Too Many Bush Voters? False Vote Recall and the 2004 Exit Poll

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> I have been staring at the exit poll results since Tuesday, and one result stands out more than any other: Presidential vote in 2000. If the CNN exit poll is to be believed, Kerry lost because Gore voters were far less likely to vote on Tuesday than were 2000 Bush voters.[… According to the exit poll,] only 37% of the 2004 electorate voted for Gore in the last election, vs. 43% for Bush…. That result strains credibility. Any thoughts?
>
> …. Obviously these results do not remotely correspond with any analysis or p[r]ojection of voter turnout performed either before or after the election. Frankly, they defy belief. I would love to see the results of the exit polling on this question before it was "crosstabulated" to conform with the "actual" results. Until a rational explanation is advanced for this anomaly (assuming that is even possible), I feel justified in reacting with great skepticism to the assertion that the "official" results are reliable while the exit poll results are not.
>
> –excerpts from two comments posted at mysterypollster.com, 11/7/04[1]

Since shortly after the 2004 election, scattered observers have cited the apparent excess of Bush 2000 voters in the weighted 2004 National Election Pool (NEP) exit poll tabulations as evidence of election fraud. (Steve Freeman featured this argument in his joint appearance with Warren Mitofsky in October 2005.[2]) In brief and extreme form, the argument runs as follows: The exit poll indicates that 43% of 2004 voters voted for George W. Bush in 2000, which would equal about 52.4 million Bush 2000 voters. Bush received fewer than 50.5 million votes in 2000 – and, of course, some of those voters have died. Ergo, the only way to account for Bush's popular vote margin is to assume that more than 100% of Bush 2000 voters turned out in 2004. Since this is impossible, the parsimonious conclusion is that Kerry won the popular vote.

While this argument has some obvious gaps, it does raise the question: what might account for the apparent overrepresentation of Bush 2000 voters in the 2004 exit poll? The short answer is deceptively simple: in all likelihood, *many 2000 non-voters and Gore voters wrongly stated that they had voted for Bush*. A corollary is that Gore 2000 voters "defected" to Bush in 2004 at a substantially higher rate than Bush 2000 voters defected to Kerry, although the exit poll tabulation indicates that the rates are very similar.

The apparently misleading tabulation of 2004 by 2000 vote not only has been cited as proof of fraud, but has influenced at least one published account of Bush's victory. Pomper (2005, 50) asserts that "small – and offsetting – proportions of Gore and Bush voters switched sides. Bush won in 2004 because there were more consistent, 'standpat' Republicans than Democrats. This group appears as the largest segment…, again demonstrating the mobilization of party loyalists." While I do not doubt that the Bush campaign mobilized party loyalists effectively, I argue that

[1] The comments, attributed to "josueencuentro" and "Robert Miller" respectively, responded to post "Moral Values" (11/7/04), at http://www.mysterypollster.com/main/2004/11/moralvalues.html

[2] See Freeman (2005a); Freeman (2005b); also Lohrentz 2005, Keefer 2005, "TruthIsAll" 2005.

Bush's improvement over 2000 probably owes more to differential defection than differential mobilization.

In this paper, I first briefly review the "exit poll debate," for the benefit of interested readers. I then turn to the topic of false vote recall; review evidence about false recall of past presidential votes; and draw on the 2000-04 National Election Study panel to attempt to assess how false recall has affected the defection rates reported in the 2004 NEP tabulation. I conclude that the defection rate of Gore 2000 voters to Bush was probably about twice as large as the defection rate of Bush 2000 voters to Kerry – although any such conclusion hinges on tenuous assumptions. I similarly find that the exit poll crosstabulation exaggerates Kerry's margin among people who did not vote in 2000. In any case, past vote reports cannot be relied upon to analyze political dynamics across elections.

The exit poll controversy

The unlikely notoriety, within a small circle, of the 2004 NEP exit poll's 2004-by-2000 vote tabulation owes to the controversy regarding the results. Shortly after 7:30 pm EST, CNN.com posted preliminary tabulations from the national exit poll that implicitly gave Democrat John Kerry a lead of approximately 3 percentage points. CNN also posted tabulations from the Ohio exit poll that indicated that Kerry led by about 4 points in that decisive state.[3] After midnight, the tabulations were updated, primarily to match official returns that showed Bush ahead in Ohio and in the national popular vote. Some observers believed that Kerry had in fact won the popular vote, and the exit poll had been "cooked" to obscure the true result. Some subsequently argued that internal contradictions in the exit polls supported their case (see, for instance, the sources cited in footnote 2).

The 2004 exit poll incorporated a total of some 110,000 interviews nationwide. Most respondents were interviewed as they left polling places after voting on Election Day; these interviews took place at over 1400 polling places. Telephone samples of early and absentee voters in twelve states supplemented the polling place interviews. Most exit poll interviews used questionnaires customized for each state. A subset of the nationwide precinct sample was selected for the national exit poll. Participants in the national exit poll received one of four forms of the national questionnaire. Responses from a total of 12,219[4] national questionnaires were tallied in the final NEP analysis, but the 2000 retrospective vote question appeared on only one form. Thus, 3182 responses are available to the question, "Did you vote in the presidential election in 2000?"[5] The resulting weighted tabulation of 2004 vote by reported 2000 vote appears on CNN.com in approximately the form shown in Figure 1 below.

[3] In fact, the Best Geo estimate, based on exit poll interviews alone, for Ohio gave Kerry a 6.5 point margin (Edison/Mitofsky [E/M] 2005, 22).

[4] The apparent sample size of the dataset is n = 13,719, but each of 500 telephone interviews is entered four times. (The telephone interviews incorporated questions from all four forms.) The tabulation that appears on CNN.com has a nominal n of 13,660, and thus is based on approximately 12,160 respondents. See E/M (2005, 74).

[5] The response categories are, in order, "No, I did not vote"; "Yes, for Al Gore"; "Yes, for George W. Bush"; and "Yes, for another candidate." All four forms of the national questionnaire are available at http://www.exit-poll.net/election-night/Nat_Final.pdf (last accessed 1/9/06).

Figure 1: tabulation of 2004 by 2000 presidential votes, 2004 exit poll (CNN.com)[6]

PRESIDENTIAL VOTE IN 2000	 BUSH		 KERRY	 NADER
TOTAL	2004	2000	2004	2004
Did Not Vote (17%)	45%	n/a	54%	1%
Gore (37%)	10%	n/a	90%	0%
Bush (43%)	91%	n/a	9%	0%
Other (3%)	21%	n/a	71%	3%

How are these results interpreted as circumstantial evidence of fraud? As I have noted, since about 121 million Americans voted in the 2004 election, 43% of the electorate would equal approximately 52.4 million voters. Yet George W. Bush received fewer than 50.5 million votes. Allowing for mortality, something under 49 million of these voters could possibly have voted in the 2004 election. Why, then, do the weighted exit poll results indicate the existence of too many Bush (2000) voters? To some, this result seems especially incongruous because, prior to weighting, the exit polls are assumed to incorporate interviews from too *few* Bush (2004) voters. These observers conclude that the unweighted exit poll results and/or preliminary tabulations[7] are more accurate than the weighted results – which implies that John Kerry won the popular vote. (The unweighted 2004 data indicate that Bush 2000 [Bush2K] voters were 39.5% of the electorate and Gore 2000 [Gore2K] voters 38.4%, among 3182 respondents. These figures are consistent, within sampling error, with the suppositions that Bush2K and Gore2K voters (1) turned out at roughly equal rates, and (2) participated in the exit poll at roughly equal rates. The preliminary tabulations most often cited by fraud theorists actually show a larger gap. The unweighted results and preliminary tabulations both put Kerry ahead.)[8]

On the contrary, I argue that the most parsimonious explanation of the "too many Bush voters" in the 2004 exit poll is that many voters falsely reported having voted for the incumbent. This explanation has not found warm support among advocates of fraud theories. Before systematically presenting evidence for false reporting of past voting, I challenge the plausibility of the fraud account by applying the same reasoning to the 2000 exit poll.

