

# Institutionally Integrated Voter Access and the Youth Electorate

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Four Quasi Experiments Examining the  
Capacity of UCSD and the UC System to Boost  
College-Aged Registration and Turnout

By

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*No man is an island, / Entire of itself. / Each is a piece of the continent, / A part of the main. . . For I am involved in mankind. / Therefore, send not to know / For whom the bell tolls, / It tolls for thee. -- John Donne's Meditation 17*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## AN INTRODUCTION TO INSTITUTIONALLY INTEGRATED VOTER ACCESS

*It is the imperative and indispensable duty of the Government of the United States to secure to every resident inhabitant the free and independent expression of his opinion by his vote.*

— James Buchanan

### **1.1 A Problem Worth Investigating**

Can the anemic electoral participation of the college aged voting bloc simply be the product of youthful aloofness toward civic engagement? No doubt, that an increase in income, education and marriage—all of which positively correlate to age—often prompt one to value their moment in the democratic process. Indeed, it is a well-founded assertion that as one settles down with a career and family, they would become more attune to the daily impact of social and economic governance (Milbrath 1965). However, college-age Americans have to overcome disproportionate participation costs that help to inculcate a sporadically effectual polity (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1980). (1) They change address more than any other age group and are subject to a lawfully established cost of having to re-register upon moving (Thompson 2009). The barrier to entry for the younger electorate is reinforced by (2) the start-up costs associated with voting for the

first time. However, older American's experience a decreasing marginal cost of participation as they go through more elections (Plutzer 2002).

This study reveals a great deal of incompleteness in the accepted theory; that it one-dimensionally explains a weak electorate as a failure of its culture—deeming its lack of participation as self-selecting, without potential for significant change. Yet, it does not account for the college-aged citizenry's clear institutional disadvantages which are typified by very fluid living situations, a dearth of access to registration materials, and the group's large number of first time voters (Thompson 2009). To correct this oversight, this investigation asserts an empirically supported revision. While inherent qualities of youth do prevent *some* from seeing a value in civic participation, the college-aged electorate is institutionally disadvantaged. Therefore, an integration of requisite materials of political engagement within institutions closely associated with citizens aged 18 to 24 will result in an increase of the registration and turnout of the college-aged electorate.

## **1.2 The Underlying Concept: Lowering the Cost of Accepting Solicitation**

I substantiate this revision by analyzing four quasi-experiments of institutionally integrated voter access. To give those words palpability, think of voter access as any action or opportunity intended to register, turnout, or electorally inform citizens. The experiments examine turnout promotion and registration opportunities that have been institutionally integrated. Put plainly, institutional integration is piggybacking on an institution's access to a group of constituents by incorporating some solicitation into one of its functions.

To make this idea a bit more concrete, consider an example of UNICEF donations and a supermarket visit. Say there here is a person trying to raise money on behalf of UNICEF and they are granted permission by store management to solicit in whatever manner he/she sees fit as long there is no interference with regular store activity. There are many points during a shopping trip in which a person could be solicited for money, but being asked by a person meandering around the parking lot most likely does not make the best use of the institution's constituency and processes. Indeed, the people contacted are either on their way to get a chore done, or on their way home to put away recently purchased groceries.

However, if a collection box with an emotionally stirring picture is adjacent to the cashier's station, donations literally collect themselves. The central accomplishment is the reduction of cost to participate, as the solicited does not have to give up time controlled by them—in the case of the parking lot. At the checkout stand, they are obligated to wait for the cashier and bagger to finish their duties, it costs the prompted person nothing beyond a ham-fisted grab for change in the money carrier they already have open. Moreover, it also presents a very desirable bottle-necking of the population through a limited number of points for a greater ease of tracking.

One can think of many organizations, events and institutions that promote something along these lines. The man offering free screenings to a crowded movie theatre line; panhandlers next to freeway off-ramps; a bake sale at a church; the boys and girls selling magazines at your door are all examples of using the qualities of a given institution to reduce the costs the prompted individual has attached to accepting the offer

. Simply put, it is the utilization of a situation one often desires to avoid: solicitation—but done in a smarter, more efficient manner. While solicitation is understandably more tangible to frame this idea, aggregating the conceptual foundation of this research into the mental image of a vacuum salesman rolled in a cheap suit clouds the power and finer nuances of institutionally integrated action. Quite literally, a few steps create all the difference in redirecting people’s immediate psychological evaluations of the intentions of strangers.

### **1.3 Overview of the Quasi-Experiments: Institutional Modes and Integration**

#### **Methods**

With four quasi-experiments in total, there were two inquiries into UC-wide registration and two experiments that occurred strictly within the University California at San Diego; one concerned with registration, the other with turnout. They are all labeled as “quasi” because of their commonality concerning an inability to ensure random sampling. While the ultimate orientation of certain participants receiving treatment was possible, the certitude of the results cannot be held to the same standard as a simple random sample. Moreover, this research could not include control variables; instead arguments will be forwarded to act as a design patch.

The turnout experiment tested the efficacy of an in-person encouragement to vote against high visibility posters, in an attempt to see if “active”, yet costly modes of turnout, are more effective than “passive” forms of motivating turnout (Nickerson 2006). The registration experiment utilized move-in weekend, a series of four days in which all eight thousand on-campus residents are bottlenecked through an administrative process.

One UC-wide intervention is a mirror of the UCSD registration method, meant to establish its generalizability because UCSD's small sample and case study approach does not carry ample external validity. Lastly, this study had the exciting opportunity to test California's brand new tool of online voter registration; to gauge the reaction different UC's had to an assortment of qualitatively distinct interventions.

### 1.3.1 Registration Experiment at UC San Diego

The experiment of institutional integration of voter registration at UCSD was facilitated by the seven housing sectors on campus which provided a process into which the opportunity could be integrated: move-in weekend. Co-founded by the author, the Student Organized Voter Access Committee (SOVAC)—a student organization, turned university-chartered civil service—recognized move-in weekend as possessing all the requisite qualities of an excellent point of integration. Students have to bottleneck at one of the colleges where there is a mandatory point of a student participation. Moreover, similarity between the solicited opportunity, a registration form, and the institutional process, the written submission of administrative information, greatly reduced the cost of compliance. Indeed, as spatial separation was generated between intervention and institutional process, registration precipitously declined.

However, these varying spatial differences were generated by some college's reluctance to grant SOVAC full access. For instance The Village only allowed SOVAC to table on campus grounds. Administrators made it very explicit that we would be interfering with the check-in process if we were to try and utilize students' captive audience. However, Eleanor Roosevelt College Residential Life Dean, Rey Guerrero,



encouraged SOVAC to be part and parcel of the check-in processes. This established the issue of selection into treatment—a recurring theme in this study.

These differences revealed how quickly an individual will change their decision to comply with solicitation. Indeed, there was a stark increase in registration if students walked into the opportunity while in the midst of the check-in process versus seeing it as the first or last table to interact with in the move-in process. Even greater registration rates were produced when comparing seamless integration into the check-in process to being approached while waiting in the surrounding area. These varying degrees of institutional cost reduction each correlated to an increase in the number of registrants at a college. In other terms, the less one had to deviate from the institutional process the more likely they were to register. This suggests that it is not the fact someone is young that causes the lack of political participation; instead it signals a potential for students to seize an opportunity for which they have been waiting.

### 1.3.2 System Wide Registration Intervention

In addition to UC San Diego institutionally integrating voter registration, the entire UC-system adopted a campaign of increasing voter access. The effort across UC's largely mimicked practices described in the previous section through a collective endeavor manifested at the annual University of California Student Association's (UCSA) congress in August 2012. Student governments of all UC's agreed on making the annual, system-wide campaign focus the correction of the abysmal rates of college-aged political participation in California, which often do not break 40 percent (Romero 2012).

Indeed, a similar phenomenon occurred, in which some universities adopted the endeavor more thoroughly than others. Universities utilized move-in weekend or a similar process which involved almost the entire constituency. This method produced adequate samples at every level of integration. “Level of integration” is a construct that will be discussed later. Ultimately, registration rate was regressed upon integration level and results revealed a significant amount of generalizability; however issues of internal validity deriving from the construct of the measure will be brought to light.

### 1.3.3 Randomized Field Experiment of Get Out The Vote Methods at UC San Diego's Eleanor Roosevelt College

Working under an approach that is different from the other three quasi-experiments, SOVAC was able to measure the response of UCSD students to the reduction of cost associated with turnout. While Eleanor Roosevelt College (ERC) was selected into treatment, the GOTV testing conducted among the residence had all the qualities of a randomized field experiment.

The goal of the experiment was to examine the difference between two methods of integration that can be broadly characterized as passive and active. Passively reducing costs to participation, ERC was blanketed with 17” x 11” posters explicitly indicating where to vote in their precinct (Appendix Figure 3). Five days before the election, posters were put in view at all common areas of ERC: major thoroughfares, student lounges, dining commons and message boards.

Actively reducing costs, and following in the policy recommendation of a George Washington University study, there was door-knocking of a randomly selected half of the residential buildings. In essence, this door-knocking had three objectives: (1) to reveal the extent to which the posters' message had been understood and (2) if the population of the rooms contacted were more likely to turnout to vote than those who had just seen posters and (3) to see if a temporal schism in canvassing would affect turnout.

#### 1.3.4 UC System Online Voter Registration

Especially exciting for this piece research, was the opportunity to examine California's modernization of its election process by putting online voter registration into effect. As the fifteenth state to pass online voter registration, California witnessed a substantial increase in the number of registered voters, the 18 to 24 year old demographic accounted for 30 percent of all newly registered voters and contributed to California's total registration rate by more than seven percent (Romero 2012, 3). While many reports have been released detailing the amount of people registered via online registration, there has been little experimentation and understanding of what promotion methods are most effective. Indeed, the literature has shown no experimental inquiries into the effects of California's Online Voter Registration Act.

Using the underlying concept of institutional integration, this study examined the relative increases in registration measured against various types of interventions. Such interventions included school-wide e-mails, student organization e-mails, social media and flyering. It is worthy to note that these integration methods are not all used through the institution of the school. However, it can be argued that checking e-mail has become

an essential, required task done every day by college students. Although mostly qualitative in its analysis, there is a strong correlation between online registration rates and the graduated use of certain methods of promotion. Ultimately, it will be shown that the greater the capitalization of venues for promotion of online voter registration—the greater number of online registrants.

#### **1.4 Organization of Analysis**

For the sake of brevity and accessibility, this examination has been an approximate description of the necessary theoretical constructs, methodological descriptions and analytic results. However, the remaining material will be presented in a scholarly manner, organized in a way that mirrors the development of this first chapter. Indeed, a point of edification should be made concerning how this paper will develop.

In the upcoming chapter, the central problem of this study, peculiarly low 18 to 24 year old political participation, will be couched in a literature review for a greater understanding of its causal mechanism: institutional biases favoring older voters. A general, formalized hypothesis will then be asserted and cast in the light of previous experience. Because of the nature of this study, chapter three will be subdivided by experiment. Each of the four experiments will have a subsection devoted to its design, procedure, measure, results and review. Finally, the fourth chapter will conclude by broadly postulating about needs for design adjustment and the wider implications of the results.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PERTINANT SCHOLARSHIP REVIEWED AND HYPOTHESES ASSERTED

*Every rational man decides to vote just as he makes all other decisions: if the returns outweigh the costs, he votes; if not, he abstains.*

– *Anthony Downs*

This investigation will now turn to a selection of scholarly works seeking to determine utilitarian methods of reducing barriers to entry to the electorate. These academic assessments are powerful in their ability to demonstrate institutionalized integration of electoral resources as promoter of voter access. Yet, while findings are often compelling, it will be shown there is a lapse in the literature’s recognition of institutional gaps biased toward the 18 to 24 year old demographic.

