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Election Reform: Does Early Voting Impact Turnout In Municipal Elections?

Gayle Alberda
Wayne State University, galberda@gmail.com

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ELECTION REFORM: DOES EARLY VOTING IMPACT TURNOUT IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS?

by

GAYLE ALBERDA

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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MAJOR: POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

For my son, Isaac.

Just when I think I can't possibly love you more, I discover that I do.

You truly are the best thing that has ever happened to me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation marks the end of a long journey. It would not have been possible without the support, encouragement, assistance, and guidance of so many people. First and foremost, I would like to thank my dissertation committee members, Brady Baybeck, Ronald E. Brown, Mary Herring, and R. Khari Brown, for their support, encouragement, and patience during this process and throughout my graduate school career. I will forever be grateful for all their assistance during this process, constant faith in my ability, professional advice, and words of wisdom.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2 STRUCTURE MATTERS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND VOTER TURNOUT.....	26
CHAPTER 3 ELECTION LAWS AND VOTER TURNOUT.....	63
CHAPTER 4 DATA AND METHODS.....	86
CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING AND VOTER TURNOUT IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.....	115
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION: DOES IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING IMPACT VOTER TURNOUT IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS?.....	128
Appendix A.....	138
Appendix B.....	139
References.....	145
Abstract.....	163
Autobiographical Statement.....	165

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Number of Local Governments in the U.S. by Category.....	10
Table 1.2 Methods of Early Voting Used by States	19
Table 2.1 Percent Break Down of Municipal Forms of Government	42
Table 2.2 Local Government Structures and Expectations of Local Voter Turnout.....	46
Table 2.3 Number of Elected Officials in U.S. by Government Unit	53
Table 2.4 Number of Local Governments in U.S. by Category.....	54
Table 3.1 Elections Laws and Number of State Adoptions	66
Table 4.1 Ohio Municipal Organization Plans.....	91
Table 4.2 Summary of Ohio Municipalities	92
Table 4.3 Summary of Variable Measures	106
Table 4.4 Range of Demographics of Ohio Municipalities	111
Table 5.1 Descriptive Statistics of Variables	116
Table 5.2 Summary of Variables	118
Table 5.3 Voter Turnout Averages Before and After Early Voting	121
Table 5.4 Results of Fixed Effects Regression Model.....	125

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Continuum of Early Voting.....	77
Figure 5.1 Histogram of Municipalities by Voter Turnout	120
Figure 5.2 Average Turnout in Municipal Elections.....	126

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Man makes monarchies and establishes republics, but the township is a gift from the hand of God -Alexis Tocqueville

Local government and local participation are integral and fundamental components of American democracy. From their founding days, local governments have been an avenue in which individuals could engage in political participation and practice self-government. Through this process, citizens can develop a deeper understanding of democracy and the democratic process.

In his observations of early America, Tocqueville (2003) observes that “political life took root” in local governments (78). It was in town hall meetings that citizens gathered to discuss policies that impacted their respective localities. Echoing Tocqueville, Mill (1971) explains that local governments are “schools of democracy,” providing a myriad of opportunities for participation and for nurturing an understanding of democratic values. Participation, Mill (1963) argues, should be “practiced” at the local level and is the only way “the people will ever learn how to exercise it on a larger scale” (186).

Tocqueville (2003) emphasizes that citizens are involved in local government “because he helps to run it” (82). This suggests that local elections are essential to American democracy for two reasons. First, they provide participatory opportunities. Local elections are held regularly and frequently. Voting in local elections allows citizens to assert their policy preferences and their voices heard. Second, local elections are the way in which citizens govern their localities. The winners at the ballot box impact localities in three ways. First, it directly alters or sustains the composition of local governing boards. Second and related to the first, it determines what public policies that are pursued. Third, it influences the quality of local government services. This directly

impacts citizens' daily lives. By casting a ballot, citizens hold elected officials accountable for decisions made while in office. The act of voting, then, is the primary method of influencing local government.

Despite the importance and potential impact of voting, voter turnout is not high at any level of American government. This is particularly true in local elections. At the national level, voter turnout in the United States is low compared to other industrialized democracies (Powell 1980; Powell 1986), and voter turnout for local elections is abysmal (Bullock 1990; Verba et al. 1995; Sharp 2003).

In local elections, eligible voters are inundated with a variety of additional complexities in order to cast a ballot. These difficulties - existing only at the local level - increase the cost of voting and the burden placed on the voter. For example, local elections are often held at different times of the year than national or statewide elections. Most local elections are non-concurrent (off-year or odd numbered year) elections and/or held during non-traditional months, such as May. Holding elections non-concurrently is a primary reason for low voter turnout at the local level (Wood 2002; Hajnal and Lewis 2003). When an election is held non-concurrently, the public tends to pay less attention to it and fewer resources are dedicated to turnout efforts (Hajnal and Lewis 2003).

Aside from the timing of elections, there is consensus in urban literature that two institutional structures, which are a result of the reforms, have a negative impact on turnout. Both nonpartisan elections and council-manager forms of government decrease voter turnout (Wood 2002; Karning and Walters 1983; Alford and Lee 1968). This is especially prevalent in non-concurrent elections (Hajnal and Lewis 2003).

While it has been argued that low turnout can be an indicator of satisfaction and stability in a democracy (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Weisberg and Grofman 1981), it can also

be a sign of an unhealthy democracy. High participation ensures that public policies will reflect the will of the people and not the interests of a select few (Hudson 2010). As Lijphart (1997) points out, “unequal participation spells unequal influence” (1). Low voter turnout could create a bias in the system as political participation influences ‘who gets what’ (Crosnell paraphrased in Sharp 2003), and ‘who gets what’ is often a zero-sum game in local politics (Kaufmann 2007). Moreover, local governments with high political participation have better policy congruence between the public and office holders (Verba and Nie 1972; Hansen 1975; Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993). If high participation is essential for a healthy democracy, what can be done to encourage voters to vote more often?

One solution offered by scholars is for polities to lower the cost of voting. In theory, if the costs of voting are reduced, then voter turnout should increase (Downs 1957; Aldrich 1993). One approach to reducing the costs of voting would be for the governing systems to alter their election laws. Election laws dictate the time, place, or manner of conducting elections, such as early voting laws, absentee ballot laws, same day voter registration, etc. Polities with election laws that lower the costs of voting, or lower the burdens placed on the voter, are characterized as having liberal voting laws. Similarly, polities that have election laws that increase the costs of voting, or increase the burden of voting, are considered to have conservative voting laws. These types of laws are more restrictive in nature as the voter often has a higher cost associated with casting a ballot.

Scholars have posited that states with liberalized voting laws have higher turnout rates than states with more conservative voting laws (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Powell 1980; Powell 1986; Teixeira 1987). Empirical evidence supports this assertion. Political systems with more conservative voting laws have lower turnout rates (Rusk 1970; Converse 1972; Powell 1980;

Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Powell 1986; Teixeira 1987; Jackman 1987; Dubin and Kalsow 1996; Timpone 1998). This suggests that election laws directly influence voter turnout.

A specific election law that is perceived to lower the cost of voting is early voting. Over half of the states have adopted some method of early voting. The various methods of early voting laws will be discussed in more detail below. The variety of early voting laws found among the states allows scholars to examine the impact that each method has on voter turnout at different levels of government. In this study, I seek to determine how in-person early voting, a specific type of early voting, affects voter turnout in local elections. The next section highlights the significance of local governments in American political life.

Importance of Local Government

Local governments have been and still are a significant and fundamental part of democracy in America. The reason for this is twofold: 1) local governments are an indispensable element of American democracy and 2) an important American philosophy is one of localism.

First, localities are an indispensable element of American democracy because they help maintain security. Mill (1963) illustrates this when he asserts that localities are the “safety-valve of democracy” (186). The independence granted to local governments prevents despotism (Syed 1966). Similarly, Tocqueville (2003) states that “the strength of free nations resides in the township...Without town institutions a nation can establish a free government, but has not the spirit of freedom” (73). Tocqueville suggests that it is only through local governments - and the institutions that compromise them - that a nation can experience genuine freedom. Localities not only develop democracy, according to Tocqueville, but also sustain it (Gannett 2005). Localities sustain American democracy because they are the oldest form of government, they are the governing system closest to the people, they protect and promote democracy, and they foster political participation.

Citizens have a strongly held belief that they ought to manage their own affairs. This belief stems from the notion that sovereignty resides ultimately with the people. The subsequent outcome of this creed is a deep and meaningful attachment to their community. This attachment is the basis of localism advanced by Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson was the first champion of local government. He believed that the smaller the locality, the more likely it was to be democratic (Syed 1966). Democracy, according to Jefferson, thrives in small homogenous units of government because it better promotes and cultivates political participation and an interest in politics. Smaller units of government were more effective at addressing the needs and demands of its citizens, thereby making them more efficient.

The Jeffersonian ideal is still an inherent and central part of American political tradition (Rourke 1964; Syed 1966). His idea of localism underscores the right of localities to self-govern “as an expression of the sovereignty of the individual, derived from the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people” (Syed 1966, 5). This sovereignty is the basis for the autonomy found in local governments. The self-governing nature of local governments compels citizens to play a large role in the direction of public policies as well as who is elected as the decision makers. For example, citizens have direct influence on determining policy issues, such as park locations, trash collection, and the quality of public schools. Citizens can participate and advance their policy stances on any of these issues by attending meetings, voting, contacting their elected officials, etc. Accordingly, citizens develop a political attachment to their community by doing so.

Progressive Reforms

As the population in the United States expanded, “cities were no longer occasional aberrations set in a cluster of comfortable commercial centers and flourishing farm communities—they had become typical, a chosen way of life” (Wood 1979, 34). The development of and

movement to cities produced its own set of troubles. The most predominant problems that emerged at the local level were government corruption and the control party machines exhibited both in and out of government.

It appeared that the Jeffersonian ideal of a “republic-in-miniature” had vanished. The wave of migration to cities revealed the need for the provision of services that local governments failed to offer ((Welch and Bledsoe 1988, Chapter 1; Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). Party machines seized the opportunity and stepped in to deliver these services, which were mainly social services, such as jobs, food, and/or money to those in need or new residents. In return, these individuals provided a vote, which helped the party secure seats in office. The party machine even assisted local businesses by offering avenues for business growth and development (Welch and Bledsoe 1988, Chapter 1; Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). Because the party machine controlled government, it could, for the right price per se, furnish a business with items such as liquor licenses and/or government contracts.

The party machine flourished until the early 20th Century. While there had always been reform voices present, they often failed to make their desired impact on government. However, the Progressive Era gave birth to a reform movement that affected all levels of government. Reformers highlighted the corruption found in American politics and businesses. They were able to successfully pass reforms at the national and state level that included popular election of U.S. Senators, the initiative and referendum, the regulation of liquor sales, the elimination of child labor, and the establishment of the Food and Drug Administration (Welch and Bledsoe 1988). In 1984, the National Municipal League was formed, which encouraged cities to engage in good government practices (Welch and Bledsoe 1988).

In particular, reformers advocated for a myriad of policy changes at the local level. First, they believed that local government would be more efficient if it was run like a business and by experts (Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). To achieve this efficiency, they pushed for city managers. Second, they proposed the non-partisan ballot, which removed any form of party identification on the ballot (Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). Without party identification on the ballot, they argued, voters would be able to make better decisions because they would think about the interests of the city as a whole and not just the political interests asserted by the party machine. Likewise, reformers also recommended at large elections instead of district (or ward) elections (Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). They believed candidates in an at large election would appeal to the needs of the entire city and not just the needs of a single district.

In essence, proponents of the reforms sought to eliminate political corruption and restore good governance within the American political system. Because of the sovereign nature of local governments, localities determined which policies, if any, to adopt. Therefore, not every local government adopted the policies advocated by the reformers. These localities are commonly referred to as non-reform cities. The local governments that adopted reform policies are known as reform cities.

The reforms are the principal reason for the variation of local government structures and local electoral systems. The governmental structures of reform cities tend to have weak political organization because they have adopted at least one of the following measures: non-partisan elections, non-concurrent elections, at-large districts, and/or a council-manager form of government. Aside from the lack of political organization, by having a manager there is likely an absence of a mayoral candidate on the ballot. Therefore, it is difficult for citizens to blame government failures on a specific elected individual. In at-large district elections, voters are often

selecting between candidates they don't know and/or have less knowledge about compared to candidates from their own neighborhood or district. These factors diminish the excitement of the electoral process and negatively impact voter turnout.

On the other hand, non-reform cities embrace features where political organization can occur more easily. Features of non-reform cities include partisan elections, single district elections, and/or a mayor-council form of government. In contrast to reform cities, the electoral process in a non-reform city often is filled with excitement. Their elections have a mayor, thereby creating a high-profile race. Council candidates typically are elected by districts, thereby they tend to be from the neighborhood of the voters electing them. This creates higher levels of name recognition and knowledge about the candidate. And, the party label is present in these elections as they tend to be partisan elections. These factors increase the excitement of the electoral process, and in so doing, increasing turnout at the polls.

This variation of institutional structure found among municipalities influences voter turnout in municipal elections. Previous research indicates that cities that have adopted reform structures depress voter turnout (Caren 2007; Welch and Bledsoe 1988; Bridges 1997; Oliver 2001; Oliver and Ha 2007; Wood 2002). Among the various aspects of the reforms, three key features have been shown to negatively affect voter turnout in municipal elections: non-partisan elections, mayor-council form of government, and non-concurrent elections (Wood 2002; Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Karning and Walters 1983; Alford and Lee 1968). While a thorough discussion of the reforms can be found in Chapter 2, the purpose here is to merely mention what factors influence voter turnout in local elections. Next, I discuss the various types of local governments and provide a definition of local government.

Defining Local Governments

In the United States, the structure of local governments is not only complex but diverse. First, the types of local governments vary from state to state. For example, Connecticut and Rhode Island do not have a county structure. And, a number of states do not possess any form of township governments. Second, states often use differing classification systems to organize their sub county governments; therefore, the level of home rule given to local governments varies. The amount of home rule given to a locality determines what functions it can or cannot perform. For instance, in Michigan, there are townships and charter townships. Townships are a statutory unit of government whose powers are determined by the State of Michigan, whereas charter townships have greater amount of home rule as their charter outlines the duties, responsibilities, and rights. The different classification systems create diversity among local governments not only between the states, but within a state.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), there are 89,004 local government entities, including both general purpose and special purpose governments. To be classified as a local government, the U.S. Census Bureau (2012) states that the locality needs to possess all three of the following attributes: 1) existence as an organized entity, 2) governmental character (e.g. the ability to elect officials), and 3) substantial autonomy (e.g. controlling its own affairs independent of another government structure). This provides a basic definition of local government.

Using this definition, there are five types of local government systems within the United States. There are three general purpose governments: counties, municipalities, towns/townships. Plus two special purpose governments: special districts and school districts. Table 1.1 provides a detailed breakdown of the number of local governments by categories of each local government system.

Table 1.1 Number of Local Governments in the U.S. by Category

General Purpose Governments		Special Purpose Governments	
Counties	3,031	Special Districts	37,203
Municipalities	19,522	School Districts	12,884
Towns/Townships	16,364		
Total	38,917	Total	50,087

* Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012

The vast number of local governments and the multifaceted differences between them creates difficulty in furnishing a definition of local government. Below, I provide a descriptive analysis of the various forms of local government using the definition provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The hope here is to provide insight and clarification on the complex local government system found in the United States. I conclude this section by offering a definition of local government.

Special Purpose Governments

Special purpose governments include both special districts and school districts. The legislation that governs both types varies from state to state. However, special purpose governments have administrative and fiscal autonomy from general purpose governments. These governments typically have a single objective. For example, school districts deal with matters related to local education while special districts handle services including hospitals, water, cemetery upkeep, and mosquito abatement. Next, I provide a descriptive analysis of both special districts and school boards.

Special Districts

By definition, “special district governments are independent, special-purpose governmental units (other than school district governments), that exist as separate entities with substantial administrative and fiscal independence from general-purpose local governments” (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). Typically, special districts are created as a single purpose service provider.

These services range from social services, such as fire protection, to the more monotonous services, such as waste management. They are independent, autonomous entities that can tax, float bonds, and can have a property requirement for voters (Burns 1994). Special districts have more flexible geographical boundaries. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see special districts overlap with other local government systems (Burns 1994). Unsurprisingly, citizens belonging to the same municipality or county government may not receive services by the same special district and/or have multiple special districts providing services. Ultimately, special districts provide citizens with the ability to self-govern, but the additional layer of local government adds to the complexity of it.

School Districts

School boards have been around since 1837 when Massachusetts created the first state school board (Danzberger 1992; 1994). Later, in 1891, Massachusetts enacted legislation giving local school boards financial and administrative authority, which allowed school boards to meet the needs of their district more effectively (Danzberger 1992). The Massachusetts structure became the primary type of school board system found among the various New England states and eventually became the system found largely within the United States (Land 2002).

The school board is important as a local governing entity as it is the primary way in which education is controlled in the United States (Johnson 1988). Education is a topic that everyone is familiar with and cares about (Chubb and Moe 1990). Citizens, through school boards, determine who teaches their children, how the children are taught, where they are taught, and what they are taught. While there is often disagreement among some of these policy areas - such as school prayer, sex education curriculums, and/or school dress policies - everyone within the community believes they have a say in the matter of local education. Thus, local schools are community based because

citizens believe they “could and should be able to govern their own educational affairs” (Chubb and Moe 1990).

While both types of special purpose governments are comprised of elected officials from the community, they can only govern affairs that pertain to their jurisdiction. This is an important distinction to make when examining local governments. This is not to suggest that special purpose governments are not a form of local government, but rather to illustrate their limited role in local matters. The next section highlights the role of general purpose governments, which provide a broader and more extensive range of services and functions.

General Purpose Governments

Counties, towns/townships, and municipalities are all types of general purpose governments. Unlike special districts, general purpose governments engage in a variety of public policies, have diverse economies, and need to manage an array of conflict over a range of issues. At the same time, they need to provide good governance that is expected by residents, who are often their friends and neighbors. Below is a brief overview of each type of general purpose government.

Counties

In the United States, 48 states have county governments. Connecticut and Rhode Island are the exceptions since a functioning county government system is absent in both of these states (U.S. Census Bureau 201). Of all general purpose governments, county governments are the largest, geographically speaking. Generally, the duties performed by county governments are similar and state mandated (Marschall 2010). Examples of their duties include keeping records on births, deaths, and land deeds; conducting elections; and assessing property.

Most county governments are comparable in their functions, but there are exceptions. For example, Alaska has boroughs. A borough in Alaska can fall into two different classifications: incorporated or unincorporated. Incorporated boroughs are independent regional units of government with home rule powers, while unincorporated boroughs are extensions of the state government and not a political subdivision of the state. Therefore, in Alaska, not all boroughs are created equal. The specific classification of boroughs gives some greater autonomy than others.

As mentioned, Connecticut and Rhode Island lack county government structures. Interestingly, both these states are organized into geographical regions referred to as counties. However, without a functioning county government, the primary purpose of the county structure in Rhode Island and Connecticut is simply organizational. In these states, towns play a greater role in the provision of services.

Some areas have even consolidated their county and municipal structures. When a municipality and a county government join forces, it is then considered to be a consolidated government structure. The result of a consolidation is a combined governmental entity with both county and municipal responsibilities. The reasons for consolidation often include creating more efficient government, increasing accountability, and/or creating cost savings. If the county and municipal governments have been consolidated, they are considered by the U.S. Census Bureau to be a municipal entity.

Despite variations, county structures among the states and their roles are similar. They provide services to their constituents, although the level and number of services provided differ from county to county. All county governments have elected boards and are held accountable by their voters. Additionally, all other general purpose governments are typically found within the

borders of county governments. Thus, towns, townships, and municipalities are commonly referred to as sub-county governments.

Towns/Townships

Townships are only found among 20 states within the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). They are found predominately in the Northeast and Midwest and are largely absent in the West and South. There are also different types of townships: civil, judicial, congressional, and charter. Civil townships are the most familiar. They are political subdivisions of the state, are independent governmental units, and have geographical boundaries. Judicial townships are a political subdivision of a county and found primarily in the West. Congressional townships were created without consideration to boundaries. Therefore, they often overlap with other political jurisdictions. Charter townships tend to have a greater amount of home rule because their powers and duties are outlined in their charter. This gives them more autonomy than a statutory township whose powers come from the state.

Township governments and town governments differ. Townships, if given similar powers and functions as a municipality, tend to have municipal structures. Otherwise they have an elected board. The duties of a township can vary. For example, in the Northeast, townships govern schools, while in the Midwest, townships are service providers. In general, townships tend to encompass broad authority and carry out similar duties as municipalities. Towns tend to be governed by the town meeting. In states without a county structure, towns tend to be the primary local government system. The principle difference between towns/townships and municipalities are their means of incorporation.

Municipalities

Currently, there are 19,522 municipal governments in the United States (U.S. Census 2012). The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) defines municipal government as:

political subdivisions within which a municipal corporation has been established to provide general local government for a specific population concentration in a defined area, and includes all active government units officially designated as cities, boroughs (except in Alaska), towns (except in the six New England states, and in Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin), and villages.

For this study, local government will be defined as municipalities. Unlike other types of general purpose governments, such as counties and townships, municipalities can be found all across the United States. As mentioned, the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island do not have counties, and the township form of government is absent in over half of the states. But, every state contains at least one municipal government (U.S. Census Bureau 2012).

Aside from the sheer number of municipal governments found among all 50 states, municipalities are the lowest level of government, and therefore, the government system closest to the people. Municipalities are physically closer since they are more geographically proximate to their residents. Aside from geographic proximity, municipal government boards are comprised of friends, neighbors, and/or family members. Those who govern the municipality are people who residents see at church, PTA meetings, and even the local grocery store. Residents have more direct contact with municipal elected officials and/or administrators than elected officials at the state or national level. Municipalities also give meaning to citizenship. Municipalities have the power to zone. The ability for municipalities to zone permits them to create geographical boundaries demarcating their municipal borders. Through zoning, municipalities can define who is, and who is not, a resident of their community. Citizenship then is conferred by municipalities through zoning - a special power given only to municipal governments.

In short, municipalities can make their own decisions independent of another government system, such as the state or federal government. They are autonomous entities where its citizens determine the manner in which they are governed and by whom they will be governed. They provide all the basic services expected by a local government. Municipalities also give meaning to citizenship. The preceding aspects of municipalities make them the closest form of government to the people. Aside from the features discussed above, data availability is greater and more accessible for municipalities. These are the reasons for defining local governments as municipalities for this project. The next section discusses how the dynamics of local elections are similar among localities but differ from national and state elections. I also address the different approaches to increasing voter turnout in municipal elections.

Local Elections and In-Person Early Voting

Local elections have vastly different dynamics than state or national elections. Yet, the dynamics among the various types of local government and their elections are very similar. First, all local governments practice self-government. This ability to self-govern is a long standing tradition in the United States. Because citizens believe that “sovereignty ought to be diffused to the point of ultimate residence in the individual himself” (Syed 1966, 21), they, in turn, have given local governments a sizeable amount of autonomy. This autonomy keeps the citizen close to the local governing structure. Since it is the local citizens who govern themselves, they develop a sense of community and create a meaning of citizenship.

Second, in local elections, their political context and the impact of their issues tend to be alike. This differentiates them from state or national elections. Unlike state and national elections where the candidate is not personally known by the community, candidates in local elections tend to be neighbors, friends, co-workers, or members from the same organization. This creates a

similar political context among all local elections. Likewise, the issues present in local elections tend to impact citizens more directly than state or national issues. Citizens at the local level care if their trash is picked up, worry about the quality of their water, and are concerned with where the local park or library will be located. The trade-offs of local public policies tend to be more apparent creating a zero-sum game (Kaufmann 2007). For example, if a tax levy for a public school fails, it could mean a layoff of teachers, reduced extra-curricular activities, and/or have no buses to transport students for that school year. A failed property tax increase could lead to less police and fire protection or the closing of parks and/or libraries. Therefore, citizens should have the desire to influence government through elections, however, turnout for local elections are lower than any other type of election.

Voter turnout in local elections is paradoxical. It is where government is closest to those governed and where many first become politically active. Yet, it is also where political participation, specifically voting, is the lowest. If high participation is an indicator of a healthy democracy, then what can be done to increase participation at the local level?

There are various ways to foster voter turnout in local elections. For example, local governments could simplify their ballot, reduce the number of elections held, and/or reduce the number of elected officials. Another possible approach to increasing turnout include making Election Day a holiday, which would ensure everyone has the ability to cast a ballot. Creating easier access to the ballot by easing the registration process through practices such as same day registration could also increase voter turnout.

A particular approach to increasing voter turnout at the local level is to alter the laws governing their elections. Previous research suggests that election laws impact voter turnout (Rusk 1970; Converse 1972; Powell 1980; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Powell 1986; Teixeira 1987;

Jackman 1987; Dubin and Kalsow 1996; Timpone 1998). For example, holding local elections concurrently would increase turnout (Wood 2002). Expanding the number of days an individual can cast a ballot (known as early voting) has also been shown to increase voter turnout at the municipal level (Karp and Banducci 2000; Kousser and Mullin 2007). However, there are a variety of early voting practices found among the states. The next section discusses the various forms of early voting - in particular the method of early voting known as in-person early voting.

Early Voting

Early voting policies differ from state to state. These differences include no excuse absentee voting, in-person early voting, and/or vote by mail elections. Table 1.2 provides a detailed description of the various forms of early voting used by the states.

Over half of the states within the United States have adopted in-person early voting, yet much of the research done thus far on early voting and municipal elections is on vote by mail elections. Studies on vote by mail elections in Oregon and California have shown that early voting does increase turnout at the municipal level (Karp and Banducci 2000; Kousser and Mullin 2007). Because these studies are on vote by mail laws, it leaves unanswered questions about the effects of in-person early voting laws on municipal elections.

In-Person Early Voting versus Vote by Mail

Making the distinction between vote by mail elections and in-person early voting is important because there are considerable differences between vote by mail laws (VBM) and in-person early voting laws. First, VBM laws are only found in two states, Oregon and Washington, while in-person early voting laws can be found in 32 states (NCSL). Since more states have in-person early voting laws than VBM laws, scholars need to understand what effects in-person early voting have on voter turnout in municipal elections.

