Science Research*.
- Nije Bijvank, Marije, Elly A. Konijn, Brad J. Bushman and Peter H. M. P. Roelofsma. (2009). "Age and Violent-Content Labels Make Video Games Forbidden Fruits for Youth." *Pediatrics* 123(3): 870 -876.
- Norrander, Barbara. (1999). "The Evolution of the Gender Gap." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 63(4): 566-576.
- Norrander, Barbara. (2008). "The History of the Gender Gaps." In *Voting the Gender Gap*, edited by Lois Duke Whitaker, 9-32. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Norrander, Barbara, and Clyde Wilcox. (2008). "The Gender Gap in Ideology." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 30(4):503-523.

- Panagopoulos, Costas. (2010). "Affect, Social Pressure and Prosocial Motivation: Field Experimental Evidence of the Mobilizing Effects of Pride, Shame and Publicizing Voting Behavior." *Political Behavior* 32(3): 369-86.
- Panagopoulos, Costas. (2011). "Thank You for Voting: Gratitude Expression and Voter Mobilization." *Journal of Politics* 73(3):707-717.
- Pew Center for the People and the Press. (2012). February 8-12 poll. 1st Roper Center for Public Opinion Research version. Washington, DC: Pew Center for the People & the Press [producer], 2012. Storrs, CT: The Roper Center, University of Connecticut [distributor], 2012.
- Rees, Patricia, and Hanne Gardner. (2005). "Political Marketing Segmentation: The Case of UK Local Government." In *Current Issues in Political Marketing*, edited by Walter W. Wymer and Jennifer Lees-Marshment, 169-184. Binghamton, NY: Best Business Books.
- Seemann, Eric A., Walter C. Buboltz, Jr., Steve M. Jenkins, Barlow Soper, and Kevin Woller. (2004). "Ethnic and Gender Differences in Psychological Reactance: The Importance of Reactance in Multicultural Counselling." *Counseling Psychology Quarterly* 77(2):167-176.
- Welch, Susan, and John Hibbing. (1992). "Financial Conditions, Gender, and Voting in American National Elections." *Journal of Politics* 54:197-213.
- Wicklund, Robert A. (1974). *Freedom and Reactance*. Potomac, MD: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Woller, Kevin P., Walter C. Buboltz, Jr., and James M. Loveland. (2007). "Psychological Reactance: Examination across Age, Ethnicity, and Gender." *American Journal of Psychology* 120(1): 15-24.

## APPENDIX. Vignette and Mailers

John Harper is running for U.S. Senator in Texas. Harper is a widely respected member of the U.S. House of Representatives who has served in the U.S. House for five terms. The congressman has a long list of political achievements. He has been the chair of the House Armed Services committee for four years, is credited with leading congressional negotiations over a major tax reform bill, sponsored a popular bill that changed how federal public education funding is distributed, introduced legislation to significantly amend energy and environmental laws, and is an active and influential member of the House-Senate Joint Committee on Economic Development.

Before being elected to the U.S. House, Harper served two terms in the Texas State House of Representatives and practiced law for several years. Supporters and opponents agree that Harper, a Democrat [Republican], is intelligent and articulate with proven leadership skills. The congressman has been married for 26 years and has two adult children.

Three days before the election, you receive the following postcard in the mail addressed to you from John Harper's campaign:

Harper for Senate 123 Main St. Lubbock, TX 79409	
Your Name Your Street Address Your City, State Zip Code	

[Front of Mailer, All Groups (M<sub>1-6</sub>)]

We at the **Harper for Senate** campaign would like to remind you the General Election to elect state and federal representatives is this coming Tuesday. We hope to see you at the polls on Election Day, regardless of who you vote for. Voting is an important civic duty. Democracy is strongest when citizens are active participants in government and when we have a voice in government. You can find your voice by voting this coming Tuesday.

Exercise your Constitutional right to vote. VOTE Tuesday!

[Back of Mailer, Control Groups (M<sub>1-2</sub>)]



We at the **Harper for Senate** campaign would like to remind you the General Election to elect state and federal representatives is this coming Tuesday. We hope to see you at the polls on Election Day, regardless of who you vote for. Voting is an important civic duty. Democracy is strongest when citizens are active participants in government and when we have a voice in government. You can find your voice by voting this coming Tuesday.

Official Voter Records indicate you voted (Yes), did not vote (No), or were not registered to vote (---) in the following elections:

	Primary <u>2006</u>	General <u>2006</u>	Primary <u>2008</u>	General <u>2008</u>	Primary <u>2010</u>	General <u>2010</u>
Your Name	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

This information was taken directly from state voter rolls, which are available for public inspection. If our records are not accurate, please contact us at the email address or telephone number below, and we will correct our records.

Exercise your Constitutional right to vote. VOTE Tuesday!