### **2.1 Institutions Drive Participation**

#### 2.1.1 Solutions Provided by The National Voter Registration Act

Indeed, what has become known as the Motor Voter Bill, the 1993 National Voter Registration Act broadly mandates that all states have registration opportunities at their DMV branches, a number of agency-based registration programs, universal mail-in ballot provisions and a forbidding of states to “purge registrants for non-voting” (Knack 1998,

345). The NVRA exemplifies institutionally integrated voter access because a solicitation is seamlessly placed in the context of a citizen’s captive audience.

No doubt, the offer by a public utility like the DMV, whose constituency has considerable depth and breadth, lowers costs for the eligible electorate to register to vote. This institutional integration between the federal government and state operated public utilities especially increases access for the poorer, less educated strata of society. However, its effect on the residentially mobile most pertinently demonstrates integrated access’ ability to engage the college-aged (Wolfinger and Highton, 1998).

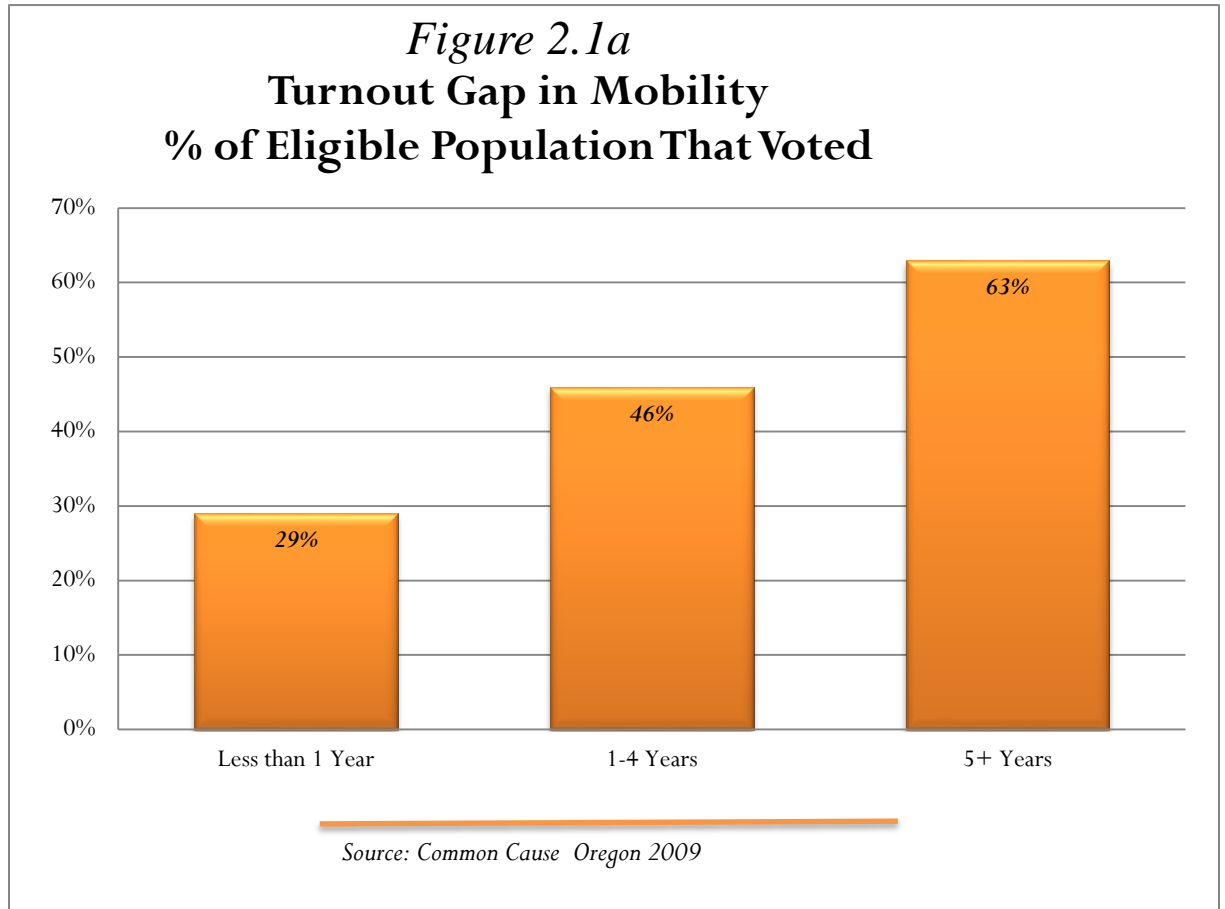
Wolfinger and Highton go on to make an important statistical analysis presented in Table 2.1a. In assessing the differences between a state with public agency based registration before it became national law, Colorado, between the 1984 and 1988 election cycles, 18-29 year-old *turnout* from 49 percent to 53 percent grows while the rest of the country’s youth turnout drops from 51 percent to 46 percent. Indeed, that would indicate

TABLE 2.1a

Age Residential Mobility, Independently Measured	Turnout Change with Institutionalized Registration without 30-day deadline	Turnout Change in Institutionalized Registration with 30-day deadline	Net increase of Turnout with Removal of Registration Deadline
18-29 years	15.1	13.2	1.9
< 1 year	14.0	12.4	1.2
1-2 years	12.2	10.6	.5
3-4 years	10.5	9	0
5+ years	8.3	7	-1.8

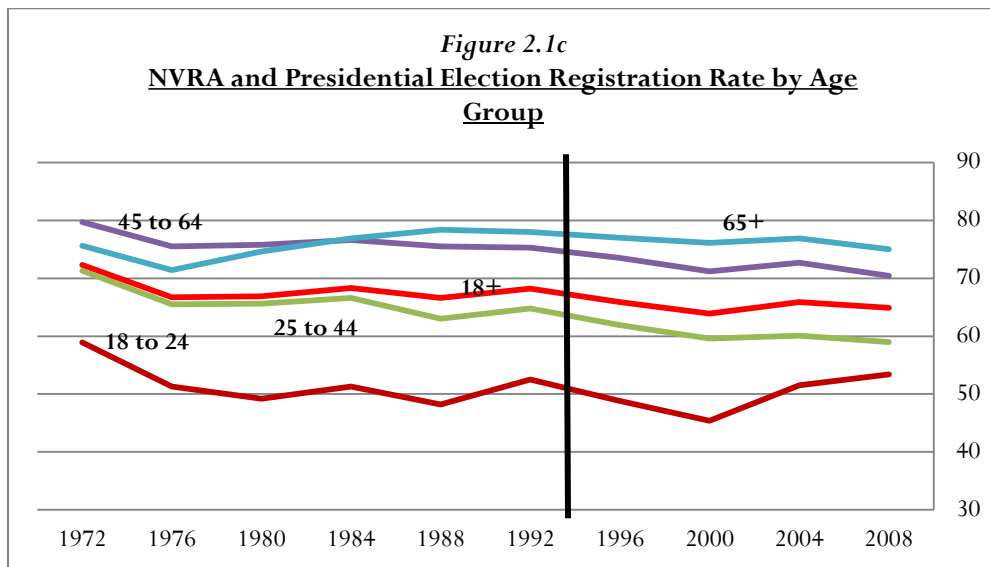
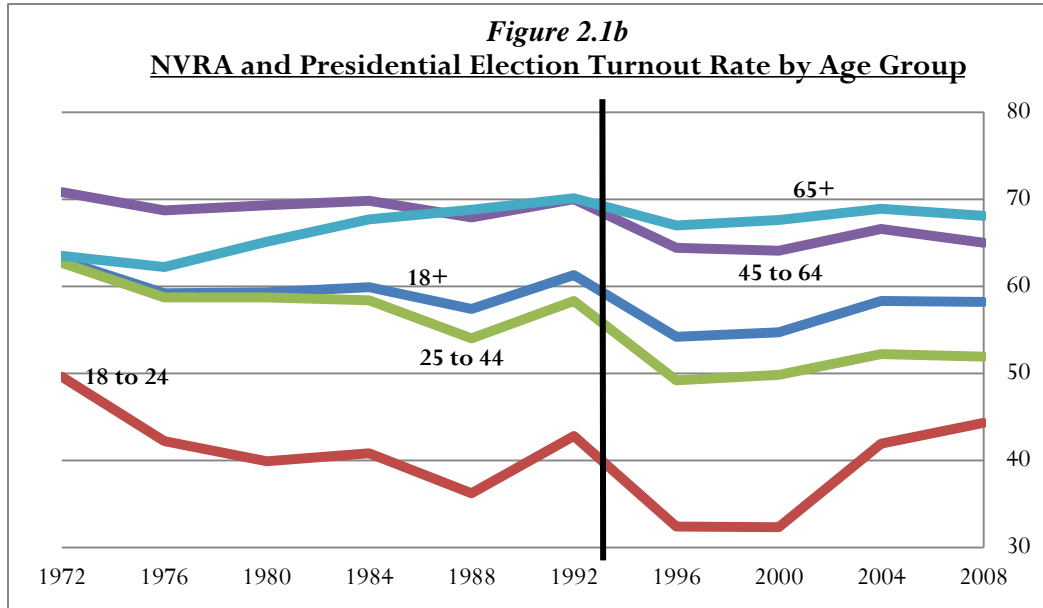
a net increase of nine percent can be attributed to institutionalizing voter registration. No doubt one can attribute that hefty increase in the registration rate of the residentially

mobile comes into greater perspective when considering their rate of civic participation described in Figure 2.1a:



The scholars go on to explain the value in eliminating the 30-day interregnum between the final day of eligible registration and the actual election with a projection using 1992 general election data. But, it would seem that these scholars have not assessed a portion of the causal relationship, most easily understood by the fact registration and turnout do not have the logarithmic rise from the legislation of inception of the NVRA

one might expect. In fact, youth registration rates saw an overall *decrease* from 1992 to 1996. Consider the census data in Figures 2.1b and 2.1c:





2.1.2 Shortcomings of The National Voter Registration Act

*Table 2.1b*

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>Mean</u>	
Cohorts to 1952	77.2	75.0	70.3	64.7	66.7	67.7	68.7	67.9	71.1	77.4	76.5	70.6	
1956 cohort	65.3	75.0	70.6	66.8	72.2	64.1	74.3	73.9	77.8	76.5	79.2	73.0	
1960 cohort	47.2	59.7	65.7	58.0	67.8	73.6	73.0	69.2	78.3	79.3	70.7	88.3	
1964 cohort		50.4	56.8	59.2	60.0	66.8	71.9	70.0	72.0	73.7	79.6	86.2	
1968 cohort			55.9	58.4	51.4	62.9	72.9	68.5	73.7	76.8	67.2	86.6	
1972 cohort				46.2	56.5	54.9	64.4	63.0	71.7	69.7	73.8	88.4	
1976 cohort					41.1	40.7	55.4	53.8	69.1	69.9	63.8	85.3	
1980 cohort						49.1	51.7	45.7	67.8	65.0	62.2	79.8	
1984 cohort							38.7	40.7	62.0	62.0	61.5	77.7	
1988 cohort								32.6	50.3	57.0	57.9	72.8	
1992 cohort									50.0	38.3	50.5	80.2	
1996 cohort										44.4	45.9	70.3	
2000 cohort											43.2	89.9	
Cohort average	63.2	65.0	63.9	58.9	59.4	60.0	63.5	58.5	67.6	65.8	64.0	62.7	Mean absolute change
Change		1.8	-1.1	-5.0	0.5	0.6	3.5	-4.9	9.1	-1.8	-1.8	0.1	3.0
1. New cohort difference		3.2	5.5	-9.7	-5.1	8.0	-10.4	-6.1	17.4	-5.6	-1.2	-0.4	7.2
2. Previous cohort change		12.5	6.4	2.5	10.2	-0.4	2.6	2.0	17.7	-11.7	1.5	4.3	6.7
3. Prior cohort change		9.7	6.0	2.4	-7.0	-1.6	14.8	-6.0	21.3	6.7	12.2	5.9	8.8
4. All preceding cohorts change		2.2	4.5	5.7	4.5	6.6	6.1	2.0	8.7	2.1	4.22	4.4	4.5

