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**Indiana Journal of Political Science**
Andrew Downs, Editor

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Politics Across the Curriculum: Teaching Introductory Political Science Courses in Learning Communities

David E. Leaman (d-leaman@neiu.edu) ■ Northeastern Illinois University

INTRODUCTION

In my first experience teaching in a learning community, I worked with two faculty colleagues to integrate my introductory American government course with their English composition and freshmen seminar courses. One of the special activities that term was our visit to the Cook County Jail, organized by my criminal justice colleague who was teaching the freshmen seminar in our learning community. As we sat in the waiting area before our tour began, one of the jail officials asked our group of first year students: “So what class are you in?” One of our students immediately answered, “We’re in a learning community!” bringing a smile to the faces of all three of us professors. I no longer remember what our student added by way of explaining to the prison guard what a learning community is. But when she was finished, the friendly jail official chuckled: “Yeah, we have a learning community here too.”

Since that first learning community (LC), I have taught introductory American government in four other LCs. Of these five LCs, two followed the model of my first experience – a three-way linkage of American government with an English composition course and the college study skills-oriented first year seminar – and two others were a U.S. government/English composition two-course combo (without the first year seminar). My fifth LC, for a cohort of pre-education students, combined U.S. government with an introductory sociology course. At my institution, as at many others, most students in American government classes are not political science majors or minors (although a few may become so after taking the class). Instead, most students take American government to meet general education or other graduation requirements. Thus, American government courses are shaped by both political science and general education goals. In this article, I address three questions related to the teaching of general education introductory political science courses, such as American government, in learning communities.

First, addressing a concern of some instructors, how do the content and assignments of introductory political science courses change when they are part of LCs? In this section, I compare topic coverage of my LC and non-LC American government courses; discuss a few of the joint writing assignments that I have developed with my English and freshmen seminar LC colleagues; and note the effects of LC collaboration on the exploration of political themes across the required LC course readings. Second, what do political science instructors (and departments) gain from participating in LCs? Here I outline both general and specific benefits for political science instructors who collaborate in LCs. Finally, what are some of the outcomes for students who participate in LCs? In this final section, I review LC program assessment findings from my campus, and note similar findings from various other institutions, that measure the benefits of LCs for student persistence, participation, and learning. I also report the results (limited at this point) of pre-tests/post tests and a short “citizenship” exercise that were administered in several of my LC-integrated American government courses.

My conclusions are that while LCs reshape, and may sometimes reduce, the traditional content of introductory political science courses, the changes are not as visible or dramatic as one might imagine while the gains of LC collaboration are clear. First, LCs provide a valuable means for advancing the academic development of students, as numerous assessment studies
indicate. Second, for political science instructors, LCs broaden and enrich the study of politics as they help to spread the study of politics across the curriculum. This spread of the study of politics occurs both in the literal institutional sense of linking political science courses and instructors with courses and instructors in other departments and programs. But it also refers to the less tangible intellectual conversation that occurs among instructors and students within LCs. As I discuss below, this multi-directional conversation can have the effect of more fully recognizing the pervasiveness and meaningfulness of politics in all spheres of human activity (including language and education) and of expanding the study of politics beyond a focus on formal political institutions and processes. Thus, the LC movement provides an opportunity for political science instructors to further explore and illuminate what Lane (2004), in a very different context, calls the “wider shores” of politics. Before addressing my three main questions, however, I need to briefly follow up on my student’s exchange with the prison guard by trying to explain what LCs are. In this next prefatory section, I will also comment on the participation of political scientists in this pedagogical movement.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND THE PARTICIPATION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

LCs are part of the curriculum at more than 400 institutions across the spectrum of U.S. higher education (Smith, 2001). The Washington Center for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education at Evergreen State College – a major leader in the contemporary LC movement – offers an inclusive and concrete definition of LCs:

“[C]urricular learning communities are classes that are linked or clustered during an academic term, often around an interdisciplinary theme, and enroll a common cohort of students. A variety of approaches are used to build these learning communities, with all intended… to build community among students, between students and their teachers, and among faculty members and disciplines (Washington Center, 2004).”

While this definition does not specify pedagogical innovation, some scholars are quick to emphasize the opportunity that LCs offer to practice fresh approaches to teaching and learning. Love argues, for example, that LCs “shift the focus to student learning outcomes;” “allow educators to rethink the ways by which students are taught;” and “can become a lens through which the experiences of students at a particular college can be understood.” Educational practices that are frequently integrated into LCs include problem-based team projects, service learning, and field trips. Love credits political philosopher Dewey, among others, for developing ideas about participatory, experiential, and collaborative education that inspired the LC model and movement (Love, 1999, p. 4-5).

As political scientist Thies (2005) has outlined in his superb overview in the inaugural issue of Journal of Political Science Education, there are multiple types of LCs. Two earlier excellent articles by political scientists who have taught American government in LCs – both published in PS: Political Science and Politics (and both also reviewed by Thies) – demonstrate how LC models may vary relative to institutional context and other factors. In the first model (Sanders 2000), American government was one of a cluster of courses (in this case, paired with two different sections of a freshmen seminar) taken together by a relatively small cohort of students (in this case, thirty-six total students). In the second model (Huerta, 2004), American government was a large lecture course linked with smaller sections of English composition and a first year seminar. At Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), the institution where I teach,
LCs have taken the form of course clusters in which the same cohort of 25 or fewer students have taken two or more courses integrated around a common theme. Thus, the NEIU model is a bit more similar to the Drake University model than it is to the Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi model. However, my discussion in this article is directed to political scientist instructors in all types of contexts who are interested in how LCs, in whatever form, might advance their institutional and personal teaching goals. In so doing, I am following Thies’s advice to political science instructors involved in LCs to contribute to the growing conversation about LCs among political scientists (2005, p. 134).

Political scientists seem to have been moderately involved in the contemporary LC movement. At the five LC conferences that I have attended, political science teachers were among the participants at each one. Also, the lunchtime keynote speaker at two of these conferences was political scientist Richard Guarasci, a national leader of the LC movement. My analysis of the one adequately informative participant list available from one of these major LC conferences – the 6th Annual Learning Communities Conference in Chicago, Illinois on November 7-9, 2001 – suggests that the involvement of political scientists in the LC movement may be comparable to that of our colleagues in sociology/social work, history, and philosophy with each of these disciplines representing four to five percent of the total 160 discipline-identified participants at this conference. (Based on the data from this conference, social science disciplines that may lag a bit behind in LC movement participation are economics, anthropology, and criminal justice.) The discipline that seems to be the most involved in the LC movement – with an impressive twenty-five percent (40 of 160) of the participants at this conference – is English. Teachers from speech/theater departments – nine percent of the participants at this conference – also appear to have above-average involvement in the LC movement.

In the growing attention to teaching and learning in political science, learning community pedagogy has only become a major topic during the last decade or so. In Kehl’s analysis of the scholarship on teaching and learning in political science from 1990 to 2001, LCs are not specifically identified in the discussion of “six transformative trends” in political science instruction, although LCs are known to support several of these trends including “democratic and civic education,” “innovation in teaching strategies,” and “the continuing importance of diversity” (Kehl, 2002). An indicator of the increasing involvement of political science in the contemporary LC movement over the last decade is the publication of the three previously mentioned articles by Sanders (2000), Huerta (2004), and Thies (2005). LCs were also among the topics discussed at both of the first two APSA Conferences on Teaching and Learning in Political Science (Alter and Gershkoff, 2004 and Botteron and Harkness, 2005).

**CHANGING CONTENT, INTEGRATED ASSIGNMENTS, AND WIDER READING OF POLITICS**

As noted, some instructors are suspicious of LCs because of the concern that collaboration will result in sacrifice of some of their traditional course content. These concerns are warranted. LCs do change course content although, in my case, the changes were not terribly dramatic. A comparison of the first four American government courses that I taught as part of LCs (what I will call AG-LC courses) with the four stand-alone American government courses that I taught during the same period (what I will call AG courses) indicates, for example, that the major exams in my courses followed the same format and included the same general content regardless of whether or not the course was part of an LC. Still, changes do occur in LCs. In this section, I first note a change in the topic coverage in my AG-LC and AG courses that
resulted from my LC participation; second, I will discuss a few integrated writing assignments that were developed in my LCs; and, third, I will comment on how LC collaboration affected the exploration of political themes across the required readings of different courses within the LC.

During my first experience teaching American government in an LC, I ran out of time to adequately cover all the scheduled course topics. This led me, the next time that I taught American government in an LC, to reduce the core course topics in one fifteen-week semester from fifteen to twelve. Eliminated were the chapters on electoral campaigns, the federal bureaucracy, and civil rights and liberties. This was painful. Still, I did make an effort to integrate some of the content of these chapters into other related chapters. For example, I presented some of the campaigns information during our discussion of the textbook chapters on voting and political parties. Some of the bureaucracy material was integrated into our discussion of the chapter on the presidency. Key civil liberties and rights cases were introduced during discussion of the Constitution early in the course and further explored during our discussion of the Supreme Court. Other instructors may have chosen different chapters to eliminate or combine. This is an instructor’s choice based on cost-benefit assessment and personal teaching strengths and passions. What is significant to me is that once I decided on the “reduced” course content for my AG-LC course, I ended up doing the same thing in my future stand-alone AG courses. In other words, my experience in the LC convinced me that what students gained from greater depth on core topics, and from more integrative writing assignments and class activities, more than compensated for the slightly reduced topical coverage. I suppose that what I say to students who ask about the required length of papers could also apply to the trimming of my course topic coverage: quality matters more than quantity.

One of the most significant effects of my LC participation on the content of my American government courses is on writing assignments. But here too the changes are not as great as one might imagine – while the value added in terms of more extensive and integrated writing seems fairly clear. On some occasions during heavy teaching load semesters, I have only assigned one paper in my AG course. Typically, however, I have assigned two papers in my AG courses, one of which required some documented research. This general practice did not change in my AG-LC courses. What has changed is that the second, and final, documented papers in my AG-LC courses have in every case required more intellectual synthesis than was the case with their AG course counterparts. In all five of my LCs, the final paper was a joint assignment that counted for each of the LC courses and that required students to integrate and cite sources and ideas from the various courses and texts that were part of the LC. In all cases, this final paper went through several writing steps. While my AG writing assignments also have proceeded through multiple steps, another difference in the AG-LC courses was that at least one other instructor was also reading and commenting on paper outlines and rough drafts.

Each of the joint writing assignments in my LCs was developed with my teaching partners: our collaborative response to the LC theme we had agreed upon. Thus, each bear the distinctive mark of the particular LC of which they were part. In my first LC, “Identity, Community, and the Struggle for Meaningful Democracy,” we required students to write a 7-10 page paper that began with a detailed description of an experience in their life that related in some way to the LC theme and texts. In their analysis of that experience, we asked students to utilize at least three of the texts from at least two of the courses that made up the three-course LC. After completing drafts of their papers, students shared their papers with other students in the class. What made this assignment different from what I would have assigned in my stand-alone AG class was, first, the focus on a personal experience as a starting point for the paper;
second, the length of the paper (my AG final papers typically being 4-6 pages in length); and, third, the peer-review and discussion of student papers within the class. My English colleague in this LC was the one who led the peer review process during his class time; had I not been in an LC, this step in the writing process would not have occurred.

What made this assignment especially valuable in my view was the requirement that students analyze, and form an argument, about their personal experience that utilized several course texts. This assignment, and the help we three instructors offered along the way, encouraged and enabled students to identify and think analytically about both the “political” and “literary” dimensions of their own life experiences – that is, to cross political science/English disciplinary boundaries as well as the traditional divide between the “personal” and the “political.” Our first year students were asked to take up this intellectual challenge even as they learned how to develop a paper in stages and to properly document their sources of information. These are favorable outcomes for general education courses like American government and English composition and also provide a solid foundation for any of the students who may later choose to take additional courses in political science.

In one of my later LCs, “Becoming Students and Citizens,” we asked students to write a final “proposing a solution” paper about a local or national issue that was of special concern to them. For this assignment, composed by the Writing I instructor, students were asked to identify a clear problem; to make an argument about the cause(s) of this problem; and to propose locally-based solutions for their problem with a concrete and relevant audience in mind. Paper topics ranged from how to limit road racing among teens in a Chicago suburb to how to increase voter turnout in elections. The reading and commenting on the first drafts of these papers was shared by the LC instructors with the English instructor reading all the first drafts and the other two instructors each reading half the drafts. At the suggestion of the English instructor, students were able to request their second faculty reader based on the subject of the paper. The concluding step in the process was formal student presentations of their papers with all the instructors present during the final class period. A distinctive feature of this assignment (that typically has received less emphasis in my stand-alone AG courses) was the focus on defining an audience, a step in the writing process that took on special significance with the multiple faculty readers of the paper and the final oral presentation to the entire LC.

In a later LC, “Democracy and Education,” we asked students to theorize about democracy and education by addressing a concrete education-related problem and taking thoughtful positions in the debates about different forms of literacy and different types of democracy. This final writing assignment built upon weekly LC discussion questions linking politics and literacy (such as “What is the difference between elite and popular democracy and how does this relate to elite and popular literacies?” and “How do current trends in the U.S. economy affect literacy and democracy?”) as well as earlier overlapping writing assignments in the English and American government sections of the LC. One of the earlier writing assignments in my AG-LC class was a migration and multiculturalism essay based on Gonzalez’s Harvest of Empire (2000 and 2011) that I had first developed in a stand-alone AG class. What made the final joint writing assignment in this LC distinctive was the degree to which it allowed and encouraged students to build upon topics and informal and formal writing exercises that they had been working on from the beginning of the LC. Of course, none of the joint LC writing assignments reviewed here were perfectly developed or implemented. But all were products of a process that gave more time to writing than was the case in my regular AG
courses and that challenged students to make intellectual connections across their different courses.

Regarding these intellectual connections, the LC “cross-over” of both writing and reading assignments has consistently challenged both students and instructors to more carefully consider the “politics” that is part of every day life in all spheres of society. As I will discuss next, the combination of required readings in the American government and English courses of the LCs have prompted students (and me) to more fully appreciate and consider the “political” nature of personal identity, language, the educational system, among other topics. In this way, LC collaboration has helped to extend the study of politics in my introductory American government courses beyond the traditional heavy emphases on government institutions and formal processes. This wider reading of politics corresponds, to Lane’s challenge to political scientists and political theorists to pursue a less state-centric study of politics, what she calls the “wider shores” of politics (2004):

“[I]f we accept the fact that political experience is present in everyday human relationships, then the field of political science . . . expands in interesting ways. Individuals, with all their idiosyncrasies, replace abstract, neutral citizens; a wide assortment of human behavior, from the high-spirited to the underhanded, replaces the right to vote; and individual self-government replaces state-centered hierarchical control. Such a viewpoint replaces an abstract and skeletal political system with fully defined political people, participating in environments that, while having no direct relation to the state and its institutions, are nevertheless political . . . .” (Lane, 2004, p. 460).

I would suggest that political scientist instructors who are interested in exploring these “wider shores” of politics – as well as those who are interested in promoting civic engagement among their students – can benefit much from LC collaboration. In the process, we contribute to spreading the study of politics across the curriculum.

As with topic coverage and writing assignments, my participation in LCs did not significantly alter the reading assignments developed in my stand-alone AG courses. Required course books in my AG courses have typically included a standard American government textbook and a second supplementary “non-traditional” text that has usually been journalistic and/or civic action-oriented in nature. The effect of LC collaboration was instead the wider and fuller exploration of political themes especially as my own required course readings interacted with my English colleagues’ assigned texts. Let me discuss two specific examples of this required reading “cross-fertilization” from two of my LC experiences. (In the three LCs that I do not discuss in this sub-section on reading assignments, my American government supplemental texts – Kozol’s Amazing Grace (1996), Ehrenreich’s Nickel and Dimed (2001), and Featherstone’s Selling Women Short – all provided the basis for lively discussions and integrated writing assignment options within the respective LCs.)

In my first three-course LC, the supplementary text that I assigned for “my” class was Kingsolver’s (1989 and 1996) journalistic account of a little known case study of women’s involvement in labor mobilization during the 1980s: Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983. One main text used by my English colleague in that LC was Push by Sapphire (1996), a novel about a semi-literate young woman facing multiple individual and societal challenges (that was later made into the movie, Precious). The combination and interaction of these two books concretely illustrated for students how politics is imbedded in
personal relationships and how political struggle can take different forms. The activist women in *Holding the Line* were mostly wives of male miners and the community they formed with each other was personally transformative even if the final political outcome of their mobilization was mixed. While the fictional *Push* is less overtly “political,” like *Holding the Line*, it focuses on a long struggle for empowerment against overwhelming odds. Both books highlight the resources— in these cases, literacy and collective action (among others)—which oppressed individuals and communities can utilize in their struggles. While students in my stand-alone AG courses are also introduced to some of these same themes (in the textbook chapter on social movements, for example) the combination—and vivid story-telling—of *Holding the Line* and *Push* in that first LC permitted comparisons, connections, and greater overall emphasis on these particular political themes. As noted earlier, student papers also responded to and referenced these readings.

In a later LC, my supplementary text was Gonzalez’s *Harvest of Empire* (2000 and 2011) and the texts used by my English colleague included Hirsch’s *Cultural Literacy* (1988) and O’Hearn’s edited collection, *Half and Half* (1998) (as well as the student choice of Sapphire’s *Push* [1996] or Rodriguez’s *Hunger of Memory* [1983]). In this LC, my English colleague helped students to focus on the politics of language by evaluating different types and functions of literacy. This emphasis on language directly related to Gonzalez’s chapter on the “English-only” versus multilingualism language debate in the U.S. While I had used the Gonzalez book several times previously in my stand-alone American government (and other) courses, in this LC I was able for the first time to engage Gonzalez’s arguments about contemporary language (and cultural) debates knowing that students had additional troves of knowledge and insight from their readings of Hirsch and O’Hearn. The exploration of this political theme is especially valuable and interesting in the teaching context of Northeastern Illinois University given that approximately one-half of NEIU students speak English as a second or other language.

**REASONS FOR MORE POLITICAL SCIENTISTS TO JOIN UP**

Why should more political scientists get involved with learning communities? As it happens, Thies (2005, p. 130-132) has directly addressed this question, so a large part of my discussion below (outlined, researched, and drafted before I read the Thies article) is a reinforcement of what has been previously well-argued. My first set of rationales for political science involvement in LCs is not specific to our, or any other, discipline. Participation in LCs makes sense for instructors, first of all, because LCs make it more likely that their students will stay in class, participate more, and learn more. As the special issue of *Peer Review* devoted to LCs stated, “The broad appeal of learning communities is easily understood from the research, which presents mounting evidence of their positive impact on student retention, achievement, and involvement” (Tritelli, 2001, p. 3). Love reviews some of the findings that support this conclusion (1999, 3), and I will report on some of the findings from the NEIU LC program assessment in the next section. A second general argument for faculty involvement in LCs is the professional refreshment they provide for experienced professors and the faculty development opportunity that they offer for all instructors (Eby, 2001, p. 31; Pastors et al., 2004, p. 42; Huerta, 2004, p. 295; and Thies, 2005, p. 131-132). In my particular case, participating in LCs has strengthened my relationships with outstanding teacher colleagues outside my department; reminded me of the benefits of peer consultation for both faculty and students; educated me about other disciplinary languages; and accelerated my
progress in incorporating learning technologies such as Blackboard and discussion boards into my classes.

But political scientists also have three particular reasons to consider participating in LCs. First, political science courses in LCs are likely to significantly shape the themes and content of the LC of which they are a part. As the Drake University, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, and NEIU models suggest (and as Thies’s review supports), introductory political science courses in LCs are often combined with courses like English composition and first year seminars. While cross-fertilization in LCs alters each linked course and can enrich all participants, the content-heavy nature of political science courses is likely to strongly affect the appearance, substance, taste, and nutrition of the LC hybrids. The theme titles of my five LCs illustrate the influence of political science content on the integrated LCs: “Community, Identity, and the Struggle for Meaningful Democracy,” “Class, Gender, and Politics,” “Becoming Students and Citizens,” “Democracy and Education,” and “Researching Democracy in the United States.” Even when political science is teamed with courses other than writing or college study skills, political content appears likely to be the “first among equals” in developing LC foci. For example, in the final LC of the nationally renowned four-LC sequence for first year students at the New Century College at George Mason University, the LC combining four social science credits, three literature credits, and one fine arts credit was titled “Self as Citizen” (Eby, 2001, p 28).

