What Parties do to Engage and Mobilize Youth:

A Literature Review of Five Countries

Laura Anthony[1]

Jane Hilderman[1]

Alison Loat[1]

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Executive Summary

This review provides Elections Canada with an overview of academic research that illuminates how candidates and political parties engage and mobilize young electors. It first reviews the relevant literature about how candidates and political parties reach out to youth through engagement and mobilization. The main challenges to party outreach are then identified. The review investigates five case studies in greater depth – Canada, the US, the UK, New Zealand and Finland – and highlights notable practices among the cases for youth engagement and mobilization. It concludes with points of consideration for the Canadian context and suggested areas for future research.

The review illuminates three main challenges to youth outreach strategies:

- Youth are harder to contact than their older counterparts.
- Youth lack partisan attachments, which may deter their mobilization by parties.
- Youth may not be interested in political activity, or their interests, priorities and evaluations may be seen to be different from older age groups.

There are several important considerations for candidates and parties creating youth outreach strategies:

- The distinction between non-voters for a party's engagement and mobilization of youth is critical. This is still a relatively under-researched area, but the literature suggests that intermittent non-voters and habitual non-voters require different types of outreach in order to be engaged and mobilized.
- Youth can be effectively mobilized, and face-to-face efforts by a peer appear to be the most effective.

The jurisdictional comparison of youth outreach across case studies finds that:

- Finland is a leading example of youth party membership. Every major party maintains a youth wing – most of which appear to have an influential voice within the mother party.
- The US is an innovator in terms of mobilization. The willingness of the Democratic campaign to surrender some control over campaign tasks to supporters generated a new pool of volunteers who worked to mobilize their own social networks online and offline.

The literature, on the whole, does not offer a thorough understanding of how parties engage youth between elections. The review makes a number of recommendations for future research in Canada.

Although it is difficult to provide best practices, the literature suggests that there is not necessarily a trade-off between election-driven behaviour and behaviour that fulfills parties' other functions as public utilities. Greater inclusion and participation by youth would not only enhance Canada's democratic health, it can be a part of a successful long-term electoral strategy for a party.

1.0 Introduction

This review provides Elections Canada with an overview of academic research that illuminates how candidates and political parties engage and mobilize young electors. Interest in this field emerged from the National Youth Survey,[2] which found youth were more likely to vote if contacted by parties or candidates. The purpose of this review is to identify and describe outreach strategies and practices used by candidates and political parties to engage and mobilize youth, and to assess, where possible, their effectiveness and appeal. This will provide context to inform future research and education initiatives as well as Elections Canada's engagement with political parties.

The first section provides a review of relevant literature, including theories of political participation, the framework of engagement and mobilization, and the main challenges to youth outreach. The second section examines outreach directed at youth from a comparative perspective. Cases are selected from the following jurisdictions: Canada, US, UK, New Zealand and Finland. Following an examination of the case studies, the review highlights notable practices in terms of youth engagement and mobilization. The review concludes with points of consideration for the Canadian context and suggests areas for future research.

1.1 Why Are Political Parties Important?

Political parties are necessary and desirable institutions for democracy (van Biezen 2004),[3] and, according to McAllister (2011, x) "Political parties shape [our] whole political process." Reflecting this central place in politics, political parties have multiple roles. For example, they recruit candidates to contest elections, organize platforms for the electorate to judge at the ballot box, and provide a venue for citizens' involvement and input into politics. Diamond and Gunther (2001) have organized parties' responsibilities into seven common, but unique, functions:

- Candidate nomination: Parties organize the process to identify and select candidates to contest elections.
- Electoral mobilization: Parties reach out to the electorate for support for their candidates and facilitate political participation.
- Issue structuring: Parties organize platforms that highlight issues out of many alternatives.
- Societal representation: Parties provide avenues for groups to gain representation.

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[2] The National Youth Survey was commissioned by Elections Canada to better understand the reasons why youth participate in the electoral process. It was conducted in May 2011 and included a sample of 1,372 youth aged 18 to 34 as well as additional subgroups.
[3] Many scholars highlight the fundamental role of political parties in modern democracy. See Chandler and Siaroff 1991; Cross 2004; International IDEA 2011; van Biezen 2004.

- Interest aggregation: Parties use the preferences of individuals to craft a broad public appeal.
- Forming and sustaining governments: Parties help to organize government and opposition roles, helping to ensure that accountability to the electorate is maintained.
- Societal integration: Parties enable citizens to participate effectively in the political process.[4]

Parties' fulfillment of these functions, however, is shaped in practice by the decisions they take on how to allocate their limited resources, and their respective objectives.[5]

This literature review focuses on two of their functions: engagement and mobilization[6] of youth. This review is particularly timely given the broad state of flux faced by many political parties in advanced industrial democracies (Mair, Muller and Plasser 2004). Parties are currently navigating a decline in partisan identification, the rise of new communication technologies and revised electoral rules, among other challenges. As a result, some political parties may be open to considering the evolution of youth outreach practices.

Notably, political parties' engagement and mobilization activities can be difficult to research as parties may be purposefully opaque with their internal decisions and operations in an effort to maintain a competitive edge over their competitors.[7]

1.2 Important Terminology

Before reviewing the literature, it is helpful to clarify key terms. A "political system" refers to institutional arrangement of governance and division of power in a country. For example, Canada has a Westminster Parliamentary system. An "electoral system" is the process by which voters' preferences are translated into support for candidates or parties. For example, the first past the post is a form of plurality majority using single-member districts, while another is proportional representation, in which parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the national vote (Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005) Both the political system and electoral system can shape political party behaviour.

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[4] Scholars note this is not an exhaustive list of the functions performed by all parties, but provides a "common denominator" that will assist in the comparison of parties cross nationally. See pp. 7–9 of Diamond and Gunther (2001) for a full explanation of each of the seven functions. For additional academic discussion of the particular role and functions of parties, see Norris (2011).

[5] The functions of parties should not be confused with types of political parties, which can be characterized by different objectives. This is beyond the scope of the review. For more on the classification of party types, see Diamond and Gunther (2001, 9–30).

[6] The specific terms used by Diamond and Gunther are "social integration" for engagement and "electoral mobilization" for mobilization. This review will define each term in full in the next section.

[7] In other words, scholars do not have access to parties' strategies or documents. As a result, it is possible that research is missing segments of their strategies and internal operations that are relevant to understanding their behaviour toward youth.

"Engagement" enables citizens to participate effectively in the political process and ideally ensures that citizens feel they have a vested interest in the political system (Diamond and Gunther 2001, 8). Engagement is reflected by parties' efforts to be participatory, inclusive and responsive to citizens. In practice, this covers a spectrum of party activities beyond voting, such as joining a party, volunteering during a campaign, donating, and providing input on platforms and policies.[8]

"Mobilization" captures how parties motivate citizens to support their candidates and facilitate participation in the electoral process (Diamond and Gunther 2001, 7). Mobilization generally deals more narrowly with election campaigning efforts to get out the vote (GOTV).

While engagement and mobilization are distinct, these categories are not mutually exclusive. Some activities, for example volunteering on a campaign, can be considered an engagement effort as well as a mobilization strategy. For this review, "outreach" comprises both engagement and mobilization tactics.

The precise classification of "youth" varies throughout the literature. In some instances, scholars consider 15 to 24 years of age as youth, but others use 18 to 34 years of age. This review relies on the 18 to 34 age bracket.[9] Academic literature generally treats youth as a homogenous cohort given that age is one of the most reliable predictors of turnout (CIRCLE Staff 2012; Haid 2003)[10] and this review follows this treatment. However, future research should investigate how the differences among youth may warrant different outreach strategies.[11]

1.3 Theories of Political Participation

Successful engagement and mobilization by political parties leads to increased political participation. However, political participation itself is a complex phenomenon, and has been theorized extensively. Given the scope of this review, the concepts of engagement and mobilization are briefly situated in one general model of political participation.[12]

Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) and several other participation scholars identify three factors that determine civic and political participation: resources, interest and recruitment (Almond and Verba 1963; Barnes and Kaase 1979; Milbrath 1965; Verba and Nie 1972).

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[8] Donating to a party is also a measure of engagement. However, to narrow the scope of this review, party financing literature was excluded. Notably, an analysis of Canada election studies data by Jansen, Thomas and Young (2012) observes that the vast majority of donations come from party members and, moreover, older affluent, politically engaged male members are the most likely to donate.
[9] This is the same age bracket used in the National Youth Survey in 2011.
[10] Age remains a reliable predictor of voting even as other characteristics, such as education or ethnicity, are controlled for in statistical models. Nonetheless, being under the age of 35 does not negate one's socio-economic status, region or literacy level. As will be outlined in the recommendations, a one-size-fits-all approach to youth mobilization is unlikely to be effective.
[11] Further research into youth's distinctions is warranted because, as later demonstrated, it is unfeasible to assume given the recent advances in mobilization tactics (specifically hyper-segmentation and micro-targeting) that parties will treat youth as a homogenous cohort.
[12] See Anderson and Stephenson (2010) and Gidengil et al. (2012) for additional participation models.