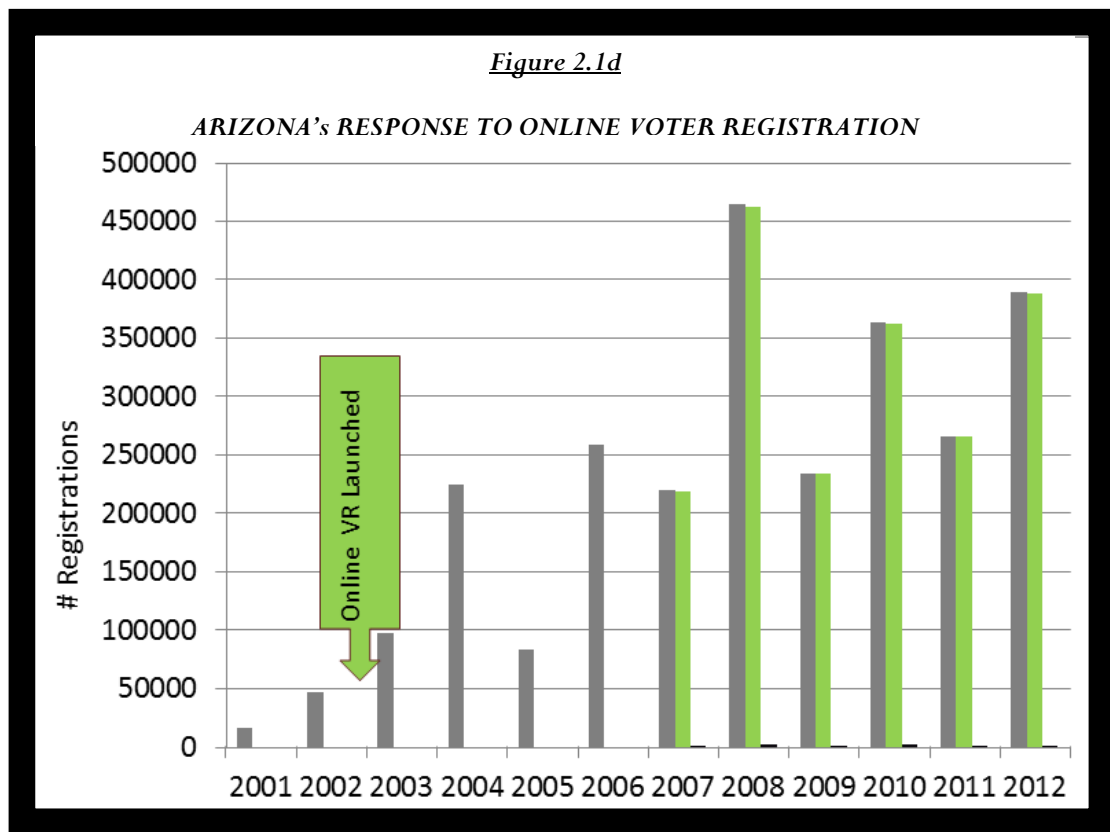
Trinity College’s Mark Franklin (2004, 17) cleverly examines this quandary by taking an in-depth look at the individual ages that constitute the 18-24 voting bloc. Presented in Table 2.1b he breaks the electoral bloc into cohorts and reveals that it is the first cohort, the seminal group of 18 to 20 year-olds, that largely determine future generations’ civic engagement. Eric Plutzer has done compelling work relating most of the concept Miller puts forward into methodological practice.

Indeed, Plutzer's model of habitual voting is foreshadowed by Table 2.1b, which strongly implies that generational participation is most determined by the response of the first entrants into the democratic process. While posturing his findings from the perspective of age, his finding establishes the idea of "voter inertia"; that voters tend to remain voters while non-voters are marginally won over as they become more rooted in social and economic institutions. In essence, all are born as non-voters and, through interactions with institutions, come to value civic participation more than the benefits in staying home. Although, it is firmly maintained that the majority of influence comes before one's first opportunity to vote.

By examining the age cohorts, an intuitive feel regarding the political development of a generation is imparted upon the reader. Most notably, however, *these findings neglect the university as the institution most capable of delivering higher rates of political participation to the youth demographic*. Ironically enough, there appears to be a distinct lack of heuristic familiarity with college life on the part of academics.

Supporting this conclusion—that the university would serve as the most capable institution to boost youthful political participation, is the fact that the DMV, is not known by half the population to possess the an opportunity to register to vote (Alvarez et. Al. 2008). Moreover, eighteen year old freshmen are usually required to live on campus their first year. US News and World Report's survey study of 238 colleges indicated 42% of universities had at least ninety percent of freshman living on campus. With an average of 21% opting to live off campus, there was only one university that had no housing available.

Moreover, vehicle ownership is low among college students. With parking



permits that cost well into the hundreds of dollars, students often take advantage of the increasing push for the wider use of public transportation. Indeed, many universities have become self-sustained microcosms of city life. However, all too often they don't make the "good faith effort" to provide low-cost resources around the campus required by the NVRA.

### 2.1.3 The Potential Provided by Online Voter Registration

The advent of online voter registration seems to have the potential to change the failures of the NVRA. Given its nascence, academic investigations are not nearly as commonplace as description-based policy reports and white papers submitted to various

legislatures. Nevertheless it is worthy of note that Arizona has had their registration system largely supplanted by this method as seen in Figure 2.1d.

In this graph one can gather the extensive, emphatic effect online voter registration can have. Although, Arizona instituted the option to register to vote online in 2002, it was not actively promoted and tracked until 2007. The bar on the left is representing total DMV registrants while the middle bar displays the subset of online registrants by the DMV. The very difficult to see bar on the right represents paper registration forms. Although not scientific, Figure 2.1d imparts a strong intuitive sense that the Digital Revolution has created a new venue for political participation.

As Wolfinger and Highton explained, it is the idea of one-stop voting that has the greatest potential to reduce increase turnout. However, less than fifty percent of the electorate is in support of either automatic registration of all citizens or Election Day registration. As a result, other venues have to create costs as a close as possible to a one-stop approach; a method that most appeals most to young people. Indeed, they are deterred from the polls by busier, irregular schedules as explained by Mary Fitzgerald of James Madison University in her survey to Tufts University's Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2003).

California's 2012 Election Day saw the arrival of a revolutionary way to become politically engaged: online voter registration. While twelve other states have already implemented this conduit of civic expression, online voter registration has never been tracked in an environment comprised of similar population make-ups but different treatments. Although this research endeavor was unable to create conditions that compel

with quantitative certainty—extensive interviews, computerized tracking and a coordinated campaigns among UC student governments can, at most, strongly suggest a positive correlation between integration and registration.

The advent of online voter registration has proven to be incredibly effectual as a instrument of integrated voter access. Passed in 2011 in California, the results that precipitated from SB 397 accounted for nearly half of all UC students registered. Moreover, it proved invaluable in reaching off-campus populations and commuter based colleges, especially UC Irvine. But its design was really more of an emergent order. I had no say in how it was administered, even at UCSD.

Joseph Motz (2009) pursued further electoral description by conducting a field experiment of 18 year olds in Washington state. He tested the effect of proactively mailing a registration card to a sample of 18 year olds. In essence, by giving 18 year olds the civic tools they may not receive at home to participate democratically, there was a ten percent increase in turnout among the youngest electorate actively engaging with mail. Ultimately, Motz showed that one-stop costs help in maximizing the youth electorate.

Ultimately, this evaluation of previous scholarship was used to inform the registration driven experiments. At its core, efforts at UCSD were directed at incoming students on move-in weekend. Indeed, the fact 92% of freshmen live on-campus their first year heartened this researchers belief in the design's effectual capacity.

## **2.2 Hypothesis Concerning Integrated Registration**

This study seeks to challenge the accepted theory that the college aged electorate is inherently apathetic—that their age does not grant the requisite capacity to feel the binding force of civic responsibility. If college youths are truly indifferent to political participation they should, under the auspices of the accepted narrative, reject an opportunity to register vote when the costs of registration are reduced. Equally so, if said cost reduction were to happen on a graduated scale, there would be no significant difference between one level and the next. Indeed, if conventional Milbrath’s (1965) findings prove to be accurate, students will be too predisposed with youthful aloofness and overlook such an opportunity. Moreover, given the swath of literature showing that an increase in registration reduces the cost of turnout; it would be reasonable to assert that if registration goes up, so will turnout. The model of this study’s quasi-experiments concerning registration are hypothesized as follows:

1.  $H_0$ : All else equal, there is no effect of an institutionally integrated opportunity to register to vote upon the registration rate of a community.  
 $H_A$ : All else equal, there is a positive effect of an integrated, institutionalized opportunity to register to vote upon the greater the registration rate of a community.
2.  $H_0$ : All else equal, there is no effect of an institutionalized integration opportunity to register to vote upon the turnout rate of a community.  
 $H_A$ : All else equal, there is a positive effect of an integrated, institutionalized opportunity to register to vote upon the turnout rate of a community.

### **2.3 Connecting Registration to Turnout**

The previous inquiries made by social scientists were quite helpful in establishing a method by which to approach a true experiment. Perhaps most central to Get Out The Vote experiments is the ability to randomize, track and control in as anti-climactic a political environment as possible (Green, Gerber, Nickerson 2002). As the researchers show in their work on different canvassing techniques, using local elections across the US, contact type matters. and the more personal the contact, the greater the turnout. Indeed there were near-universal increases in turnout, with one of Green and Gerber's (2000) experiments revealing a nine percent jump in turnout. Nickerson, Friedrichs and King (2006) posit something different. They establish statistically significant findings that door-hangers, phone calls and face to face contact have negligible differences among their effects if they are partisan in nature.

A Green and Gerber (2000) compliment this finding by making of the intention to treat the method. In their research on leafleting, they find an insignificant effect in prompting partisans and non-voters. However, flyering had a substantial impact on non-party affiliated voters, especially those who did not vote in the previous, 1996 election—boosting turnout by as much as ten percent. By showing the threshold to impart a sense of civic duty on a peer is fairly low. Indeed, this stirred significant intrigue in preparation of this study as posters are fairly cheap and students, more than ever, are registering without party affiliation (Romero 2012, 2).

Another randomized field experiment conducted in a similar vein is Nickerson's research on the ineffectual nature of e-mail contact coupled with the highly impactful practice of door-to-door canvassing (2006). It revealed to that people will effectively

communicate a door canvasser's message of civic participation to their roommate eight to eleven percent of the time. This emboldens a George Washington University report on youth mobilization—that emphasizes door-to-door, targeted drives as the best practice for registration and turnout. These findings shaped my hypothesis and design to be something academically original and practically feasible.

## **2.4 Hypothesis Concerning Integrated Get Out The Vote (GOTV) Efforts**

Given the amount of literature examining the effects of social values being peer driven, it would logically follow that imparting a message of civic participation would have a significant impact (Christakis and Fowler 2011). However, an exploration into the application of this principle within the context of a university's population has been unseen. To answer a question of logistical value and psychological significance a randomized field GOTV experiment was conducted in UCSD's Eleanor Roosevelt College.

I endeavored to understand the capacity of passive and active civic communication to influence a uniform electorate. Moreover the access to information allotted to this study from by ERC administration allows for a more thorough assessment of integration efforts in their ability to reach the youth demographic. As a consequence the hypotheses are organized as such:

3.  $H_0$ : All else equal, there is no effect of an integrated message of civic participation and the turnout rate of a community.  
 $H_A$ : All else equal, there is a positive effect of an integrated message of civic participation on the turnout rate of a community.