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[6] This table is derived from the CNN.com report of "U.S. President / National / Exit Poll" results at http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/states/US/P/00/epolls.0.html. To enhance readability, the table is pasted in HTML and then reformatted to approximate the original appearance.

[7] The "unweighted results" to which I refer are the data archived at ftp://ftp.icpsr.umich.edu/pub/FastTrack/General_Election_Exit_Polls2004/ , without weights applied. Some observers have referred to the preliminary tabulations released on election night as "unweighted," meaning that they had not been forced to match the official returns. These tabulations do incorporate a variety of weights.

[8] Two independent sources indicate that the preliminary national exit poll tabulation as of approximately 7:30 pm EST (which would not incorporate many late results from the West) indicated that the electorate contained 41% Bush2K voters and 38% Gore2K voters, as well as 4% who voted for another candidate and 17% who did not vote (http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/pdfs/Mitofsky4zonedata/US2004G_3798_PRES04_NONE_H_Data.pdf; http://web.archive.org/web/20050207070506/http://www.exitpollz.org/CNN_national2.htm).

Consider: In the 2000 VNS exit poll, the weighted results indicate that 45.6% of respondents had voted for Bill Clinton in 1996, while 31.3% had voted for Bob Dole, 6.5% for Ross Perot, 2.4% for another candidate, and 12.5% had not voted (1.7% skipped the question). The unweighted results are similar.[9] Thus, Clinton's apparent margin over Dole is 14.3% of all respondents, or 16.7% of those who said they had voted in 1996. By contrast, in the 1996 returns, Clinton received 49.2% of the vote, Dole 40.7%, Perot 8.4%, and other candidates about 1.7%. That is, Clinton won by only 8.5 points. Of course, we cannot assume that the 2000 proportions should match the 1996 proportions. Nonetheless, these results are "impossible" in precisely the same sense as the 2004 results. In 2000, 105.4 million presidential votes were counted, of whom 45.6% would equal about 48.1 million Clinton 1996 voters. Yet Clinton received only 47.4 million votes in 1996, of whom presumably under 46 million survived in 2000. The maximum *possible* proportion of Clinton 1996 voters in the 2000 electorate is some two points lower than the reported proportion – a discrepancy well beyond expected sampling error.[10]

How, then, do we explain the "impossibly high" proportion of Clinton 1996 voters in the 2000 exit poll? Is it likely that Al Gore stole millions of votes in 2000, and Clinton voters were upweighted in the exit poll to match the result? Or that millions of votes were stolen from *Clinton* in 1996? Perhaps anything is possible, but given that the 1996 and 2000 national exit poll estimates came close to the official returns, neither conjecture seems at all likely. Likelier, again, is that many respondents in 2000 wrongly reported having voted for Clinton in 1996.

Paradoxically, then, rather than the weighted 2004 results being suspiciously inconsistent with the actual 2000 returns, it seems to be the unweighted 2004 results that are too close to the actual returns – if we assume that exit poll respondents routinely exaggerate past votes for the incumbent. But this conjecture opens a research question quite apart from allegations about the 2004 election. How widespread is misreporting of *whom* one voted for in the past?

A brief review of misreporting in the literature

That survey respondents might misreport their past presidential votes is hardly a novel insight. On the contrary, it figures in a stock example of survey misreporting: John F. Kennedy's retrospective landslide. NORC conducted a survey soon after Kennedy's assassination in which it asked, "In the 1960 election, did you prefer (Richard) Nixon or (John F.) Kennedy for President?" Kennedy – who had won the popular vote by less than 0.2 percentage points – was retrospectively "prefer[red]" by 65% of respondents, compared to only 30% for Nixon.[11]

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[9] These results are derived from the national dataset archived with ICPSR, "Voter News Service General Election Exit Polls, 2000" (ICPSR 3527), applying the "WEIGHT" variable. Using unweighted data yields almost the same result (45.8% of respondents report having voted for Clinton in 1996, $n = 6361$). A convenient source of summary tabulations from the 2000 exit poll is archived on the CNN.com website, http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/ ; national results are available at http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/results/index.epolls.html (last accessed 1/9/2006).

[10] The nominal margin of error for some 6300 responses would be on the order of 1.3%. However, in 2000, unlike 2004, the past-vote question was asked on most state surveys, so we can actually examine over 50,000 responses. Clinton's retrospective lead over Dole in these data appears to be even larger, although the aggregation of state samples naturally does not yield an unbiased national sample.

[11] National Opinion Research Center, Kennedy Assassination Survey (field dates 11/26/63-12/03/63), 1384 adult respondents interviewed in person. USNORC.63KENN, R51, Roper Center accession number 0410511. (The

Of course, the aftermath of a presidential assassination does not lend itself to robust generalizations. Are survey respondents in general – and voters in particularly – generally predisposed, in subsequent years, to misreport having voted for a victorious presidential candidate? Surprisingly, I have not yet encountered a paper that addresses precisely this question. The extant literature seems to examine two related questions: the extent to which respondents overreport voting, especially in the immediate aftermath of an election; or the extent of misreporting having voted for the winner soon after an election (sometimes called a "bandwagon effect").

I am aware of several European sources that describe vote misreporting over an extended period. Noelle-Neumann's *The Spiral of Silence* (1984/1993) notes that reported voting for a particular party tends to covary with the party's current popularity. In Britain, Himmelweit et al. (1978) reported that in a longitudinal study, 16% or more of participants misrecalled their prior votes four to eight years later, and that this difference tended to favor "the party for whom the subject had just voted" (369). The authors argued that "Political scientists have tended to overestimate consistency in electoral behaviour…. The voter also tends to overestimate his own consistency; so there is a conspiracy of error, of which… political scientists in looking for trends need to be aware" (1978, 374). MORI (2001) presents an extensive time-series of recalled vote in the British 1997 General Election, in which Labour's margin over the Conservatives is overstated by 10 points in the month after the election, and by as much as 17 points in subsequent surveys – a phenomenon they dub "inaccurate recall." MORI uses these results to argue against the use of recalled past vote in weighting; two ICM researchers concede the existence of "faulty memory" or "false memory" while defending their weighting practice (Curtice and Sparrow 2002), which incorporates an adjustment for false memory. There is little reason to expect the dynamics of U.S. presidential elections to match those of parliamentary elections in Germany or Great Britain.

In the U.S. context, an immense literature discusses the phenomenon of vote overreporting, especially in connection with the American National Election Studies' vote validation studies. Cassel and Sigelman (2001) cite 28 such studies. Traugott (1989, 5) notes that in five validation studies from 1964 through 1988, "we find that 12-14% of self-reported voters do not actually have a record of voting." Burden (2000) notes that the gap between NES and official estimates of voting-age turnout more than doubled from 1952 to 1996. The demographic correlates of overreporting – most of them modest – have been extensively considered, as have possible impacts on models of turnout and candidate choice. These studies rarely describe the reported voting behavior of the apparent false reporters, perhaps in part because the data are so sparse.[12]

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following question asked if the respondent had voted; I cannot now determine what proportion of the self-reported *voters* implied that they had actually voted for Kennedy.)