Resources refer to the costs of time, money and civic skills for individuals to participate. Interest captures civic duty, interest in politics and sense of efficacy that facilitates involvement. Finally, recruitment refers to the social networks that mobilize citizens and promote participation, and is particularly salient for an analysis of outreach strategies.

Citizens participate in elections and government both because they "go to politics" and "politics comes to them" (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 6). Political engagement or "going to politics" presupposes political interest. Unless citizens have some degree of interest in politics, they are unlikely to devote much time and energy to keeping up with public affairs (Gidengil et al. 2004, 11). While interest at one level is waning, the literature suggests it may be cultivated via other means. This is the essence of the mobilization model referenced by Rosenstone and Hansen (1993).

Within the mobilization model, scholars assert that participation can be a response to contextual cues, such as being asked to vote or become a member by a candidate or political party.[13] Opportunities to participate are further structured by the individual's environment or network; for example, having a spouse who asks when you are going to vote (Leighley 1995, 189). Political parties, given their central role in political systems, are key agents involved in engagement and mobilization.

The most current academic literature focused on mobilization generally originates in the US (Bennion 2005; Green 2004, 2008; Green and Gerber 2001, 2005; Nickerson 2006; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Canadian political research has yet to systematically explore how, and with what success, political parties and candidates engage with and mobilize young electors. However, scholarly analysis of voting behaviour in Canada – including among youth – has been extensive (Dalton 2011; Gidengil et al. 2004; Howe 2010; Rubenson et al. 2004). Findings from this research carry implications for youth mobilization during elections and can provide a starting point.

1.4 Habitual Versus Intermittent Non-Voters

Patterns of voting behaviour are an important consideration when implementing an outreach strategy since some types of voters are more likely to be mobilized than others (Melton 2011, 2).[14] Research describes voting as a habitual activity (Aldrich, Green and Glaser 2011; Denny and Doyle 2009; Gerber, Green and Shachar 2003; Howe 2010; Meredith 2009; Nickerson 2004). In other words, voting in one election increases individuals' probabilities of voting in the next election, with all other considerations being

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[13] This model does not exclude the fundamentals of the other theories of participation, such as personal resources and psychological motivations.

[14] While promising, Melton does note the continuous ambiguity within the field over what precisely causes a habit to form. He notes, "Unfortunately, this potential cannot be fully realized until the mechanism(s) through which habit formation occurs is identified, and although several mechanisms have been proposed, existing accounts of habitual voting have been unable to determine which are valid." Further, if efforts to boost participation succeed only in increasing the frequency of voting by intermittent voters, they can be considered but a limited success.

equal (Melton 2011). Howe provides a useful distinction between habitual voters and two types of non-voters: intermittent non-voters, who sometimes but not always vote, and habitual non-voters, who never vote (2010, 10).

Habitual non-voters cite a lack of information and understanding whereas intermittent non-voters cite a lack of time or sufficient planning when they do not vote.[15] Howe (2010 argues intermittent non-voters are more inclined to be mobilized than habitual non-voters. For intermittent non-voters, the aim is to facilitate voting as much as possible; for habitual non-voters, the goal is to motivate voting in the first place (Howe 2010; International IDEA 1999, 44).

Howe argues each classification of voter warrants a different mobilization strategy. Howe suggests those with a prior inclination to participate (i.e. intermittent non-voters) are more readily reached by formal methods of communication (Hillygus 2005; Niven 2004), whereas the habitually disengaged "are more effectively mobilized through informal inveigling by those they know personally" (Howe 2010, 220).

This raises an important question in terms of youth outreach: In which voter category does the youth cohort belong?

1.5 Debating the Effectiveness of Youth Outreach by Political Parties

Patterns of youth participation have changed since 1974 and indicate an increase in the number of intermittent non-voters and habitual non-voters.[16] Nearly 36% of those under 30 can be classified as intermittent non-voters compared with 10% of those 50 and over.[17] Of particular concern is the increase of habitual non-voters who represent a new larger group of young abstainers (11.1%) – a group that was relatively non-existent in 1974 (Howe 2010).

Can youth be effectively mobilized? Most scholars agree that youth outreach can be effective; in fact, some evidence suggests that youth may be easier to mobilize than older voters (Nickerson 2006, 56).[18] However, scholars diverge on the approach. Some academics claim similar strategies will produce similar effects across age cohorts, and

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[15] For both periods in Howe's research, youth were limited to those aged 25 to 29 to ensure that all respondents would have been eligible to vote in all three elections in question. See Howe (2010, 15) for the list of reasons given by each type of voter for not voting.

[16] Howe compared respondents from the 1974 and 2004 Canadian election studies based on reported participation (which notably suffers from social desirability and faulty recall) in three elections: federal elections in 1974 and 2004, the previous federal elections in 1972 and 2000, and the most recent provincial election.

[17] The classification of intermittent voter was created by adding voting once and twice together using the 2004 data. Within this category of intermittent voters, one-time voters have become more common, again among youth. Where the ratio of two-time to one-time voters among those under 30 in 1974 was about 4 to 1, it is now almost 1 to 1. In addition, it is widely recognized that those who fail to participate in elections are also less likely to participate in surveys, which exacerbates the problem of under-representing of the actual number of habitual non-voters.

[18] Nickerson concludes that it is definitely possible to mobilize young voters and his study's probit results suggest that youth may be easier to mobilize than other low-voting groups in the US. However, when pooled together this finding does not approach statistical significance. At a baseline rate of turnout of 50% among young voters, the difference is only 3.3%. Nonetheless, it suggests that young registered voters are no more difficult to mobilize than older cohorts.

therefore, youth need not be singled out for a tailored strategy (Nickerson 2006). In contrast, Shea and Green (2007) argue traditional approaches are not as effective with a younger cohort.

Despite this lack of consensus in the literature, there is some convergence of opinion around the general barriers to youth engagement and mobilization. The next section summarizes three broad challenges, but precisely how these barriers weigh on Canadian parties' decision making is less clear.

1.5.1 Challenge One: Hard to Contact

Voter identification is essential for both engagement and mobilization strategies, and youth are much harder to contact than any other cohort. This is an important barrier not only because parties and candidates must allocate limited resources, but also because the success of outreach tactics depends on reaching an audience receptive to the message.

For example, Niven (2002) argues mobilization messages often fail to reach the intended audience, but if the messages did that youth would likely be responsive.

Many young people are much more mobile than older cohorts since they tend to be in a transitional stage (Highton and Wolfinger 2001) and contact lists for them are frequently inaccurate.[19] Consequently, it is more difficult to provide youth with election information. For example, in the 2000 federal campaign in Canada, one third of those born after 1970 indicated that they did not receive an information card compared with one in five born in the 1960s and one in ten born earlier (Gidengil et al. 2004, 112). Research in the US has also shown that those under 30 are also less likely to be home during door-to-door canvassing (Nickerson 2006, 49). Furthermore, youth are harder to reach using traditional communication technologies. More than half of 18- to 24-year-olds in the US do not have a land-line phone, rendering them unreachable by a traditional phone bank (Harvard University, 2007). This challenge is also experienced by consumer research firms, many of which have invested a substantial number of resources to locate the contact information of those under 30 and yet still struggle (Nickerson 2006, 57).

Moreover, the problem of contact is magnified when parties and candidates use voter identification to collect information on the specific preferences and backgrounds of individual supporters (Karp, Banducci and Bowler 2007). Parties and candidates collect these data so they can tailor subsequent messaging to try to maximize their appeal. As

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[19] These contact lists fundamentally shape parties' and candidates' outreach strategies. In Canada, the Register of Electors includes a person's name, sex, date of birth, and address. Every year the voter information in each electoral district is transmitted to the member of Parliament and to political parties. The list forms the foundation for communication purposes, such as recruiting party members and soliciting donations (Marland, Glassen and Lees-Marshment 2012, 32). Thus, in Canada the Register of Electors marks the first point at which many youth are excluded from the system.

youth are more difficult to reach, candidates and parties are not as likely to have data to inform a tailored message.

Parties and candidates must distribute limited resources effectively all the time. As a result, they are more likely to attempt to mobilize voters who are easiest to contact and identify as a supporter, which tend to be older voters with permanent addresses (Nickerson 2006, 48).

However, there is some evidence that the real costs of overcoming barriers to youth voter contact may be exaggerated. In the US, mobilization experiments by CIRCLE have shown that the cost of mobilizing young people is much less than many leaders and consultants assume (Levine 2007, 2009). Clearly more research is required for the Canadian context to delineate the precise associated costs.