4.  $H_0$ : All else equal, an active message of civic participation will have no effect in relation to a passive message.

$H_A$ : All else equal, an active message of civic participation will outperform a passive message by producing a higher rate of turnout among groups contacted .

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE QUASI-EXPERIMENTS: DESIGN, MEASURE, PROCEDURE, RESULTS AND REVIEW

*“Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature.”*

*– William Faulkner*

### **3.1 Experimental Overview**

The experiments truly run the gambit of the non-equivalent group design. They all possess fairly similar populations, with the exception of population size. But they are all top universities in the nation that select a certain kind of student. Indeed there are cultural differences from one campus to another, however this researcher has been able to incorporate a heuristic knowledge of the UC’s which could be expanded upon via in-depth examination on a case by case basis. Nevertheless, all units of analysis for each experiment were exposed to the same type intervention, although the degree of this intervention may be qualified differently from one quasi experiment to another. However, it should be stressed the y remain consistent within each experiment; in the case of comparing UCSD’s registration experiment to the UC-system’s they have no significant qualitative distinctions.

### **3.2: Quasi-Experiment 1: UC-Wide Online Voter Registration Design**

My examination of online voter registration was far removed from the ideal design of a random sample based experiment. It possesses a strong feel of a qualitatively analyzed case study. However, the intimate knowledge of each UC campus’ registration

operations, coupled with similar populations have produced a scale of interventions that can be viewed in terms of a natural experiment.

3.2.1 Measurement and Procedure

The categories of measurement presented in Table 3.2a were thought about ahead of time, and indeed the methods used were fairly intuitive along the lines of Green and Gerber’s work on social pressure. Interviews with the voter registration coordinators coupled with review of registrar data provide the substance for quantitative analysis. Table 3.2a explains the various interventions used to communicate the availability this new tool of civic engagement.

*Table 3.2a*  
**Online Voter Registration Overview by UC Campus**

<u>Campus</u>	<u>School</u> <u>-Wide</u> <u>Emails</u>	<u>Social</u> <u>Media</u>	<u>Student</u> <u>Organization</u> <u>E-mails</u>	<u>Professor</u> <u>s E-mail</u> <u>to their</u> <u>Classes</u>	<u>Flyer</u> <u>ing</u>	<u>Time</u> <u>Availabl</u> <u>e</u>	<u>Online</u> <u>Registrant</u> <u>s</u>
<i>UC Berkeley</i>	3	YES	10	15	YES	7 Weeks	3210
<i>UC Irvine</i>	3	YES	15	8	NO	4 Weeks	2628
<i>UC Santa Barbara</i>	2	YES	7	0	YES	4 Weeks	1720
<i>UC Los Angeles</i>	2	YES	10	5	NO	4 Weeks	1624
<i>UC Santa Cruz</i>	2	YES	7	0	YES	4 Weeks	1337
<i>UC San Diego</i>	2	YES	0	0	NO	4 Weeks	822
<i>UC Riverside</i>	2	YES	0	0	NO	4 Weeks	765
<i>UC</i>	0	YES	0	0	NO	4 Weeks	275

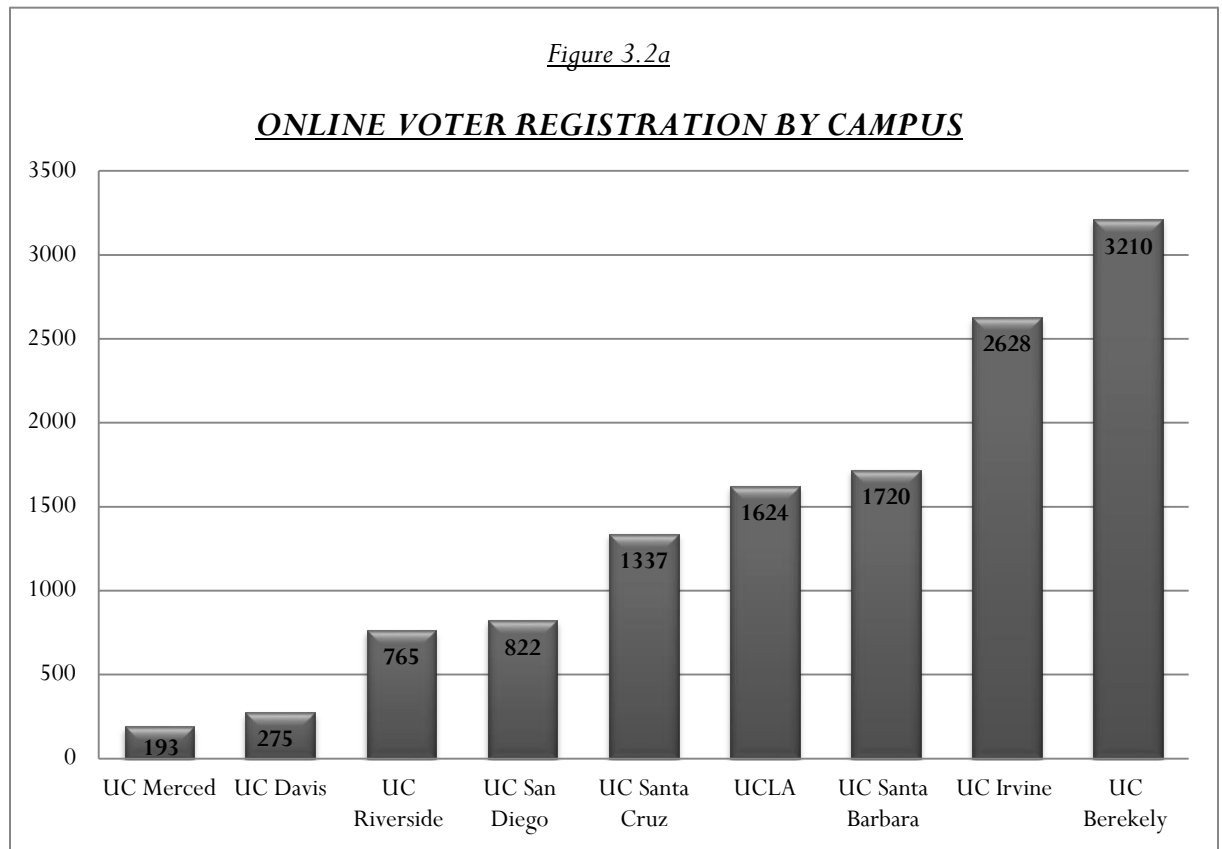
<i>Davis</i>							
<i>UC</i>	0	YES	0	0	NO	7 Weeks	193
<i>Merced</i>							
Data Source: UCSA 2012							

The meaning of the measures are instinctive in their titles. For example, a school-wide e-mail is defined as a message to the inbox of all students registered in a given University of California campus; the number corresponds to the amount of e-mails sent. An indication of “YES” to the “Social Media” category means the members of the organization whose responsibility it is to register students would make weekly posts directing their Facebook friends to use the online voter registration application. Additionally, organizations dedicated to voter access would contact other student organizations on their respective campus. The amount of student groups that sent out e-mails to all their members are listed as “Student Organization E-mails”. The number of professors who sent out e-mails to their classes follow the same kind of logic. However, it should be noted that if a given professor were teaching multiple classes that it would not be distinguished from a professor teaching a single class. The number seen in the table corresponds to “Flyering” specifies when common areas of the university have been posters explicitly identifying an *online* option to vote, not simply a general opportunity or encouragement to register to vote. Lastly, the time available can be considered the weeks between the start of the fall term and the final date allowed for voter registration, Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>.

While this sample is small and the definitions of the qualifying interventions are somewhat broad, this should not diminish what this evidence suggest. Quite clearly, the increase in the number of registrants corresponds to the amount of interventions and the

degree to which they were executed. Although this study cannot make an argument couched in strongly quantitative analysis based on this procedure; it can point to a number of qualitative comparisons between the various UC's that employed this channel of political engagement employed this channel of political engagement.

3.2.2 Results and Review



In figure 3.2a one can infer a baseline with UC Merced and UC Davis, and without surprise, they have similar degrees of intervention. Although UC Merced runs on the semester system, granting it an additional three weeks to reach out to its population, and UC Davis' has twenty thousand more undergraduates—these disparities seem to be mitigated in their similarly low degrees of intervention are reflected with a relatively similar number of registrants.

Moving to the right, one can notice a cluster hovering around 800 registrants represented by UC Riverside and UC San Diego. It is valuable to notice their qualitative similarities in both population and method of integrating online voter registration opportunities into student life. Both campuses consistently used social media, but the important distinction between these two UC's and Merced and Davis is that the campus administration sent out two e-mails to the entire student population. While this relationship is grounded in correlation alone, this association pushes the observer to consider this integration as an effectual tool of youth registration.

When coupled with further forms of integration such as targeted e-mails from professors or student organizations and supplemental advertising via flyering the number of registrants increased significantly. By creating a form of credibility by association, student organizations were able to make a major contribution to the increase in political participation. Indeed, this tool helped universities like UC Santa Cruz outperform UC San Diego despite a population difference of over ten thousand students. UC Santa Barbara echoed this fact by having a similar population disparity of eight thousand to colleges like UC San Diego, yet an online registration count twice that of UCSD.

However, the capacity for some efforts to acclimate is worthy of note, as the voter registration coordinator of UC Irvine conceded, "We were totally inexperienced in integrating [in-person] into the move-in process, but our ability to reach out to the student community [with online voter registration] was essential in getting our campus involved." She went on to note that this tool was essential in reaching out to the twenty-two thousand students who lived off-campus, a challenge which no other UC faced.

Ultimately, this aspect of their registration campaign proved to be crucial, as UC Irvine registered almost twice as many students with online voter registration as they did with in-person integration attempts (UCSA 2012).

Finally, one may notice UC Berkeley as a bit of an outlier relative to the other UC's examined. Given a qualitatively similar approach to their online voter registration campaign as UC Irvine, one would not expect quite the difference in their registrant count to be quite that large. However, UCB had the added benefit of an additional three weeks to educate their students and organize their campaign. Indeed, their voter registration coordinator, Caitlin Shamberg, stressed this point as crucial explaining,

”Those first weeks in August gave us an edge. We had the ability to get all of our volunteers together to make coordinated Facebook posts and marketing campaigns before the Secretary of State’s office could even get the online form up and running. It really helped build awareness about the resource, especially for kids living off-campus. Also, we had time to get connected with professors with large classes and student organizations we hadn’t previously been in contact with.”

This time gap can logically explain why UC Berkeley had the most e-mails sent out by professors, the most student organization based e-mails and the most school-wide e-mails. Combined with a well-organized social-media based awareness campaign, UCB students were regularly reminded and offered an opportunity to register to vote. Indeed, it was this elevated degree of integration, facilitated by Berkeley’s longer school calendar that allowed for a greater number of students registered.

No doubt that online voter registration proved a vital tool in the challenge to get as many students registered as possible. Moreover, this instrument’s success directly

correlated to how well it was integrated into a student's life at a given university. One could make the claim that there were certain inherent aspects to being a Berkeley student or a UCSB student that would make them more inclined to register. While this may be true, given both campuses' history of having an emergent order of political activism—how would one explain UC Irvine or UC San Diego? Historically speaking, these schools have been a beacon of apathy and hermetic political voices. Prior to SOVAC at UCSD, single digit, on-campus registration rates were commonplace (Appendix Figure 1). The UC Irvine voter registration coordinator said it herself when she confessed that". . .getting students excited was really difficult. The kids who come here often have an attitude of just wanting their 4.0 [GPA] and degree."