[Back of Mailer, Vote History: Frequent (M<sub>3-4</sub>)]

We at the **Harper for Senate** campaign would like to remind you the General Election to elect state and federal representatives is this coming Tuesday. We hope to see you at the polls on Election Day, regardless of who you vote for. Voting is an important civic duty. Democracy is strongest when citizens are active participants in government and when we have a voice in government. You can find your voice by voting this coming Tuesday.

Official Voter Records indicate you voted (Yes), did not vote (No), or were not registered to vote (---) in the following elections:

	Primary <u>2006</u>	General <u>2006</u>	Primary <u>2008</u>	General <u>2008</u>	Primary <u>2010</u>	General <u>2010</u>
Your Name	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

This information was taken directly from state voter rolls, which are available for public inspection. If our records are not accurate, please contact us at the email address or telephone number below, and we will correct our records.

Exercise your Constitutional right to vote. VOTE Tuesday!

[Back of Mailer, Vote History: Infrequent (M<sub>5-6</sub>)]

**TABLE 1: Effect of Receiving Vote History Treatment across Seven Dependent Variables:  
PARTY DIFFERENCES**

		(Support)			(Affect)			
		<u>Support</u>	<u>Vote For</u>	<u>Vote Against</u>	<u>Feeling Therm.</u>	<u>Angry</u>	<u>Afraid</u>	<u>Call to Complain</u>
Republicans	Trt Eff	-.09	-.21	.40**	-10.6***	.63**	.53**	.50**
	(SE)	(.19)	(.22)	(.22)	(2.6)	(.25)	(.25)	(.25)
	N	278	275	274	270	273	272	272
Independents	Trt Eff	-.33*	.08	.13	-7.6***	-.04	-.31	-.38
	(SE)	(.24)	(.27)	(.28)	(3.2)	(.35)	(.34)	(.33)
	N	126	123	122	121	120	120	122
Democrats	Trt Eff	-.56**	-.63**	.30	-5.7*	.10	.15	.30
	(SE)	(.33)	(.36)	(.38)	(3.8)	(.38)	(.36)	(.39)
	N	102	98	99	100	99	99	98

Note: Treatment effect represents difference between subjects receiving and not receiving a vote history treatment. The models include control variables for: age, age squared, sex, education, race, income, and political knowledge.

\* p < .10 \*\* p < .05 \*\*\* p < .01 (1-tailed test)

**TABLE 2: Effect of Receiving Vote History Treatment across Seven Dependent Variables:  
SEX DIFFERENCES**

		(Support)			(Affect)			
		<u>Support</u>	<u>Vote For</u>	<u>Vote Against</u>	<u>Feeling Therm.</u>	<u>Angry</u>	<u>Afraid</u>	<u>Call to Complain</u>
Females	Trt Eff	-.29	-.19	.45**	-9.7***	.07	.16	.32
	(SE)	(.19)	(.23)	(.23)	(2.7)	(.27)	(.25)	(.26)
	N	233	231	227	224	228	227	227
Males	Trt Eff	-.21	-.11	.24	-8.5***	.59***	.29	.18
	(SE)	(.19)	(.22)	(.22)	(2.4)	(.23)	(.24)	(.24)
	N	273	265	268	267	264	264	265

Note: Treatment effect represents difference between subjects receiving and not receiving a vote history treatment. The models include control variables for: age, age squared, sex, education, race, income, and political knowledge.

\* p < .10 \*\* p < .05 \*\*\* p < .01 (1-tailed test)

**TABLE 3: Effect of Receiving Vote History Treatment across Seven Dependent Variables:  
AGE DIFFERENCES**

		(Support)			(Affect)			
		<u>Support</u>	<u>Vote For</u>	<u>Vote Against</u>	<u>Feeling Therm.</u>	<u>Angry</u>	<u>Afraid</u>	<u>Call to Complain</u>
18-32 Yrs	Trt Eff	-.19	-.10	.32	-3.8	.62	.12	.24
	(SE)	(.27)	(.33)	(.38)	(3.3)	(.39)	(.39)	(.42)
	N	120	118	119	117	118	118	119
33-49 Yrs	Trt Eff	-.27	-.82***	.40	-13.7***	.13	.17	.15
	(SE)	(.25)	(.29)	(.29)	(2.9)	(.32)	(.31)	(.32)
	N	157	156	156	152	156	155	156
50-88 Yrs	Trt Eff	-.32*	.25	.36	-9.3***	.32	.35	.38*
	(SE)	(.21)	(.25)	(.24)	(3.1)	(.27)	(.26)	(.27)
	N	229	222	220	222	218	218	217

Note: Treatment effect represents difference between subjects receiving and not receiving a vote history treatment. The models include control variables for: age, age squared, sex, education, race, income, and political knowledge.

\* p < .10 \*\* p < .05 \*\*\* p < .01 (1-tailed test)