At the same time, the influence of political science content in LCs should not be overstated or over-prized. Indeed, I would suggest that if the disciplinary language of political science were to become hegemonic in an LC, the benefits for political science instructors would greatly decline. This leads me to the second benefit of LC participation for political science instructors: the opportunity to learn about politics from colleagues and discourses in other disciplines. Through my collaboration with English colleagues, I have learned that the field of English composition (or at least one of the dominant currents within that field) – far from being solely focused on the teaching of writing “skills” – has a disciplinary language all its own. This discourse – centered on literacy and the politics of literacy – has broadened my own understanding of politics and has assisted me in my long-time interest in extending my teaching of politics into other important areas of social life. Thus, my experience of LC collaboration has demonstrated to me that LCs have the potential to be a positive-sum game for all parties involved if the faculty partners, to use Eby’s terms, are willing to develop “disciplinary self-awareness” and to “become learners” of the languages of other disciplines (Eby, 2001, p. 29).

Finally, since LCs are often structured to help freshmen students with basic skills such as writing, political science instructors gain from participation in LCs because it allows them to give more effective and coordinated attention to teaching these skills than is the case when we teach political science content courses on a stand-alone basis. As Huerta (2004: 295) and others have noted, when political science courses are teamed with English composition and/or college study skills courses, it means that political science instructors are receiving professional assistance in helping students with library research, outlining, drafting and revising papers, source citation, etc. At the same time, such collaboration also allows political science instructors to have some influence on tailoring the teaching of these skills to the needs and norms of social science. So, once again, the effects and benefits of LC collaboration are multi-directional. My acquisition of new methods for teaching writing through collaboration with LC colleagues on joint writing assignments may be similar to the experience of political science instructors who develop “unconventional and creative writing assignments” in political science courses that are part of “writing across the curriculum” or “writing in the disciplines” programs (Sherman and
Waismel-Manor, 2003, p. 755). I might add, as a final note, that since political science instructors in LCs have assistance from their partners in teaching skills such as writing, it may mean that on occasion more (rather than less) time is freed up for teaching political science content and for further heightening the demands of the course.15

Of course, some LCs succeed more than others just like some stand-alone classes succeed more than others. One of the special problems of LCs is the tendency, noted in an article by a sociologist who has taught in LCs, of student cohorts to build such strong communication networks with each other that the instructors become “outsiders” and the LC “may inadvertently create conditions that potentially retard the students’ academic development.” This dynamic seemed to occur in one of the five LCs in which I have participated that revolved around a cohort of pre-education students who stayed together in multiple linked courses over several consecutive semesters. Given the emphasis on student participation in LCs, some instructors are more capable than others of making them successful (Jaffee, 2004). Also, as Eby suggests, LCs may not work well for teachers who are deeply and defensively invested in the discourses and boundaries of their discipline (Eby, 2001, p. 29-30).

STUDENT ADVANCEMENT?

To repeat an introductory note, this article aims to contribute to the growing conversation among political scientists about LCs by offering a question-directed report of my experiences as a political science instructor who has participated in LCs. In this final section, I will briefly address the important question of assessment. The initial assessment of LCs at my institution emphasized broad program assessment – conducted by NEIU political scientist (and former Acting Dean of NEIU’s College of Arts and Sciences) Charles Pastors – rather than the assessment of individual LCs. Unfortunately, because of non-comprehensive administration of pre-tests/post-tests in my department, I do not have the data to make a systematic comparison of student outcomes in my AG courses taught inside and outside LCs. Thus, in the first part of this section, I will report on the results of LC program assessment at NEIU. In the second part, I will note the results (limited but positive) from standard pre-tests/post tests administered in two of the AG-LC courses that I taught and offer a few suggestive observations on student outcomes in another of my AG-LC courses based on a simple pre- and post- “citizenship” survey that was conducted in that LC-integrated class.

According to Shapiro and Levine’s review (2001) of LC assessment findings at six colleges and universities around the nation, LCs promote “achievement and retention,” “intellectual and social development,” and “student involvement”. What were the findings at my institution? Pastors’ analysis of the NEIU LC program was based on pre- and post-surveys of NEIU students who participated in LCs during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 academic years. This survey included a long list of questions related to student engagement and academic development. In addition, semester-to-semester student tracking analysis of student enrollment conducted by NEIU’s institutional studies director compared students who took general education courses, such as American government, as part of LCs and students who took general education courses, such as American government, outside LCs. On the critical matter of student persistence (sometimes called student retention), this tracking analysis has demonstrated – consistent with the findings at other institutions – that students who took general education courses in LCs were more likely than the average general education student to persist as full-time students to the next semester and to the following academic year (Pastors et al., 2004, p. 41).
But, besides helping to keep students in school, what are the effects of LCs on the academic development of students? While the findings here are tentative and limited, what we have learned from Pastors’ analysis is encouraging. In the fall 2003 surveys of comparable students in matched LC and non-LC general education courses, LC students self-reported being two to seven times more likely than non-LC students to have “studied with others; participated in class discussions; coped with test anxiety; sought feedback from instructors; evaluated opinions and facts; took notes; and improved writing, reading, and decision-making skills (Pastors et al. 2004, 41).” These findings – especially the group study and class participation items – correspond to Huerta’s findings at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi (2004: 294). LC students at NEIU also rated themselves more highly than did comparable non-LC students on “understanding faculty expectations” and “succeeding in other courses generally” (Pastors et al., 2004, p. 41-42).

In a separate preliminary analysis of NEIU students within LCs, Pastors’ comparison of “first (family member) in college” students with “non-first in college” students indicates even greater self-perceived gains among “first in college” LC students on important items such as “academic ability,” “confident in my research skills” and “know how to study effectively” (Pastors and Leaman, 2005). This tentative finding of benefits for first generation college students suggests the valuable role LCs may play for institutions like NEIU that have a large proportion of “first in college” students and for the broader goal of further democratizing American higher education.

Regarding political science learning in my particular AG-LC courses, the assessment data again is limited but positive. Results of the department’s standard multiple-choice pre- and post-tests administered in my first and fourth AG-LC courses indicate that student knowledge of the American political system increased by taking these courses. In the first AG-LC course, average student scores increased by 15% over the course of the semester and in the second AG-LC for which there is data, the increase was 20%. Encouragingly, since the questions on this pre-post assessment instrument are focused on the “nuts and bolts” of American government institutions and formal political processes, these increases indicate that students in LCs are gaining knowledge about traditional topics of American government courses even as the LC extends the study of politics well beyond the content covered in this multiple-choice test.

One of my goals as a teacher of American government is to encourage students to think about the meaning of “citizenship” and the possibilities of participation. This goal became the central focus of the third LC in which I participated, “Becoming Students and Citizens.” In that LC, my colleagues and I administered a short pre- and post-written survey that first asked students to rate themselves on a scale of 1-5 (1 being “not at all” and 5 being “perfectly”) on how well they thought they understood the concept of “citizenship” in four different areas: their government, their personal life, their being a student at NEIU, and their neighborhood. Second, students were asked – in an open-ended question – how they would define citizenship.

Not surprisingly, the results of this survey showed that students at the end of the course thought of themselves as more knowledgeable about citizenship in all four areas. As the teacher of American government in the LC, what was most encouraging in these results was that the biggest jump in student self-assessment of their knowledge of citizenship was in the area of government (from a mean of 2.95 to a mean of 3.77). The other nearly as big jump was in the area of being a student at NEIU (from 3.05 to 3.86). These results not only reflected the two-part theme of the LC, “Becoming Students and Citizens,” they also suggested that “government” had not become a secondary focus within the LC even though students were constantly crossing and
blurring disciplinary, local/national, and personal/political boundaries. Responding to the open-ended question about how they would define citizenship, only two of the twenty-two students on the entry survey made mention of political participation and/or government (even though “government” was one of the specified areas in question 1). On the exit survey, by contrast, at least nine of the students made specific mentions of political participation and/or government in their responses.

FUTURE RESEARCH
First, as suggested in the previous section, one area for future research for political scientists teaching in learning communities is comparative assessment of student outcomes, both knowledge acquisition and writing skills, in stand-alone political science courses and in political science courses that are part of learning communities. At my own institution, the learning communities program has evolved into an innovative, multi-disciplinary First Year Experience (FYE) program that engages students on Chicago-related themes across many subjects. My research in this article suggests the importance of systematic assessment that compares the performance of students in political science FYE courses with first year students in other introductory political science courses. Second, this article’s discussion of teaching politics across the curriculum is intimately bound up with even broader discussions, at my institution and across American higher education, of more integrative general education. As political science teachers and other educators participate in reforms of general education, I expect that the lessons and conclusions of this article can make a positive contribution, and can also spawn future research about the role of political scientists in promoting integrative liberal education.

CONCLUSION
Involvement in learning communities locates political science instructors and departments on the side of those who are promoting more integrated and socially engaged liberal education. The very act of teaching political science courses in LCs has the desirable effect of helping to spread the study of politics across the curriculum. As I have discussed, my experience teaching introductory American government in five different LCs has not required or led me to make dramatic changes in my course topics, tests, and texts. In fact, political science content has always deeply shaped the organizing themes and content of the LCs in which I have participated. At the same time, the combination and interaction of my political science readings and assignments with those of my LC teaching partners has offered both students and instructors greater opportunities to more fully explore the pervasiveness and significance of politics in different areas of human identity and activity. So, the spread of the study of politics flows in multiple directions.

The wider reading and study of politics also has the effect of shining more light on the possibilities for political action in both formal institutions as well as in other arenas of every day life. In this way, the goals of greater learning and of greater democracy are joined in the LC movement. Keeping in mind Theda Skocpol’s challenge to political scientists in her 2003 APSA Presidential Address to actively participate in “civic revitalization” (Skocpol, 2004, p. 12-13), political scientists have more than one good reason to increase their involvement in the movements toward more integrated education.
REFERENCES


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Notes

1 Here I would like to acknowledge my LC teaching colleagues at Northeastern Illinois University from whom I have learned very much and without whom this article would not have been possible: Timothy Barnett, Shelley Bannister, Wamucii Njogu, Vicki Byard, Robert Binkowski, and Christopher Schroeder. I especially want to thank Tim Barnett for his careful reading and thoughtful comments on this article. I also thank Carolyn Shaw for her kind comments at the APSA conference at which this research was presented.

2 The Sanders LC, made up mostly of Honors students, also had a residential component as most of the students were intentionally clustered in the same student housing area (Sanders 2000, 207, 210).

3 As Huerta reported, this LC model has had both a “Tetrad” version (including another large lecture course like U.S. History) and the more successful “Triad” version that was the focus of the article (Huerta 2004).

4 While LCs are usually inter-disciplinary and are often oriented to general education (as in the Sanders, Huerta, and NEIU models), Botteron and Grove (2005) demonstrate that LCs can also link courses within a particular discipline as in their pairing of Research Methods and Comparative Politics within the curriculum of their political science department. According to Botteron and Grove, their LC was motivated by the formidable challenge of teaching research methods to political science undergraduates.

5 Two specific examples of LCs involving political science courses at the first LC conference I attended (the 4th Annual Learning Communities Conference, Chicago, IL, November 17-19, 1999) were presented by faculty from McKendree (Lebanon, IL) College and Brookhaven (Farmer’s Branch, TX) College.

6 Two of the four stand-alone AG courses I taught during this period were limited to Honors students. While this introduces a new variable, I include them as AG courses in part because the sizes of these Honors courses were in fact more comparable to my AG-LC courses. The two “regular” AG classes, on the other hand, were roughly twice as large (approximately 40 students) as the AG-LC classes and the AG Honors courses.

7 Sanders similarly found that his participation in an LC did not dramatically change the content of his introductory American government course (Sanders 2000, 208).

8 While I have not administered a formal comparative assessment of writing products in my AG and AG-LC classes, I have a strong impression that the overall quality of the final essays in the AG-LC courses was higher than in the two regular AG courses that I taught during this period. I am less certain of this difference when it comes to the two AG Honors courses that I taught, so it is possible that the difference in writing quality is as much the result of class size and the starting point of students as it is of the LC effect.

9 One way that we instructors tried to reinforce the integrated theme of this three-course LC was to relate the college study skills concept of “internal vs. external locus of control” with the notions of “active vs. passive voice” in Writing I and “participatory vs. elite democracy” in my American government class.

10 Referring to this overlap and integration of course themes and assignments, one student wrote at the end of the learning community, the American government “class was fun when we could connect it to English.”

11 Examples of learning communities spreading the study – and democratic citizenship emphasis – of politics across the curriculum can be found in the early history of the LC movement and in diverse higher education locations. One of the historical LC models oft cited by current LC advocates – the Meiklejohn Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin in the 1920s – “looked at the roots of democracy and issues facing twentieth-century America (Smith 2001, 5)” As Smith states, “Early learning communities…were concerned with the role schools play in preparing students for responsible citizenship” and the resurgence of the movement in the 1960s and 1970s...
was influenced by the civil rights and women’s movements (2001, 7). Another analysis by scholarly advocates of LCs (neither of whom are political scientists) cites political theorist Benjamin Barber’s discussion of “communal” and “community-based” citizenship education in *An Aristocracy of Everyone* as a strong rationale for LCs (Oates and O’Connor 2001, 13). The emphasis on civic engagement is at the center of various learning community programs, including the Michigan Community Scholars Program (Schoem 2001).

12 For my argument on the pedagogical benefits of using journalistic, testimonial, and literary texts in all kinds of political science courses (not just introductory general education courses), see Leaman (2005).
13 Interestingly, my knowledge of Kingsolver’s first book *Holding the Line* came from a conversation with a different English colleague. Kingsolver, of course, has since become much better known as a novelist.

14 Sanders (2000, 211) also reports on the benefits of the interplay of readings in different LC courses.
15 Sanders (2000, 208) argues that participation in LCs can in fact allow political science instructors to ratchet up the intellectual demands of their course (2000, 208) and Thies (2005, 131) suggests that some students may, happily or unhappily, agree.
16 Pre-tests/post-tests have not been comprehensively administered in my department which is why I have results from two, but not all, of my AG-LCs.
ABSTRACT

Longstanding research in political behavior tells us that citizens pay very little attention to politics and, in turn, are not civically engaged. Recent studies on heuristics argue that citizens can make good decisions based on limited information; however, the quality of those decisions is questionable. Notably, and for the purposes of this paper, Lau and Redlawsk (1997; 2006) examine “voting correctly” and find convincing evidence on voters’ ability to match their political preferences to presidential candidates. Nonetheless, questions concerning voter ability remain—such as the possible existence of demographic group variation and whether voting incorrectly is more likely to occur in sub-presidential elections. Based on data from the 1990 and 1992 Senate elections, this study finds that individual characteristics of a political nature, such as political knowledge and ideological extremism, do a far better job of predicting a correct vote than an individual’s demographics.

INTRODUCTION

Two weeks following the 2010 election, the PEW Research Center administered a nationwide poll examining public familiarity with current events. After the Republicans’ historic victories in November, less than half of those surveyed knew that the GOP had taken over the House. This same survey showed that Americans did not know the unemployment rate and few knew who would be the new Speaker of the House. Results such as these are not unusual in American politics. Since the advent of modern polling, political scientists have frequently addressed Americans’ poor understanding of how government works and lack of familiarity with who represents them (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). In addition to low levels of knowledge, evidence also exists that the public is less interested in politics than citizens of earlier generations (Neuman 1986).

A number of concerns arise from the public’s poor knowledge of and interest in politics. At the most basic level, a lack of political knowledge affects the quality of representation because voters may not be able to link their political preferences to candidates who would best represent those preferences (Nicholson, Pantoja, & Segura, 2006). Adding another layer of complication, the public’s poor level of political knowledge is not equally distributed across all groups in society. In fact, research indicates that some groups in American society are consistently less knowledgeable, interested, and engaged (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Galston, 2001). Given this, some individuals and groups may be better able to link their preferences to candidates and, subsequently, better represented in government (Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997).

The ability to link political preferences to candidates is a tall order for any voter. Given the likely absence of complete information, how are voters able to make good decisions at the ballot box? In the 1990s, researchers began to advance the notion that people use information shortcuts, or heuristics, in place of full information to make voting choices (Popkin, 1991; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991; Tetlock, 1991). This means that voters can operate within a complex political world by using simple cues, such as party identification, to develop an opinion or cast a politically representative vote (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Schaffner & Streb, 2002).

This paper examines the link between voters’ political values and beliefs and their selection of U.S. Senate candidates. In particular, I ask whether voters in a Senate election can
use heuristics in place of full information and make the same voting decisions they would make if they were fully informed. I investigate this question by adapting Lau and Redlawsk’s (1997; 2006) correct voting measure to Senate elections. Assessing the “accuracy” of Senate vote choices, I find that voters tend to be less likely to connect their policy positions to Senate candidates than presidential candidates. Further, I find that those who have more extreme ideological views are better able to match their preferences to the candidates. Most importantly, the results indicate that differences in quality voting are independent of a person’s demographic characteristics. This latter finding provides further evidence that all voters are able to successfully use heuristics and vote as if they were fully informed regardless of their demographic background. This contribution is particularly noteworthy because certain groups in society disproportionately engage within American democracy, but these same groups show no difference from others in the quality of the voting decisions they make.

INFORMATION AND VOTING DECISIONS

Pundits and political scientists alike spend a good deal of time discussing the competency levels of voters. Voters are sometimes called “unsophisticated” and “irrational” (Campbell, 1960; Bartels, 2008) while at other times they are described as “ignorant” and “stupid” (Shenkman, 2008). These types of common characterizations are typically the result of surveys that ask basic civic knowledge questions. Even though the American public is more educated now than ever before, they continue to score low on questions pertaining to government operations and American history (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1991; 1996; Galston, 2007). Given this, questions arise in regards to what we ought to expect from the American public. Is the public lazy and irrational for ignoring politics? Perhaps politics is becoming secondary to Americans due to more complex life commitments and decreasing lack of interest in politics (Bennett, 1989).

Democracy’s functionality depends on its citizens’ participation. Arguably, citizens exercise their greatest democratic responsibility during elections. Their performance during elections, however, has been a subject of inquiry for political scientists since the early Columbia and Michigan studies. For instance, Campbell and his coauthors (1960) found that voters are not only mostly uninformed on issues presented by candidates, but also unaware of their own opinion on such issues. And, as more recent research contends, “about half of the electorate continues to think about politics in very limited ways, with only tenuous connections to general ideologies or specific policy controversies” (Lewis-Beck, Jacoby, Norpoth, & Weisberg, 2008, p. 290). While ideally such disengagement and “ignorance” would be equally distributed across society, it is not. When it comes to political knowledge, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) nicely summarize their conclusions on social and demographic groups as:

Groups of citizens vary in knowledge in ways that mirror their standings in the social, political, and economic world, calling into question the fundamental democratic principle of equality among citizens. In particular, women, African Americans, the poor, and the young tend to be substantially less knowledgeable about politics than are men, whites, the affluent, and older citizens. (p. 271)

One might respond to such findings by asking, “so what? Why does it matter that the public is generally uninformed?” To begin, the fact that knowledge is unequally distributed across groups negatively affects the collective political voice of the American public by, for
example, distorting our understanding of public opinion (Althaus, 2003) and the quality of
government representation these groups receive (Swers, 2002). Furthermore, electoral studies
frequently recognize the unequal distribution among demographic groups surrounding voter
turnout and civic engagement (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady,
1995). Because of this group variation, it is argued that government responsiveness is skewed
toward the socially advantaged (Verba et al., 1997). However, a lack of knowledge also affects
voters’ choices on Election Day. For example, Bartels (1996) finds that support for incumbent
presidents and Democratic presidential candidates would actually decrease if the electorate were
fully informed. Thus, we might question whether, given the public’s low levels of knowledge,
voters are selecting candidates that represent their interests.