However, UC Irvine outperformed every UC operating on the quarter system, which granted four weeks to register students at their current address as opposed to the semester system which allowed seven. It should come without surprise that Irvine had both the highest number of online registrants and the most thorough campaigns integrating the opportunity to register to vote via the internet. Indeed, checking one's university e-mail is virtually mandatory in the age of information. One could even reasonably conjecture that UC Irvine would have had relative parity with UC Berkeley had it had an additional three weeks to organize and market this opportunity to register. However, the driving point is that UC Irvine's capacity to integrate the chance to politically participate was positively correlated to the number of students registered. By examining UC Irvine relative to UC Santa Barbara and UC Berkeley, the degree of



integration is largely controlled for and strongly suggests that a climate of civic apathy can be overcome by integrating more deeply into student life.

### **3.3 Experiment 2: Institutional Integration at UC San Diego**

#### 3.3.1 Design

As stated previously, the most theoretically sound point of integration was the four days in which the entire on-campus population moved-in to their future residences. The design mirrored the qualifications elucidated by Wolfinger and Highton's analysis of the NVRA, "1. Use license renewals and change-of-address notices for purposes of voter registration 2. Follow item 1 above for at least most of one renewal cycle before the election 3. Integrate voter registration into driver's license procedures" (1998, 82).

Indeed there was a good operationalization of concepts to the realities of move-in weekend. Instead of license renewals, SOVAC had access to something better—a students' move-in day in which they are mandated to have an accurate summary of their address with them as they sign in, which nullified any serious chance of incorrect information disenfranchising a student. Moreover, item two was rendered moot by the fact students moved in during late September, just as election season enters full swing. Lastly it met the scholars' criteria by being part of process that captured the audience of students. Students were not acting on their own time; they had to go through this administrative process at their respective college. However, therein lies the rub, the college administrators in charge of these processes proved to be the non-random selectors of treatment.

### 3.3.2 Measure and Procedure

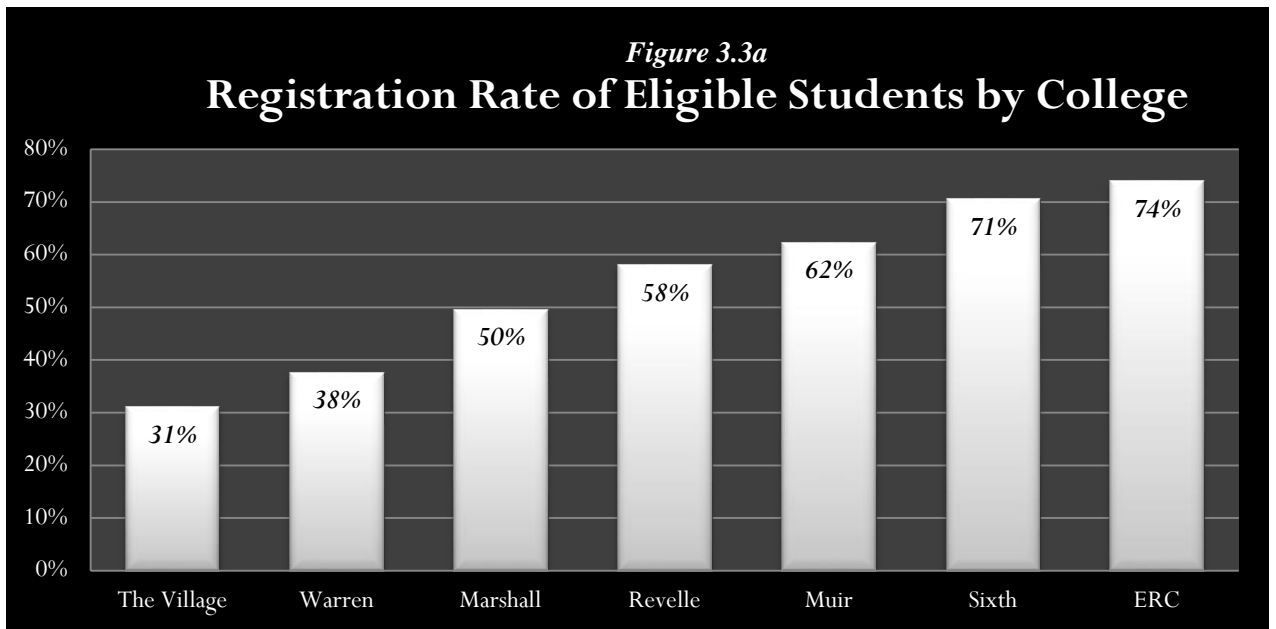
The reactions of the colleges of UCSD ranged from absolute hospitality in the case of Eleanor Roosevelt College, which granted SOVAC a fully integrated seat at their move-in process; to dismissive, where there was no presence at all, as in the case of Warren College. Indeed there was a graduated representation of integration between these two points. From a scale of none to high, integration could be measured according to the degree in which they resembled the process they into which they are integration. For instance, a “high integration level” would mean that the registration table is the number three of four in the process. To the casual observer, the registration table connotes no difference in purpose relative to surrounding tables. If the intervention were to be slightly displaced, but still a definite part of the process, maintaining a striking resemblance to university sanctioned activity it would be classified as “medium integration”. If there was “low integration”, that would mean a registration opportunity was allowed on community grounds but, not allowed near the process. These modes of measurement should be clarified by Table 3.3a.

***Table 3.3a***

<b>College</b>	<b>Level and Method of Integration</b>	<b>Registration Rate</b>
<b>ERC</b>	High integration over move-in weekend using RA meetings and check-in.	0.74
<b>Revelle</b>	High integration over move-in weekend	0.58
<b>Sixth</b>	Medium integration over move-in weekend	0.71
<b>Muir</b>	Medium integration over move-in weekend	0.62
<b>Marshall</b>	Medium integration over move-in weekend using half of RA meetings	0.5
<b>The Village</b>	Low integration over move-in weekend	0.31
<b>Warren</b>	No Integration	0.38

3.3.3 Results and Review: Registration

Recalling the hypotheses asserted earlier: that integration would boost registration and turnout beyond what one would expect from doing nothing. This study must assess the results of integration in light of the status quo: the average registration and turnout rate of the college aged who did not have this service available to them. Indeed, the average registration rate of 18-24 year olds was 57 percent in 2012 (Romero 2012, 3). Consequently, examine Figure 3.3a in this light.



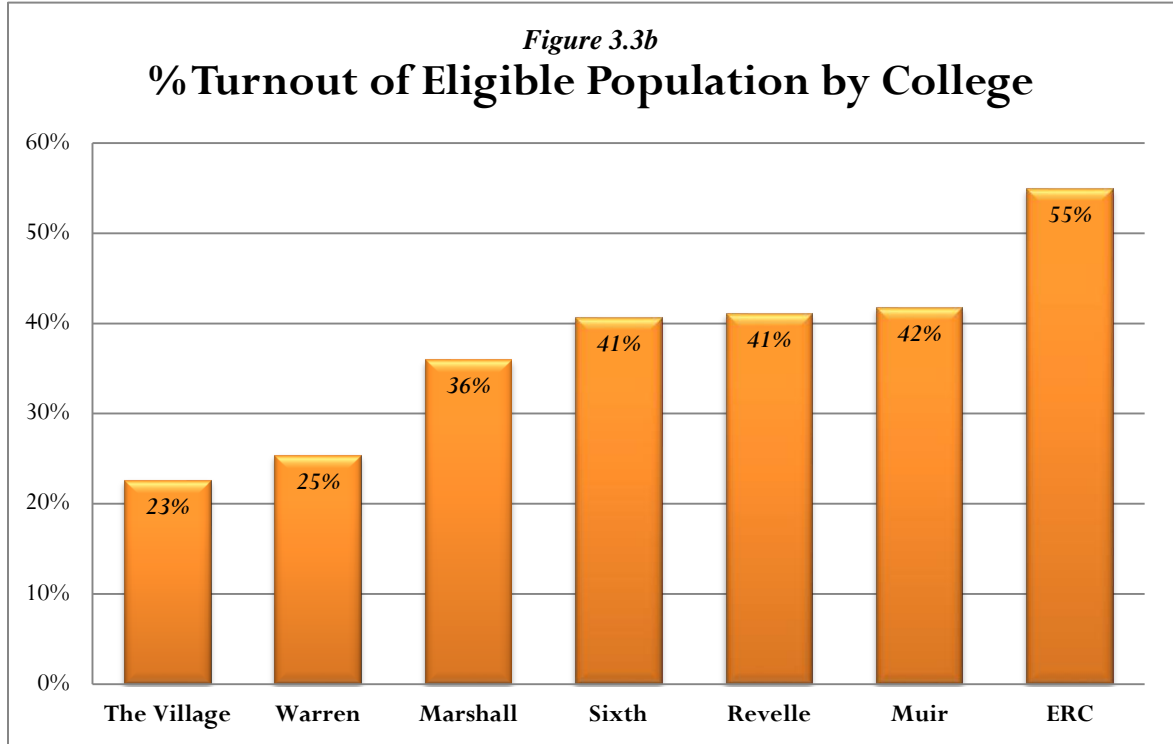
If one references this chart in conjunction with Table 3.3a it becomes clear that the tendency for a community to become more registered correlated with how integrated an opportunity there was for a student to register. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that a medium level of integration is the requisite degree of cost reduction necessary to exceed the average. Although Marshall is hovering below the 57 percent threshold with a

“medium level” of integration, it separates itself from the other colleges via its manner of integration.

Recalling Table 3.3a, rather than integrating into the check-in process via an informal written contract, which was rejected by Marshall College administrators, individual Resident Advisors (R.A.) were approached. By integrating into their first meeting of the year—which is required of all students living on campus—the same effect was achieved, although only half the population was exposed to SOVAC’s efforts. In sum exactly half of the R.A.’s accepted. So the cost to entry into the 2012 electorate remained unreduced for half of Marshall’s population. This postulation, that a “medium level” of integration embodies the requisite cost reduction to unbridle the college-age electorate’s true interest in political participation, is more thoroughly explored in the third experiment.

#### 3.3.4 Results and Review: Turnout

Contrary to registration, the results concerning turnout are not as stark in their assessment of the hypothesis that integration increases turnout. As a point of reference, this study will note that the turnout rate of 18 to 24 year olds who are California citizens was 43 percent in the 2012 general election (Romero 2012). With that statistic in mind, consider Figure 3.3b.



It appears that this study must fail to reject the null hypothesis: that integrating a registration opportunity alone will not lead to higher turnout. In fact, it appears that the same threshold of “medium” integration has to be met just to bring UCSD students turnout rate up to the national average. Although Eleanor Roosevelt College stands apart from the other colleges, this can be attributed to the integrated turnout efforts. It appears that integrated voter registration must be accompanied by a turnout effort in order to exceed the average turnout rate of the eligible population. However, this effect will be studied in greater detail in the four experiment of this study.

### **3.4 Experiment 3: Institutional Integration Across the UC System**

#### 3.4.1 Design and Procedure

Once again a design based on selection into treatment was implemented. Using the UCSA's (University of California Student Association) VOTE campaign there was the formation of MOU's (Memorandums of Understanding) between UC student organizations whose mission it was to register students and Residential Life offices. Essentially a good faith agreement, these MOU's granted student organizations similar to SOVAC at UCSD access to events which drastically reduced the cost of registration (Appendix Figure 2).

Enter move-in weekend and welcome week of the Fall 2012 term. All students arriving to their respective universities had to go through a number of mandatory processes to in order to be a resident of the on-campus living community. One of these events are Resident Advisor meetings where a floor will have to meet their RA in groups of about 25 to 50. Another event capitalized upon by organizations dedicated to voter registration is the move-in day check in. Students are required to provide their information to administrative assistants of the university tasked with recording their time and date of move-in. However, what is key to this event is that it usually involves an assembly-line of bureaucratic procedures related to registering at the school as a resident. SOVAC and many other student groups integrated into the process in some manner—capturing students the student's audience.

