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Voting By Mail: Institutional Reform and Political Participation in Oregon

by

Sean E. Richey

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2004

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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by

Sean E. Richey

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Oregon became the first state to vote exclusively by mail in 2000. In this new system, all ballots are mailed to the voter's home, eliminating the traditional polling-booth system. Why did Oregon change to voting by mail? What are the effects of this reform? This research answers these questions by examining the history of the reform; which groups supported and opposed it; and its impact on voter turnout and social capital. My study of election results, interviews, and survey data finds that voting by mail encourages turnout, particularly among socioeconomic groups that vote less. I find that when participating in the electoral process becomes easier, more people vote. Voting increased 10.1 percentage points over similar elections. Regression analysis reveals that changes in other potential factors were not affecting voter turnout. The reform also encourages social capital. I study these effects using a mixture of quantitative data and qualitative research (e.g., interviews, written records, and media textual analysis).

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Ch 1: Introduction

In 2000, Oregon became the first state to vote exclusively by mail in 2000. In this new system, all ballots are mailed to the voter's home, eliminating the traditional polling-booth system. Why did Oregon change to voting by mail? What are the effects of this reform? This research answers these questions by examining the history of the reform; which groups supported and opposed it; and its impact on voter turnout and social capital. My study of election results, interviews, and survey data finds that voting by mail encourages turnout, particularly among socioeconomic groups that vote less. I find that when participating in the electoral process becomes easier, more people vote. Voting increased 10.1 percentage points over similar elections. Regression analysis reveals that changes in other potential factors were not affecting voter turnout. The reform also encourages social capital. I study these effects using a mixture of quantitative data and qualitative research (e.g., interviews, written records, and media textual analysis).

Research Objective

Why people do or do not vote is a very important question. A critical dilemma to American political scientists is low voter turnout. Oregon's mail-in voting reform has been proffered as a solution. The central research question is: What prompted the reform and what impact did it have? Four main hypotheses are tested:

- H1: Oregon's voting rates increased after the change to voting by mail.
- H2: Oregon's poor and marginalized residents vote at disproportionately higher rates with the change to voting by mail.
- H3: Politicians fight an expansion of the electorate.

- H4: Social capital has increased with the change to voting by mail.

I offer more-detailed hypotheses below, and discuss the theoretical significance of these hypotheses. The original contribution of this dissertation is to study voting by mail in depth and test several competing theories of political behavior. Voting reforms of this ingenuity are rare in America. The reform provides an excellent opportunity to fully test these theories in a new and powerful way.

Theoretical Debates

Electoral Reforms and the Turnout Paradox

I use Oregon's change to voting by mail to determine whether structural barriers are negatively affecting turnout. Many electoral reforms are unsuccessful, and the voting paradox is an oft-stated reason why reforms do not work (Bowler, Brockington and Donovan 2001; Stein 1998). Rational choice theorists discovered the voting paradox. It states that the decision to vote calculates the marginal cost of going to a polling booth versus other competing goals. If the benefits of voting outweigh the costs, then rational choice theory assumes one will make the choice to vote (Bendor, Diermeier, and Ting 2003). Rational choice theorists argue, however, that voting has little benefit for the individual because the ability of one vote to change an election is negligible (Downs p.267). Starting with Anthony Down's An Economic Theory of Democracy, scholars have debated why people bother to vote, considering that an individual vote will probably not affect the outcome of the election. A large body of literature derived from economic theories of human interest-based action suggests that voting is an irrational act, and that

removal of structural barriers will not affect the decision to vote (Aldrich 1993, Shepsle and Bonchek 1997). They posit that many people will be “free-riders” of democracy, and let others do the voting. They argue that electoral reforms are not going to increase voting rates because voting is irrational (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Polsby 1963). The people who do not vote now are the rational ones, who see that the costs of voting will always outweigh the benefits, and thus, electoral reform will have little impact (Aldrich 1993).

Other scholars say that the cost-benefit analysis must include social-psychological factors (Riker and Ordeshook p.25). They suggest that these social-psychological benefits are powerful, meaningful, and should not be dismissed as motivational factors. They argue that more people would vote if reforms can decrease the cost of voting (Amy 1993; Brady, Verba, & Schlozman 1995; Lijphart 1997; Piven and Cloward 2001; Teixeira 1992). They argue that civic duty, emotional interest, and other social-psychological benefits can be introduced into the rational choice equation to expand Down’s model to justify the decision to vote (Shepsle and Bonchek 1997). Riker and Ordeshook (1968) argue that rational choice’s cost-benefit analysis must include these other explanations. They differentiate between experiential and instrumental reasons for voting. While rational choice theory might prove that instrumental voting is irrational, experiential voting may be worthwhile. Thus, an opposing model suggests that people would like to vote, but there are specific structural difficulties that discourage voting (Knack 1994; Merrifield 1993; Radcliff 1994; Berch 1993; Matsusaka 1993; Chen 1992; Teixeira 1992; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Fenster 1994; Heckelman 1995;

Jackman 1987; Jackman and Miller 1995; Oliver, 1996; Brace et al. 1995; Radcliff and Saiz 1995).

Rational choice theory has been attacked for its failure to explain why people vote at all, given the power of Downs's argument. Green and Shapiro (1996) find voting to be the biggest unexplained question for rational choice theory. Morris Fiorina (1990) says that "turnout is the paradox that ate rational choice theory" (see also Grofman 1993). Grofman (2003) states that the turnout paradox is one of the five most important debates in public choice/rational choice theory. Bendor, Diermeier, and Ting (2003) find that Riker and Odershook's model is also unsatisfactory because it does not answer why all people do not vote if these experiential benefits outweigh the costs. The voting behavior literature disagrees as to whether reforms can influence turnout because of this turnout paradox (Kelley, Ayres, and Bowen 1967; Timpone 1998, Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott 2000). The most important reforms occurred at the national level. Recent national examples include the Voting Rights Act and the National Voter Registration Act (the "motor-voter" bill) (Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott 2000). States, however, provide interesting "laboratories of democracy" and are often in the lead on reform movements (Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott 2000). In the past 20 years, there have been several attempts to make voting easier that failed to increase voting levels. Some recent state level examples "include opening polling places for longer hours on election day; employing 'early voting' that opens polling for several days before an election; and easing qualifications for an absentee ballot, including an allowance for registration as a 'permanent absentee voter'" (Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott 2000). These reforms have

had mixed results. For example, early voting does not influence turnout (Stein 2000), while same day registration increases a debate that has no definitive answer. Perhaps these differences are explained by the mechanics of these reforms, or by the turnout paradox.

This dissertation empirically tests these competing theories. Does lowering the cost of voting affect turnout, despite not increasing the instrumental benefits (i.e., the likelihood of someone's vote affecting the electoral outcome)? This reform lowers the cost of voting in terms of how much effort is required to cast a ballot, and, thus, can test the propositions that underlie this debate. If voting rates increase after the reform, and it is the sole reason for this increase, then structural barriers were limiting voting. If, however, voting does not increase, then people are "rational" in choosing not to vote because they realize the political inefficacy of one person's vote. I find that people vote more when the system is simplified, presumably because there are social-psychological benefits in voting.

The literature on voting behavior is vast, but due to the novelty of this reform, little of it is on Oregon's change to voting by mail. Broadly speaking, however, one of the central questions is: How do reforms in political institutions affect levels of voter participation? Many scholars have addressed this question by testing if voting increases after an electoral reform occurs (Jackman 1987; Jackman and Miller 1995; Powell 1986, Bowler, Brockington, and Donovan 2001). A similar approach will be used in this dissertation. Most studies find that the United States is lower in turnout than similar

nations (Piven and Cloward 2001). Some scholars find low turnout to be non-problematic (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Polsby 1963), while others disagree and find that democracy is threatened by low voting rates (Amy 1993; Brady, Verba, & Schlozman 1995; Lijphart 1997; Piven and Cloward 2001; Teixeira 1992). The reform is a possible solution to this important problem.

Demography and its Influence on Voting Behavior

Another theoretical debate concerns why poor and minority voting rates are at the lowest levels in American society (Teixeira p.71). Some scholars argue that the reason poor and marginalized groups vote less is because they have more difficulties getting to a polling place (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman 1995; Lijphart 1997; Piven and Cloward 2001; Teixeira 1992). Others say these groups have cultural, social, or even educational reasons for abstaining from electoral politics (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, Lazarfield, Berelson, and McGhee 1963). After the Oregon reform, voting rates increased significantly within poor and marginalized populations, suggesting that the former theorists are correct. Since poor and some marginalized groups vote more when the cost of voting decreases, we cannot always cite cultural, social, or educational reasons for lower turnout. The most important potential aspect of this reform is its ability to encourage political participation among these groups. Voting by mail decreases the gap in turnout.

In particular, this reform benefits those people with physical and economic impediments, who might lack the time, ability, or resources to visit the polls. But that is

entirely different from not wanting a voice in the political process. In combination with voter registration reforms, voting procedures should be changed to increase all voting, especially by marginalized groups. Voting is a two-step process. First, one needs to register, and then one needs to vote. (Cox & Munger 1989; Timpone 1998). If easing the procedures to register has increased registration—e.g. the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA)—then simplifying voting should also increase turnout. Any increase in participation would force politicians (at least “rational” ones) to take more seriously the problems and needs of marginalized groups (Martin 2003). It might take many years for these reforms to affect political decision-making, but eventually there could be a renaissance in social justice and democratic politics if most poor or marginalized people voted.

The central idea behind many electoral reforms is not only to render voting more accessible for the average citizen, but also to facilitate voting by marginalized groups. In Why Americans Still Don't Vote, the authors state that the main impetus behind what eventually became known as the motor-voter bill was to get government service agencies (e.g., welfare offices) to distribute and help poor and racial minorities complete voter registration forms (Piven and Cloward p.1). Thus, the intent of the reform, at least in its original form, was to increase voting by the poor and racial minorities. Yet, studies of the NVRA suggest that registration rolls “have increased overall but that the impact on party registration has varied with the type of registration procedures permitted” (Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott 1995; Knack 1995; Knack and White 1998).

Interestingly, studies have also found that NVRA does not benefit turnout for one party

or demographic group more than another (Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott 2000; Stein 1998; Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Franklin and Grief 1997). I find, however, that voting by mail is successful in increasing turnout for marginalized groups. Since this reform works in combination with easier registration procedures, it is now easier for marginalized groups to vote. Subsequent to the reform, their turnout did increase in Oregon.

Demobilization and Electoral System Reform.

A somewhat related debate in the literature proposes other reasons for nonvoting. Scholars—e.g. Burnham (1974) and Schattschneider (1960)—have posited that the decline in party competition after 1896 and the subsequent control of parties by opportunistic elites makes elections so unrewarding that fewer people vote. Converse (1974) and Rusk (1974) counter that the Progressives promoted structural changes after 1896 that account for the drop in turnout. Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978) say that one of the reasons that only specific groups show declining turnout is that elite dominance of parties has produced little class-based policies that could excite marginalized groups to vote. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) argue that the lack of party mobilization is what led to declining turnout. Piven and Cloward (2001) synthesize these various arguments and suggest that circumstances after 1896 allowed party elites to dominate, and that then they produced the legal-institutional structural changes that depressed turnout. Party elites changed the rules of voting to demobilize voters by introducing Progressive-era reforms, declining mobilization, and deepening irrelevance of party platforms in an effort to secure their position of power.

This “demobilization” theory argues that politicians not only work to mobilize voters, as was previously believed, but they also work to de-mobilize voters by creating structures and barriers that keep unwanted groups from voting. Furthermore, once these barriers are in place, politicians try not to change the rules to encourage more turnout because they were elected under these restrictive de-mobilizing conditions. Adding new voters would increase their difficulty in getting reelected. Are politicians aware of the structural conditions that facilitate their reelection, and do they fight reforms that facilitate increased voting? Discovering who supported the reform—and how it was enacted—provides an opportunity to test the demobilization theory.

Social Capital and Institutional Influence

What are the unintended consequences of the reform? The open nature of voting by mail moves away from the secret ballot. Mailing a ballot to an individual’s home could possibly affect other types of political participation. Some churches in Oregon invite members to come to church on Sunday night and discuss the issues and candidates and mark their ballots together (Dreker 1998). In doing away with the secret ballot, this reform has created an institutional structure that promotes political engagement. Political engagement has the potential to spark other types of political action. I hypothesize that the change from a secret ballot to voting by mail will increase “social capital”. Social capital is defined as civic engagement and community involvement that facilitate collective action for mutual benefit (Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993). Social capital creates trust in one’s community through shared experiences and social activities.

The nature of institutional influence on social capital is debated frequently in the literature, and the reform provides an interesting test of this debate. Miller and Jackman (1998) describe an internal inconsistency within social capital scholarship as to whether social capital is endogenous or exogenous of institutions. The Coleman perspective is that societal structures and institutions create environments that foster trust and cooperation. Thus, social capital is endogenous to institutions. The alternative exogenous view is that social capital is present in the form of political culture, and it is what influences institutional performance. Miller and Jackman find that these ideas are inconsistent and cannot be merged into a workable research agenda. They prefer the endogenous approach of Coleman due to a series of common methodological concerns with the exogenous approach.

Due to the convenience of voting by mail, turnout increases in an open ballot system, and this might produce more civic engagement. The increased exposure to politics that comes from this mechanical change in the style of voting might have more than its intended consequences. Robert Putnam says that participation leads to more participation (Putnam 2001). His idea that democracy will become more responsive if the populace is more engaged in civil society posits a bottom-up relationship. But what if the structure through which people participate is changed to expose them to more information in a longer, more deliberative context? An institutional change in the method of participation would thus create a more engaged populace. If the reform creates a new style of participation that is *engaging* by its structure, then social capital can be

encouraged in a top-down approach. If true, then other types of interaction people have with their government could be changed in an effort to make policies more conducive to civil and political participation.

Putnam is criticized for being “oblivious to institutions and structural causation” (Edwards and Foley p.229). Putnam and Theda Skocpol debate whether governmental reforms can create more social capital. Putnam (1993, 1995, 2001) presents evidence that areas with higher levels of social capital have more responsive and efficient democracies. Theda Skocpol critiques Putnam by arguing that without state structures to permit the existence of these groups, encourage their activities, and listen to their voices, social capital will not be effective (Skocpol and Ganz 2000). Skocpol brings the state back into social capital research by examining historic evidence of civic associations and their relationship with the federal government (Skocpol and Ganz 2000). The reform offers a contemporary test of whether institutional reforms can increase social capital.