Some argue that concerns about citizens’ abilities to make “good” voting decisions based
on limited information are exaggerated. Here, it is suggested that the public does not have to be
highly informed about government processes or the issues facing the country, they can instead
rely on information shortcuts, or heuristics, to make good decisions based on limited information
(Tversky & Kahneman, 1982; Popkin, 1991; Sniderman et al., 1991; Tetlock, 1991; Lau &
Redlawsk, 1997; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). According to this view, voters do not need to
know all the details of the candidates and their policy platforms, but they can instead rely on
their party identification or other cues to guide them towards the same vote choice they would
have made if they were fully informed (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001).

Because voters are not fully informed, certain personal characteristics may be used as
cues in their evaluations of candidates. For starters, it makes sense to expect more
knowledgeable individuals to use heuristics accurately (Sniderman et al., 1991). Other
contentions suppose that voters will be more likely to support political candidates with whom
they share demographic characteristics (Dolan, 1998). This is a form of “cognitive bias”
(Tversky & Kahneman, 1982), which proves that identity politics matter in voter evaluations.
Terkildsen (1993) argues that a voter’s race plays a role in the positive and negative evaluation
of candidates based on their race. One underlying theory behind identity politics is that it acts as
a judgment cue for individuals to vote for “someone like them,” independent of one’s party
affiliation (Plutzer & Zipp, 1996). On the other hand, if voters and candidates are of different
backgrounds this may cue personal stereotypes over that of more thoughtful reflections (Devine,
1989). This conclusion recognizes that identity politics matter in voter decision making, but the
quality of these decisions, once again, may not be accurate to one’s political values and beliefs.

What is the extent to which heuristics actually work as a replacement for full
information? Given that the public does not meet the classic textbook definition of a fully
informed citizenry, would voters make the same decisions if they were fully informed? Lau and
Redlawsk’s (1997; 2006) research normatively evaluates the decision making process of voters,
coining the term “voting correctly.” A correct vote is defined as a decision “that is the same as
the choice which would have been made under conditions of full information” and is based on
the “values and beliefs of the individual voter” (Lau & Redlawsk, 1997, p. 586). The difficulty
of determining a “correct” vote is admitted by Lau and Redlawsk (1997) and is worth reiterating
here. Indeed, voters obviously choose the candidates they like, or at least the lesser of two evils.
So, are not all voters voting correctly? They are only doing so if all voters rationally select
candidates who are politically representative of their attitudes and beliefs, a notion this study
does not assume. In a complex world of media politics, where information is frequently
distorted (Lipmann, 1922), we should not simply expect voters’ sincere political beliefs to be
fairly represented in their evaluations of candidates for office. Furthermore, scholars recognize
the limited political interest and cognitive abilities of voters (Lau & Sears, 1986). As such, voting correctly considers voter decision making as it would be under conditions of full information.

Previous literature argues that certain personal characteristics of the voters also factor into the choices they make. Classic political behavior studies recognize individual membership in unions and belonging to the Catholic Church as predictors of vote choices (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948; Campbell et al., 1960). More recently, studies find that personal characteristics of voters, such as gender (King & Matland, 2003) and race (Kam, 2007; Weaver, 2011), are reflected in voter evaluation of candidates. But, are such cues reliable? Racial minorities often share political interests, such as concerns about civil rights and advancement out of economically poor circumstances (Kaufmann, 2003). Do these commonalities translate into consistent patterns of voting correctly for racial minorities, who predominately vote for Democrats? Individual backgrounds of the voters are seen as powerful heuristics that affect their perceptions. While group identification may “make a difference” in voter decision making, we still know little about the quality of these decisions.

Given that some groups are less politically knowledgeable, engaged, and interested, we may expect them to be less likely to vote correctly. But, those proponents of heuristics recognize that political predispositions can be still be accurately exercised in decisions despite low information. These conflicting expectations for voting correctly create a research gap on voter decision making and demographic groups.

DATA AND METHODS

This study focuses on correct voting in Senate elections and utilizes state respondent data from the 1990 and 1992 National Election Studies Senate Election Study. This dataset is widely used to study Senate elections (e.g. Krasno, 1994; Kahn & Kenny, 1999; Sulkin, 2001; Highton, 2006) because of its representative sample of state populations for the 1990 and 1992 Senate elections. For this analysis, these data are also ideal because it includes a large battery of policy position questions.

Much of the data on Senate candidates are collected from content that analyzes a major newspaper in each state with a Senate election. A total of 59 Senate races (118 candidates) constitute the sample considered. I code newspaper coverage of each Senate candidate from September 1 to Election Day. This timeframe generally represents the most intense part of a campaign (Kahn & Kenny, 1999). Appendix A lists the Senate races and newspapers analyzed. This study relies on Senate campaign newspaper coverage for several reasons. First, local newspaper coverage of Senate races provides rich documentation of campaign events. For instance, Mondak (1995) finds that newspaper coverage has informational benefits for voters and can effect decisions based on the quality of coverage. Also, Druckman (2005) finds local newspaper coverage is representative of the topics and debates in the actual campaign (see also, Westlye, 1991). In addition, it is difficult to collect data on the policy positions of Senate candidates, particularly Senate challengers. Although newspapers may not cover political candidates equally in the number of articles published, they nonetheless spend a significant amount of time covering a variety of Senate campaign events such as political debates, speeches, advertisements, and other campaign activities that mention policy positions (Kahn & Kenny, 1999). Finally, this paper builds on previous studies that use newspaper content to understand voter evaluations of Senate candidates (e.g. Kahn, 1991; 1993).
MEASURING A CORRECT VOTE

In order to determine the extent to which voters correctly match their preferences to Senate candidates, I adapt Lau and Redlawsk’s (1997; 2006) correct voting measure. The Senate voting correctly calculation is based on four key components. The first three elements match respondents and the candidates running for Senate in their state based on (1) issue positions, (2) support for the president, and (3) party identification. The other component is respondent job approval ratings of their incumbent Senator (if the incumbent is running for reelection). Taken together, these four assessments result in an overall utility score for the respondents’ political closeness to their state’s Senate candidates.

Each assessment is scaled on an interval between –1 and +1. For example, in the first assessment, agreement with candidates’ policy stances, –1 means the respondent completely disagrees with a candidate’s policy position, while +1 means the respondent completely agrees with a candidate’s policy position. Missing items are scored as 0 (or neutral). The four performance assessments are addressed in more detail below.

Assessment #1: Agreement with Candidates’ Policy Stances

In this assessment I estimate the proximity between the respondents’ and the candidates’ issue preferences. All policy positions elicited in the Senate Election Study are considered in this measure. This equates to a maximum of 21 issues considered for 1990, and up to 23 issues for 1992. Agreements with candidates’ policy stances are incorporated in only those instances where a newspaper covered that particular issue for the candidate. Those articles that mention a candidate’s policy position are recorded using the same scale as the Senate Election Study’s policy questions. These policy questions range from the need for government to increase or decrease funding for certain programs to pro-life and pro-choice views on abortion. If the newspaper does not present a candidate’s stance on a particular issue, it is not included in the assessment.

I calculate the symmetry between the Senate candidates’ issue positions and those of the respondents by using Rabinowitz and MacDonald’s (1989) directional issue effect calculation, \[ \frac{\text{outcome of this equation ranges from } -1 \text{ (opposite viewpoints on an issue between the candidate and the respondent) to } +1} \]. Because issues are of particular importance in terms of the representation of voters’ preferences in government, each issue is included as a separate component in the final calculation of the correct voting measure.

Assessment #2: Presidential Support

A large body of research suggests that citizens’ evaluations of the president are linked to votes for lower political offices. Theories such as the “presidential coattail effect” and “surge and decline hypothesis” predict that presidential approval and congressional election outcomes are intertwined (Campbell, 1960; Erikson, 1988; Mondak, 1990). Indeed, it might be that voters who support the president reward candidates who follow suit. At the same time, voters who disapprove of the president punish candidates who are supportive. Gronke, Koch, and Wilson (2003) conclude that the impact of presidential approval on congressional elections is conditional to the incumbent’s level of support for the president and the administration’s policies. Likewise, I suspect that voter perception of a Senate candidate’s link to the incumbent president is a function of the degree to which the Senate candidate publicly supports the president.

In order to measure citizens’ approval of the president, I use the Senate Election Study’s question, which asks respondents to place their approval of the president on a four point scale (strongly approve, approve, disapprove, strongly disapprove). In order to capture the extent to
which a candidate supports the president, I rely once again on the content of newspaper articles. For the sampled data, these include newspaper articles that may portray, for example, an incumbent Democratic Senator agreeing with President George H.W. Bush on a piece of legislation or attacking his foreign policy. As another example of what is coded, an article may discuss Bush assisting in a fellow Republican’s fundraising campaign to unseat a Democratic incumbent. Each article that linked Bush to a Senate candidate is coded as supportive, neutral, or unsupportive. For each candidate, I create an aggregate measure of presidential support based on their average support of Bush over the course of the campaign. In order to assess the level of agreement between each respondent’s support of the president and that of the Senate candidates in their state, I again use Rabinowitz and MacDonald’s (1989) directional theory of issue voting.

**Assessment #3: Strength of Partisan Attachment**

Party affiliation has a long-standing tradition in explaining how people vote. From an information shortcut perspective, party identification is a simple cue that citizens use when making voting decisions (Schaffner & Streb, 2002). This is particularly true for those who are strong partisans. Thus, it is important to incorporate party identification into the measure of a correct Senate vote. For this particular component, self-identified strong Republicans are coded +1, Republicans are coded as +0.66, and independents with Republican leanings are coded as +0.33 in their evaluations of the Republican candidates. These same Republican partisans are coded as -1, -0.66, and -0.33 respectively in their evaluations of Democratic candidates. This scale is multiplied by -1 for self-identified Democratic respondents and independents are coded as neutral (0).

**Assessment #4: Job Approval of Incumbent Senator**

Studies on voting behavior in presidential elections often incorporate incumbent job approval (see, for example, Finkel, 1993; Abramowitz, 2004). As for studies on Senate campaigns, voters’ views of their incumbent senators are usually disregarded, but recent research argues that performance evaluations of incumbent senators are a key component to understanding voting behavior (Highton, 2008). As such, the Senate voting correctly calculation includes whether respondents strongly approve (+1), approve (+0.5), disapprove (-0.5), or strongly disapprove (-1) of their Senate incumbents’ job performance.

**Final Calculations**

Each respondent has a comprehensive utility score for the Republican and the Democratic candidate based on these four assessments. From these two scores, a respondent is considered as voting correctly, or better matching their preferences to a candidate, if they vote for the candidate with the higher numerical value. Thus, the dependent variable in the analysis is coded as 1 if a respondent voted for the candidate with the higher score and 0 otherwise. Because of the subjectivity of content analyses, a trained undergraduate and graduate student conducted separate content analyses on a random selection of Senate contests. The intercoder reliability scores for the voting correctly measures, based on the separate content analyses, is high (81.2 percent agreement) with a Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficient of 0.73 (Kuder & Richardson, 1937).

**PREDICTORS OF A CORRECT VOTE**

This study examines the extent to which citizens correctly vote based on a variety of demographic and political characteristics. As detailed above, the literature offers two theoretical expectations about demographic groups’ behavior in politics and decision making. Heuristics tell us that ill-informed voters can make decisions as if they were fully informed and political behavior literature tells us that certain demographic groups are less knowledgeable, engaged, and
interested. Below, I examine differences in correct voting based on gender, age, education, and race. Previous studies consistently find that discrepancies in, for example, political sophistication and engagement exist within these groups (Verba et al., 1995; Delli Carpini & Ketter, 1996; Althaus, 2003) which leads to the suggestion of voting correctly discrepancies. In addition, there might be certain political attributes that impact quality voting. I also examine how political interest, party identification, and ideological extremity affect citizens’ ability to connect their preferences to candidates. Those who are interested in the campaign ought to attend more to the information presented in the campaign and thus correctly vote at higher levels. Since ideology is seen as a decision making heuristic for voters, it seems reasonable that those with more extreme ideological tendencies are more likely to vote correctly (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). Appendix B details the measurement of the independent variables.

VOTING CORRECTLY IN SENATE ELECTIONS

In their analysis of presidential elections from 1972 to 2004, Lau, Anderson, and Redlawsk (2008) find that roughly 75 percent of the American public vote correctly, with the largest percentage of the public voting correctly in the 2004 election (85 percent) and the least amount during the 1980 election (51 percent). These results lead the authors to hold an optimistic viewpoint about the public’s ability to make informed decisions. These “high” levels of correct voting in presidential elections are expected due to the fact that presidential campaigns are the most visible and salient in the U.S. (Wolfinger, Rosenstone, & McIntosh, 1981). It would be difficult for any voter not to have at least some exposure to presidential campaigns during such elections because news coverage is typically fixated on the race and advertisements often dominant the television airwaves (especially in swing states). Lau and his coauthors (2008) find that campaign intensity is a predictor of quality voting, leading to the notion that less salient elections, even by nature of the office, may experience less quality voting.

FIGURE 1. VOTING CORRECTLY PERCENTAGES IN SENATE ELECTIONS, 1990-1992

![Graph showing voting correctly percentages in Senate elections, 1990-1992]
The results for the 1990 and 1992 Senate elections support this conclusion. As seen in Figure 1, 67.6 percent of voters act on their sincere political preference in their vote for senator. We may expect lower quality voting during presidential election years because voter attention is heavily skewed toward presidential candidates and the public is less likely to identify who is the best Senate candidate for them. On the other hand, presidential elections increase the political saliency environment as a whole, which may provide information benefits to voters for their evaluations of non-presidential candidates. Neither line of thought is upheld here. In 1992 there is only a slight increase, though not statistically significant, in voting correctly as compared to 1990.11

As mentioned above, demographic groups vary in political knowledge levels and this variation may be linked to how well voters match their preferences to candidates. However, this is not demonstrated in Figure 1. For instance, women have a slightly higher correct voting average (68.3 percent) compared to men (66.8 percent). Furthermore, differences in age and education are minimal. Surprisingly, less educated voters have a higher average of preference matching (71.4 percent) compared to those with more education. It is common knowledge that African Americans overwhelmingly choose Democratic over Republican candidates (Dawson, 1994). It appears that this choice, more often than not, is representative of their political beliefs. African Americans are casting a correct vote at around 82 percent, compared to whites at 66 percent. The comparison in means test on the two races reveals a statistically significant relationship ($F$-value = 7.55; $p < .01$).12 In general, the percentages do not vary greatly amongst most of the groups, particularly in the cases of age, gender, and education. Although we know that demographic groups’ knowledge levels are unequally distributed, at first glance it appears that these differences may not hold up in terms of the quality of their decision on Election Day. The next section empirically analyzes the extent to which differences in voting correctly exist across demographic groups and individual political characteristics.

MODELING CORRECT VOTING

Table 1 presents two models predicting the dependent variable, a correct vote. Model I analyzes the effects of individual characteristics and demographics on quality voting. Model II includes political knowledge as an independent variable, thereby capturing its effects on correct voting.

Overall, after controlling for a race’s competitiveness and including individual political characteristics, the demographic variables in Model I have no significant effect on correct voting. Being female fails to have a negative effect on voting correctly, despite previous studies that frequently show a gender gap among political sophistication trends (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1991; 1996; Verba et al., 1997). While African Americans are voting correctly at a higher percentage, the model finds no effect on race and quality voting. The same can be said of education and age effects. These findings strengthen the argument that differences in demographic group behavior are not universal. That is, we ought not to expect demographic “gaps” or “unequal distributions” across all forms of political behavior. The evidence suggests that the use of heuristics is equally distributed across demographic groups. Simply put, those groups with less knowledge are just as able to link their preferences to candidates as those groups that are more knowledgeable.
What about the effects of other individual characteristics? The strength of one’s ideology is an individual characteristic that has strong roots in political behavior research (Holm & Robinson, 1978) and can easily be seen as a heuristic to assist voters in their decision making process. In the model, those with more extreme ideological views have a stronger likelihood of
voting correctly. This is expected because voters with more extreme ideologies have an “easier” decision making process. In the Downsian (1957) sense, these voters cannot be identified as the “median voter” because they are so far to the left or right of the political spectrum that only one candidate emerges as the closest to them. Political knowledge is included in Model II and also reveals an effect on correct voting. In the employment of certain heuristics, using whatever cues that may exist, evidence in Model II suggests that having higher levels of political knowledge increases a voters’ likelihood of employing those heuristics appropriately (see also Sniderman et al., 1991; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). This expected effect is highlighted further in Figure 2 with predicted probabilities. Holding all other values at their means, those individuals with the highest levels of political knowledge have a 75 percent probability of voting correctly compared to 58 percent for those with the lowest levels of political knowledge. Political interest surprisingly has no effect on correct voting despite the expectation that those individuals who admit to being “interested” in political campaigns are also more likely to match their preferences to the candidates running for office. Overall, the models demonstrate that political attributes do a far better job predicting voting quality compared to demographic characteristics. The unexpected results from Democratic voters seen in Figure 1 and Table 1 deserve some further exploration. The next section dissects the strong relationship seen between Democrats and voting correctly.

FIGURE 2: PREDICTED PROBABILITIES OF VOTING CORRECTLY

Note: Probabilities based on estimates presented in Model II. Estimates determined based on all other values held at the means.

EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS

Surprisingly, Democratic voters have a much higher percentage of voting correctly (75 percent) compared to an alarming low percentage of Republicans (62.3 percent). Similar results can be found in Lau and Redlawsk’s (2006) work as they find that, on average, correct votes for Al Gore were 20 percent higher than for George W. Bush in 2000 and 17 percent higher for Bill Clinton over Bob Dole in 1996. Establishing a concrete theoretical justification for this
phenomenon is difficult, but some discussion of the electoral context in 1990 and 1992 is warranted. First, as mentioned above, the surge and decline (Campbell, 1966) and presidential penalty (Erikson, 1988) hypotheses, for example, expect midterm election losses for the president’s political party. This may have given Democrats more credibility in their issue and character appeals and with their attacks on the Republican party during the 1990 elections. Second, because ideologically extreme voters are more likely to vote correctly, a lack of GOP enthusiasm for the 1992 Bush campaign (Caeser & Busch, 1993) means less conservative voters showing up to the polls, but higher levels of liberal voters turning out to vote for Clinton (Brady, Cogan, Gaines, & Rivers, 1996). Third, the 1992 elections are typically characterized as the Year of the Woman because of the number of female candidates running for congressional offices. Their presence in many Senate elections may act as another ideological heuristic for voters to identify which candidate is best for them (McDermott, 1997). Finally, one could point to Thomas Frank’s What’s the Matter with Kansas? as rationale for Democrats voting more correctly than Republicans. Frank’s (2004) assertion is that the popularity of the modern day Republican party is rooted in their stances on social issues and messages of traditional values over that of their economic concerns. With these thoughts in mind, some further discussion on the issue proximity between the sampled respondents and Senate candidates is warranted.

Following the median voter theorem, candidates adopt those policy positions that represent the average voter (Downs, 1957). Downs’s spatial model places voters on a left-to-right ideological scale and candidates position themselves as close to the median voter as possible. Using this logic, Table 2 lists the average issue positions for the sampled Senate candidates and voters.

The first 14 policy positions focus on government funding for specific policy areas and the corresponding ideological placements of candidates and voters in such areas. Over the past few decades a paradox in explaining American public opinion towards government funded programs has emerged. That paradox revolves around Americans’ favorability towards most government programs, but a lack of interest in paying for such programs. The results seen in Table 2 suggest most Americans have liberal viewpoints on government funding for programs, including those relating to Social Security, the environment, and public schools. Indeed, the table indicates that voters hold liberal viewpoints on a vast majority of government funding areas. Of those 14 government funding programs listed, only 4 areas (food stamps, foreign aid, war on drugs, and the space program) tend to elicit more conservative views. Again, this finding is not unique, for public opinion data consistently finds that the average voter is liberal on most federal government expenditures. From this, one may ask, if voters are generally liberal on federal government programs, why are many voters supporting political candidates who are more conservative on such matters? This question is not necessarily new to researchers, and some even extend the question to why voters are unwilling to pay taxes for government programs they support (Welch, 1985).