An additional point of integration that was less common, but nearly as powerful, were welcome week campus-wide events that would draw upwards of 80 percent of the on-campus population. These events included all-campus dances, mixers and other social gatherings which would have check-in point which would be integrated upon by voter

registration organizations. By approaching people standing in line a similar effect was seen. While this method was primarily employed by UC Irvine, it proved to be less efficient than using conventional, entirely bureaucratic events such as the move-in weekend check in process or mandatory RA meetings. Indeed these varying points and methods of integration laid the framework for a design that rested upon selection into treatment.

### 3.4.2 Measure

The graph below, Figure 3.4a, is a univariate regression in which the registration rate of a housing unit is regressed upon the level of integration. The dependent variable's construct is fairly straight forward: the percentage of students registered in a given housing area. Housing areas, like the colleges of UCSD, conveniently cordoned into their own election precincts for Election Day 2012 (Appendix Figure 4). In other instances, in which there was no college to be placed within a precinct, a large residence hall or housing tract fit would be given its own precinct by the local registrar office. An example of this would be the large residence halls at UC Santa Barbara that house between 700 and 1000 students. After the election results were reported the preliminary data was used to generate the regression. Although the results were preliminary, a copy of the official election results was obtained from the San Diego County Registrar and compared against the preliminary results issued to the public 15 days after the election and it was found that there was less than one percent difference between what was reported preliminarily and what was reported officially.

With respect to the independent variable, the integration level was coded on an ordinal scale of zero to three which corresponds to no integration, low, medium and high integration. This study constructed this variable by considering the efforts made to integrate into a process that draws more than 80 percent of the precinct population.

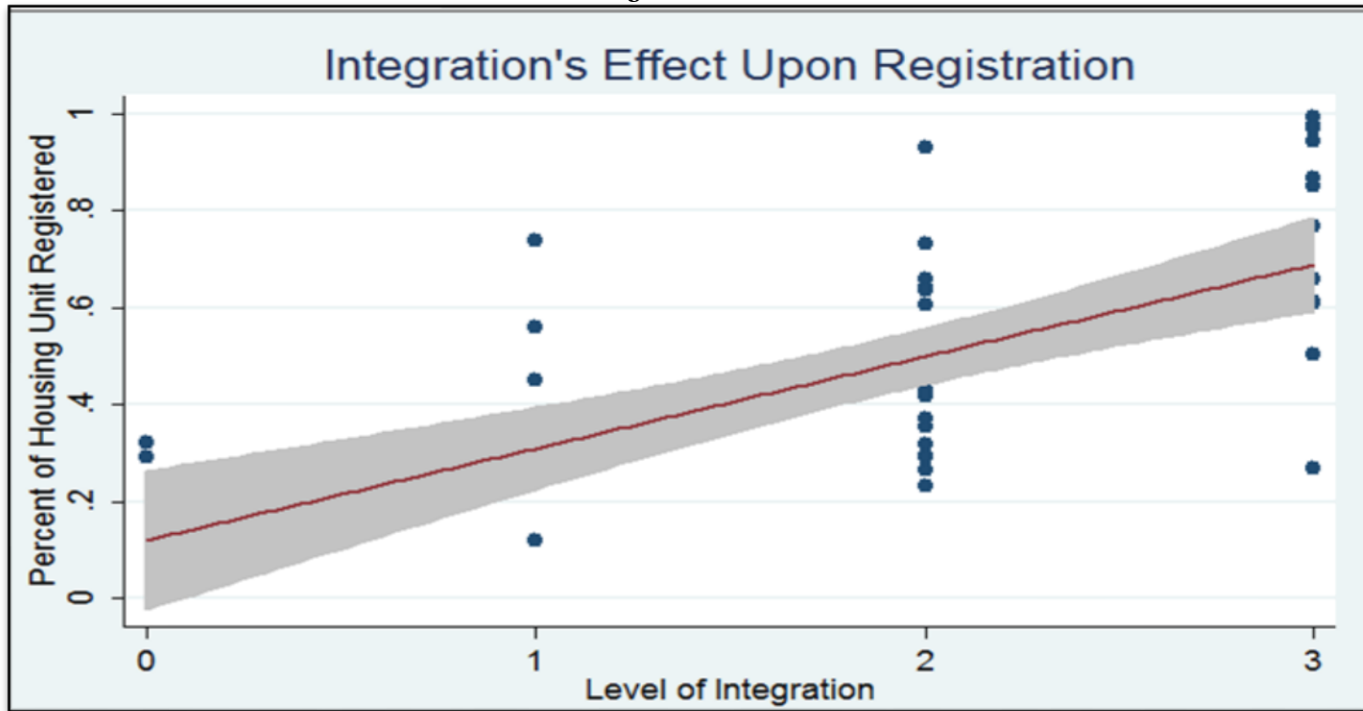
An integration level of zero corresponds to no institutionally supported attempt to integrate a voter registration opportunity into a widely participated process. If a precinct is coded as a one, or low integration, it indicates that a registration attempt was made; but it was entirely external to the process. If an integration level of two was recorded, this designates that there was an institutionally supported, integrated opportunity to register that is part of a greater process but it was spatially externalized in some fashion. More tangibly speaking, this would be what occurred at UC San Diego's Muir College where the registration table was directly outside the pavilion where students checked in on move-in day. Alternatively, it could have been the table seen immediately before one enters the designated check-in area, as in the case of UC Santa Cruz's Eighth College. Lastly, an high integration level, coded as three, would specify that the integration attempt was institutionally supported to the maximum extent. That is if the opportunity to register seamlessly integrated into the process. For instance, if, during the check-in process, the registration table would be station three of four; similarly, if the registration opportunity were integrated into the mandatory RA meetings it would be coded as an integration level of three.

### 3.4.3 Results and Review



With data provided by the county registrar of each university, Table 3.4a details the above Figure 3.4a by indicating that, on the average, for every one level increase in

*Figure 3.4a*



integration an on-campus UC precinct could expect a 19 percent boost in its registration.

With a good deal of explanatory power indicated by the R-squared statistic, this

regression can be considered both statistically and substantively significant—especially

when the independent variables' extremely low p-value is considered. However, simply

applying an average expected increase to this ordinal scale lends itself to an over

aggregation of information. Potentially, there could be a bigger difference between an

integration level of one and two than say, two and three.

To further confirm the capacity of this method of institutionally integrated voter

registration to consistently deliver a high registration rate, further statistical examination

of the data was done using a logistic regression. Coding integration levels two and three

as a value of one—labeled “strong integration” and setting a registration rate of 55 percent or higher as a value of one; one can see the odds ratio reveals something quite powerful about having a medium or high integration level at a college campus.

<b>Table 3.4b</b>	
<b><u>LOGISTIC REGRESSION</u></b>	
	<b><i>Odds Ratio</i></b>
<b><i>Strong Integration</i></b>	7.319* [1.374, 38.990]
<b><i>Constant</i></b>	.187 [-0.0211, 0.263]
<b><i>N</i></b>	46
<b><i>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup></i></b>	.107
95% confidence intervals in brackets * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001	

As shown, by having medium or high integration at a campus, the registration rate of the precinct where the intervention is applied has more than seven times the chance of exceeding a registration rate of 55 percent. Fifty-five is a key number because the average registration rate of 18 to 24 year olds is roughly 45 percent over the past four general elections in California (Federal Election Commission 2012). By setting the threshold for success in this regression at 55 percent, the attainment of results that exceed the norm are less likely to be a result of random chance. Moreover, the fact that the odds

ratio is fairly high suggests that this methodology has a good degree of consistency.

Caligula

These regressions are promising for the generalizability of institutionalized voter registration. However, it must be considered that this quasi-experiment only took place among on-campus University of California precincts. In addition to only having results from one state, the UC system attracts a more academically competitive, intellectually inclined type of youth (Geiser and Studley 2002). Consequently, it could be inherent qualities of the students registered that prompted their decision to become eligible to vote. In order to mitigate the strength of this potential confound MOU's integrating voter registration access should be made with CSU's, community colleges and state universities across the country.

### **3.5 Experiment 4: GOTV Experiment Using Eleanor Roosevelt College at UCSD**

#### 3.5.1 Design Overview

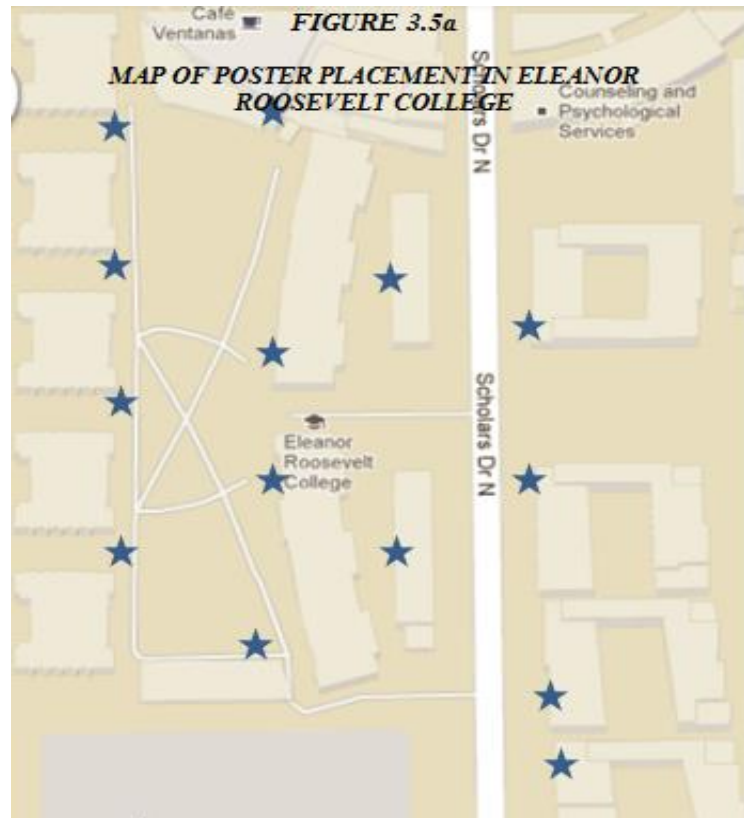
WhAs an inquiry into the effect of turnout-driven integration, this study experimented with two Get Out The Vote (GOTV) strategies: active and passive. Passive being posters seen by an observer through the course of their day; active being a canvasser approaching students at their residences. While I designed this as a randomized field experiment, I was unable to randomize the college in which the experiment took place—thereby marring this experiment with selection into treatment. Nevertheless, I strived to examine the comparative effects of these posters versus canvassing with an temporal difference infused to said canvassing. By this I mean I contacted roughly half of

the rooms randomly selected for in-person canvassing the day of posters being put up and contacting the other half four days after the posters being made visible.

### 3.5.2 Procedure

I put up 15 large, colorful posters around ERC; the exact placement can be seen in Figure 3.5a. These 11”x17” posters were made visible the morning of Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup> 2012. They were taped to the inside of every common area: message boards, dining commons, laundry rooms and lounges. The posters indicated where each college’s polling place was located (Appendix Figure 3). It would be reasonable to question the capacity of these posters to be seen by all twelve hundred students of ERC by Election Day. However, as the study will illuminate, the wording of the canvassing

prompt evoked that information prior to the canvasser informing a student of their polling place. In fact, 16% of students contacted in their homes on November 1<sup>st</sup>, the day of the posters being made visible, knew where to cast their ballot. However, upon the second round of canvassing on the night of November 5<sup>th</sup> it was revealed that 86% of students knew where to vote—indicating a very strong possibility that the posters served as an important electoral



resource.