Table 1.2: Methods of Early Voting Used by States

No Excuse Absentee Voting	State(s) permit any qualified voter to vote absentee without offering an excuse.
In Person Early Voting	State(s) allow any qualified voter to cast a ballot in person during a designated period prior to Election Day. No excuse or justification is required.
Vote By Mail Elections	State(s) automatically mail a ballot to every eligible voter (no request or application is necessary), and the state does not use traditional poll sites that offer in-person voting on Election Day.
In Person Early Voting & No Excuse Absentee Voting	State(s) allow any qualified voter to cast a ballot in person during a designated period prior to Election Day and permit any qualified voter to vote absentee. Both can be done without offering an excuse or giving a justification.

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures website

Secondly, the role of the government, and subsequently the burden placed on the voter, are vastly different between these two methods of early voting. Vote by mail laws, by their nature, require state governments to play a more active role in the voting process. In a vote by mail system, the state government mails all registered voters their ballot for each election even if they have decided not to vote in that particular election. If the voter opts to vote, it is up to the voter to complete the ballot and return it via mail.

Alternatively, the burden to vote remains completely upon the individual in states with in-person early voting. While in-person early voting laws allow one to cast a ballot prior to Election Day, the voter must still make the decision to vote, locate the early voting center, and then go to the early voting center to cast a ballot. The costs of voting are much higher in in-person early voting states than states that have vote by mail elections. Therefore, it is necessary for scholars to know how in-person early voting laws affect municipal elections despite the previous work done by scholars on the effects of vote by mail systems.

With a few exceptions (Karp and Banducci 2000; Kousser and Mullin 2007), early voting studies have not focused on voter turnout in municipal elections. As discussed in the following

section, I hypothesize that in-person early voting has a significant positive impact on municipal turnout.

General Argument

According to the ICMA (2002), 77 percent of municipalities have non-concurrent (odd numbered years) elections. In addition to non-concurrent elections, many municipal governments hold elections in months that are atypical, such as May. Previous research on early voting has almost entirely focused on voter turnout in concurrent election years - where there is a presidential or statewide election (Richardson and Neeley 1996; Lyons and Scheb 1999; Dyck and Gimpel 2005; Karp and Banducci 2001; Burden et al 2009; Gronke et al 2007; Neeley and Richardson 2001; Stein 1998; Gronke et al 2005; Leighley and Nagler 2009). Consequently, the majority of the early voting studies fail to include the years, or months, that the majority of municipalities conduct their elections. By examining non concurrent election years, I can isolate the effects of early voting at the local level.

This project asks a simple, but overlooked question: Does in-person early voting impact voter turnout in municipal elections? While studies on in-person early voting suggest that early voting does not increase turnout (Stein 1998; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Neeley and Richardson 2001), these studies are on state and national elections. Research on early voting that include municipal elections indicate that early voting increases turnout in local elections (Karp and Banducci 2000; Kousser and Mullin 2007). Similarly, I hypothesize that in-person early voting has a significant positive impact on voter turnout in municipal elections. If empirical evidence supports my hypothesis, it would suggest that local democracies benefit the most from the early voting laws. Conversely, if the results of this study do not support my hypothesis, it suggests that in-person early voting may not be the best method of early voting to increase voter turnout. As

other studies on in-person early voting indicate, it does not increase voter turnout in state or national elections. This is not surprising since statewide and national elections tend to be high-stimulus elections which, by their nature, attract a greater number of voters to the polls. On the other hand, most municipal elections tend to be low-stimulus elections thereby often having lower turnout rates than national and statewide elections. The positive effect of early voting may be more pronounced in these low-stimulus elections, which is why I hypothesize a positive relationship between in-person early voting and municipal voter turnout.

Data and Methods

To assess the impact of in-person early voting on voter turnout in municipal elections, I use individual level data to conduct a cross-sectional time series analysis to examine turnout in mayoral elections among the 938 municipalities in Ohio. The data for this project will come from a variety of sources: the Ohio voter file; U.S. Census data; the Ohio Municipal, Township, and School Board Roster; the Ohio Municipal League, and election results from the County Board of Elections.

I collect a variety of information on municipalities for this study. I obtain election results for all mayoral elections within my specified time period. I also collect the number of registered voters in each municipality for each election year in this study. These pieces of information are collected from the 88 County Boards of Elections within the State of Ohio. The U.S. Census data is downloaded from the Census Bureau's website and used to determine the localities' demographic make-up, such as city size. Information obtained from the Ohio Municipal, Township, and School Board Roster, includes a list of all the cities in the State of Ohio as well as their government structure (e.g. mayor-council or council-manager).

Implications

This study has implications in two main areas of scholarship: public policy and the study of local elections. This study examines the impact of a statewide public policy on its subunits of government. Studying early voting at the municipal level will provide an understanding of the effects of state public policies on municipal governments. Because early voting laws impact local governments in the same manner and the dynamics of local elections are similar among localities, the results can be generalized to other local governments as well. This analysis will provide a better understanding of the impact of early voting policies on municipalities and municipal elections in particular, and local elections in general, even if the results suggest early voting has no influence, or a negative influence, on voter turnout.

Public Policy

Early voting laws significantly alter the costs and benefits of voting. This has important consequences for who votes, the manner that votes are translated into legislative seats, and the overall direction of public policy (Marschall 2010). Understanding the impact early voting policies have on local elections is, therefore, essential.

Recently, many states have reexamined their early voting laws. These states have either attempted to or were successful at scaling back the number of days individuals could cast an early vote. For example, two key swing states, Florida and Ohio, have attempted such action. Florida successfully decreased the number of days voters could cast their ballot early from 14 to eight.¹ In 2012, Ohio's Secretary of State Jon Husted attempted to prohibit early voting 72 hours before Election Day except for military personnel.²

¹ FL HB 1355 passed in 2011 and signed by Gov. Rick Scott

² US Supreme Court denied hearing the case, and Husted ordered the 88 County Boards of Elections to hold hours for the 72 hours before Election Day (Sat, Sun, Mon).

It has been just over 20 years since the first state introduced early voting. Yet scholars have not assessed the impact of early voting laws for *all* types of elections. The majority of early voting research has focused on national and statewide elections. While there have been a few studies on municipal elections in vote by mail systems, the impact of the other forms of early voting on municipal, school board, township, and other local elections has yet to be determined. Since early voting is a controversial public policy, understanding its impact at all levels is necessary, especially if early voting policies are being altered. This study advances the knowledge of early voting policies by examining its effects on voter turnout in local elections.

Local Elections

A specific study within the field of urban politics is that of local elections and political participation. While studies of local participation far and few between, studies specifically on municipal elections are even more uncommon (Marschall 2010; Clark and Krebs 2012). Additionally, Sapotichne et al (2007) found that studies on voting behavior are underrepresented in citations in urban journals. Given the close proximity of local governments to their citizens and the myriad of research opportunities that local elections present, it is surprising that local elections have been largely overlooked by scholars.

Studies on local elections that focus on turnout have concentrated on three explanatory factors. Those factors include 1) electoral and institutional arrangements, 2) candidate characteristics, and 3) local context (Marschall 2010). This study examines two of the three explanatory factors: electoral and institutional arrangements and local context. Electoral and institutional arrangements focus on the rules that govern elections (e.g. timing of elections) and the forms of government (e.g. manager versus mayor systems) respectively. Local context investigates how variables, such as the population or size of the local entity being studied, affect voter turnout.

In addition, this study is a macro-level study; the municipality is the unit of analysis. This is unique as many of the studies on early voting have not had this focus. Previous studies on early voting and local elections have used the precinct as the unit of analysis and included municipal elections as variables (see Karp and Banducci 2000; Kousser and Mullin 2007). Since I have municipalities as the unit of analysis, it will provide a unique insight on how election laws influence voter turnout within the municipal settings and will contribute to a better understanding of voter turnout in municipal elections specifically. However, the findings of this study can be generalized to other forms of local government and local elections overall.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapters 2 and 3, I provide a literature review on municipal governments and participation and early voting respectively. In particular, Chapter 2 gives a detailed discussion on the importance of local governments and local elections in American democracy. I then discuss the impact of local governments' administrative and electoral structures on political participation. I conclude this chapter with an analysis of the characteristics of local governments that scholars have found to influence voter turnout in local elections. Chapter 3 provides an overview of early voting and its impact on voter turnout in elections, and particularly municipal elections. Chapter 4 provides a thorough discussion on the methodology and data collection procedures used for this study.

In Chapter 5, I develop and test my model. Using the data I have collected and controlling for the key municipal variables indicated in the literature, I examine my hypothesis by employing a cross-sectional time series analysis for the years 2001-2013. Since the State of Ohio implemented early voting in 2006, this will be the interruption year. The observations will be aggregated to the municipal level. I contend that while in-person early voting laws have not increased turnout in

national or statewide elections, it has a significant positive impact on turnout in municipal elections suggesting that municipalities have benefited the most from early voting laws.

Chapter 6 will summarize the findings and discuss their implications. I expect in-person early voting to have a positive effect on voter turnout in municipal elections. These local democracies are likely to be the greatest beneficiary of early voting laws. Identifying what contextual factors of municipalities contribute to early voting in municipal elections will give scholars a deeper understanding of how institutional and local contextual factors impact turnout in municipal elections. Gaining a better understanding of how in-person early voting in particular affects turnout in municipal elections is essential. As Election Day continuously transforms, it is imperative we understand what impact election reforms have on political participation at all levels of government.

In this introduction, I have illustrated the importance of local governments to the American political system as well as the significance of local elections. In the next chapter, I provide a comprehensive analysis on local governments and local elections in the United States. I pay particular attention to the structures of local governments and how they impact political participation. I further ground this work in the theories on local governments discussed above.

CHAPTER 2

STRUCTURE MATTERS:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES AND VOTER TURNOUT

Localities typically are thought of as ‘creatures of the state,’³ but in practice, they exercise a significant amount of autonomy. That autonomy is a defining feature of the American political system, and permits localities to make public policy choices that impact the daily lives of their citizens. They determine where homes can be built, where and what businesses can operate within their borders, as well as what services they provide to their residents. In turn, citizens participate in local elections to hold elected officials accountable for their policy choices.

Local governments, since their inception, have been an avenues for individuals to practice self-government and participate politics. This invites two assumptions: individuals have the right to self-govern - an assumption that has broad support - and participation at the local level should be promoted.

Promoting participation at the local level encompasses two streams of philosophical debate: disagreement over what characteristic of local government create an optimal environment for participation, and disagreement over who should participate at the local level. Which characteristics of local government facilitate participation? One group argues that small, homogenous republics are best. Another contends that large heterogeneous populations are more effective. This debate continues today among scholars who study urban/local politics.

³ Justice Dillon in *Atkins v. Kansas* (1903) declared municipalities as “creatures of the state”

At the local level, political participation is largely tied to their geographical environment⁴ (see Marschall 2010; Baybeck 2014). Huckfeldt (1979) theorized that participation was linked to the status of one's neighborhood. He found evidence supporting his claim. While Huckfeldt empirically tested his theoretical claim, he was not the first to theorize that geographical environment affects participation. During the nation's founding, the Anti-Federalists and Federalists quarreled over the optimal size for the newly created nation. Likewise Tocqueville wrote about the relationship between local governments' structure and participation among its citizens. Early in America's history, theories surrounding the importance of geographical context and environment were present.

Exactly how geographical context influences participation is a debate that has yet to be settled among scholars. Geographical context can be broken down into two sub-categories: local context and institutional (or structural) context. Scholars who study local politics typically agree that local context matters.⁵ Local contexts refers to the characteristics of localities, such as their size and demographic composition. The philosophical disagreement among scholars is over *what* characteristics create the optimal environment for political participation at the local level. Jeffersonians contend that small, homogenous republics are best at cultivating participation. Alternatively, others maintain that large, heterogeneous populations are better suited to promote participation. Both schools of thought, however, signify that local context is important and does influence political participation. Scholars have found statistically significant correlations between local context and political participation (see Oliver 1999, 2000, 2001; Oliver and Ha 2007).

⁴ Individual factors, such as socioeconomic status, or mobilization also play a role in an individual participating in politics, however, local context is an additional factor taken into account when examining local participation.

⁵ Some don't necessarily agree that context matters. See King 1996.

However, this centuries old debate continues today among scholars who study urban and/or local politics (see Kelleher and Lowery 2004).

Much like local context, the importance of a local government's institutional context is not without contention. The disagreement here is over the impact of local government structures on participation. These institutional structures include the type of government (i.e. mayor-council versus council-manager) and the electoral structures (i.e. the timing of the election and method of selection). As mentioned, Tocqueville, early in America's history, commented on how local government structure influenced local participation.

Who should participate at the local level? During the Progressive Era, reformers sought to change the political, institutional, and electoral structures of local governments so that politics and administration would be separate. The reformers claimed that only the elites should participate and govern localities. Opponents of the reformers argued that there should be mass participation at the local level. Yet, both sides believed that the structure of local government impacted who participated (Welsh and Bledsoe 1988).

Scholars who study local and urban politics recognize the impact institutional structures have on local participation. Local governments that adopted aspects of the reform measures, and subsequently de-politicized local government, typically have lower turnout than localities that did not adopt these measures (see Caren 2007; Wood 2002; Hajnal and Lewis 2003). Empirical research demonstrates that these structures matter since they influence *who* participates. In turn, who participates can effect which public policies are adopted and the overall direction of local government. The political institutions of local governments have a profound impact on political participation (Milner 2002).

Should local governments promote participation? Should there be mass participation or participation by a select few? What form of local government best promotes participation? How do the institutional and electoral structures of localities impact participation? In this chapter, I address these questions. I begin by discussing the philosophies of local government focusing on the debates over local and institutional contexts of localities. I examine the implications that both the size and institutional structures have on local voter turnout. I then move to an overview of local participation, focusing on why it is an important feature of American democracy. I conclude with a discussion on how the structure of localities matter with regards to voter turnout. In future chapters, I apply these concepts to my data. The purpose here is to give a comprehensive overview of local governments and how their structures impact participation.

Philosophies of Local Government

The doctrine of the sovereignty of the people asserts that the people are the ultimate authority. Therefore, the government derives its powers from the people. The Federalist Papers support this distinction. In Federalist #46, the authors state that “the federal and state governments are in fact but different agents and trustees of the people.” Even Jefferson (1993), an Anti-Federalist, wrote, “I consider the people who constitute a society or nation as the source of all authority in that nation” (294). The sovereign, then, is the person, or a body of people. There is no entity politically superior as the “people are the source of legal power and authority in the United States” (Eaton 1900, 442). Thus, powers are reserved for the people unless they are delegated to some other government entity.

Localism, advocated by Jefferson, underscores the right of localities to self-govern “as an expression of the sovereignty of the individual, derived from the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people” (Syed 1966, 5). People are the “only source of power” and this is most noticeable at the

local level because it has the most “immediate effect” (Tocqueville 2003, 74). For Tocqueville, this was an identifying feature of the American political system.

The autonomous nature of localities expects citizens to share in local policy decisions and to participate in selecting decision makers through elections. For example, citizens should have direct influence on determining public policy issues, such as park locations, trash collection, and the quality of public schools. Citizens can participate and advance their policy stances on any of these issues by attending meetings, voting, contacting their elected officials, etc. Arguably, participation at the local level fosters an attachment to their community.

While advocates for both small and large local governments agree that the people are the ultimate sovereign and have the right to self-govern, they disagree on the both the size and composition of governments. Aristotle, the Anti-Federalists, and in particular, Thomas Jefferson, argue that democracy would be most advantageous in small units of government. The Federalists, and James Madison specifically, suggest that large, heterogeneous republics are better because they protect public interest. The philosophical differences between these two sides are over the features or characteristics of national government systems, yet have application to local governments. While seemingly unimportant, these features have profound effects on political participation at the local level.

Size and Demographic Composition of Local Government

The ideal size and composition of governmental units is a centuries old debate. Aristotle suggests that governments should be comprised of small republics. These city-states should be large enough for self-sufficiency, but small enough to foster a feeling of closeness between the citizen and the government. This bond between the citizen and the government is created because man holds office and takes part in the affairs of government. Holding elected positions, for

Aristotle, was an essential aspect of citizenship. As an active participant in political affairs, men would develop a deep attachment to the government system he is associated with.

When establishing the government system for the United States, the Anti-Federalists reasoned that self-government should consist of a patchwork of small, limited, homogenous units. In this type of government system, consensus could be reached more efficiently and conflict avoided because the citizens would have common and shared interests. This was the means to good governance. It was only through small, limited government that they could ensure self-government and preserve liberty.

Conversely, the Federalists maintained that only in large republics with a strong government could the evils that plagued governments (man's own self-interest and factions) be curtailed. Self-interest could only be prevented by establishing a system that could check it. Factions were created when groups of men with the same interest united. A large republic could overcome these ills because interests would be more varied, a larger number of individuals would be represented, and it would extend over a geographically large territory. Through large governments, both majority and minority rights could be secured and justice obtained.

The arguments between the Anti-Federalist and Federalists of the late 18th Century predominately focused on national government systems. However, their normative arguments have important implications for local governments. Do size and composition of a unit of government influence participation? Should local governments be large and heterogeneous? Or small and homogenous? While the arguments asserted by the Anti-Federalists and Federalists are normative in nature, they continue to be debated, and empirically tested, by urban and local government scholars. This section takes a deeper look at both of these philosophies and the empirical evidence supporting each claim.

Small, Homogeneous Localities Promote Participation

Building off of the Anti-Federalist arguments, Thomas Jefferson asserts that America should be comprised of small, homogenous wards with yeoman farmers-the “chosen people of God”-working the land and achieving their own destiny (Jefferson 1993, 259). The wards would be small and numerous so that every citizen could participate in the affairs of that neighborhood. Jefferson (1993) reasoned that every county should be divided into hundreds of wards because it was the “little republics [that] would be the main strength of the great one” (Jefferson 1993, 554). This, for Jefferson, was the only way the new country would survive.

Jefferson advocated for small ward republics because he believed they were the best way to promote participation. For Jefferson, the principal role of government was to citizens could participate “directly and personally” (Syed 1966). The ward system Jefferson idealized allowed for maximum participation by citizens because it provided an opportunity for direct democracy, which was the essence of republicanism (Syed 1966). For Jefferson, government became more pure as it grew closer to the people; the ward system exemplified this (Syed 1966).

During his visit to the United States, Tocqueville observed town governments in New England that promoted maximum participation and were a forum for direct democracy. Town meetings were the primary way which Americans participated in governing their localities. The freemen of the community would gather to discuss local affairs. A moderator would preside over the meetings. Here, the townsmen would pass resolutions and elect or appoint individuals to their governing boards. In doing so, they exercised democratic principles.

Tocqueville (2003) indicates that citizens participated in their local government because they feel responsible for governing their community, thereby suggesting that the ideas of participation and citizenship are closely related. When an individual becomes involved in local

politics, they develop a sense of attachment to their community. Rousseau also indicates that participation “increases the feeling among individual citizens that they ‘belong’ in their community” (Pateman 1970, 27). Participation - a vital aspect of citizenship – creates a bond between citizens and their community. This attachment is the basis of localism.

The Jeffersonian ideal has become part of American political tradition (Rourke 1964; Syed 1966). This can be seen two ways: normatively and empirically. Localism suggests ‘small is beautiful.’ These beliefs suggests that small, homogenous government entities are better at developing a meaningful understanding of citizenship, promote participation, increase interest in politics, and increase political efficacy. In essence, "small localities facilitate participation because of the shared values they foster in the ease of participation they afford" (Kelleher and Lowery 2004, 721-722).

Scholars have examined normative assumptions of small local governments. One of their major claims is that small governments promote participation. Verba and Nie (1972), and more recently Oliver (2000, 2001), found that participation is higher in smaller localities than large ones. Oliver reasons that large local governments make civic action more difficult, which leads to a decrease in civic activity.

Oliver’s findings provide empirical support as well as normative. Using data from the 1990 American Citizen Participation Study and the 1990 Census, Oliver (2000) discovered that the size of a municipality has a profound effect on political participation. In particular, he found that “people in smaller places are more civically involved” (Oliver 2000, 371). He attributes this to the differences in social relationships and psychological orientations of citizens in larger and smaller municipalities. He suggests that in larger localities there is less attachment because citizens are less likely to know their neighbors, and be less socially connected. In essence, Oliver suggests that

the lack of attachments within larger municipalities has an overall negative impact on political participation.

By contrast, it has also been shown that the small localities promote civic attitudes, increase interest in politics, and have higher levels of political efficacy. For instance, in their analysis, Finifter and Abramson (1975) observed that small municipalities promote civic attitudes. Similarly, Oliver and Ha (2007), when studying suburban communities, noticed individuals in small suburbs are more engaged in local politics. Individuals in smaller localities also have a greater sense of political efficacy because they have more in common with their neighbors (Oliver 2000).

Fittingly, Jefferson argued that large republics were not capable of offering the same benefits that smaller republics could. He believed cities were akin to “sores” on the human body. Like sores, cities weaken the Union. He reasoned that the smaller the locality, the more likely it was to be democratic (Syed 1966). In short, smaller units of government were more effective at addressing the needs and demands of its citizens, thereby making them more efficient at managing local affairs and encouraging participation.

Large, Heterogeneous Localities Promote Participation

While never distinctly discussing localities, James Madison does assert that large, heterogeneous populations are better at promoting democracy. In Federalist 10, Madison argues that large republics are the only way to ensure that the will of the people will be protected. Large republics offer more, and better, options for electing representatives of “fit” character because there would be more candidates from which to choose. Because there would be more citizens choosing representatives in large republics, it would be difficult for an “unworthy” candidate to win would undergo greater scrutiny by a larger electorate. Large republics contain a greater variety

of interests making it less probable for a majority to invalidate the rights of the minority. Simply put, large republics curtail factions; and safeguard public interests and individual liberties.

Unlike Jefferson, Madison opposed ward republics. In Madison's view of government, representation is the epitome of republicanism not direct democracy (Syed 1966). Ward republics permit factions because citizens have the same interests thereby creating local majorities. These local majorities threatened the very essence of republicanism. For Madison, government should separate itself from citizens through representation (Syed 1966). The more removed citizens were from government, the more pure it became (Syed 1966).

While Madison's writings focused on the national government, his arguments have found a home in urban and local literature. It has been argued that larger is better because large, heterogeneous municipalities foster participation (Kelleher and Lowery 2004). Normatively, large, heterogeneous localities also often have more conflict over political issues because the demographic composition is more diverse, therefore, interests are more varied. This conflict within a community spurs citizens to mobilize either in support of or against the issue at hand. It is because of this conflict, that large, heterogeneous localities have higher rates of political mobilization (Kelleher & Lowery 2004).

Empirical evidence that supports this normative claim indicates a positive relationship between large localities and participation. Milbrath (1965) suggests that the larger the community, the higher the rate of political participation. Similarly, Fischer (1975) found that residents of larger cities have a higher interest in politics. In relationship to turnout and the size of localities, Kesselman (1966) observed that as the size of the community increases, turnout for national elections increases.

By contrast, Oliver (2000, 2001) finds a negative relationship between large local governments and participation. However, scholars offer two primary reasons for this disparate finding. The first reason is the complexity of large governments. Finifter and Abramson (1975) suggest that lower participation occurs in larger municipalities because of the complex bureaucracy associated with larger local governments. If the system is complex, the costs of participation are high. If costs are high, participation tends to be low (Downs 1957).

The second reason for low participation in large localities is associated with the attachment individuals establish with their locality. Fisher, (1975) and Verba and Nie (1972), suggest that in large municipalities there is greater physical and psychological distance between citizens and political officials. In a similar vein, Oliver (2000) states that “as cities size increases, people are less likely to know their neighbors and less likely to have social contacts that are geographically proximate” (370). Essentially Fisher, Verba, Nie, and Oliver all suggest that the size of the locality shapes the connection citizens develop for their community.

Institutional Structures and Participation

Size and composition of governments while important are not the only points of contention regarding local governments and participation. The institutional context of local governments plays a key role in understanding local participation. Institutional contexts refers to “specific institutional structures, rules and procedures, that formally or informally define relationships among individuals and in turn influence individual behavior” (Johnson, Shively and Stein, 1999, 3). At the local level, this includes the structure of the locality (e.g. council-manager versus mayor-council) and the electoral rules that govern it (e.g. method of representation).

In his analysis of democracy in the United States, Tocqueville (2003) admired the high levels of participation at the local level. He observed how the institutional structure of local

governments influenced participation. Public duties of local governments were “numerous” and “divided” among the citizens (Tocqueville 2003, Chapter 5). He reasoned that individuals were aware of local matters and would partake in the decision-making process to address them. Tocqueville (2003) believed that individuals were devoted to their local government because they help run it (82). Local governments and the participation of their citizens were, for Tocqueville, the reason democracy in America was so remarkable.

Local governments have undergone many changes since Tocqueville’s visit to the United States. The reforms that transpired during the Progressive Reform Movement of the early 20th Century had a sizable impact on local participation. Fittingly, during this movement, there was a debate over the institutional, political, and electoral structures of local governments. Echoing Tocqueville, both supporters and opponents of the reforms believed that institutional and electoral structures of local government impacted political participation (Welsh and Bledsoe 1988, xiv). As research indicates, the structure of governing institutions is a key factor in local electoral participation (Sharp 2003; Hajnal and Lewis 2003).

The Reform Movement

The reform movement began between 1890 and 1930 and was closely linked to the Progressive Movement. Largely due to the influx of immigrants, the population of the cities were growing. Municipal governments were unable or opted not to provide basic services, which offered an opportunity for political parties to intervene and fill the void. The result was the genesis of the party machine and ultimately corruption-both in and out of local government.

Party machines controlled many local governments. The goal of the party machine was simple: secure votes, win elections, and control local government. They achieved their goal by offering social services, patronage, and favors to the urban residents, mainly the poor and new

immigrants (Welch and Bledsoe 1988, Chapter 1; Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). These services and favors could be offered because the party machine used their government connections to obtain police protection, government contracts, and special privileges for businesses (Welch and Bledsoe 1988, Chapter 1; Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). In turn, the recipients would ‘pay back’ the party by voting for those on the party ticket. The party machine included ethnic groups, organized labor, blue-collar workers, and immigrants who were traditionally excluded from the political process (Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). Many immigrants used their involvement with the party machine to climb up the social ladder.

At the local level, the reformers sought to improve municipal government under the guise of curtailing government corruption and creating a more efficient government. Their political ethos focused on the idea that “public interest should prevail,” ‘politics’ was unacceptable, and that municipal government should be run by those who were best qualified to manage public affairs (Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). Supporters for local government reforms included liberals, reporters, professors, and predominately upper-class, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant individuals who sought to regain control of local government (Dye and MacManus 2012).