Putnam argues that social capital evolves from independently organized volunteer groups; thus, these groups affect government from the “bottom up.” Skocpol disagrees and says that institutional structures are the source of social capital. The institutional structure determines whether these volunteer groups are present and effective; thus, social capital evolves “top down.” The ballots are mailed to each house three weeks before the elections. The theory is that the extra time, availability of additional sources of information when making one’s vote decision, and the ability to discuss your choice

while voting will provoke more civic engagement. Increased exposure to politics might lead to increased saliency of political issues, and the joining of social groups to address those issues. The reform encourages the development of social capital, and this supports Skocpol's endogenous thesis, rather than Putnam's exogenous view of social capital.

Voting By Mail Literature

The reform has been studied in two reports, five academic journal articles, and one dissertation chapter. Only two articles concern increases in participation, and there are no books on the subject. None of these articles deals in depth with why this change was made. I use new methods to test the effect of voting by mail on voter turnout. I considered whether regional and national voting trends affect Oregon's turnout. I determine what changes within Oregon might have affected voter turnout since the reform was adopted. I study all national elections that used voting by mail in Oregon, rather than one election as the current literature does. I use larger survey data that covers the time before and after the reform.

The two studies of the effects of participation of voting by mail are by Southwell and by Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott. A 1996 survey of special election participants is the basis of analysis in these two academic journal articles written about the effect of the reform on turnout. Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott (2000) find that 19 states have used voting by mail for at least one election but the state with the greatest experience with this form of balloting is Oregon (Mason 1984). The authors further state, "Oregon held its

first local voting by mail election in 1981” (Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott 2000).

Berinsky, Burns, and Traugott examines turnout in the 1996 special election to see the effect of voting by mail on different demographic groups. Using survey data, they found no evidence that the reform increases voter turnout for marginalized groups. Rather, they find that groups with high turnout vote at even higher rates after the reform.

The other article on the reform is by Southwell (1996) and uses the same survey data. She finds increased turnout in the 1996 special election using statewide and county level data. She, however, does not disaggregate this data based on economic, racial, or social demographics. In her dissertation, Mary Kristen Fitzgerald wrote a chapter about the reform. She uses National Election Survey data for Oregon to see what effect the change to voting by mail had on the 2000 presidential election. All of these studies find that turnout increases, but they did not look at a wide enough range of elections to judge whether these increases were spurious. None of these studies speak to why this reform was introduced in Oregon, which groups were affected, or what effect the reform has had on other types of political participation.

There are two published reports on the reform and its effects on participation. Michael W. Traugott and Michael J. Hammer of the University of Michigan wrote the first. It is a report for the League of Conservation Voters Education fund entitled “Oregon Vote by Mail”. The report summarizes its findings in three areas. First, it states that “Turnout in Oregon remains high, although the added contribution of VBM to

already high levels remains low” (Traugott and Hammer p.1). Also the reports states that roll off—the process where voters do not answer certain referendum questions—is not a problem in Oregon before or after the reform (Traugott and Hammer p.1). Finally, the report notes that “Oregon’s residents seem to be holding on to their ballots longer-casting them later” (Traugott and Hammer p.1). Later casting is interesting for the test of social capital because longer mailing time may signify that voters are contemplating these issues in a longer and more deliberative context. If voters mailed their ballots back the same day they received them, then the process would not be substantively different than voting at a polling place.

The second report was by Curtis Gans entitled “Mobilization Propels Modest Turnout Increase, G.O.P. Out-organizes Democrats, Registration Lower, Parties In Trouble, Reforms Fail To Boost Turnout”. It examines state level turnout change. It posits that mobilization was affecting turnout in the last two elections. It states that the reforms “aimed at enhancing turnout – early voting (where citizens can, at designated voting places, vote during a period up to 21 days before the election) and no-excuse absentee voting (where citizens need not give a reason for obtaining an absentee ballot, can vote during a period up to 21 days before the election and may, in some cases, be placed on a permanent absentee list and be automatically sent mail ballots) – were shown to hurt voter turnout (See Note 8). One reform – the all-mail balloting adopted by Oregon – showed no positive effect on turnout. Only Election Day registration, now in operation in six states, seemed to have a positive effect on turnout”(Gans). Thus, mobilization is what is driving the turnout increase and not these reforms that ease the process of voting.

I test the report's conclusion that Oregon's battleground state status caused turnout to rise, and find it flawed due to the use of imprecise measures of voter turnout.

Mutch (1992) describes the various methods used at the local level to implement voting by mail. He does not perform any empirical testing of its affect on participation. Smolka (1996) reports on the negative experience of a Nevada county that experimented with voting by mail. He also does not perform any empirical testing of its affect on participation. Rosenfield (1996) describes Oregon's system of voting by mail and problems with potential fraud. Mason (1984) posits that voting by mail might facilitate the influence of one's family on freely choosing a candidate, which is termed "undue influence". Labor union members are now allowed to vote by mail in union elections (US D.O.L. 2003). American Federation of State County Municipal Employees and other large unions use vote by mail for both initial union choice and local elections (AFSCME 2001). Matheny (2001) finds that vote by mail increases voting rates for union positions, and also increases the times workers choose to unionize. For example, Kelber (2002) finds that for Delta Airlines flight attendants the American Flight Attendants Union was in a tough fight, and that voting by mail made the difference in winning unionization. The success of voting by mail in increasing union turnout and increasing votes for unionization suggests Oregon's system might be successful.

Research Design and Data Collection Plans

The four main research questions are: did voting rates change, for whom did they change, what facilitates and hinders electoral reform, and what effect did this reform have

on social capital? To answer the first question, I consider changes in voting rates in Oregon. Pre and post reform data for similar elections is informative if there are no changes in other determinants of turnout. I define similar elections as an election held during either presidential, mid-term, or off-year elections for the same office. I perform a regression analysis to ensure that changes in socio-economic determinants and levels of registration are not creating spurious relationships.

I create a model based on seven independent variables and one dependent variable to determine if the reform increases voter turnout. I enter the variables into an Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS) equation. The dependent variable is the change in percentage of registered voters who vote compared to a similar previous election as measured by the Secretary of State of Oregon. The seven independent variables are strongly correlated with voter turnout in various studies (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, Texiera 1992, Miller and Shanks 1995). I obtain the data from government databases. I review economic changes using variables measuring unemployment, poverty, and income. I gather rates of immigration, racial population trends, changes in age, educational, and homeownership rates, and commuting times from the Census Bureau. I check the model for “goodness of fit” using an ANOVA table, and particular attention is paid to the adjusted R^2 , due to the small sample size. I check colinearity and serial correlation. I check heteroskedasticity using a Park and a White test. I check the other models in this dissertation for problems using these same tests. I use SPSS for the statistics software.

I determine if outside trends are affecting Oregon's turnout by comparing Oregon, national, and regional voting data. I define Oregon's regional group as "Northwest", including Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. By compositing these states into one Northwest score, I determine that nothing is happening in the area that would affect Oregon's voter turnout. National trends in voter turnout were affecting Oregon's voter participation levels before the reform but not after. I gather the data for the United States and the Northwest and extrapolate it in a pre and post reform manner from 1980 until now. I use regression analysis to determine the influence of these outside trends on Oregon's voting. I then determine if the change in voter turnout stemmed from the reform or from these outside trends.

I use the Oregon Population Survey, which asks voting and socioeconomic questions, to determine how the reform affects different socioeconomic groups. I compare the mean voting rates of minority and majority groups before and after the reform using the independent samples T test. The University of Oregon Survey Research Lab conducts the Oregon Population Survey. They ask the same questions every other year from 1990 to 2002. Measures are taken to make the survey statistically relevant. Oregon's Office of Economic Analysis, a state-run office that helps forecast conditions in Oregon's economy, pays for the survey. These data sets are made public by the State of Oregon and are available for academic use. I use survey data to gather racial, social, and economic demographic information from 1990 through 2002. I examine demographic factors that are strongly correlated with turnout: race, education, employment, age,

gender, homeownership, disability, and commuting time (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, Texiera 1992, Miller and Shanks 1995).

In discovering how this reform came about, and testing the demobilization theory, I use a qualitative approach. I note the key sponsors of legislation, or, in case of referendum, the key groups that authored the language of the question, and those who were opposed to the legislation. The names of these sponsors and opponents are recorded in referendum questions, and are kept by the Oregon State Archives. The Oregon Senate and House of Representatives each keep detailed records of voting and debates on legislation that are available to the public. Opponents of a referendum question are also allowed to place their objections on the ballot. The ballots provide the names and addresses of major opponents to referendum questions. I gather the names of key opponents from these sources. I determine which politicians supported this change in voting style--and test the demobilization theory--by analyzing legislative voting records. I interview several politicians, reformers, and opponents (see appendix for list of names). I select these people because of their reported knowledge of the change to voting by mail. The answers to the questions I ask are not a part of public knowledge. I use a mail questionnaire; the questions are listed in the appendix.

In addition, I study newspaper coverage from Oregon's two top newspapers The Oregonian and the Statesman Journal for textual analysis. The Oregonian and the Statesman Journal keep records of every article from the previous 25 years. I use the database to compile a list of every article about the reform. From these articles, I make a

master list of key individuals. Additionally, I note any relevant information contained in these articles. For national coverage, I examine the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, various Internet search engines, and the lexis-nexus database of articles about the reform, voting by mail, or election reform. I use these sources to determine how this reform occurred, and which politicians supported and fought it.

The social capital section of this dissertation will use Putnam et al.'s standard approach of survey research. The use of surveys that ask questions about social capital to determine the societal impact of a reform is a frequently used methodology (Burt, 1998; Molyneaux, 2002; Mayoux, 2001; Neuhouser, 1995; Smith, 2000; Smith-Lovin & McPherson, 1993; World Bank, 2001). Putnam (2001) uses surveys that asked questions related to civic engagement and relates these results to various socioeconomic demographic factors, including race, income, and education. Rosenfeld, Messner, and Baumer (2001) use aggregate survey data to find that high aggregate homicide rates are correlated with areas with lower levels of social capital. Kawachi and Kennedy (1997) use the General Social Survey to find that "inequality is related to reduction in social cohesion and that disinvestment in social capital is in turn associated with increased mortality". Rice and Ling (2002) use the World Values Survey to develop measures of social capital, and find that social capital is related to personal wealth. Further review of literature finds that many researchers use survey data questions about civic engagement and community involvement and correlate those answers with socioeconomic variables (Burt, 1998; Molyneaux, 2002; Mayoux, 2001; Neuhouser, 1995; Smith, 2000; Smith-Lovin & McPherson, 1993; World Bank, 2001). Oregon's Population Survey has

questions that measure social capital. One about community involvement, and another about feelings for Oregon, henceforth defined as Trust. As was done in the voting section, I examine the survey answers for the various economic, racial, and social sub-groupings to determine who has more social capital after the reform.

Summary of Results

In chapter two, I determine what facilitated and hindered the reform. I find that the reform's successful enactment and continued existence depended on the alignment of unrelated circumstances. These circumstances came about in both direct and indirect ways. All were crucial to the reform's enactment. The institutional context of state's rights in electoral procedures facilitated the change to voting by mail. If voting by mail had been inaugurated in another nation without our distinct federal system it might have been declared an illegitimate abuse of sub-national power. But our federal system allows states to determine their own electoral systems. Oregon also has a political culture that is hospitable to reform. Oregon started with an open voting process in the 1850's where people said the name of their candidate in public. Oregon also led the way in referendum and initiative voting, the process that enabled voting by mail to be enacted. Oregon has experimented with many recent reforms that have been successful. Thus, Oregon's political culture and history may have made the enactment of new reforms—like voting by mail—easier. There was a successful experiment with voting by mail that provided crucial empirical evidence of the reform's benefit and safety. There were present in Oregon various non-governmental organizations, Democratic politicians, and unions which would benefit from the reform's enactment. Further, the reform did not endanger

any powerful corporations, provoking them to lobby against it, which had occurred with Oregon's health care reform referendum in the 2002 election. Oregon was also facing decreasing turnout, rising cost of elections, and more negative political advertising. These circumstances created a window of opportunity for policy change that enabled the voting by mail reform. I find that fear of fraud, undue influence, and a loss of polling booth camaraderie hindered the reform effort. Also there was clear resistance to the reform by the Republican Party, offering evidence to support the demobilization theory.

In chapter three, I test the reform's impact on voter turnout. I find that the reform significantly increases voter turnout. In both national elections that used voting by mail there was a large increase in turnout. In the 2000 election voting rates increased by 8.5 percent of registered voters. The 2002 election had an even larger increase, 10.1 percent of registered voters. The increase happened after the reform was enacted, and interrupted a trend of voter decline for Oregon. I ran a regression analysis to determine if other factors were causing this increase. The model features the most common factors that are thought to influence turnout. These factors were race, age, education, and income. I test from 1990 through 2002. The regression equation shows that there are three variables that are statistically significant. These variables are Voting By Mail, Over65, and Income. The voting by mail variable is highly positively correlated with Oregon's turnout at 0.715. The Over65 and income variables did not change during the period of the reform. The variables that are not significant are Under25, Education, and Race. I determine the impact of mobilization and the elections' competitiveness. The change to

voting by mail appears to be the only factor in Oregon that increases turnout in the 2000 and 2002 elections.

I determine if outside factors raised the turnout. I examine if rural counties benefited more than urban counties from the reform. After the reform, urban counties voted slightly more than rural counties, as they have always done in Oregon. In 2000, urban counties had 80.1 percent of registered voters turnout, while rural counties voted at 78.7 percent. I test the effect of national and regional voting trends to determine if they caused turnout to increase. From the period 1980 through 1996 Oregon closely followed the national and regional trends in voting. Oregon's voting patterns are .80 correlated with the national patterns, and the correlations are significant. Oregon's voting patterns are .87 correlated with the regional patterns, and are significant. But after the reform the national and regional turnout levels remain constant, while Oregon's turnout increased. This increase shows that there was something unique to Oregon that changed turnout. The only determinant in Oregon that changed was the introduction of voting by mail.

I test Oregon's turnout compared to all other states' turnout. The test ran a regression of all states' 1996 turnout against their turnout in 2000. Oregon is significantly higher than the regression line, which signifies that its change in turnout is atypical. Finally, the influence of the closeness of the 2000 election and mobilization was measured by a recent report (Gans). This analysis uses less precise voting age population (VAP) data. When the test uses the percent of registered voters, it shows that Oregon had 5 percent more turnout increase than all other battleground states. Thus,

although some increase might be due to greater mobilization and the closeness of outcomes in 2000, these tests confirm that reform results in a large increase in voter turnout. 2002 had an even larger increase.