The data included in this study considers some social issues echoed by Frank (2004) in his justification for voters supporting Republican candidates. Of the social policies considered, three address abortion and another addresses the death penalty. Table 2 reveals that Republican candidates are slightly closer to voters on death penalty views and government funding for abortions, but they are around equidistant to Democratic candidates on parental consent for abortions and pro-life/pro-choice abortion views. Thus, we should look at the proximity of other issues to determine why Republicans are voting incorrectly. Here, the data suggests that of those 12 issues mentioned the most in the sample, voters, for a majority of these issues, are closer to
the Democratic candidates. Specifically, when we consider only those issues that are discussed the most in newspaper articles, Republicans are closer to voters on only 4 issues while Democrats are closer to voters on 8 issues. This means that of those salient issues addressed in 1990 and 1992, Democrats are closer to the voters’ issue positions than Republicans. Therefore, the sampled time period must be considered when determining if votes for Republicans are more likely to be incorrect. In electoral environments where GOP strengths are the dominant issues of the day (Jacobson, 2003), votes for Democrats may more likely be incorrect.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

America is typically characterized as a representative democracy serving the “will of the people,” but what if a relatively large sector of the electorate is not casting votes that best represent the voters’ own political predispositions? As President John Kennedy once stated, "the ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all." The results found in this study shed some light on Kennedy’s concern and are not without previous support (Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1964; Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996). Compared to presidential elections, this study finds that voting correctly is less likely in Senate elections. With a host of unsalient state and local elections presented to voters every Election Day, the potential for an even greater number of incorrect votes is likely.

However, this study also finds that the “accurate” use of heuristics does not correspond with certain demographic segments of the population. Specifically, the lack of politically representative vote choices is not a byproduct of demographics, but one of a more political nature. Individuals who hold strong ideological opinions and keep up-to-date on politics are those who perform the best at the ballot box, regardless of a person’s gender, age, or education level. With other political phenomena remaining to be explored, such as campaign related variables germane to the sub-presidential level, a greater understanding of heuristics working at the ballot box remains for future research. Specifically, it makes sense for voters to gain informational benefits from campaign stimuli, such as advertisements and news coverage. In addition, races with two quality candidates with previous experience in politics should increase levels of politically representative vote choices. Arguably, these campaign effects are expected because individual social characteristics are not strong predictors of voting correctly, unlike political knowledge, interest, and awareness.

Future research may also explore what heuristic cues lead to stronger levels of voting correctly. As discussed earlier, the fact that the congressional elections of 1992 were characterized as the Year of the Woman may have led women voters who voted for a female Democratic candidate to make an easy, accurate decision at the ballot box (McDermott, 1997). Similar behavior is seen by African-American voters (Bullock, 1984). However, it could be hypothesized that more polarized candidates send ideological cues to voters that improves their decision making process. The logic here is that when candidates are more polarized, they are easier to distinguish on issues. If voters are sorting themselves out along polarized caps like candidates and other political elites (Levendusky, 2009), than voting correctly ought to increase as well. With the wealth of literature that recognizes the use, and normative value of informational shortcuts in campaigns, there remains room for greater exploration on the accuracy of shortcuts and what individual and campaign related characteristics increase their accuracy.
### Table 2. Average Senate Candidate and Voter Issue Positions, 1990–1992

<table>
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<th># Candidate Mentions</th>
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<td>Funding for Unemployment Assistance</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Funding for Fighting AIDS</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for Child Care</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>31</td>
</tr>
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<td>Funding for the War on Drugs</td>
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<td>♻</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Funding for Space Program</td>
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○ — Dem.  ● — GOP  ☼ — Voter
REFERENCES


**APPENDIX A. STATE NEWSPAPERS CODED AND DATA SOURCES**

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APPENDIX B. MEASUREMENT OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

- **Age** is coded as a respondent being (1) between the ages of 17-29, (2) between the ages of 30-49, (3) between the ages of 50-69, and (4) 69 and above.
- **African American** is coded as (1) African American and (0) other.
- **Female** is coded as (1) female and (0) male.
- **Education** is coded as (1) no high school degree, (2) high school graduate, (3) some college, (4) college degree, and (5) post-graduate.
- **Political Interest** is measured as a respondent who is (3) very much interested in political campaigns, (2) somewhat interested in political campaigns, and (1) not much interested in political campaigns.
- **Political Knowledge** is measured from a battery of questions that address the ideological location of the president, the ideological differences between the two parties, and the specific names of their senators.
- **Democrat** is coded as (1) self-identified Democrat (including independents with Democratic leanings) and (0) all other identifiers.
- **Competitiveness** is based on the CQ Weekly Report’s election forecast. Senate races are coded as (1) safe, (2) likely towards one party, (3) leans towards one party, and (4) toss-up.
- **Year** is coded as (0) for 1990 and (1) for 1992.

NOTES

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Indiana Political Science Association. The author would like to thank Scott McClurg, Carly Schmitt, Elizabeth Bennion, Drew Seib, Scott Comparato, Steve Roper, Richard Lau, David Redlawsk, John Pearson, Nicole Bailey, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and feedback. He also thanks Marsha Wright for her research assistance and Indiana State University’s Center for Instruction, Research, and Technology for their technical assistance. Any errors remain the responsibility of the author.


3 The groups considered in this paper are based on gender, race, age, and education. As one reviewer recognized, “low” and “high” levels of political participation among these groups cannot be easily argued due to group variations in the host of specific actions that may be considered political participation and the interconnected relationship between, for example, gender, race, age, and education.

4 Data from newspaper articles are gathered from three different sources. First, candidates from 44 Senate elections are coded from newspapers archived in the online databases Lexis-Nexis and Newsbank. Some states do not have newspapers with a publicly available internet database dating back to the early 1990s. In these cases, 15 races total, microfilm copies of the newspapers are used. In total, the content analysis provides a total of 2,313 articles that mentions at least one policy position for at least one of the candidates in the 59 Senate races considered.

5 See Lau and Redlawsk’s Appendix (1997: 595-597) for an explanation on the calculation for presidential elections. Due to data availability and the nature of Senate elections compared to presidential elections, some alterations to the measurement of voting correctly are needed. This should not be a cause for concern because previous analyses of voting correctly also alter the measure in efforts to improve upon it (Lau, Anderson, & Redlawsk, 2008).
See Table 2 for the list of issues coded along with the average placement of the Democratic candidates, Republican candidates, and voters.

In those cases where multiple articles placed candidates at different viewpoints, the average placement of the candidate is used. Variation in viewpoints may be the result of newspapers presenting different information on the campaign (Dalton, Beck, & Huckfeldt, 1998) or candidates may have inconsistent viewpoints.

The equation is multiplied by four simply to scale the numerical output between -1 and +1. The neutral point is 0.5.

This method is consistent with Lau and Redlawsk’s (1997; 2006) measurement. These evaluations are also weighted equally. Previous voting correctly calculations explore adding weights to certain evaluations and find little difference in the results when considering, for example, single-issue voters (see R. Lau’s data availability at www.votingcorrectly.com). Also, Lau et al. (2008) explore further alternatives to weighting and find little difference in their performance.

They argue that the low results in 1980 are a consequence of a viable third candidate.

\[ \chi^2 = 1.24, \text{ df } = 1, \text{ p. } = .27. \]

Adjusted Wald test used to control for clusters in means tests.

When modeling this hypothesis with the specifications seen in Model II, a positive coefficient emerges for women voting correctly compared to men in those races where a Democratic female Senate candidate is present. However, the effect does not reach traditional levels of statistical significance (p. < .12).

This argument is not without its critics. While Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder (2006) find some evidence of moral value voting, they find greater strength and consistency in economic based voting (see also, Bartels, 2006; Gelman, Park, Shor, & Cortina, 2008).

It is expected that these viewpoints vary through time. Salient issues of the day change from election year to election year and national events sway public opinion in different directions. For instance, both voters and candidates for office (Republicans and Democrats) held fairly liberal viewpoints towards defense spending in 1990 and 1992. This makes sense for two reasons. One, the end of the Cold War sparked a new debate on reforming the Defense Department away from battling the Soviet Union and communism. Second, budget deficit concerns emerged during the early 1990s and the Defense Department was frequently targeted as a major expenditure that could easily be cut to help balance the federal budget. Republicans drastic movement to more liberal stances on defense spending during this time period fits within Downs’s (1957) theory of candidate movement to the median voter. At other points in time, such as the early 1980s (Bartels, 1991) and the mid-2000s (Kam & Kinder, 2007), public opinion has taken a more conservative approach to national defense and favored increased spending.

Cheap, But Still Not Effective: An Experiment Showing that Indiana’s Online Registration System Fails to Make Email an Effective Way to Register New Voters

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ABSTRACT
We conducted a randomized voter registration field experiment including 7,366 trackable students at a public Indiana university. Consistent with prior research, we found no effect from emails linking students to traditional downloadable forms. Contrary to our hypothesis, Indiana’s new online voter registration system did not boost the effectiveness of email outreach in generating new registrations.

INTRODUCTION
Voter registration is a prerequisite for most electoral participation in the 40 states where voters are required to register before Election Day in order to be eligible to cast a vote. Among eligible citizens, only 60 percent vote in Presidential elections (40 percent in midterm elections). Among people registered to vote turnout is roughly 90 percent vote in presidential elections (75 percent in midterm elections). Over 60% of the eligible citizens who do not vote are also unregistered. Many of these unregistered persons would not vote if given the opportunity, but the bureaucratic burden prevents a subset from voting (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 2004), perhaps as much as eight percent of the population (Hanmer, 2009). Thus, processes that can make registration easier should have the normatively desirable outcome of increasing participation rates. This manuscript reports the results of an experiment testing the effectiveness of linking people to online voter registration sites at increasing rates of registration.

The Internet has made a wide range of activities easier for voters. Information on candidates, ballot propositions, election dates, and polling places are readily available online. The Internet also facilitates participation by reducing the logistical hassles of donating to and volunteering with campaigns. Can the Internet be used to increase rates of voter registration? Extant research offers mixed conclusions. The positive correlation between political engagement online and offline behavior (Tolbert and Mcneal, 2003) led some scholars to believe that once the “digital divide” narrowed, the Internet would bring new people into politics (Krueger 2002). However, more recent research suggests that the Internet simply reinforces existing patterns of participation (Smith et al. 2009) where people with a high propensity to participate simply replace offline activities with online activities (Quintelier and Vissers, 2008; Bochsler, 2009). Specifically with regards to voter registration, two large field experiments found that emailing eligible citizens links to on-line voter registration tools, actually decreased rates of voter registration (Nickerson, 2007a, b; Bennion, 2008; Bennion and Nickerson, 2010). Thus, despite enormous gains in efficiency from online transactions (Barreto et al., 2010), the online tools are an unpromising means of increasing participation.

However, technologies improve and organizations become adept at taking advantage of new tools. Recently eight states, including Indiana, have passed laws allowing the voter registration process to take place entirely online, obviating the need for downloading, printing,
and mailing registration forms. In announcing the new online voter registration system on June 29, 2010, Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita stressed the importance of using “tools and technologies Hoosiers use everyday” to make the voting proves “simpler and more convenient” and to help local election administrators to “better serve voters” while cutting costs and “enhancing accessibility, accuracy and security” (Rokita, 2010).

Perhaps the online registration system will also increase registration rates and make online outreach to potential voters effective where prior technologies failed (see Figure 1). This experiment explicitly tests this hypothesis by targeting nearly over 7,000 subjects at an Indiana university where fully online voter registration (OLVR) is an option and randomly assigning them to: (a) receive an email linking to the online registration system; (b) receive an email linking to the more common “downloadable form”; or (c) receive no contact from the researcher (control group). After the registration deadline closed, subjects in all three treatment conditions were matched against a state voter file. Random assignment assures any systematic differences in rates of voter registration among the subjects are attributable to the email.

FIGURE 1. COMPARISON OF VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR DOWNLOADABLE FORMS AND ONLINE REGISTRATION

Consistent with prior research (Bennion and Nickerson, 2010), we find no effect from emails linking to traditional downloadable forms. More discouraging is the fact that Indiana’s new online registration system did not increase the effectiveness of email outreach at registering new voters. Based on earlier research on the effectiveness of classroom-based registration in producing new registrants and voters (Bennion, 2008/2009; Bennion and Nickerson, 2013), we conclude that colleges and universities seeking to register their students should pursue face-to-face strategies (e.g. classroom-based registration) rather than technology-mediated approaches (e.g. email).

DESIGN

To gain reliable insight on the causal effect of adopting a fully online voter registration system, the ideal study would assign OLVR to randomly selected states and compare changes in
subsequent rates of voter registration among key populations. For obvious logistical and ethical reasons, this type of experiment can only performed as a thought exercise and not implemented. The next best form of data would be an experiment where randomly selected eligible citizens within a state were allowed to register online and the remainder of the populace was forced to rely on traditional forms of registration. Again, ethical and practical challenges make this experiment impossible to conduct. However, an experiment randomly varying a person’s awareness of online registration as an option and ease of access can be conducted. If subjects with increased awareness and access to online tools are more likely to participate, the experiment would provide solid evidence that OLVR can actually increase rates of voter registration.

This experiment used email communication as a means of increasing awareness and access to OLVR. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions. First, subjects could be sent email encouraging registration and providing a link to the Secretary of State OLVR site. Subjects were sent two emails encouraging participation in the weeks leading up to the registration deadline. The text of the OLVR emails is included in Appendix A. Second, subjects could be sent email encouraging registration and providing a link to the downloadable form from the Secretary of State website. The sender, text and schedule for sending the download email was identical to the OLVR email. The only difference between the two treatments was the link provided in the email. Thus, a subject’s propensity to open the email and click on the link should be identical across the two treatments. The only difference between the two treatments is whether the subject was connected to the fully online registration system or the downloadable form. The third treatment condition was being sent no email related to the experiment. The inclusion of this (control group) condition allows the experiment to estimate the baseline propensity to register to vote and determine whether either of the other two treatments successfully motivated subjects to register.

For the purposes of studying online voter registration, email is the perfect medium to apply the treatment. Email may be less effective than phone calls (Nickerson, 2005) or door knocks (Green, Gerber, and Nickerson, 2003) at increasing voter turnout (Nickerson, 2007a), but it is the most convenient way of getting subjects to a website. Using either a phone call or a door knock, the subject would have to receive the treatment, walk to a computer, and type in the URL to get to the website. This temporal distance makes compliance with the treatment much less likely. In contrast, subjects opening the email can simply click on the link provided and be instantly sent to the website. So while email is often thought of as a weak treatment, it is one of the strongest possible treatments for establishing the effectiveness of OLVR.

Rigorous randomized experiments require a well-defined subject population where the treatments can be randomly assigned and administered correctly and the outcome can be measured for all subjects regardless of treatment assignment. Voter mobilization experiments use lists of registered voters to create this subject population (e.g., Gerber and Green, 2000), but voter registration is a challenge to study because a definitive list of unregistered persons does not exist. This experiment creates this well-defined list of subjects to be targeted for registration by using a university’s student directory. Student enrollment files have both logistical and substantive advantages.

Logistically, student directories are excellent for the purposes of studying registration because it has nearly all the data needed to conduct the study. Directory information usually includes full name including middle initial, date of birth, and often a local and a permanent mailing address. This information creates a unique profile and allows for accurate matching against voter files to collect the dependent variable (i.e., registration status). The fact that
students enrolled in classes roughly a month prior to the voter registration deadline also means that the information is extremely accurate. Furthermore, every enrolled student has an email address, so student directories facilitate the delivery of the treatment. Thus, student directories provide an excellent source of subjects for voter registration experiments.

Students are also an interesting population to study with regards to voter mobilization. College students are generally young and less likely than older citizens to have developed a habit of voting (Plutzer, 2002; Bendor, Diermeier, and Ting, 2003; Green, Green, and Shachar, 2003; Fowler, 2006). Gains in participation at a young age usually translate into greater participation in the future. College students also need to register with greater frequency than most citizens. College students are geographically mobile and are extremely likely to have moved in the recent past, necessitating re-registration (Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass, 1987). College students also fall into many of the demographic categories associated with low levels of electoral participation: young (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980), disinterested in politics (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995), and unlikely to watch or read much political news (Wattenberg, 2007).

Pragmatically, the federal government has mandated that colleges and universities make an effort to register students. To make this policy effective, government officials and universities must distinguish between useless gestures and effective methods for registering student voters. Thus, student directories provide not only a logistically convenient population, but also an interesting one.

College students are also an interesting population to study with regard to email and online registration tactics because they are more reliant on and frequent users of e-mail and the Internet relative to other age cohorts (Tedesco, 2006). Many U.S. colleges and universities have also made email the university’s “official” mode of communication with students. For example, Indiana University’s policy states: “Email shall be considered an appropriate mechanism for official communication by Indiana University with IU students unless otherwise prohibited by law. The University reserves the right to send official communications to students by email with the full expectation that students will receive email and read these emails in a timely fashion.”

E-mail has not been found to be effective at boosting voter turnout (Nickerson, 2007a), but college students should be the population most responsive to e-mail and Internet appeals. Moreover, despite the media depiction of email as a “dying” technology, studies have actually found that students are more likely to use email than instant messaging and online chat rooms to contact people known to them offline. Although texting and social networking are favorites for socializing online, email is still the most frequently used form of technology for task-related communication (Recchiutti, 2003). USA Today published an article in 2006 entitled, “E-mail has become the new snail mail” as younger set goes with text messaging,” and the Wall Street Journal published “Why e-mail no longer rules” three year later. Yet, studies find that increased use of social media drives increased use of email. Moreover, even non-social-media users are using email more than in the past, and people use email more as they get older (Stewart, 2009). Although it is well documented that teens do not use email often, the largest uptick in email use occurs when students enter college and then continues as these student graduate and enter the workforce (Stewart, 2009). If e-mail messages encouraging registration and driving traffic to Web-based registration tools will work for any population, it should be college students.

The experiment described in this manuscript took place at a public, four-year, regional comprehensive university in Indiana. Directory data was provided by the Registrar, upon approval of the Institution Review Board and university legal counsel. Voter registration was
ascertained by matching student directories to official voter files. Matches were made using first
name, middle name, last name, address, and age.

The campus was eager to test the effectiveness of e-mail for boosting voter registration
because email delivery complies with federal requirements and is inexpensive to implement. The
author consulted the local Information Technology office to guarantee successful delivery and
avoid internal spam filters and tracked the email messages sent on campus by placing her own
email address at the end of each treatment group. Using an Excel spreadsheet, every student
received two messages from the PI before the Fall 2010 voter registration deadline. The message
was from a university email address and contained only his or her own name in the recipient line.
The analysis that follows relies on the assignment to treatment conditions and evaluates the
overall effectiveness of the campaign to raise registration rates. In other words, it measures
return on investment for a campus that promotes registration via email outreach combined with
an online registration system.

RESULTS

Because randomization assures comparability across treatment conditions, unbiased
estimates of the effect of the two treatment emails on voter registration rates can be derived by
simply comparing the mean rates of voter registration across treatment conditions. Table 1
provides the voter registration rates for the control group and two treatment groups for all
students in the experiment. The estimated intent-to-treat effect for students receiving an email
encouraging them to register with a link to a printable registration form is a statistically
insignificant -0.9 percentage points (s.e. = .01). Essentially, the experiment confirms that
emailing links to downloadable registration forms does not increase participation rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Download</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Download Effect</th>
<th>Online Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IUSB</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[2,456]</td>
<td>[2,454]</td>
<td>[2,456]</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in brackets report number of subjects.
Numbers in parentheses report standard errors.
Effects are not statistically significant.