To achieve their goals, proponents of the reforms pushed for changes in the electoral and institutional structures of local governments. They recruited educated, upper-class, typically successful business owners to seek office and pushed for city managers (Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). By having a council-manager form of government, reformers argued, localities could separate the business of government from the politics of government, which would make it more honest and less corrupt.

To ensure public interest would prevail, reformers aimed on altering the electoral system in two ways. First, they proposed the elimination of political parties from the political process via

a nonpartisan ballot (Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). A nonpartisan ballot removes any form of party identification. Without party identification on the ballot, they reasoned, voters would be able to make better decisions because they would think about the interests of the city as a whole and not just the political interests asserted by the party machine. The second change to the electoral system included at-large elections instead of district (or ward) elections (Dye and MacManus 2012, Chapter 11). The reformers believed candidates in an at-large elections would appeal to the needs of the entire city and not just the needs of a single district.

Opponents maintained that the changes to local government proposed by the reformers were actually created to exclude certain groups from the political system. They claimed that the structural changes professed by the reformers were a mechanism to decrease political power among the groups traditionally excluded, but were included by the party machines (Burnham 1982). In particular, they claimed these reforms reduced the political power of immigrants and the working class and increased political power among the elite (Burnham 1982; Welch and Bledsoe 1988).

“Both supporters and opponents to the reforms obviously believed that structures impact the kinds of people elected to office, the way the political process works when decisions are being made, and the nature of those decisions” (Welch and Bledsoe 1988, xiv). While opponents claimed the reforms would, in essence, alienate certain groups from the political system, the reformers maintained that the changes to the political, institutional, and electoral structures of localities would produce a more honest, efficient, and effective government (Welch and Bledsoe 1988, xiii). And, this would promote good governance and public policies that benefited the public as a whole.

The proposed structural changes to local governments artfully redefined who was included in the electorate at the local level. Broadly speaking, the adoption of the reforms had a devastating

effect on turnout in local elections. Scholars have consistently found that turnout is depressed in localities that adopted the reforms (see Lineberry & Folwer 1967; Alford & Lee 1968; Bridges 1997; Karnig and Walter 1983; Wood 2002; Caren 2007). As Teixeira (1987) indicates, turnout never reached the levels attained before the reforms. The lack of interest in politics and political participation was directly related to the institutional structures put in place by reformers (Bridges 1997). A result of the reforms is a government system that is less responsive to elections (Lineberry and Fowler 1967). The reform structures also diminish the ability for citizens to maintain accountability of government (Sharp 2003).

According to Bridges (1997), reform governments create barriers to voting and participation and insulate politicians and government from the demands of lower income and ethnic groups. The findings produced by scholars who examine the effect of the reforms on participation illustrate the importance of institutional structures. "It is clear that institutional arrangements associated with "reform" government, such as at-large election of city council members, nonpartisan elections, and the replacement of directly elected mayors with professionally credentialed, appointed city managers, have come at a price" (Sharp 2003, 71).

It should be noted that not every local government adopted the structures advocated by the reformers. These localities are commonly referred to as unreform cities. The local governments that adopted reform policies often did so in a piecemeal fashion-adopting some policies but not others. These localities are known as reform cities. Table 2.1 illustrates the diversity of municipal administrative and electoral system as a result of the reforms. Today, these reforms are the principal reason for the variation of local institutional and electoral structures found among localities.

The institutional structures of reform cities tend to have weak political organization because they have adopted at least one of the following measures: nonpartisan elections, non concurrent elections, at-large districts, and/or a council-manager form of government. Aside from the lack of political organization by having a manager, there is likely an absence of a mayoral candidate on the ballot. Therefore, it is difficult for citizens to ‘blame’ government failures on a specific elected individual. In at-large district elections, voters are often selecting between candidates they don’t know and/or have less knowledge about compared to candidates from their own neighborhood or district. These factors coupled together minimize the ‘excitement’ of the electoral process and negatively impact voter turnout.

On the other hand, unreform cities embrace features where political organization can occur more easily. Features of unreform cities include partisan elections, single district elections, and/or a mayor-council form of government. In contrast to reform cities, the electoral process in an unreform city often is filled with excitement. Their elections include a mayor candidate, thereby creating a high-profile race. Council member candidates tend to be from a single district, thus from the neighborhood of the voters electing them. This creates higher levels of name recognition and knowledge about the candidate. And, the party label is typically present in these elections as they tend to be partisan elections. These factors increase the excitement of the electoral process, and in so doing, increasing turnout at the polls.

These two types of local government structures tend to dominate the American landscape and are the primary focus of this project. However, more recently, scholars have suggested that local governments may be more dynamic than these two legal descriptions reveal. Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood (2004) suggest that there has been an emergence of the adaptive city. There are three types of adaptive cities: adaptive political, conciliated/fully adaptive, and adaptive

Table 2.1 Percent Break Down of Municipal Forms of Government

<i>Administrative Structure</i>	
Council-Manager	59%
Mayor-Council	33%
Other	8%
<i>Electoral Structure</i>	
Partisan Elections	21%
Non-Partisan Elections	80%
At-Large Elections	66%
District/Ward Elections	17%
Combination of At-Large and District/Ward Elections	17%

* Source: IMCA 2011 Municipal Form of Government Survey

administrative (Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004a; Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004b). Adaptive political municipalities have government structures that resemble mayor-council municipalities, but have adopted various reforms that include structural characteristics of council-manager municipalities (Frederickson and Johnson 2001; Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004a). Likewise, council-manager municipalities that have adopted some structural characteristics of mayor-council municipalities are referred to as adapted administrative municipalities (Frederickson and Johnson 2001; Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004a). Finally there is conciliated or fully adapted city, which is defined as having neither an exclusive separation of powers model (i.e. mayor-council structure) nor a unity of powers model (i.e. council-manager structure) (Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004b). These conciliated or fully adapted municipalities have a chief administrative officer, directly elected mayor, both district and at-large council elections, and the mayor serves on council and either is full time or part time (Frederickson and Johnson 2001; Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004a, Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood 2004b).

The Impact of the Reforms on Local Participation

As mentioned, research indicates that cities with reform structures have comparatively lower voter turnout (Caren 2007; Welch & Bledsoe 1988; Bridges 1997; Oliver 2001; Oliver & Ha 2007; Wood 2002). Among the various aspects of the reforms, three key features have been shown to negatively affect voter turnout in municipal elections: nonpartisan elections, council-manager form of government, and non concurrent elections (Wood 2002; Hajnal & Lewis 2003; Karning and Walters 1983; Alford & Lee 1968).

Nonpartisan elections eliminated the party machine. By having a nonpartisan ballot, the party affiliation is removed. Candidates running for office in a nonpartisan election run without a party label for voters to identify with. For instance, the City of Oklahoma, both the mayor and city council candidates run on a nonpartisan ballot. The primary election for mayor is held in March. If no candidate receives a majority vote, then the top two vote getters run in a general election in April. The general election would then declare the winner for the mayoral race. For the voter, moving to a nonpartisan ballot means the party cue is removed, thereby increasing the costs of voting (Karning and Walter 1983). When the costs of voting are high, turnout tends to be low (Downs 1957).

Examining the impact of a nonpartisan ballot on turnout has mixed results. Early research by Karning and Walter (1983) and Alford and Lee (1968) finds that nonpartisan elections have lower turnout rates. More recently, scholars have found no significant difference in turnout rates between partisan and nonpartisan ballots (Lublin and Tate 1995; Wood 2002) expect when the elections are close (Caren 2007). The difference in findings is likely do to the statistical techniques utilized by the authors; the latter scholars use regression analysis while the former group does not. The more recent findings are also in line with research suggesting that party affiliation is not salient

in local elections (Peterson 1981; Kaufmann 2007) and politics at the local level are more allocative in nature (Kaufmann 2007).

Much like the nonpartisan ballot, holding non concurrent elections (elections held in odd numbered years) increases the cost of voting. When local elections are prohibited from coinciding with other major elections, such as a presidential election, they don't receive as much attention and have few resources dedicated to voter turnout (Wood 2002; Hajnal and Lewis 2003). This in turn results in lower voter turnout compared to local elections held concurrently with major elections (i.e. presidential elections). If local elections were held at the same time as presidential elections, it is estimated that turnout would increase by as much as 36 percent (Hajnal and Lewis 2003).

However, unlike research on the nonpartisan ballot, there is consensus on the impact of non concurrent elections. Holding a local election non concurrently has consistently been shown to reduce turnout (Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Caren 2007; Wood 2002). "Cities that hold elections concurrently with state and national elections have about a 29 percent higher voter turnout than cities who do not hold concurrent city elections" (Wood 2002, 228). The timing of an election, more than any other institutional factor, has the largest negative impact on voter turnout (Caren 2007; Wood 2002).

Another aspect of the reforms was the introduction of council-manager form of government. Research has frequently shown that the council-manager form of government decreases turnout (Karnig and Walter 1983; Alford and Lee 1968; Wood 2002; Hajnal and Lewis 2003). And, municipalities with a mayor-council form of government have higher turnout rates (Caren 2007; Oliver 2001).

Previous scholarship has indicated that the laws governing local governments' institutional and electoral structures impact participation, specifically voter turnout. Table 2.2 provides a summary of local government structures and their influence local voter turnout. Typically, reform cities have a lower turnout than unreform cities suggesting that institutional and electoral structures play a meaningful role in local participation. Participants influence the direction of local public policies, the composition of governing bodies, and who benefits from the public policies.

The debate over the reforms focused on two important features of democracy: representation and participation. The question of representation centered on who should be represented and which method of representation should be utilized (Welch and Bledsoe 1988; Hayes 1964). With regards to participation, and more imperative to this project, the question became who should participate in local affairs? Should the local political system encourage mass participation? Or should it only encourage those who were educated and had a stake in local government to participate? In short, should electoral participation encompass the masses or a select few? This debate continues among scholars today and is the subject of the next section.

Local Participation-Does It Really Matter?

As Tocqueville (2003) indicates, high participation in local affairs is a distinctive and important aspect of the American political system. He applauded the high rates of participation found among localities. Key aspects of a democracy are the concepts of consent and legitimacy. Tocqueville reasoned that individuals participated in the decision-making process of local government because it was a way to consent and provide legitimacy to the local governing entity. In the New England towns, Tocqueville observed how the townsmen came together to discuss local matters. Being an active participant in the decision making process, an individual exerts their right to be heard. Since those affected by the decision have been given a chance to be heard, the outcome of the decision is perceived as legitimate.

Table 2.2 Local Government Structures and Expectations of Local Voter Turnout	
<i>Low Voter Turnout Expected When:</i>	<i>High Voter Turnout Expected When:</i>
Nonpartisan electoral system is used	Partisan elections, especially when competitive
Council-Manager form of Government	Mayor-Council form of Government
Conduct Elections in Odd Numbered Years	Conduct Elections in Even Numbered Years
Homogenous Population	Heterogeneous Population

*Adopted from Dye and MacManus 2012

While Tocqueville paints a splendid picture of participation at the local level, not all scholars agree that high participation is necessary for a healthy democracy. What level of participation should be desired is a reoccurring debate. How much participation is necessary? In a democracy, are high levels of turnout needed? Or is it acceptable for a democracy to have low levels of turnout?

Lower Participation is Best

Some scholars argue that low levels of participation is an indicator for satisfaction and stability in a democracy (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954; Weisberg and Grofman 1981). Low levels of participation creates stability within the political system and limits conflict. It indicates that citizens are content with public policies and elected officials. In their study of voter alienation, satisfaction and indifference, Weisberg and Grofman (1981) found that voters abstain from voting if they like both candidates. In other words, candidate satisfaction suppresses overall turnout (Weisberg and Grofman 1981).

In a local political context, voters can use either exit or voice (Hirschman 1970). Exit is escaping from the undesired condition while voice involves an attempt to change the condition (Hirschman 1970). At the local level, an individual could opt to exit thereby moving to a new locality for better services, such as a better school system. However, the ability for individuals to

exit one locality in favor for another is typically not a feasible option. Moving costs money, which not everyone has. If one cannot utilize exit, they turn to voice (Hirschman 1970).

If a voter becomes dissatisfied, they can use their 'voice' and vote against policies and candidates with whom they disagree (Hirschman 1970; Hirschman 1980). Voice can mean individual voice, such as calling a local official and complaining, or collective voice, where voters as a whole can participate by voting, marching, protesting, etc. (Dowding and John 2008).

Unsatisfied voters can utilize the collective voice and engage in protests, marches or riots. These are "political explosions" that are sudden and occur when there is an intense preference for a certain public policy (Hirschman 1980). In Dowding and John's (2008) study of UK residents and public service satisfaction, they found that dissatisfied individuals were more likely to vote and engage in other collective participation forms (i.e. marches). "The discontented customers or members could become so harassing that their protests would at some point hinder rather than help" (Hirschman 1980, 31) suggesting that sharp increase in participation may lead to more conflict than a democracy can handle.

Accordingly, some citizens are highly active, some are not, and some fall somewhere in the middle (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954). This distribution of political activity works because the political system is threatened when too many individuals participate. If individuals do not participate normally, they may not have a commitment to democratic values, therefore, when these individuals participate, they may be prone to support more authoritarian solutions to societal problems (Hudson 2010). Thus, political apathy and inactivity make the political system more stable since high levels of participation would collapse the political system (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954).

Higher Participation is Best

Alternatively, low participation can also be a sign of an unhealthy democracy. This school of thought claims high levels of participation are needed because it confers legitimacy of a political system, provides a mandate to govern, offers control over and accountability of elected officials, and reduces the bias in policy outcomes. Voter turnout is a widely used approach of establishing the legitimacy of the political system (Clark and Krebs 2012).

High levels of participation signify that the newly elected governing body has a mandate to govern and provides legitimacy to the political system (Dahl 1956). If voter turnout is low, it may call into question the legitimacy of a given political system. For instance, Wilks-Heeg and Blick (2009) suggest that turnout in local elections is too low to offer adequate legitimacy to their political systems. By having low turnout, it is difficult to argue that citizens have a reasonable degree of accountability over their elected officials. Additionally, low voter turnout creates difficulty in declaring that election results are an indicator of the citizens' policy preferences.

Low voter turnout also makes it harder to ensure accountability of elected officials. Newton's (1976) study illustrates just how sensitive elected officials are to constituents' preferences. In an English city, local officials kept rent down due to fear of being voted out of office when housing was a local campaign issue (Newton 1976). The threat of being voted out helps ensure that elected officials adhere to their campaign mandates (Powell 2000) and thereby making the elected official more responsive to constituents' preferences (Clark and Krebs 2012).

High participation ensures that public policies will reflect the will of the people and not the interests of a select few (Hudson 2010). As Lijphart (1997) points out, "unequal participation spells unequal influence" (1). Voters and non-voters are different: voters tend to be better educated and have higher incomes than non-voters (Clark and Krebs 2012). If only a select few are participating,

policies tend to favor the participating groups, which subsequently forms a bias in public policies. Those who don't (or can't) participate fail to have their voices heard. "When disadvantage groups fail to vote, local officials are more likely to be unresponsive to their concerns" (Hajnal 2010, 139). Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993) found that citizens in cities with citywide programs designed to give neighborhood organizations a role in the local policy process were more likely to feel that government was responsive to their needs. Participation, then, is the vehicle to obtain the outcomes desired from government. Scholars have found that with high turnout, the bias of public policies are fairly low (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Mahler 2008).

This view of democracy also argues that participation teaches individuals how to be good citizens. If individuals practice democracy through voting, it allows them to learn about the political system, the issues and matters affecting society, and creates awareness of their fellow man's concerns. Through participation, individuals can understand what the public good is. Local governments provide a forum for individuals to learn these democratic values. This idea is discussed further in the next section.

Participation at the Local Level

Engaging in participation at the local level has three principal consequences. As Mill and others note, participation at the local level is paramount because it is where the individual learns about democracy and democratic values. Mill (1971) suggests that local governments are "schools of democracy." Localities provide a myriad of opportunities for participation and foster an understanding of democratic values. Practicing participation at the local level, Mill (1963) argues, is the only way "the people will ever learn how to exercise it on a larger scale" (186).

As citizens participate more frequently at the local level, they gain a democratic education that makes it easier to participate in the future and at other levels. "Participation develops and fosters

the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate, the better able they become to do so” (Pateman 1970, 42-43). Participation is expected, according to Bentham and Mill, since citizens are assumed to be “interested in politics because it was in his best interest to be so” (Pateman 1970, 19).

For Mill, understanding democracy and participation are instrumental for a healthy democracy. The democratic education citizens receive through participation at the local level helps prevent tyranny. Conventional wisdom acknowledges that the Founders believed individuals would seek their own self-interest both in and out of government. To prevent tyranny, they decentralized power. The decentralization found in the American political system provides citizens the opportunity to practice democracy at many levels, beginning primarily at the local level. The independence granted to local governments prevents despotism because “a people who had not learned to use freedom in small concerns would not know how to use it in great affairs of the State” (Syed 1966, 31). Through participation in local government, citizens learn about democracy, practice it on a small scale, and are then able to exercise it at the state and federal levels. The outcome is a nation that practices democracy at all government levels.

Second, Mill and Bentham argue that participation at the local level is the key to good governance. Mill and Bentham maintain that “participation of the people has a very narrow function; it ensures that good government... is achieved through the sanction of loss of office” (Pateman 1970, 19). Elections are the mechanisms employed by citizens to ensure that the will of the people is attained. By participating in elections, Mill and Bentham reason, the “private interests of each citizen [are] protected” (Pateman 1970, 20). Similarly, Rousseau views participation as the means to ensuring “freedom to the individual by enabling him to be (and remain) his own master”

(Pateman 1970, 26). Because of the equality⁶ in participation and the ability to be governed, man “remains master of his own affairs” and only surrenders that ability when his actions cause “damage” to “society” (Tocqueville 2003, 78). “The participatory process ensures that although no man, or group, is master of another, all are equally dependent on each other and equally subject to the law” (Pateman 1970, 27).

Mill, Bentham, Rousseau, and Tocqueville suggest there is a protective function in participation. It protects individual freedom and curtails individual self-interest. The power conferred to local governments is decentralized among its institutions. Localities “diversify the duties” of government (Tocqueville 2003, 81). In doing so, they “share” local “authority among a large number of citizens” (Tocqueville 2003, 81). When individuals participate at the local level, they do so to protect their own private interests (Tocqueville 2003). However, these interests are reduced because “he [man] views the township as a strong, free social body of which he is part and which merits the care he devotes to its management” (Tocqueville 2003, 80). Citizens do what is best for the community as a whole because their survival depends on it. The decentralization of power within local government ensures that individual freedom is maintained and self-interests are minimized.

Finally, participation at the local level creates a sense of belonging or attachment to their community. Rousseau indicates that participation “increases the feeling among individual citizens that they ‘belong’ in their community” (Pateman 1970, 27). There is equality in participation: one man, one vote. Voting booths do not differentiate between a rich person’s vote and a poor person’s vote. At the voting booth, all citizens of the community are equal. The experience of participating

⁶ Equality here means one man, one vote

in the decision-making process of the locality, by any means, attaches the individual to the community.

Governing Localities: Local Elections and Participation

The impact of decisions made by government varies depending on the level of government making the decision. Decisions made by the national government do not necessarily have the same immediate impact compared to decision made at the local level. For example, national and even state policy on abortion only becomes applicable to an individual's daily life if they or their partner are pregnant. FDA regulations impact pharmaceutical companies and other food and drug manufactures directly; a secondary impact might be felt by the individual if they are a consumer of a product offered by a manufacture that must comply with FDA regulations.

On the other hand, decisions made at the local level directly impact the daily lives of citizens. Tocqueville (2003) suggests this is because decisions made by local governments are "at the center of everyday affairs" (81). Issues such as trash collection, library and park locations, water and sewer maintenance, property tax rates, mosquito abatement, and the quality of public schools are all matters that are debated and decided at the local level. The impact of these decisions has a more immediate effect. For instance, citizens know when their trash has not been picked up or if their school district eliminates teaching positions.

Additionally, the nature of policy decision making of localities is "often a zero-sum game" (Kaufmann 2007) meaning a gain for one group/project/entity is a loss for another. Since local politics tends to be a zero-sum game, the trade-offs of policies tend to be more apparent (Kaufmann 2007). For example, if a tax levy for a public school fails, it could mean a layoff of teachers, reduced extra-curricular activities, and/or have no buses running for that school year. A failed property tax increase could lead to less police and fire protection or the closing of parks and/or libraries. For that reason, the ability to influence local government decision making is paramount.

The American Electoral System: An Overview

A primary way to participate and influence government is through elections. Elections ensure that elected officials are held accountable and authorize citizens to remain in control of their government. Elected officials are those who are directly elected by the eligible voters. In the United States, voters elect 513,658 individuals to public office (U.S. Department of Commerce 1992). The vast majority of these elected officials, however, are not elected to federal or even state office. Ninety-six percent of all elected officials are elected to local offices (U.S. Department of Commerce 1992). Table 2.3 illustrates just how many elected officials there are within the United States, and in particular, local governments.

Table 2.3 Number of Elected Officials in U.S. by Government Unit

Government Unit	Total Number of Elected Officials
<i>United States</i>	513,200
Federal Government	542
State Governments	18,828
Local Governments	493,830
<i>General-Purpose Governments</i>	
County	58,818
Sub-County	262,489
Municipal	135,531
Town/Township	126,958
<i>Special-Purpose</i>	
School District	88,434
Special District	84,089

*Source: U.S. Department of Commerce 1992 Census of Governments

The sheer number of local elected officials suggests that there are a considerable number of elections to fill these positions. Broadly speaking, local elections include elections for counties, municipalities, towns/townships, school boards, and special districts⁷. Overall, there are 89,527

⁷ This is not a compressive list of all local elections.

government entities within the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). Collectively, local governments comprise 89,476, or 99 percent, of those governmental entities. These local government entities tend to hold elections for their respective governing bodies. Table 2.4 breaks down the number of local government entities found in the United States. Since local elections tend to be held often, there is a larger number of observations for scholars to better understand political behavior at the local level. Nonetheless local elections have been overlooked by scholars (Clark and Krebs 2012; Marschall 2010).

More specifically for this project, local governments refers to municipal governments. Recall that municipal governments are sub-governments under the broader classification of general-purpose governments. Of the 89,476 local governments found in the United States, 19,492, or 21 percent, are municipalities (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). The number of municipal governments found within a state range from 1 to 1,299 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). At least one municipality can be found in every state.

Table 2.4 Number of Local Governments in U.S. by Category

<i>General Purpose Governments</i>		<i>Special Purpose Governments</i>	
Counties	3,031	Special Districts	37,203
Municipalities	19,522	School Districts	12,884
Towns/Townships	16,364		
Total	38,917	Total	50,087

* Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012

Municipal governments have an elected governing body to administer services and make decisions on local matters. In the State of Ohio, there are 938 municipal governments (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). Municipal boards or councils in Ohio have at least six elected members but no more than 17 elected members (Ohio Revised Code 731.01 and 731.09)⁸. Do the math, the State of Ohio

⁸ The number is dependent on the size of the municipality. Municipalities can also alter their number of elected councilmen per a ballot initiative.

has anywhere from 5,628 to 15,946 elected officials just to manage the 938 municipal governments.

Types of Elections

There are different types of elections within the United States. First there are general elections-where the person that is elected holds office. General elections are conducted for federal, state, and local offices. Presidential elections occur every four years in November and falling on even numbered years. Midterm elections are held every two years after the quadrennial election of president also in the month of November. State elections include statewide offices, such as governor, secretary of state, and state legislators. Only four states hold elections for their state assemblies in odd years (National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)).⁹ And, just six states hold their gubernatorial elections in odd years (National Governors Association)¹⁰. The majority of state elections are held in even numbered years thereby falling concurrently with either presidential or midterm elections. Local elections broadly encompasses all sub-state elections including but not limited to city councils, county commissions, mayors, school boards, township officials, and special district officials. Unlike federal and most state elections, local elections tend to take place in odd numbered years (non-concurrent). The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) (2002), indicates that 77 percent of municipalities hold their elections non-concurrently.

In addition to general elections, there are also primary and special elections. Primary elections are held to determine which candidate will represent each political party in a general election. It is not uncommon to have a primary election for president, U.S. Senators, U.S. Representatives, mayors, governors, etc. There are also special elections that can occur within a

⁹ New Jersey, Virginia, Louisiana, Mississippi

¹⁰ Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, West Virginia, New Jersey, Virginia

state or locality. Special elections can be held to fill a vacant seat, or for ballot issues, such as mileage proposals. In 2013, there were 16 special elections to fill state legislative vacancies (NCSL). Primary and special elections add to the sheer number of elections conducted in the United States.

Given the large quantity of elections held in the United States, some voters have the opportunity to cast a ballot every year, such as voters in the State of Ohio. Voters in Ohio, like those in other states, elect a president every four years and a congressman every two years. Both of these federal general elections occur in even numbered years and in November, the traditional month to hold elections. In addition to federal elections, Ohioans elect statewide officers- governor and lieutenant governor, secretary of state, auditor of state, treasurer of state, and attorney general- and county officers in even years that fall non-concurrently with presidential election years (e.g. 2010, 2014, and 2018). In odd numbered years, voters in Ohio elect municipal officers, including city councilmen and mayors, school board officials, special district officers, and township officers. For voters living in the State of Ohio, every year they have the opportunity to cast a ballot in a general election.

Local Elections Are Different

To this point, the discussion has highlighted the nuances of the American electoral system. But, there are fundamental differences between federal and local elections.

The most notable difference is the timing of local elections. Unlike the federal government, where the time of the election is set for all federal elections, local governments have no set time or method that applies to all localities. Local elections are often held at different times of the year than national or statewide elections. As Marschall (2010) explains, only 22.6 percent of municipal governments held elections concurrently leaving 77.4 percent of municipal government to hold

elections non-currently.¹¹ For instance, voters in the cities of Birmingham, Alabama; Apache Junction Arizona; and North Miami, Florida all elected their mayors in odd numbered years.¹²

This difference has a significant impact on voter turnout. Holding elections non-concurrently is a primary reason for low voter turnout at the local level (Wood 2002; Hajnal and Lewis 2003). If local elections are held concurrently with presidential elections, it is estimated that turnout in local elections would increase by as much as 29 percent (Wood 2002). "Participation in local elections depends critically on the timing of those elections" (Hajnal and Lewis 2003, 656).