In chapter four, I test the reform's impact on voter turnout of different socioeconomic groups. I find that the cause of lower turnout amongst marginalized groups is not simply lack of education or interest in politics. If the voting process is made easier, then these groups participate more. I find that traditionally marginalized groups increase turnout at higher rates than mainstream Oregonians. Poor people, in particular, experience an increase in turnout much greater than the non-poor. Voting by mail succeeds in facilitating voting rate increases at higher rates than the majority for the poor (5.5 percentage points higher), the elderly (13.9 percentage points higher), African Americans (.2 percentage points higher), American Indians (6.6 percentage points higher), men (2.0 percentage points higher), and the unemployed (14.2 percentage points higher). Other groups, however, do not show an increase in turnout. These groups are the young, the uneducated, Hispanics, Asians, Other Race, and renters.

In chapter five, I test the reform's impact on social capital. The social capital test shows that the reform had beneficial unintended consequences for Oregon's political life. I find that civic engagement is higher for those who voted by mail. The mean response for civic engagement for those who voted in 1996 is 1.97, and for 2000 it is 1.73. On a scale of one to five, people who voted by mail are .2 more civically engaged. The feelings of community involvement also rise after the reform. In 1996, voters have a less

positive skew in caring about their community than in 2000. In 2000, there is a 24 percentage points more community involvement among voters than in 1996. Thus, if you voted by mail you have a greater chance of feeling like a part of your community. The mean score test shows that in 2000—when comparing those who did and did not vote—voters felt .10 more a part of their community than in 1996. The data also suggests that volunteering should increase, although no statistical proof is available.

I use demographic data to determine for whom social capital increased. The different groups tested were American Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, Whites, the disabled, Gender, Education, the unemployed, the poor, those under age 25, and those over age 65. I test these groups for changes in civic engagement and community involvement. Those who voted by mail who were a marginalized group who feel more engaged than the majority are Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, the disabled, the unemployed, those under age 25, and those over age 65. Those who voted by mail who are a marginalized group who feel more involved in their community than the majority are Asians, Blacks, the disabled, the poor, and those under age 25. Thus, voting by mail makes a small increase in social capital. In particular groups who have low social capital like the poor or the young, saw higher levels of increase.

Ch.2: Facilitating and Hindering the change to voting by mail.

Oregon's mail-in voting reform is the most innovative change in state-level electoral systems in many decades. What led Oregon to change its voting system in such a radical way, and what hindered the reform effort? Voting by mail's enactment provides insights into the conditions necessary for electoral reform. Oregon experimented with voting by mail in a few local elections since 1981. But voting by mail was only recently approved in a referendum for use in all elections, starting with the 2000 election. The reform process was slow, as all the right elements gradually converged to make change possible. National, state, and local elements were aligned to create a chance for reform.

Electoral reform is difficult to achieve. Studying voting by mail's history sheds light on how to enact an innovative electoral reform. Piven and Cloward's (2001) theory of non-voting (hereafter the "demobilization theory") offers an explanation of why electoral system reform is difficult. It states that once politicians are in power, they fight reforms that expand the electorate, especially if these reforms threaten to include more new voters for the opposition. An expansion of the electorate might endanger their ability to be reelected if it comes from groups likely to vote for other candidates. Reformers predicted a turnout increase because voting by mail simplifies the electoral system (Vetter 1996). The reform provides an interesting test of the demobilization theory. Discovering how it came into existence tells us if, and, if so, which, politicians

were against the reform. The central research questions are: who promoted and fought the reform, and what conditions are necessary to enable change?

The “garbage can” model of Cohen et al. (1972) is helpful in understanding how Oregon changed to voting by mail. The garbage can model suggests that change is often encouraged by the development of unrelated circumstances. Previous circumstances and resources can (dis)encourage the development of new policies, even though reformers did not create these conditions. Change happens when conditions align to form a window of opportunity. The garbage can model outlines an incremental process in which previously occurring changes enable new reforms to take place. These prior conditions are not necessarily part of a large coordinated plan of action that leads to one targeted goal. Rather, various events happen to create an environment which reformers can take advantage of to create a new policy.

Incrementalist might seem a better policy model if voting by mail was a gradual expansion of a previous policy, but its adoption was not gradual. Although a small trial of voting by mail did provide important evidence of its safety and success, the 1998 reform is not an incremental expansion of this policy. Rather, almost twenty years later, a combination of a variety of factors created a window of opportunity for change. The incrementalist model should show a gradual, ever-increasing expansion of a policy. But, one experiment in 1981, followed by twenty years of inactivity, then a dramatic change is not gradual or incremental. The more ad-hoc explanations of John Kingdon's (1995) Garbage Can model is better suited for explaining the complexities of this electoral

system reform. The policy window that emerged from the combined forces of institutions, Oregon's culture, and Oregon's needs created the opportunity to enact vote by mail.

Voting by mail's enactment was encouraged by: national constitutional arrangements that allow state's rights in election procedures, Oregon's development of the referendum process and a political culture that accepts radical change, the previous creation of a successful local experiment with voting by mail, and the formation of a pro-reform coalition of the Democratic Party, election reformers, and non-governmental organizations. The conditions that facilitated bringing voting by mail to a successful referendum vote are also available in some other states. Thus, we need to examine what else encouraged this reform in Oregon. The other factors in Oregon I identify are decreasing turnout, rising costs of elections, and increasing use of last minute negative campaign attacks. The combination of all of the above factors in Oregon overcame the resistance to reform.

These unintended circumstances do not take away from the desire of the reformers to do societal good, and fulfill their civic and professional duties. In fact, I find that the reform has many beneficial effects. But why do some reforms get enacted, when so many others fail? A successful reform effort is due to the alignment of both the efforts of reformers and the presence of propitious conditions. As it happens, the reform had even greater benefit than was anticipated by the reformers. But the desire to "do good" must be accompanied by a situation that will enable change to occur.

I also study the factors that worked against the reform, because it is important to know what the reform effort overcame to achieve its goal. Opponents argued that voting by mail will lead to rampant fraud, “undue influence”, and loss of polling place civic engagement. I also find that most Republican politicians did not want voting by mail. For example, in 1995, there was a state legislature vote by mail bill that Republicans voted unanimously against. Republicans unanimously voted against, and killed, another vote by mail bill in the Oregon Senate elections committee in 1997. In the 1998 election, Republicans denounced the voting by mail referendum. A Republican-led conservative-funded organization tried to have the reform declared unconstitutional. In 2001, Republican members of the state legislature passed legislation—with a party-line vote—to curtail the effect of the reform. I also determine that the negative predictions of opponents did not occur.

What Facilitates Electoral Reform?

American National Institutions

National institutions limit the ability of any sub-national unit to enact legislation. How the reform overcame national institutional barriers must be studied. The United States’ unique federal system allows sub-national units to create their own electoral policy, within the limits of constitutional and national law. The Federal Election Commission says, “as might be expected given the Constitutional mandate that the individual States conduct elections in our country, the administration of elections varies

widely from State to State and region to region” (F.E.C.). Yet despite this diversity, the ability of reformers to get their legislation enacted is limited by constitutional and national election law. The judiciary must approve any change in election law that happens in the country due to the lawsuits that typically follow in the wake of an electoral reform. If the reform did not meet the Court’s legal criteria then it could not continue to exist.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Burdick v. Takushi case (1992) that any changes in election laws or regulations must be approved under the Voting Rights Act only if they have a direct connection to voting. It listed such things as changes in the manner of voting, in candidacy requirements and qualifications, in the composition of the electorate that may vote for candidates for certain offices and changes affecting the creation or abolition of elective offices. By limiting what the federal government must approve, the Supreme Court preserved a federal institutional context in which states could change elections laws. Oregon’s mail-in voting reform remained possible. Another example of recent reform is in Texas where the traditional polling places are now open on for a three-week period before the election.

In 2000, the Supreme Court refused to hear a case against the reform, thus ensuring its legality. I asked Bill Bradbury—whose office was a defendant in the lawsuit—if he had expected the Supreme Court to hear the case against voting by mail, and if he had been confident in the law as written? He said “We were confident in the

law as written and we were not surprised when the Supreme Court declined to consider the challenge to Oregon's vote by mail system".

The primary argument of the Voter Integrity Project (the appellant in the appeal, notably an organization based outside of Oregon) was that voting by mail should be illegal because federal statutes establish "the Tuesday next after the first Monday in November" as federal Election Day. The Voting Integrity Project argued that by designating a federal election day, "Congress implied that the designated federal elections were to take place on that day and no other days" (Voting Integrity Project, Inc. v. Keisling, 9th Cir. Court, 2001).

In its 1997 decision in Foster v. Love (522 U.S. 67, 69 1997), the Supreme Court defined election for purposes of the federal Election Day statute as "the combined actions of voters and officials meant to make a final selection of an officeholder." The Supreme Court further explained, "This case does not present the question whether a State must always employ the conventional mechanics of an election. We hold today only that if an election does take place, it may not be consummated prior to federal Election Day." Thus, the Supreme Court allowed various types of reforms as long as they met a narrow set of federal or constitutional requirements.

Based upon the above Supreme Court decision, the Ninth Circuit Court concluded in VIP v. Keisling that "there is only a single election day in Oregon, when the election is 'consummated,' even though there are prior voting days." In other words, even though

people mark their ballots and mail them in over the course of two weeks, because the county clerks do not actually count all of the ballots until Election Day, the election is “consummated” on that day and therefore meets the federal requirements. Thus, the federal judiciary ruled that the reform was acceptable under this federal constitutional system that allows sub-national units to control elections. The reform needed this institutional context.

Interestingly, I find below that this state-level electoral system reform encourages participation from marginalized groups, including African Americans. But, state’s rights are historically associated with denial of access for these groups. Slavery, segregation, and Jim Crow were all defended with state’s rights. Walker (1999) finds that decentralization is synonymous with segregation and racism in the minds of many. Yet the potential for progressive state innovation cannot be ignored. For example, traditionally liberal states like Hawaii and Massachusetts are in the vanguard of gay marriage. State’s rights in matrimonial law allows these liberal states to be policy pioneers. If the state’s political culture is inclined towards progressivism, state’s rights will promote progressive innovation in that state. Oregon’s political culture is progressive. Voting by mail is part of a larger history of electoral reform that facilitated participation in Oregon. Southern states have conservative political cultures, and in the past that led to conservative electoral policies. But one should not assume that the national is always more liberal than the local. Some states are more progressive than the national government. State’s rights in election procedures allows progressive states—like Oregon—to enact reforms that encourage participation.

Oregon's Political Development.

Oregon's history and political culture make it easier to radically change election procedures. A political culture of reform in a state makes it easier to enact innovative policies, because people are familiar with change, and therefore, less leery of it. Almond and Verba (1989) find that the political culture of state has a profound influence on its policy choices. Wildavsky (1987) finds that a state's culture influences its institutions, which in turn further defines its culture. Laitin and Wildavsky (1988) also find that institutions are shaped by political culture, which shapes the political preferences of a people. The political culture in Oregon is one where experimentation is commonplace, and this facilitates reform.

Oregon has a reformist political culture. Endo (1998) finds that Oregon has a "penchant for passing landmark legislation". Daniel Elazar studied Oregon and concluded that its reformist culture reflects the "progressive, and predominantly moralistic citizenry" (Elazar 1991). Piott (2003) finds that Oregon is the most reformist state in the use of referendum and initiatives. Malsberger (2003) cites direct primary elections, the recall, proportional representation, and the popular election of US senators as areas in which Oregon led in electoral reforms. Josephson (2002) finds that Oregon's reformist culture is vigorous, but it often leads to bad or even horrific public policy, including the use of eugenic sterilization in the 1930's of the mentally ill. Putnam and Feldstein (2003) find the Portland metropolitan area—where half of Oregon's residents live—has a vibrant reformist political culture, more than other areas they studied. Johnston (2002) finds that the middle class in Oregon has a long history of supporting

reform, more than in other states. Johnson (1992) finds that of Western states, Oregon has the most reformist political culture due to the traits of its earliest inhabitants, who created institutions that invigorated future reform efforts.

Referendum and initiative voting is an important example of Oregon's reformist political culture. The history of referendum and initiative, in fact, is intimately tied to the development of Oregon. "In 1902, the Oregon electorate overwhelmingly approved a ballot measure that created the initiative and referendum, a system of direct legislation by the people. In 1904, the electorate enacted the direct primary and, in 1908, the State Constitution was amended to include recall of public officials." (Blue Book 2002). The referendum and initiative system developed in Oregon was pushed by a group led by progressive leader William S. U'Ren and founded in 1898 (Blue Book 2002). The system was widely known as being developed in Oregon and has since been adopted by many other states. "The initiative and referendum became known nationally as the 'Oregon System,' and adoption of these popular legislative tools put Oregon in the vanguard of progressive and enlightened politics, allowing the people to propose new laws or change the State Constitution through a general election ballot measure." (Blue Book 2002). Oregon continues to be in the vanguard of electoral procedures with the change to voting by mail.

Oregon uses the referendum and initiative process often. "Since 1902, the people have passed 99 of the 288 initiative measures on the ballot and 25 of the 61 referenda on the ballot. During the same period, the legislature has referred 363 measures to the

people, of which 206 have passed.” (Blue Book 2002). The process is designed to be simple. The simplicity of the process facilitates the ability of reformers to get their referendums and initiatives enacted. “Oregon holds the records for the most (enacted) statewide initiatives, the highest average initiative use (6.6 per general election), and the most statewide initiatives on the ballot in a single year - 27 in 1912.” (Schmidt) The high rate of referendum passage in Oregon can be attributed to the simplicity of the system, and the ease of the process.

The requirements for referendums are straightforward. “Both houses of the legislature must vote to refer a statute or constitutional amendment for a popular vote. Such referrals cannot be vetoed by the governor. To place an initiative or referendum on the ballot, supporters must obtain a specified number of signatures from registered voters.”(Blue Book 2002). Oregon, thus, developed the referendum and initiative system, implemented it in an engaging and simple fashion, and used it thoroughly throughout its existence. The reform was facilitated by these innovations and their consistent use. In fact, the high number of ballot measures resulting from this easy process created another pressure for the reform: the need of voters for more time to look at the ballot. The ballot had twenty-six questions in 2000, more than most people can answer in the short time in a polling booth (Bradbury 2003). The longer time period of voting by mail and the easier access to information about ballot measures were common arguments for the reform (Seligson 2003).

Oregon's political culture created many recent successful firsts. Historical examples provide insight as to why Oregon was willing to make a radical change in its voting system. Here are examples of reforms that were approved through the referendum process in Oregon:

- The first state to pass the Bottle Bill in 1971. (CRI)
- Innovative land-use laws. (Oregon)
- The creation of Metro, where Portland went from being a city with separate governments for the suburbs; to becoming a unified metropolis. Metro provides a broad range of services to 1.3 million residents in three counties and 24 cities in the Portland, Oregon region. (Metro)

These successful experiments make it is easier for people to trust new reforms. Oregon's past successes with other reforms might make voters more receptive to voting by mail. Also, it is interesting that Oregon had experimented with a "viva voce" voting, a non-secret open ballot where people voted by roll call (Bourke and Debats 1995). In Oregon's Washington County between 1855 and 1860 votes were given by voice (Bourke and Debats 1995). The similarities of the viva voce system with voting by mail are remarkable in that both allow for an open style of voting.