[12] For what it is worth, of the five validation studies incorporated in the NES cumulative file (1964, 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1988), the false reporters reported voting for Jimmy Carter in significantly higher proportion than the validated voters in 1976 (65.5% vs. 48.6%, $p < 0.001$); any differences in the other four elections fall short of statistical significance. Cassel and Sigelman (2001) conclude that misreporting has little impact on candidate choice models in the three elections they examine, 1980 through 1988. (They do not examine 1976 because the vote validation procedures were improved in 1978 [2001, 645].)

Wright (1993) discusses both vote overreporting and the bandwagon effect. Wright (1993, 291) notes that in NES post-election interviews, a "significant number of respondents overstate their support for the winning candidates." Importantly, this propensity is not limited to overreporters: "while those who cannot be shown to have voted are more easily moved to report going with the winner, they are followed rather closely by those who did vote" (1993, 304). However, Wright finds "no overall pattern" of pro-winner bias for *presidential* vote reports if the 1964 study – which grossly overstates Lyndon Johnson's margin over Barry Goldwater – is excluded from the analysis (1993, 300). Here Wright expands upon earlier work exploring bandwagon or spiral-of-silence effects favoring Senate winners (Wright 1990; Gronke 1992, in critique; Wright 1992, in response). Wright (1992, 132) suggested that given the high salience of the presidential vote, "although we may expect decay in recall of presidential voting, it may not occur appreciably for weeks or months after the election."

Strangely, the bandwagon effect has been offered as further evidence that the 2004 election was stolen. Maxwell (2004) states: "It is a well-recorded phenomenon that after an election result is known, more people will claim to have voted for the winner than actually did…. In this case [2004], and as far as I can discover, only in this case does the percentage claiming to have voted for the winner fall below the percentage actually voting for him." Maxwell cites Prisuta's (1993) evidence of a presidential bandwagon effect in a telephone poll following the 1992 election, in early December. Among the respondents who reported having voted for one of the three leading candidates, Bill Clinton retrospectively held a 17-point margin over George H. W. Bush, 49% to 32% – whereas in the official returns Clinton won by only 5 points, 43% to 38%. Prisuta concluded that the largest disparities occurred in subgroups "where Clinton ran strongest and where Democrats traditionally do well" (2) – specifically, women, low income voters, and ethnic minorities. For instance, the ICR survey showed 43% of men voting for Clinton (compared with 41% in the exit poll), but 54% of women (versus just 45% in the exit poll).

However, judging from the Pew Research Center's post-election polls for the past five presidential elections, Wright was right to downplay presidential bandwagon effects, notwithstanding the case of 1992 (which came too late for Wright to discuss) and the very different case of 1964. In Pew's 2004 post-election survey, 49% of respondents reported having voted for Bush, 45% for Kerry, less than 1% for Nader, and 6% "Other/DK" (Pew Research Center 2004). Thus Bush held a 4-point retrospective margin, slightly larger than his 2.5-point margin in the official returns. Compare results for previous elections:

Table 1: winning margins in post-presidential-election Pew telephone surveys

Year	Pew margin for popular vote winner	Official popular vote margin	Difference
2004	4% (Bush)	2.5%	+1.5%
2000	3% (Gore)*	0.5%	+2.5%
1996	6% (Clinton)	8.5%	–2.5%
1992	13% (Clinton)	5.6%	+7.4%
1988	10% (Bush)	7.7%	+2.3%

* Bush held a tenuous electoral college lead at the time of the survey

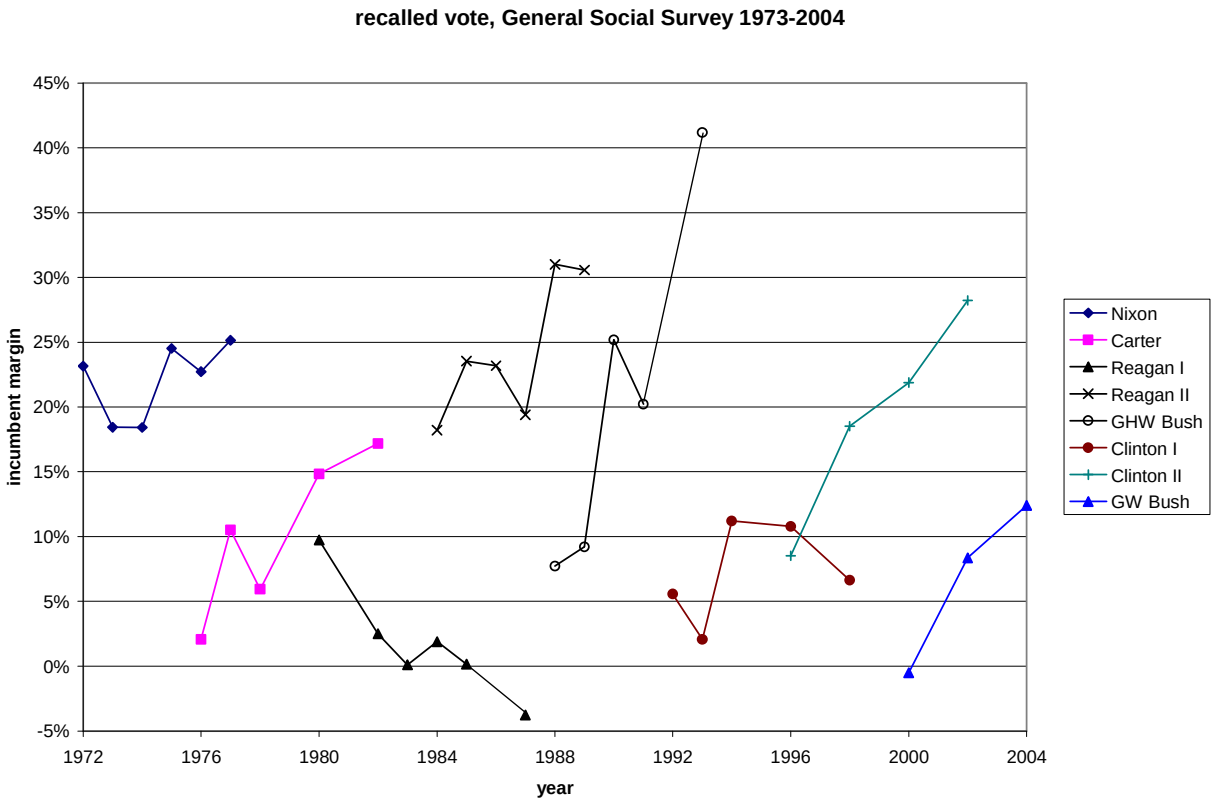
Note that in 2000, Gore narrowly won the popular vote, Bush was the presumptive leader (if not winner) in the electoral vote, and the outcome was undecided at the time of the poll. Regardless, among these Pew results, the bandwagon effect of 1992 is unusual, while 2004 does not stand out. The NES results, presented below, provide more support for bandwagon effects than indicated by Wright, but much less than suggested by Maxwell.

The U.S. discussion of "bandwagon effects" appears more or less to end when the NES post-election wave does. Little if any discussion parallels the British consideration of recalled vote years in the future.

False past-vote reporting in the General Social Survey

As a baseline to explore the intertemporal dynamics of "false recall" in the U.S. presidential context, I present some vote-recall results from the General Social Survey since its inception in 1973. Of course, these results are by no means comparable to exit poll results, or even to NES results given the NES's proximity to elections and emphasis upon political content. For simplicity, I present only the margin between the two major candidates; percentages for other candidates tend to vary much less over time. For each series, the first point at left reflects the winner's initial margin in the popular vote (slightly negative for George W. Bush in 2000); the following points represent *recalled* vote margin in General Social Surveys.