1.5.2 Challenge Two: Weak Party Identification

In recent decades, young voters in Canada, the US and the UK have become less likely to identify with a party (Cross 2004; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Martin 2012). In the US, a young person in 1964 was more than two and a half times likely to identify with a political party than a young person in 2010 (Martin 2012, 75). Furthermore, some research has found that partisan affiliation repels young people (Milner 2010; UK Electoral Commission 2002). In Canada, research has also shown that party support among youth tends to be unstable across different elections (see Kay and Perrella 2012).

This weakening partisan identification and instability has repercussions for political parties. In terms of engagement, parties are failing to attract the next generation of party members. As a result, parties lose a natural donation base and volunteer resource. The work of mobilization is also made more challenging as fewer youth identify as supporters. This is a problem because parties and candidates are inclined to mobilize their identified supporters, as this approach assumes the least amount of short-term risk. Dalton and Anderson (2011, 68) confirm that partisans are the most likely to be contacted by parties. This compounds the problems associated with voter identification noted above.

1.5.3 Challenge Three: Interests

There are at least three separate aspects to this challenge. First, youth may not be interested in politics. Second, when they are interested, their interests and priorities may be seen to be different from those of older age groups. Third, youth may evaluate leaders differently than their older counterparts.

Youth may be largely ignored in terms of engagement and mobilization strategies if parties accept the argument by some scholars that youth are simply tuned off and dropped out (Gidengil et al. 2003). Blais et al. (2004) note that the generation after 1970 is less

interested in electoral politics, pays less attention and is less well informed than previous generations. Inglehart (1990) and Nevitte (1996) have observed a values shift among young voters and a rejection of hierarchical forms of participation (such as involvement with a political party). Yet this does not mean a rejection of politics per se.

Perhaps a larger challenge for engagement and mobilization could be a perception held by parties, candidates and young electors themselves that their interests rarely, if ever, converge. Survey research has generated conflicting conclusions. An analysis by Gidengil et al. (2005) using Canadian elections studies data from 2004 found a striking similarity in issue priorities among 18- to 29-year-olds compared with all other age groups, such as the top-ranked health care. The authors concluded that:

> Issues that concern many young people are on the political agenda, and the political parties are taking positions on these issues. The problem seems to be that too often these messages are just not registering with a significant proportion of younger Canadians (Gidengil et al., 2005).

However, other survey research has found that those between the ages of 18 and 30 hold a different set of priorities than older cohorts (Turcotte 2007, 6). Granted, older and younger voters often share the same set of top priorities, notes Turcotte (2005), but they place different emphasis on issues. Youth also reported different spending priorities but again this is a matter of degree (2007, 11).

A third insight suggests that youth assess political candidates differently. Bastedo (2013) argues that older voters are more moved by the capacity of leaders to represent their interests and deliver tangible benefits, compared to younger voters who give greater consideration to the values and symbols a leader stands for. Though evaluations of representative capacity affect individuals' motivation to vote in both cases, recent leaders tend not to fulfill the representational style that appeals to older voters (Bastedo 2012).

Some form of a communication failure seems to be at work: either parties' messages are not reaching youth (Gidengil et al. 2005), at least not in a format that youth are receptive to, or parties are not marketing platforms that reflect the priorities of youth (Bastedo 2012; 2013; Turcotte 2005; 2007). Further research, which includes the perspective of party strategists, may help to unravel the real cause of the challenge.

In summary, evidence suggests that there are barriers that inhibit party outreach to youth. First, as a cohort, they are more difficult to contact due to high mobility and lack of land-line telephones. Second, partisan identification, though falling across the Canadian population, is weakest among youth. It is not clear whether parties, candidates and youth fail to perceive shared issue preferences or whether messages are being successfully

marketed to youth audiences. Either messages are not penetrating youth audiences, or they are failing to resonate with them.

Despite the barriers to youth outreach, the literature suggests that the youth cohort can be a source of support for an endeavouring political party. However, this is dependent on effective engagement between elections and mobilization during elections.

2.0 Engagement and Mobilization Strategies

This section turns attention to how outreach strategies work in practice for parties, according to academic research. Engagement is examined first, followed by mobilization.[20]

2.1 Engagement

Although it is common to equate political participation with voting, engaging voters does not stop when the polls close. This review organizes parties' youth engagement along three streams: (1) party membership, (2) non-member engagement and (3) policy development. It is difficult to measure the benefits of engagement strategies since the effects are not as immediate or precise as mobilization techniques (i.e. voting). However, scholars note several benefits for parties with robust levels of these three indicators.

In terms of party membership, youth members can benefit parties in a number of ways. First, parties gain legitimacy from their member base (Cross, Young and Carty 2006). Second, youth are a source of abundant volunteer labour, if parties successfully cultivate a deep sense of loyalty to the candidate and party (Carlin 2011, 98). Finally, having socialized young members in partisan politics and party structures, youth ensure longer-term party renewal. Nonetheless, youth organizations within parties – how they are resourced, administered and relate to the "mother-party" – have rarely been studied systematically (Bruter and Harrison 2009).[21]

Generally, youth are not joining parties in the same numbers as they once did. As party memberships decline, Dalton and Wattenberg (2000) note that parties may struggle to fulfill their functions without a robust and active membership. Recognizing this reality, parties' engagement of non-members grows increasingly important to their relevance and success.

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[20] See Appendix 1 for a table that provides an overview of the techniques and reported effectiveness on rates of voter turnout.
[21] Notable exceptions to this are Cross and Young's (2002) study of party members and Bruter and Harrison's 2009 work, which examines young party members in Europe.

Policy development provides a vehicle for members (and sometimes non-members) to put forward issues and ideas. This can be an important process to ensure that youth feel they have a voice and influence.[22] Cross et al. (2006) argue a robust policy foundation is one approach to encourage party membership and help parties fulfill their roles in public life.[23] Further, Cross (2004) finds that parties without an ongoing capacity for policy development find it far more difficult to engage their members in policy-related activities while in government.

The third section applies this engagement framework to selected case studies.

2.2 Mobilization: Getting Out the Vote

Several scholars have demonstrated that party, candidate or issue organization contact with voters improves turnout (Blydenburgh 1971; Cain and McCue 1985; Calderia et al. 1990; Crotty 1971; Eldersveld 1956; Gosnell 1927; Huckfeld and Sprague 1992; Katz and Eldersveld 1961; Kramer 1970; Lupfer and Price 1972; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). This research also suggests that many factors shape the effectiveness of GOTV efforts, including messaging content, delivery, timing and the targeted recipient (Nickerson 2006). While experimental research has helped to illuminate precisely how these factors interact, the precise psychological mechanism underpinning the success of electoral mobilization is not clear. Green and Gerber (2008) believe social pressure is responsible, while Bennion (2005) claims mobilization efforts reawaken and remind voters of their sense of duty.

Mobilization strategies, or GOTV efforts, take various forms.[24] The strategies are reviewed here in order of their effectiveness: face-to-face, phone, text messaging, direct mail and the Internet. Few studies focus specifically on the youth cohort, so this review summarizes general findings first.

Door-to- door canvassing has proven to be the most effective mobilization method (Eldersveld 1956; Green and Gerber 2000). Analysts have found an increase in turnout between 7% and 10% in response to face-to-face contact (Eldersveld 1956; Green and Gerber 2000; Miller, Bositis and Baer 1981). The fact that the particular message delivered door-to-door is relatively unimportant in most voters' response confirms the findings by Gerber and Green (2000) as well as by Rosenstone and Hansen (1993). In other words, the actual presence of a person urging a citizen to vote is more important than the message (Bennion 2005, 136).

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[22] Many studies have noted that youth turn away from parties to interest groups because they feel interest groups offer the greatest opportunity for change.

[23] There are arguments against the development of strong policy foundations among parties. First, some feel it is at odds with their ability to represent the entire electorate once elected. Second, allotting funds to policy development is not seen as a priority in terms of resource allocation.

[24] There are two ways of assessing effectiveness of party contact: the total number of voters contacted and the effect of this contact on actual voting. If they contact only those who usually vote, then their efforts may not prove terribly effective in enlarging the pool of voters (Karp, Banducci and Bowler 2007, 103).

Some scholars suggest not all phone calls are alike. Phone calls by volunteers have the biggest impact on turnout, while calls by paid call centre workers demonstrate a weaker, yet still positive, effect. Nickerson (2006) argues that the quality of the phone calls determines effectiveness rather than the presence or absence of payroll. He also finds that the content of the message of the phone call is not as important as the timing and tone.[25] In contrast, automated telephone banks are found to have no significant effect on turnout.

Parties have successfully used text message reminders on election day to increase turnout. In Dale and Strauss' (2007) experiment, text message reminders increased turnout by 3.1 percentage points. Yet beyond reminders, only a few campaigns have developed ongoing communication strategies with voters via mobile phones.