Additionally, there are differences in the method of selection are different between federal and local elections. First is whether candidates have their party identification on the ballot. In non-partisan elections, candidates seek office without a party label on the ballot whereas partisan elections provide candidates with a party label on the ballot. In federal elections, the candidate runs with a party label-Republican, Democrat, Independent, etc. During a federal election, political parties mobilize voters, provide the candidate with a party label, and align themselves government services and programs that appeal to their base. In many local elections, the party label is absent. For instance, 77 percent of municipalities and 89 percent of school boards have non-partisan elections (ICMA 2002; Hess 2002). Recent scholarship indicates that there is no significant difference in turnout rates between partisan and nonpartisan ballots (Lublin and Tate 1995; Wood 2002) expect when the elections are close (Caren 2007) These findings are in line with research suggesting that party affiliation is not salient in local elections (Peterson 1981; Kaufmann 2007) and politics at the local level are more allocative in nature (Kaufmann 2007).

¹¹ This also includes municipalities that hold elections in both odd and even years

¹² City of Birmingham, Alabama who elected their mayor in October of 2013. In March of 2013, voters in Apache Junction, Arizona elected their mayor. The City of North Miami held its election for mayor in May of 2011.

Secondly, the type of district is different between local and federal elections. At the local level, municipalities have either single member district or an at-large district. Single member districts are similar to Congressional districts in that the candidates are elected by voters of particular district or ward, and the candidate represents that district or ward while in office. In at-large districts, voters across the municipality as a whole elect candidates who will represent the entire city, not a particular district. As noted in Table 2.1, 66 percent of localities elect their governing boards through at-large elections while 17 percent hold single-district elections. This is a unique feature of local governments. Using an at-large system of electing public officials versus a single-member district has also been shown to have a negative impact on voter turnout in municipal elections (Hajnal and Lewis 2003), however, this finding should be used with caution as the number of single member districts in the study was small.

Finally, the institutional structure of local governments are different from those found at the state and national level. All fifty states have an executive (governor) and a legislative body. The national government has an executive (president) and a legislative body. When political systems have an executive, voters have someone to blame when times are tough and reward when times are good. In municipal governments, the executive (mayor) is often absent since the majority of municipalities have council-manager systems. In a council-manager form of government, the municipal government has a manager to handle administrative matters. Alternatively, in a mayor-council form of government, the municipal government has a mayor, which generally makes executive decisions. Research has consistently shown that the council-manager form of government decreases turnout (Karnig and Walter 1983; Alford and Lee 1968; Wood 2002; Hajnal and Lewis 2003) while municipalities with a mayor-council form of government have higher turnout rates (Caren 2007; Oliver 2001). In council-manager systems, voters have a difficult

time determining who to blame for poor performance or who to reward for good performance. The lack of an executive in many localities creates a distinctive election dynamic.

Participation in Local Elections

For Tocqueville (2003), local elections were significant because it was where citizens learned to govern by seeking opportunities to help run local government (82). Tocqueville suggests that local elections are essential to American democracy for two reasons. First, local elections involve citizens because they provide many participatory opportunities. Local elections are held regularly and frequently. As a result, local elections are a mechanism utilized by citizens to manage those who are elected. Casting a ballot in a local election is one method for citizens to assert their policy preferences and allow their voices to be heard.

Second, local elections are the way in which citizens govern their locality. It is at the ballot box that citizens hold elected officials accountable for their decisions while in office. Consequently, who wins at the ballot box directly alters or sustains the composition of local governing boards and what public policies are pursued. In a local setting, this has substantial consequences as the public policies determine what services are provided as well as the quality of those services. These service choices have a direct effect on a citizen's daily life. The act of voting, then, is the primary method of influencing local government.

Local Campaigns

Most municipal elections tend to be low-stimulus elections thereby often having lower turnout rates than national and statewide elections. Local campaigns tend not to receive the same amount of media coverage as state or national elections. The media acts as an intermediary between the people and politics. It can be used, for instance, to discuss issues and increase name recognition of candidates. Media buys are expensive and candidates would need to have the necessary funds to run a media campaign. At the local level, even if the candidate had enough in his war chest to

launch a media campaign, it would be fruitless since media markets often cross the geographical boundaries of a locality (Welsh and Bledsoe 1988). In local elections, especially those with single-member districts, the media buy would be large compared to the district (Welsh and Bledsoe 1988).

For national elections, votes do not necessarily need to be abreast of the national issues, they can use the candidates' party affiliation as a cue to determine who they vote for. This dynamic is not the same in local elections. The party affiliation for candidates is often absent in local elections, and issues tend to matter more. The issues at the local level are "smaller in number, less complicated, and more proximate than are issues at the national level" (Kaufmann 2007, 19). For Americans, "the role of their local government is to maintain or enhance their immediate quality of life, to provide necessary services" (Kaufmann 2007, 18-19). Consequently, local campaigns tend to focus on the 'who gets what' and at the expense of whom. The emphasis of local campaigns is on the outputs of local government decisions. Debates in local campaigns are over parks, police and fire protection, garbage collection, and misquote abatement. The distribution of these services (or lack thereof) and the benefits they entail can create conflict during an election making the issues more salient than other more typical factors, such as party affiliation.

This, coupled with the zero-sum nature of local politics makes the allocation of local resources more relevant in local campaigns. It also makes the politics of "place" more common. It is not unusual for there to be divisions in the electorate between the east or west side of a locality or between the business community and residents. This makes electoral coalitions an important part in winning local elections.

Turnout in Local Elections

Scholars, when examining local elections, have consistently concluded that turnout in local elections is low (Bullock 1990; Verba et al 1995; Sharp 2003). At the national level, 55-60 percent

of eligible voters will cast a ballot while only 25-35 percent cast a ballot in local elections (Dye and MacManus 2012). In Caren's (2007) analysis, the average turnout for municipal elections is 27 percent. This begs the question: why is turnout in local elections so low?

In the previous sections, I have offered some explanations for this. I have illustrated how local elections are different than national elections. In local elections, eligible voters are inundated with a variety of additional complexities in order to cast a ballot. These difficulties - existing only at the local level - consequently increase the cost of voting and the burden placed on the voter.

I have indicated that the institutional structure of local governments influences turnout. There are three particular electoral structures that are unique to localities that greatly impact elections. First is the timing of elections. The timing of elections is the main reason for low voter turnout (Wood 2002; Hajnal and Lewis 2003). Hajnal and Lewis (2003) argue that by holding local elections concurrently, it would "essentially double voter turnout" (661). Turnout is low when held non concurrently because the public tends to pay less attention to it and fewer resources are dedicated to turnout efforts (Hajnal and Lewis 2003).

Second is the method of selection-using at-large districts or single member districts to elect council members. The method of selection has been found to impact minority representation in local legislative bodies (Marschall 2010). Using a nonpartisan ballot also affects local elections. Conducting nonpartisan elections appears to diminish voter turnout when the elections are close (Caren 2007). The electoral structures of localities are important because they alter the costs and benefits of voting. Changing the costs and benefits of voting has significant repercussions with respect to who votes and who wins.

Aside from the electoral structures of local elections, the institutional structure of local governments can negatively impact voter turnout. There is consensus in urban literature that

localities with a council-manager form of government have lower turnout (Karning and Walter 1983; Alford and Lee 1968; Wood 2002; Hajnal and Lewis 2003). This is especially prevalent in non concurrent elections (Hajnal & Lewis 2003).

It is apparent that the structures of local governments influence participation within them. In particular, the electoral structures of localities have a negative impact on voter turnout. The electoral structures of the reforms are a primary area of study among scholars. However, local governments have another electoral structure that has yet to be full examined. Early voting laws are an electoral reform. They were primarily adopted as a tool to increase turnout. While early voting is a state policy, localities must adhere to it. How has this electoral reform impacted local participation? What are the implications of early voting laws on voter turnout?

In the following chapter, I discuss the impact of electoral reforms on political participation. I focus mainly on early voting laws and its effect on voter turnout. However, these analyses are limited to primarily national and statewide elections as research on the impact of early voting laws on local governments has been understudied. In future chapters, I examine the influence of early voting laws on voter turnout in local elections.

CHAPTER 3

ELECTION LAWS AND VOTER TURNOUT

American elections are legendary for low voter turnout. In presidential elections, turnout exceeds just half of the voting age population (Martinez 2010; Franklin and Weber 2010), and in midterm elections, turnout is far worse. Local elections, such as but not limited to elections for county commissioners, city councilmen, mayors, school boards, special districts, and/or township boards, have awful voter turnout (Bullock 1990; Verba et al. 1995; Sharp 2003).

Scholars have spent decades trying to understand why American elections have such low voter turnout (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Powell 1980; Powell 1986; Teixeira 1987; Franklin 2002). The literature on voter turnout offers a few explanations, one of which is that the legal rules, or election laws, governing elections have a significant influence on voter turnout¹³ (Rusk 1970; Converse 1972, Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Powell 1980; Powell 1986; Teixeira 1987). Altering those legal rules can have a positive or negative impact on turnout. This chapter focuses on how the legal rules, or elections laws, influence turnout in American elections.

Election laws are policy interventions that governments can adopt to increase, or decrease, voter turnout. This chapter is not exhaustive, but rather highlights the impact of recent federal and state election laws on voter turnout. In particular, I discuss early voting, a specific type of election law, which alters the timing of elections by extending the number of days a voter can cast a ballot.

¹³ Four factors have been identified that significantly affect voter turnout in American elections: 1) legal factors (Rusk 1970; Converse 1972, Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Powell 1980; Powell 1986; Teixeira 1987) 2) psychological factors (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Campbell 1979; Clotfelter and Prysby 1980), 3) personal/demographic factors (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Verba and Nie 1972; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Brody 1978; Cassel and Hill 1981; Abramson and Aldrich 82), and 4) mobilization (Burnham 1982; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

Assuming high participation in American elections is good and desired in a democracy, low voter turnout in local elections is particularly concerning. Early voting laws may be a public policy solution that can increase voter turnout in local elections by alleviating the burdens of voting. While there are a variety of early voting laws, I focus on in-person early voting laws. I hypothesize that in-person early voting has a significant positive influence on voter turnout in municipal elections. This suggests early voting laws benefit local democracies the most.

Election Laws

Election laws regulate how elections are administered and define the structures of the electoral system. Electoral structures influence who votes (turnout), when they vote (timing of elections), how they vote (method of voting), how the votes cast are translated into legislative seats (method of selection), and, in the end, the overall direction of public policies. Since the voting process in the United States is twofold¹⁴, election laws also include registration laws, as they have a substantial impact on who votes.

The federal and state governments share the responsibility of elections in the United States. The Constitution sets the date for federal offices (the President and Congress). Both the president and members of Congress are elected the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even years. States have the authority to determine the time, place, and manner of elections for federal offices. This produces different rules (laws) for governing elections. For instance, each state has the power to determine residency requirements, the time period for both registration and voting, and the location of polling stations. The result is an assortment of election laws adopted by the

¹⁴ The first step is to register to vote. The second is to actually vote.

states creating a mixture of rules and regulations to govern elections. Table 3.1 illustrates the diversity of election laws found among the states.

There are three components of state elections laws: year, place and manner. The year (odd or even numbered) includes the month the election is held and the length of the voting period. Place refers to the location(s) where an individual can cast a ballot (i.e. location of polling station). The manner of elections often refers to how the elections will be conducted (i.e. type of ballots).

State laws regarding time, place, and manner of elections have a significant effect on voter turnout. For example, with regards to the timing of elections, those held non-concurrently with higher offices have lower turnout (Berry and Gerson 2010). Polling stations located in nontraditional places, such as supermarkets, marginally increase turnout (Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997). Likewise, proximity to the voting site matters. The further away a voter lives from a polling station or early voting site, the more likely the individual will become a nonvoter (Dyck and Gimpel 2005). However, the manner of elections can have a positive impact on turnout, as is the case with an all-mail system. Conducting elections with an all-mail system increases turnout by as much as 10 percent (Southwell and Burchett 2000). While place and manner of elections are important, this project focuses on the election laws that determine the timing of elections.

Timing of Local Elections

The timing of federal elections is set and does not vary across the states. According to the Constitution, federal elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. This creates consistency for federal elections across states. For local elections, states have the authority to determine what day and what month elections are held. The result is a variety of

Table 3.1 Elections Laws and Number of State Adoptions

Election Law	Number of States with Law
Photo ID Law (requires picture ID)	18
Photo ID Law (photo not required, just ID)	19
Early Voting Law*	33
No Excuse Absentee Law*	28
Excuse Required Absentee Law	21
Permanent Absentee Law*	8
Vote by Mail	2
Pre-registration (for those under 18)*	23
Same Day Registration*	12
Online Voter Registration	19
Limited Online Voter Registration	5
Straight Ticket Voting	14

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures 2013 * Includes the District of Columbia in Totals

days and months which local elections are held across the country. Since localities are “creatures of the state,” the states determine when localities can conduct their elections. For instance, the State of Connecticut gives localities two options: the first Monday in May or the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November (Berry and Gerson 2010). In Ohio, state law requires all general elections to be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November (R.C. 3501). Louisiana’s municipal and ward general elections not held concurrently with a gubernatorial or congressional election are conducted on the fourth Saturday in February or the fourth Saturday in April (Berry and Gerson 2010)¹⁵. In California, municipal elections are held primarily in March, April or June (Berry and Gerson 2010). The variation in the timing of local elections emphasizes the piecemeal policies that govern timing of local elections.

The majority of states conduct their elections in even numbered years. Only New Jersey, Virginia, Louisiana, and Mississippi hold election for state offices, such as governor and state

¹⁵ The month of the general election depends on when the primary was held. If the primary was in February, then general election is also in February; primaries held in April have their general elections held in April

legislative bodies, in odd numbered years (non concurrently) (National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)).

Since there is no central database for local elections in the United States, it is difficult to determine exactly how many localities conduct elections in odd versus even years. A survey by International City/Council Management Association (ICMA) (2002) indicates that only 22.6 percent of municipalities hold their elections in even years (concurrently with federal offices) while 77.4 percent conduct their elections in either odd years or in both odd and even years. For instance, the State of Connecticut mandates that local officers be elected in odd numbered years (Berry and Gerson 2010) while the State of Ohio law splits the timing of local elections with county officials being elected in even numbered years and all other municipal officers are elected in odd numbered years (Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3501). Of the 19,135 local elected officials in Ohio, 8,829 (46.1%) are elected in non-concurrent years (US Department of Commerce 1992). California and Montana also divide local elections between even and odd numbered years (Berry and Gerson 2010). The end result is great variation in the year local elections are conducted.

Does Changing Election Laws Increase Turnout?

Altering election laws occurs with somewhat regular frequency at the national and state levels. At the national level, amendments to the Constitution have expanded the electorate to include women, African Americans, and 18 year olds. States have required individuals to pay poll taxes, pass literacy tests, and own property in order to vote. While none of these former practices are used today, states require photo identification, determine voter registration periods, and decide residency requirements. At the local level, municipalities that adopted aspects of the reforms, such as nonpartisan elections, also altered their electoral systems (Welsh and Bledsoe 1988; Bridges 1997). Therefore, election laws become an important component of electoral systems because they

can have a direct influence on voter turnout since they determine who is able to cast a ballot (Rusk 1970; Converse 1972, Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Powell 1980; Powell 1986; Teixeira 1987).

In the examples above, the changes made to the national, state, or local electoral system redefined who could vote. This can have significant consequences as voters and nonvoters tend to be different. Voters tend to be older, more educated, and have higher incomes than nonvoters (Clark and Krebs 2012; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). This is concerning, since who votes shapes the policy outcomes of the government system. Like the adage “the squeaky wheel gets the grease,” those who are able to vote and do so have the ear of their elected officials (Clark and Krebs 2012; Lijphart 1997).

This section reviews national, state, and local policies that have been used to increase, or decrease, voter turnout. For this project, I assume high participation is desirable in a democracy. Recall from Chapter 2 that higher voter turnout reduces potential policy bias, provides legitimacy, and ensures accountability. Election laws can be policy prescriptions that alleviate the burden of casting a ballot. That is not to say election laws do not have a negative impact on voter turnout, they sometimes do. As past U.S. history reveals, some policies adopted by the states, such as literacy tests, had a devastating impact on the black vote.¹⁶ But, the goal of an election law in American democracy should be to increase voter turnout. Democracy cannot be sustained with zero voters. And, low voter turnout can call into question the legitimacy of the system and the

¹⁶Literacy tests, poll taxes, registration systems, and white primaries were all means to disenfranchise the black voters. These laws had a severe impact on the number of blacks registered to vote. According to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, in Mississippi, fewer than 9,000 of the 147,000 voting-age African Americans were registered after 1890. In 1989, Louisiana had more than 130,000 black voters registered. The number dwindled to 1,342 by 1904. <http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/1-segregated/white-only-1.html>

mandate of those elected. By changing the legal context that shapes the electoral system, there can be a positive influence on voter turnout.

In Wolfinger and Rosenstone's (1980) seminal piece, Who Votes?, the authors primarily examine the demographic composition of voters in the United States. More importantly for this project, they also study the influence of state election laws - registration laws specifically - on voter turnout. Voter registration is the legal means to vote; without registering to vote, one cannot cast a ballot on Election Day. While voter registration was originally a mechanism used to combat voter fraud, it is now often perceived as a barrier to the voting booth (Brown 2010).

Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) found that registration laws correlated with turnout rates. Four conditions in particular had a negative impact on turnout: early registration deadlines, irregular office hours, no Saturday registration, and no absentee registration. The negative relationship between voter registration laws and turnout, they theorize, is because these laws increase the costs of voting "above the threshold of many people" (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, 79). In order to register, a potential voter must navigate the bureaucratic red tape, such as knowing the registration deadlines and the location of the registration facility, therefore the costs of registering are not equal for everyone (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Education is a factor that can help reduce the costs associated with registration. A higher education voter can overcome the obstacles associated with voter registration better since education increases their ability to manage the bureaucratic hurdles that come with registering to vote (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980).

Wolfinger and Rosenstone's (1980) work laid the foundation for future research on voter registration laws and turnout. Scholars have consistently found that strict voter registration requirements negatively impact turnout; this finding is consistent across all electoral contexts

(Brown 2012). Registering to vote often has many procedural steps. Additionally, an individual must make the decision to register long before the election has gained momentum. The costs of voting are increased by registration requirements because it asks the individual to be aware of the registration process and register to vote before interest in the campaign occurs. Registration has information costs, such as knowing registration deadlines and the location of registration offices, as well as physical costs, such as time away from work, to register.

Analyzing voter turnout from a cost and benefit perspective stems from the rational choice framework. In An Economic Theory of Democracy, Downs' (1957) model of voting hypothesized that an individual's decision to vote is a function of the costs and benefits of voting. In a perfect world, with no information costs, a voter would decide which candidate to vote for by comparing the expected utility from the incumbent while in office to the expected utility from the challenger had he won office (Downs 1957, Chapter 3). This allows the voter to find his current party utility differentials, which would then determine his vote choice. Since the world is not perfect, a rational voter seeks to increase his efficiency and does so by spending no more time or money on obtaining information than his potential benefits warrant (Downs 1957, Chapter 12). A rational voter will vote if the benefits of voting outweigh the costs; "if not, he abstains" (Downs 1957, 260).

Downs suggests that there are two primary costs of voting: information costs and physical costs. Information costs refer to the resources utilized to obtain information about the candidates and/or parties. Physical costs include the resources, such as time and money, needed to register to vote and then vote, as well as the time taken off work in order to complete these tasks. While information costs are important in calculating who to vote for, physical costs can be lessened by election laws. For instance, election laws can alter the hours a polling station is open or the duration of the voting or registration period. The longer hours reduce the cost of voting (or registering)

because they create more opportunities for the individual to complete these tasks. The benefits of voting include the value the voter places on democracy and the concern the voter has on the outcome of the election. Since the probability for one vote to make a difference in election outcomes is low, Downs reasons that voting is irrational if the costs outweigh the benefits.

Using his model,¹⁷ Downs' work predicts a much lower turnout than what actually occurs. Since a democracy cannot survive with zero voters, he suggests that individuals may be motivated to vote so that democracy is sustained even when there are no personal gains from voting (Downs 1957, Chapter 14). Much like the probability of an individual's vote deciding the out of an election is slim, there is relatively little chance that one vote would determine the success (or failure) of a democracy.

The rational choice perspective of voting offered by Downs asks an important question: why do people vote? Expanding on Downs' theory, Riker and Ordeshook (1970) include a civic duty variable in Downs' equation. Akin to Downs' notion that individuals may vote to support democracy, Riker and Ordeshook's civic duty variable aims to capture the satisfaction one receives from voting, affirming allegiance to their political party, and being part of the political system (Riker and Ordeshook 1970, 28). With the inclusion of a civic duty variable in the calculation of voting, their findings support the theory that an individuals' voting behavior can be explained by rational decision-making (Riker and Ordeshook 1970).

The model used by Riker and Ordeshook (1970) indicates that the probability of an individual's vote mattering (P), the benefits received from voting (B), the costs associated with

¹⁷ The expected utility hypothesis states the calculus of voting is: $R = (BP) - C$ where R= individual rewards from voting, B= the individual's differential benefit between the candidates, P= the probability that voting will bring the expected benefit, C= individual costs of voting (See Downs 1957, Riker and Ordeshook 1970).

voting (C), and civic duty (D) all have marginal effects on voter turnout. According to their model, a change in any of these variables would create a change in voter turnout. Election laws affect the costs (C) of voting. Using their model,¹⁸ if there is a decrease in the costs of voting (C), then there should be an increase in turnout. This model has been the foundation for later scholarship that examines the impact of election laws on voter turnout.

Much of the literature on election laws and voter turnout has been done under the rational choice framework, which suggests that if the costs of voting were lowered, participation would increase (Downs 1954; Riker and Ordeshook 1969). Election laws are the primary means to altering these costs as they can make it easier, or harder, for individuals to access the ballot. Returning to voter registration as an example, costs of registering are high because of the resources (e.g. time) used to navigate the registration process, learn the registration deadlines, locate the registration office, etc. Most registration deadlines are 10 to 30 days prior to Election Day.¹⁹ These early registration deadlines have a negative effect on voter turnout because they occur before the campaign has built momentum (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980).

How significant is the impact of voter registration laws on turnout? Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) found registration laws decrease voter turnout by nine percent. Others have estimated an eight percent reduction in turnout due to the barriers presented by the registration process (Teixeira 1992). If voter registration laws were liberalized, meaning less costly to the voter, it would increase voter turnout by about eight percent (Mitchell and Wlezien 1995).

¹⁸ Their model and others, such as Downs, who have also used the calculus of voting formula.

¹⁹ Exceptions are states with Election Day registration. There are six states who practice Election Day registration and one state that does not require voters to register (Brown 2010).

In an effort to ease the burden of registration on potential voters, Congress enacted the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (a.k.a. Motor Voter law). A key feature of the NVRA allows an individual to register to vote when renewing their driver's license. This was largely viewed as a potential means to reduce the burden of the registration process. The central anticipation after the passage of the NVRA was that voter turnout would increase since the costs of registering were decreased. This speculation assumes that once registered, voting would follow. As empirical evidence points out, lessening registration costs does not necessarily mean voter turnout increases. Registering to vote and casting a ballot are two separate political acts. In theory, the NVRA should increase registration rates since it reduced the costs associated with registration. Empirical evidence indicates that by decreasing the burdens associated with registration, the numbers of those registered has increased. In examining the NVRA, Martinez and Hill (1999) found that registration increased, but not turnout. Others have found registration has increased among groups traditionally less likely to register (Hill 2003; Brown and Wedeking 2006). While the NVRA creates an easier registration process and expands the electorate, it has not increased turnout in American elections.

The NVRA is an example of a national law that has been implemented to reduce the costs of voting by making the registration process easier for the potential voter. But, states have also adopted policies that alter the registration and voting process. A long line of research has been conducted on state election laws (Larocca and Dlemanski 2011; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2007; Berinsky 2005; Fitzgerald 2005; Wolfinger, Highton, and Mullin 2005; Gronke 2004; Karp and Banducci 2000, 2001; Knack 2001; Stein 1998; Southwell and Burchett 1997; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997). Some of these election laws have had a positive impact on voter turnout (e.g.

vote by mail elections, Election Day registration) while others have produced the opposite (e.g. in-person early voting).

At the state level, there are two types of laws that ease the registration process: same day registration and Election Day registration. These two laws are similar as they both offer a one-stop shop that allows individuals to register and vote simultaneously. Logically, if potential voters can incur the costs of registration and voting at the same time, and do so closer to Election Day when campaign momentum is higher, the perceived benefit of voting may be greater. This should have a positive effect on turnout as the costs (C) are decreased and the perceived benefits (B) are increased. The difference between same day registration and Election Day registration lies in *when* a voter is able both register and vote. Same day registration permits a voter to register and vote on the same day *prior* to Election Day whereas Election Day registration allows voters to both register and vote *on* Election Day.

Same day registration (SDR) allows an individual to go to a voting site, such as the election office, register to vote, and then vote. With SDR, the costs associated with registering to vote and actually voting are incurred at the same time. SDR should have a positive impact on voter turnout because the costs of voting are reduced. In her study of SDR and NVRA, Rhine (1996) found a positive relationship between SDR and voter turnout. She estimates SDR increases turnout between 10-14 percent.

Likewise, Election Day registration (EDR) allows potential voters to register at their voting site, such as their polling location, on Election Day. On Election Day, they register, then proceed to the polling booth to cast their ballot. EDR in particular allows voters to register and vote at the last moment of an election cycle when voter interest is highest and the campaign has the most momentum (Burden et al 2009). With EDR, the costs of registering and voting are lessened

because they are experienced simultaneously and the perceived benefit of voting is greater since the campaign is at its peak. It is not surprising then that EDR has a positive impact on voter turnout (Burden et al 2009). States that adopt EDR had higher turnout rates in midterm elections (Knack 1998; Fenster 1994). Turnout in midterm elections increased by six percent in states that had EDR (Fester 1994). In presidential elections, states with EDR also had higher turnout rates compared to states without EDR (Brians and Grofman 2001; Knack 1998; Fenster 1994). Interestingly, Larocca and Dlemanski (2011), who examined turnout in presidential elections (2000, 2004, and 2008), found EDR increased the probability of new residents voting. This finding supports Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass' (1987) hypothesis that low turnout among movers is due to the burden of re-registering to vote. In presidential elections, EDR increased turnout by as little as three percent (Knack 1998) and as much as seven percent (Brians and Grofman 2001). It is estimated that a national EDR law would increase turnout by five percent (Fenster 1994).