Figure 2: recalled vote margins in General Social Surveys, 1973-2004



(The results have been weighted by the number of adults in each household, to approximate an equal probability of selection across individuals rather than households, as suggested in the GSS Appendix A. Also, black oversamples have been filtered out. The sample sizes range from 852 to 1164 prior to the 1994 election, and from 1652 to 1993 thereafter. Thus, the nominal margins of error for the *margin* can be as large as ±7 points prior to 1994, and ±5 from 1994 on.)

Five of the eight recalled-vote series end distinctly above the actual vote margin, although Reagan's "margin" in his second term (following the 1984 election) appears to stagnate until 1988. Two presidents end up roughly where they began: Richard Nixon's recalled margin in 1977 roughly matches his actual margin in 1972 (after a distinct drop prior to his resignation), and Bill Clinton more or less breaks even over his first term (through 1998). One president loses ground: seven years after Reagan's victory over Jimmy Carter, a plurality of respondents recalled having voted for Carter! These differences apparently reflect not only the relative popularity of the winners, but the name recognition and popularity of the losers. Carter and George H. W. Bush, the two presidents in this group who were defeated for reelection (Ford never having been elected), fare best. At the other extreme, Mike Dukakis – probably the most obscure of the losing candidates – falls from a single-digit margin in the 1988 election to a brutal 41-point retrospective loss in 1993.

I eschew further analysis of the GSS data, because my main interest is in exploring the impact of false vote reports on election studies. Respondents may be more prone to false vote report in contexts where relatively few of the questions treat political issues, and when interviewed further from election day.

False past-vote reporting in the National Election Studies: an overview since 1948

In most National Election Studies from 1948 on, respondents have been asked in the pre-election survey whether they voted in the prior presidential election, and if so, for whom. Prior to 1964, respondents were asked about the major candidates by name only; from 1964 on, respondents have been prompted with both the names and the party affiliations of the major candidates.[13] In the post-election survey, of course, they are asked whom, if anyone, they have just voted for. Thus, the NES offers at least two opportunities for false vote reporting: immediately after the election (or as immediate as the post-election wave), and four years later. (Given my specific interest in election dynamics, I omit results from the off-year NES studies.)

[13] Strictly, in 1964, roughly half the respondents were asked if they had voted "Republican or Democrat for president in that [1960] election." The results were not significantly different from the other half-sample. In that other 1964 half-sample, and in following years, the basic structure of the question (slightly modified for major third-party candidates) has been: "In <year>, {you remember that} <Republican presidential candidate> ran on the Republican ticket against <Democratic presidential candidate> for the Democrats. Do you remember for sure whether or not you voted for in that election? (IF YES, VOTED:) Which one did you vote for?"

The 1948 question also differed from the version asked in 1952 through 1960. In 1948, the wording was: "Do you remember whether you voted in <year> when <Democratic presidential candidate> ran against <Republican Presidential candidate> (IF YES:) Whom did you vote for then?" In 1952 through 1960, the wording was, "In <year>, you remember that <Democratic presidential candidate> ran against <Republican presidential candidate>. Do you remember for sure whether or not you voted in that election? (IF YES:) Which one did you vote for?" Thus, the 1948 wording (which omits "for sure") lends itself to more overreporting.

For the comparison four years out, I offer two change measures. The first measure is limited to respondents who indicated that they had voted both four years ago and (in the post-election wave) that they had voted in the current election, and who named whom they had voted for in each. These results are presumably more nearly compatible with exit poll results. The second measure includes all respondents who reported a vote choice in the previous election, whether or not they reported voting in the current election. Table 2 summarizes the basic results.[14]

Table 2: recalled vote margins in National Election Studies, 1948-2004

Election year	Winner's official margin	Winner's margin, NES post	change in margin, NES post	Winner's margin, NES +4 years*	Change in margin, NES +4 years (voters)*	Change in margin, NES +4 years (all)**
1944	7.5%	n/a	n/a	20.6%	13.1%	22.4%
1948	4.5%	8.4%	3.9%	13.5%	9.0%	11.7%
1952	10.9%	16.1%	5.3%	26.3%	15.4%	16.7%
1956	15.4%	19.2%	3.8%	26.7%	11.3%	12.4%
1960	0.2%	-1.7%	-1.9%	27.7%	27.5%	27.6%
1964	22.6%	35.0%	12.4%	32.7%	10.1%	13.0%
1968	0.7%	6.7%	6.0%	18.9%	18.2%	13.0%
1972	23.2%	28.3%	5.2%	30.1%	7.0%	6.1%
1976	2.1%	2.3%	0.2%	2.8%	0.8%	5.6%
1980	9.7%	11.4%	1.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a
1984	18.2%	16.3%	-1.9%	25.5%	7.2%	6.8%
1988	7.7%	5.7%	-2.0%	20.5%	12.8%	16.0%
1992	5.6%	13.9%	8.3%	6.5%	1.0%	3.2%
1996	8.5%	15.5%	7.0%	14.9%	6.4%	12.7%
2000	-0.5%	-4.2%	-3.7%	9.1%	9.6%	5.6%
2004	2.5%	0.4%	-2.1%	n/a	n/a	n/a

* Pre-election NES four years later; limited to people who reported (in the post-election survey) having also voted in the later election.
** Pre-election NES four years later; all respondents to retrospective question

Although short-run bandwagon effects are not a major focus of my paper, they are salient because of the use I will later make of the 2000-2004 NES panel survey. If we had reason to believe that NES respondents in either 2000 or 2004 were radically prone to bandwagon effects, the panel results would be gravely (or more gravely) compromised. Earlier I reported Wright's conclusion that apart from 1964, there was no evidence of a presidential bandwagon in the years he examined. Here, considering fourteen elections from 1948 on (excluding the problematic case of 2000[15]), I do find some propensity for a bandwagon effect: the mean winning margin is 3.3

[14] Using the NES 1948-2000 cumulative file, I have applied the post-election post-stratification weight VCF0009B; supplemented by the NES 2004 datafile, again using the post-election post-stratification weight
[15] In 2000, Al Gore appears to increase his small lead in the popular vote; most of the interviews were conducted before Gore conceded. In the other direction, a good case could be made for excluding 1964, as Lyndon Johnson's margin in the post-election study (35 points) was substantially smaller than in the pre-election study (40 points) – hardly a prototypical bandwagon.

points larger in the NES than in the official returns (standard deviation = 4.5%, p = 0.017). Contrary to Pew, the NES indicates a bandwagon effect favoring Clinton in 1996. However, in four of the last six elections, the NES margin is (insignificantly) *smaller* than the actual margin. The question wording of the vote question was substantially changed in 2000 (and in a half-sample in 2004), reducing self-reported turnout rates; however, it is unlikely that this reduction substantially affected estimates of bandwagon effects.[16]

A long-term bandwagon effect – the *apparent* propensity to overstate having voted for the incumbent four years earlier – is much more consistent in these data. In all fourteen presidential elections for which the past-vote question was available, the previous winner's margin in the past-vote question was larger than the official margin. Among self-reported current voters, the average increase in retrospective margin was 10.7 points. However, the effect appears to decline after 1964, when party affiliation was first supplied in the retrospective vote question. From 1968 on, the mean increase in margin is 8.1%. The average increase among all respondents was 12.3 points; this increase was larger than the increase among self-reported current voters in 10 of the 14 years, arguably weakly supporting the inference that vote overreporters are more prone to a bandwagon effect. (The bandwagon effect is positively correlated with presidential approval, but the correlation falls well short of statistical significance.)