The experimental literature on partisan direct mail finds a weakly positive effect on turnout. It appears that partisan mail has its greatest mobilization effects when sent to strong partisan supporters, but at best, experimental mail campaigns have generated a 1.9 percentage point increase in turnout, and often the estimated effects are zero (Gerber, Green and Green 2003). Cardy (2005) finds that neither partisan direct mail nor partisan phone calls, used independently or together, garner significant effects.

Using the Internet for mobilization is a comparatively recent development, but given its potential, Martin (2012) finds that political parties are not using web-based mobilization as effectively as they could. While direct human contact is demonstrated to be most effective, the Internet is a promising channel for mobilizing young people at a cost that is likely to be deemed more affordable (Martin 2012, 127). Most recently, Bond et al. (2012) demonstrated that the online social network, Facebook, mobilized young voters. The scholars estimate that the experiment, which included informational and social messages, caused an extra 340,000 people to vote.[26] However, not all scholars ascribe to the Internet's potential outreach capacity. In particular, Oates and Gibson (2006, 3) are pessimistic about the Internet's ability to reach the civically disengaged.

In terms of the delivery of mobilization methods, Niven (2002) finds the effects of contact are dependent on timing, as more distant efforts to mobilize had a much weaker effect on turnout. The combination of distant contact aimed at an infrequent voter was especially ineffective in improving turnout. In contrast, efforts focused near election day were much more successful. For intermittent voters, the gap between early and late contact differs by a factor of seven (Niven 2002, 315).

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[25] In terms of the cost per additional vote for each treatment, Nickerson finds that even with the higher cost ($1.50/call) of the national professional phone bank at $29/additional vote, professional calls are cost-competitive with door-to-door canvassing ($31) and leafleting ($32). The local phone banks ($1/call) generate one additional vote for every $19. The volunteer calls boosted turnout by one additional vote for every $150 and were therefore inefficient relative to many other GOTV methods.

[26] This experiment did not involve a political party.

Most of the measurable mobilization effects identified above apply to the general electorate rather than youth specifically. Whether such methods generate identical, greater or lesser effects pertaining to youth warrants further study. Bennion (2005) found that contact with young voters (18 to 24) boosts their probability of voting by 18.1 percentage points, and that those under 30 are particularly susceptible to the civic duty message when delivered by non-partisan youth. She argues young people may be more likely to be persuaded by their peers telling them that it is their duty to vote than by partisan campaigns or messages encouraging them to select a particular candidate.[27]

Wattenberg (2002) offers a contrasting perspective to the implicit assumption in much mobilization research that more participation is beneficial. He questions the desirability of mobilizing tactics if they are used to get citizens with low interest and knowledge to the polls (2002, 165). He suggests such uninformed citizens will treat voting with the same carelessness with which they pick lottery numbers. This viewpoint reflects the broader normative tension in the literature, which is worth highlighting in this review, although it is not the primary focus.

3.0 Comparing Jurisdictions: Party Outreach Directed at Youth

Having reviewed relevant academic research on engagement and mobilization between parties and young people, this section examines outreach strategies targeted at young electors in Canada and other jurisdictions, including the US, UK, New Zealand and Finland at the national level.[28]

The international case studies were selected based on a review of the English-language literature on the outreach strategies of political parties in advanced democracies.[29] Cases were chosen based on whether they illuminated a notable or innovative practice in terms of engagement or mobilization relevant to the Canadian context. Each case begins with a brief overview of participation rates and then proceeds to examine key findings on engagement (party membership, non-member outreach, and policy development) and mobilization. Although the literature does not permit an equal treatment of each area across each case, gaps in the literature are duly noted.

3.1 Canada

Like many advanced democracies, Canada has experienced a decline in youth political participation over the last few decades. In the most recent federal election in May 2011, only 38.8% of Canadians aged 18 to 24 and 45.1% of 25- to 34-year-olds voted, which put them well below the national average of 60% (Mayrand 2012).

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[27] While this finding was not statistically significant, it is suggestive. Bennion hypothesizes that having a peer mobilize them may overcome youth's hesitations regarding whether one vote can make a difference, and their scepticisms of politicians and political parties.
[28] See Appendix 2 for a table that compares basic features across the countries included as case studies in this review.
[29] As a result, there may be relevant academic literature in other languages not considered in the case study analysis.

Engagement

     Membership Engagement

Most federal parties in Canada grant memberships to those below the voting age and non-citizens (Cross 2004, 19).[30] Thus, parties are able to formally engage youth in party affairs before they can vote, with membership in some parties extended to youth as young as 14 years old. In the 1970s and 1980s, the three parties (the Liberal Party of Canada, the Progressive Conservatives, and the New Democratic Party [NDP]) supported efforts to increase the participation rates of women, youth and new Canadians by creating internal chapters dedicated to each demographic (Cross 2004, 22). During this period, a review of the formal status accorded to youth wings and their presence at major party conventions argued that over-representation of youth was a concern – youth were in fact distorting parties' internal democratic processes (Perlin, Sutherland and Desjardins 1988). As Cross and Young observe, since the late 1980s youth organizations in Canadian parties have changed substantially as part of a shift toward a less group-oriented and more individualist approach to party organization (Cross and Young 2002).

At present, the constitutions of both the NDP and the Liberal Party still ensure institutionalized representation from youth chapters on their national executives. In contrast, the Conservative Party did not adopt differentiated membership following the merger of the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties. This, according to Cross, came out of a conviction that a youth chapter conflicts with a populist foundation (Cross 2004, 23). Youth chapters from all the parties are also present at many colleges and universities throughout Canada. A comprehensive update of Perlin, Sutherland and Desjarins' (1988) study would be valuable, as it is not clear what influence youth voices yield inside parties today, although it is likely less than that observed in 1988.

Overall, in Canada as well as other advanced democracies, party membership numbers are in decline. In particular, young Canadians are less likely to join compared with their counterparts in their parents' or grandparents' generation (Cross and Young 2007; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). In 2000, only 3% of party members were 25 years or younger (Cross and Young 2004).[31] A survey of young party members suggests that those who do join are "unusually privileged both in their exposure to politics and in their socio-economic background" compared with the youth cohort at large, and were likely recruited into party membership by a parent more so than older members (Young and Cross 2007, 1).

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[30] Usually in the UK and the US, the only requirement to join a party is a small payment and membership form. In 2012, the Liberal Party of Canada created a "party supporter" which waives the typical membership fee while allowing supporters to vote in leadership contests. This addition is extremely new to the Canadian party context and thus its effects have not been studied.

[31] A study conducted by the Institute for Research on Public Policy found that only 1 in 20 Canadians aged between 18 and 30 has ever belonged to a political party (either federal or provincial compared with one third of those over age 60 (Howe and Northrup 2000).

The absence of party membership renewal and declining partisanship brings into question the capacity of parties to recruit and engage members, particularly between elections. Indeed, a party's membership increases two or three times during a leadership contest or election and subsequently dwindles between election years.[32] Moreover, Cross (2004) argues that even the most committed partisans are not very active in party affairs between elections.[33] It is not clear in the literature to what extent electoral district associations (EDAs) attempt to create and maintain engagement among local members. Further, it is not clear how EDAs have the capacity to handle burgeoning memberships during candidate nominations and elections. This non-election year atrophy does not lend itself to continual engagement.

Canadian parties are also failing to connect the efforts of their grassroots volunteers with their central party campaign activities (Cross 2004, 12). Instead of engaging volunteers in the actions of the central party (especially policy development), volunteers are left on the periphery and tapped into only for annual conventions and elections. O'Cass finds that recent advances in political marketing and campaigning are not being used to encourage "a constructive dialogue for both specific and broader goals" (2009, 198).

Non-Member Engagement

Non-member engagement includes general efforts where the party opens more broadly to the public. Given that members' engagement between election years is dismal, one would expect that non-member engagement suffers a similar fate, although there is limited academic attention directed toward this area. In Canadian political parties, interested citizens must approach and attend a party event (i.e. a convention, riding meeting, etc.). To reiterate Rosenstone and Hansen's earlier point, Canadian political parties are not "going to young citizens," but rather youth must go to them. The supporter membership category initiated in 2012 by the Liberal Party of Canada provides a novel direction in terms of engagement not focused exclusively on members. It not clear how this will impact youth participation – both in terms of recruiting youth to party politics and for the youth who are already Liberal Party members.

Policy Development

The literature suggests that Canada's major parties typically spend little time on policy study and development. Scholars argue a heightened period of party competition has pushed parties into continual campaign mode. As a consequence, party research in the Canadian context is more often used to inform decisions surrounding image positioning

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[32] A survey question asking why members joined a party found that supporting a leadership contestant is the number one reason.
[33] Both the NDP and the former Canadian Alliance presented themselves as parties driven by grassroots initiatives with mass-membership bases. Yet at the time of his research, Cross (2004, 26) found both parties to be very inactive with relatively few members spending any time on party activity in the average month.

rather than for policy development (Marland 2012, 34). This effect is compounded since electoral success strategies dominate opposition parties' agendas (Cross 2004, 12).[34] Cross and Young (2006) come to the conclusion that Canadian parties are "empty vessels" since they place the highest emphasis on electoral competition and do not allow for meaningful membership engagement in policy development. Perhaps as a result, nine in ten members of all five parties[35] agree that their party should do more to encourage local associations to discuss matters of public policy (Cross 2004, 28).