Other proposals for registration reform include mail-in registration and easing the requirements of registration (often re-registration) for movers. Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass (1987) suggest that low turnout among movers is due to the burden of re-registering to vote. If this burden of registering was reduced for those who move, turnout would increase by nine percent (Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass 1987).

Additionally, states could adopt policies that do more to facilitate access to the ballot. Some suggestions include having accessible polling locations, mailing sample ballots and polling information to voters, and have the polling stations stay open longer. When a voting location is less accessible, the costs to get there could be higher than any benefit the voter receives from casting a ballot (Gimpel and Schuknecht 2003). Gimpel and Schuknecht (2003) found that accessibility does make a significant difference in turnout with distance imposing the heaviest

burden. States that mail sample ballots to voters prior to Election Day, mail information about polling locations, and have polls open for longer periods of time, have higher turnout rates (Wolfinger, Hughton, and Mullin 2005). Wolfinger, Hughton, and Mullin (2005) indicate that if states adopt these aforementioned practices, it would increase turnout by three percent.

Early Voting

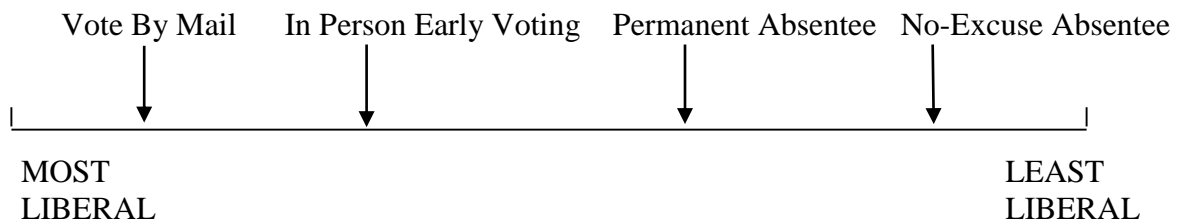
Another state policy that has been touted as an approach to increasing voter turnout is early voting. Early voting is a means to vote outside of the traditional voting booth while still preserving the integrity and fairness of an election (Rosenfield 1994). Advocates of early voting claimed it would attract marginal voters - those who would vote if they could get to the polls on Election Day (Rosenfield 1994). Therefore, voter turnout should increase. Election Day voters are confined to the hours and assigned polling location determined by the government. Those who opt to vote early travel to an early voting site at their convenience to cast a ballot. Early voting extends the number of days in which a person can cast a ballot and increases the number and type of voting locations (Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997).

Texas introduced early voting in 1988. Because of early voting's popularity among voters, a number of states have adopted similar policies. Currently, 34 states utilize some form of early voting. The rapid adoption of early voting among the states is not surprising as it is common practice for a state to adopt policies of neighboring states (Walker 1969; Katz, Levin, and Hamilton 1963; Berry and Berry 1990; Mooney and Lee 1995; Mintrom and Vergari 1998). However, early voting laws vary among the states. These variations primarily include the method of early voting and the features of in-person early voting.

Methods of Early Voting

There are four primary methods of early voting: no-excuse absentee voting, permanent absentee voting, vote-by-mail, and in-person early voting. It is common to refer to any of these methods as early voting, even though they are vastly different in practice. Each type of early voting law attempts to reduce the costs of voting borne by individual by expanding the number of days an individual can cast a ballot. However, some early voting laws are more liberalized than others. In other words, if the early voting law is liberalized, the state government bears most of the burden associated with voting rather than the individual. The methods of early voting can be placed on a spectrum from most liberal to least liberal (most restrictive). See figure 3.1. Using the cost - benefit approach, liberalized early voting laws would have less individual costs associated with them. Therefore, participation should increase.

Figure 3.1: Continuum of Early Voting



No-Excuse Absentee Voting and Permanent Absentee Voting

No-excuse absentee voting allows voters to request an absentee ballot without providing an excuse. Twenty-eight states have implemented no-excuse absentee voting; twenty-six have both no-excuse absentee voting and in-person early voting (NCSL). Unlike the other methods of early voting, with no-excuse absentee voting the voter still needs to request a ballot from the government. Therefore, the costs of voting are still borne by the voter. States with no excuse

absentee voting have higher rates of absentee voters than states that require an excuse to vote absentee (US Election Assistance Commission 2006 (US EAC)).

A caveat to no-excuse absentee voting is permanent absentee status. In seven states, voters can request to be placed on a permanent absentee ballot list (NCSL). Upon doing so, these permanent absentee voters are mailed an absentee ballot every election without the need to request an absentee ballot. With permanent absentee voting, the costs of voting shift from the voter to the state since the state becomes responsible for mailing the ballot to the voter without a request from the voter.

Vote By Mail

The vote by mail (VBM) system has been used in Oregon since 1998. Currently two states, Oregon and Washington, practice this method of early voting. In VBM elections, voters receive their voter pamphlets in the mail, followed by their ballots, which they return via the mail.

Vote by mail laws, by their nature, require state governments to play a more active role in the voting process. In a vote by mail system, the state government mails all registered voters their ballot for each election. This occurs even if the voter has decided not to vote in that particular election. If the voter opts to vote, it is up to the voter to complete the ballot and return it via mail.

In-person early voting

In-person early voting is akin to absentee voting in that both can be done prior to Election Day. However, there are clear differences. In absentee voting, the voter requests the ballot, which is then mailed to them. And in some cases, absentee voting requires an excuse be provided.²⁰ In-person early voting allows voters cast a ballot at an election center and/or a satellite location before

²⁰ According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 20 states require an excuse to vote absentee.

Election Day without an excuse. Election centers are located in places such as the clerk's or election officials' office. Satellite locations are typically determined by the state or local clerks and include places such as government buildings, firehouses, shopping malls, and/or grocery stores (Stein and Vonnahme 2010). When voters arrive at the voting site, they cast a ballot using the same equipment that is used on Election Day.

The burden to vote remains completely upon the individual in states with in-person early voting. While in-person early voting laws allow one to cast a ballot prior to Election Day, the voter must still make the decision to vote, locate the early voting center, and then travel to the early voting center to cast a ballot. The costs of voting are much higher in in-person early voting states than states that have VBM elections or permanent absentee ballot systems.

Features of In-Person Early Voting

Since in-person early voting is a state law, its characteristics differ among the states. These differences include the period of early voting, the location of voting sites, the type of voting sites used, and the hours voting sites are open.

Early voting laws lengthen the time period a person can cast a ballot. States like Michigan, which has not adopted any method of early voting, only permit their voters to vote during specified hours on Election Day. Alternatively, in-person early voting allows voters to cast a ballot at a voting site as early as 45 days prior to Election Day (NCSL). The start dates for in-person early voting fluctuate by state. For example, in the State of Ohio, voters can cast a ballot at early voting sites 35 days before Election Day. Vermont²¹ and Florida²², which have similar in-person early voting laws to Ohio, permit voters to cast a ballot 45 days and 10 days prior to Election Day

²¹ http://vermont-elections.org/elections1/absentee_overview.html

²² <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/voting/early.shtml>

respectively. On average, states open the early voting process 22 days before Election Day (NCSL).

Much like the start dates of in-person early voting, the end dates also differ between the states. Early voting can remain open as late as the day before Election Day (NCSL). In three states, in-person early voting closes the Thursday prior to Election Day (NCSL). Nine states end in-person early voting the Friday before Election Day (NCSL). In five states, early voting concludes the Saturday before Election Day whereas 11 states end it on the Monday prior to Election Day (NCSL). The average voting period is 19 days among the states with in-person early voting (NCSL).

The hours and days that voting sites are open for in-person early voting vary by state. In many cases, states with in-person early voting have locations open on weekend days.²³ For instance, in Texas, during the last week of early voting, the most populous counties' early voting sites are required to stay open 12 hours a day (Rosenfield 1994). Twelve states require that voting centers remain open on weekends (NCSL). In the remaining 20 states, either the county or local officials determine the hours of early voting sites (NCSL).

The locations where voters can travel to cast a ballot early are known as voting sites, and voting sites differ by state. Stein and Garcia-Monet (1997) point out that voting sites can be traditional or non-traditional. Traditional voting sites include election offices and government facilities, such as libraries and courthouses. Non-traditional voting sites include satellite locations, such as grocery stores and shopping malls. The State of Ohio uses traditional voting sites, typically

²³ Weekend days are Saturday and Sunday

county board of elections offices.²⁴ On the other hand, Texas has both non-traditional and traditional voting sites, including city halls, libraries, churches, and rec centers.²⁵

Early Voting and Turnout

Theoretically, states with early voting policies should have higher rates of voter turnout than states without early voting policies, *ceteris paribus*. However, to presume that early voting laws (broadly speaking) increase turnout assumes all methods of early voting are synonymous. As the preceding section indicates, early voting laws are not equivalent. Each method of early voting has different costs associated with it. Recall that in vote by mail elections, the government bears a substantial portion of the costs. On the other hand, in in-person early voting elections, the individual still carries the majority of the costs. This theoretical assumption also presumes that all elections are equal. Federal elections tend to be high-stimulus, which by their nature produce higher turnout rates than low-stimulus elections (e.g. local elections).

The relationship between early voting and turnout is more complex than the theoretical assertion assumes. The effect early voting laws have on voter turnout is in large part dependent on two factors: the method of early voting and the type of election. For example, vote by mail has had a positive impact on voter turnout while in-person early voting has not seen similar results. In state elections, vote by mail appears to have a positive effect on turnout whereas in-person early voting only has a marginal effect on turnout in state elections. Two methods of early voting that have received a considerable amount of attention in the literature: vote by mail and in-person early voting. The next section discusses the influence of these two methods of early voting on turnout.

²⁴ <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/elections/Voters/absentee/inperson.aspx>

²⁵ <http://www.dallascountyvotes.org/early-voting-information/early-voting-locations-3/>

Vote By Mail Systems and Turnout

The literature on vote by mail (VBM) elections and voter turnout appears to provide conflicting findings. In aggregate level studies, scholars have found that vote by mail increases voter turnout (Southwell and Burchett 2000; Karp and Banducci 2000). Although an individual level examination reveals that vote by mail does not significantly increase turnout (Berinsky et al 2001). Yet, the mixed results are negated when election type is teased out and examined independently.

Overall, studies indicate that at the national level, VBM doesn't significantly increase voter turnout and may lower it. Studies indicate that national elections have not seen the increase in voter turnout that is expected with VBM systems. In their examination of U.S. Senate races, Berinksey and Traugott (2001) found that VBM increases turnout marginally and does not make the electorate descriptively representative of the voting population. Kousser and Mullin's (2007) findings are much graver. Their analysis of VBM in presidential elections shows that VBM decreases turnout in national elections by two percent.

The impact of VBM on state elections is much more mixed. Southwell and Burchett (2000) found that VBM increased turnout by 10 percent. Similarly, Karp and Banducci (2000) found VBM had a 2.9 percent increase in turnout in midterm elections. More recently, Kousser and Mullin (2007) found that VBM decreases turnout in gubernatorial elections. This difference could be due to the location of study. Southwell and Burchett (2000) and Karp and Banducci (2000) studied VBM in the State of Oregon while Kousser and Mullin (2007) studied VBM in counties within California. The different findings could also be due to the type of methods used. Kousser and Mullin (2007) took advantage of a natural experiment where voter in precincts with less than 250 voters received mail ballots and voters in larger precincts used traditional polling locations

during two elections (2000 and 2002). Southwell and Burchett (2000) examined 48 elections between 1960 and 1996. Similarly, Karp and Banducci (2000) studied six elections between 1986 and 2000. Southwell and Burchett (2000) and Karp and Banducci (2000) also use the same measure for voter turnout, which may be a reason for their similar findings.

Local elections appear to have benefited the most from VBM elections. Studies have consistently found that VBM increases turnout in local elections. David B. Magleby (1987) found a 19 percent increase in turnout at the local level. In their study of Oregon's VBM system, Karp and Banducci (2000) found that while VBM increased turnout across all elections, local elections saw the largest increase, 26.5 percent. In California, Kousser and Mullin (2007) found VBM increases turnout in local elections by 7.6 percent.

In-person early voting and Voter Turnout

Both aggregate and individual level studies on in-person early voting and voter turnout have similar findings. They have consistently demonstrated that in-person early voting has no significant impact on turnout (Richardson and Neeley 1996; Stein 1998; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2007; Neeley and Richardson 2001). However, the findings from in-person early voting become more conflicting when broken down by election type.

The type of election studied seems to be important in determining if in-person early voting affects turnout. In presidential and midterm elections, Gronke and Toffey (2008) found in-person early voting increased turnout. But, others who have examined national elections have found insignificant or marginal effect on turnout (Richardson and Neeley 1996; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Neeley and Richardson 2001) or no effect at all (Gronke Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller

2007). Gronke et al (2007) assert that only when in-person early voting and no excuse absentee voting are combined, and then only in midterm elections, is there an increase in voter turnout.

In state elections, in-person early voting appears to have a marginal effect on turnout. Stein (1998) found that in-person early voting increased in voter turnout in gubernatorial elections, but only marginally. Stein, Owens, and Leighley (1993) indicate that in-person early voting increases turnout when the parties and campaigns incorporate early voting into their campaigns. Similarly, J. Eric Oliver (1996) notes that early voting along with strong mobilization efforts increase voter turnout.

Scholars also indicate that early voting may increase turnout at first, but over time, this effect fades. Gronke and Miller (2007) argue that the increase in voter turnout found by others is a “novelty effect.” Voters utilize the new laws at first, which leads to an immediate increase in voter turnout. With time, the novelty wears off and voter turnout returns to its previous rate. Likewise, Giammo and Brox (2010) found that early voting produced a short-lived increase in turnout. Voter turnout increased until the second presidential election after implementation after which voter turnout declined by two to three percent (Giammo and Brox 2010), supporting Gronke and Miller’s novelty effect hypothesis.

Others suggest that increases in voter turnout due to early voting can be attributed to party loyalists who are encouraged to vote in low profile elections in which they traditionally would not have voted (Harris 1999; Hillygus 2005; Holbrook and McClurg 2005).

It is important to note that unlike VBM systems, in-person early voting has not been fully examined at the local level. Richardson and Neeley (1996) conducted a study in Tennessee to examine the impact of in-person early voting implementation and voter turnout. They found that

in-person early voting increased countywide turnout. Their findings also suggest that having municipal elections on the ballot is an important factor in early voting participation. However, their study focused on implementation factors that influence early voting. Thus, these results do not necessarily explain the relationship between in-person early voting and voter turnout. The present study helps fill this void in the literature by examining in-person early voting and voter turnout in municipal elections.

Unanswered Questions about Early Voting and Turnout in Local Elections

While there has been considerable research on early voting and its effect on voter turnout, the question of early voting's substantive impact on voter turnout at the local level is unanswered in the participation and urban studies literature. With Election Day is slowly becoming obsolete, advancing early voting scholarship by determining how in-person early voting influences political participation at all levels of government is increasingly important.

I hypothesize that early voting, in-person early voting in particular, has a significant positive impact on voter turnout in municipal elections. As findings from previous vote by mail studies indicate, local democracies likely benefit the most from early voting laws (David B. Magleby 1987; Dubin and Kalsow 1996; Karp and Banducci 2000; Kousser and Mullin 2007). What is left unanswered is the impact of in-person early voting on local elections. Does in-person early voting increase participation at the local level? The following chapters answer this question.

CHAPTER 4

Data and Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the sources of the data, the construction of the data set, the statistical model, the statistical methods used for this study, and the variable measures. The data set for this study is unique as it is a compilation of data from a variety of sources. What sets this study apart is the application of the independent variable - in-person early voting - to local elections. Having a locality²⁶ as the unit of analysis provides insight on how early voting affects local elections. Many localities hold their election in non concurrent years (or odd numbered years). Examining non concurrent election years allows me to isolate the effects of early voting at the local level because the only elections occurring are local elections. By having municipalities as the unit of analysis, my study fills an existing gap in both urban and early voting research. I ask a simple, but overlooked question: Does in-person early voting impact voter turnout in municipal elections?

The chapter begins with a discussion of the unit of analysis - municipalities - and then moves to a discussion on the decision to use the State of Ohio. The second section addresses the data sources and the approach of data collection. I then proceed to a discussion of the statistical method used to examine the impact of in-person early voting on municipal voter turnout. I conclude this chapter with an overview of the statistical model, variables, and how those variables are operationalized to test the concepts of interest, and hypothesis that is tested in the subsequent chapter.

²⁶ I use the term locality and municipality interchangeably.

Why Municipalities?

I chose municipalities because they are convenient, understudied, and a unique political unit within the United States. As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, municipalities are an important and fundamental component of American democracy. Municipalities can be thought of as small-scale democracies where citizens debate and resolve local issues and matters. Additionally, scholarship on early voting studies tends to focus on the individual voter rather than a political unit, such as a municipality. Such research asks: Do early voting laws impact individual behavior? Who utilizes early voting? How are early voters and Election Day voters different? While these are important questions that warrant study, it is not the only question researchers and policymakers should examine.

Proponents of early voting laws contend that these laws should increase turnout in elections. Recall from Chapter 3 that in-person early voting has no significant impact on turnout in state and national elections (Richardson and Neeley 1996; Stein 1998; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2007; Neeley and Richardson 2001). Vote by Mail (VBM) studies have consistently found that VBM increases turnout in local elections (Karp and Banducci 2000; Kousser and Mullin 2007).²⁷ These studies provide some knowledge on how local elections are affected by a VBM laws, a specific type of early voting law. But, how does in-person early voting, which 32 states use, impact local elections? This study begins to address this question.

²⁷ It can be problematic to use individual-level data to analyze a social or political unit *if* the researcher makes inferences about individuals that are deduced from the social or political unit being studied (Singleton and Straits 2010). Since we often don't know how individuals vote, researchers often use other ways to capture it, such as percent of votes cast, percent vote share, etc. The problem is not the use of such proxies, but occurs in the interpretation of the results. An ecological fallacy occurs when researchers use aggregate or group data, such as data on cities, to infer individual behavior. For instance, let's say the results indicate that cities with higher percentages of whites have higher turnout. An ecological fallacy is committed if one infers from this that whites are more likely to vote. While my study uses individual-level data that are tabulated to describe political units, municipalities, my focus is on the policy of early voting. I seek to determine how voter turnout in municipal elections are impacted by in-person early voting, not individual behaviors.

Municipalities are the unit of analysis of this dissertation. The definition for municipalities, especially Ohio municipalities, is relatively straightforward. Using the U.S. Census Bureau's definition, a municipal government is defined as

political subdivisions within which a municipal corporation has been established to provide general local government for a specific population concentration in a defined area, and includes all active government units officially designated as cities, boroughs (except in Alaska), towns (except in the six New England states, and in Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin), and villages (2012).

For the State of Ohio, a municipal government would then be municipal corporations that have been designated as cities and villages.²⁸ According to the Ohio Constitution, cities are defined as municipal corporations having a population of 5,000 or more while villages are defined as municipal corporations having a population less than 5,000 (OH Constitution Article XVIII). Since both cities and villages in Ohio are defined as municipal corporations, both will be included in this analysis, and will be henceforth referred to as municipalities. Using this definition, there are 938 municipalities in the State of Ohio.

The decision to include both cities and villages for this study raises an important question: do cities and villages have the same functions, powers, and authority? The Ohio Revised Code grants both cities and villages the same general powers, they both provide similar services, and they both have the same function (R.C. 715.01, 717.01).²⁹ For instance, both have the power to police, erect buildings, collect taxes, sue and be sued, acquire property, and maintain municipal roads. Both provide sanitation services, street cleaning services, street lighting, and clean water, power, and heat to their residents. Both have the authority to govern taverns, determine fencing ordinances, enter into contracts for the provision of services, and regulate the impoundment and

²⁸ The State of Ohio does not have boroughs or towns.

²⁹ For a complete list of powers see Ohio Revised Code 715.01 and 717.01.

sale of animals.

The cities and villages organize under one of three plans outlined by the Ohio Constitution and the Ohio Revised Code. Those plans are commission, manager, and mayor³⁰ (R.C. 705, OH Constitution Article VXIII). Commission plans only elect commission members to sit on the municipal commission (R.C. 705.41). Manager plans have an elected council while the manager is appointed/hired by the council.³¹ For mayor plans, voters elect both the mayor and the council. Unless otherwise stated in a municipal charter, mayoral elections occur every four years.³² Statutory cities and villages are to hold nonpartisan elections unless the city or village has adopted partisan elections in accordance with the Ohio Constitution and Revised Code. See Table 4.1 for a breakdown of the municipal organization plans found in Ohio.

The main difference between a city and a village in Ohio is the population (Ohio Constitution Article XVIII, §1).³³ Classification of a municipality as a city or village depends on its population and/or the number of registered voters residing within the municipality's borders.³⁴ While a municipality's classification can change (city to village or vice versa), it is important to note that the duties, powers, and responsibilities of municipalities do not.

³⁰ Ohio calls the mayor-council government plan the federal plan.

³¹ The exception to this is Ashtabula which elects its manager.

³² Exception being a vacancy, which they are required by law to fill.

³³ There are other differences, such as but not limited to the governing boards and administrative personnel, however, for the purposes of this dissertation, the population difference is of primary interest.

³⁴ There are two ways a municipality can have its classification changed: after the last federal census or an increase or decrease in the number of registered voters³⁴ (R.C. 703). After the federal census is completed, city and village classifications are reevaluated. A village that saw an increase in population to more than 5,000 residents is reclassified to a city. Likewise, a city that experiences a decline in population and has less than 5,000 residents is classified as a village. When a change from village to city or city to village occurs, the Secretary of State issues a proclamation indicating the change. Copies of the proclamation are sent to the mayor and municipal legislative body. After 30 days, the change takes effect. Similarly, changes can be made by an increase or decrease in the number of electors in a municipality. If a municipality's electors increase to more than 5,000, it is changed to a city. If a municipality's electors decrease to under 5,000, it is changed to a village. When the number of electors changes, the County Board of Elections is responsible for notifying the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State, upon certifying the change in the number of electors, issues a proclamation indicating the change in classification. The mayor and municipal legislative body receives copies of the proclamation. Thirty days later the change takes effect.

Why Ohio?

Currently, there are 19,522 municipalities within the U.S. (U.S. Census 2012). To collect information on all of the municipalities would be time consuming, tedious, and likely impossible. Instead, I opted to focus on municipalities found in the State of Ohio. Using a single state permits me to collect information on smaller municipalities as well as larger ones. It is common for scholars to focus on larger, more populated municipalities when examining municipal voter turnout.³⁵ By limiting my analysis to Ohio, I can, and do, include smaller, less populated municipalities. Since municipal elections in Ohio are conducted in odd numbered (non concurrent) years, I can isolate the affects in-person early voting has on turnout in municipal elections while holding other factors constant (e.g. implementation and administration of early voting, registration rules, etc.).

Additionally, Ohio has distinctive characteristics that are useful for this analysis. Ohio is a microcosm of the United States. In 2004, CNN describes this best when they discusses how the “Five Ohios-”³⁶ Democratic northeast, conservative and traditional Southwest, the farming belt, Appalachia region, and central suburban Ohio- make Ohio a microcosm of the United States.³⁷ The adoption and implementation of in-person early voting in Ohio provides a unique opportunity to study the impact of early voting on turnout in municipal elections. Finally, it is convenient because most of the data necessary for this study was available online or obtained by an email request.

Ohio is best thought of as a microcosm of the United States because of its heterogeneity and diversity. Geographically, Ohio borders five states: Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Indiana,

³⁵ See Caren (2007), Alfred and Lee (1968), Wood (2002), Hajnal and Trounstein (2005)

³⁶ The Five Ohios was first discussed in the Plain Dealer, a newspaper in Cleveland, Ohio.

³⁷ <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/08/30/quest.ohio/index.html?iref=newssearch>

Table 4.1 Ohio Municipal Organization Plans

	Commission	Manager	Mayor
Voters Elect	Commissioners	Councilmen*	Mayor and Council members
Appointments Made By	Commission	Council	Mayor
Appointments	Clerk, Treasurer, Auditor, Solicitor (villages only), Director of Law (cities only)	Manager, Clerk, Treasurer, Auditor, Solicitor (villages only), Director of Law (cities only)	Director of Public Safety, Director of Public Service, Treasurer, Solicitor (villages only), Director of Law (cities only)
Municipal Government Supervision	Commission as a whole, or departments may be assigned to individual commissioners	Manager	Mayor

Source: Ohio Revised Code Chapter 705 *Ashtabula the city manager is elected

Michigan, and West Virginia. These neighboring states have a profound influence on Ohio. For example, the counties in Ohio that share a border with another state share similar demographic composition and political identity as their neighboring state (see Table 1 in Appendix A). This makes Ohio relatively unique because the state as a whole is not largely comprised of one political identity, industry, or demographic group. Because of this, Ohio is like a small-scale version of United States as a whole. Ohio encompasses a similar demographic composition and political identity to that of the United States (see Table 2 in Appendix A).

Within the borders of Ohio, one can find a bit of everything, such as large cities, suburbs, and small rural communities, liberal urban centers, and Bible belt communities just to name a few. The municipalities in Ohio have institutional variation and political diversity. They range in size, demographic composition, and political identity. See Table 4.2 for a description of the

municipalities. The municipalities found in Ohio are not fundamentally different than other municipalities within the United States. Therefore, the results should be generalizable to other municipalities.

Table 4.2 Summary of Ohio Municipalities

	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
<i>Administrative System</i>							
Mayor-Council	87.9%	87.9%	87.9%	87.9%	87.9%	87.9%	87.9%
Council-Manager	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%	7.8%
<i>Electoral System</i>							
Partisan Elections	1.1%	7.5%	0.6%	5.9%	1.3%	5.1%	0.8%
Non Partisan Elections	9.8%	46.2%	9.8%	60.9%	11.9%	62.7%	12.8%
<i>Demographics</i>							
Population	8,005	7,991	7,991	7,962	7,998	7,959	7,909
Percent Bachelor Degree	9.77%	10.01%	10.26%	10.51%	10.75%	11.01%	11.29%
Percent White	94.1%	93.7%	93.4%	93.1%	92.8%	92.5%	92.2%
Median Income	49,945	54,028	58,111	62,194	66,277	29,531	33,614
Percent Female	51.7%	51.7%	51.7%	51.8%	51.8%	51.8%	51.8%
Age	36.9	37.5	38.0	38.5	39.1	39.6	40.1

Numbers are rounded (N=6,566; n= 938, T=7), where $N=n*T$

While this study is not a true natural experiment, it has elements of a natural experiment that are beneficial to studying in-person early voting and turnout in municipal elections. Ohio offers an opportunity to assess a naturally occurring political phenomenon over a substantial time period. In 2005, the Ohio General Assembly passed a law offering voters to the opportunity to cast

a ballot via in-person early voting.³⁸ In January 2006, the law went into effect. Since 2006, Ohio voters have been allowed to cast a ballot 35 days prior to Election Day at their County Board of Elections (CBoE).³⁹ The hours for in-person early voting are typically uniform throughout the state and are open during the weekends and evenings.⁴⁰ This means that individuals residing in different municipalities in different counties had relatively the same opportunity to utilize early voting. For example, voters in Toledo, Ohio (Lucas County) have a similar time period to vote early as voters in Columbus, Ohio (Franklin County). Consistency of voting hours across municipalities is important as the length of time an individual has to vote influences turnout (Wolfinger, Hughton, and Mullin 2005).