Oregon's unique political history facilitated the reform effort. Through Oregon's consistent use of referendums and initiatives the public has seen radical change result in positive outcomes. The people of Oregon are, thus, more willing to accept new changes than citizens of another state who had not succeeded with as many new policies.

Previous Experiments with Voting By Mail

After experimenting with voting by mail in some local elections for almost 20 years, Oregonians voted in 1998 to adopt voting by mail for all state elections with nearly 70 percent in favor. The first local government to use voting by mail after the Oregon Legislature approved a test for local elections in 1981 was Linn County. Current Linn County Clerk Steve Druckenmiller told me that “Linn County was chosen because of great respect for then County Clerk Del Riley who was a leading proponent of Vote By Mail.” (Druckenmiller 2003) Del Riley (Democrat) accompanied Oregon Elections Director Ray Phelps (Democrat), and several state legislators (all Democrats), to witness an experiment with voting by mail in San Diego, California in 1981 (Oregon State Senate, Committee on Elections. Hereafter SCOE 1981). Monterey County, California conducted the first all voting by mail election ever held in the United States in 1977 (Henshaw 2001). After 1977, many local elections in California used voting by mail, particularly for referenda. The Oregon delegation was interested in San Diego because it is a larger and more diverse population than Monterey County (Oregon State House, Committee on Elections. Hereafter HCOE 1981). All who went on this observation tour became strong proponents of the system and viewed it as a tremendous success (SCOE 1981).

Ray Phelps convinced then Secretary of State Paulus (Democrat) to draft a proposal that was submitted to the elections committees of the House and Senate (SCOE

1981). After holding hearings, these committees drafted legislation based on the Secretary of State recommendations (SCOE 1981 and HCOE 1981). They also sought the approval of the Attorney General as to voting by mail's constitutionality (SCOE 1981). After receiving approval, they submitted a version to the floor of the House and Senate (SCOE 1981, HCOE 1981). The House committee voting was six for and four against, with three out of four Republicans against (HCOE 1981). The Senate committee voting was seven for and two against, with two out of three Republicans against (SCOE 1981). After many hearings, it was decided that--based on San Diego's success--a one-time county non-candidate experiment would be tried for a special election (SCOE 1981, HCOE 1981). If that was a success, then more special non-candidate elections would be tried. A compromise was reached when local non-candidate elections (usually local bond and tax referenda) were suggested as the first experiment to use vote by mail (SCOE 1981, HCOE 1981). The non-candidate elections compromise facilitated Republicans joining the Democrats in supporting this bill (SCOE 1981, HCOE 1981). The House floor voting was forty five for and fifteen against, with eleven out of nineteen Republicans against (Oregon State House of Representatives Archives. Hereafter House. 1981). The Senate floor voting was twenty one for and nine against, with seven out of eleven Republicans against (Oregon State Senate Archives. Hereafter Senate. 1981). Del Riley, who observed the San Diego system and supported the reform, volunteered Linn County to be the first Oregon County to experiment with vote by mail (HCOE 1981).

The San Diego experiment supplied crucial empirical evidence that the new system was safe, fair, cheaper, and increased turnout. Similarly, the 1981 experiment was a crucial source of empirical evidence about the positive benefits of the system that reformers could show the public. Thus, a path for electoral reform is small level experimentation that can provide evidence for future expansions of the policy. By the time of the referendum for all mail-in ballots in national elections, Oregon had experimented with voting by mail for twenty years in local special elections. Through this slow implementation, Oregonians became familiar with voting by mail, and did not fear adopting it for national elections. Both the 1981 experiment and the 1998 referendum also benefited from Oregon's political culture that was open to innovation. Voting by mail's slow implementation allowed citizens to see evidence of the reform's consequences—particularly regarding fraud—before trying it in important national elections. By implementing the policy slowly, it would not seem to be a radical change to the average citizen, but merely an application of a successful experiment.

Table 27 Here is a complete timeline of the implementation of Voting by Mail:

1981	The Oregon Legislature approves a test of vote-by-mail (VBM) for local elections.
1987	VBM approved for candidate local/special elections.
June 1993	First candidate local election by mail – 39 percent turnout.
May 1995	Second candidate local election by mail – 44 percent turnout.
Spring/Summer 1995	The Oregon Legislature approves a proposal to expand VBM to primary and general elections. The Governor vetoes the bill.
May 1997	Sixth special candidate local election by mail – 42 percent turnout.
Spring/Summer 1997	The Oregon House of Representatives approves a proposal to expand VBM to primary and general elections. The bill dies in a Senate committee. The Governor would have signed the bill into law.
November 1997	Seventh special candidate local election by mail – 60 percent turnout.
May 1998	Primary election at the polls. Forty-one percent of registered voters in Oregon are voters, an all-time low.
June 1998	Supporters of expanding VBM to primary and general elections use the initiative to put the issue on the November general election ballot. No paid signature gatherers were used to put the measure on the ballot – a first since 1994.
November 3, 1998	Oregon voters decide to expand VBM to primary and general elections by a vote of 757,204 to 334,021.
November 2, 1999	Eighth special candidate local election by mail — 38 percent turnout.

Source: Oregon Election Division (Accessed April 23rd, 2003)

The Democratic/Non-Governmental Organization Coalition

Referendums must have sponsors. For a referendum to be taken seriously by the public it helps that these sponsors be noteworthy, respected, and probably politicians. For a politician, supporting a referendum offers a way to increase exposure, seem forward thinking, and appear as someone with solid policy proposals. A referendum's supporters need a politician's credibility, and politicians can use the referendum's spotlight to benefit their careers. But this is an electoral system reform, and thus, it affects politicians' reelection prospects. Traditional wisdom in Oregon held that the

Democratic Party would benefit from voting by mail (Vetter 1996). The Democratic Party in particular would benefit from an expansion of the electorate that results from greater convenience, because marginalized populations more often vote Democratic (Citrin et al. 2001). I provide evidence below that Democrats strongly supported the reform, while Republicans opposed it, by studying state legislature voting records and media textual analysis. The Democratic Party formed a coalition with reformers, liberal non-governmental organizations, and unions to get enough signatures to put the reform on the ballot, and convince voters to pass it.

Here are the sponsors of the reform as listed on the referendum question.

Opponents are not listed on the question as sponsors are, but they are allowed to place their arguments in opposition next to the question. Below, I discuss the opponents:

Organization

League of Women Voters
 Oregon League of Conservation Voters
 AARP of Oregon
 American Association of University Women
 Oregon Common Cause
 AFL-CIO Oregon
 OSPIRG
 NW Oregon Labor Council
 Oregon Education Association
 Special Districts Association of Oregon
 National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 82
 Oregon NARAL
 Oregon Woman's Rights Coalition
 Oregon Public Employees Union, SEIU Local 503
 Oregon Fire District Directors Association

Individuals

Governor John Kitzhaber (Democrat)
 Secretary of State Phil Keisling (Democrat)
 Former Secretary of State, Governor and US Senator Mark Hatfield (Republican)
 Former State Treasurer and Secretary of State Clay Myers (Republican)
 Brian Booth (Author/Activist)
 Ivan Gold (Oregon Common Cause)
 Curt Gleaves (Campaign for Equal Justice)
 John Gray (ACLU)
 Jim Wright (ACLU)
 Paul and Alice Meyer (ACLU)

Businesses

Salem Area Chamber of Commerce
 PGE
 Gibson Enterprises
 Neil Kelley Company
 Russell Development Company
 Medford Fabrication

(<http://www.sos.state.or.us/elections/other.info/stat.htm>. This is the source of the voting records and textual evidence regarding who were the supporters and opponents of the reform.)

The presence of this coalition was another factor that was needed to get this reform enacted. A similar coalition of reformers enabled NVRA's passage (Groarke 2000). Each of these groups had its own interest in supporting the reform. The Democratic politicians were able to support this reform because it did not endanger any of the major contributors to their campaigns, and was predicted to benefit their party. The reformers and voting rights groups were able to see electoral innovation occur. The non-governmental organizations and the unions expected to see benefit for their members from this reform. Other reforms that fail do not have a powerful coalition of supporters (Jacobson 2002). This reform succeeded when others did not, because many other reforms would endanger powerful corporations. The reform did not provoke any

powerful business group to lobby against it—as Oregon’s universal health care reform referendum in the 2002 election did (Jacobson 2002). Voting by mail seems innocuous to enough people that some businesses even aligned to support it, despite union support. This coalition gathered the petition signatures to qualify the measure for a ballot, campaigned to persuade voters, and wrote the referendum that passed. An appointed committee in Oregon verified the accuracy of its statement. The only committee member to vote against its accuracy was the only Republican, Sen. Lynn Snodgrass. Here is the text of 1998’s referendum 60 that approved voting by mail:

RESULT OF "YES" VOTE: "Yes" vote amends existing law to require vote by mail in biennial primary, general elections.

RESULT OF "NO" VOTE: "No" vote retains current law prohibiting vote by mail in biennial primary or general elections.

SUMMARY: Current law prohibits vote by mail for biennial primary or general elections. This proposal eliminates the prohibition and requires vote by mail for biennial primary or general elections. The proposal does not affect existing law permitting the Secretary of State and county clerk to conduct other elections either at the polls or by mail.

ESTIMATE OF FINANCIAL IMPACT: County government expenditures are estimated to be reduced each Primary and General Election year by \$3,021,709.

Lowering turnout

Obviously, the most prominent motivating factor for the reform was decreasing voting rates in Oregon. Decreasing turnout provides a valid reason to reform the electoral system. If turnout rates are level or rising, then there is less impetus to change the electoral system. Before the reform, Oregon’s voting rates decreased by 10 percentage points in the 1990’s. The reform was predicted to facilitate the voting process and increase turnout. I find that it was successful in raising turnout. Importantly, I also

find that this occurred in a period of national turnout decrease. Whether voting by mail is the sole reason for Oregon's increase in turnout is controversial, and in the following chapters I find it did increase participation.

Increasing Elections Cost

The cost of elections was rising in Oregon before the reform (Bradbury 2001). In the pamphlet Oregon Secretary of State Voting By Mail Frequently Asked Questions one of the goals of the reform is listed as "saving taxpayer dollars"(Elections Office 2000). The cost of elections is measured in terms of cost per vote. These statistics take rates of inflation into account. Bill Bradbury said the costs of running the elections was increasing in Oregon, and that it did decrease after the reform (Bradbury 2001, 2003) He said, "The cost of running elections decreased with the advent of voting by mail. As you know, voting by mail was enacted statewide in the November 1998 general election. Elections costs in Oregon rose for two decades. People were complaining about the rising costs. Our state is large, and the reform offers a much cheaper solution on how to hold elections". Cost figures are not yet available for the 2002 primary and general elections, as the counties are still compiling the data and reporting to the Elections Division. To illustrate the cost savings, let us compare the primary and general elections in 1998 (polling place) with 2000 (voting by mail).

Table 27

Election	Total Eligible Voters	Total Ballots Cast	Turnout %	Election Cost	Cost per Voter	Cost per Ballot
Nov. 1998	1,965,778	1,158,163	58.92%	\$3,558,764.36	\$1.81	\$3.07
Nov. 2000	1,953,423	1,559,168	79.82%	\$3,564,120.12	\$1.82	\$2.29
May 1998	1,903,628	664,970	34.93%	\$3,396,272.12	\$1.78	\$5.11
May 2000	1,815,854	927,330	51.07%	\$2,812,480.88	\$1.55	\$3.03

When comparing the November elections, the overall cost for both elections was roughly the same; however, over 400,000 more Oregonians voted in the 2000 election. The cost per ballot was significantly lower with voting by mail. When comparing the May elections, it again shows a clear reduction in cost with voting by mail. It should be noted that some of the cost savings results from collaboration between the state Elections Division and the U.S. Postal Service. The Elections Division is now able to mail election materials at a reduced bulk postage rate. Thus, the reform is successful in reducing expenditures, in a period when Oregon's election costs were rising. Cheaper election procedures are a powerful argument in favor of reform, and the reformers promoted this benefit (Carlton 2001).

Negative Campaigning

Last minute negative campaigning was increasing in Oregon before the reform (Carlton 2000). The reform decreases the impact of last minute negative campaigning. In polling place elections, it is common for candidates to run attack ads soon before an election, giving their opponent no time to respond to allegations or denounce falsehoods by the time ballots are cast. In voting by mail elections, over half of the voters have already marked and mailed in their ballots by that last weekend, so a last-minute attack ad reaches a much smaller percentage of people who have yet to vote. Further, if candidates run negative ads at the beginning of the voting period, their opponents have time to respond while voters are still considering their ballots. The reform lowers the benefit of last minute attacks, which was deemed as positive by Oregonians (Carlton 2000)

What Hinders Electoral Reform?

To understand what hindered the reform effort, I examine the opponents and their reasons for resistance. The reform was hindered by: fear of fraud, fear of “undue influence”, fear of loss of polling booth camaraderie, and organized Republican resistance. I also determine that the predicted negative effects of the reform did not materialize.

Concerns over Fraud

A major obstacle for reformers was convincing the public that the reform provides sufficient protection against fraud. Every opponent listed fraud as a major concern on the 1998 referendum. For example, conservative activist Neale Hyatt said “the overriding

concern about mail voting is not cost or convenience, it is vote FRAUD” (emphasis in original) (Hyatt 1998). He further states “when people are allowed to vote through the mail as well as register through the mail, all control over elections is lost” (Hyatt 1998). Republican Representative Lynn Snodgrass said “we do not have a statewide-computerized voter registration system. A single voter can be registered in more than one county and receive more than one ballot. Counties verify signatures, however, they do not automatically talk to 35 other counties to see if someone is registered in multiple jurisdictions. Therefore, (with voting by mail) multiple casting of ballots can occur.” (Snodgrass 1998). Scholar Bill Lunch, at Oregon State University, campaigned against voting by mail because “many political scientists have doubts about the system because of their sensitivity to history and how real problems occur when ballots are loose and not controlled” (Endo 1998). Fred W. Decker, Treasurer, of Citizens For Choice of Voting urged voters to not “vote us back to the mess of corrupted elections that Americans reformed by adopting the secret ballot a century ago” (Decker 1998). Election fraud is a longstanding concern for American politics. A change away from the secret ballot seems risky to many people. Thus, concerns over fraud were a hurdle for the reform efforts.