Mobilization

The National Youth Survey of 2011 found that before the May 2011 federal election, approximately 40% of surveyed youth had been directly contacted by a political candidate or party. Further, those who were contacted voted at a higher rate: 83% of those contacted voted compared with 68% of those who were not contacted.[36] However, fewer youth in all subgroups, particularly Aboriginal youth (27%) and unemployed youth (28%), said they had been directly contacted when compared with the general population of youth (40%). Thus, it appears the mobilization efforts can be and are successful in increasing youth turnout, but Canadian parties' mobilization efforts are not equally distributed.

Recently, parties have segmented the electorate into voter types to allow for precise targeting (Flanagan 2009; 2014). For example, two young voter profiles used by Conservative Party strategists are "Dougie" and "Zoe." "Dougie" is a single man in his late 20s who enjoys hunting and could be persuaded to vote Conservative, while "Zoe" is a single urban female who lives downtown, eats organic food and will never vote Conservative (Delacourt 2013).[37] The Conservative Party has been the quickest to adopt hyper-segmentation and micro-targeting strategies. The Conservatives have used precise targeting to divert resources away from safe ridings toward those with the highest electoral pay-off, a strategy described as "simply pragmatism forced by competitive necessity" (Marland 2012, 64).[38] These micro-targeting strategies guide GOTV tactics and local door-knocking efforts have provided constituency campaigns with highly targeted "walk routes" (Marland 2012, 86).

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[34] While parties' main focus is electoral success, Cross argues that policy development coincides with parties' objectives and therefore should not be neglected.

[35] The five parties referenced here refer to those in the House of Commons at the time of Cross' analysis in 2004. They were the Liberal Party of Canada, the Conservative Party of Canada, the New Democratic Party of Canada, the Bloc Québecois and the Green Party of Canada.

[36] Similarly, a study conducted by Karp, Banducci and Bowler (2007) analyzing the effect of party contact on voter turnout using a statistical model found that contact has an important positive impact. Drawing upon data from the 2000 Canadian Election Study, the authors estimate that turnout would have increased by 2 percentage points had everyone eligible to vote been contacted. Conversely, it would have declined by 1 percentage point had no one been contacted.

[37] No other voter profiles that are used by other political parties were found in the literature review.

[38] According to Marland et al. (2012), the result was that out of 23 million eligible voters, the Conservative strategy was able to focus on a pool of about 500,000 voters, which made the difference between victory and defeat. In this highly focused mobilization strategy, inclusive nationwide campaign tactics were replaced by nightly tracking in winnable ridings and among key groups only.

Inevitably, not all regions, ridings or groups are targeted. Bastedo (2013) argues that appealing to youth could be seen as politically risky to strategists. By catering to a potentially volatile segment of the population, parties may alienate or turn off more stable (older) supporters who otherwise can be counted on to vote. Consequently, Turcotte (2007) suggests this electoral divisiveness may be one reason for youth's lower turnout since they are rarely, if ever, targeted (Bastedo 2013; Marland 2012).

3.2 United States[39]

Over the last several decades, the US has also experienced a decline in youth voter turnout. However, data show that youth voter turnout has increased since 1996 (37%). In 2012, 50% of young people cast a ballot, compared with 52% of eligible voters in 2008, which still lags behind turnout of those over 30 years old (CIRCLE Staff 2012, 1).

Engagement

Member/Non-Member Engagement

Given the unique characteristics of US elections, party membership requirements are less restrictive than those in Canada or the UK. As a result, the boundaries between membership engagement and non-member outreach are ambiguous and thus reviewed together in the case of the US.

Observers have commented that the Democrats have been more focused on reaching the youth demographic while the Republicans have done comparably less to court the youth vote. Youth outreach strategies occur at both the national and local levels of the party structure. Shea and Green (2004) argue the local party committees offer the greatest potential to engage youth since they are the best facilitators of personal contact.

The Democratic Party has an official student outreach chapter, the College of Democrats of America (CDA), which is responsible for mobilizing campuses, training activists and providing a youth voice within the national party (Shea and Green 2004, 11).

The Democratic National Committee's (DNC) Youth Coordinating Council was made an official council of the committee in December 2005 to increase the involvement of young

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[39] There are two distinct peculiarities about the US system that may account for the intensity of its engagement and mobilization efforts compared with other countries. First, American politics, by the standards of anywhere else in the world, are highly expensive (Malbin and Cain 2007, 4). Second, parties are in a "constant campaign" mode due to the length and relative frequency of electoral competitions. As noted above, candidates and campaign strategies also played a role in targeting youth voters in the 2008 and 2012 US presidential elections, perhaps in part responding to these systemic pressures.

people in the Democratic Party.[40] The goals of the DNC Youth Council are to ensure the Democratic Party maintains a majority of the youth vote; to increase involvement of young people in the inner workings of the DNC; and to get more young people placed on key DNC committees.

The Obama for America campaign also included a fundraising program staffed by young adults, Gen44, which aimed to maintain the passion of young Americans and "[help] them engage their networks and colleagues to support the President and the Democratic Party" (Gen44 2012). Gen44 was active in both the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections.

Shea and Green (2004, 11) interviewed members of the DNC staff and concluded that youth participation is a key part of the party's long-term strategy. Stephanie H. Sanchez, the executive director of the College Democrats of America and advisor to the DNC on youth outreach in 2004, stated "… young folks, especially students, are very important to the DNC because we believe the Democratic Party is on track with the issues that are important to this age group."

The DNC and CDA also facilitate voter registration programs such as "Every Vote Counts" and "Youth to Booth." Voter registration drives also figured in the DNC's "Something New" initiative, which, according to Sanchez, sought to "create an educated and registered army of young, new voters" (Shea and Green 2007, 12). Something New events, which catered to youth aged 18 to 35, included voter registration drives, town hall meetings, and events at local "hotspots." In 2003, one such event attracted 4,500 participants.

To date, the majority of youth outreach initiatives have focused on maximizing online media. The Democratic Party's goal is to bring young voters into Democratic politics by reaching them online (Shea and Green 2004). In the 2008 campaign, the Democrat's presidential candidate Barack Obama had an e-mail list of 13 million individuals (not exclusively youth) who were sent newsletters and campaign updates, and solicited for donations (Milner 2010).

The Democratic Party leverages the social networks of its young supporters and encourages them to reach out to their peers. This social encouragement takes place online or face-to-face. Online "Meetups" were pioneered by MoveOn.org, a liberal online grassroots organization that enables virtual volunteers to share information and thoughts about the campaign online through blogs and comments. This model was initially employed by Howard Dean's presidential campaign in 2004 to increase interest in the campaign, but also to raise money and recruit an army of volunteers. Semiatin (2013, 91) suggests well-designed Meetups enable campaigns to generate volunteers who are willing to do the

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[40] The membership of the Youth Council consists of all DNC members under age 36, as well as 12 at-large members selected from each of the DNC's four regions (East, Midwest, South and West).

footwork for voter contact and mobilization. Building off the success of these Meetups, the DNC also encourages youth to sign up as "eCaptains." These eCaptains are responsible for building and sustaining an online team of party activists who support campaign efforts.

Policy Development

Policy development at the grassroots level is not the main focus for either the Democratic or Republican parties. It appears to be a secondary concern. One of the main objectives of the Youth Council, however, is to place youth onto DNC committees in order to discuss issues and policies.

Mobilization

The majority of mobilization tactics are developed in the US, which has been the main focus of the academic literature. It appears most countries are playing catch-up with the level of mobilization sophistication in US campaigns. The new age of voter mobilization strategy is vested in merging consumer or lifestyle data with traditional targeting models. One example of this application is in Mitt Romney's 2003 Massachusetts governor campaign. Romney's campaign analysts found that those most susceptible to Romney's appeals were very likely to be premium cable TV subscribers. Consequently, instead of sending literature to the entire electorate, the campaign sent brochures to every premium subscriber using the cable company's database (Issenberg 2012). The process of micro-targeting uses multiple points of voter contact and multiple methods to get voters to the polls (Semiatin 2013, 87).[41]

Nickerson (2006, 48) found that party mobilization and outreach largely ignore young people in the US. Shea and Green (2007) asked local party leaders if they have specific GOTV programs for young voters[42] – only 41% of respondents said yes. A follow-up question asked them to describe their program. Most of these programs were dubbed "modest" or "traditional," such as a speaking event at a local school or a table at a local fair. Only a small number of leaders stated significant activities. Even more startling is that many respondents could not describe the programs (Shea and Green 2007, 7).