The picture is not much better for the treatment emails linking directly the online
registration sites (see Table 1). Linking students to the online registration system increased
registration by a statistically insignificant 1.6 percentage points (s.e. = .01). In other words, for
every 100,000 students emailed a link to the Secretary of State’s online registration site, would
generate only one new registrant who would have otherwise remained unregistered. This
treatment effect is not statistically different from zero. Thus, we can conclude that email driving
traffic to Indiana’s online voter registration site was ineffective at increasing rates of voter
registration. In other words, contrary to the hypothesis that the logistical burdens of printing,
completing, and mailing a printable registration form made email outreach ineffective, it seems
that email outreach itself is an ineffective way to boost registration rates, even with the
streamlined process enabled by the change in state law.
Table 2 isolates the effects of the experiment on those previously unregistered to vote. This analysis confirms the findings state above, while providing additional support that downloadable forms may actually have a negative effect on successful registration. When limiting the analysis to students without a previous voter history, the estimated intent-to-treat effect for students receiving an email encouraging them to register with a link to a printable registration form is a statistically significant -0.049 percentage points (s.e. = 0.017). Essentially, the experiment confirms that emailing links to downloadable registration forms does not increase participation rates. In addition, it adds (limited) support to Bennion and Nickerson’s (2010) contention that email outreach using printable, mail-able registration forms might actually decrease registration rates as students who would otherwise stop by registration tables or participate in campus-wide registration campaigns put off registration knowing that they have the form and information required on their computer and planning to register at a later time – a time that never comes.

**TABLE 2. RESULTS FOR REGISTRATION LEVELS – NOT PREVIOUSLY REGISTERED ONLY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Download</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Download Effect</th>
<th>Online Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IUSB</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>-0.049*</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[4022]</td>
<td>[3984]</td>
<td>[4036]</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in brackets report number of subjects.
Numbers in parentheses report standard errors.* result is statistically significant; p = 0.003

The analysis of previously unregistered voters also confirms the finding regarding the ineffectiveness of the online registration system to generate new registrations when paired with email outreach (see Table 2). Linking students to the online registration system decreased registration by a statistically insignificant 0.8 percentage points (s.e. = 0.017). In other words, for every 100,000 previously unregistered student emailed a link to the Secretary of State’s online registration site, would disenfranchise two students who might have otherwise registered as part of a campus-wide registration campaign. However, this treatment effect is not statistically different from zero. In sum, Indiana’s online voter registration site was ineffective at increasing rates of voter registration. In other words, contrary to the hypothesis that the logistical burdens of printing, completing, and mailing a printable registration form made email outreach ineffective, it seems that email outreach itself is an ineffective way to boost registration rates, even with the streamlined process enabled by the change in state law.

**DISCUSSION**

This study has several important implications. First, this experiment establishes the ineffectiveness of email outreach, even when combined with online registration systems. Prior email campaigns linking to downloadable registration forms showed no effect whatsoever (or even a negative effect, see Bennion and Nickerson, 2010). Here we replicate that earlier finding and reject the hypothesis that a fully online registration system could reverse these results, making email a cheap and effective way to register new voters. According to this study, one does
not appreciably increase registration rates by linking to the state’s OLVR site. Replication of this study on other campuses and in other states will further establish this finding.

Second, this experiment suggests that arguments for online registration systems should be based on improved accuracy, efficiency, accessibility, and cost savings rather than on increased participation in the electoral process. The marginal cost of sending an email is trivial compared to the expense of distributing flyers or sending canvassers into the field. However, email, while cheap, was not efficient in increasing registration rates. Neither providing a direct link to a printable PDF form nor a link to a fully online registration system increased registration. Downloadable forms force the citizen to incur the expense of paper, ink, envelopes and stamps, whereas submitting a form online costs the citizen nothing other than time. However, even the logistical ease of the online system did not promote registration. From the perspective of the Board of Elections, the fully online voter registration system is markedly cheaper than traditional paper forms. For example, a 2010 study in Arizona found that processing each paper registration form costs $0.83 in staff time, whereas each registration submitted online costs only $0.03 (Barreto et al. 2010). While implementing OLVR might save money on registrations process, reduce staff time and redundancy in transferring information from paper forms to the electronic voter file, and improve the accuracy of the voter file, it does not, in itself, generate an increase in voter registration rates.

Although online voter registration systems may save the state money and might become part of a larger strategy to educate and register voters, they do not, by themselves, increase registration rates. Citizens seem unwilling to respond to email messages intoning them to register to vote. Citizens seem unwilling to print and mail forms, or even to take the time required to consult their driver’s license, enter their license number, and follow the brief steps required to register online.

For this reason, third party registration is still needed to make sure that eligible voters are not disenfranchised. A third implication of this study’s findings is that public agencies like the Department of Motor Vehicles should automate the registration process so that the client only needs to sign the form and hand it back (rather than return the form later). The 1993 National Voter Registration Act required that registration materials be made available (and accepted) when citizens apply for driver’s licenses or public assistance. However, the law places no requirements on how registration forms are administered or accepted and government offices vary considerably in implementation. A standardized procedure where the information already in the database (i.e., name, address, date of birth, etc.) is used to print a completed form that the citizen need only sign and return to the agent would reduce nearly all the physical and psychological transaction costs associated with registering to vote with very limited increase on the demands of the public agencies.

Finally, this study has implications for colleges and universities. Higher education institutions committed to civic engagement should focus on face-to-face approaches to voter registration. Registration tables and classroom-based registration are proven to increase registration rates among college students. In contrast, technology-based solutions, particularly email outreach, is ineffective in getting new voters on the rolls and giving them the power to get engaged on Election Day.

REFERENCES


Internet economics: A thinker’s guide. 2000. The Economist, April 1, 64–66.


**APPENDIX A**

Text from treatment emails

**MESSAGE #1**

Subject line: REGISTER TO VOTE NOW. Online link provided.

Politicians ignore issues college students care about because too many college students do not vote. I urge you to vote in the upcoming national election. To vote you need to first be registered.

It’s easy to register to vote. Just click on this link and you can register in [STATE] right now!

[LINKED WEB ADDRESS]

Remember, the DEADLINE to register to vote in [STATE] is [DATE].
If you don’t register, you won’t be able to vote this year.

Let the politicians hear your voice. Please vote. Register today.

**MESSAGE #2**

Subject line: Time is running out to register to vote! Click URL to register.

Politicians pay attention to citizens who vote. They are not likely to care much about the issues of college students who do not vote.
Our democracy depends on voters. Our democracy depends on you voting. Are you registered to vote? You can register in [STATE] right now. Just click on this link and you can register to vote.

[LINKED WEB ADDRESS]

If you don’t register by [DATE], you can’t vote this year.

Get engaged, get registered to vote and then make your voice heard by voting in the national election.

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1 The authors would like to thank the Office of Research at Indiana University South Bend for their financial support of this project and our larger series of randomized field experiments.


4 A project coordinator on each campus sent the email messages to ensure that all email messages were from internal email addresses. This should increase the likelihood that students trust the sender and open the message.

5 A 1998 amendment to the Higher Education Act requires all campuses receiving federal funding to provide registration forms to all enrolled students.

6 The voter file was maintained by Catalist, which collects official state voter files, performs maintenance on the file (e.g., resolving duplicates), and cross-checks the information with available consumer databases.

7 Name, address, and date of birth are considered directory information and are not considered “private” data under FERPA. However, some institutions, including the one featured in this experiment, have elected to designate date of birth as “private” data which cannot be shared with anybody off campus (or people on campus who do not need this information for specific, legitimate purposes related to their assigned duties). For this reason, age groups were provided to help distinguish between people (e.g. parent and child) with the same name and address.
ABSTRACT
Our study seeks to investigate how nonprofits mobilize Latino residents in Indianapolis, and how linkages are created with local political parties. Through this analysis we seek to provide implications for how public policy may be shaped by the growing emergence of nonprofit organizations as tools of civic engagement, beyond voting. This form of immigrant assimilation (linkages) is often either overlooked or at best minimized in the civil society literature. It takes the backseat to more transparent forms of assimilation and acculturation, i.e., socio-economic and educational models of assimilation. We seek to examine what (if any) strategies, state and local political parties and nonprofits are utilizing to not only attract these new members of the electorate, but also embed a sense of civic-engagement not only at the ballot box but beyond elections.

INTRODUCTION
The growth of the Latino population in recent years in the Midwest (specifically Indianapolis for this study) has created a tremendous opportunity for nonprofit organizations and civic-based groups to act as linkage mechanisms to local and state political parties in order to mobilize potential voters and party activists. In this study, the definition of Latinos or Hispanics are those persons permanently living in Indianapolis and whose ancestry can be traced to any of the Spanish-speaking countries of North, South or Central America (Barreto, 2007). As Barreto (2007) notes, this definition of Latinos is consistent with most scholarly research. Thus, this study will specifically investigate how nonprofits, churches and civic-based groups are serving as linkages to local political parties in Indianapolis, and their subsequent efforts at reaching out and mobilizing the Latino population. We will also include data on various dimensions or behaviors associated with participation in the political process. Dimensions include voting patterns, campaign activities, political party activism and campaign donations. However, the choice of mobilization strategies is heavily dependent on “action through and reliance on pre-established community and other association networks” (Bartolini, 2007: 13). After all, voluntary civic organizations are part of what Robert Putnam (2000) calls “schoolrooms of democracy.” In our study, we operationalize mobilization as the number of voters a particular nonprofit was able to register.

We decided to generally cluster the various groups of Latinos in Indianapolis under one “umbrella.” We decided this is the most appropriate route given the 9.3% (2010 U.S. Census Bureau) Hispanic or Latino population of Indianapolis. However, a limitation of such a small Latino population means that the linkage between non-profits and political participation will probably only provide baseline data for our study. Half of the Latino population of Indianapolis has arrived in the last eight years (The Indianapolis Hispanic Study, 2000). The Mexican subgroup is the largest with about 2.7% of the total Latino population residing in Indianapolis. However, we acknowledge that as the Latino population increases in Indianapolis, it will be necessary for us to differentiate Mexicans vis-à-vis Puerto Ricans vis-à-vis Cubans and so on to discern any nuances in terms of nonprofits, civic groups and political party linkages.

In light of the huge influx of Latino immigrants within the U.S. in general and most
recently within the Midwest, the viability of political parties in the 21st century in Midwestern cities will depend upon their ability to mobilize Latino voters. The numbers speak for themselves with regard to the huge influx of Latinos residing in Midwestern cities over the past 10 years. Indianapolis exhibited the largest percentage growth in Latinos over the past year of any U.S. city (Indiana Business Center, 2006), and subsequently Kentucky experienced its largest percentage growth in the number of Latino residents from 1990 to 2010, and subsequently has one of the fastest growing Latino populations in the U.S. (Census Bureau, 2010). Moreover, an area of research which has been overlooked is the impact of increasing numbers of Latinos moving into suburban America. Jones-Correa (2002: 3) suggests that the “suburbanization of politics” with the increasing numbers of immigrants holds the possibility of racial and class conflicts. This area of research has “…not been studied by urban ethnographers and political scientists” (Andersen and Cohen, 2005: 191).

Our study seeks to investigate how nonprofits mobilize Latino residents in Indianapolis, and how linkages are created with local and perhaps state political parties. Through this analysis we seek to provide implications for how public policy may be shaped by the growing emergence of nonprofit organizations as tools of civic engagement, beyond voting. This form of immigrant assimilation is often either overlooked or at best minimized in the civil society literature. It takes the backseat to more transparent forms of assimilation and acculturation, i.e., socio-economic and educational models of assimilation and acculturation. We seek to examine what (if any) strategies, state and local political parties and nonprofits are utilizing to not only attract these new members of the electorate, but also embed a sense of civic-engagement not only at the ballot box but beyond elections.

BACKGROUND

First, our research addresses salient questions that have not (or have not been fully addressed) been dealt with by previous research. Targeted groups (e.g., Latinos and Asian Americans) have generally not been the main focus of nonprofit sector research. However, there is a plethora of research focusing on the salience of the nonprofit sector in providing goods and services which are traditionally provided by the government via the legislative process, especially at the federal level. Nonprofits are playing an increasingly prominent role in delivering basic public goods and services. However, nonprofits have been generally prohibited by federal law to directly advocate for goods and services on Capitol Hill. For example, as Berry and Arons (2005) have suggested, lobbying restrictions should be eased so that nonprofits can become more directly involved in the federal legislative process. This type of involvement will widen the pluralist and more specifically civil society notion, which undeniably nurtures democratization.

Moreover, in general, in recent years, political parties have simply ignored (or marginalized) these newly arrived immigrants. Furthermore, political parties have relied on community groups to perform these civic inculcation functions (United Way of Central Indiana/Community Service Council, 2000; Freedman and Johnson, 2002; Andersen and Cohen, 2005). Tocqueville (1840) and more recently, Berger and Neuhaus (1977) understood the salience of institutions or organizations playing a pivotal role in democratic consolidation. Robert Putnam has posited that “members of associations are much more likely than nonmembers to participate in politics...and express social trust” (Putnam, 1995: 73). Additionally, Putnam theorized that nonprofit membership is good for society in general because it engenders a kind of generalized trust, which in turn facilitates even more positive cooperative
linkages. According to the Nonprofit Almanac (2001) the number of adults that volunteered for a nonprofit between 1989 and 1998 increased from 98.4 million to 109.4 million. In addition, 70 percent of Americans donate money to nonprofits every year; the total annual contributions for all Americans being $132 billion. A majority of early American institutions, such as schools and hospitals, were founded by religious institutions with missions to serve the poor and underserved as well as to foster a spirit of community. These values also have become a part of the secular philosophy of the country and provide the impetus for many social service programs.

Latinos are more likely (Formicola, Segers, and Weber, 2003) to attend and participate in churches than most Americans, as well as being more willing to support programs offered by many nonprofits, especially human services. Additionally, there are close to 18,000 Latino evangelical churches (membership of approximately 15 million born again/evangelical Christians) in the United States (National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC) website). One of the many goals of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference according to its leader, the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, is “to foster greater political engagement by Latinos, whose turnout at the polls has often disappointed.” In the buildup to the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election Day, the NHCLC organized voter-registration drives, hosted candidate forums and issued a “Latino Christian manifesto” of core Hispanic values (Campo-Flores, 2008: 86).

Latinos in general share the same enthusiasm for nonprofits, especially religious-based involvement within the political realm. Formicola, Segers, and Weber (2003) detail how President George W. Bush Administration’s Community and Faith Based Initiative exhibited considerable appeal for Latinos who were somewhat more willing to embrace the intermingling of religion and government than many Americans. In light of Latino voters’ tendency to not “fit” neatly into the traditional political platforms of neither the Democratic or Republican Party, therein is a dilemma. That is, Latinos generally align with Republicans on religious involvement in government and issues of morality, yet part with most Republicans with regard to governmental spending on social services and immigration issues. Subsequently, in order to galvanize the support of a growing number of Latino voters, voter mobilization strategies must reflect necessary transformations of mainstream (and fringe) political activity at the organizational level. However, mobilization of Latino voters involves more than simply “pandering” to the “community” or simply registering voters. Mobilization includes both political parties supporting Latino candidates for elected office. Such candidacy support not only bolsters Latino civic-engagement, but it also helps mobilize non-Latino candidates, which means increased competition, which nurtures democracy. A cogent, recent empirical study (Barreto 2007) illustrates that ethnicity is quite salient for Latino voters, and in turn plays an empowering role for co-ethnic candidates. Moreover, Sanchez (2006) has investigated how Latino group identity may impact political engagement.

Latinos are the fastest growing population group in Marion County, Indiana (Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, 2006). Latinos in Indianapolis have been “serviced” by churches and other civic-based organizations as far back as 1967. For example, St. Mary’s Catholic Church began offering masses in Spanish in 1967 (Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, 2006). Likewise, La Plaza, a civic-based organization in Indianapolis, had its start in 1971, after merging with several other organizations, including the former Hispanic Center (Center for Urban Policy and the Environment 2006), and began offering similar services.
Unlike most medium to major-sized American cities, Indianapolis’ Latino population is widely dispersed throughout the city. That is, Indianapolis does not have a “barrio” (an identifiable Latino neighborhood with more than 50% Latino residents) (Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, 2006). This scenario has major social, political and economic implications for service providers and political parties. The distance between Latino residents means that linkages to services by both civic organizations and political parties may be more difficult because of the lack of a critical mass of residents in one major geographical location. That is, instead of having centrally-located service providers and political party neighborhood offices, satellite locations will have to be dispersed throughout the city, meaning higher overall costs. However, such dispersion of residents and services does not automatically diminish the effectiveness of developing linkages between these vested actors. Moreover, civic organizations and political parties (beyond registering people to vote) can help provide routes to desperately needed labor in industries such as light manufacturing, hospitality in hotels/motels, the new convention center, maintenance, construction, landscaping, and farming. These sectors are all experiencing rapid growth in Indianapolis and Marion County (Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, 2006).

Our study will complement the extensive work that nonprofit, civic-based groups like La Plaza and Alliance for Community Education in Indianapolis are currently doing. La Plaza’s current education programs include: the El Puente Project (which educates teachers and administrators about Latino culture, as well as educating Latino students and parents about American culture and the American educational system); the Alliance for Community Education offers certification training in Microsoft applications and other computer-related training) (Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, 2006). However, unlike the above “independent” activities, our study will investigate any linkages between these nonprofit, civic-based groups and local political parties as they both attempt to inculcate educational, political and economic opportunities (beyond the salience of voting) in Latinos in Indianapolis. Moreover, a brief summary of the nonprofits illustrates that the primary focus of their work tends to be geared towards English language indoctrination. Worthy as such activities are our investigation seeks to extend such linkages and address the implications.

Given the large increases of Latino immigrants in recent years, not just in Indianapolis, but nationally, most have expressed a preference for Catholicism as their religion of choice (over 40% according to the New Immigrant Survey, 2008). Thus, what role does Catholicism play in assimilating newly arrived immigrants? As well, are roles different for nonprofits when attempting to assimilate such groups with diverse religions? Social capital theory (Putnam, 1995 and 2000) would suggest nonprofits (including churches) play a role in fostering assimilation by enabling immigrants to gain entry into the United States, obtain employment, obtain housing, learning English and so on. Such quality of life issues are addressed by most human service and health care related nonprofits, and subsequently are undergirded in the American Judeo-Christian belief system.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This study is based on primary and secondary analysis of quantitative data gleaned from various nonprofit organizations in Indianapolis, Indiana and surrounding communities. The purpose of this methodology will allow future researchers to build upon the existing civil society
literature, and more specifically the nonprofit, voluntary organization and democratization literature. However, this study is only preliminary with regard to the connections between Latino voter mobilization and nonprofits. Thus, this examination seeks to assess connections between Latino voter mobilization and nonprofits. The contribution of our study views democracy-building activities as more than linear, institutional parameters. Our study will afford students of democratization a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the nonprofit sector in the area of democratization.

Our study will employ a quantitative methodology to examine strategies employed by nonprofits and political parties to link and mobilize the growing Latino population in Indianapolis, Indiana. Data collected through direct mail surveys, telephone calls and other contacts (such as the Internet) will be gathered to determine the frequency and type of contacts employed by these entities to mobilize Latinos. We had a sample of 43 nonprofits in Indianapolis, with most providing completed surveys.

INNOVATION

Our research will provide innovation within the study of nonprofit linkages by examining the interface of politics and the role of nonprofits in civic engagement, on a local level. Specifically, innovation is provided mainly in the form of approaches and methods; few if any studies have examined the role played by nonprofits in mobilizing Latino voters in Indianapolis. In the future, we hope to further investigate the linkages in other Midwestern cities. We will develop a new multi-dimensional measure of Latino political participation in Indianapolis. While providing considerable innovation in examining the impact of this recent demographic change, as well as an innovative approach, this study will build upon previous studies (e.g., Gronbjerg, 1993; Galaskiewicz and Bielefeld, 1998) by purporting that governmental entities, in the form of political parties, exhibit a symbiotic relationship with nonprofit organizations within the Latino community. Subsequently, political parties are dependent upon nonprofits, especially churches within the Latino community, in order to mobilize Latino voters successfully. Baum and Oliver (1991) demonstrated how nonprofits need to foster institutional linkages with governmental entities in order to sustain their operations.

In building upon the importance of institutional linkages for the growth and viability of organizations, this study proposes that success in mobilizing Latino voters depends in part on citizen involvement, i.e., active participants, engaged in organizational and electoral activities, for the purpose of influencing public policy. Effective political mobilization is dependent upon a nonprofit’s or political party’s ability to establish community linkages. In tandem with Baum and Oliver’s definition of an institutional (in our case, the Latino community) linkage, this study views a linkage as a direct and regularized, i.e., on-going relationship between a political party and community based organizations (i.e., nonprofits) within the Latino community.