Supporters of the reform worked to relieve fears of fraud with the new system. Bill Bradbury says that “Evidence shows fraud and undue influence are simply not a problem with Vote-by-Mail. During voting by mail’s 20-year history in Oregon, elections officials have found no indication of greater fraud or undue influence. Elections experts say all-mail ballot elections are often more secure from fraud than poll-site elections.” The reformers designed the system to have many safeguards. Bradbury

explains how: “Every signature on every ballot is checked against the original voter registration card in voting by mail elections. If the signature looks suspicious, the vote isn't counted until the voter is contacted and the signature is verified. This provides a level of security that simply isn't possible in polling place elections where signatures are not checked.” They also increased the penalty of voter fraud to a class “C” felony. The reformers worked to overcome the fraud fear with voters by implementing safeguards, increasing penalties, and showing evidence of no fraud from the twenty years of experimenting with voting by mail.

Oregon’s Elections Office has reported no increase in fraudulent activity (Elections Office 2002). A recent conference report from national fraud experts and state and county elections officials in Oregon concludes that they have seen little evidence of fraud in Oregon (Associated Press 2003). Former Secretary of State Phil Keisling noted “that many states have made it easier to get an absentee ballot without seeing any problems with fraud.” (Associated Press 2003). The general consensus among observers is that fraud from voting by mail is not a problem, yet it remains a point cited by the opposition (Carlton 2000).

Fear of Undue Influence

Undue influence is when a voter is pressured to vote a certain way. One of the chief benefits of secret ballots is that people are free from undue influence (Barbalet 1998). This concept is held with much regard in America, and ending the secret ballot was a major point of contention. The potential for parents, guardians, or bosses to put

pressure on people to vote a certain way seems a danger without the secret ballot. Many opponents state that this as a concern (Bradbury 2001). Also, churches and other organizations have been known to ask members to meet to discuss ballot choices. If this turns into a situation where pressure is exerted to vote a certain way is exerted, then people could lose their freedom to choose (Sizemore 2003).

Southwell (2000) created a face-to-face survey where she asked in privacy about undue influence. She focused on populations that were theorized to be more readily unduly influenced (the elderly, people in institutions, wives). She finds that undue influence is not a problem. Undue influence was a concern that reformers had to overcome. The reformers wrote into the referendum two features to reduce these fears. First, is that undue influence became a class “C” felony. Second, County clerks offices created private booths where people can fill out their ballot in secret, and drop it off in the office. Secretary of State Keisling—a Democratic reform supporter in 1998—also offered to create a task force to monitor undue influence, which concluded that it is not a problem (Elections Office 2003). Also, evidence from the 1981 experiment was used to document the lack of undue influence (Bradbury 2001).

Concern for a Loss of Polling Booth Camaraderie

Critics of the reform make a civic engagement argument, in which going to the polls is viewed as a patriotic endeavor that fills people with a healthy respect for their country. Reformer David Buchanan, Executive Director at Oregon Common Cause, was annoyed at many people’s view that “voting is a social function. The act of voting is not a

meet-and-greet gabfest. It is the noblest expression of the democratic process and it is so wherever you do it, in a kitchen or a campground or a courthouse. In fact Vote-by-Mail doesn't even deprive the polling place fan. They can drive to their clerk's office on election day and vote with all the ceremony and camaraderie they want" (Buchanan 1998). He finds that it is the most prominent objection to the reform (Buchanan 1998). Many opponents thought that the new system trivializes voting (Decker 1998). Opponent Bill Sizemore says "we lost something rather sacred when we stopped meeting with our neighbors down at the local precinct and waiting our turn in line to cast our ballots to determine together who our leaders would be and which ballot measures would pass or fail. We lost part of our sense of community" (Sizemore 2003). Thus, the reform that intends to increase voting might also decrease another type of participation: polling place camaraderie. Overcoming this perception was another difficulty facing reformers.

The argument about the social function of the polling place is powerful since America has experienced declining civic engagement (Putnam 2001). The social capital benefits I find in Chapter Five may well outweigh the loss of civic engagement that results from not voting together in a polling place. The open process of voting by mail may be more engaging than the atomized polling booth experience, and has in fact boosted measures of social capital for those who voted by mail. Reformers countered this argument by focusing on the social benefits of discussing your choices with friends and family as you mark your ballot (Buchanan 1998).

Republican Resistance

Republicans fought this reform, and I find several kinds of direct evidence of Republican resistance. In a 1995 State legislative vote on making voting by mail a statewide system, there was a floor vote with all Republicans voting against the reform. In 1997, the Republican in Senate Elections Committee voted unanimously against the reform, while all Democrats supported it. In 1998, Republicans mobilized and spoke out against the referendum. A non-governmental organization run by Republicans launched the court challenge to the reform. In 2001, the Republicans enacted legislation to curtail the reform's effects. Republicans usually cite the above criticisms of voting by mail in their opposition. But, since they are disproportionately against the reform, their resistance needs to be examined separately.

Voting Behavior in Oregon's State Legislature for the 1995 and 1997 reform bills.

Voting by mail legislation was passed by the Oregon legislature in 1995, but was vetoed. We see a clear division of party support in the legislature voting records. All Republicans in the legislature voted against the bill (SCOE 1995, HCOE 1995). Almost all Democrats voted to support the bill (SCOE 1995, HCOE 1995). The Republicans give the reasons listed above for being against the reform (SCOE 1995, HCOE 1995). Republican House Minority Whip Earl Ehrhart said "Voting is a responsibility. If you're too lazy, too good-for-nothing to get out and exercise that responsibility by going to the many places available to vote, then perhaps you don't deserve that right"

(Salzer 1998). The Republican decision to vote against the reform shows that their resistance was an important factor hindering the reform effort. But the 1995 vote is complicated because a Democratic governor vetoed the bill.

Democrat Governor John Kitzhaber vetoed a 1995 vote by mail bill, SB 319. He said, however, the veto was not indicative of a lack of support for mail balloting. He said "I have supported the concept of vote by mail in the past, and I continue to do so. However, I believe that the best way to achieve vote by mail is to move in a deliberate manner. For this reason, I am open to working with the Secretary of State in the months ahead to develop legislation that will allow us to move gradually towards a vote by mail system."(Kitzhaber 1995). Later, he is listed as being a supporter of the referendum. A Republican supporter Mark Hatfield was famous for defying his party, being the only governor that was openly against the Vietnam War, and he was also a strong supporter of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA). Thus, any prediction of partisan policy support or opposition must be in the aggregate, because some individuals deviate from predicted partisan behavior. But, in sum, the 1995 bill faced clear Republican resistance.

By 1997, Kitzhaber was convinced that the reform was beneficial and publicly stated his support (Elections Office 2003). Then, the reform was re-submitted as a bill in the Oregon Senate. The make-up of the elections committee, however, had changed in the 1996 elections and now had a Republican majority (SCOE 1997). In the election committee, the Republican majority voted unanimously against the reform, while the

Democratic minority unanimously voted for the bill (SCOE 1997). A bill must be passed by a committee to be recommended for a floor vote by the entire Senate. Thus, the bill died in committee.

1998 Voting By Mail Referendum Republican Opposition

Since Republicans were blocking vote by mail legislation, reformers switched to the referendum process. In 1998, they gathered enough signatures to have it placed on the ballot. There was strong Republican resistance to the referendum. The Republican gubernatorial candidate that year, Bill Sizemore, was an outspoken critic. He said, “vote by mail is a formula for election fraud” (Sizemore 2003). As the Republican gubernatorial candidate in 1998, Sizemore’s opinion is both influential on, and indicative of, Republican Party preference. Democratic Oregon House Rep. Jeff Barker told me that in 1998 “the Republican’s whined about illegal alien voter fraud [with vote by mail], but they did not offer any proof before or after [the change to voting by mail]” (Barker 2003). All party affiliations listed in the opponent’s section of the 1998 referendum are Republicans. Salzer (1998) found the referendum about “voting by mail has become a very partisan issue. Historically, elections with higher turnout favor Democrats. Oregon Republicans have been opposed to the mail-in vote, with Democrats favoring the proposal.” Editorials of the time show that newspapers were clearly aware of the partisan nature of the referendum. (Mail Tribune 1998). Conservative think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute, The Federalist Society, and the Constitution Project were all vocal opponents in 1998 (Seligson 2002). Brown (2001) finds a clear pattern of Republican resistance to ballot questions designed to boost turnout, including the 1998

voting by mail referendum. Henshaw (2001) also notes that Republicans were fighting the voting by mail referendum.

Republican Attacks After the Reform's Enactment.

If Republican politicians are threatened by a referendum or initiative, then they might try to hamper its effects by changing the law after it was approved. After the referendum there were attacks on voting by mail by Republicans. An example noted earlier is that the Voting Integrity Project—a conservative funded organization run by a former county head of the Republican party of Virginia—was the group that tried to have voting by mail declared unconstitutional.

Besides the judicial challenge, there have been significant changes made to the system. Since 2001, the following legislative changes were made to Oregon's voting by mail system:

- House Bill 2584 required ballot drop boxes to be labeled as “official” and “unofficial.” Every county in Oregon provides official drop boxes in which voters can drop off their ballots (rather than mailing them). The county elections offices guarantee that any ballot placed into those boxes by 8:00 p.m. on election night will be counted. (Bradbury 2003)

In addition to the official drop boxes, many community and advocacy groups hold ballot pick-up drives with their own ballot drop boxes. It is not illegal for community groups to pick up voters' ballots; however, this law was passed so voters will know whether the ballot drop box in which they are leaving their ballot is an official drop box of the county (and therefore will know whether or not they are *guaranteed* that their ballot will be received by the county and counted.) (Bradbury 2003)

- House Bill 2575 moved campaign contribution and expenditure deadlines one week earlier during an election in order to align reporting with Vote-by-Mail. The earlier deadlines allow voters to gain information about candidates' and initiative committees' funding before they vote. (Bradbury 2003)

In response to the 2000 election fiasco in Florida, significant changes were made to Oregon's election system that are not directly related to the conduct of voting by mail (including establishing uniform standards for what constitutes a vote, requiring counties to develop ballot security plans, establishing uniform ballot replacement procedures and increasing the requirements for voter education) (Bradbury 2003). These changes are not attacks on the efficacy of voting by mail.

One recent law, however, sponsored by Republican politicians is an attack on voting by mail. House bill 2825 shortens the time that people have to mark ballots by one week. Supporters said it shortens the time that politicians have to campaign, and thus lessens the impact of money on campaigns by making them cheaper. But, "Critics counter that House Bill 2825 is an attack on vote-by-mail" (Wong 2003). The bill "cleared the House Rules Committee by a 4-3 vote along party lines, Republicans for it and Democrats against." (Wong 2003)

By shortening the time that people have to mark their ballots, the bill increases the costs of voting and threatens to lower turnout (Statesman Journal 2003). "If it becomes law, Oregon's 36 counties would send mail ballots to post offices 11 days before an election" earlier than before (Wong 2003). An Oregon newspaper in its editorial said, "House Bill 2825 is a backhanded swipe at Oregon's vote-by-mail system. It deserves to be scuttled." (The Statesman Journal 2003) The Association of Oregon Counties and the Oregon County Clerks Association both oppose House Bill 2825. It can be concluded

that this is an attack on voting by mail. By desiring to make voting more difficult again, it provides evidence that these Republican politicians were against the reform. Despite evidence that neither fraud or undue influence were a problem, Republicans still fight this reform, which suggests that there is a partisan motive behind their resistance.

Conclusion

The “garbage-can” model accurately depicts the processes that allowed the reform to take place. There was a chance for reform in Oregon because of the unrelated alignment of factors in the same time and place. The Constitution allows discretion to states to control their elections more than in other countries. Oregon’s political culture experimented for 150 years with voting reforms. Oregon’s residents enacted other successful recent reforms. The reform might not be approved in a state with more traditional politics. There was evidence from the 1981 experiment of the reform’s success and safety. There was a coalition of election reformers, non-governmental organizations, and Democratic politicians that worked together to put the reform referendum on the ballot. This coalition provided the crucial support to get the reform on the ballot in 1998, and promote it with voters. Oregon was facing decreasing turnout, increasing elections costs, and an increase of negative political advertising which gave further impetus for the reform. The combination of these factors facilitated the reform’s enactment because it was attempted at the right time and place. These factors outweighed the hindrances to the reform: fear of fraud, fear of undue influence, fear of losing polling place camaraderie, and Republican resistance.

The evidence is supportive of the demobilization theory. I find that Republicans are against this electoral reform designed to expand the electorate. Why do Republicans resist a cheaper, more efficient voting system? The demobilization theory suggests that politicians will resist any expansion of the electorate if it will increase the number of voters for the opposition. Although there were individual Republican supporters of the reform, as a whole Republicans were resistant to this change. If a Republican politician's district uses a new electoral system that increases turnout, then they would have to convince new voters to vote for them. The new voters enabled by this system were predicted to be from marginalized populations that more often vote Democratic (Vetter 1996).

I asked Bill Bradbury whether any political party (Democratic, Republican, or a third party etc.) benefits more from voting by mail? He said "no political party benefits more from Vote-by-Mail, since voting by mail makes voting more convenient and accessible for *all* voters." As support for his opinion he cited a 1998 University of Michigan study that found that there was no direct impact of voting by mail on the mobilization or retention of Democratic voters more than Republicans, or vice versa, in the political process.

The political beliefs of Oregonians were determined by the Gallup organization in two polls conducted in 1993 and 2002 released on January 7, 2003 and entitled "Special Report: State-by-State Analysis Reveals Republican Shift" by Jeffrey M. Jones,

Gallup Poll Managing Editor.¹ In both of these polls, Oregon's beliefs were about equally split with the Democrats having a slight advantage. In 1993 and 2003 43.1% of Oregonians were either Republicans or independents that leaned Republican. In 1993 46.1% and in 2002 48.4% were Democrats or Independents who leaned Democratic. Thus, the reform does not seem at first glance to benefit either party because the state's voting age population is essentially split down the middle. The registration for both parties rose about 100,000 in the period of the reform, so one party was not gaining on the other (Blue Book 2003). But, I show below that the voters who have increased turnout after the reform come from groups that traditionally vote Democratic, as was predicted before the reform.