Nickerson's research showed that youth are less frequently contacted than their older counterparts. In New Haven and Boston, the odds of being contacted by a phone campaign were lower for 18- to 24-year-olds (19% in New Haven and 11% in Boston) and rapidly increased among older age groups. The odds of a 70-year-old being spoken to by a party were three times that of a 20-year-old (Nickerson 2006, 58).

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[41] Points of contact include the frequency of contact while methods of contact are either phone, direct mail or face-to-face.
[42] This study was conducted in 2003 and included 805 local party leaders, randomly selected across the US over the telephone.

Youth-targeted mobilization strategies were in use before Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, but this campaign provides the best example of youth-directed initiatives. Green and Coffey (2011, 144) noted Obama's ground troops were mostly young, new activists and are likely less inclined to merge their efforts with the party establishment. The local grassroots development appealed to youth:

> They have invested in a civic infrastructure on a scale that has never happened. It's been an investment in the development of thousands of young people equipped with the skills and leadership ability to mobilize people and in the development of leadership at the local level (upi.com 2008).

The CDA facilitates a program, "Campaign Invasion," in which college students go door-to-door to talk to potential young voters in swing states and swing districts. The party relied on cell phones to reach hard-to-contact segments of the population, including youth and minorities (Delany 2009). On Election Day in 2008, everyone who signed up for alerts in highly competitive states received three text reminders to vote.

Some three million calls were made during the final days of the race using the virtual phone bank of the multi-functional online tool, MyBO, which provided a "conduit for supporter energy and a launchpad for supporter activism" (Delany 2009). Volunteers used MyBO to organize events, run fundraising campaigns and recruit friends. Gibson (2013) argues this site fostered a new form of "citizen-initiated campaigning" (CIC), a practice where digitally registered supporters who are not necessarily members make use of online tools created by the party or candidate to campaign both online and offline on the party's or candidate's behalf.

Five million people, mostly young, signed up as supporters of Obama on social networking sites. This support materialized in an "I voted" button on Election Day (Green and Coffey 2011, 143).

While the Democrats enjoy the largest number of youth supporters for a variety of reasons, youth-focused outreach strategies have likely played an important role. In 2012, 45% of non-college youth identified as Democrats, while 27% identified with the Republican party and 28% as independent or something else (CIRCLE Staff 2012, 6).

3.3 United Kingdom

In many ways, the state of political engagement in the UK closely parallels that of Canada. In the most recent 2010 parliamentary election, national voter turnout was 65% (International IDEA) and youth turnout (18–24 years) was 44% – well below the national average (Ipsos MORI 2010). However, this was up slightly from 2001 and 2005, where

turnout was 39% and 37%, respectively, but still much lower than the 68% youth voter turnout recorded in 1987.

Engagement

    Membership Engagement

Like Canada, weaker commitments among youth to political parties in the UK compared with older age groups have been documented (Clarke et al. 2004; Tilley 2003); youth are also less likely to be party members (Sloam 2007; Whiteley and Seyd 2002). Bruter and Harrison observe that citizens aged 60 or more make up only 24% of the total UK population, but comprise 61% of party members (2009, 10). Most national UK political parties[43] maintain youth wings, although the age ranges and their structures differ; most automatically enrol eligible new members into youth wings.

However, youth wings, which were once very large and vibrant in post-Second World War years, suffered a period of decline punctuated with conflicts between more extremist elements of the wings and central party hierarchies. Kimberlee (2002), who documents this history briefly, notes that both Labour and the Conservatives terminated a part of their youth wing due to affiliation with more militant activity or extremist views.[44] Perhaps fearing a re-occurrence, parties moved to minimize this risk by reducing the influence of youth wings.

The declining popularity of the Young Conservatives and the extremist views of members of the party's student federation led the Conservatives to re-launch their youth movement in the 1990s (Russell 2005, 565). This saw the merger of three youth wings, the Young Conservatives, Conservative Students and Conservative Graduates, into Conservative Future. Russell (2005) observes that Conservative Future members do not seem to be treated any differently from ordinary party members during campaign periods and seem to lack formal power.

Berry (2008) looks closely at the Labour Party's youth sections, which remain divided between Young Labour and Labour Students. He observes that Young Labour is "chronically under-resourced and over-centralised" (366), and interviews with youth members reveal a sense of disempowerment. Although there are youth representatives on the National Policy Forum of the Labour Party, they are selected by the party as a whole at an annual conference, and not by young members specifically. Two reform camps have emerged to address the lack of control or access to the national structure (Berry 2008). The

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[43] This case study centres on UK-wide political parties (i.e. compared with more regional parties such as the Scottish National Party) with substantial representation at Westminster (i.e. those that hold more than 1% of seats). This includes the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democratic Party.

[44] Labour shuttered the Young Socialists for being too closely linked to the Militant Tendency. The Conservatives were forced to close the Federation of Conservative Students in the 1980s due to vocal extremists. The Liberal Party (precursor to the Liberal Democrats) also dealt with youth who regularly and publicly challenged the party hierarchy. See Kimberlee (2002).

first calls for greater democratization (allowing youth to vote for their own representatives); the second desires more localization (to enhance local networks).

Russell (2005) calls the Liberal Democratic Party a leader for the privileged place accorded to the Liberal Democratic Youth and Students (LDYS) within the party, which translates into greater influence, resources and expertise for the LDYS. Only one other subgroup, the Association of Liberal Democratic Councillors, shares as much influence. Russell (2005) suspects the Liberal Democrats' position as a third party has a role to play: they have had less to lose or risk by giving the LDYS heavy representation in the party structure.

The LDYS includes both youth and students, though numbers skew toward students. An interview with one LDYS member suggests that the party provides political organizing training for the LDYS executive, which in turn is tasked with travelling around the UK to "[keep] people enthused" (Russell 2005, 567). Furthermore, every local executive is expected to have a member 26 years of age or younger on its committee, which ties the local parties to youth wings (Russell 2005).

Non-Member Engagement

There is little academic literature on how young people relate to parties as a vehicle to contribute to politics (Berry 2008). A 2011 survey among 18-year-olds eligible to vote for the first time in the UK 2010 parliamentary election asked, "How effective do you think being a member of a political party is for influencing government?" Interestingly, Henn and Foard (2011) note that the data reveal that youth (most of whom are non-members) see party membership as effective. A plurality of 46% agreed that it would be effective, while 37% believed it would not be effective and 17% were unsure. However, most youth still feel parties are closed to them: 61% agreed that "there aren't enough opportunities for young people like me to influence political parties," compared with only 7% who disagreed.

Mycock and Tonge (2012) observe that the disconnection between youth and politics has led to initiatives to improve youth citizenship, wherein the role of parties is conspicuously absent. Under Tony Blair, the Labour government introduced mandatory citizenship education in school curriculums; under Gordon Brown, the Labour government initiated the Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC) to explore lowering the voting age and "youth-proofing" legislation; and under David Cameron, the Conservative–Liberal Democratic coalition government launched the National Citizen Service that focuses on community rather than political activism.

There has been no concerted national conversation about the responsibility of parties or need for reform in these initiatives, which may be contributing to the "significant disconnection between young people and political parties" (Mycock and Tonge 2012 1,

143). The YCC[45] represented a missed opportunity, as it did not consider how parties could restructure their internal arrangements to give young members a greater voice in day-to-day operation or policy formation. Nor did parliamentarians or political parties engage with the YCC when offered the opportunity (Tonge and Mycock 2009).

An open-ended question on the aforementioned 2011 survey asked young people what might be done to reverse their distrust and antipathy toward political parties and politicians. The study notes that their responses confirm a belief that parties should do more to directly connect with young people.[46] However, Henn and Foard (2011, 16) do not offer specific advice as to how parties can change beyond calling for "serious public relations work."

Policy Development

The limitations that were imposed on the youth wings of the Labour and Conservative parties were noted above. According to Kimberlee, "After every challenge, young people's ability to affect policy and influence party debate was either curtailed or undermined, leaving successive generations of young people with less opportunity to influence debate within political parties" (2002, 89).

Notably, Mycock and Tonge (2011) observe that both the Conservative Party and Liberal Democratic Party did issue separate youth policy papers during the 2010 election, although it is not clear if (or how) youth were involved in their generation. The content was deemed "eclectic," ranging from tackling homophobic bullying and youth training and employment, as well as non-youth-specific policies like high-speed rail and broadband networks. No details discussed if young voters were aware of these parties' initiatives.