Change in margin clearly is not a pure measure of false past-vote reporting, because it is affected by differential turnout. In any given election, voters for the previous winner may vote at a higher (or lower) rate than voters for the previous challenger. Unfortunately, the influence of false reporting itself swamps any effort to measure differential turnout directly. In the 14 NES studies for which the past vote question was available, 6 indicated a statistically significant difference in turnout – in every case favoring the out-party candidate. Presumably this difference largely reflects overreporting of voting for the previous winner among respondents who subsequently report not voting in the current election.[17] On average, reported out-party turnout (i.e., turnout in the current election among people who claimed to have voted for the major-party loser of the previous election) was 2.9 points higher than reported in-party turnout.

To focus on recent elections: the 2000 NES, which employed the more stringent wording for current-election voting, indicates that 87.4% of Clinton 1996 voters turned out again in 2000, compared to 95.3% of Dole 1996 voters. (Compare the exit poll "evidence," discussed earlier, that over 100% of Clinton voters turned out in 2000!) The 2004 NES indicates a more equitable repeat turnout: a statistically indistinguishable 91.1% of Gore 2000 voters and 92.8% of Bush

[16] From 1952 through 1996, respondents were asked whether they had voted using language similar to this (from 1996): "In talking to people about the election we often find that a lot of people weren't able to vote because they weren't registered or they were sick or they just didn't have time. How about you, did you vote in the elections this November?" In 2000, a new wording was adopted. The preamble (the first sentence) was unchanged, but then respondents were asked: "Which of the following statements best describes you: One, I did not vote (in the election this November); Two, I thought about voting this time - but didn't; Three, I usually vote, but didn't this time; or Four, I am sure I voted?" In half-sample experiments in the 2002 and 2004 NES, this new wording yielded self-reported turnout rates seven to eight points lower (Martinez 2006, 4). However, as Wright (1993) observes, apparent overreporters are only somewhat more likely to say they voted for the winning candidate.

[17] Indeed, the apparent difference in turnout between past in-party and out-party voters is – by construction – highly correlated with the apparent difference in bandwagon effect between self-reported current voters and all respondents, as described in the preceding paragraph.

2000 voters.[18] This result is arguably consistent either with the hypothesis that Bush 2000 voters actually turned out at a substantially higher rate than Gore 2000 voters (if the out-party turnout was again overstated), or with the view that turnout was close to equal. The 2000-2004 NES panel offers an alternative measure of repeat turnout in which people's 2000 vote is reported in 2000 rather than 2004.[19] By this (also problematic) measure, 95.5% of Gore 2000 voters and 96.2% of Bush 2000 voters voted again in 2004.[20]

False past-vote reporting in exit polls

I obtained all national presidential general election exit polls archived with ICPSR: ten exit polls in eight elections dating back to 1976. Using the supplied national weights, I computed the retrospective margin of the *previous* winner as a proportion of those who reported having voted. As with the NES, *in every case, the winner's retrospective margin in the exit poll four years later was larger than his initial margin* – approximately 11 points larger on average. George W. Bush's increase in 2004 recalling 2000 is somewhat below the mean of these ten exit polls, and close to Bill Clinton's increase in 2000 recalling 1996. The gap between exit poll and NES results appears to narrow from 1992 on, perhaps due to changes in the exit poll wording. (The appendix presents these changes over time.)

Table 3: recalled vote margins in national presidential exit polls, 1976-2004

Election year	Winner's official margin	Winner's margin, exit poll four years later	Change in margin, official to exit poll +4	Change in margin, official to NES +4
1972	23.2%	(CBS) 27.1%	3.9%	7.0%
1976	2.1%	(CBS) 13.0%	10.9%	0.8%
1980	9.7%	(ABC) 21.9% (CBS) 22.0%	12.2% 12.3%	n/a
1984	18.2%	(ABC) 34.4% (CBS) 32.4%	16.2% 14.2%	7.2%
1988	7.7%	(VRS) 28.4%	20.7%	12.8%
1992	5.6%	(VNS) 9.2%	3.6%	1.0%
1996	8.5%	(VNS) 16.4%	7.9%	6.4%
2000	-0.5%	(NEP) 7.5%	8.0%	9.6%

These results certainly do not support the inference that the 8.0-point change in retrospective margin in the 2004 exit poll evinces massive vote miscount favoring Bush. But the question remains to what extent the boost may be influenced by differential turnout rather than false recall. Advocates of the fraud hypothesis have argued that 2004 turnout among Gore voters

[18] This result combines half-sample results for two distinct wordings, as detailed in footnote 16.
[19] Thus the comparison is limited to respondents who (1) in 2000, reported having voted for Bush or Gore and (2) also participated in 2004.
[20] Here I apply the 2004 weight variable (i.e., a post-stratification weight that attempts to compensate for panel attrition). The unweighted result is that 302 of 314 Gore voters (96.2%) and 304 of 315 Bush voters (96.5%) also voted in 2004.

should have at least matched turnout among Bush2K voters. These observers variously cite Gore voters' anger over the 2000 denouement (although this anger was by no means universal), the intense 2004 Get Out The Vote efforts (on both sides), and of course the high overall turnout, which is often assumed to be inherently favorable to Democratic candidates. Pomper (2005), following the weighted exit poll results, concludes on the contrary that turnout among Bush2K voters was substantially higher. Campbell (2005, 237) observes that states in which Bush did better had larger increases in turnout; this result might conceivably hint that Bush2K voters turned out at a higher rate, but Campbell ventures no such extravagant ecological inference.[21] Similarly, some analyses have found somewhat larger turnout increases from 2000 to 2004 in counties that favored Bush. In light of the exit poll finding (supported by pre-election polls) that 2000 non-voters tended to favor Kerry in 2004, these analyses suggest that Bush may have enjoyed at least some advantage due to differential mobilization of Bush2K and Gore2K voters. However, any such advantage seems unlikely to account for much of the increase in retrospective margin.

"Retrospective defection" in the NES 2000-2004 panel study

To gain some insight about the possible dimensions and impact of false reporting in the 2000 exit poll, I turn again to the NES 2000-2004 panel study. Clearly NES results are not directly comparable to exit poll results, but they have one great virtue: they allow us to see respondents actually changing their report of whether they voted, and whom they voted for, in 2000. In the panel, 759 respondents reported their 2000 presidential vote, or non-vote, in both 2000 and 2004. Note that in 2004, panel respondents were interviewed only after the election. Thus, panel reports of 2000 vote are not directly comparable to reports from the main 2004 NES study, in which the question was asked in the pre-election wave. To give context, I report both the (often very small) unweighted *N*s and row percentages, and the weighted percentages, omitting third-party voters for simplicity.

Table 4: reports of 2000 vote in 2000 and 2004, NES panel study

2000 report	**2004 report (unweighted)**			**2004 report (weighted)**		
	No vote	*Gore*	*Bush*	*No vote*	*Gore*	*Bush*
No vote	68 (61.3%)	14 (12.6%)	26 (23.4%)	71.7%	6.6%	20.1%
Gore	7 (2.2%)	279 (88.9%)	23 (7.3%)	2.6%	86.5%	7.6%
Bush	5 (1.6%)	5 (1.6%)	303 (96.5%)	1.8%	1.3%	96.7%

Two results here are especially striking. First, people who reported in 2000 that they had not voted are much more likely in 2004 to report having voted for Bush in 2000 than for Gore. Second, a substantively significant proportion of (2000 self-reported) Gore voters – over 7% – "retrospectively defect" to Bush by 2004, while the rate of retrospective defection from Bush to Gore is much smaller.

[21] Indeed, Campbell suggests that "high turnout may have favored the president because marginal voters were more likely to be energized by the positive messages of voting for Bush than the negative messages for voting against him" (2005, 237).