It is convenient to use Ohio municipalities as much of the necessary data needed to complete the study was available online. This creates a savings on research costs. Since the information I collected was in the public record, most of the agencies' websites had this information available. Any information that wasn't available online was obtained via an email request. Conducting a survey, an alternative to using available data, would be costly especially if I sought to have a similar size sample.

Data Collection and Sources

Since the United States does not have a centralized database containing information about local elections or local governments, I constructed my own data set. The data for this project came from a variety of government agencies: the U.S. Census Bureau, Ohio Department of Development, the Ohio Secretary of State Office, the Ohio Municipal League, and the Ohio

³⁸ HB 234 was passed in 2005. Ohio law states that a bill will become effective 91 days after being signed. It became effective in January 2006. The 2006 elections was the first year of implementation.

³⁹ In June 2014, this law was altered. It now allows early voting to occur 30 days before Election Day.

⁴⁰ The new law, effective in June 2014, reduces the hours voting sites are open. Weekdays, voting sites will be open until 5 pm. No voting site can be open on Sundays. And the last two Saturdays of early voting, voting sites can only be open until 4 pm.

County Board of Elections. Each agency and what information I obtained from them will be discussed in more detail below. From these sources, I acquired a variety of information on Ohio municipalities. I also collected information on mayoral elections from 2001 to 2013. According to Ohio law, voters elect municipal officers, including mayors, in odd numbered years. This provides me with seven municipal elections for study - three prior to the implementation of early voting and four after it. This time period, discussed in the next section, is an important aspect of this study.

The information on the municipalities' population and demographics came from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Ohio Department of Development. For the years 2000 and 2010, the U.S. Census was used to acquire population and demographic data on the municipalities. The 2000 and 2010 census were downloaded from the U.S. Census Bureau's website. The population estimates for the years 2001 to 2009 and 2011 to 2013 were obtained from the Ohio Department of Development. They publish the U.S. Census Bureau's population estimates for non-census years for municipalities in Ohio. The more recent years were downloaded from the Ohio Department of Development website. The other years were obtained via an email request to the agency.

The Ohio Secretary of State's office publishes the Ohio Municipal, Township, and School Board Roster. This handbook contains information on all the municipalities in the State of Ohio and is released every two years. It contains information about their government structure (e.g. mayor-council or council-manager), the type of municipality (charter or statutory), and the year of incorporation. I also collected similar information from the Ohio Municipal League. Their website provides a list of municipalities in Ohio along with their government structure and type of municipality. I used these two agencies' records to check the information for errors.

There are 88 County Boards of Elections (CBoE) within the State of Ohio. I visited and/or contacted all 88 CBoEs to obtain mayoral election results, precinct lists, and registered voter totals. Each of these are discussed in more detail below.

The CBoE are responsible for maintaining records of municipal elections and registered voter files for their respective counties. Many of the CBoEs had mayoral election results available on their respective websites. If the data was available online, I downloaded the summary or cumulative file to acquire the election results for mayoral races for each year of this study. The summary or cumulative file lists each race and the number of votes each candidate received in that particular election. I sent an email request to the CBoE asking for the summary or cumulative files for the elections not found on their website.

I use two different documents to obtain the number of registered voters for each municipality: the turnout report or the official statements of votes cast. These two documents are similar since they both contain information about registered voters and election results. Both documents are used to obtain the number of registered voters because the CBoEs do not use the same document to report election results. Some of the CBoEs use turnout reports, while others use the official statements of votes cast. The turnout report contains a list of each locality, including municipalities, within that respective county. For each locality it lists the number of registered voters and the overall number of ballots cast in that election. If the turnout reports were unavailable, I obtained general election results by precinct, or the official statement of votes cast (SOVC) report, from each CBoE. The general election results by precinct, or the SOVC report, lists the number of registered voters and election results for precinct in that respective county.

In addition, the CBoE are responsible for providing precinct maps and lists. Typically, precinct maps are used to determine what precincts are assigned to various districts. For example,

a precinct map shows which precincts are included in a U.S. House district. However, this was unavailable online for municipalities. Since I needed to identify which precincts are assigned to each municipality in my study, I contacted the CBoEs and requested this information. The list of precinct assignments were used for identifying precincts assigned to a municipality for election purposes.

Of the 88 CBoE, I was able to obtain records from 82 of them. I first went to the CBoEs' websites to obtain election results and the number of registered voters in each municipality. In most cases, this data was available online. For example, Lucas County Board of Elections had all the necessary records for this study available online. Other CBoEs had some data, but did not have all the data necessary for this study. For instance, Ashland County Board of Elections did not have the registered voter numbers for the 2003 general election, but had information for all the other elections while Wyandot only had information for the 2013 election.

If these documents were not available online, sent a request to the CBoEs to obtain this information. Some CBoEs fulfilled this request quickly. While some of the CBoEs did fulfill my requests, some did not.⁴¹ The reasons for not fulfilling my request varied, but included reasons such as missing the records, inability to locate the records, not enough people in the department to handle the request, and/or they were in the midst of conducting an election. A few CBoEs, like Sandusky County Board of Elections, did not have any records available online nor did they provide them upon request. From these records, I collected pieces of election information on 789 of the 938 municipalities.

⁴¹ The CBoEs that received an email request either did not respond to it, in which case another request was sent again. In the case of Sandusky, I never heard back even after multiple requests were sent. In other cases, the CBoEs did not fulfill it because they were administering an election, they did not have the data available in electronic format, they no longer had the files, or the files could not be located. In the case of the data not being available in electronic format, I requested the files be copied and mailed to me. This was fulfilled in each request.

Why Interrupted Time Series?

I want to determine if in-person early voting increases voter turnout at the municipal level. In order to accomplish this, I need a data set that contains information about several municipalities collected over a substantial period of time. Since I am interested in the relationship between in-person early voting and voter turnout, the temporal period needs to include municipal elections both before and after the implementation of in-person early voting.

A credible technique to disentangle the effects of in-person early voting on voter turnout is to employ an interrupted time series model. An interrupted time series model allows me to examine the impact of a law or public policy.⁴² The year of implementation serves as an interruption, breaking the data into a pre and post implementation groups. By comparing the pre and post implementation groups, I can test the statistical significance of a shift in voter turnout that occurs after the implementation of the law.⁴³

There have been many interrupted time series studies done to examine the impact of a law. Likely the most famous interrupted time series analysis is that of Campbell and Ross' (1968) traffic study. They sought to determine if the new traffic law for speeding reduced the number of traffic deaths. Others have used interrupted time series analysis to examine other policies such as traffic laws (Glass 1968; Ross et al 1970), gun control laws (Deutsch and Alt 1977), hotel taxes (Bonham, Fugi, Im, and Mak 1992), and anti-drunk driving campaigns (Murry, Stam and Lastovicka 1993).

In interrupted time series analysis, the impact refers to the shift that occurs after implementation. An impact has two characteristics: onset and duration (Mc Dowall, Mc Cleary, Meidinger, and Hay 1980). The onset can be gradual or abrupt and the duration can be permanent

⁴² In particular, I am using a single interrupted time series model. In a single interrupted time series model, researchers take repeated observations of the same subjects at regular time intervals for a specified period of time. In my case, I have taken repeated observation of municipalities every two years for 14 years.

⁴³ See Mc Dowall, Mc Cleary, Meidinger and Hay 1980 for a detailed explanation.

or temporary (Mc Dowall, Mc Cleary, Meidinger, and Hay 1980). After the implementation of in-person early voting, did the shift in turnout occur gradually or abruptly? And, was the shift in turnout temporary or was it permanent? In this study, I hypothesize that after the implementation of in-person early voting, the shift in turnout will be abrupt and permanent.⁴⁴ A statistically significant upwards shift in voter turnout would indicate that the law had a positive impact on voter turnout in municipal elections. Conversely, a statistically significant downwards shift in voter turnout would indicate that the law had a negative impact on voter turnout in municipal elections.

Interrupted Time Series Design

For my study, the implementation of in-person early voting, in 2006, serves as the interruption or the treatment to the sample. It divides the sample into a control group (pre) and treatment group (post) similar to true experiments. In true experiments, the treatment is administered by the experimenter. However, in my study, the treatment is a policy adoption and its implementation. Since the treatment is not controlled by the experimenter, it is considered a quasi-experiment. In this case, the control group consists of the 2001, 2003 and 2005 elections while the treatment group consists of the 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2013 elections. Odd numbered years were used because municipal elections in Ohio are only held in odd numbered years. Using an interrupted time series model, I can determine if the policy (in-person early voting) had an impact on voter turnout. If an impact occurs, voter turnout should be different after the treatment than before the treatment. The quasi-experimental design is diagramed below.

$$O_1 O_2 O_3 X O_4 O_5 O_6 O_7$$

⁴⁴ The novelty hypothesis proposed by Gronke and Miller (2007) would suggest an abrupt and temporary shift in turnout after the implementation of in-person early voting. This is discussed in more detail when addressing the time period of the study.

In general, interrupted time series models have strong internal validity but weak external validity. As Campbell and Stanley (1966) and Britt, Kleck, and Bordua (1996) point out, the biggest threat to internal validity is history - an alternative explanation or reason for the shift after impact. A plausible alternative explanation for higher turnout in my analysis, for example, is that turnout increased because of local ballot issues, such as a millage. If there were highly salient issues on a municipality's ballot after the implementation of early voting, but not before the implementation of early voting, then this would be an alternative explanation for the increase in voter turnout after early voting was implemented.

With regards to external validity in an interrupted time series analysis, it is often the case that the results cannot be generalized beyond the subjects being studied. This is because the subjects being studied usually are not randomly selected. In many cases, subjects are selected after the policy intervention occurs (Britt, Kleck and Bordua 1996). Generally, the policy intervention is not randomly administered to subjects, but occurs because of a historical or social change (Britt, Kleck and Bordua 1996). If randomization were to have occurred, the results can be generalizable to a broader population.

One way to increase external validity and generalize beyond the subjects being studied is to conduct similar interrupted time series designs on additional municipalities with in-person early voting laws. My study will provide some insight on the impact of in-person early voting on municipal elections, however, it remains a single study of in-person early voting and municipal elections. As Campbell and Stanley (1966) state, a single study is never enough to be completely conclusive (42). Repeating this quasi-experiment on other municipalities and/or localities will help establish results that can be generalizable.

Panel Data

Panel data usually has both a temporal and a spatial component. As a result, using linear regression with panel data is often problematic since the procedures assumptions are likely violated. For example, linear regression assumes that the disturbance terms/errors are spherical⁴⁵ (Beck and Katz 1995; Kennedy 1979). Data sets with temporal and spatial components are often nonspherical; they contain autocorrelated and heteroskedastic errors (Beck and Katz 1995).⁴⁶ For instance, an OLS regression assumes that the errors are independent of one another. In time series, it is assumed that the errors are related to errors at different time points.⁴⁷ If the data contains autocorrelated and heteroskedastic errors, the standard errors of a linear or ordinary least squares regression are not guaranteed to be accurate or unbiased (Beck and Katz 1995).

Linear regression also assumes that the observations of the independent variable can be considered fixed in repeated samples (Kennedy 1979). However, in panel data, it is often the case that the value of the dependent variable at time t is dependent on a past value of itself ($t-1$). This may be the case with turnout- the dependent variable in my study. For instance, turnout rates in the 2003 election could be influenced by turnout rates in the 2001 election. To capture this, the lagged value of the dependent variable (turnout) is an independent variable, or regressor ($y_{i,t-1}$). The result is autoregression, which violates this assumption of linear regression. Time series models corrects for autoregression.

⁴⁵ Disturbances/errors are spherical if they are homoskedastic and are not correlated with one another.

⁴⁶ To account for this, it is common to use feasible generalized least squares (FGLS) (see Beck and Katz 1995). For instance, Southwell and Burchett (2000) use FGLS to examine VBM elections over time. However, as Beck and Katz (1995) point out, using FGLS often leads to inaccurate standard errors and suggest using panel-corrected standard errors. Using panel-corrected errors, OLS regressions can be run with time series data. The standard errors are accurate even with heteroskedasticity and contemporaneous correlation of the errors (see pages 640-41).

⁴⁷ This is known as contemporaneously correlated errors. See Cook and Campbell 1979 Chapters 6 for a complete discussion or Kennedy 2008.

As Beck and Katz (1995) point out, using OLS with time series data leads to “incorrect standard errors,” which lead to overconfidence or inadequate confidence in our statistical results (636).⁴⁸ An interrupted time series analysis uses techniques designed to address the assumption violations of OLS and permit unbiased errors in a time series, specifically, this is called the autoregressive integrated moving average (ARIMA) model (Cook and Campbell 1979).

Time Period

The time period of this study warrants a quick discussion. Specifically, data were collected on the 938 municipalities for odd numbered years between 2001 and 2013. The intervention year is 2006. This time period provides seven election years for study; three election years before the implementation of in-person early voting and four after.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the early voting novelty effect found by Gronke and Miller. They contend that increases in voter turnout after the implementation of early voting are due to novelty effects (Gronke and Miller 2007). The literature on early voting studies suggest that three election cycles after implementation voter turnout declines because the novelty wears off (Giammo and Brox 2010; Gronke and Miller 2007). The time period of this study contains four elections after the implementation of early voting, addressing this issue.⁴⁹ If the novelty effect applies to municipal elections, the turnout in the third and fourth elections after implementation (2011 and 2013 elections respectively) should be lower than turnout in the preceding elections. In other words, the result of the impact should be an abrupt and temporary increase in voter turnout. If this occurs, it suggests that early voting affects municipal elections in a similar manner as national and

⁴⁸ Beck and Katz argue that the generalized least squares (GLS) approach with time series data leads to overconfidence in the standard errors. Instead, they suggest using a panel-corrected standard errors model.

⁴⁹ The last election I include is 2013. Thus, I have every odd numbered year election that has occurred to date in my study.

state elections. Voters utilize the new laws at first, which leads to an immediate increase in voter turnout, but with time, the novelty wears off and voter turnout returns to its previous rate. However, if voter turnout does not decline, I can rule out the alternative hypothesis that the increase was due to the novelty effect.

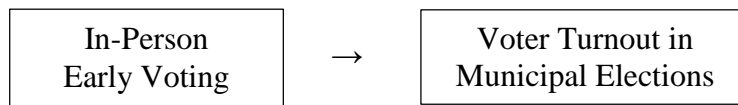
It should be noted that the implementation of in-person early voting in Ohio created a five day window for same day registration to occur. From 2006 until 2014, Ohio had a window for same day voter registration and in-person early voting.⁵⁰ As noted in Chapter 3, same day registration and in-person early voting are different. Burden et al (2009) suggest that it is important to break down type of early voting (e.g. absentee, in-person early voting, same day registration, Election Day registration) when examining the impact on turnout. While it would be valuable to study both in-person early voting and same day voter registration as Burden et al (2009) suggest, disentangling in-person early voting from same day registration is essentially impossible. The available data for elections in Ohio does not differentiate between the two; while many records note if a person voted early, they do not denote if they voted and registered during the window of same day registration. However, disentangling the two is not necessarily important for this study. The research question at hand asks about the overall impact of early voting. Both same day registration and in-person early voting are considered to be forms of early voting. Future research may want to consider examining each independently as their properties are different. But, for this study, I focus on how early voting overall has impacted turnout at the municipal level.

⁵⁰ In 2014, the Ohio General Assembly passed SB 238. On June 1, 2014 it will become effective. The measure shortens the early voting period, effectively eliminating the window for same day voter registration.

Modeling the Relationship between Early Voting and Municipal Voter Turnout

The purpose of this project is to highlight the impact in-person early voting has on voter turnout in municipal elections. I assume high voter turnout is desired in elections, particularly local elections. I also assume that all elections are not synonymous. For example, state and national elections tend to be high stimulus elections while local elections are often low stimulus elections. Thus, while scholars have found that in-person early voting has not increased voter turnout in national or state elections, I don't assume the same holds true for local elections. By their nature, local elections are different than state or national elections. For instance, in vote by mail elections, local/municipal elections have been the greatest beneficiary. Local elections using vote by mail systems have seen an increase in voter turnout by as little as 7.6 percent to as high as 26.5 percent (Kousser and Mullin 2007; Karp and Banducci 2000). While vote by mail systems and in-person early voting are different, as noted in Chapter 3, these findings suggest local democracies may benefit the most from early voting laws.

The research question for this study is as follows: Does in-person early voting increase voter turnout in municipal elections? I hypothesize that in-person early voting has a significant positive impact on voter turnout in municipal elections. Below is the theoretical model I will be testing.



While a more complex model could be developed, I adopt the principle of parsimony. This model captures the theory I propose in the simplest manner. The model is simple and useful.

According to Feldstein, a useful model is one that is “parsimonious, plausible, and informative” (Feldstein quoted in Kennedy 2008, 71). My model has all three of these features.

However, there are other factors that may lead to increases in voter turnout at the municipal level, and these need to be controlled for in order to rule out alternative hypotheses. Previous research indicates that the electoral structure (partisan versus nonpartisan), the form of government (mayor-council versus council-manager), and the competitiveness of the election influence turnout in municipal elections (Caren 2007; Wood 2002; Hajnal & Lewis 2003; Karning and Walters 1983; Alford & Lee 1968). In the following section, I discuss how these concepts are measured.

Measurement of the Variables

In order to assess the impact in person early voting has on municipal elections, I examine its impact on overall turnout in mayoral elections. Mayoral elections are used because it is the highest executive position in municipal government. This section defines the variables, and outlines the measures of the variables. I begin with the dependent variable: municipal voter turnout. Next, I discuss the independent variable: early voting. Finally, I move to a discussion of the control variables. Table 4.3 gives a summary of all the variables, their definitions, and the operationalization of them.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this model is municipal voter turnout. It is measured as the percent of registered voters casting a ballot in mayoral elections. It is calculated by taking the total number of votes cast for all mayoral candidates, and dividing by the number of registered voters in the municipality. This is then transformed into a percentage. To calculate the dependent variable, I need two pieces of information: 1) the total number of votes cast in each mayoral election and 2) the number of registered voters in each municipality in each election year. As previously

mentioned, I obtained the mayoral election results for each election year of the study from the CBoEs.

The second part of the dependent variable, the number of registered voters, was much more complicated to calculate. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I used two different documents to obtain the number of registered voters for each municipality. The turnout report was easier to use since it listed the number of registered voters by locality, including municipality. This number was then entered into the data set. The SOVC report was more complicated to use since it listed the number of registered voters by precinct instead of municipality. I first had to determine which precincts were assigned to each municipality. Using the list of precinct assignments from the CBoEs, I could decipher which precincts were assigned to each municipality. The number of registered voters for each precinct assigned to a municipality were then added together to obtain the overall number of registered voters for each municipality within that county. For example, Yellow Springs Village has four precincts. The number of registered voters in each precinct were added together to obtain the overall number of registered voters in Yellow Springs Village.

One concern with using registered voters involves the maintenance of the lists. With the passage of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, the maintenance of the registered voter file has been standardized. According to the Department of Justice, voters cannot be removed from the registered voter file for nonvoting.⁵¹ Moreover, maintenance programs must “incorporate specific safeguards, e.g., that they be uniform, non-discriminatory, in compliance with the Voting Rights Act, and not be undertaken within 90 days of a federal election” (Department of Justice).

⁵¹ http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/nvra/activ_nvra.php

Table 4.3 Summary of Variable Measures

Variable Name	Variable Description	Operationalization
Voter Turnout	Dependent Variable: The percent of registered voters casting a ballot in mayoral elections.	A percentage value that ranges from 0 to 100%.
Early Voting	Independent Variable: Presence of in-person early voting in election year.	Takes the value of 1 for election years with in-person early voting, 0 otherwise.
Partisan Election	Control Variable: Elections where the mayoral candidate has a political affiliation that appears on the ballot.	Dummy variable: partisan elections were coded 1, 0 otherwise.
Mayor Administrative Structure	Control Variable: Mayor-council form of government is defined as municipal governments where there is a mayor but no manager.	Dummy variable: Municipalities with mayor-council government systems were coded 1, 0 otherwise.
Manager Administrative Structure	Control Variable: Council-manager forms of government are municipal governments where there is a manager.	Dummy variable: Municipalities with council-manager government systems were coded 1, 0 otherwise.
Municipal Size	Control Variable: The total population of the municipality.	A numeric value that ranges from 27 to 792,499
Percent White	Control Variable: Percent of the municipality that has self-identified as white in the Census.	A percentage value that ranges from 0 to 100%.
Median Income	Control Variable: the median value of a municipality's income as reported in the Census.	A numeric value that ranges from 7,427.5 to 326,001.80
Percent Bachelor Degree	Control Variable: Percent of the municipality that has self-identified as having at least Bachelor Degree in the Census.	A percentage value that ranges from 0 to 100%.
Closeness of Mayoral Election	Control Variable: The percentage of victory of the winning candidate over all other candidates.	A percent value ranging from 0 to 100%. As the percent increases, the closeness of the mayoral race increases
Ballot Measures	Control Variable: Elections years where a highly salient statewide ballot initiative appears on the ballot.	Dummy variable: election years with ballot measures were coded 1, 0 otherwise.

This data set contains only elections held after the National Voter Registration Act was implemented in 1995, and therefore it provides uniformity in the data set.

In addition, the measure chosen for the dependent variable has been used by scholars. For example, Hajnal and Lewis (2003) and Caren (2007) both use mayoral elections for their dependent variable when studying municipal voter turnout. Both early voting and urban/local scholars use registered voters as their denominator (Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Wood 2002; Southwell and Burchett 2000; Richardson and Neeley 1996). Thus, this measure has been established as having both reliability and validity.

Independent Variable

The independent variable is the availability of in-person early voting. Elections prior to 2006 did not have in-person early voting. These elections were coded 0. Elections after 2006 had the option of in-person early voting and were coded 1. This is consistent with the literature on quasi-experiments involving interrupted time series (Cook and Campbell 1979, Chapter 6).

Control Variables

The control variables for this study include the institutional and local contextual factors that previous research has indicated influence voter turnout (see Baybeck 2013; Marschall 2010; Kelleher & Lowery 2004; Oliver and Ha 2007) and campaign factors that influence turnout in municipal elections (Caren 2007). Each of these factors will be defined and controlled for in this study.

Recall from Chapter 2 that institutional factors include non-concurrent and concurrent elections; partisan and nonpartisan elections; and mayor-council and council-manager forms of government. Each of these influence voter turnout in municipal elections (Wood 2002; Hajnal & Lewis 2003; Karning and Walters 1983; Alford & Lee 1968).

The electoral structure of a municipality may influence voter turnout. Therefore, I include an electoral structure variable in my study. Partisan elections are elections where the mayoral candidate has a political affiliation that appears on the ballot. Nonpartisan elections are elections where the mayoral candidate does not have a political affiliation on the ballot. Municipalities that held partisan elections were coded 1. Municipalities that conducted nonpartisan elections were coded 0.

Since a municipality's administrative structure can impact voter turnout, I include an administrative structure variable. Mayor-council form of government is defined as municipal governments where there is a mayor but no manager; and council-manager forms of government are municipal governments where there is a manager. In Ohio, there are four types of government systems municipalities can have: mayor-council, council-manager, commission-manager, or mayor-council-administrator/manager. The latter two types of government systems are similar to adaptive cities. I combine these two types (commission-manager, or mayor-council-administrator/manager) into one category, adaptive city structure.⁵² From these three categories, I created two dummy variables: one for mayor-council government systems and one for council-manager government systems. Municipalities with mayor-council government systems, were labeled Mayor Administrative Structure, and were coded 1, all others were coded 0. Municipalities with council-manager government systems were labeled Manager Administrative Structure and coded 1, all others were coded 0.

The local contextual factors of a municipality include municipality's size, municipality-level measures of socioeconomic status (SES), and the racial composition of the municipality. Table 4.2 from a previous section in this chapter notes the average composition of an Ohio

⁵² 34 municipalities fell into this combined category of adaptive city structure.

municipality. Table 4.4 details the range of the demographic data for each of the variables discussed here. Empirical research on a municipality's size indicates that there is no clear consensus on the direction of influence of municipality size on voter turnout (see Kelleher and Lowery 2004). Regardless of the direction of influence size has on voter turnout, it is important to control for municipal size since it may influence voter turnout. The size of the municipality is defined as the total population of the municipality and is a continuous variable.

In Chapter 2, I discuss Madison and Jefferson's arguments about government size composition as it relates to participation. Madison, admittedly indirectly, advocates for large, heterogeneous municipalities while Jefferson supports small, homogeneous municipalities. While municipal size is discussed above, here I focus on the demographic composition of the municipality. A municipality's demographic composition is important because it reveals the degree of heterogeneity of the municipality. Oliver (1999) suggests heterogeneous cities have higher rates of participation because there is more competition for resources (186). The heterogeneity of a municipality can be measured by demographic characteristics, such as racial composition, education, and income. Alfred and Lee (1968) suggest six different demographic characteristics that can be used to measure the heterogeneity of a municipality: ethnicity, religion, education, occupation, neighborhood, and race (62). I use U.S. Census data to capture the demographic variables that have been shown in the literature to influence municipal turnout: these variables are percent white, median income, and median education.

The U.S. Census data contains a percent white measure for each municipality in 2000 and 2010. However, I need the percent white for years both in between and after the census years. One technique to deal with missing data is to mathematically interpolate data. By doing so, I am creating new data points from a set of known data points. Specifically, I am constructing new data

points for percent white for the years 2001 to 2009 using the known data points of percent white in 2000 and 2010.⁵³ For the years between 2000 and 2010, I obtain estimates on percent white from interpolating the variables. I take the difference between percent white in 2010 and percent white in 2000 and divide it by 10. For years after 2001 and before 2010, I add this number to the previous year.