If new voters are from disproportionately marginalized populations, it would be difficult to convince them to vote Republican. Socioeconomic status strongly affects vote choice, and these groups more often vote Democratic (Miller and Shanks 1995). Denardo (1980) finds that increased turnout helps Republicans, but Citrin et al (2001) update his findings and show that his results were only true in the Democratic "solid south" before 1968. In a modern context, they find that increased turnout helps the Democratic Party (Citrin et al 2001). Thus, it is likely that the groups predicted to vote

¹ Gallup says their methodology is that the "(r)esults for 2002 are based on telephone interviews with 44,889 national adults from randomly selected national samples of adults, aged 18 and older, conducted in 2002. Results for 1993 are based on telephone interviews with 27,319 national adults from randomly selected national samples of adults, aged 18 and older, conducted in 1993. For results based on an individual state, the maximum error attributable to sampling and other random effects varies, from a low of plus or minus 2 percentage points in California to a high of plus or minus 13 percentage points in Washington, D.C. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls."

more under this system (poor, racial minorities, marginalized populations) will vote Democratic.

The reform has the potential to threaten Republican politicians, by enabling new marginalized voters. Republicans not aware of these factors would be advised to be against the reform by their party. There are of course Republican politicians that are not interested in reelection, and are mostly concerned with the public good. They might evaluate voting by mail by its merits, and vote accordingly. These ideologues need to be reelected, however, if they are going to remain in power. Mayhew and others have pointed to this dilemma among national legislators, and it also exists at the state level (Mayhew 1974, Fiorina 1989, Jacobson 2001). Politicians need to be concerned with reelection even if they want to focus on loftier topics. Thus, Republicans in Oregon tended to be against the reform.

Ch 3:Voter Turnout in Oregon

The goals of the reform are listed in the pamphlet Oregon Office Of Elections Vote-by-Mail Frequently Asked Questions. These goals include “increasing voter participation, removing barriers that can keep people from getting to the polls, allowing more time for people to study issues and candidates before marking the ballot, having built-in safeguards that increase the integrity of the elections process, and saving taxpayer dollars” (Bradbury p.1). In this chapter, I test the first goal listed—increasing voter participation. I examine the reform’s impact on voter turnout in multiple ways to determine its efficacy. I analyze socioeconomic factors, national and regional voting trends, and other states’ voter turnout rates. I examine pre and post election results from before and after the reform to determine if turnout increased. Participation increases in both the 2000 and 2002 elections. Oregon's turnout is up by 8.5 and 10.1 percent of registered voters when compared to previous rates in similar elections.

Oregon’s Turnout

Bill Bradbury told me that voting by mail increases turnout. He said, “Evidence shows voting by mail increases turnout. The advantages of voting by mail become clear when you look at turnout. When Oregon launched its first all-mail primary election in 2000, there was 16 percent more votes cast than had been cast in any primary conducted entirely at polling stations. Last fall, nearly 80 percent of registered voters participated in Oregon's first all voting by mail presidential election”

He also finds that voting by mail dramatically increases turnout in national elections during the off-Presidential years when voters' interest tends to drop. In 1998, turnout in Oregon was roughly 9 percentage points higher than the national average. He examined voting statistics for 2002, and said that voting by mail has once again improved turnout in Oregon.

2002 primary election:

- 46 percent of Oregonians who were eligible to vote actually voted in the May 21, 2002 primary election. Comparing that figure to the last non-presidential primary held four years ago, we see that 34.93% of Oregonians participated in the 1998 primary. Thus, the percentage of Oregonians who turned out in the 2002 primary was 33 percent higher than the percentage of Oregonians who participated in the 1998 primary election.
- Further, Oregon's 46 percent turnout in the 2002 primary was higher than turnout in many other states' primaries this year; California had 35 percent turnout, Ohio had a 19 percent turnout and Nebraska had a 17 percent turnout.

2002 general election:

- 69.1 percent of eligible Oregon voters actually voted in the 2002 general election, held on November 5. In 1998, only 58.92 percent of eligible voters participated. Again, when we compare the two figures, we see that the percentage of Oregonians who voted in the 2002 general election was 17 percent higher than the percentage that turned out in the 1998 general election.

The voting rates in Oregon have fluctuated in the last twenty years. Table 1 shows that turnout rises slowly until 1992, and then decreases until 2000, when it rose again. It is interesting that the mid-term and presidential elections follow the same trends. It is important to separate mid-term from presidential elections when studying turnout (Citrin et al 2001). The turnout for mid-term elections is lower than for presidential elections. Also, Oregon's turnout is usually about 10 points higher than the national average in any election. Percentage of registered voters is the measure of turnout. Tables 1 and 2 show an increase in voting in the 2000 election, and a greater increase in 2002. Campaign spending is relatively the same throughout these years: 19 million in 2002, and 18 million in 1998, and thus is not the cause of increased turnout (Institute 2004).

To combine both mid-term elections and presidential elections, I develop a new measure that easily tracks changes in turnout. Voter turnout in presidential elections is usually 20 points higher than in mid-term elections. To compare changes in voter turnout between mid-term and presidential elections, I examine the rate of increase from the

previous similar election. To test the 2000 voting level, I review the percent change from the last presidential election in 1996, and for the 2002 voting level, the percent change from the last mid-term election in 1998. By examining the changes between elections, I can make a comparable dataset of both mid-term and presidential voting changes. Thus, Table 2 shows a list of recent changes in turnout. In 2000, turnout increased by 8.5 percent from 1996 and in 2002 it increased 10.1 percent from 1998. Before the reform, Oregon was in a period of voting rate decline. After the reform, the voting rate rises consistently, suggesting that the reform accomplishes its goal of raising turnout.

Table 1

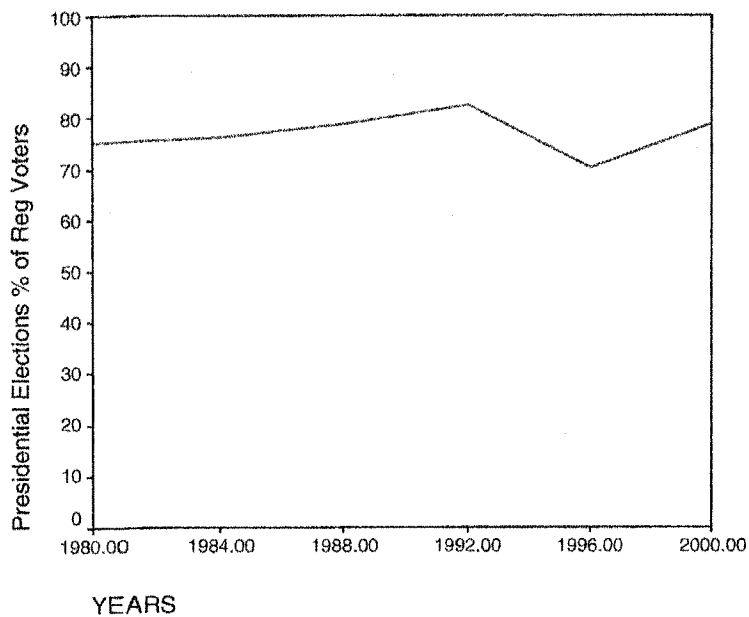


Table 1 Cont.

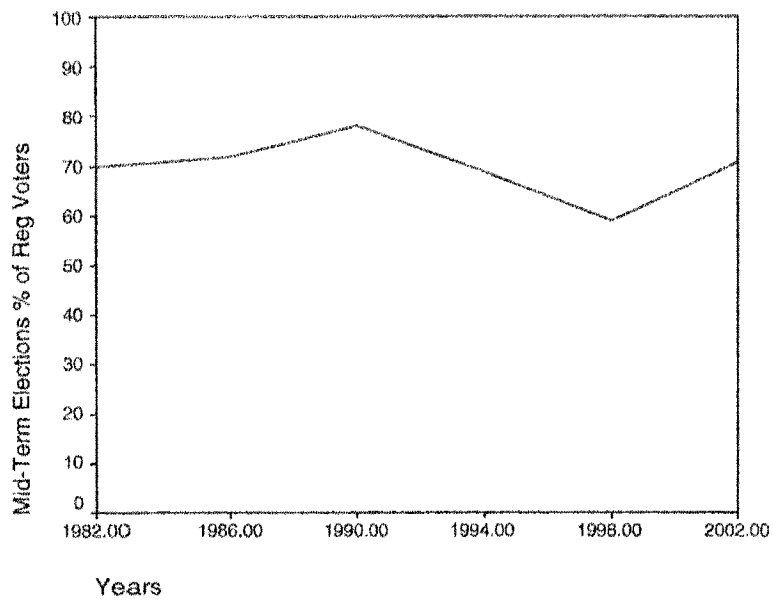
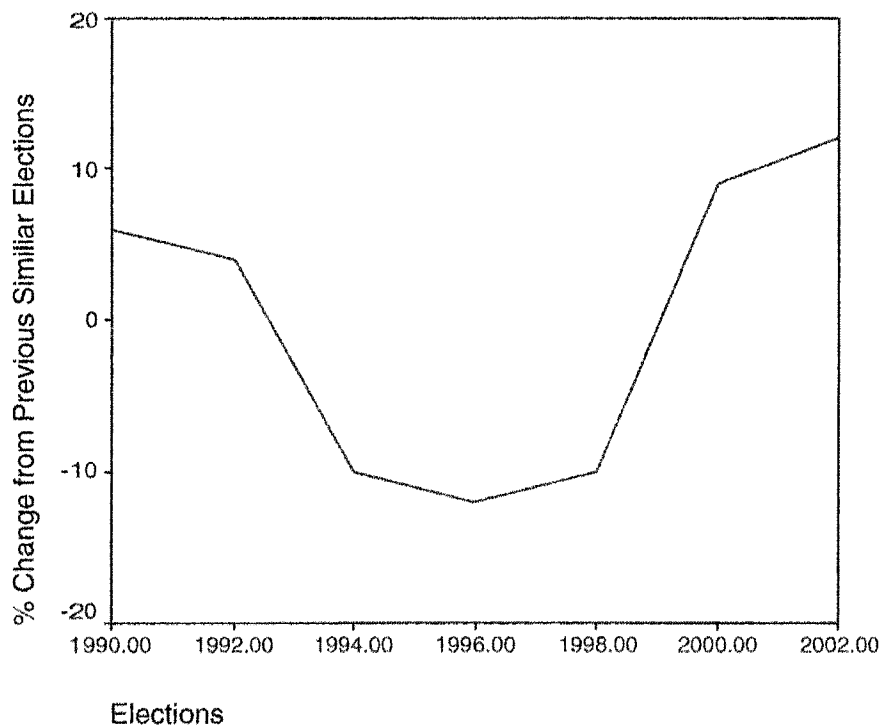


Table 2



Oregon County Turnout

Oregon has many large counties where the population is dispersed over a large area characterized by mountainous terrain. One of the chief concerns of the reformers was facilitating voting for people who come from these rural counties. Bill Bradbury says, "There are some features of voting by mail that make it more convenient for many voters who might have faced challenges in voting at polling places. For Oregonians living in rural communities where they have to travel long distances to get to their local polling place, voting by mail is more convenient since they receive their ballots in the mail and have to travel only as far as their mailbox to vote." Less densely populated counties should show a greater increase in turnout. Table 3 shows the turnout of registered voters at the county level for recent elections in Oregon. At the bottom is an average of rural and urban counties. There is no significant difference in voting levels between urban and rural counties before the reform, and the same holds true after it was enacted. The statewide voting rate for 2000 was 79.8 percent, while for urban counties it was 80.1 percent and for rural counties it was 78.7 percent. Voting by mail, thus, does not affect rural voters more than on urban ones.

In Table 4, I compare the increase measure described above for 2000 and 2002 with the population density of counties from the 2000 census. When compared to all counties, the large counties tend to show a middle level increase. For example, the densest county, Multnomah, had an increase of 10.5 percent in 2000 and 12.3 percent in 2002. Both rates are similar to the state average of 8.5 in 2000 percent and 10.1 percent in 2002. The outliers tend to change from election to election. Morrow County, for

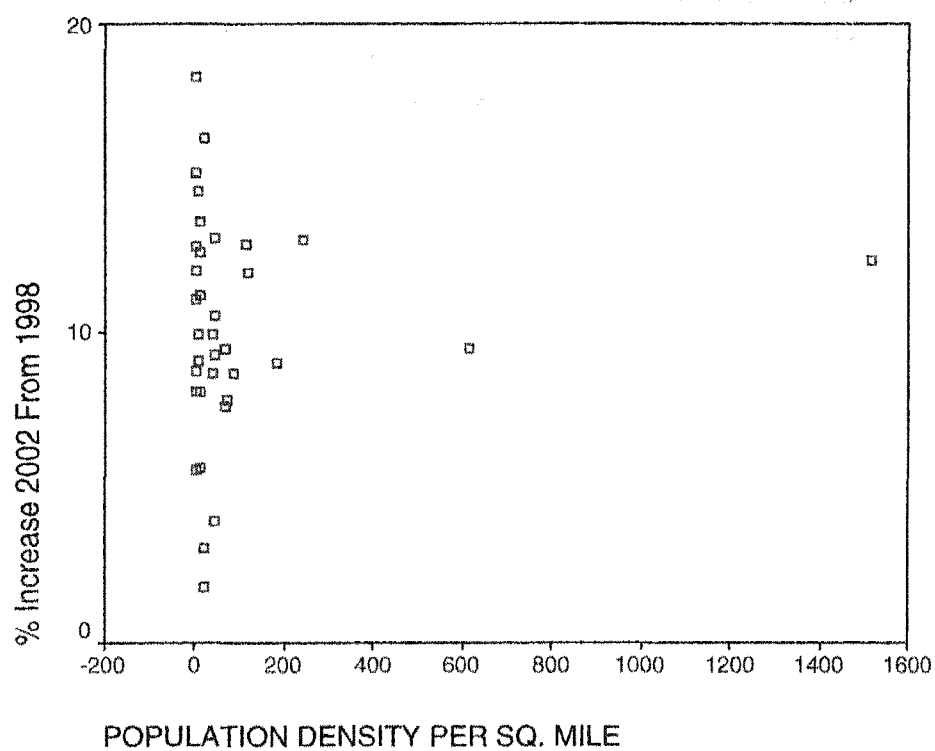
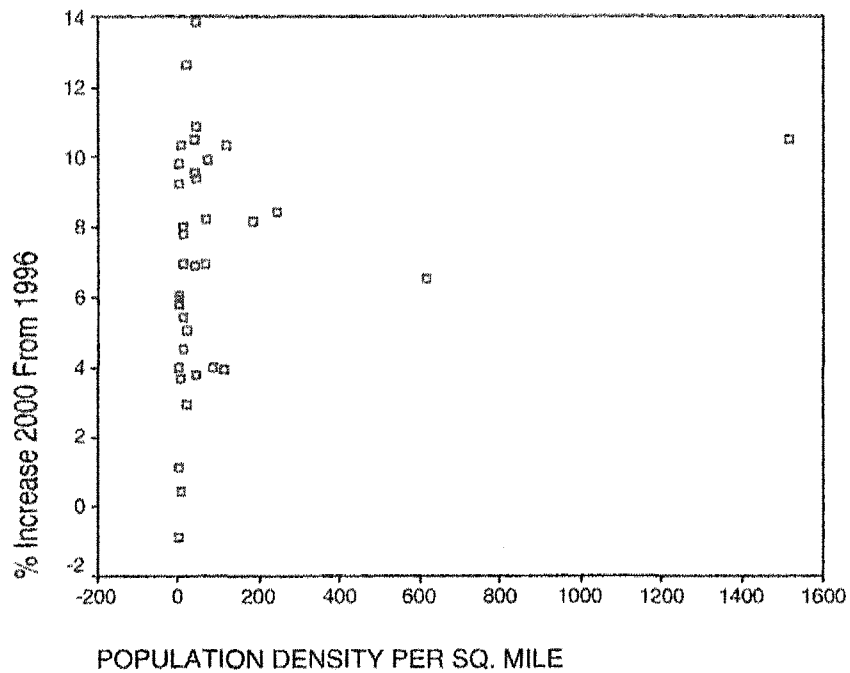
example, increases 0.45 percent in 2000, but 9.07 percent in 2002. Thus, there is no discernable difference in effect on rural and urban counties. The reform failed to achieve this goal. It would be incorrect to assume that these aggregate turnout rates can be attributed to the voting decision of individuals in these counties, based on the ecological fallacy.