Mobilization

Gibson (2013) considers whether UK parties, during the 2010 election, borrowed the pioneering CIC strategies of American political parties, such as the MyBo platform outlined in the US case study of this review. She finds ample evidence that the three major parties, as well as two minor parties,[47] had invested in websites for members and non-members to help the party in its campaign efforts offline and online. These included MyConservatives

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[45] The YCC was created in response to the July 2007 publication of the Governance of Britain Green Paper (www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm71/7170/7170.pdf). Thirteen independent commissioners, headed by chair Professor Jonathon Tonge, oversaw the commission. Among the commissioners were three youth participants. The commission was asked to examine how young people define citizenship; to explore how that citizenship might better be connected to political activity; and to lead a consultation about lowering the voting age to 16 years. See Tonge and Mycock 2010 for a full description. The YCC's final report is available at: www.liv.ac.uk/politics/staff-pages/YCC_Final_Report.pdf. The UK government's response is available at: www.liv.ac.uk/politics/staff-pages/Agenda_for_Youth_Engagement.pdf.

[46] See Appendix 3 for the results to the 2011 survey question "What do you think the political parties could do to better connect with young people?," conducted by Henn and Foard, 2011.

[47] These are the Scottish Nationalist Party and the British National Party, in addition to the major parties (Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats). This case will focus on the experience of the latter group. Gibson notes that the large parties had invested more resources into their multi-functional sites (2013, 7).

(MyCons), Labour's Membersnet (Mnet) and LibDemAct (LDA) – with sign-up open to party members and non-members.[48]

Gibson notes that parties seemed to be very interested in using supporters to contact voters on behalf of the party, with use of a virtual phone bank and tools for supporters to distribute party messages. However, the sites made less use of supporters to help generate revenue and new members online. Gibson notes that it is difficult to discern the impact of CIC within the electorate, as well as the number of people assisting parties with their mobilization efforts via the online enabling sites. The 2005 and 2010 British election studies (BES) showed no marked increase in overall party contact reported by voters, and reported online contact was very low at 1.5% of the electorate (Gibson 2013). However, BES data revealed increased contact by friends or family on behalf of a party, growing to 17% in 2010 from only 2% in 2001. A survey of online engagement during the campaign suggests that approximately 1.5 million voters were accessing these online campaign tools, although use by age cohorts was not reported. It is also not clear, nor did Gibson consider, whether the emergence of CIC had any relation to the small increase in youth voter turnout in the 2010 election, or whether the platforms were being maintained and/or adapted for between election periods.

3.4 New Zealand

Historically, New Zealand has held an enviable record of voter turnout during national elections, with rates consistently high, often above 90%, before 1984. Since the 1980s, turnout has been declining, reaching a new low of 74% in 2011 (International IDEA). Youth remain over-represented among non-voters. Approximately 22% of 18- to 26-year-olds did not vote in the 2008 general election compared with 7.5% of all other age demographics (Curtin 2010, 561). New Zealand presents a worthwhile case to consider given the recent shift from the first-past-the-post electoral system (last used in the 1993 national election) to a proportional representation (PR) electoral system[49] (first used in the 1996 election), which was expected to change party behaviour. In principle, parties should expend more effort mobilizing voters when the extra votes are likely to turn into seats for the party (Cox 1999; Vowles 2004), although this does not seem to have been the case.

Engagement

    Party Membership

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[48] Gibson's analysis compares the performance of party websites on a CIC index that measured activities in four areas: community building, resource generation, getting out the vote, and message dissemination/production. The Liberal Democrats scored the highest. See Gibson (2013) for a full review.

[49] Technically, New Zealand adopted a mixed-member proportional representation system (MMP) – a variant of a proportional representation. However, the literature consulted for this review generally referred to the electoral system as "proportional representation" or "PR," which is used in this literature review. See Miller (2005) and Vowles (2002; 2004).

Miller (2005) describes the 1960s and 1970s as a period when youth were highly visible and vocal participants in the organizations of major parties. This era was also characterized by "small armies of volunteers urging voters to attend campaign meetings and cast a vote" (2005, 172). Like other Western democracies, party membership numbers have fallen from 22% among the adult population to less than 5% more recently (Vowles 2004, 5). Parties are also dominated by older members. According to the New Zealand Election Study (NZES), 18- to 29-year-olds comprise less than 4% of all party members (NZES 2002).

Non-Party Membership

Miller (2005) argues that party membership has now declined to a point where some parties no longer have the numbers to engage locally during campaigns, let alone outside of an election period. Use of social media has also increased by political actors, according to Marret (2010). It is assumed that social media provides better access to youth since their use of social networking sites is greater than for older generations, yet little attention has been dedicated to measuring its impact on political engagement among youth in New Zealand – particularly for youth who would not otherwise participate or have limited interest in politics.

Policy Development

No detailed literature for this type of engagement was located.

Mobilization

Under PR electoral systems, party contact is assumed to be more effective for two main reasons. First, parties are incentivized to mobilize everywhere, regardless of how competitive they are in specific regions or areas. Second, it may take less effort to convince non-voters or intermittent voters to cast a ballot because of a sense that votes are not wasted, thereby enhancing voters' sense of their own political efficacy (Banducci, Donovan and Karp 1999; Vowles 2004).

However, research following the 2002 election found that party mobilization activities did not increase under PR. In 1993, the NZES found that about 25% of the electorate had some contact with a political party, either by a personal visit or phone call. In comparison, this dropped to 7% in the 2002 NZES despite the increased number of parties competing for seats under the new electoral system (Vowels 2004, 107). This gap also applied to voters aged 18 to 29, for whom reported contact fell from 17% to 3% between 1993 and 2002 (Ibid., 107). The drop in reported contact may have been tied to the overall decline in voter turnout in 2002, although this does not seem to have been explored.

Parties in both elections remained more likely to contact their own partisan supporters, rather than reach out to undecided voters or other partisans. Consistent with mobilization

trends internationally, parties were also more likely to contact those who had previously voted (compared with non-voters) (Ibid., 110). This pattern again puts New Zealand youth, who vote at a rate lower than older cohorts and have weaker party identification, at a disadvantage.

However, as of 2002, the Alliance and Green parties managed to attract higher votes among the youngest voters than their average turnout levels, and there is evidence to suggest that the Greens were particularly effective at mobilizing their young supporters (Ibid., 97). No literature describes their approach, though Miller notes that the Greens have been early adopters of Internet-based engagement (2005, 178) and have strived to employ interactive tools (Rudd and Hayward 2006, 334). Overall, Miller (2005) describes parties' campaigns as centralized, and having shifted away from the local campaign to concentrate on the nationwide campaign in New Zealand.

Mobilization literature on the most recent 2011 national election was not found, although it is noteworthy that New Zealand had its lowest turnout since the PR system was adopted.

3.5 Finland

In the 2011 parliamentary elections, general voter turnout was 67%. In the 2012 presidential elections turnout was 68%, down from 74% in 2006 (International IDEA 2012). In Finland, there are no estimates of turnout for youth in national elections. However, at the municipal level, a study by Martikainen and Wass (2004, 29) found that between 41% and 51% of young people voted in Helsinki in 2004.[50]

Aside from how candidates and political parties engage and mobilize, the literature suggests the general Finnish political culture facilitates youth participation. The 2006 Youth Act made youth participation and the right of young people to be heard in the municipalities a legal obligation. Section 8 of the Act states "The opportunity to participate in the handling of issues relating to local and regional youth work and policy must be provided for young people. Additionally, young people must be heard during the handling of issues concerning them" (Feldmann-Wojtachnia et al. 2010, 20).

Engagement

   Party Member Engagement

In Finland, 47% of party members are 60 or older, although they comprise only 25% of the general population (Bruter and Harrison 2009). However, youth political organizations are a significant part of the Finnish political system. In Finland, every party in parliament has a designated youth chapter. Finnish political parties view their own youth organizations as

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[50] The proportion of candidates in the municipal elections who were younger than 30 was 10.7% (Feldmann-Wojtachnia et al. 2010, 12).

important for the whole party since they offer a consistent opportunity of renewal and many receive financial support from the mother parties (Falck 2007). While political parties compete electorally for power, many political party youth organizations work together to increase representation of youth in decision-making channels; for example, student financial aid is an interest area all parties claim to work together on.

Non-Member Engagement

While member engagement appears to be sustained and significant during non-election years, most youth do not belong to political parties in Finland. Using 2002–04 survey data, 7% of the Finnish population belongs to a political party. The literature consulted for this review did not explicitly mention non-member engagement initiatives. However, similar to other democracies youth appear to be most active in interest groups (Falck 2007, 13).

Policy Development

Many political parties consider policy development as a clearly defined area where youth must be given the opportunity to participate (Feldmann-Wojtachnia et al. 2010, 21). While youth organizations have their own local branches and districts, in some parties young people are also in decision-making positions of the local party associations. The mechanisms for including youth wings in the policy and decision-making process vary across parties: for the Social Democrats, representatives from the Social Democratic Youth are included in working groups (i.e. committees); for the Green League, the Federation of Green Youth and Students are permitted to speak and be present at party management board meetings; for the Left Alliance, the Left Youth are allowed to put forward motions to the party; and for the Christian Democrats, the Christian Democratic Youth are officially represented as one of three deputy chairpersons of the party (Falck 2007, 11).