For example, Conneaut City, OH in 2000 was 96.3 percent white and in 2010, it was 89.8 percent white. To find the percent white for 2001 I did the following:

$$1) \frac{89.8-96.3}{10} = -.65$$

Then added -.65 to the value in 2000 (96.3)

$$2) 96.3 + -.65 = 95.65$$

The value of percent white for the Conneaut City in 2001 is 95.65 percent. For 2002, I added -.65 to 95.65. This was done for each year between 2000 and 2010.

Similarly, data points are missing for percent white for the years of 2011 to 2013. Much like interpolating the data for percent white for the years 2001 to 2009, I extrapolate the data for percent white for years 2011 to 2013. I use the percent change between 2010 and 2000 and add it to the preceding year. By extrapolating the variable, percent white, I assume the municipality is continuing to increase or decrease at the same rate as it did between 2000 and 2010. Returning to the Conneaut City example, the city decreased in its percent white by -.65 each year. In 2010, the percent white for the Conneaut City was 89.8 percent. Thus for 2011, the percent white was calculated by adding -.65 to 89.8, which is 89.15 percent. For 2012, the percent white is 89.15 (2011's value) plus -.65, which is 88.50 percent. I did this for every year through 2013.

⁵³ The percent white variable is restricted to 100 percent-meaning by interpolating or extrapolating the data, values over 100 percent were reduced to an even 100 percent.

Table 4.4 Range of Demographics of Ohio Municipalities

	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
Population	29 -710,016	28 -716,825	28 -718,752	28 -736,359	27 - 757,435	36 -780,288	36 - 792,499
Percent Bachelor Degree	0 - 44.84%	0 - 44.92 %	0 - 45 %	0 - 45.08%	0 - 45.73%	0 - 48.27%	0 - 50.81%
Percent White	7.9 - 99.9%	14.4 - 9.8%	20.9 - 99.8%	27.5 - 99.9%	11.4 - 99.9%	0 - 100%	0 - 100%
Median Income	20,875 - 214,001	18,875 - 242,001	16875 - 270,001	14,875 - 298,001	12,875 - 26,001	7,428 - 5,575	12,259 - 14,193
Percent Female	8.4 - 93.1%	18.5 - 87.8%	28.6 - 82.5%	29.4 - 85.7%	23.3 - 94.7%	17.3 - 100%	11.2 -100%
Median Age	21.8 - 71.7	23.3 - 63.1	22.7 - 54.4	22.1- 54.6	21.5 - 57.1	19.2 - 61.6	15.6 - 66.3

Numbers are rounded (N=6,566; n= 938, T=7), where N=n*T

Previous research has found municipal income to have interesting effects on voter turnout. Oliver (1999) examines a community's economic heterogeneity, finding that homogenous, affluent cities have the lowest turnout while heterogeneous middle class cities have the highest turnout. I obtain median income of each municipality from the 2000 and 2010 Census. For the years between 2000 and 2010, I obtain estimates on median income from interpolating the variables just as I did for the percent white variable above. I take the difference between median income in 2010 and median income in 2000 and divide it by 10. For years after 2001 and before 2010, I add this number to the previous year. For the years after 2010, I obtain estimates by extrapolating the variables, just as I did for the percent white variable above. By extrapolating the variable, median income, I assume the municipality is continuing to increase or decrease at the same rate as it did between 2000 and 2010. I use the percent change between 2010 and 2000 and add it to the preceding year. To obtain the 2011 median income variable, I take the percent change between 2010 and 2000 and add it to 2010 median income variable. For 2012, the percent change between 2010 and 2000 is added to the 2011 median income, and so on for each year through 2013.

The last demographic variable to capture the heterogeneity of a municipality is education. Education is measured as the percent of a municipality's population over 18 with at least a bachelor degree. The U.S. Census provides the percentage of a municipality that has self-reported completion of a bachelor degree in 2000 and 2010. I interpolate this variable to obtain values for the years 2001 to 2009, just as I did for median income and percent white. To obtain values for percent bachelor degree for 2011 to 2013, I extrapolate the variable as I did with median income and percent white. Like median income and percent white, by extrapolating the variable, I assume percent bachelor degree increases or decreases at the same rate as it did between 2000 and 2010.

Since campaigns can affect voter turnout, I also control for these dynamics. When elections are close, there tends to be higher turnout (Hill and Leighley 1999). To control for this, I use a competitiveness variable from the election data collected. The competitiveness of the election is determined by taking the absolute value of the percentage of victory of the winning candidate over all other candidates. The calculation is as follows:

$$\left(\frac{|W - O|}{T} \right) * 100$$

Where W is the total number of votes the winning candidate received

O is the total number of votes all other candidates received, and

T is the total number of votes cast.

Using this calculation, the results can range from 0 to 100 percent. As the percentage of victory increase, closeness in the election increases. In other words, if the percentage is 100, then the mayoral election was very close. If the percentage is 0, then the mayoral race was not close. Therefore, if the result is 5 percent, it would indicate that there was only one candidate on the ballot or one candidate received all votes cast. Likewise, a result of 99 percent suggests that the mayoral race was extremely close.

Ballot initiatives have been shown to increase voter turnout in midterm and presidential elections (Grummel 2008; Tolbert, Grummel and Smith 2001). There were two election cycles where highly salient state ballot initiatives were on the ballot after early voting. Both the 2009 and 2011 had statewide initiatives that likely contributed to the high turnout for these two election cycles. In 2009, there was a casino initiative that would allow for casinos to be built in Ohio. In 2011, there was a labor initiative that would repeal a measure passed by the state general assembly

that would limit collective bargaining for public employees. Since there were highly salient issues on the municipal ballot after the implementation of early voting, but not before the implementation of early voting, then this could be an alternative explanation for the increase in voter turnout after early voting was implemented.⁵⁴ To control for the statewide ballot issues, I created a ballot measure dummy variable. If there was a highly salient ballot measure in that election, it was coded 1, 0 otherwise. The 2009 and 2011 election years both received 1. The other election years received 0.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the hypothesis for this study as well as the theoretical model and variable measures. I also described the data set being used in this study. Using the hypothesis discussed above, the next chapter examines the relationship between in-person early voting and voter turnout in municipal elections. If in-person early voting has a positive influence on voter turnout in municipal elections, it may provide a solution to the low voter turnout problem that is common in local elections.

⁵⁴ This alternative explanation assumes that ballot initiatives increase turnout in a similar manner as they do in midterm and presidential elections.

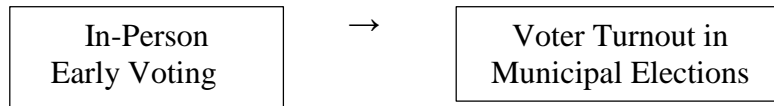
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS:

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING AND TURNOUT IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

In the previous chapter, I discussed the methodology and the application of interrupted time series models to assess the impact of in-person early voting on turnout in municipal elections. I hypothesized that in-person early voting will have a positive effect on voter turnout in municipal elections. In this chapter, I present the results.

I perform an interrupted time series model to assess the impact in-person early voting has on turnout in municipal elections. The model was sketched out in Chapter 4 and is reprinted below. Specifically, I expect in-person early voting to have an abrupt and permanent impact on voter turnout in municipal elections. The following section assesses this claim.



Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics of the dependent, independent, and control variables over all the years in this study are presented in Table 5.1.

Municipal Voter Turnout, Dependent Variable

The average turnout for municipalities for all time periods, is 35 percent. The 2013 election year has the lowest average turnout among the municipalities (28%) while voter turnout in 2011

Table 5.1 Descriptive Statistics of Variables (N=6,566; n=938, T=7)

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev.	Min	Max
Voter Turnout All	1,911	35.41	14.46	0	80.09
Voter Turnout 2001	86	36.04	15.65	0	71.19
Voter Turnout 2003	394	36.12	15.13	0	70.62
Voter Turnout 2005	84	37.21	12.13	0	65.97
Voter Turnout 2007	564	31.67	13.63	0	80.09
Voter Turnout 2009	107	35.36	13.43	0	63.91
Voter Turnout 2011	573	39.58	14.18	1.34	79.21
Voter Turnout 2013	103	27.90	11.46	1.02	65.05
<hr/>					
Early Voting All	6,566	0.57	0.49	0	1
Early Voting 2001, 2003, 2005	938	0	0	0	0
Early Voting 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013	938	1	0	1	1
<hr/>					
<i>Institutional Structure Variables</i>					
Mayor Administrative Systems All*	6,566	0.88	0.33	0	1
Manger Administrative Systems All*	6,566	0.78	0.27	0	1
<hr/>					
Partisan Elections All	6,566	0.03	0.18	0	1
Partisan Elections 2001	938	0.01	0.10	0	1
Partisan Elections 2003	938	0.75	0.26	0	1
Partisan Elections 2005	938	0.01	0.08	0	1
Partisan Elections 2007	938	0.59	0.24	0	1
Partisan Elections 2009	938	0.13	0.11	0	1
Partisan Elections 2011	938	0.51	0.22	0	1
Partisan Elections 2013	938	0.01	0.09	0	1
<hr/>					
<i>Local Context Variables</i>					
Percent Bachelor Degree All	6,552	10.51	8.49	0	50.81
Percent Bachelor Degree 2001	936	9.77	8.17	0	44.84
Percent Bachelor Degree 2003	936	10.01	8.15	0	44.92
Percent Bachelor Degree 2005	936	10.26	8.21	0	45.00
Percent Bachelor Degree 2007	936	10.51	8.34	0	45.08
Percent Bachelor Degree 2009	936	10.75	8.54	0	45.73
Percent Bachelor Degree 2011	936	11.01	8.80	0	48.27
Percent Bachelor Degree 2013	936	11.29	9.09	0	50.81

Results are rounded, *These variables are time invariant, so only the overall statistics are presented.

Table 5.1 Descriptive Statistics of Variables Continued

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev.	Min	Max
Median Income All	6,552	50,528.71	24,785.52	7,427.50	326,001.80
Median Income 2001	936	49,945.46	19,170.38	20,875.00	214,001.10
Median Income 2003	936	54,028.26	21,511.21	18,875.00	242,001.30
Median Income 2005	936	58,111.06	23,894.22	16,875.00	270,001.50
Median Income 2007	936	62,193.86	26,307.94	14,875.00	298,001.70
Median Income 2009	936	66,276.67	28,744.65	12,875.00	326,001.80
Median Income 2011	936	29,531.44	9,270.95	7,427.50	95,575.00
Median Income 2013	936	33,614.25	10,784.97	12,258.50	114,193.00
Percent White All	6,559	93.26	11.77	0.98	100
Percent White 2001	937	94.37	10.77	0.98	100
Percent White 2003	937	94.00	11.03	1.14	100
Percent White 2005	937	93.63	11.33	1.30	100
Percent White 2007	937	93.26	11.66	1.46	100
Percent White 2009	937	92.90	12.04	1.62	100
Percent White 2011	937	92.52	12.44	1.78	100
Percent White 2013	937	92.14	12.86	1.94	100
Municipal Population All	6,562	7,982.63	33,931.68	27	782,498.60
Municipal Population 2001	938	8,005.02	33,988.86	29	710,016.00
Municipal Population 2003	938	7,991.41	33,925.93	28	716,825.00
Municipal Population 2005	935	7,991.23	33,750.91	28	718,752.00
Municipal Population 2007	938	7,962.54	33,815.27	28	736,359.00
Municipal Population 2009	938	7,998.35	34,404.48	27	757,435.00
Municipal Population 2011	938	7,958.52	33,7400.03	36	780,288.00
Municipal Population 2013	937	7,971.35	33,999.75	36	792,498.60
<i>Campaign Variables</i>					
Closeness All	2,219	37.86	40.53	0	100
Closeness 2001	102	40.23	39.95	0	100
Closeness 2003	503	42.13	41.61	0	100
Closeness 2005	98	42.00	40.63	0	100
Closeness 2007	628	35.32	39.82	0	100
Closeness 2009	124	40.67	41.48	0	100
Closeness 2011	648	35.79	39.82	0	100
Closeness 2013	116	35.95	41.77	0	100
Ballot Measures All	6,566	0.29	0.45	0	1
Ballot Measures 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2013	938	0	0	0	0
Ballot Measures 2009, 2011	938	1	0	1	1

Results are rounded, *These variables are time invariant, so only the overall statistics are presented.

election has the highest average voter turnout among the municipalities (40%). The large turnout in 2011 election is not surprising since there was a highly salient ballot initiative on the ballot.⁵⁵

Table 5.2 provides a summary of the variables that includes the between and within components specific for panel data. Examining municipal voter turnout, the average voter turnout for each municipality varied between zero and 69 percent. The ‘within’ numbers refers to the standard deviation around each municipality’s average. This number is added into the overall mean. As stated above, the overall mean for municipal voter turnout is 35 percent. Some municipalities deviated from their average by 5 percent, or had 30 percent voter turnout.

Table 5.2 Summary of Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev.	Min	Max	T-bar
Turnout						
Overall	1911	35.41	14.462	0	80.09	
Between	732		12.191	0	69.27	
Within			8.878	5.148	77.49	2.61
Early Voting						
Overall	6566	0.571	0.495	0	1	
Between	938		0	0.571	0.571	
Within			0.495	0	1	7
<i>Institutional Structure Variables</i>						
Mayor Admin Systems						
Overall	6566	0.878	0.327	0	1	
Between	938		0.327	0	1	
Within			0	0.878	0.878	7
Manger Admin Systems						
Overall	6566	0.078	0.268	0	1	
Between	938		0.268	0	1	
Within			0	0.078	0.078	7

⁵⁵ In 2009, there was a statewide gaming initiative on the ballot. If passed, it would allow for casinos to be built in Ohio. Going into the 2011 election, the Ohio General Assembly passed a bill that would limit the collective bargaining rights of public employees. Citizens collected enough signatures to place a repeal of the law on the ballot (known as SB5). If passed, the law that limited collective bargaining rights of public employees would be repealed.

Table 5.2 Summary of Variables Continued

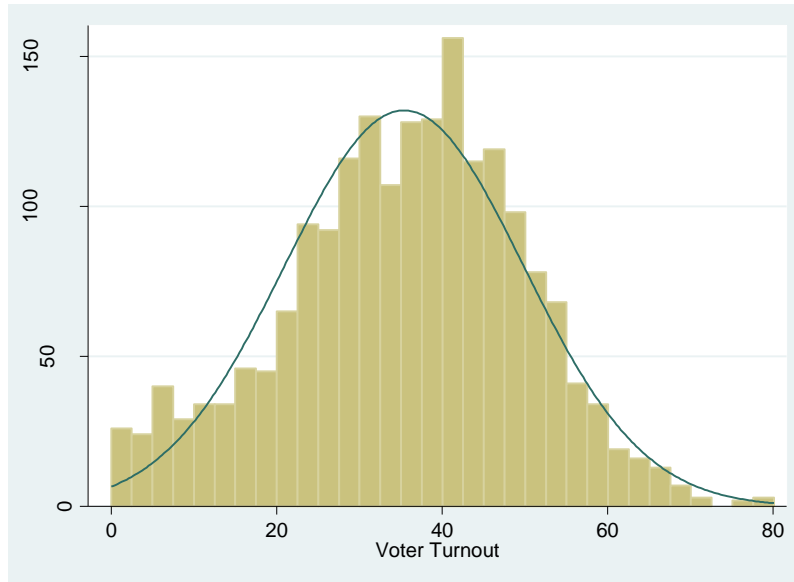
Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev.	Min	Max	T-bar
<i>Partisan Elections</i>						
Overall	6566	0.0317	0.175	0	1	
Between	938		0.102	0	0.857	
Within			0.142	-0.825	0.889	7
<i>Local Context Variables</i>						
<i>Percent Bachelor Degree</i>						
Overall	6552	10.514	8.488	0	50.81	
Between	936		8.328	0	45.08	
Within			1.656	-8.62	29.85	7
<i>Median Income</i>						
Overall	6552	50528.71	24785.52	7427.5	326001.80	
Between	936		19501.62	20589.29	218001.10	
Within			15308.74	-93472.29	158529.40	7
<i>Percent White</i>						
Overall	6559	93.259	11.772	0.98	100	
Between	937		11.663	1.46	100	
Within			1.633	70.879	115.639	7
<i>Population</i>						
Overall	6562	7,982.629	33931.68	27	792498.60	
Between	938		33891.40	32.286	744596.20	
Within			1762.346	-35312.14	55884.97	6.99
<i>Campaign Variables</i>						
<i>Closeness</i>						
Overall	2,219	37.86	40.53	0	100	
Between	780		29.83	0	100	
Within			28.75	-34.07	112.86	2.84
<i>Ballot Measures</i>						
Overall	6,566	0.29	0.45	0	1	
Between	938		0	0.29	0.29	
Within			0.45	0	1	7

Results are rounded

The large differences between minimum and maximum values of turnout suggest there are differences in turnout across municipalities and over time. The minimum values of turnout stay roughly the same until 2011 and 2013, then there is a slight increase. The 2007 election, one

municipality had 80 percent turnout. A close second, was the 2011 election with at least one municipality having 79 percent turnout. The maximum values suggest that some municipalities may have substantially higher turnout in mayoral elections than other municipalities. Overall, municipal voter turnout in Ohio over the years of this study is normally distributed, as demonstrated by Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Histogram of Municipalities by Voter Turnout



Source: Ohio's County Boards of Elections

Early Voting, Independent Variable

The mean municipal voter turnout for elections both before and after the implementation of early voting provides interesting and useful insight to the influence it has on voter turnout in municipal elections. As indicated by Table 5.3, prior to early voting, the mean municipal voter turnout for elections was 36 percent. After the implementation of early voting, the mean municipal voter turnout for elections was 35 percent. Municipal voter turnout is lower after the implementation of early voting by one percent. This suggests that early voting has a negative impact on voter turnout in municipal elections, which is contrary to what I hypothesized.

Table 5.3 Voter Turnout Averages Before and After Early Voting

	N	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Before Early Voting	564	36.29	14.79	0	71.19
After Early Voting	1,347	35.04	14.31	0	80.09

Results are rounded

Control Variables

The average Ohio municipality has a population of 7,982 and a median income of \$50,529. The majority of municipalities have highly homogenous populations with regard to race. On average, 93 percent of the municipal population was white while 11 percent of the municipal population over 18 held at least a bachelor degree.

The majority of the municipalities have mayor-council systems (approximately 87 percent). The second largest administrative structure is the council-manager system (approximately 8 percent). The remaining 5 percent are the adaptive administrative systems. On average, only three percent of municipalities conducted partisan elections during the years of this study. This is not surprising since Ohio law requires municipalities to conduct nonpartisan elections.⁵⁶

Often there was only one mayoral candidate on the ballot. Over all the seven elections included in this study, there were 1,123 mayoral races where a candidate ran unopposed. The closeness of mayoral races averaged 38 percent. Since the percentage is relatively low, it means that on average the mayoral races were not extremely competitive. In this study, there were 96 mayoral races where victor won by less than three percent, meaning the mayoral race was extremely competitive and the winning candidate won by a slim margin. The large differences between minimum and maximum values of competition (0 to 100) suggest that there are large differences in competitiveness of mayoral races across municipalities and over time.

⁵⁶ The exception is a change in the municipal charter.

Missing Data

The overall number of observations in the population is 6,566.⁵⁷ However, the number of observations include in the sample is 1,806. The difference is due to the inability to collect voter turnout data from some CBoEs. In the analysis, the observations without turnout data are dropped. This can be problematic if the missing data is not missing at random.

In this case, the data is not missing at random. There is a systematic bias in the missing data. Municipalities with missing turnout data and municipalities without missing turnout data were significantly different in population, the percent of municipality's population that is white, and percent of a municipality's population over 18 with at least a bachelor degree.⁵⁸ Municipalities with missing turnout data are smaller, less educated, and are more white. Less populated, less sophisticated, more homogenous areas of Ohio were more difficult to obtain data from. The CBoEs in these areas often had less staff, limited resources, lack of electronic files, inability to have files on their website, etc. This may be a cause for concern for the generalizability of the results. However, this is the first cut at such an analysis. In other words, the data in this study provides a starting point to assess the impact of in-person early voting on voter turnout in municipal elections. There are methods to for handling missing data, and these will be taken into account in future analyses.

Modeling Strategy

I employ a fixed effects regression model. By doing so, I can examine panel data as a before and after experiment - where the "before" is the control group and the "after" is the treatment group. In the fixed effect model I use, it fixes, or holds constant, the average effects of each

⁵⁷ $N=n*t$. Where $n=938$, $t=7$, $N=(938*7)=6,566$

⁵⁸ Appendix B contains the T-Test results

municipality.⁵⁹ It creates a dummy variable for each municipality, which controls for the average differences across municipalities for any observed or unobserved variables, such as political culture of a municipality. It assumes that each municipality has its own characteristics that may or may not influence the dependent variable, municipal voter turnout. And this influence on the dependent variable is fixed across time. By doing this, it absorbs between-group effects and leaves within-group effects; therefore, reducing the threat of omitted variable bias.

In a panel fixed effect model, it typically drops time-invariant variables because they are fixed over both time and observations. In my data this would include two control variables: manager and mayor administrative systems. The effects of the dropped variables, such as mayor and manager administrative structure, are absorbed into the residuals of the fixed effect model thereby controlling for time-invariant differences between municipalities. While these variables are not my main variable of interest, they are important as they influence turnout in municipal elections. I opt to conduct a fixed effect model by using the `xi: reg` command in Stata versus the `xtreg`, so I can include these time-invariant variables in my analysis. The `xi: reg` command in Stata is much like the fixed effects panel regression that is done with the `xtreg, fe` command. The `xtreg, fe` command suppresses the output for the municipal dummies while the `xi: reg` command reports them. The `xi: reg` command functions much like an OLS regression (`reg` command) except that it includes a dummy variable for each municipality, thereby controlling for differences between municipalities and unobserved variables. To simply use an OLS regression, the results would likely be biased as there would likely be omitted variables, such as the within municipal effects and/or time effects. The `xi: reg` command can also control for both entity (municipalities) and time

⁵⁹ Fixed effects models drop cases with only one observation, which is the case with my model as well.

(election years) fixed effects. This is an important distinction as I can control for differences not only between municipalities but also differences between election years.

Fixed Effects Model Diagnostics

Using the fixed effects model, I ran diagnostic tests. First, I test for heteroskedasticity. I conduct Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test, which tests for heteroskedasticity in fixed effects regression models. The null hypothesis is constant variance (homoscedasticity). Given the test results, I reject the null hypothesis; there is heteroskedasticity ($\chi^2=19.96$, $p=0.000$). I correct for heteroskedasticity in my fixed effect model. In Stata, this is adding `robust` to the end of the regression command. To check the model for autocorrelation, I conducted a Wooldridge test. The null hypothesis is no first order autocorrelation. The results indicate that I fail to reject the null; I do not have first order autocorrelation ($F=1.266$, $p=0.2658$). The fixed effects models correcting for heteroskedasticity results are in Table 5.4 below.

Results

The results of the fixed effects regression model are in Table 5.4. First, and of interest to this study, the analysis reveals that in-person early voting has a significant negative impact on municipal voter turnout. The direction of influence has remained the same in all models and is consistent with the correlation matrix.⁶⁰ In the election years with in-person early voting, municipal turnout drops by 4.52 percentage points. While this is not what I hypothesized, the results are consistent with the literature on in-person early voting and voter turnout in state and national elections (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2007). The implications of this finding, as well as the other findings, are discussed in the following chapter.

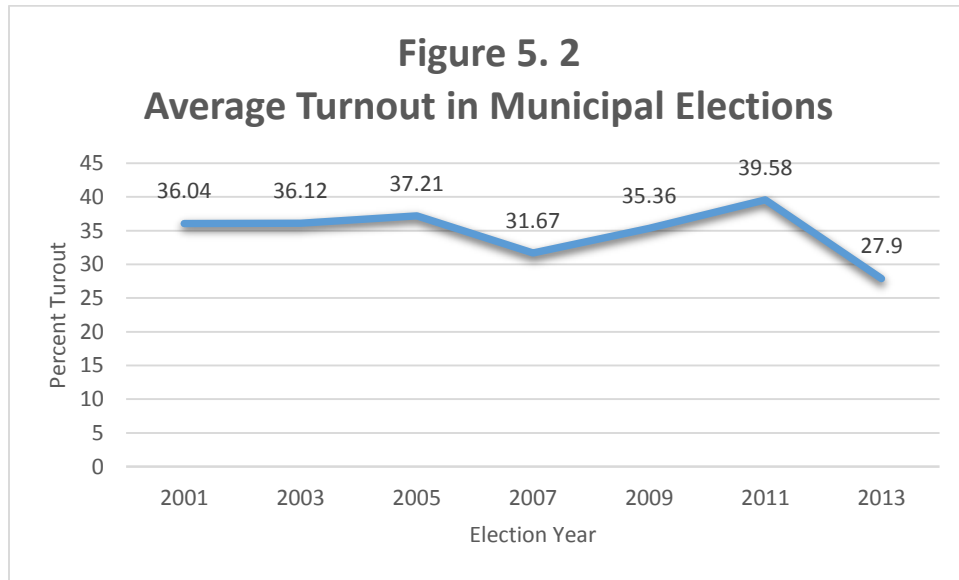
⁶⁰ See Appendix B for bivariate and OLS regressions and correlation matrix.

Table 5.4 Results of Fixed Effects Regression Model

Variable	Coefficient	Std Error
Early Voting	-4.52**	0.62
<i>Institutional Structure Variables</i>		
Mayor Admin. Systems	19.15**	2.11
Manager Admin. Systems	-12.55	8.56
Partisan Elections	0.69	1.05
<i>Local Contextual Variables</i>		
Percent Bachelor Degree	-0.01	0.20
Median Income	-0.00	0.00
Percent White	-0.01	0.12
Population	0.00	0.00
<i>Campaign Variables</i>		
Closeness	0.17**	0.01
Ballot Measures	7.83**	0.59
Cons	31.49*	12.30

Results are rounded *p<.05 **p<.001, R² = .78, n = 1,806, F=(638, 1167) = 206.63 p=0.000

In Figure 5.2, the average turnout is graphed over time. I anticipated an abrupt permanent increase in voter turnout after the implementation of in-person early voting. It is clear from Figure 5.2, the impact of in-person early voting did not have an abrupt permanent increase in voter turnout. Rather it appears to have a gradual permanent decrease in voter turnout. After the implementation of early voting, turnout declined dramatically. In 2007, the first year to utilize early voting, turnout was 6 percent lower than turnout in 2005. In 2009 and 2011, there is a sudden increase in voter turnout. However, this increase is not likely because of early voting alone, but due to highly salient ballot measures. In 2009, there was a gaming initiative and in 2011 there was a labor initiative on the ballot in Ohio. Both of these measures were highly salient. As Table 5.4 indicates, early voting has a negative effect on turnout even after controlling for these ballot measures. In 2013, there is a steep decline in turnout as well. It is 12 percent lower than turnout in the previous municipal election and 9 percent lower than the last election before early voting.