Table 3 Percent of registered voters who participated in Oregon's elections

County	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
Baker	76.6%	83.1%	71.4%	77.4%	64.4%	81.1%
Benton	81.9%	83.8%	69.8%	80.1%	63.6%	84.0%
Clackamas	77.6%	85.4%	70.4%	71.8%	59.9%	80.0%
Clatsop	75.1%	88.2%	69.9%	70.5%	61.3%	79.9%
Columbia	80.1%	86.9%	70.3%	72.3%	64.9%	81.1%
Coos	75.1%	82.3%	69.6%	69.5%	63.1%	79.1%
Crook	75.2%	86.4%	70.4%	70.9%	55.7%	81.3%
Curry	71.6%	81.8%	68.2%	74.4%	66.6%	78.9%
Deschutes	73.4%	84.7%	68.4%	70.5%	60.9%	81.0%
Douglas	71.3%	82.7%	69.6%	70.5%	60.5%	75.5%
Gilliam	81.8%	86.8%	78.6%	79.9%	62.4%	85.9%
Grant	72.9%	82.9%	71.3%	78.1%	65.8%	87.3%
Harney	75.9%	85.6%	71.9%	80.6%	65.7%	86.4%
Hood River	73.0%	85.9%	72.1%	73.1%	57.8%	80.0%
Jackson	74.3%	84.9%	69.6%	70.5%	57.7%	77.5%
Jefferson	76.4%	84.4%	68.9%	70.3%	57.3%	78.1%
Josephine	73.6%	86.1%	67.5%	72.2%	58.4%	76.0%
Klamath	69.9%	80.1%	66.4%	70.7%	52.2%	76.2%
Lake	73.3%	82.1%	69.4%	75.0%	66.1%	79.0%
Lane	77.8%	84.9%	66.9%	72.0%	62.0%	81.9%
Lincoln	76.4%	85.2%	68.4%	71.5%	63.0%	82.4%
Linn	78.8%	84.4%	68.2%	68.0%	58.2%	81.8%
Malheur	66.0%	82.7%	66.0%	70.7%	52.8%	80.6%
Marion	78.2%	84.2%	68.9%	72.8%	60.5%	81.3%
Morrow	67.6%	78.1%	65.5%	73.1%	55.3%	73.6%
Multnomah	77.0%	83.3%	65.7%	67.6%	55.1%	78.2%
Polk	75.6%	81.9%	72.6%	74.4%	62.0%	78.4%
Sherman	84.8%	87.2%	74.0%	79.7%	65.7%	85.7%
Tillamook	81.1%	86.8%	76.6%	77.1%	69.9%	80.0%
Umatilla	70.6%	81.8%	67.4%	67.0%	46.6%	79.6%
Union	73.4%	82.6%	68.2%	74.8%	61.6%	81.7%
Wallowa	76.5%	87.5%	77.3%	86.8%	66.5%	85.9%
Wasco	78.3%	85.3%	72.5%	72.1%	63.4%	80.1%
Washington	80.2%	86.6%	68.9%	74.0%	58.3%	80.5%
Wheeler	78.5%	89.5%	76.8%	82.5%	70.9%	83.6%
Yamhill	78.1%	86.6%	73.4%	72.6%	62.8%	82.9%
STATEWIDE	76.7%	84.4%	68.4%	71.3%	59.0%	79.8%
URBAN	77.7%	84.6%	68.2%	71.2%	58.9%	80.1%
RURAL	73.4%	83.7%	69.2%	71.8%	59.4%	78.7%

Source Oregon Blue Book 2003

Table 4



Other Factors Influencing Turnout

If voting rates have increased, how do we know it is an effect of the reform? There could be changes in other factors that are increasing turnout. Social and economic demographics are often cited as determinants of turnout (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, Teixeira 1992, and Miller and Shanks 1995). In this literature there is an emphasis on race, education, and economic levels as predictors of participation. I test seven independent variables that are strongly correlated with voter turnout in various studies (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, Teixeira 1992, and Miller and Shanks 1995). The independent variables are all measured by using the Oregon Population Survey. Education (variable named Bachelor) is measured as a percent of Oregon adults (25 years and older) who have completed a baccalaureate degree or more. Income is measured as per capita personal income as a percentage of the U.S. per capita income. I find that poverty levels are similar to income levels, and, thus, I omit them to avoid colinearity. Race (White) is measured as a percent of Oregonians who consider themselves Non-Hispanic white. Age is measured in two ways: as a percentage of Oregonians 25 and younger (Young25) and as 65 and older (Over65). The young and the elderly have the greatest differences in voting rates from the average and an increase in either population might affect turnout rates (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, Teixeira 1992, and Miller and Shanks 1995). I mark voting by mail (VBM) as a dichotomous variable with zero being years before the reform, and one thereafter. The data for this model is from 1990 through 2002. Percent change in voting rates is the dependent variable. I enter the variables into an OLS model.

The model uses an OLS regression because the Gauss-Markov Theorem shows this method is the Best Linear Unbiased Estimator (BLUE) of the effects of independent variables on a dependent variable. There are, however, seven classical assumptions that must exist in the model to use OLS as BLUE. If these assumptions are not met, then statistical transformations must be done to “correct” the data. The seven classical assumptions of OLS models are:

1. The Regression model is linear in the coefficients, is correctly specified, and has an additive error term.
2. The error term has a zero population mean.
3. All explanatory variables are uncorrelated with the error term.
4. Observations of the error term are uncorrelated with each other (no serial correlation).
5. The error term has constant variance (no heteroskedasticity).
6. No explanatory variable is a perfect linear function of any other explanatory variable(s) (no perfect multicollinearity).
7. The error term is normally distributed. (This assumption is optional but desirable.)²

The model needs to fulfill these requirements to go forward with the OLS regression analysis. After examining each variable’s scatter plot with the Vote Change variable, I find that the correct form is Linear. The error term has a zero mean and is uncorrelated with the other variables in the model. There is no serial correlation, and the error term has no discernable pattern. There is no perfect multicollinearity. All of the classical assumptions have been met.

Table 5 shows that three variables are statistically significant: Voting By Mail, Over 65, and Income. The White, Under25 and Bachelor variables—which measure

² This passage is quoted from p. 85 of Studenmund, A.H. *Using Econometrics* Boston, MA. Addison Wesley Longman Co. 2001 4th Edition. This book is the guide for most of the statistical methodology in this dissertation.

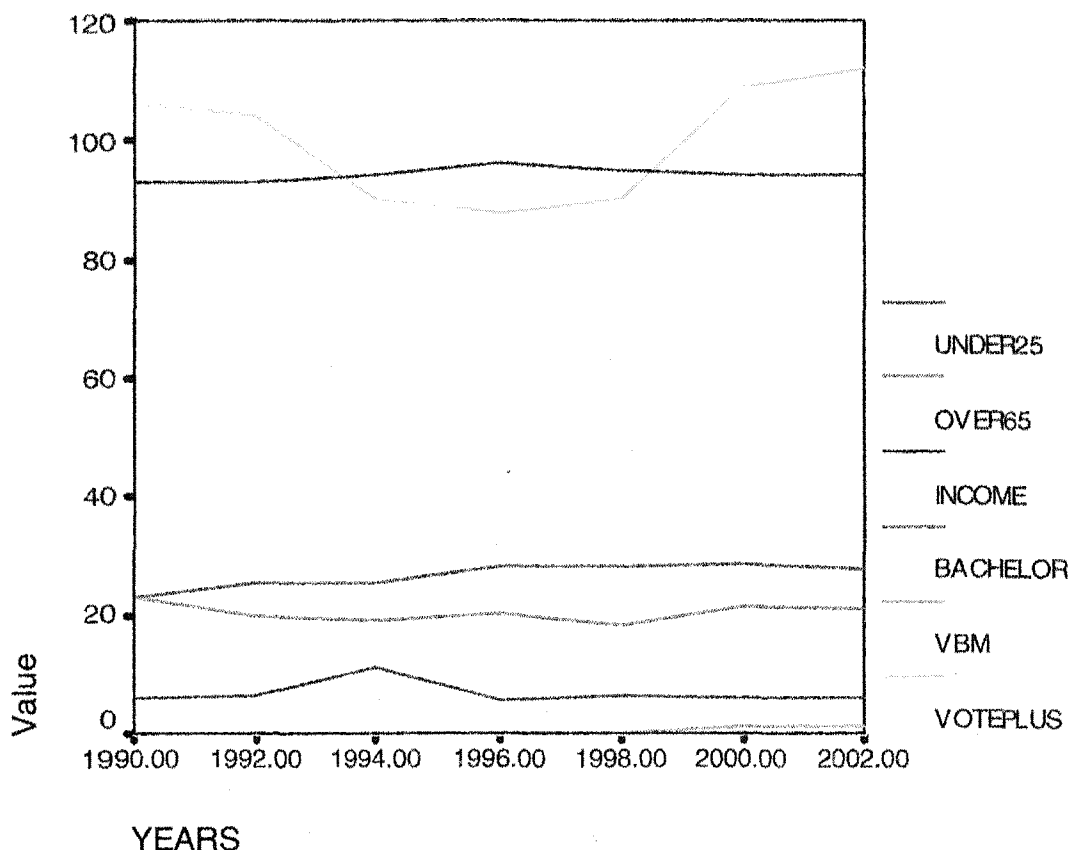
race, youth, and education—are not significant and did not affect voter turnout in Oregon. After the reform was introduced, turnout increased, and the VBM variable shows a strong positive effect on turnout of 0.715. But the other two significant variables might be the real cause of the turnout increase. Table 6 shows no changes in Over65 and Income during 2000 and 2002 elections. These variables have an impact on voter turnout, but they did not change in the period of the reform. Hence, they are not the cause of the change in voter turnout in those years. The main determinants of voting rates—Age, Education, Race, and the Economy—have not changed or are not affecting turnout in Oregon. Thus, voting by mail is likely the cause of the increases in the 2000 and 2002 elections.

Table 5: Correlations

		VOTECHAN
Pearson Correlation	VOTECHAN	1.000
	VBM	.715*
	YEARS	.212
	WHITE	-.305
	UNDER25	-.426
	OVER65	.691*
	INCOME	-.672*
	BACHELOR	-.085
Sig. (1-tailed)	VOTECHAN	.
	VBM	.036
	YEARS	.324
	WHITE	.253
	UNDER25	.171
	OVER65	.043
	INCOME	.049
	BACHELOR	.428
N	VOTECHAN	7
	VBM	7
	YEARS	7
	WHITE	7
	UNDER25	7
	OVER65	7
	INCOME	7
	BACHELOR	7

* Significant at the $p > .05$ level.

Table 6



The variables that are not significant are counter-intuitive, and their failure to affect Oregon's turnout is interesting. Education and income levels are usually closely related. Why then is only income significant? Perhaps educational levels do not affect Oregon's voting rates because many educated people are not eligible to vote. For example, if the University of Oregon has many thousands of graduates who are not planning on becoming long-term residents of Eugene, they might not feel inclined, or be ineligible to vote. The other two variables—Under 25 and White—might not affect Oregon's voting turnout because they are fairly even every year. The significance measure would show no relationship between Oregon's voter turnout, which changes,

and these variables, which do not. If they ever do change, then it is possible that turnout would also change.

Another question to examine is how well this model explains what is happening to voting in Oregon. The model may or may not adequately explain the change in turnout. The way that this is tested is through the creation of a model summary. A model summary measures whether the model, or the amalgamation of all the independent variables, is a “good fit.” Goodness of fit is determined by regression analysis and significance on the model as a whole. This is similar to the correlation of each independent variable. The results of the model summary are that this model has an r^2 score of 0.819, which is high (see Table 7). But for multiple variables, r^2 tends to be optimistic so the Adjusted r^2 is 0.523. The model is significant with a $p <$ of 0.044. Thus, the model explains half of the change in voter turnout, but some change is either random or explained by variables other than those tested.

Table 7. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.905	.819	.523	2.57258		.819	2.768	.044

The Adjusted r^2 is lower than the r^2 so we need to explain why this is happening. The best test to understand what a model is not measuring is the ANOVA Model Test. The ANOVA Model Test shows what in the dependent variable does the model not

affect. Two items are important in this test: the Regression Sum of Squares, and the Residual Sum of Squares. The Regression Sum of Squares measures how much the model affects the variable. "The output for regression displays information about the variation accounted for by your model. The output for residual displays information about the variation that is not accounted for by your model. A model with a large regression sum of squares in comparison to the residual sum of squares indicates that the model accounts for most of variation in the dependent variable." (SPSS) In this case the regression sum of squares is 329.7 and the residual sum of squares is 72.8, which is large enough in comparison to indicate that the model accounts for most of the variation in the dependent variable (see Table 8).

Table 8. ANOVA Test.

Model		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	329.734	18.319	2.768	.044
	Residual	72.800	6.618		
	Total	402.534			

Since the model is significant and explains a high percentage of what is happening to the dependent variable, the correlations and significance of the independent variables are trustworthy. No other occurrence in Oregon except voting by mail is responsible for the rise in turnout.