FINDINGS

Collaboration (institutional linkages) between political parties and Latino-based nonprofits to mobilize the Latino population, beyond voting, was our dependent variable. We measure mobilization as the number of people that the nonprofits were able to register to vote. It is important to note that the nonprofits were in compliance with 501c federal regulations. Mobilization is measured as an ordinal variable, i.e., low, medium and high levels of attainment.
in mobilization efforts. Our study used the independent variables (mission, longevity, geographic location, religious or secular-based, and funding sources of the nonprofits), to investigate the linkages. The mission is the goal of the political party/nonprofit; the longevity is how long the nonprofit has been in existence (longevity adds to the credibility and legitimacy of the group); the geographic location (proximity, or physical location) of the political party and nonprofit enhances the one-on-one contact. Moreover, religious or secular-based nonprofits may influence the attractiveness of the potential voter to get engaged in the political process. Likewise, the funding sources of the nonprofits may (or may not) allow such groups to engage in particular get-out-the-vote opportunities. Our study revealed (see Table 1) that a nonprofit’s geographic location to the Latino community was the strongest indicator (although not statistically significant) of the linkages that are developed between nonprofits to mobilize the Latino community. At first glance, location, location, location might be commonsensical in terms of developing enduring relationships however that may not always be the case. For example, a nonprofit’s mission and/or longevity might actually foster more enduring relationships, as well as a level of legitimacy in the eyes of the clientele (the Latino population). Our study also revealed strong, positive correlations (significant at the .05 alpha level) in terms of a nonprofit’s years in operation (longevity) and “streams” of revenue, that is, the various sources of revenue tended to be more enduring or embedded as the years of operation increased for a nonprofit. Also, there was a positive, significant correlation between a nonprofit’s objective(s) and assistance by government institutions (e.g., local and state legislatures). This strong relationship may suggest that as long as the government views the nonprofit as acting in accordance with 501c (nonprofit organizations) rules and regulations that increases the nonprofits’ chances of garnering some level of local and/or state financial support. As well, our study found that Catholic-based nonprofits tended to see higher traffic (in some cases) and higher retention levels of servicing the Latino population. The religious variable played a role, because many Latinos are Catholic in their religious orientation, and may feel more of an affinity towards those nonprofits that are Catholic-based.

In terms of the other independent variable (funding) in our study, there was no discernible evidence to suggest that funding was either augmented or hampered by the nonprofits’ mission statement. That is, there appears to be other reasons why perhaps a nonprofits operating budget, and the like may vary from year to year, including budget constraints because of difficult economic times, like a recession, which tends to impact nonprofits more so than most commercial (for profit) firms. The quantitative evidence suggests that there are transparent linkages which help to mobilize the growing Latino population in Indianapolis.

There were organizations that linked and mobilized Latinos by distributing handbills, delivering speeches, and having discussions with the Latino community. As well, some of the nonprofits linked up with other similar organizations, to not only maximize their legitimacy, but also increase their leverage with local political parties, as a way to illustrate to the political parties that they (nonprofits) have a captive audience of new and existing voters (Latino population). A couple of the nonprofits sought to build grassroots involvement in legislative processes that affects non-public schools. Therefore, such groups have to maintain a healthy, positive relationship with political parties and policymakers. Furthermore, such groups have to maintain “effective representation of non-public school agenda items to public policy members
Lastly, our study did not reveal robust relationships between nonprofits and local political parties as a “bridge” to foster stronger ties with the growing Latino population in Marion County (more specifically Indianapolis), Indiana. One reason that nonprofits do not engage in this “entangling alliance” is the fear that they will be perceived as actively involved in politics, which will violate their 501c status. Nevertheless, indirectly nonprofits and political parties are engaging in forging relationships to connect the growing Latino population. Strategies such as nonprofit meetings about how to get civically-involved, as well as linkages between nonprofits and information-sharing are making inroads to connect the Latino population. A couple of quotes that captured the essence of organizational links and mobilization efforts in the political process can be summarized as follows. “We link and mobilize our clients in the political process at events such as state board meetings, legislative hearings and superintendent meetings” (Indiana Non-Public Education Association).

**TABLE 1. PEARSON CORRELATIONS**

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(beyond voting) with member to member communication via handbills, speeches, and discussions.” “We link and mobilize our clients in the political process (beyond voting) by building grassroots involvement in legislation that affects non-public schools.” These quotes glean from qualitative interviews and amplify the linkages we found between nonprofit organizations and voter mobilization.

Our justification or rationale for running a series of correlations, as opposed to more complicated models that incorporate multiple causes in a single statistical model, was mainly because correlations provide baseline data (illustrating a relationship between linkages and mobilization efforts) for future research. Moreover, since our sample size was relatively small, we felt that more complicated models might muddle our results, which would increase the bias in our study.

CONCLUSIONS

Nonprofits are categorized as 501c organizations, thus have to be in compliance per federal regulations (as previously stated), which precludes the organizations from engaging in the political process, like political parties. Thus, there are particular variables which distinguish nonprofits from political parties in the political process, which gives nonprofits a unique opportunity in the political process. For example, longevity and location of nonprofits certainly play a significant role in developing trust and legitimacy for the growing (which has more than doubled in the last decade) Latino population of Marion County, Indiana. Therefore, social capital is a valuable resource that nourishes nonprofits and provides a linkage to the historically marginalized Latino population. This independent sector involvement in politics, especially with regard to voter registration, is nothing new within America’s political traditions and culture. In tandem with African American churches and other 501c nonprofits such as the N.A.A.C.P. during the modern Civil Rights movement, as well as Christian Evangelical churches during George W. Bush’s presidency, “nonpartisan” nonprofits have historically played pivotal roles in mobilizing and galvanizing American voters (Formicola, Segers and Weber, 2003). However, it is quite naïve to suggest that such linkages are the “catchall” in terms of formulating enduring long-term civic relationships. That is, other factors must also be considered, variables such as partnerships with multiple nonprofits to share mobilization costs, as well as creating more neighborhood satellite offices of nonprofits and political parties. Lastly, further investigations into the areas of the role of political efficacy and trust in the political system should reveal more information as intermediate variables which help embed the linkages.

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The State, Property Rights, and the Middle Class: Empirical Support for an Aristotelian Observation

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ABSTRACT

For decades, economists argued that property rights emerge when commodities become scarce enough to ‘merit’ property rights for their protection and trade. More current scholarship, however, finds no historical support and no theoretical merit in this argument. Our research defends the competing argument that property rights emerge when governments grant and protect them to self sustain. Scarcity (or expectations of future scarcity) may be a necessary condition, but only government intervention is sufficient for the protection of property rights. In this paper, we revisit the Aristotelian observation that the well being of states depends on the extent to which their constitutions protect the welfare -- i.e. the property rights -- of their middle class. Here, we test whether the welfare of the middle class correlates with the sustainability, consolidation, and prosperity of the state; our empirical analysis indicates that it does.

INTRODUCTION

Property rights are known to be a key to social organization and economic performance. Therefore, their establishment and preservation are of great interest. For decades, economic theory assumed that property rights emerge when a commodity becomes scarce enough to ‘merit’ property rights to protect and trade scarce commodities in the market (Alchain, 1961; Demsetz, 1967). As dissatisfaction arose with this assumption, considerable effort was invested in explaining the ‘spontaneous’ emergence of property rights using the logic of repeated games (Sugden, 1986; Taylor, 1987). According to this logic, in equilibrium, unconstrained players without the presence of any third, governmental, party, would settle on some self enforcing governance of property rights. Two main results in the late 1990’s challenged this argument. First, a series of results established that self enforcement is unlikely in most realistic environments (e.g. Calvert, 1995). Relatively insignificant increases in the number of agents involved, or moderate levels of future discounting, quickly erode any hope for even minimal realizations of self-enforcing property rights. A second series of results illustrated and formally proved that governments are actually rather robust and reliable enforcers of property rights. Under very general conditions, governments can be relied on to enforce property rights in large scale and societies should fare better with governments that protect property rights (Sened, 1997). This line of work has established a very simple and straightforward role for governments to play: protect the property rights of their constituents. Though government enforcement is expected to be inefficient, due to monopolistic power in the grant and protection of property rights and the derivative monopolistic pricing in the grant and enforcement of those rights, property rights should be under supplied and over priced as the taxes levied by government to provide their services as the sole protector of those rights are expected to exceed the efficient level (Sened, 1997). Governments are mostly motivated by distributive and redistributive rather than efficiency concerns (Knight, 1992). And yet, government involvement in the granting and protection of property rights seems a necessary and sufficient condition for markets to emerge, in
spite of the generic inefficiency associated with government’s monopolistic and politically motivated protection of property rights (Levi, 1988; Sened, 1997).

One hypothesis that may be derived from this argument is that government may protect the property rights of the middle class as that class, under many circumstances, may be the most likely to yield high returns for the protection of their well being, both in tax revenues and political support. A first step towards the development of such an argument is to establish whether the protection of the property rights of the middle class is correlated with economic growth and social prosperity. Our data confirms this expectation. Thus, our work provides a theoretical foundation and interesting empirical support to Aristotle’s (Politics) famous argument that the wealth of nations depends on the wealth and size of the middle class and the extent to which it is protected by sound political constitutions. We provide a theoretical explanation as to why this argument is so immediately and directly derived from simple principles of neo-classical economics. We also submit a rich empirical data analysis to support the argument.

THE WELL BEING OF THE MIDDLE CLASS AND THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

The fact that the wealth of the middle class and its size are critical for sustainable economic growth is usually regarded as well known but has not received the appropriate attention in the literature. Certainly, the literature has linked the middle class with both democracy and economic growth. Modernization theorists (e.g. Lipset, 1960) have suggested that economic development encourages the empowerment of a democratically inclined middle class. Indeed, Pye (1990) argues that the collapse of communism in the former Eastern Bloc was a demonstration of modernization theory. However, much of the literature on income inequality and economic growth has focused on the negative effect that reducing income inequality may have on economic growth. This argument follows two main lines of reasoning. The first states that greater equality may have a negative effect on growth through a negative impact on aggregate savings. If income is redistributed through transfers from those individuals capable of saving more to individuals with a lower propensity to save, in the aggregate, the level of savings will be lower, thereby decreasing the level of investment and economic growth (Kaldor, 1956). The second line of reasoning states that governments promote redistributive policies to favor the poor in order to alleviate political pressures through progressive taxes on the increment in the stock of wealth. These taxes, imposed at the margin, should affect the incentives for investment and translate to a negative effect on the rate of growth (e.g. Alesina and Rodrik, 1994).

Empirical studies, however, aimed at testing the effects of income inequalities on growth yields non-conclusive results at best. Rigorous recent studies are consistent with our results, presented below, and show quite consistently an inverted U shaped relationship between income inequality and economic growth. Most notably, Banerjee and Duflo (2005) find that the relationship between inequality and economic growth is non-linear and follows an inverted U-shaped function of lagged inequality. None of these recent studies advances a thematic theoretical argument to explain these results.

Part of the reason why transfer and savings arguments fail empirically may be the generic low levels of savings in modern economies that may have pulled the rug from under this argument. Here, however, we suggest a more generic, diminishing returns argument to explain the empirical findings: Excessive wealth in the hands of very few is likely to result in two types of major inefficiencies. First, a simple diminishing returns argument would suggest that those who accumulate immense sums of money would use investment strategies with quickly diminishing returns. Second, huge financial conglomerates that usually manage the financial
assets of institutions and multi-billionaires are likely to experience large x-inefficiencies more typically associated with the conduct of central governments but for the same reasons. Being huge administrative apparatuses, they tend to invest their capital and manage it as inefficiently as central governments. Recent figures on corporate earnings clearly indicate how widespread this phenomenon is. Much attention has been directed recently to the excessive salaries of many of the corporate leaders who run these corporate conglomerations often with little or no success to show for their inflated salaries. The mismanagements and basic management failures of many of these major corporations has been widely discussed in the media in the context of the 2007-2011 economic recession. In addition, those at the top of the earning pyramid have every reason to be conservative in their investments. They have enough to last a lifetime and a reputation to defend. There is less incentive to get into high-risk investment once you have established yourself at the top of the pyramid of wealth.2

At the other end of the spectrum, transfers to the poor may be easy to justify normatively but are likely to confirm worries about the ineffectiveness of political transfers and the negative effect that such transfers may have on saving and other economic activities. With all likelihood, such transfers aid the poor in very basic survival at best and do not result in entrepreneurial investment in the economy. We note the reputed success of poverty alleviation and social security policies in various countries, including developing countries (e.g. Sandbrook et al, 2007). However, the developmental state characteristics of these countries were likely more powerful than the welfare state characteristics in their ability to promote prosperity, though both sets of characteristics are relevant for political consolidation. We also note, however, the excellent study of. The Samaritan’s Dilemma, (Gibson et al, 2005) that illustrates so effectively the rampant failure of philanthropic policies of poverty alleviation around the globe.

Due to the correlations between education and middle class income as well as other measures of well being that characterize any healthy middle class family, this strata of society is likely to use a fair amount of its free income to reinvest in its own economic development and, indirectly, in the development of the society as a whole. Given the fact that middle class investors usually depend on their savings and investments for the education of their children and for retirement and health related expenses and given the somewhat limited resources that each family in this group of society has at its disposal, this class of citizens is likely to manage its finances efficiently and invest wisely. This class of individuals usually possesses the information and skills to succeed in their efforts to invest wisely and protect their investments against different threats and risks.

Finally, a strong middle class should be able to affect political institutions so as to better protect its wealth and property rights to this wealth. Such institutions will in turn impact the security of more members of the society that, with a little bit of help from government and financial institutions, can join the middle class and further strengthen it. While perfectly consistent with the by now classic argument of Douglass C. North of how economic firms affect the evolution of political institutions, North (1990) overlooks the fact that strong segments in society can affect the evolution of political institutions not through the economic leverage they may control, but as private individual citizens through the political process. Indeed, the power resources approach (e.g. Korpi, 2006) argues that the middle class, motivated by the potential gains to be derived from collective action, will engage in potentially positive-sum conflicts with employers through political parties and labor unions.

An important means by which individuals may resist the predation of their governments is through the use of their political institutions. Monarchs, military juntas, presidents, and other
executives of the state tend to attempt to acquire and control as much of the resources from their societies as is feasible (Levi, 1988). In the absence of constraints on these actors, property rights tend to become less secure and the incentive to invest diminishes.

The empowerment of institutions outside of the executive branch forms a bulwark against predatory governance. A primary responsibility of a legislative branch, for instance, is to oversee the operations of the government and to hold the executive, and his or her subordinates, to account. Likewise, a critical function of an effective judicial branch is to permit individuals, and business entities, to receive an impartial adjudication of their complaints vis-à-vis their governments, as well as against others parties. In this way, these other branches of government encourage ‘good governance’ and the ‘rule of law,’ helping to move states’ bureaucracies closer to the Weberian ideal of hierarchy, specialization, meritocracy, and rules-based operation – characteristics that have been linked to effective state intervention (e.g. Rueschemeyer and Evans, 1985). The legislature, especially, also helps to strengthen the state by improving policy outputs and by further integrating society into policymaking. Legislatures can provide superior functional representation (the provision of public goods and social services of interest to the public) due to legislators being far more accessible to the public than are executives. Additionally, legislators can be expected to better understand the concerns and needs of their constituents. Moreover, descriptive representation (the extent to which a political institution reflects the demographics of society) is superior within the legislature because legislators are usually chosen by their various communities. Lijphart and Rogowski (1991) contend that whatever descriptive representation exists within the executive branch may be perceived as mere token representation by officials who do not genuinely work for ‘their’ communities; estrangement between the executive and a significant segment of society may result. Hence, the demographic diversity of society can be better expressed within the legislative branch; and we expect better descriptive representation, ceteris paribus, to strengthen the state.

Given the foregoing conversation, our causal mechanism can be outline as follows. An emerging middle class will identify potential gains that can be achieved via collective action. For the purpose of structuring this collective action, the middle class will instigate the creation and/or strengthening of organizations and institutions. The middle class may create or strengthen civil society organizations, such as professional associations and labor unions. Further, the middle class may seek to create or strengthen explicitly political organizations, such as political parties. Lastly, the middle class may propose the creation or strengthening of state institutions that are designed to promote limited government and to thereby protect its property rights and welfare (Weingast, 1995); these may include: rights-respecting constitutions, impartial courts, representative legislatures, and ‘Weberian’ bureaucracies. A consolidating state will accept the creation and/or strengthening of these types of organizations and institutions. In order to successfully instigate the creation and/or strengthening of the above organizations and institutions, the middle class requires power, in terms of size and resources. Hence, our hypothesis:

H1: As the size and strength of the middle class increases, state consolidation will increase.

The middle class is motivated by potential material gain. However, some members of the wealthy and the poor also recognize such institution building as a positive-sum conflict; thus, they form allies of the middle class. The state is motivated by survival and by revenue generation. This is true whether we consider the state as a monolithic actor or as a disaggregated
set of actors. By accepting these middle class demands the state will enhance its political support and its tax revenues, by means of economic growth. Hence, the state furthers its consolidation by two methods: increased process legitimacy and increased performance legitimacy. The empowerment of state institutions that protect the property rights of the middle class, e.g. legislatures and courts, deepens the state, makes it more representative and responsive, and thereby increases the state’s process legitimacy. Moreover, secure property rights will lead to a larger and more prosperous middle class, thereby increasing the state’s performance legitimacy. Conversely, a state that does not accept and meaningfully implement these middle class demands will further feelings of economic insecurity, will underperform economically, and will lack representative and responsive institutions. Process and performance legitimacy will suffer; such a state will be viewed as predatory and will be non-consolidating.

AN OPERATIONAL, RATHER THAN THEORETICAL, DEFINITION OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

A theoretical definition of the middle class is far beyond the scope of this paper. The much easier definition of the poverty line has been a subject of controversy for decades. It is relatively straightforward to argue that the lower bound of the membership in the middle class is the poverty line and by the same token, the upper bound is a (likely arbitrary) threshold of income or asset ownership (for further discussion of this strategy see Banerjee, Abhijit and Duflo, 2008). Such definitions suffer from the same shortcomings of contemporary definitions of the poverty line and others due to an upper bound that is likely to be as arbitrary as the lower bound. In this paper, we avoid this controversy by using a practical, albeit imperfect, proxy instead of a definition. It seems to us that the Gini coefficient is a good empirical proxy to the strength of the middle class and allows us to bypass the definitional controversy. It is of great interest to pursue a more theoretical approach to the definition of what constitutes membership in the middle class but it is way beyond the scope of our effort here. The Gini coefficient is clearly not a perfect measure of the size and strength of the middle class. But after giving it much thought, it seems the most likely candidate for the best viable proxy we could come up with. Thus, in the absence of a good theoretical definition, while others use as operational definition based on somewhat arbitrary cut points, we use the Gini coefficient as our operational definition of the middle class.

If our argument is correct, moderate levels of Gini Coefficient coupled with actual protection of the welfare of the middle class should be the main variables to look at when we try to explain economic growth and sustainable social success. Interestingly, however, our analysis shows a very interesting tension between the two. Again, the theoretical argument is very straightforward. A degree of inequality is necessary in any society to provide the entrepreneurial elements in society with enough incentives to develop the engines of any economy. However, every level of inequality introduces some level of tension into the very fragile fabrics of society. It is too early to establish what the right amount of inequality is to generate enough economic incentive for economic growth, but our analysis provides three important lessons on the subject. First, economic inequality begins to affect negatively the sustainability of nations at very low levels, way below the levels optimal for economic growth. Second, the benefit of economic inequality clearly follows the law of diminishing returns. At around 0.4 on the Gini coefficient, the benefits of inequality begin to wear off. At .5 they turn negative as we begin to slide down the right hand side of the inverted U shaped relationship. Finally, this leads us back to the main argument of our current project. High levels of inequality are clearly detrimental to economic
growth. In other words, to the extent that the Gini coefficient—albeit problematic—measures the size and contribution of the middle class to the overall economy, it is clear that high Gini coefficients provide an indirect indication of the weakness of the middle class.

In terms of measurement, a strong middle class with moderate excess capacity among the very rich and limited transfers to the poor should correlate with moderate Gini coefficients on the right hand of the equation and a thriving economic environment on the left side of the equation.