Source: Ohio County Boards of Elections

The only institutional structures variable that was significant was mayor administrative systems. Mayor administrative systems have a significant positive effect on turnout. Localities with mayor administrative systems have an increase in turnout by 19.15 percentage points.

The campaign variables are both significant and positive. The effect of closeness, or the competitiveness of the mayoral race, is small in magnitude. As competition in mayoral races increases, municipal voter turnout increases as well. Specifically, the model predicts that a one percent increase in competition (increases towards 100%) increases turnout by .17 percentage points. This is also consistent with the literature on competitive races and turnout; the more competitive the race, the higher the turnout. Interestingly, ballot measures are large in magnitude and significant. Highly salient ballot proposals increased turnout by 7.83 percentage points.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of the chapter was to determine if in-person early voting impacted municipal voter turnout. Specifically, I hypothesized that in-person early voting would have a significant positive impact on municipal voter turnout. However, the fixed effects regression results indicate

that in-person early voting has a significant negative relationship on municipal voter turnout. This finding is consistent with other scholarship on in-person early voting. Others have found that in-person early voting has a no significant impact on turnout (Richardson and Neeley 1996; Stein 1998; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2007; Neeley and Richardson 2001) or a negative impact on turnout (Gronke Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2007).

Conclusion

This project begins to address the question: does in-person early voting impact municipal voter turnout? By examining local elections in non concurrent years (odd numbered years), I was able to isolate the effects of in-person early voting in local elections. The findings of my analysis reveal that in-person early voting has a significant negative impact on municipal voter turnout, which did not support my hypothesis. However, the results are consistent with the literature on in-person early voting in national and state elections. The following chapter summarizes my findings and discusses their implications.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION:

DOES EARLY VOTING IMPACT VOTER TURNOUT IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS?

The objective of this research was to examine the effects of in-person early voting on turnout in municipal elections. This project contributes to the understanding of election laws and local elections. It is different from previous early voting studies because it focused on the municipality. By doing so, I could include the features of municipalities that influence voter turnout in municipal elections. Previous studies do not include these characteristics. The results provide insight on the effect of early voting when focusing exclusively on turnout in municipal elections. In this chapter, I summarize the findings from Chapter 5, discuss the implication of my findings, and suggest directions for future research.

Summary of Findings

This research project set out to answer a simple question: does early voting impact voter turnout in municipal elections? I hypothesized that in-person early voting would have a significant positive impact on municipal voter turnout. However, the findings suggest that in-person early voting has a significant negative impact on voter turnout in municipal elections.

My fixed effects model, which includes variables measuring early voting, institutional structure, local context, and campaigns, explains 78 percent of the variation in voter turnout in municipal elections, $F(638, 1167) = 206.63, p < 0.0000$. Many variables have no statistically significant effects, including manager administrative systems, partisan elections, or local context. The two campaign variables and mayor administrative systems all have a strong, positive effect on municipal turnout: having close mayoral races $\beta = 19.15, p < 0.001$, having highly salient ballot initiatives $\beta = 7.83, p < 0.001$, and having mayor administrative systems $\beta = 0.17, p < 0.001$. Early

voting has a strong negative effect on turnout in municipal elections, $\beta = -4.52$, $p < 0.001$. This finding is robust. The negative effect is large and could over time substantially decrease turnout in local elections.

Turnout

Turnout in local elections is abysmal (Sharp 2003; Krebs 2014). This is concerning since voter turnout is often used as an indicator for the overall health of a democracy. In Caren's (2007) analysis of turnout in big cities (populations 500,000+), he revealed that turnout in large cities could reach lows of five percent and averaged 27 percent. Voter turnout in Ohio municipal elections are no different. Ohio municipal elections averaged 35 percent voter turnout, slightly higher than what Caren found in the large cities. But, in some elections, municipal voter turnout in Ohio reached a low of less than one percent. Three times during the scope of this study a municipality has turnout less than one percent. And, six times turnout was zero percent, meaning there was a mayoral election held, but there were no candidates on the ballot.⁶¹ Turnout such as this creates serious concern over the health of local democracies.

On a more positive side, municipal voter turnout between municipalities ranged from 12 percent to 69 percent. Occasionally, municipal voter turnout reached a high of 80 percent. There were eight mayoral elections where turnout was 70 percent or higher. In each of these eight cases, the population of the municipality was less than 7,000. While such high turnout is not the norm, per se, for municipal elections, it may be that smaller municipalities, which are often excluded in local/urban studies,⁶² are healthier than the larger municipalities.

⁶¹ No candidates filed for the position.

⁶² When scholars study local/urban elections, there is a tendency to focus on big cities (See Caren 2007). The studies that do include smaller municipalities, like this one, tend to me individual level analysis (see Oliver).

Determinants of Turnout

I found that mayor administrative systems have significant positive impacts on turnout in municipal elections, which is consistent with other studies on municipal structures (Caren 2007; Wood 2002). Mayoral elections tend to be much more political and high profile. Mayors also run campaigns like higher levels of office. So it is not surprising that turnout is higher.

Most mayors in Ohio are nonpartisan, yet the local political parties often play a large role in disseminating information about their candidate to voters. For instance, the City of Toledo, in Lucas County, has a mayor who is nonpartisan according to Ohio law. Yet, the City of Toledo is a highly Democratic municipality; it is common for most mayoral candidates to claim affiliation with the Democrat Party. As a result, the local Democratic Party will endorse a candidate. By doing so, the local Democratic Party will make phone calls, knock on doors, air media ads, etc. to help ensure that the endorsed Democrat mayoral candidate is elected mayor over the other Democratic candidates. The political situation in the City of Toledo illustrates that while elections may be nonpartisan, political parties can still play a large role in motivating individuals to the polls. This study did not explicitly examine this phenomena, but it gives support to the findings of mayor administrative systems. Mayor administrative systems can have a more exciting election, more resources can be spent, and more media attention can be given to them, which only in turn helps keep the citizens informed and later mobilizes them to vote.

These local context variables examine the long lived debate about what features are best promote participation in local government. On the one side, it is argued that small, homogenous municipalities are best. The other side advocates for large, heterogeneous municipalities. I used some of the demographic variables suggested by Alfred and Lee (1968) to measure the heterogeneity of a municipality.

In my model, I found that none of the local contextual variables had a significant impact on municipal voter turnout. In Caren's (2007) study of the 38 largest cities in the U.S., when he included a measure for competitiveness of mayoral races, the local contextual variables statistical significance disappeared. This suggests that the campaign variables may be a better indicator of local turnout than local contextual variables. That is likely what is happening in my model. If more studies on localities, and municipalities in particular, are conducted that include campaign variables, it may be that the local context variables are not as explanatory as once believed.

Few studies on voter turnout have combined measures of campaign contexts, such as closeness of races and election laws, together (Tolbert and Franko 2014). Accounting for campaign activity in local races is important to fully understand the implications of election laws such as early voting. The closeness measure in my study reveals that the more competitive the race between mayoral candidates, the higher the turnout. Others have similar findings on the relationship between competitiveness and voter turnout (Caren 2007; Hill and Leighley 1999; Lublin and Tate 1995). It is important to keep in mind that the campaign measures include both closeness of a mayoral race and ballot measures. So to infer that only closeness or competition in an election matters is not appropriate. The closeness measure had a positive significant effect on turnout, $\beta = 0.17$. Ballot measures had a significant positive effect on municipal voter turnout, $\beta = 7.83$. This is not surprising as voter turnout studies have shown ballot initiatives increase voter turnout elections (Grummel 2008; Tolbert, Grummel and Smith 2001).

While I control for mayoral races' competitiveness, I do not include information on party or candidate involvement in the election – primarily because the information at the local level is difficult, if not almost impossible, to obtain. Stein, Owens, and Leighley (2003) indicate that in-person early voting increases turnout when the parties and campaigns incorporate early voting into

their campaigns (22). Similarly, Oliver (1996) notes that early voting along with strong mobilization efforts increase voter turnout (510). In- person early voting may have a positive influence on local elections when there are competitive races coupled with mobilization efforts from campaigns and political parties.

While my results are not what I hypothesized, it is consistent with other studies on in-person early voting. Much of the previous work on in-person early voting suggests that it has no significant impact on turnout (Richardson and Neeley 1996; Stein 1998; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2007; Neeley and Richardson 2001). One study, like mine, found that in-person early voting had a negative impact on turnout (Gronke Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2007). These studies taken collectively suggest that in-person early voting may not be an effective approach to increase voter turnout, and in some types of elections, it may be detrimental to voter turnout.

Interestingly, the results of my study conflict with prior studies on vote by mail systems and turnout in local elections. I can't compare apples to oranges per se, because vote by mail is different than in-person early voting. However, the idea that local elections are the biggest benefactors of early voting is a shared theme among scholars. The findings from this research suggest that 1) the type of election law may matter and 2) how we study local elections is paramount.

Early Voting as a Public Policy

Recall that proponents of early voting claim that it should increase voter turnout primarily because it reduces the costs of voting. However, the empirical expectation, that having early voting will yield higher turnout in elections *ceteris paribus*, has not always been supported by either of the two dominate early voting methods (Richardson and Neeley 1996; Stein and Garcia-Monet

1997; Neeley and Richardson 2001; Gronke Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller 2007; Kousser and Mullin 2007). The expectation appears to be vote by mail laws as they have a positive impact on turnout in local elections (Karp and Banducci 2000; Kousser and Mullin 2007). In the same way, I expected in-person early voting to increase turnout in municipal elections. Clearly this empirical expectation was not met in this study.

The results of this study suggest that if the goal of early voting laws is to increase voter turnout, then the type of early voting law matters. In-person early voting studies have found consistent results: in-person early voting either has no effect on turnout or a negative impact on it. I am reluctant to suggest that in-person early voting is ineffective as more studies on other local governments should be done before such statements are made and acted on. However, if future studies on in-person early voting continue to reveal negative impacts or no impact, then a reevaluation of the law may need to happen.

This study taken collectively with other in-person early voting studies also suggest there is more to elections than simply extending the duration of voting. The study of voter turnout entails examining how administrators organize and conduct elections as well as the laws that elected officials pass to govern them. Laws like early voting illustrate how fluid Election Day is. If in-person early voting itself is not increasing voting turnout, and higher voter turnout is a goal, then laws that focus solely on the duration of voting period may not be effective. It might be that other types of election laws that lessen the costs associated with voting are more effective at increasing turnout, such as the place of polling locations (Gimple and Schuknecht 2003), or the types of places where individuals can vote, such non-traditional places like grocery stores (Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997). Or that these laws coupled with in-person early voting that extends the voting period could create more opportunities for individuals to cast a ballot and yield higher turnout rates.

All in all, it underscores that there is no easy solution to the low voter turnout problem found in municipal elections. Finding alternative ways to hold elections or better ways to organize them may be fruitful as a policy solution. Continued research on other types of election laws that help alleviate the costs of voting in municipal elections may yield more promising results.

The Study of Local Elections

This study illustrates that how we study local elections is essential. While vote by mail studies have found a positive impact on voter turnout in local elections, localities were not the focus of the study. They were merely one of many variables included in the analysis. This begs the question: would similar results be found if localities were the unit of analysis in a vote by mail study? While the answer to this is outside the scope of this project, it highlights my point. To only include local elections as merely a variable ignores the importance and uniqueness of local governments and their elections. Localities are plentiful and diverse; this diversity helps scholars understand which contexts influence turnout in local elections. Incorporating these contextual aspects of municipalities in a study emphasizes the value of localities as a unit of analysis. This research takes into account the institutional and local contexts of municipalities as well as the dynamics of mayoral campaigns to determine the impact of in-person early voting on turnout in municipal elections. In doing so, it gives scholars, administrators, and the like, a better understanding of the impacts in-person early voting has on all levels of government.

What Does It Mean for Local Elections?

The 'low voter turnout problem' has plagued American elections for decades and is most apparent at the local level. The consistent low voter turnout in municipal elections has substantial consequences as voting confers not only legitimacy to the governing body, but also influences who is elected and the overall direction of public policies.

Since early voting is a statewide policy, governmental subunits, or local governments, must comply with it. The policy itself tends to be controversial, with many states seeking to reduce the number of days ballots can be cast (e.g. Ohio and Florida). While no direct connection can be made to indicate any political reasoning for changes in early voting laws, elections are nonetheless about winning and losing. The rules that govern the election, therefore, are often used for political gain.⁶³ Altering the laws that govern elections has consequences. For this reason, this study is essential to understand the effect early voting has on voter turnout in municipal elections.

As the results from this study indicate, in-person early voting has a negative impact on municipal voter turnout. While on its face, in-person early voting appears as a viable solution to the low voter turnout problem, this may not be the case. If the goal of early voting is to increase voter turnout, then the findings from this study, and others, on in-person early voting are troubling. It is especially concerning for local elections in particular since they already have such low voter turnout. It may be that in-person early voting is not an effective way to increase voter turnout or alleviate the low voter turnout problem that plagues American elections. However, it would be unwise to jump to such broad conclusions without conducting more studies on in-person early voting. For instance, does in-person early voting have a similar effect on turnout in school board elections? County Board elections? Township elections? Or even state legislative elections? It is evident that more research should to be done. This study offers a glimpse into the effect of in-person early voting in local elections.

⁶³ Gerrymandering and malapportionment are examples of using the election laws to gain a political advantage. While gerrymandering is unconstitutional, it still occurs. In Texas, the 2003 Congressional redistricting was challenged since it added 5 Republican seats and allegedly diluted the minority vote.

Future Research

While this study does not yield positive results for in-person early voting as a means to increase voter turnout in municipal elections, it does provide a glance into the impact early voting has on municipal elections. Future research should continue to examine the impact of in-person early voting, and other methods of early voting, on other local elections and in other contexts. What this study does reveal is that how we study local elections is important. Local elections should be the focus of these future studies, not merely a variable or measure in larger analyses on turnout. By doing so, scholars, administrators, and the like will gain a better understanding of the effects of early voting at all levels of government.

As previous research has illustrated, the institutional reforms put in place from the Progressive Era have reduced voter turnout in municipal elections (Caren 2007; Wood 2002). It would be interesting, and beneficial, to see if the impact of these reforms are mitigated by early voting. I included variables to capture these reform measures in this study, however, to examine if early voting offsets, per se, the impact of the reform measures was outside the scope of this study. A future analysis like this would be valuable. If early voting lessens the effect of these reform measures, it might be a solution for municipalities that are less political and more administrative in nature.

Early voting extends the duration of the voting period. By doing so, the nature of political campaigns would change to include the longer voting period. For instance, Get Out The Vote (GOTV) programs would be extended since Election Day can last for 35 days (e.g. Ohio's early voting period). The natural deduction from this would entail changes in campaign strategy, campaign spending, media campaigns, etc. for any candidate, including local mayoral candidates

and/or council candidates. These areas of local elections are already understudied (Krebs 2014). However, it would be interesting to explore how early voting alters local campaigns.

The title of this dissertation asks if early voting impacts local elections. The answer to this, at least at the municipal level, is yes, but not positively. If democracy rests on the consent of the governed, and this consent is given by casting a ballot, then this study paints a devastating picture for local democracies in states with in-person early voting. Yet, this is one study on a particular type of locality. I hope future research continues to investigate the effects of early voting laws so that scholars, administrators, elected officials, and the like gain a better understanding of them and their impacts on voter turnout in all types of elections.

APPENDIX A

Table 1: Demographics of Ohio and the United States

	% Bachelor Degree	% White	% Black	Median Income	2000 Presidential Vote	2004 Presidential Vote	2008 Presidential Vote	2012 Presidential Vote
Ohio	24.1%	83.6%	12.4%	\$47,358	Republican	Republican	Democrat	Democrat
United States	27.9%	78.1%	13.1%	\$51,914	Republican	Republican	Democrat	Democrat

* Data taken from 2010 U.S. Census, FEC Election Results, and Secretary of State Offices

Table 2: Demographics of Ohio Counties and Neighboring States

Data taken from 2010 U.S. Census, FEC Election Results, and Secretary of State Offices

	% Bachelor Degree	% White	% Black	Median Income	2000 Presidential Vote	2004 Presidential Vote	2008 Presidential Vote	2012 Presidential Vote
Lucas County, OH	23%	76%	19.4%	\$42,072	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat
Michigan	25%	80.2%	14.3%	\$48,432	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat
Hamilton County, OH	32.5%	69.7%	25.8%	\$48,234	Republican	Republican	Democrat	
Kentucky	20.3%	88.9%	8%	\$41,576	Republican	Republican	Republican	Republican
Washington County, OH	16%	96.5%	1.2%	\$41,654	Republican	Republican	Republican	
West Virginia	17.3%	94.1%	3.5%	\$30,380	Republican	Republican	Republican	Republican
Mahoning County, OH	20.4%	81.1%	16.1%	\$40,123	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	
Pennsylvania	26.4%	83.8%	11.3%	\$50,398	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat
Butler County, OH	25.9%	87.5%	7.7%	\$54,788	Republican	Republican	Republican	
Indiana	22.4%	86.8%	9.4%	\$47,697	Republican	Republican	Democrat	Republican

APPENDIX B

Missing Data T-Tests

T-Test Results, Municipal Population for Missing Turnout and Non-Missing Turnout Groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	4,651	7388.86	441.35	30099.49			
Non-Missing	1,911	9427.75	955.97	41790			
					6,560	-2.21	0.027

Results are rounded, Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test Results, Percent Bachelor Degree for Missing Turnout and Non-Missing Turnout Groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	4,644	10.14	0.12	8.40			
Non-Missing	1,908	11.42	0.20	8.62			
					6,550	-5.54	0.000

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test Results, Percent White for Missing Turnout and Non-Missing Turnout Groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	4,648	93.61	0.17	11.26			
Non-Missing	1,911	92.39	0.30	12.90			
					6,557	3.82	0.000

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test Results, Median Income for Missing Turnout and Non-Missing Turnout Groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	4,641	50,747.22	356.80	23,307.14			
Non-Missing	1,911	49,998.05	592.69	25,909.45			
					6,550	1.11	0.266

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Population in 2001 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	8690.899	1384.427	16899.09			
Non-Missing	789	7875.494	1293.418	36330.99			
					936	0.2684	0.7884

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Population in 2003 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	8694.121	1371.722	16744			
Non-Missing	789	7858.703	1291.404	36274.42			
					936	0.2755	0.7830

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Population in 2005 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	8707.852	1355.722	16548.7			
Non-Missing	786	7855.379	1287.833	36105.29			
					933	0.2825	0.7776

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Population in 2007 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	8862.993	1345.612	16425.29			
Non-Missing	789	7792.497	1287.964	36177.81			
					936	0.3542	0.7232

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Population in 2009 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	8910.067	1342.802	16390.99			
Non-Missing	789	7826.171	1311.37	36835.27			
					936	0.3525	0.7245

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Population in 2011 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	8923.537	1297.231	15834.72			
Non-Missing	789	7776.284	1286.737	36143.34			
					936	0.3805	0.7037

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Population in 2013 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	8912.096	1293.706	15791.7			
Non-Missing	788	7793.467	1298.058	36438.24			
					935	0.3681	0.7129

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Percent Bachelor Degree in 2001 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	10.47608	.7966591	9.691776			
Non-Missing	788	9.633997	.279879	7.856578			
					934	1.1501	0.2504

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Percent Bachelor Degree in 2003 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	10.69446	.7913029	9.626615			
Non-Missing	788	9.885749	.2793946	7.84298			
					934	1.1077	0.2683

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Percent Bachelor Degree in 2005 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	10.91284	.7905718	9.617721			
Non-Missing	788	10.1375	.2818727	7.912543			
					934	1.0549	0.2918

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Percent Bachelor Degree in 2007 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	11.13122	.7944786	9.66525			
Non-Missing	788	10.38925	.2872366	8.063115			
					934	0.9936	0.3207

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Percent Bachelor Degree in 2009 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	11.34959	.8029557	9.768378			
Non-Missing	788	10.641	.2953291	8.290284			
					934	0.9262	0.3546

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Percent Bachelor Degree in 2011 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	11.58736	.8139223	9.901792			
Non-Missing	788	10.90202	.3055038	8.575901			
					934	0.8695	0.3848

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Percent Bachelor Degree in 2013 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	11.84453	.8267871	10.0583			
Non-Missing	788	11.18152	.3170369	8.89965			
					934	0.8140	0.4159

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Median Income in 2001 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	51480.72	1735.655	21115.15			
Non-Missing	788	49657.11	669.1249	18783.23			
					934	1.0619	0.2886

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Median Income in 2003 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	55793.31	1925.744	23427.69			
Non-Missing	788	53696.75	752.776	21131.43			
					934	1.0880	0.2769

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Median Income in 2005 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	60105.9	2119.338	25782.86			
Non-Missing	788	57736.4	837.907	23521.17			
					934	1.1071	0.2686

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Median Income in 2007 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	64418.48	2315.557	28169.97			
Non-Missing	788	61776.04	924.109	25940.98			
					934	1.1213	0.2624

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Median Income in 2009 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	68731.07	2513.788	30581.55			
Non-Missing	788	65815.69	1011.108	28383.16			
					934	1.1323	0.2578

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Median Income in 2011 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	29917.78	916.0748	11144.53			
Non-Missing	788	29458.88	316.3918	8881.541			
					934	0.5523	0.5809

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

T-Test on Median Income in 2013 for Missing and Non-Missing groups

Group	N	Mean	Std Error	Std Deviation	DF	t	p
Missing	149	34230.37	1048.634	12757.18			
Non-Missing	788	33498.53	369.7065	10378.16			
					934	0.7573	0.4491

Equal variances assumed $p > 0.05$

Results of Bivariate Regression

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	P Value
Early Voting	-1.249	0.725	0.085
Cons	36.289**	0.609	0.000

Results are rounded n=1,905 *p<.05 **p<.001 R²=0.0016

Results of OLS Multivariate Regression

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	P Value
Early Voting	-4.24	0.68	0.000
<i>Institutional Variables</i>			
Mayor Admin. Systems	4.44	1.41	0.002
Manager Admin. Systems	-0.28	1.92	0.885
Partisan Elections	-0.03	0.91	0.970
<i>Local Contextual Variables</i>			
Percent Bachelor Degree	0.35	0.04	0.000
Median Income	-0.00	0.00	0.433
Percent White	0.11	0.02	0.000
Population	-0.00	6.69e-06	0.000
<i>Campaign Variables</i>			
Closeness	0.18	0.01	0.000
Ballot Measures	7.50	0.74	0.000
Cons	11.40	2.46	0.000

Results are rounded n=1,806 *p<.05 **p<.001 R²=0.3566

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ABSTRACT**ELECTION REFORM: DOES EARLY VOTING IMPACT TURNOUT IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS?**

by

GAYLE ALBERDA**August 2014****Advisor:** Dr. Brady Baybeck**Major:** Political Science**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

Turnout in the United States is low, especially in municipal elections. Early voting laws, which have been adopted by over half of the states within the United States, offer voters a chance to cast a ballot over a longer period of time thereby lowering the cost of voting. Early voting includes no excuse absentee voting, in person early voting, and/or vote by mail elections. Many of the previous studies on early voting have focused on national or statewide elections. What has been largely understudied is the impact of early voting laws on voter turnout in municipal elections, where voter turnout is the lowest. Previous early voting studies that have included municipal elections in their analysis have examined vote by mail laws or only examined in person early voting only in the year it was implemented leaving unanswered questions on the impact of in person early voting laws on voter turnout in municipal elections over time. Additionally, many of the studies on early voting and voter turnout in municipal elections have not included the institutional and local contextual factors of municipalities; important features when studying municipal elections as previous research indicates that these contextual factors impact voter turnout. In contrast to previous studies, this project seeks to determine how early voting laws, in particular in person early voting, influence political participation in municipal elections when

accounting for the institutional and local contexts of municipalities. Using data collected from 938 cities in Ohio, I conduct an interrupted time series analysis to examine the impact of early voting laws on voter turnout in municipal elections. I find that in-person early voting has a significant negative effect on voter turnout in municipal elections. This finding is consistent with other studies that have found in-person early voting laws have not increased voter turnout in national or statewide elections. This suggests that early voting laws alone may not be an adequate solution to the low voter turnout problem found in municipal elections.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Gayle Alberda

Education

- Ph.D. Wayne State University, 2014 (Political Science)
 Major Field: American Politics
 Minor Fields: Urban Policy & Public Policy
- M.P.A. Central Michigan University, 2008 (Political Science)
- B.S. Central Michigan University, 2002 (Political Science)

Awards

- Prestage-Cook Travel Award, Southern Political Science Conference, 2014
- Teaching Assistant, Wayne State University, 2013-2014
- Horowitz Foundation Dissertation Grant Award, Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy, 2013
- Robert K. Merton Award, Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy, 2013
- Warren E. Miller Scholarship, ICPSR, 2012
- Graduate Professional Scholarship, Wayne State University, 2011-2012
- Graduate Assistant, Central Michigan University, 2005-2006

Publications

“Peer Effects and Youth Voter Turnout” with Olugbenga Ajilore, Social Science Research.
 Forthcoming.

“Adolescent Social Networks and Citizenship Outcomes: A Longitudinal Study of Place” with
 Olugbenga Ajilore. In Richard Marback (Ed): Citizenship and Place. Wayne State University
 Press. Forthcoming.

Professional Presentations

“Peer Group Effects, Extracurricular Activities, and the Political Participation of Young Adults”
 (with Olugbenga Ajilore) Presented at 2014 Southern Regional Science Association Annual
 Meeting, March 27-29, San Antonio, Texas.

“Adolescent Social Networks and Citizenship Outcomes: A Longitudinal Study of Place” (with
 Olugbenga Ajilore) Presented at 2014 Citizenship Conference, March 20-22, Detroit, Michigan.

“Voting Early, But Often? The Effects of Early Voting on Turnout in Municipal Elections”
 Presented at 2014 Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting, January 9-11, New
 Orleans, Louisiana.