I canvassed 74 rooms, 43 of which answered the door; 19 doors were answered the day of flyering with a potential population of 127 students exposed to the canvassing message. Twenty-four rooms answered the door the night before the election resulting in a potentially exposed population of 151. The rooms were selected based on residence building. I chose six of 15 residence buildings at random to canvass within ERC, thereby standardizing the exposure all students had to move-in weekend registration efforts. Also, given the fact I was contacting students after the registration deadline, there was no chance for additional registrants after the fact. Respondents received a standardized message that read as follows:

*Hi, my name is Nolan. I just wanted to give you a heads up about the election on Tuesday. Do you know where your polling station is? Well, you can stop by Middle Earth Lounge between 8am and 8pm to cast your vote. Also, don't forget to let your roommates know! Thanks for your time!*

Also, given the potential complications inherent to motivating political engagement, I wore non-descript clothing: a black polo t-shirt, blue jeans and a pair of white sneakers on both canvassing occasions.

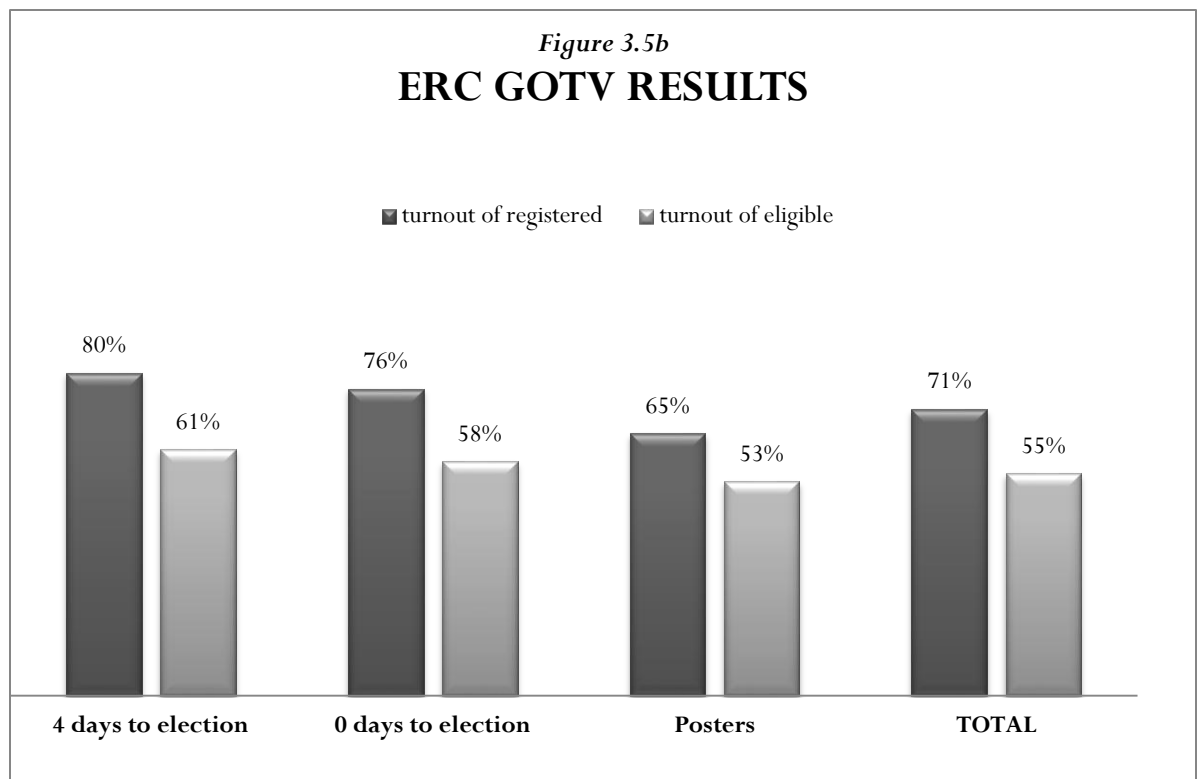
### 3.5.3 Measure

Three types of intervention were generated: (1) the group of students exposed to the canvassing effort four days prior to the election, the day of flyering; (2) the group of

students exposed to the canvassing effort the night before the election, four days after flyering; and (3) the group of ERC students whose only intervention the posters. To compare the effects each group, I measured the turnout of registered voters and turnout of the eligible population. I ascertained exact knowledge of the amount of ineligible students for each room contacted because I was granted supervised access to the residence rolls. Below, the results are compiled in Figure 3.5b.

#### 3.5.4 Active vs. Passive: Results and Review

Considering Figure 3.5b, note a clear difference between the groups that only saw

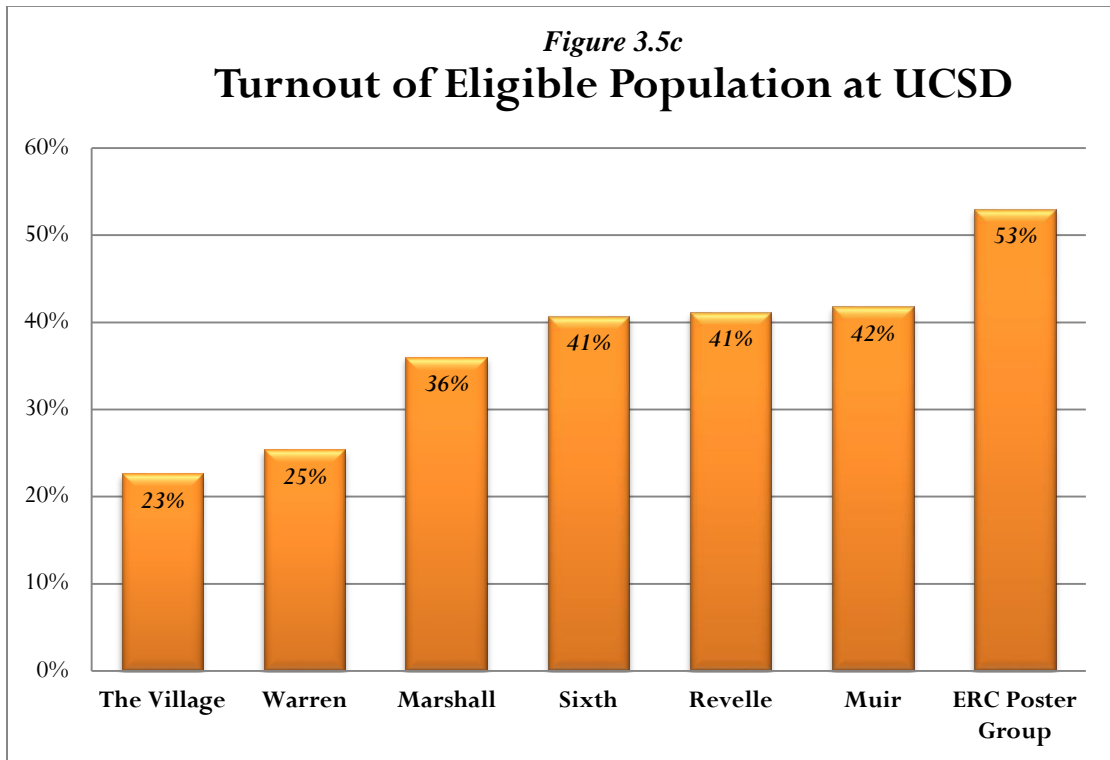


posters versus those who were contacted. No doubt, these results strongly suggest that canvassing facilitates an increase in voter turnout relative to the posters. These results reflect and build upon scholarly literature concerning political behavior—that in-person

contact significantly improves turnout within a community relative to other, impersonal forms of motivating potential voters to cast a ballot.

The four percent difference among the canvassed groups can most likely be attributed to the message being circulated through the household. Indeed those four days were crucial in allowing for social pressure to build. However, this is mere conjecture. This phenomenon may have occurred in this experiment, so a follow-up must be conducted to increase the confidence of this assertion.

It appears the posters had a diminished effect relative to canvassing within Eleanor Roosevelt College. However, when considering the effect of the posters on turnout among the colleges of UCSD, a marked difference is unveiled.



Considering Figure 3.5c, there is an obvious separation in turnout between ERC and the other colleges. Indeed with the posters localized entirely within ERC, these results strongly suggest the capacity for passive integration to increase turnout in elections. It seems that college students are truly on the precipice of voting. However, this experiment suffers from a small sample size. While carrying strong internal validity, its capacity to be generalized is still in question. No doubt, the procedure of this experiment should be repeated across spatial and temporal bounds in an effort fully contextualize this result.



# CHAPTER FOUR

## CONCLUSION

*“I don’t think everyone should vote. If you have to be dragged into the polls [and] carried into the polls, . . . you probably shouldn’t be voting. However, we shouldn’t be putting up barriers to voting that target certain groups.”*

— Mo Rocca

### **4.1 An Overview**

While there will be some added qualifiers later on in this conclusion, I am confident these experiments suggest that we should reject the null hypotheses asserted—with the noted exception of integrated opportunity to register being correlated to higher turnout. However, without question, there must be more research into this more or less nascent subfield of political behavior. Indeed it would be supportive to enact both observational and experimental research designs concerning the institutionalization of college-aged electoral access. Although I referenced Faulkner’s notion that purity is contrary to nature in a supportive light, I will readily concede that the most revealing and, perhaps most interesting, parts of the domain of a function exist at its extremes. While I am confident that these results will be mirrored elsewhere, only middling certitude stands to be asserted when attempting to generalize the thesis of this study to other spatial and

temporal locales. I will now turn the focus of this study toward an individualized review of each hypothesis.

#### **4.2 The More Integrated the Opportunity; the More Registered the Community**

Of the four hypotheses, the results of the experiments most strongly suggest a rejection of the null hypothesis that there is no effect of an institutionally integrated opportunity to register to vote upon the greater the registration rate of a community. As evidenced at the micro-level at UCSD, colleges that saw greater integration into their administrative processes consistently witnessed greater registration rates. This was further supported by a quantitative analysis of the registration returns across the UC system. Recall that simply being spatially associated with an administrative process has chance of producing a higher than average registration that is more than seven times greater than letting recently moved students assume the full cost of registration.

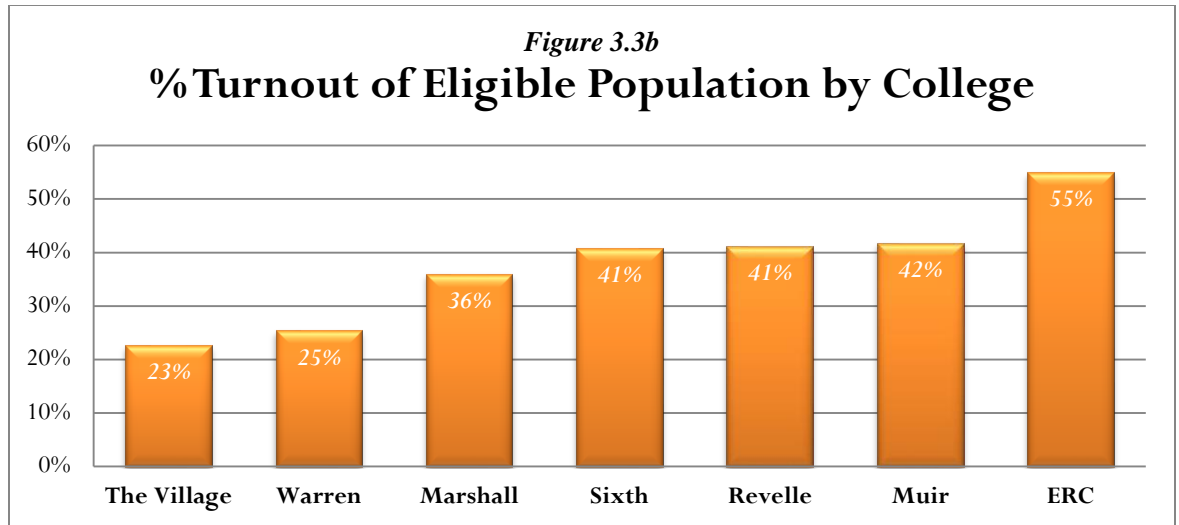
Moreover, online registration revealed itself to significantly reduce the barrier to electoral entry for college students. The graduated increase and intensification of methods integrating the opportunity to register via the internet consistently and positively correlated with campus registration rates. Through qualitative research, it was shown that off-campus students particularly benefited from this method of integration.