Mobilization

Finnish political parties rely heavily on their youth organizations for mobilization efforts. They raise youth issues in electoral debates, encourage young people to vote, and assist and train young candidates (Falck 2007, 12). In the Finnish system, the youth organizations maintain a strong sense of engagement, which allows for mobilization to become one part of the larger agenda rather than the entire objective.

4.0 Points of Consideration

4.1 Revisiting the Challenges

This section revisits the three main challenges to effective youth outreach outlined earlier in the literature review. In light of the insights from the case studies, the review highlights

strategies used in other jurisdictions to overcome the challenges.

The first challenge is that youth are harder to contact than their older counterparts. This makes voter identification, an essential task for effective outreach, more difficult. However, it is unlikely that the two reasons why identification is made more difficult will change: youth's mobility patterns and lack of land-line phones. As such, parties that seek to reach youth have had to devise innovative solutions. In the US, the Democratic Party, in particular, has invested both in online platforms like MyBo that encourage supporters to share information about themselves (e.g. name, e-mail, mobile phone, location, interests).

Concurrently, US parties have also invested in sophisticated data management systems that compile data from a variety of sources. These combined strategies can enable youth outreach. In Canada, the Conservative Party is arguably the most advanced in its data collection, though the Liberal Party has also invested in a data program (Marland 2012). The literature reveals little about the other political parties or to what extent youth are present in these databases.[51]

The second challenge is youth's weak partisan attachments, which diminish parties' membership base and decrease parties' propensity to reach out to youth. This is a common challenge across many advanced democracies, and there is no simple solution to the erosion of partisan attachments.

With the growing aversion to formal party membership, particularly for youth, UK parties seem to be redefining their relationship with supporters by moving toward a more networked model during campaign periods that facilitates the involvement of citizens who do not desire membership (Gibson 2013). Parties, in order to maximize their investments in digital tools, are loosening control over previously highly centralized campaign tasks – and encouraging supporters (and members) to use them. Such a new form of party affiliation – more similar to the floating support associated with social movements – may reduce parties' need for formal membership. However, it is not yet clear how these campaign experiences will have a deeper organizational impact on the party structure beyond elections (Gibson 2013). In Canada, the recent creation of the "supporter" category[52] by the Liberal Party suggests some willingness to experiment with a new model.

The final challenge is the (mis)perception that youth are not interested in politics whatsoever, and if they are, that their interests and evaluations diverge from the larger

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[51] The Conservatives use CIMS (Constituency Information Management System); Liberals use LiberalList. Marland (2012) describes these databases as integrating the electronic list of electors provided by Elections Canada, socio-demographic data from Statistics Canada, and information that party canvassers and constituency offices input. See p. 69.
[52] "Supporters" could sign up via the Liberal Party of Canada website or websites of the party leadership candidates, and without paying a membership due, will be able to cast a ballot in the selection of the next party leader in spring 2013.

electorate. The case studies do not illuminate a solution to this puzzle. There is no common approach to how youth should be treated by parties: Are they a cohort with distinct issue preferences that require expression in the party's policy and platform development? Does an institutionalized youth voice in the party structure improve a sense of effectiveness among youth – as members and non-members? Limited research, particularly comparative work, also makes it difficult to assess these approaches.

4.2 Benefits of Youth Outreach

Despite the challenges to youth outreach faced by political parties, the literature and case studies highlighted (albeit sometimes implicitly) the benefits for political parties.

First, there can be long-term electoral advantages for parties that effectively reach out to youth. Without strong partisan identities, youth votes are potentially winnable. This creates room for parties to think strategically about how to mobilize youth, as the Democratic Party has demonstrated. Another advantage to recruiting youth – either full party members or supporters – is that they possibly offer a pool of low-cost (often free) labour to perform outreach tasks. Such opportunities also offer an initial step toward cultivating a sense of loyalty to the party or candidate among a new generation of supporters.

Second, parties risk long-term decline as their membership ages and fails to be replaced with younger members. Although it is not likely parties will cease to exist without members (Young and Cross 2007), their attachments to the broader society are important since they are the vehicles through which governments are formed. Moreover, among their many functions, parties should provide a meaningful way for citizens, including youth, to participate in politics. The successful mobilization and engagement of youth is thus tied to both the legitimacy of parties and the democratic system in which they operate.

4.3 Notable Practices from Case Studies

It is challenging to distinguish a set of "best" practices for how candidates and parties reach out to youth. The fact that political parties tend to operate opaquely makes a comprehensive study of their strategies and decisions more difficult for scholars. Additionally, technologies used by parties, often in campaigns, are evolving quickly while the research process generally unfolds more slowly. Without clear evidence of "best" practices, this review draws attention to notable practices based on the case study material.

Engagement

This review considered three aspects of parties' youth engagement: party membership, non-member engagement and policy development.

Finland presents a leading example of party membership. Every major party maintains a youth wing, most of which appear to have, at least to some extent, an influential voice within the mother party. Furthermore, several of Finland's youth chapters work with each other and other community partners to advance youth issues in concurrence. As a result, this appears to open up parties to a dialogue with non-members (although the full effects were not documented). However, it is unclear what effect this might have on youth turnout at the national level as no estimates are available.

In terms of non-member engagement, the US is also an important case. As described in depth in the case study section, youth outreach includes social events which attract an audience beyond core party supporters. The Democratic Party has invested in online platforms that build interactive and ongoing dialogue among interested youth. However, as alluded to earlier, this non-member engagement could also be considered a type of sustained mobilization given the near continual campaign cycle in the US.

Mobilization

Mobilization strategies are widely used but not always aimed specifically at youth. The US, and in particular the Democratic Party, are innovators in terms of mobilization. Other countries, including Canada (Lees-Marshment 2012, 94) and the UK (Gibson 2013, 6), are watching closely in an effort to adapt US mobilization strategies to their own political and electoral context.

The willingness of the Democratic campaign to surrender some control over campaign tasks to supporters generated a new pool of volunteers who worked to mobilize their own social networks online and offline. One such example is the eCaptains used during the 2008 election.[53]

4.4 Recommended Future Research

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[53] Although precisely how many youth filled the ranks of eCaptains is not clear.

This literature review points toward a number of research questions that warrant further investigation in Canada.

Engagement:

- Engagement of youth between elections is a neglected area of research. Canadian literature lacks a clear understanding of the full range of activities candidates and political parties undertake at the federal political level to involve youth (both members and non-members). An audit of this sort that pays particular attention to youth wings and campus chapters, as well as local EDAs, would be a starting point. This could take the shape of in-depth interviews with local party leaders, as Shea (2004) completed in the US. Such a step is necessary before determining what works most effectively among parties.
- Current comparative literature suggests vast differences in how parties approach policy development. A more systematic comparative study of the role for youth (and their contribution) in these processes would also be of value.

Mobilization:

- Currently, the vast majority of mobilization experiments occur in the US. The precise effectiveness and costs associated with each strategy for Canadian youth is unclear. Experiments offer the most accurate assessment of mobilization strategies, and should be carried out in the Canadian context. The inability to validate individual-level voter turnout in Canada presents the largest challenge to this task.

Additional areas:

- As a complement to this review, it would be beneficial to consider how organizations other than parties, such as non-profit groups that work with youth, facilitate political engagement and mobilization among youth. These organizations may offer lessons adaptable to parties.

5.0 Conclusion

This report reviewed the relevant literature regarding how candidates and political parties engage and mobilize youth and identified three main challenges: youth are hard to contact, they have weak party attachments, and they may not be interested in political activity or their interests, priorities and evaluations may be seen to be different from those of older age groups. Following an examination of the case studies, including Canada and international examples, the review highlighted notable practices in terms of youth engagement and mobilization. The review concluded with points of consideration for the Canadian context and suggested areas for future research.

The literature does not offer a thorough understanding of how parties engage youth between elections. The effectiveness of existing youth engagement strategies is even less well understood. However, research demonstrates that mobilization tactics can be effective in reaching young voters – the debate arises over the precise messaging used.

In summary, several of the challenges surrounding youth engagement and mobilization *can* be addressed. This *can*, however, come with a caveat. As discussed at the outset of this review, political parties have multiple functions that contend for limited party resources – a triage that prioritizes electoral success. Admittedly, it is not a realistic expectation for political parties to forego such electoral priorities to fulfill their other functions. Yet, this review suggests there is not necessarily a trade-off between election-driven behaviour and behaviour that fulfills parties' other functions as public utilities. Greater inclusion and participation by youth not only enhances Canada's democratic health – it can be a part of a successful long-term electoral strategy for a party.

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