These changes in recall of *whether* and *how* respondents voted have substantial effects on the estimated defection rates of Gore 2000 voters to Bush, and of Bush 2000 voters to Kerry. If one relies on the 2004 proportions (among panel respondents who also answered the vote question in 2000, and who say they voted in 2004), approximately 10% of Gore 2000 voters voted for Bush, and about 9% of Bush 2000 voters voted for Kerry – a virtual break-even. However, if one looks back to the 2000 vote reports, a different pattern emerges. Now (applying the 2004 panel weights), approximately 14.1% of Gore 2000 voters voted for Bush, while about 6.7% of Bush 2000 voters voted for Kerry! These proportions – derived from just 532 panel respondents – are far from precise, but they defy assimilation to chance (chi-square $p < 0.01$).

Let us consider the potential pitfalls of extrapolation from the NES panel to the exit poll. Most obviously, there is a disparity in sample frame: the NES is not limited to actual voters. However, the evidence indicates that any (same-year) "bandwagon effect" in the NES is minimal in general, and in 2004 in particular. Moreover, vote overreporting in 2004 is smaller than in years prior to 2000, due to the more stringent question wording. Thus, the inclusion of overreporters may not have much effect on the analysis. On the other hand, overreporters may be more prone to misreporting past votes, and so may lead to exaggerated retrospective defection rates.

The fact that the retrospective vote question was asked after the election may tend to increase both the retrospective bandwagon effect and the convergence between recalled past and current vote. We have seen that in the 2004 NES, the recalled Bush 2000 margin among self-reported 2004 voters was 9.1 points (a 9.6-point increase). In the panel, the recalled margin was 13.9 points among self-reported voters using the more stringent question wording (see footnote 16), and 23.2 points among self-reported voters using the traditional wording. Much of this "bandwagon surplus" under the traditional wording owes to people who had reported in 2000 that they did not vote. Among these respondents in 2004, those who reported voting under the traditional wording were more likely to retrospectively defect to Bush, and less likely to retrospectively defect to Gore, than those who reported voting under the more stringent wording. Interestingly, the retrospective defection rates of Gore to Bush, and Bush to Gore, both were *higher* under the more stringent wording than the more permissive wording. Thus, it seems likely that respondents who self-reported not voting in 2000 are most prone to retrospective bandwagoning in a post-election interview than in a pre-election interview, and that a more stringent current-vote filter tends to mitigate the effect. Retrospective bandwagoning among respondents who had reported voting for Gore or for Bush in 2000 may not be as subject to this effect. Of course, the exit poll is not a pre-election interview! It seems plausible, especially in the case where an incumbent is reelected, that any additional retrospective bandwagoning between pre-election and post-election will owe more to current vote choice than to some generalized desire to back whoever won – and, therefore, that the exit polls will more closely match post-election than pre-election results. Yet this inference is speculative at best, and our speculations about 2000 non-voters appear especially prone to error.

NES respondents, and particularly panel respondents, are subject to panel conditioning: the intensity of the interviews is likely to stimulate more thought at least about the content of the questions, and therefore these respondents may be (in this respect) *less* likely to misremember their votes four years earlier. Moreover, the intensity of the NES interview may create a propensity to underrepresent nonpoliticals – although, given the countervailing intensity of the

recruitment efforts, it is hard to guess how this propensity might compare with the exit polls'. This propensity, as well as panel attrition, may partly account for the smaller average bandwagon effects in NES studies as opposed to exit polls, although changes in question wording greatly complicate any such comparison.

Modeling retrospective defection in the 2004 exit polls: a baseline scenario

The exit poll and NES data are, in my judgment to date, too problematic (and, in the NES case, too sparse) to lend themselves to high-powered statistical modeling. Nonetheless, inquiring minds want to know the possible implications of the NES results for estimates of differential turnout and defection rates. I therefore have developed some frankly conjectural results based as closely as possible on the NES panel results. Although I do not assert that the NES proportions are either statistically robust or likely to be directly transferable, using them provides some discipline to the exercise, since alternative assumptions seem *ad hoc*. Because my model initially grew out of a controversy as to the accuracy of the 2004 vote count, I accepted external stipulations (including critics' assumptions) wherever possible. The model, implemented as a spreadsheet, cascades through six steps in order to explore how various assumptions about turnout, actual vote division by 2000 vote or non-vote, and false report of the 2000 vote could reconcile the actual results with the exit poll results.

For the baseline scenario, I somewhat arbitrarily decided to use entirely unweighted exit poll results as my goal in step 6 (see the right side of Table 7 on page 17). Here yet again, my criterion was partly rhetorical: the observations in the national exit poll dataset "are what they are," and no one can plausibly complain that they are skewed to official election returns. As with a great deal of exit poll rhetoric, this argument does not bear close scrutiny: surely the cases in the national sample *should* be weighted to compensate for differential non-response and probability of selection before being subjected to serious analysis. Edison/Mitofsky (2005, 20) report that a national sample applying such weights (but not weighting to the official results) would yield an estimated Kerry margin of about +3.0% rather than +4.7%. These weights cannot be reconstructed from available data. However, we can use the fully weighted data as an alternative goal for Step 6, as I do in Model 4 below.

Step 1: estimate the numbers of 2000 voters for Gore, Bush, and "other" who could vote in 2004.

For sake of argument, I accept an estimate, offered on-line by the pseudonymous "TruthIsAll," that the potential 2004 *repeat* electorate can be reckoned as 96.52% of the 2000 electorate (based on an annual mortality estimate of 0.87%, multiplied by four years and subtracted from 100%). This estimate seems not much worth refining, given the further arbitrary turnout assumptions at Step 2.

I thus estimate approximately 49,229,000 Gore2K voters, 48,704,000 Bush2K voters, and 3,815,000 'Other2K' voters who *could* have voted in 2004.

Step 2: based on "repeat turnout" estimates, allocate the 2004 (official) electorate among Gore2K voters, Bush2K voters, Other2K voters, and DNV2Ks (who "did not vote" in 2000).

As noted above, the literal NES panel evidence indicates very slightly higher 2004 turnout among Bush2K voters than Gore2K voters. However, again for rhetorical purposes, I initially assume that Gore2K and Bush2K turnout were equal. I further assume that Other2K turnout was slightly higher (the panel implies 100% turnout). Unsurprisingly, the very high repeat turnouts implied by the panel do not allow for sufficient "new" (Did-Not-Vote 2000) voters in the 2004 electorate. The ultimate target is to have 18.4% of respondents *state in the exit poll* that they did not vote in 2000. However, since the NES panel indicates that one quarter or more of people who did not vote in 2000 will, four years later, report having voted, the actual proportion of DNV2Ks must be higher.

By assumption, in my baseline scenario, repeat turnout is 91.0% among Gore2K voters, 91.0% among Bush2K voters, and 94.0% among Other2K voters; given these figures, DNV2Ks comprise 24.2% of the 2004 electorate.

Step 3: make assumptions about how these groups actually voted, to approximate the actual vote.

These proportions are influenced by the observed exit poll and NES panel estimates, but as with the Did Not Vote proportion in Step 2, the actual proportions here are not expected to match the observed exit poll proportions, because the exit poll does not measure *actual* 2000 vote.

The assumptions at Step 3 are also crucial "results" of the model. In the baseline scenario, these values are estimated (using Excel's Solver) so as to approximate the official vote totals and to minimize the sum of squared deviations, in Step 6, between the twelve modeled exit poll results and the actual (unweighted) results.[22]

Table 5: 2004 by 2000 vote proportions, baseline scenario

Assumed past vote	Turnout	Kerry %	Bush %
Gore 2000	91%	85.4%	14.1%
Bush 2000	91%	7.6%	91.9%
Other 2000	94%	65.1%	18.5%
DNV 2000	n/a	50.8%	48.5%

These percentages are all plausibly close to NES results. Note that the defection rate of Gore2K voters to Bush (in 2004) approaches twice the defection rate of Bush2K voters to Kerry (actually a smaller difference than in the NES panel).

