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Will Palin Appeal to Younger Voters and Women?

If there's one thing clear about the outcome of the 2008 race for the White House, it's that **both tickets**--for the Democrats, it's Barack Obama and for the GOP, it's Sarah Palin--have **someone who represents a changing of the guard**, so to speak. Both are in their 40s, and both have an opportunity to engage younger voters--and women--in an election like no other candidates have before.

Obama has 1,656,862 supporters on Facebook and 20,802 friends on MySpace. Newly minted GOP vice-presidential nominee Sarah Palin already has 11,559 fans on Facebook and 1,776 MySpace friends. So what does this mean?

It means the old days of politicking are over. Today, it's all about technology and courting the young vote.

Both Democrats and Republicans have turned to the web (and cell phones) to get their message out fast. When Obama first announced Sen. Joe Biden as his running mate, he didn't wait to stand before a crowd. Instead, he sent text messages to millions of supporters and media members. And when McCain wanted to share with Americans his views on the housing crisis, he made a YouTube video.

But will this actually work? If you pay attention to the numbers, it very well may.

As technology has increasingly become an integral part of politics, young voter numbers have consistently risen. Consider this: **When George H.W. Bush was elected as president in 1988, only 39.4 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 voted.** Fast forward to **2004 and young-voter participation grew to 42.4 percent**, with the largest growth coming from young Black voters, which jumped from 39.4 percent in 1988 to 49.5 percent in 2004.

This year is shaping up to be more of the same. Young voters in record numbers trekked to Denver to witness Obama's acceptance of the Democratic nomination, according to the blog [Future Majority](#): **"Young people made up a record 16 percent of all official participants in Denver, including 631 delegates.** This represented a huge increase over 2000 and 2004, when young people made up 9 and 11 percent of convention participants respectively.

"As Crystal Strait, political director of the California Democratic Party and active Young Democrat noted during a press conference by the DNC Youth Council, young people were still not represented in the convention at the levels in which they participate in Democratic politics," the blog post continues. **"Young people made up 19 percent of the Democratic electorate in 2004,** and under the DNC Charter, should also make up 19 percent of the delegates at the Democratic Convention, some 3 percent more than the record levels found in Denver."

Numbers on the Republican National Convention have not been released yet.

It remains to be seen whether picking up young, fresh-faced Palin will quiet critics who say McCain is too old to serve as president. Tonight, at 72, McCain will become the oldest person ever to accept a major party's nomination for the presidency. On the other side, it's not immediately clear whether Sen. Joe Biden will give Obama the needed "wisdom" of years on foreign affairs to calm opponents.

But one thing is clear: **Young voters are watching (on TV and online), and more importantly, they're voting.**

McCain's decision to bring in a woman as his running mate may have been the most highly strategic political move in the race for the presidency thus far. Pundits say McCain is attempting to sway millions of disgruntled Clinton supporters across party lines--and that it seemed like a downturn along the road to the White House. But the polls are in and they do not show support for McCain or Palin.

"Sen. McCain has seriously misjudged women voters if he thinks he can win them over simply by putting a woman on the ticket," says Ellen Malcolm, president of the women's activist group Emily's List. In fact, 6 in 10 women voters see McCain's choice as a political decision rather than one based on Palin's experience, according to a poll conducted by the Garin-Hart-Yang Research Group.

On the flipside, 50 percent of women voters believed Obama chose Biden to be his running mate because of the Delaware senator's experience. Furthermore, 52 percent of women voters polled say they would vote for the Democratic ticket of Barack Obama and Joe Biden. But the major stinger is that 56 percent of the 800 women polled said they were turned off by Palin's legislative record and her position on moral issues.

It's no secret that McCain saw the draw Sen. Hillary Clinton brought to the Democratic Party and figured he could gain her fame by adding a woman to his ticket. But poll after poll shows the persuasive efforts McCain thought this would bring has more women unswayed by the choice of Palin. In fact, **45 percent of Clinton supporters thought Palin was not very attractive as a candidate, and 55 percent said they would not be voting for McCain, according to another survey.**

McCain's biggest argument about Obama was experience--and instead of strengthening that with his choice for a running mate, Americans feel he has taken steps back, polls reveal. Only nine percent of Clinton supporters said they thought they would vote Republican because Palin was on the ticket.

Prior to Palin's selection, 52 percent of women said the Obama-Biden ticket had the experience advantage that once carried McCain's campaign, according to yet another poll. Republican National Committee spokesperson Blair Latroff responded to the poll by saying, "The fact is that while Barack Obama was voting ... 130 times as a state senator on the most contentious issues of the day, Gov. Palin was taking on corruption within her own party and standing up to the good-old-boy network in her state."



This information came from a monthly printed and online magazine known as **DIVERSITY Inc.**

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