Why inverted U shape? We know that high Gini Coefficients are indication of a large class of poor and a small class of very rich. Moderate Gini Coefficients are indication of some redistribution but not too much of it. Low Gini coefficient indicate one of two situations. Either everyone is very poor, or a sizable middle class with very few poor and very few rich. In other words, countries with high Gini Coefficients clearly have a small middle class. Countries with moderate Gini coefficients may have a sizable middle class (at least defining the middle class in relative terms). Very low values of the Gini coefficient indicate that either everyone is poor or a sizable portion of the population is in the middle class. In a large cross-section of heterogeneous nations, the likelihood of very low Gini coefficients representing a stronger middle class is lower than with moderate Gini coefficients where this correlation is likely to be high in all cases. Hence the inverted U shaped relationship.

Probably the most important lesson that our analysis provides is in highlighting the tension between income inequality as necessary for economic growth and the negative effect of this same income inequality on the viability of the state. The painful lesson is rather straightforward: Strong states can afford higher levels of inequality that further their economic achievements, and eventually their long term viability. The U.S. is an obvious example of that category. But those nations most in need of economic growth, can probably not afford the negative effect of policies that allow those inequalities to grow in the name of their beneficial effect on economic growth because those policies jeopardize the very viability of the political structure on which all economies and societies more generally, depend. China may be an example for this category of nations. The tentative solution for this obvious tension lies again in the strength of the middle class. This is the only segment in society that can be provided incentives to do better economically without immediately endangering the fabrics of society.

Acemoglu and Robinson (2005) suggest yet another link between inequality and governance. They view forms of government as arising from a fundamental conflict over the implications of forms of government for the distribution of resources in a society. Governments provide an aggregation mechanism for determining a tax rate with far reaching implications for both the type of institutions and their stability. Indeed, they write of “...an inverted-U-shaped relationship between inequality and democratization. Highly equal or highly unequal societies are unlikely to democratize. Rather, it is societies at intermediate levels of inequality in which we observe democratization ... having democratized, democracy is more likely to consolidate in more equal societies” (244). This consolidation is quite obviously related to political stability. Here, we provide important insight and further evidence to the Acemoglu and Robinson Hypothesis as stated above.

To summarize, we highlight a tension between the economic growth implications of inequality, on the one hand, and the political instability engendered by that same inequality, on the other. In the next section, we statistically assess and illustrate the validity and reliability of these claims.
THE STATISTICAL MODEL

In recent years, statistical models using measures of formal institutional structures, such as veto players and other structural variables, have often given rise to contradictory inferences or conclusion. Consequently, we suggest that an analysis based solely, or even mostly, on formal institutions is unlikely to produce consistent and meaningful results; this is a failing of the ‘old institutionalism’ (i.e. constitutionalism). Institutions that aggregate preferences, for example, may yield different outcomes that depend on the distribution of preferences to be aggregated. Institutions are hardly monoliths.

We approach this problem in a novel way. First, we use the country experts based, Polity IV dataset (Marshall and Jaggers, 2002) as measures of formal institutions alongside measures of their function. As a measure of state consolidation we use the indicators of the Failed States Index (Fund for Peace, 2006), which is further described below. Most importantly, this index provides a wealth of proxies for protection of the middle class from predatory behavior of the elite. While imperfect, these variables clearly fared, in our statistical model, a lot better than variables constructed on the basis of formal characteristics of regimes and institutions. Furthermore, past studies indicate that there is no single set of magical institutions. The participation of country experts in compiling these data allows us to capture the operation, or lack thereof, of formal and informal institutions. Hence, this analysis proceeds within the paradigm of the ‘new institutionalism.’ Indeed, this multiplicity of quality institutions is a key motivation for our empirical analysis in the next section.

Subsequently, our dependent variables will initially number twelve; however, we later reduce these to one, as described below. The twelve dependent variables are taken from the Failed States Index (Fund for Peace, 2006) and are described below. The index is compiled using a proprietary Conflict Assessment Software Tool (CAST). CAST searches millions of documents each year; information that is pertinent to the index’s 12 indicators, and more than 100 sub-indicators, is identified, collected, and converted into country scores via various algorithms. The country scores are further verified and refined by experts’ quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Demographic pressure, identified as FSI 1 in Table 2, represents measures including: disease, pollution, food scarcity, malnutrition, and mortality. Refugees and internally displaced persons, FSI 2, represents measures including: displacement, refugee camps, and refugees/IDPs per capita. Group grievance, FSI 3, represents measures including: discrimination, powerlessness, and violence related to pluralism. Human flight and brain drain, FSI 4, represents measures including: migration per capita human capital, and emigration of educated people. Uneven economic development, FSI 5, represents measures including: urban-rural service distribution, access to improved services, and the slum population. Poverty and economic decline, FSI 6, represents measures including: government debt, unemployment, youth employment, GDP per capita, and GDP growth. State legitimacy, FSI 7, represents measures including: corruption, political participation, protests and demonstrations, and power struggles. Public services, FSI 8, represents measures including: education provision, water and sanitation, healthcare, infrastructure, and policing. Human rights and rule-of-law, FSI 9, represents measures including: political freedoms, civil liberties, political prisoners, torture, and executions. Security apparatus, FSI 10, represents measures including: rebel activity, military coups, small arms proliferation, bombings, and fatalities from conflict. Factionalized elites, FSI 11, represents measures including: power struggles, defectors, and flawed elections. External intervention, FSI 12, represents measures including: sanctions, foreign assistance, presence of peacekeepers, and
the presence of UN missions. High FSI values indicate state failure; thus, independent variables’ negative coefficients signal where they are aiding the consolidation of the state.

Our independent variables number nine, allowing us to control for a variety of potential determinants of state consolidation. First, our key variable of interest, the size and strength of the middle class, is operationalized with the Gini coefficient (World Institute for Development Economics Research, 2005), as explained in the prior section. Second, executive constrains, measures ‘checks’ or other institutional constrains on presidents and prime ministers; it is operationalized with the XCONST variable (Marshall and Jaggers, 2002). Third, urban population, represents the percentage of the national population which is identified as living in an urban area (World Bank, 2005). Fourth, rentier states, are those states identified as deriving >50% of their government revenue from minerals or energy; this was determined by inspecting the countries’ statistical appendices produced by the International Monetary Fund. Fifth, trade, measures foreign trade as a percentage of GDP (World Bank, 2005). Sixth, ethnolinguistic fractionalization, measures socio-cultural heterogeneity (Roeder, 2001). Seventh, party fractionalization, represents the number and relative size of the politicos’ political parties; this is operationalized with the FRAC variable (Beck et al, 2001). To assess the robustness of our findings, two additional independent variables are included. The eighth, economic freedom, is operationalized with the IEF variable (Beach and Kane, 2008); and the ninth, the prevalence of corruption, is operationalized with the ‘violations’ variable (Fisman and Miguel, 2006).

Our empirical strategy comes in four parts. First, we provide a loose illustration of the relationship between income inequality and economic growth. Second, we compile evidence concerning the relationship between income inequality and the principal component of a host of indicators of failed states. Third, we turn to models of the individual components of state failure to demonstrate general patterns in the determinants of state failure. Fourth, we combine the results from the regression models of the individual components to argue that the most appropriate empirical strategy should extract the principal component of the multiple indicators of state failure and explain variation in this broader measure of state failure. We engage in this last step due to the nature of our dependent variables. The twelve FSI variables are latent variables; further, some of the observed indicators are continuous while some are ordinal. Most models are inappropriate when the observed indicators comprise such a combination of continuous and ordinal data; indeed, they will produce falsely precise, less precise, and/or biased estimates. The Markov Chain Monte Carlo model presented below is the most appropriate for our multivariate analysis with combined continuous and ordinal data (Quinn, 2004).

SOME BIG PICTURE RESULTS

First, we demonstrate the relationship between inequality and growth. As mentioned before, at the lowest levels of inequality, increases in inequality improve a country’s growth rate (or have less negative effects), while there is an inflection point (roughly at the value of inequality present in the United States). Because this relationship has been investigated in significant detail elsewhere, we simply provide face validity for the fact that it holds in these data as well. Our method for doing this utilizes standard linear regression techniques combined with local-regression smoothing on income inequality. We specify a model identical to our regression model of the elements of state failure in the following section, though these results are only meant to showcase the influences on per capita economic growth. As Figure 1 showcases, there appears to be a level of inequality that is optimal for growth rates. Higher or lower levels of
inequality seem less beneficial in as much as they seem to indicate somewhat reduced levels of the incentive needed in any society to generate economic growth rates.⁴

FIGURE 1. GDP GROWTH AND INCOME INEQUALITY


As the second part of the empirical demonstration, Figure 2 shows the downside of the same story. Following the growing awareness of the phenomenon illustrated in Figure 1, many countries allowed or fostered, in the last couple of decades, higher levels of inequality to their social and economic systems by reducing barriers to competition and the magnitude of transfers and protection to the middle class and the poor. As inequality grows, the fabrics of society weaken and run an increasing risk of state failure.⁵ Russia and Argentina are two, among many, examples of this largely ignored phenomenon. More recently, the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ is a blunt illustration, if one was needed, for a series of state failures due to increased inequality without the necessary middle class or institutional buffers needed to allow the consequent economic growth to be sustainable.
THE EMPIRICAL STRATEGY FOR THE REMAINING EVIDENCE

The bulk of the empirical analysis comes in two parts. First, we rely on traditional evidence obtained from a host of indicators of state failure by relying on linear regression models. Though we are hesitant to make too much of any particular regression result, the evidence we obtain leads us toward a unifying empirical approach. The two important pieces of information to glean from the individual regressions are (i) the relative consistency of relationships between covariates and the various elements of state failure and (ii) the amount of residual correlation among components of state failure even after controlling for an array of potential determinants including constraints on the executive, the degree of urbanization, rentier states, the level of trade openness, ethnolinguistic⁶ and political fractionalization, and the level of income inequality.

The unification is premised on extracting a principal component of state failure (θ(i)) for each country i using a regression model for combined continuous and ordered factors. The basic model comes in two parts (one for the ordered data, the other for the continuous data) playing off of two basic regression equations. For each of the j ordered indicators, we estimate a latent variable regression of the form,

\[ Y^* = \alpha(j) + \beta(j) \cdot \theta(i) + \epsilon(i,j) \]
With y linked to Y* by a series of cut points defining differentiation in the density of the latent variable (y*) that correspond to the probabilities of discrete outcomes. For a k category ordered variable, there are k-1 cut points. The probability that Y(i) = k is simply

$$\Pr(Y(i,j)=k) = F(\alpha(j,k) + \beta(j) * \theta(i)) - F(\alpha(j,k-1) + \beta(j) * \theta(i))$$

such that $\alpha(i,0)$ equals negative infinity for all j and $\alpha(j,k)$ equals infinity for all i. This ensures that the probability that the discrete ordered categories of Y(i) can be sorted with an appropriate probability distribution. In our case, the cumulative distribution of interest is assumed to be a standard normal distribution.

The continuous variables (call them Y) enter the determination of the latent factor in a similar way (after a z-transform to standard normal) so that

$$Y = \alpha + \beta * \theta(i) + \varepsilon$$

The technique for extracting the latent factor is a Bayesian Markov Chain Monte Carlo algorithm developed by Quinn (2004). The latent factor is assumed to follow a standard normal distribution and can be identified with a simple directional prior on one of the inputs (for reasons of invariance that we detail in the analysis sections). From the factor analysis, one can glean important information. Of particular interest, comparing the parameters $\beta(j)$ across equations provides information about how much change in the $j^{th}$ ordered indicator is caused by a unit change in $\theta$. Furthermore, such comparisons are rendered valid because the underlying factor and the probability distribution that defines the ordered scale are equivalent across equations so the metrics being compared are identical.

Our inferential strategy, given measures of the latent factor, is simply to draw 1000 independent draws from the posterior density of $\theta(i)$ and to use these as dependent variables in a linear regression model. We then perform inference on the distribution of regression coefficients and t-statistics to incorporate the fact that the dependent variable is measured with some uncertainty as it is, after all, only an estimate. We summarize the relationship in Figure 1 with a quadratic, though the formal gam prediction obtained using weighted least squares suggests that a fraction of an additional degree of freedom is required.

We have adopted this flexible strategy for analyzing the determinants of a novel index tracking the key elements of state failure. Table 1 lists the indicators of the Failed States Index, which were described above.

The remaining empirical analysis comes in two parts. First, we present individual regression results derived from Zellner’s method of seemingly unrelated regressions. The SUR method extends standard ordinary least squares to the case where the stochastic component is likely to be correlated across equations. Because we are fitting the same model to a host of divergent indicators, it is likely that there is a varying degree of residual correlation across indicators. The consequence of residual correlation is that the ordinary least squares estimates of residual variance are likely to be in error. Indeed, as we will see shortly, this is the case. However, diagnostics indicate that residual correlation is not a threat to valid inference employing standard diagnostic tests.
TABLE 1. THE ELEMENTS OF STATE FAILURE

- Mounting Demographic Pressures
- Massive Movement of Refugees or Internally Displaced Persons creating Complex Humanitarian Emergencies
- Legacy of Vengeance-Seeking Group Grievance
- Chronic and Sustained Human Flight
- Uneven Economic Development along Group Lines
- Sharp and/or Severe Economic Decline
- Criminalization and/or Delegitimization of the State
- Progressive Deterioration of Public Services
- Suspension or Arbitrary Application of the Rule of Law and Widespread Violation of Human Rights
- Security Apparatus Operates as a "State Within a State"
- Rise of Factionalized Elites
- Intervention of Other States or External Political Actors
- or Group Paranoia
- Chronic and Sustained Human Flight


RESULTS

We examine the overall fit of the models before turning to specific effects of interest. As a whole, the models explain between 35% and 68% of the variance in the components of the failed state index. In each case, the model chi-square statistics are statistically differentiable from zero to the level of computer precision and the estimates generally conform to their directional expectations.

Turning to specifics, though the effect of constraints on executives cannot be distinguished from zero in all models, executive constraints generally decrease the value of failed state components where positive values indicate weaker states. This implies that constraints on the executive decrease the likelihood of components of state failure. Implementing an omnibus test that the effect is zero in all equations yields a joint Wald statistic of 64 (12 d.f.) indicating that constraints on the executive are related to at least some of the components of state failure and in the expected direction. Demographic pressures, vengeance-seeking group grievances, and human flight do not appear to depend much on constraints on the executive. On the other hand, the creation of complex humanitarian emergencies, uneven economic development among groups, criminalization/delegitimization of the state, deterioration of public services, sharp economic declines, violations of the rule of law, police states, fractionalized elites, and intervention of political actors external to the society are statistically less likely in the presence of constrained executives. Comparing magnitudes, because the scales on both sides of the equation are identical, executive constraints have the greatest marginal effect on the security apparatus operating a "state within the state," criminalization and delegitimization of the state, suspension of the rule of law, and the rise of a factionalized elite. Of central importance to the claim that these indicators are all tapping something similar, it is primarily the magnitude of the slope and not variation in standard errors that influences significance levels.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FSI 1</th>
<th>FSI 2</th>
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<th>FSI 6</th>
<th>FSI 7</th>
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<td>0.476***</td>
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<td>0.319</td>
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<td>-0.009*</td>
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<td>-0.006</td>
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<td>(% of GDP)</td>
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<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.004</td>
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<td>0.004</td>
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<td>0.291***</td>
<td>0.325***</td>
<td>0.222***</td>
<td>0.216***</td>
<td>0.507***</td>
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<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.003**</td>
<td>-0.003**</td>
<td>-0.002*</td>
<td>-0.002*</td>
<td>0.005*</td>
<td>0.003***</td>
<td>0.004***</td>
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<td>1.973</td>
<td>0.929</td>
<td>3.178</td>
<td>4.287*</td>
<td>-0.934</td>
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<td>r2</td>
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<td>0.705</td>
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* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

On the development side, countries with higher levels of urbanization are uniformly less likely to score high on any failed state component. With t-statistics that range between 4 and 10, there is strong evidence that countries with greater levels of urbanization are less susceptible to state failure.\(^9\) Rentier states, defined here as states receiving 50% or more of their revenue from the exploitation of a mineral or fossil fuel, are not easy to differentiate from other states, but they are more likely to score highly on some elements of state failure. Furthermore, the precise patterns are interesting. Rentier states are more likely to be subject to mounting demographic pressures, criminalization/delegitimization of the state, deterioration of public services, police states, and factionalized elites. The remaining indicators fail to showcase effects that reach conventional levels of statistical significance. In substantive terms, fractionalized elites are most influenced by rentier state status.

Trade openness is seldom statistically related to elements of state failure.\(^10\) Though vengeance seeking groups and demographic pressures are negatively associated with the level of trade openness, in general, trade flows are weakly related to elements of state failure. Though the signs across equations are almost all negative, there are only two cases where the magnitude is sufficiently large to reject the hypothesis of no effect.

The same tends to be true of ethnolinguistic fractionalization (ELF). ELF is never statistically differentiable at conventional levels. That said, the joint hypothesis test of a zero null across equations can be statistically differentiated from zero at the .01 level of statistical significance, but the individual effects are always zero. Ethnolinguistic fractionalization is weakly related to state failure in the abstract, but not obviously driving any particular element of state failure.

Referencing political fractionalization measured by party fractionalization within the legislature, there are a few strong statistical relationships and the joint hypothesis that political fragmentation is unrelated to state failure can be rejected at conventional levels of statistical significance. Vengeance-seeking group grievances and a factionalized elite are statistically associated with political fractionalization. There is some evidence that failed states are more likely in the presence of political fragmentation. It is likely the case that party fractionalization matters with some classes of states but not with other classes. In some models, not reported, the detrimental effect of fractionalization becomes more pronounced when we control for the agricultural sector’s share of the economy. In more rural and agrarian societies party fractionalization may be indicative of ethno-regional segmentation. Whereas, in more advanced economies fractionalization may be indicative of a multiplicity of interests. In the former, the sustainability of the political system may be threatened; in the latter, moderate policy output and the protection of various interests may result.

We investigate income inequality using both the Gini coefficient and its square.\(^11\) Consistently, across all equations with the exception of complex humanitarian emergencies, Ginis increase and the likelihood of state failure also increases, while the square term mitigates the effect at higher levels of the Gini. These effects are strongest for criminalization of the state and the rise of a factionalized elite, but in all cases, a similar pattern emerges. Income inequality makes state failure more likely to a point, but the relationship has an inflection point that depends on the particular component of failed states. There is a robust inverse U-shaped relationship between the likelihood of state failure and the level of income inequality, measured by the Gini coefficients.
The Table following the regression results reports the residual correlations from the SUR estimates. Our choice of Zellner’s SUR estimator ultimately rests on convenience. Because the matrix of regressors is the same without regard to the equation, the BLUE estimator is an OLS estimator equation-by-equation. The advantage of the SUR system is simply the automation of calculating the correlation matrix of the residuals. A convenient feature of equivalence is that we can utilize simple equation by equation diagnostics to assess the quality of inference.

We rely on a few tests to justify t inference. First, we employ White’s test for general heteroscedasticity, as homoscedasticity is required for the OLS estimator of the variance of the regression coefficients to be valid (in the BLUE sense). Second, we employ a test based on the third and fourth moments of the residuals to rule out skewness and kurtosis of the residual vectors to justify normality and, by extension, chi square inference. In cases where we find evidence sufficient to reject the null hypothesis of constant error variances, we have examined White’s (1980) robust covariance matrix and utilized this variance/covariance matrix to validate inference. The results are strengthened by relying on the robust covariance matrix. With departures from normality, there is little that can be done, though we note that there are only two such departures and they may only work against our central claims to the extent that they accompany statistically insignificant findings on our variables of interest.

The omnibus Breusch-Pagan test of independence yields a chi-square statistic of 1701 with 66 degrees of freedom, statistically significant to the level of computer precision. This implies that there are clear remaining correlations among the residuals net of the model, this despite the reasonable fit of the models. We point to a few patterns in these correlations before examining the interrelations among the indicators in a more systematic fashion. The strongest residual correlations involves the criminalization of the state, suspension of rule of law, and police state. Others are more moderate though all showcase significant residual correlations. In face of the considerable amount of shared variation, we turn to an alternative modeling strategy based upon the extraction of a common variance factor to create a composite measure that combines common information about the prospect of state failure.