[22] More specifically, the sum of absolute deviations between modeled and official vote counts (Bush, Kerry, and Other) was capped at 50,000 votes – a value that allows a maximum deviation of 25,000 votes or about 0.02% of total vote for any figure. Also, the sum of Kerry and Bush percentages is capped at 99.5% in each case.

Step 4: apply assumptions about differential response rates to yield a Kerry margin of approximately +4.7%, as in the unweighted national exit poll.

I set the Kerry participation rate per million at 120.0 and the Bush rate at 103.9, implying an overall participation bias "alpha" of about 1.155 (cf. Liddle 2005; Lindeman, Liddle and Brady 2005). The actual extent of participation bias may well have been quite different among different groups of voters; it clearly varied from state to state, and in other ways poorly documented or understood. Thus, the assumption of a fixed bias may well distort other estimates. Yet no alternative assumption has clear warrant.

Step 5: set assumptions about "retrospective defection" rates (2000 actual vote to 2000 recalled vote), and the marginal vote rates for Bush and Kerry in 2004 among each group of defectors.

In the baseline scenario, most of these values are taken or slightly rounded from the NES 2000-04 panel, using unweighted results. However, one large adjustment is necessary, because the panel does not incorporate young 2004 voters who were not eligible to vote in 2000. I assume that 26% of DNVs were these new young voters.[23] Because the youngest cohort of DNVs in the exit poll (those aged 18 to 24) appears to have divided its votes fairly equally between Bush and Kerry (giving Kerry about a 2-point margin in the unweighted results), I do not treat them as a separate voting bloc in Step 3, but their inclusion does entail that the defection rate among all DNVs is lower than it would be among DNVs who participated in the panel.

I model seven groups of "retrospective defectors" that are large enough to be somewhat measurable, although several of these obviously are inconsequential. Again, the proportions are based on observed counts of (1) 2000 report of 2000 vote, (2) 2004 report of 2000 vote (yielding retrospective defection rates), and (3) 2004 report of 2004 vote (yielding marginal vote rates).

Table 6: retrospective defection and vote rates, baseline scenario

Retrospective defection type	Defection rate (% of group as per 2000 report)	% of defectors voting for Kerry	% of defectors voting for Bush
Gore → "Bush"	7.3%	26%	65%
Bush → "Gore"	1.6%	79%	21%
DNV → "Gore"	9.4%	95%	5%
DNV → "Bush"	17.5%	25%	75%
DNV → "Other"	1.5%	60%	15%
Gore → "DNV"	2.2%	57%	14%
Bush → "DNV"	1.6%	20%	20%

[23] The actual figure is probably lower. In the exit poll, about 35% of respondents who reported not having voted in 2000 were in the 18-24 age cohort. Thus – if vote overreporting does not vary sharply with age -- perhaps on the order of 20% were actually ineligible to vote based on age. The effect of overstating this proportion is to reduce the estimated DNV retrospective defection rates.

Step 6: compare the resulting expected exit poll counts of Kerry and Bush interviews attributed to various 2000 vote statuses to the observed unweighted exit poll results.

For the baseline scenario, the assumptions in Steps 1 through 5 yield expected exit poll results that vary from the observed results by fractions of one point. (The sum of squared deviations across the twelve parameters is approximately 1.96×10^{-4}, a root mean square of 0.40%.) The modeled results give a larger surplus of "Bush2K" voters over "Gore2K" voters, offset by a larger net propensity of "Bush2K" voters to defect to Kerry.

Table 7: Modeled exit poll results, baseline scenario

Reported 2000 vote	Modeled exit poll results			Actual exit poll results		
	% of voters	% Kerry	% Bush	% of voters	% Kerry	% Bush
"Gore"	38.3%	91.5%	8.0%	38.4%	90.9%	8.4%
"Bush"	40.2%	10.5%	89.1%	39.5%	9.8%	89.4%
"Other"	3.3%	69.3%	17.1%	3.7%	69.2%	17.1%
"DNV"	18.3%	56.6%	42.6%	18.4%	56.2%	42.6%

Perhaps the most striking aspects of the baseline scenario are the (arbitrary) assumption of equal repeat turnout rates among Bush2K and Gore2K voters; the asymmetrical defection rates, where 14.1% of Gore2K voters defect to Bush as opposed to 7.6% of Bush2K voters to Kerry; and Kerry's narrow margin (2.3 points) among DNV2Ks, at odds with the 13-point gap in the weighted reported results.

Alternative models

Alternative assumptions provide further insight into the behavior of the model. For Model 2, I preserved the assumptions that the unweighted NES panel yields best estimates of retrospective defection and voting rates (Step 5) and that the unweighted exit poll results are an appropriate target (Step 6). I freed the repeat turnout coefficients (Step 2), except that I imposed a ceiling of 98% repeat turnout among Other2K voters – a ceiling that the model in fact hit. The resulting model has substantially better fit than the baseline model, with a root mean square of 0.17% compared to 0.40% in the baseline. Perhaps counterintuitively (and very possibly incorrectly), this new model yields a higher repeat turnout rate among Gore2K than Bush2K voters – 91.8% versus 89.3% – because in the baseline scenario, self-reported "Bush2K" voters were somewhat overrepresented. The defection rates diverge somewhat (14.6% of Gore2K voters to Bush; 7.0% of Bush2K voters to Kerry) to offset the relative increase in Gore2K turnout.

Table 8: 2004 by 2000 vote proportions, Model 2 (unequal turnout)

Assumed past vote	Turnout	Kerry %	Bush %
Gore 2000	91.8%	84.9%	14.6%
Bush 2000	89.3%	7.0%	92.5%
Other 2000	98.0%	65.2%	18.6%
DNV 2000	n/a	50.7%	48.7%

Table 9: Modeled exit poll results, Model 2 (unequal turnout)

Reported 2000 vote	Modeled exit poll results			Actual exit poll results		
	% of voters	% Kerry	% Bush	% of voters	% Kerry	% Bush
"Gore"	38.6%	91.1%	8.5%	38.4%	90.9%	8.4%
"Bush"	39.6%	10.0%	89.6%	39.5%	9.8%	89.4%
"Other"	3.4%	69.3%	17.1%	3.7%	69.2%	17.1%
"DNV"	18.5%	56.4%	42.8%	18.4%	56.2%	42.6%

In Model 3 (details not reported), I used retrospective defection percentages (Step 5) based on weighted, instead of unweighted, results from the NES panel. The fit of this model is worse than Model 2, but better than the baseline (root mean square = 0.36%); the model generates too many self-reported DNV voters because the "defection" rates are smaller. In this model, Gore2K turnout is 2.9 points higher than Bush2K turnout, and the defection rates are estimated at 14.2% Gore2K→Bush and 7.0% Bush2K→Kerry – results similar to Model 2.

In Model 4, I returned to the unweighted retrospective defection percentages for Step 5, but I used *weighted* exit poll results for Step 6 (and accordingly set the participation ratio in Step 4 to 1.0, indicating no bias). These weighted results should be easier to fit to, and they are. The resulting root mean square is just 0.11%, indicating a very close match, as is evident below.