This result was foreshadowed by theories presented earlier in the paper. Laws like the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) did boost registration for poorer and residentially mobile citizens. However it had effects that were focused on older Americans. Indeed the average college goer is residentially mobile but, by and large, does

not own an automobile. As a result college-aged citizens became exposed to an institutionalized bias: that older Americans had more organizational tools available to them than younger Americans. However, this study will *partially* maintain the findings of Milbrath—that integrating into society through marriage, children and career is essential in maximizing civic participation across the electorate (Milbrath 1965).

#### **4.3 The More Integrated the Registration Opportunity; the Greater the Turnout in a Community**

This evidence cultivated from the experiments has strongly implied a failure to reject the null hypothesis: that there is no effect of an institutionally integrated opportunity to register to vote upon and the turnout rate of a community. While the work of Wolfinger and Highton (1998) on the NVRA showed an increase in turnout derived from registration, the increases seen were most likely—given the findings of this study, people already voting on a regular basis who were a casualty of the externalities of residential mobility. Figure 3.3b is reiterated to shed light on the fact that there empirical evidence to support a failure to reject the null hypothesis.



As the institutional bias was removed, it seems that the turnout rate remained almost exactly the same as the national average (2011 Census ACS). Indeed, the only separation in turnout among colleges occurred when there was a concerted Get Out The Vote effort. In a sense, this study went out on a limb to say that registration *alone* would boost turnout. The literature, upon close examination, revealed a non-existent foundation for such an assertion that was, no doubt, reflected in the results.

#### **4.4 The More Integrated the Message of Civic Participation the Greater the Turnout**

Given the results of the turnout experiment conducted at Eleanor Roosevelt College, it appears that null hypothesis can be rejected: that, all else equal, *there is a positive* effect of an integrated message of civic participation and the turnout rate of a community. With ERC being the only campus that had posters encouraging turnout, there was an 18 percent boost in turnout from the average of the other campuses and an 11 percent separation from the next closest college.

This result should fascinate given what the literature had to say. The closest experiment relating to this endeavor was Nickerson's review of impersonal modes of motivating the electorate by flyer-ing houses with a message of civic participation. Indeed, it revealed that it had no effect on turnout. Yet there was a significant increase in the turnout of the student population of ERC despite the fact this method of integration was even more impersonal. Instead of having flyers waiting for students in their mailboxes or leaflets hung on the doors of their dorms; posters were simply made visible so that students would consistently notice them over the course the five days preceding Election Day 2012.

It is my opinion that this finding speaks to the very small push required to get college-aged students involved. The theory presented earlier by Eric Plutzer, that there is a sort of "start-up cost" to voting, appears to exist; but the down payment on entry to the electorate is not as great as scholars might think. It seems that for the cost \$22.50 for 15 posters, roughly 100 additional students turned out to vote.

#### **4.5 An Actively Integrated Message of Civic Participation Produces Greater Turnout Than a Passively Integrated Message**

From the result exhibited in Figure 3.5b it can be reasonably suggested that the null hypothesis should be rejected: that it is incorrect to assert that all else equal, an active message of civic participation will have no effect in relation to a passive message. Indeed, the turnout of the canvassed group exceeded the poster group by five to nine percent. It seems that this is in fact the most efficacious way to get college aged voters to the polls.

However, it would have been interesting to see the reaction a group that was canvassed but not exposed to posters would have. No doubt, there would be a strong suggestion of omitted variable bias if I were to chalk the large increase in turnout of canvassed groups *solely* to canvassing.

#### **4.6 Closing Remarks**

This not an advocacy paper. It did not approach the problem of unusually low youth turnout with a dogmatically predisposed notion of what the results should be. However, the evidence presented in this study—at a minimum, suggests that further examination of institutionally integrated voter access should be done with respect to the youth electorate. Indeed, it should be known, particularly to college administrators, that at no point did any complications occur with privacy or the logistic operations of a college campus. I cannot stress enough the frustration of watching an institution committed to the development of both natural understanding and social responsibility continually waste opportunities to embolden the ethics it seeks to uphold.

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## APPENDIX

**Figure 1: Previous Registration Rates of UC's**

According to UCSA Website in 2010:

Campus	Campus Enrollment	2010 Voter Registration	% of Campus Registered
UC Santa Barbara	20,559	7,895	38%
UC Santa Cruz	15,825	2,600	16%
UC Berkeley	35,843	5076	14%
UC Merced	4,381	624	14%
UC Hastings	1,300	150	12%
UC Riverside	20,746	2,096	10%
UC Los Angeles	38,476	3,098	8%
UC Irvine	27,631	1,802	7%
UC San Diego	28,748	1,758	6%

## Figure 2: Sample Memorandum of Understanding

Memorandum

SOVAC & UCSD Residential Life

2011-2012

### 1. Introduction:

The Resident Deans join the Associated Students of UCSD in supporting the values of Scholarship, Leadership and Citizenship. Toward that end, both parties will do all in their power to ensure that students are provided the opportunity and means to register to vote. Thus, it has been structured that the Student Organized Voter Access Committee (SOVAC) will, as the voter registration arm of A.S., resolve to achieve the aforementioned aims. The Resident Deans will support SOVAC's efforts, while setting specific conditions under which voter registration activities take place in order to coordinate with Residential Life's procedures and policies. Each summer, contact should be made between SOVAC and the Resident Deans to confirm the following year's agreement, as well as to update contact names, roles and logistics. In addition to the conditions and stipulations explained in this MOU, SOVAC may request more frequent access to various parts of campus if there is a special event (i.e. U.S. Primary Elections, Special Elections, etc).

### 2. Voter Registration Efforts:

Dining Halls — Once a month SOVAC will request access to the Dining Halls, for the purpose of informing students about the importance of voter registration and passing out voter registration forms. All logistical information regarding these activities must be attained by August 15 the week prior to opening weekend in September. (September - December)

Collection Boxes — SOVAC will place a voter registration collection box at each Residential-Life Office. Everyday a SOVAC representative will collect the forms in the collection boxes and turn them into the County Registrar Office. State and Federal Law state that voter registration forms must be delivered to the registrar office within three days. SOVAC president will provide a list of SOVAC representatives that will pick up the forms. A SOVAC representative may only receive the forms with proper UCSD ID. (Confirmed by August 30, distributed September 15)

Meeting with Res-Life Deans — After move-in weekend, SOVAC will meet with the Council of Resident Deans/Council of Assistant Resident Deans each Residential-Life Dean to discuss any issues or concerns that may have arisen. These issues may result in an immediate change to the MOU for the following year. (mid-Fall Quarter TBD at discretion of Residential Life)

Materials and Advertising — SOVAC’s communication director will contact Residential Life in regards to design and distribution of material. After approval for various designs from Residential Life, SOVAC will seek confirmation for the distribution of material. SOVAC intends to work closely with the RA’s to pass out posters, postcards and other materials at various gatherings including, but not limited to, dining halls, move-in weekend, residential areas and main thoroughfares. SOVAC will affix 12”x18” posters on each residential building in strategic places such as entrances and exits so as to maximize viewing. (Approval needed by September 15)

### 3. Volunteers:

Volunteer eligibility — SOVAC requires all volunteers to agree to the terms and conditions laid out by the Secretary of State and Residential Life in regards to voter registration activities on campus.

Volunteer Non-Partisanship — SOVAC will require all volunteers to retain a non-partisan stance when conversing with students. The activity or program shall not be influenced by, affiliated with, or supportive of the interest or policies of any political party, candidate, or ballot initiative, whether it be local, state, national, or UC system-wide or campuswide. This also includes not wearing clothing or displaying buttons, stickers, fliers, posters, bumper stickers, or any other partisan literature or political messaging, implicit or explicit, displaying names of candidates, political parties, ballot propositions or initiatives. If a volunteer violates the terms and conditions set by the Secretary of State or Residential Life, Resident Deans have complete authority to investigate the incident and remove that individual from the voter registration service.

### 4. SOVAC Schedule of Events:

#### Spring Quarter

Preliminary meeting between the new SOVAC board and Residential Life — After the out-going SOVAC elects a new board, the out-going SOVAC President will schedule a meeting with the Chair of the Council of Resident Deans or designate. All members of SOVAC’s out-going and incoming board must attend the Week 7 meeting. (May - June)

Change of Leadership — During Week 7, SOVAC’s outgoing board will introduce the newly elected board. The newly elected board will schedule a meeting before Finals Week with the the Chair of the Council of Resident Deans or designate. (May - June)

Meeting with Affiliates Week — SOVAC will invite and introduce the student organization affiliates seeking to run a co-campaign to register students during move-in weekend and the mandatory RA meetings. These may include but are not limited to: President of the College Democrats, College Republicans, and Young Americans for Liberty. SOVAC, student organization affiliates, and Residential Life will discuss revisions to the existing MOU. These re-visions will be noted and finalized at the next meeting. All attendees will discuss and determine a set pattern of meetings over the summer period to organize a voter registration drive for the Fall quarter. (TBD)

## Summer Sessions

Move-In Weekend — SOVAC will organize volunteers and provide each Resident Dean with an accurate list of volunteers that will be present for each day. Residential Life will provide SOVAC with a table for each respective location. The location of the table must be consistent with the pattern students must enter in order to attain the information/material necessary to enter their place of residence for the year. SOVAC will provide each campus representative with 1,000 forms for the move-in weekend event. (September)

Mandatory RA Meetings — SOVAC will make an inquiry with respect to meeting with the RA's of each campus before the beginning of the Fall Quarter, preferably during RA Training. SOVAC board member will meet with the RA's of each campus and discuss procedure for the mandatory RA meetings with their residents and move-in weekend. To determine the date, time, and location of each RA meeting with their corresponding building/floor, we will hand out the "RA Info Sheet." This sheet will provide SOVAC with the name of the RA, contact information, jurisdiction (change word), the number of residents, and basic logistics to organize volunteers to attend meetings. SOVAC asks for 10 minutes at the very end of the RA meetings with residents to pass out voter registration forms. SOVAC may have a floor/house incentive party so that the RA with the most voter registrations (by percentage of the floor/house occupancy) will win a Pizza Party for the entire floor/house. (August-June)

## 5. Origins of Agreement

This MOU was originally created in Spring of 2011 by the following individuals:

Alyssa Wing, ASUCSD President

Samer Naji, Vice President of External

Arshya Sharifian, President SOVAC

Mina Nilchian, External Press Associate SOVAC

Nolan Weber, Vice President SOVAC,

Arash Najibfard, Treasurer SOVAC,

Carl Welliver, Chief of Staff SOVAC

## 6. Signatures of the Agreement:

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Rey Guerrero, Resident Dean, ERC and I-House (representing Council of Resident Deans)

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Samer Naji, Vice President of External Affairs, Associated Students

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Arshya Sharifian, President of SOVAC (Student Organized Voter Access Committee)

Figure 3: ERC Poster

**POLLING STATIONS AT EVERY COLLEGE CAMPUS**

**VOTE TUESDAY, NOV. 6TH**

- Revelle  
*Why Not Here Lounge?*
- Muir  
*Half Dome Lounge*
- Marshall  
*Oceanview Lounge*
- ERC  
*Middle Earth*
- The Village  
*Building 2 Conference Room*
- Warren  
*Student Activity Center*
- Sixth  
*Dogg House*

UC San Diego

**SOVAC**  
Student Organized Voter Access Committee

Figure 4: Precinct/College Map of UCSD