The factor analysis is constructed by relying on an estimator presented by Quinn (2004) and made publicly available in software by Martin and Quinn (2007). The essence of the procedure is a mixed factor analytic model that combines ordered and interval-scale data into a unified factor analytic routine. In basic terms, we have a series of ordered and continuous factors that are affine linear functions of some latent factor that is assumed to be normally distributed with mean zero and variance one. To achieve identification, we simply assume that the first component of FSI is positively related to a single underlying factor. We are not forced to identify the minimum and maximum or any other relation and diagnostics suggest that posterior convergence has been achieved in considerably fewer iterations than the 500,000 that we allow for the Markov chain to burn-in. We first describe the results of the factor analysis and pay particular attention to the relationship between the elements of state failure and the level of societal development.
To summarize the results of the factor analysis before turning to models of the estimated factors score, we examine Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 presents density plots of 1000 posterior draws for each of the discrimination parameters (regression parameters relating the latent factor to the observed outcomes). The x-axis is the regression coefficient metric while the y-axis simply measures density. Two points are worthy of note. First, the level of development, proxied by per capita (PPP) GDP - the solid black density on the far left - is strongly related to but not the primary determinant of the first common factor to the state failure index. In fact, it has almost no overlap with the other densities that are all larger in absolute terms. Second, not all individual FSI components are equally related to the composite factor. Though most of the parameter densities have considerable overlap, the solid blue - chronic and sustained human flight - and the dotted green - intervention of external political actors - densities have very little of the parameter space in common with the solid green - suspension of the rule of law/repression - and dotted purple - police state - densities and the latter are clearly larger. In more substantive terms, variation in the latent factor causes greater variation in observed levels of things like the existence of elements of a police state and suspension of the rule of law than it does for things like human flight and external political intervention. We now explore the ordering of these inputs in determining the latent factor employing a box plot in Figure 4.
FIGURE 4. DISCRIMINATION PARAMETERS


Figure 4 displays box plots derived from the 90% credible range of the discrimination parameters. The x-axis describes the magnitude of the discrimination parameters while the elements of the Failed State Index are given brief descriptions next to the corresponding boxplots. The points made in the previous paragraph are amplified by this data summary, GDP per capita is clearly, but most weakly, related to variation in the latent factor. Of the elements of the Failed State Index, once again we find that human flight and external political influence are the weakest. Of middling impact, we find uneven group development, then complex humanitarian emergencies and severe economic decline. Criminalization of the state, demographic pressures, a factionalized elite, the deterioration of public services, and group grievances form the next cluster of relations; these can be differentiated from the weakest factor loadings, but overlap considerably with the two strongest Failed State components: suspension of the rule of law and the existence of a security apparatus that operates as a``state within a state’’. It is clear that the various elements of a broader Failed State Index are differently related to the principal common factor. To conclude our analysis, we turn to the determinants of this common factor employing a linear regression model.
Our inferential strategy must confront the fact that we have uncertainty about the true value of this factor for any given state. Thus, our approach is to take 1000 draws from the posterior density of each state’s factor score and estimate 1000 linear regressions using the estimates and their standard errors to form a sampling distribution of t-statistics. We present these results in Table 3.

**TABLE 3. REGRESSION RESULTS BASED ON 1000 POSTERIOR FACTOR SCORES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>t-statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[95% C. I.]</td>
<td>[95% C. I.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>-0.123</td>
<td>-3.805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints</td>
<td>-0.163, -0.084</td>
<td>-4.973, -2.467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>-5.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>-0.019, -0.011</td>
<td>-6.775, -3.939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentier</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td>1.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States</td>
<td>0.028, 0.366</td>
<td>0.179, 2.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-2.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(% of GDP)</td>
<td>-0.005, -0.002</td>
<td>-3.454, -1.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fractionalization</td>
<td>0.099, 0.55</td>
<td>0.412, 2.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini (squared)</td>
<td>-0.001, -0.001</td>
<td>-2.958, -1.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.159, -1.716</td>
<td>-2.745, -0.728</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3 presents two sets of estimates. The first numerical column presents the 95% quantiles of the regression coefficients from 1000 draws of the factor scores for each nation for which data exist; the second numerical column presents associated t-statistics for each of the 1000 regressions. As the Table makes clear, the results are similar to those we obtained with the SUR system. For example, constraints on the executive always have a negative impact on latent state failure and the associated 95% range is always greater, in absolute value, than the t critical value at the 0.01 level (2.37). Executive constraints robustly discourage state failure. A similar finding emerges with the size of the urban population. The 95% interval of t-statistics has a lower bound of -3.94; there is considerable evidence that larger urban populations are present in states less likely to fail. Rentier states are only weakly correlated with the principal component of state failure. While the regression coefficient is always greater than zero implying that rentier states are more likely to fail, the bounds on the t-statistics suggest that the standard errors of these effects are usually quite large. With regard to trade openness, the estimated effect is always negative and the median of the sampling distribution of t-statistics exceeds the .01 level critical value. At the same time, there is sufficient mass...
below this critical value to cast some doubt on the robustness of the relationship. Elements of fractionalization result in similar if not weaker findings. The median t-statistic lies below standard thresholds of statistical significance though there are draws of the primary component of failing states that would allow a rejection of the hypothesis of no effect.

Lastly, and most robustly, the Gini coefficient yields a positive relationship with the principal component of failing states and the associated t-statistics are always greater than two. Consistent with the previous patterns, the square of the Gini coefficient maps to state failure negatively suggesting that the net effect of the Gini coefficient is to increase the scores on the principal component of failing states, but to do so at a decreasing rate with an inflection point that will become clear shortly.

In short, we recapture the robust inverse U relationship between income inequality and the likelihood of state failure. We plot this result in Figure 2. The x-axis maps the in-sample range of Gini coefficients (20 to 75) while the y-axis demonstrates something akin to the factor analytic scale (normal, mean zero and variance one). Because of the factor analytic basis in a standard normal variable, we can interpret the effects in standard deviations, though the y-axis is, in some sense, arbitrary. Figure 2 makes clear that, as income inequality increases, states first experience an increasing likelihood of the components of state failure, but the relationship then inflects about 50. With these results in mind, we can safely conclude that constraints on the executive and urbanization clearly reduce the essential elements of state failure, but of utmost importance income inequality can both increase and decrease the likelihood of state failure, as highlighted by Figure 2.

To further assess the robustness of these claims, we have undertaken a variety of robustness checks. For example, it has been suggested that the security of property rights, corruption, and similar factors are likely to mitigate the relationships that we have presented. Tables 4 and 5 present results that fail to falsify the central results regarding income inequality and the likelihood of state failure, in the aggregate. For example, to measure general economic freedoms, we have utilized the same factor analytic techniques that we used to derive the common element to the indicators that comprise the Failed State Index. Included among the measures in the Index of Economic Freedoms are measures of business freedom, trade freedom, fiscal freedom, government size, monetary freedom, investment freedom, financial freedom, property rights, freedom from corruption, and labor freedom (Beach and Kane, 2008; ch. 4).

For example, examining Table 4, we find that the effects of Executive Constraints and the size of the urban population are, to a degree, mitigated, but given that the results reflect draws from the posterior density of two common factors, the fact that the 95% credible intervals of the effects never cross zero gives us considerable faith that the general arguments hold up in the face of more rigorous statistical tests. Though the effects are attenuated to a notable degree, the evidence still supports our general claims. Indeed, perhaps the most impressive piece of evidence is that, for both Executive Constraints and the urban population, the median t-statistic is considerably greater than one standard deviation away from zero.
TABLE 4. REGRESSION RESULTS BASED ON 1000 POSTERIOR FACTOR SCORES (SOME CONTROLLING FOR THE PRINCIPAL COMPONENT OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>t-stat</th>
<th>2.50%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>97.50%</th>
<th>2.50%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>97.50%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exec. Const.</td>
<td>-0.1073</td>
<td>-0.0484</td>
<td>-0.0003</td>
<td>-2.8165</td>
<td>-1.3159</td>
<td>-0.0062</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Pop.</td>
<td>-0.0122</td>
<td>-0.0076</td>
<td>-0.0033</td>
<td>-3.6101</td>
<td>-2.2899</td>
<td>-0.9882</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentier</td>
<td>-0.1351</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.3266</td>
<td>-0.7236</td>
<td>0.4881</td>
<td>1.7687</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>-0.0046</td>
<td>-0.0028</td>
<td>-0.0007</td>
<td>-2.8833</td>
<td>-1.7628</td>
<td>-0.4124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELF</td>
<td>0.0698</td>
<td>0.3609</td>
<td>0.6138</td>
<td>0.3185</td>
<td>1.5367</td>
<td>2.5543</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Frac.</td>
<td>-0.0337</td>
<td>0.2614</td>
<td>0.5333</td>
<td>-0.1299</td>
<td>0.976</td>
<td>2.0931</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini</td>
<td>0.0262</td>
<td>0.0628</td>
<td>0.0983</td>
<td>0.7158</td>
<td>1.7646</td>
<td>2.7225</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini-sq</td>
<td>-0.0009</td>
<td>-0.0005</td>
<td>-0.0001</td>
<td>-2.29</td>
<td>-1.3862</td>
<td>-0.3372</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEF</td>
<td>-0.5124</td>
<td>-0.3369</td>
<td>-0.1653</td>
<td>-5.8257</td>
<td>-3.8148</td>
<td>-1.8564</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-2.0326</td>
<td>-1.3066</td>
<td>-0.5082</td>
<td>-2.5491</td>
<td>-1.6738</td>
<td>-0.6474</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Turning to the effect of income inequality, we uncover the same pattern as before. Though the individual terms are diminished in magnitude, the same functional form continues to describe the relationship and the statistical evidence continues to allow us to reject the hypothesis of no effect for both the Gini coefficient and the square of the Gini coefficient. Moreover, we have additional confidence derived from the fact that both parameters do not contain zero even in the tails of their 95% credible intervals.

TABLE 5. REGRESSION RESULTS BASED ON 1000 POSTERIOR FACTOR SCORES (CONTROLLING FOR CORRUPTION USING THE INSTRUMENT OF MIGUEL AND FISMAN AND THE PRINCIPAL COMPONENT OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>t-stat</th>
<th>2.50%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>97.50%</th>
<th>2.50%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>97.50%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exec. Const.</td>
<td>-0.1042</td>
<td>-0.0464</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-2.7854</td>
<td>-1.2849</td>
<td>0.0286</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Pop.</td>
<td>-0.0113</td>
<td>-0.0067</td>
<td>-0.0024</td>
<td>-3.3167</td>
<td>-2.0003</td>
<td>-0.7262</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentier</td>
<td>-0.1229</td>
<td>0.0997</td>
<td>0.3364</td>
<td>-0.6582</td>
<td>0.5621</td>
<td>1.8628</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>-0.0044</td>
<td>-0.0025</td>
<td>-0.0003</td>
<td>-2.8144</td>
<td>-1.6216</td>
<td>-0.2031</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELF</td>
<td>0.0329</td>
<td>0.3346</td>
<td>0.5967</td>
<td>0.1466</td>
<td>1.4324</td>
<td>2.4864</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Frac.</td>
<td>0.0064</td>
<td>0.2946</td>
<td>0.5679</td>
<td>0.0259</td>
<td>1.1218</td>
<td>2.2777</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini</td>
<td>0.0264</td>
<td>0.0636</td>
<td>0.0997</td>
<td>0.7648</td>
<td>1.8042</td>
<td>2.8238</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini-sq</td>
<td>-0.0009</td>
<td>-0.0005</td>
<td>-0.0001</td>
<td>-2.3165</td>
<td>-1.3696</td>
<td>-0.3368</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEF</td>
<td>-0.4891</td>
<td>-0.3193</td>
<td>-0.1472</td>
<td>-5.6697</td>
<td>-3.6828</td>
<td>-1.6982</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violations</td>
<td>0.0031</td>
<td>0.0048</td>
<td>0.0064</td>
<td>1.469</td>
<td>2.3158</td>
<td>3.063</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-2.2511</td>
<td>-1.5264</td>
<td>-0.7209</td>
<td>-2.9095</td>
<td>-1.9792</td>
<td>-0.9447</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Examining Table 5, we add the instrument for corruption proposed by Fisman and Miguel (2006). The findings remain largely in tact. For example, though the coefficient on Executive Constraints now crosses zero in the far tail, the preponderance of the evidence continues to support the general claims. The credible interval for the effect of urban population never crosses zero. Just as before, the median t-statistics are greater...
than one standard deviation from zero in both cases. Controlling for corruption and for economic freedoms, our general claims cannot be rejected. Moreover, the evidence is even stronger for the effects of income inequality.

Income inequality also withstands these robustness checks and the functional form remains almost identical. Looking first at the second through fourth columns of Table 5, we see that as the Gini coefficient increases from zero, the factor describing failed states also increases but at a decreasing rate. Just as we have shown in Figure 2, there is an inflection point at around 50 and from this point, increases in the Gini coefficient imply a reduction in the factor describing the Failed State Index.

To summarize the results in this section, we have found that Executive Constraints and urban populations reduce the likelihood of state failure and that the robust relationship between income inequality and state failure is nonmonotonic. In addition to a host of controls, we have shown that these relationships are robust to economic freedoms and freedom from corruption and that the results, though differing in magnitude, are remarkably consistent in terms of statistical evidence and functional form. In short, inequality has opposite influences on economic growth and political stability.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The lessons of our efforts are rather straightforward. First, middle class size and strength, at least to the extent that it is well proxied by the Gini coefficient, seems to emerge as a key component in the explanation of the economic and social welfare of nations. Second, a tension between the effect of income inequality on economic growth and the effect it has on the likelihood of social and political failure deserve more attention. Third, executive constraints are tremendously important though these mechanisms merit considerable further elaboration. Other often used formal measures of executive constraints, while not reported in this analysis, fail to show any significant effect on any of the measures of social, political or economic success of nations. Fourth, rentier states do not seem to develop well. This observation is clearly connected to the general theme of the paper. Rulers who depend on income from sources other than their own middle class are unlikely to treat this middle class very well; the insights of Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow (2004) are relevant to the extent that leaders under these circumstances are unlikely beholden to the middle class for their political survival without institutions that force them to be so beholden. Finally, the correlation between urban population and development is well documented in many places. Again, it is clearly related to the fact that the middle class tends to reside, at least in the last several centuries, in urban rather than rural environments. In other words, the measure of urban development is yet another indirect proxy of the strength of the middle class rather than an alternative explanation.

Besides the usual caveat on improving measurements and data sets more generally, we advocate a more in depth look at the entire web of formal and informal institutional conditions that determine the well being of this ‘maudite petit bourgios.’ Because this ‘cursed’ class seems to hold an important key to both economic development and political stability – social well being -- that seems to have been noticed by laymen but largely overlooked by modern scholarship.
REFERENCES


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2 We owe this remark to David Levinson, former commissioner of insurance in Delaware and currently a developer who heard our argument at a conference and made this comment ‘speaking from experience.’

3 Because one of the key inputs, the Lorenz curve, is an empirical cumulative distribution function, the Lorenz curve must be weakly increasing, as follows directly from the definition of a cumulative distribution function. At the same time, because it is a measure of dispersion, it is “location independent” in the sense that two societies with vastly different levels of average income or wealth can have identical Gini coefficients.

4 Caveat: we use a single annual growth rate. To strengthen the evidence, we rely on exhortations of Barro, Sala-i-Martin and others to take long-term averages of annual growth rates to smooth year-to-year variation.

5 To the extent that the level of inequality that maximizes growth minimizes the viability of the state, this is consistent with Huntington’s claims regarding rapid growth and political pressures, though the mechanism and a single causal input driving both is quite different.

6 For an empirical alternative to ethnolinguistic fractionalization see Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010).

7 By definition, the $\alpha$’s are a strict order in $k$. Furthermore, without loss of generality, this notation assumes that the arbitrary ordered scale has been reoriented to consecutive positive integers.

8 The weights in the weighted least squares arise from the posterior standard deviation of the factor scores.

9 An omnibus test that the effect across all equations is equal to zero yields a chi square statistic exceeding 160 with 12 degrees of freedom which is statistically differentiable from zero to the level of computer precision.

10 The joint test that the effect across equations is uniformly zero cannot be rejected at the .05 significance level.

11 A joint test of each component and of all 24 estimates involving the Gini coefficient reject the null hypothesis of no effect to the level of computer precision.

12 The elements of the Failed State Index are technically ordered but take on a number of discrete values. We must pay close attention to ordering in the construction of a common factor, but dispense with the innate inefficiency of estimating multiple cut points alongside the statistics central to our interest.

13 By pinning down this relation, we can avoid the fact that inversion of the factor analytic model results in an identical set of estimates with only interchanged signs.

14 A host of convergence diagnostics indicate that we have arrived at the target distribution.

15 An anonymous reviewer has pointed out that these indicators are relatively diverse in their relation to State Failure and the evidence is consistent with this in an entirely plausible way. Those that are most indicative of state failure such as the rule of law and arbitrary security apparatuses are most strongly related while those that are “a greater stretch” are most weakly related to the derived factor.

16 The 90% credible range is the Bayesian equivalent of a confidence interval (though the interpretation differs because of the inherent subjectivity of probability in Bayesian statistics).

17 We also employed weighted least squares estimation techniques that confirm the results that we present.

18 It is important to note that the factor describing the Index of Economic Freedoms is strongly and negatively related to the Failed State Index. The importance and magnitudes of these effects underscores their usefulness for evaluating the robustness of our claims.
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2. Your submission should be double spaced with 1” margins.
3. The paper should be in APA format. APA uses in-text citations; for example:
   a. Hoppin and Taveras (2004) have noted …
   b. Although some iron triangles are still evident today, subsystems can take on a variety of forms depending on the strategies used by subsystem participants (Stein & Bickers, 1995).
4. For more information about APA citation style, please consult Research and Documentation Online (a.k.a., the Diana Hacker database) at: http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/.
5. Use endnotes for additional explanatory information. Please keep your use of notes to a minimum. Please use the insert command in Word to do the endnotes. Number your endnotes as 1, 2, 3, etc.
6. Include your reference list at the end of the paper. As per APA format, you do not need to list the full first name of the authors; initials will suffice.
7. Due to space limitations, please keep your paper to 25 pages or less.

Formatting Guidelines, Tables:
1. Please include your tables in a separate Word file.
2. In your paper, mark the insertion point for the table with the statement “Insert Table X Here.”
3. All tables should be numbered and titled.
4. Please format your tables according to APA style.

Formatting Guidelines, Figures:
1. Flowcharts and other graphics should be submitted in a separate Word file.
2. In your paper, mark the insertion point for the graphic with the statement “Insert Figure X Here.”
3. Please submit these graphics as JPEG or GIF files.

Submission Guidelines:
1. Please submit your paper to the editor via e-mail attachment. If you do not have e-mail
access, you may mail an electronic copy via the US Postal Service or other delivery service.
2. All electronic files should be formatted for PCs.
3. All files should be in a format that can be opened by Microsoft Word 2010. The “suffix” on the document title should be .docx, .doc or .rtf.

**Deadlines:**
1. Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis.
2. Manuscripts are reviewed blindly by at least two members of our editorial review board.
3. The goal is for manuscripts to be reviewed in 60 days or less.
4. Once your paper has been reviewed, the editor will return your manuscript to the e-mail address included on your title page.
5. Deadlines for submitting revisions and approving proofs of manuscripts that will be included in the IJPS will be included in communication from the Editor.
6. The target date for publication is fall of the year.

**Priority Considerations (meeting these considerations is no guarantee of acceptance):**
1. Faculty members who work at Indiana institutions who presented their papers at the annual IPSA meeting.
2. Faculty members who work at institutions outside of Indiana who presented their papers at the annual IPSA meeting.
3. Faculty members who are members of the IPSA who did not attend the annual meeting of the IPSA, but have paid their dues for the year.
4. Students, graduate or otherwise, who presented their papers at the annual meeting of the IPSA.
5. All other submissions as space allows.

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