Table 10: 2004 by 2000 vote proportions, Model 4 (weighted exits)

Assumed past vote	Turnout	Kerry %	Bush %
Gore 2000	92.3%	85.3%	14.2%
Bush 2000	94.0%	7.5%	91.9%
Other 2000	98.0%	68.9%	20.2%
DNV 2000	n/a	52.1%	46.8%

Table 11: exit poll results, Model 4 (weighted exits)

Reported 2000 vote	Modeled exit poll results			Actual (wgtd.) exit poll results		
	% of voters	% Kerry	% Bush	% of voters	% Kerry	% Bush
"Gore"	36.8%	89.7%	9.8%	36.7%	89.7%	9.9%
"Bush"	43.0%	9.1%	90.4%	43.0%	8.8%	90.2%
"Other"	3.3%	69.7%	20.2%	3.4%	69.7%	20.2%
"DNV"	16.9%	53.5%	45.0%	16.9%	53.4%	44.9%

In Model 4, repeat turnout among Bush2K voter narrowly exceeds turnout among Gore2K voters, more consistent with the NES results. In fact, Bush2K voters outnumber Gore2K voters in the actual electorate, but only very narrowly so (37.4% versus 37.2%). The defection rates are similar to the baseline scenario, but new (DNV 2000) voters give Kerry a respectable 7-point margin, still substantially smaller than in the weighted exit poll results.

Model 5's assumptions are identical with Model 4's except that the retrospective defection rate of Gore2K voters to "Bush2K" voters is reduced from 7.3% (see Table 6) to 6.0%. This model

yields a similar degree of fit (RMS = 0.12%, details not reported). The gap in defection rates narrows, while the turnout gap widens (the Bush turnout actually reaches its upper constraint at 95%). Bush2K voters now outnumber Gore2K voters in the 2004 electorate by 1.2 points (37.8% to 36.6%).

Table 12: 2004 by 2000 vote proportion, Model 5 (weighted exits, reduce false report)

Assumed past vote	Turnout	Kerry %	Bush %
Gore 2000	91.0%	86.0%	13.5%
Bush 2000	95.0%	7.7%	91.6%
Other 2000	98.0%	68.9%	20.2%
DNV 2000	n/a	52.1%	46.8%

Of course, alternative models can be multiplied indefinitely. For instance, if the retrospective defection rates among DNV2Ks (people who initially reported not having voted in 2000) to both "Bush2K" and "Gore2K" are increased by 20% (not 20 points) each, to 21.0% and 11.3% respectively, the Gore→Bush defection percentage increases to 14.2%, the Bush→Kerry defection percentage decreases to 6.9%, and the turnout gap narrows (repeat turnout 91.2% for Bush2K, 90.6% for Gore2K). Under a range of plausible assumptions, it can be said that the Gore defection percentage is "around 14%," the Bush defection percentage is "around 7%,"and the Gore2K and Bush2K shares of the 2004 electorate are "similar."

Conclusion

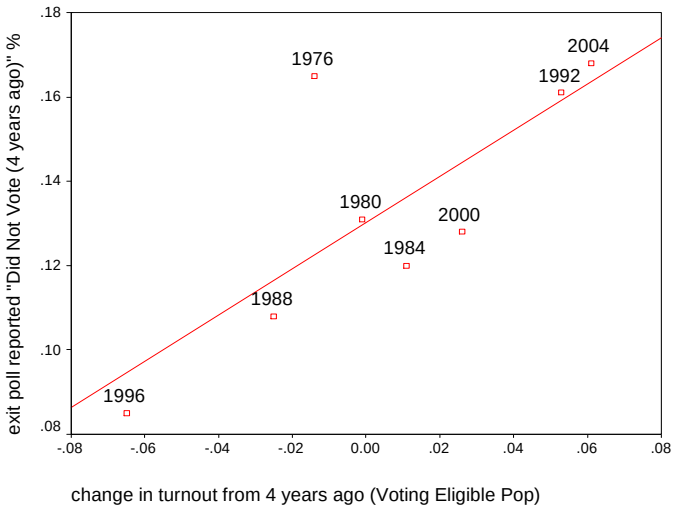
False vote recall complicates our analysis of partisan dynamics, and challenges some unconscious assumptions. Political observers rarely profess surprise that some respondents wrongly claim to have voted, but some find it strange that millions of voters might misreport – indeed, might forget – whom they voted for four years ago. I have not presented (or uncovered) systematic evidence about the mechanism behind false vote recall, but mere forgetfulness is not a bad account for respondents who (e.g.) report in 2000 that they voted for Gore, then report four years later that they had voted for Bush in 2000 but for Kerry in 2004. No spiral of silence this: more like a slow-drifting fog. I am reminded of Larry Bartels' (1996) conclusion that presidential incumbents derive approximately a five-point advantage from "information effects" (or, one might say, non-information effects) in the electorate. False vote recall favoring the previous winner is one distinctive manifestation of this incumbency advantage, although its practical importance is difficult to gauge – especially given the confounding influence of differential turnout.

George W. Bush evidently won in 2004 not by turning out a higher proportion of his 2000 supporters, but (inter alia) by winning the votes of millions of people whom, if asked, would not have recalled that they did not vote for him the first time around. The fraud theorists were right to infer that the previous-election tabulation could not mean what it said, and their account of it – a desperate attempt to paper over the evidence of a stolen election – has evident narrative appeal. On the evidence presented here, however, retrospective Bush bandwagoning is what we should have expected all along.

Appendix: Past-vote question wording in ICPSR-archived exit polls

The retrospective vote question ('who did you vote for four years ago?') has been phrased in various ways in various exit polls; it was drastically restructured in 2004. Although several of these changes seem to make it easier for people to report not having voted, there is no *apparent* trend in that direction, controlling for changes in turnout.

Election	Exit poll % "did not vote" in previous election (weighted)	Change in VEP turnout from previous election[24]
1976	16.5% (CBS)	–1.4%
1980	13.1% (CBS)	–0.1%
1984	13.8% (ABC) 12.0% (CBS)	+1.1%
1988	11.9% (ABC) 10.8% (CBS)	–2.5%
1992	16.1% **(1)**	+5.3%
1996	8.5% **(2)**	–6.5%
2000	12.8%	+2.6%
2004	16.8% **(3)**	+6.1%



1976 (CBS): "In 1972 For Whom Did You Vote?"
Nixon / McGovern / Someone Else / Did Not Vote
1980 (CBS): "In 1976 For Whom Did You Vote?" [similar responses]
1984 (CBS): "Who Did You Vote For In The 1980 Presidential Election?" [similar responses]
1988 (CBS): "Who Did You Vote For In The 1984 Presidential Election?" [similar responses]
1992 (VRS): "Who Did You Vote For In The 1988 Presidential Election?" **(1)**
George Bush **(Rep)** / Michael Dukakis **(Dem)** / Someone else / Did not vote in 1988
1996 (VNS): "In the 1992 election for president, **did you vote for**:" **(2)**
Bill Clinton (Dem) / Bob Dole (Rep) / Ross Perot (Ind) / Someone else / Did not vote for president
2000 (VNS): "In the 1996 election for president, did you vote for:"
Bill Clinton (Dem) / Bob Dole (Rep) / Ross Perot (Ref) / Someone else / Did not vote
2004 (NEP): **Did you vote** in the presidential election in 2000?" **(3)**
No, I did not vote / Yes, for Al Gore / Yes, for George W. Bush / Yes, for another candidate [note absence of party categories]

1984 (ABC): "Back in 1980, for whom did you vote for president?"
John Anderson / Jimmy Carter / Ronald Reagan / Someone else / Didn't vote
1988 (ABC): "Back in 1984, for whom did you vote for president?" [similar responses]

[24] Source: for 1976 and 1980, McDonald and Popkin, "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter," calculated from Table 1 ("Turnout Rate VEP"); for later years, United States Elections Project, turnout spreadsheet at http://elections.gmu.edu/Turnout%201980-2004.xls ("VEP Rate") – based on votes for president.

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