Comparison with National and Regional Turnout

Oregon's voting rates increase from 71.3 percent of the registered voters in 1996 to 79.8 percent of the registered voters in the 2000 elections, and there are no changes to

typical socio-economic determinants of voting rates. Yet this does not confirm that the increase in turnout was the result of the reform. Another consideration is spurious relationships from sources that do not originate in Oregon. Not represented in the OLS regression of socio-economic data are national trends in voting rates that may change voting behavior in Oregon. For example, the closeness of the election can increase turnout. If a third party is stronger than normal it might affect voting rates, and thus affect Oregon's voting. A particular presidential candidate might have charisma or be aligned with a social movement that can motivate voters (Lacy and Burden 1999). To control for these factors, I analyze the national voting trends from 1980 to 1996 to see how closely Oregon fits in with these national trends. Then, I analyze the 2000 election results to see if they differ significantly from the past results.

Regional voting trends may also affect Oregon's voter levels. To measure the potential regional impact, I compare Oregon with its contiguous border states of Washington and Idaho from 1980 to 1996. By compositing each of these states into one score, I reduce individual variance of a particular state. I compare the correlation between the rates of voting in these states with the same states in the 2000 election. I enter the variables into a regression equation. I use percentage of registered voters who voted as the dependent variable. This test determines if anything was happening in the Northwest that also affected Oregon's voter turnout. The data is from the United States census and extrapolated in a pre and post manner from 1980 until now.

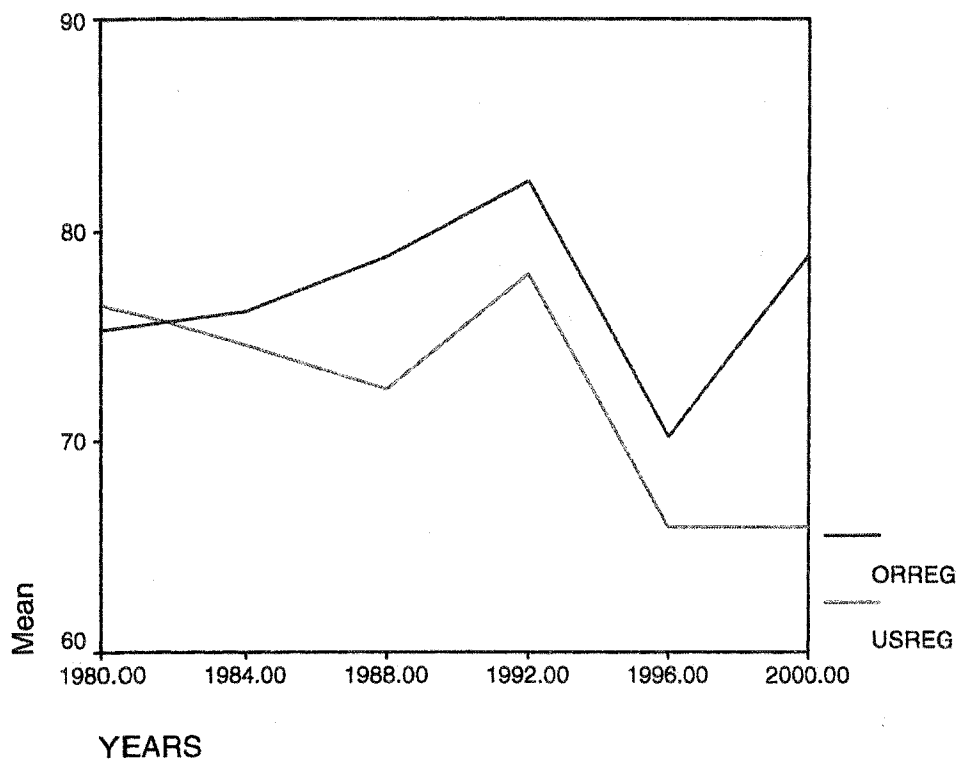
The nation did not change its voting rate from 1996 to 2000. Yet Oregon's voting rate--which generally follows the national trend--rose 8.5 percentage points. A regression analysis compares the correlation between the United States and Oregon previous to the change from 1980 to 1996. In that period the Pearson r correlation score for United States' voting and Oregon's voting was 0.80, with a significance of $p= 0.05$ (see Table 9). Until the reform, Oregon and the United States had a similar pattern of voting rates (Table 10). The rise in Oregon's turnout must be due to the reform if Oregon's voting rates are similar to national trends before the reform and significantly different after it.

Comparing the national trends to Oregon's tests if particular issues and candidates might affect turnout after the reform. The 1992 election had high turnout in Oregon due to the closeness of the Presidential election, the Gulf War, interest in Third Party candidate Ross Perot, and several other issues and reasons (Lacy and Burden 1992). By analyzing Oregon data only, it appears that turnout in 1992 is similar in turnout to 2000. But by examining national trends, it shows that America voted more in 1992, and Oregon was a part of that movement. The change in 2000 is thus not caused by national trends but an occurrence in Oregon, or in the Northwest region.

Table 9. Correlations Oregon and United States Voting 1980-1996.

		ORREG	USREG
Pearson Correlation	ORREG	1.000	.800
	USREG	.800	1.000
Sig. (1- tailed)	ORREG	.	.05
	USREG	.05	.
N	ORREG	5	5
	USREG	5	5

Table 10. United States and Oregon Voting Percentages 1980-2000



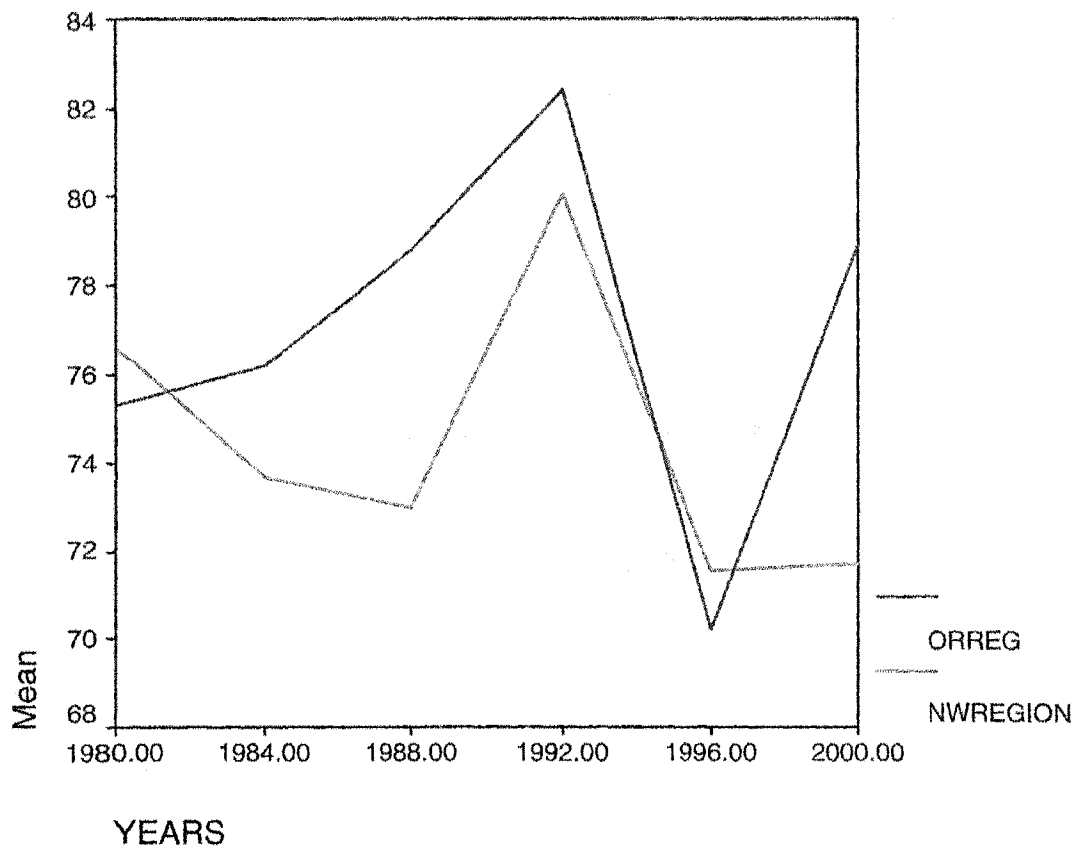
Perhaps it is regional changes that influence Oregon's rise in turnout from 1996 to 2000. To test this possibility, I define the region as Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. These states share the most cultural commonality with Oregon and are typically defined as Northwest. California and Nevada also share contiguous borders with Oregon, but their population centers are far from Oregon. Indeed, those states are typically defined as Southwest. Thus defined, the results for the Northwest region are similar to that of the analysis of United States voting (see Table 12). The regional voting levels did not change from 1996 and 2000, yet Oregon featured a 8.5 percentage point increase in the

same time period. A regression analysis shows whether there was a similar pattern in voting in this region. From 1980 to 1996, the Pearson r correlation score for the Northwest region's voting and Oregon's voting is .85, with a significance of $p=0.034$ (see Table 11). Oregon and the Northwest region have a very similar pattern of voting until the reform. The combined result of the tests of national and regional trends strongly suggests that an explanation of Oregon's change in voting participation must be found in changes in Oregon. Results indicated no similar outside change in that same time period.

Table 11. Correlations Oregon and Northwest Region Voting 1980-1996.

		ORREG	NWREGION
Pearson Correlation	ORREG	1.000	.850
	NWREGION	.850	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	ORREG	.	.034
	NWREGION	.034	.
N	ORREG	5	5
	NWREGION	5	5

Table 12. Oregon and Northwest regional Voting Percentages 1980-2000.



Comparison with Changes in Other State's Turnout

Turnout change in other states could parallel the increase in turnout observed in Oregon, but not be found for the United States or surrounding states. A scatterplot with all fifty states' voter turnout for two consecutive elections is an interesting test of the relationship between state turnout rates.³ The regression line will strongly slope positive. If the state studied is above or below that regression line then it is atypical for changes in state voting behavior. If it is on or near the line, then its changes in turnout are typical for that election.

³ I learned this technique from Charles Stewart and Steve Ansolabehere. I am grateful for their help.

Table 14 shows Oregon's turnout with all other states' turnout in 1996 and 2000. Of all fifty states, Oregon deviates most from the regression line, indicating that its turnout change is the most unusual in the country. There are other electoral reforms in America today, including same day registration and early voting. The test shows that voting by mail is the most successful reform in increasing turnout. Moreover, even with all the registration and socioeconomic changes that are happening in the country, no state's voting rates changed as dramatically as Oregon, which had few changes in socioeconomic factors. This data suggests that voting by mail is the most successful voting reform in the country so far, and that it is also responsible for the largest change in voting for any one state.

Some reports dispute this conclusion. Table 14 shows that Oregon lies much closer to the regression line when VAP is used. Oregon was hotly contested in 2000 and the site of get-out-the-vote efforts. A recent report claimed that Oregon had a lower than expected turnout increase in 2000 since its turnout increase was less than other "battleground states" (Gans). The battleground states listed in this report are "Wisconsin (up 8.7 percentage points), followed by Pennsylvania (4.7), Minnesota (4.5), Nevada (4.5) and New Hampshire (4.4)", while Oregon is only at 3.1 (Gans). Thus, the article concludes: "In the 2000 general election, Oregon, a Battleground state, had a turnout increase of 3.1 percentage points from 1996, greater than the national average of 2.2 percentage points. But that turnout increase was lower than the 3.4 percentage point increase for Battleground states." (Gans). It further states that "The turnout for the

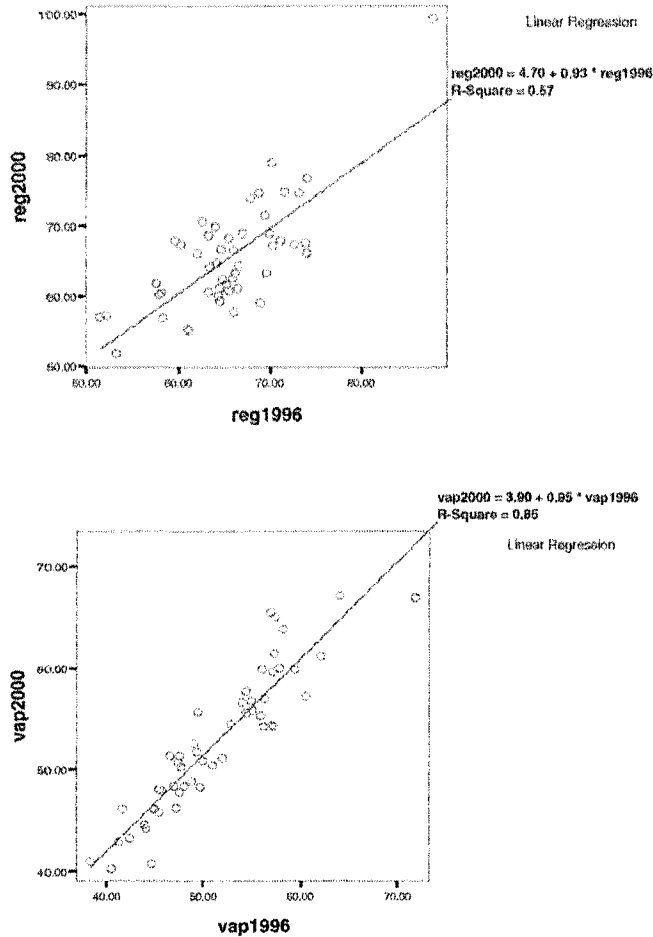
general election was the third lowest for a presidential general election in Oregon's history. And there were 18 states in the nation which had greater turnout increases than Oregon, none of which had adopted all-mail voting."(Gans).

This report uses VAP data for its analysis. VAP includes registration and population changes that are unrelated to the impact of the reform, and therefore, it is not as precise as percentage of registered voters. When examining percent of registered voters in Oregon, there is an 8.5 percent increase in 2000 and a 10.1 percent increase in 2002. Oregon's reported turnout ranking with other states is only accurate if VAP data is used. If you perform that same test using percentage of registered voters as the measure, then Oregon's 8.5 percent increase is the highest in the country, and is significantly larger than the 3.1 percent average increase in other battleground states (note that Pennsylvania's turnout actually decreases).

Table 13 2000 Turnout Change

2000 Election Battleground States	% Reg	% V.A.P
Minnesota	3.18	3.03
Nevada	8.09	2.67
New Hampshire	.34	4.14
Oregon	8.5	3.1
Pennsylvania	-3.07	3.50
Wisconsin	N/A	7.65

Table 14



Source: Dave Lieb's Presidential Atlas

Why is there a striking difference in turnout rates when using percentage of registered voters instead of VAP in these elections? Table 15 shows that VAP increased by 120,000 from 1996 and 2000, but registered voters decreased by 20,000. Turnout in 2000 was 1,533,968. The additional one hundred thousand unregistered non-voters in 2000 makes Oregon's VAP turnout increase appear less than the percentage of registered voters. The effectiveness of voting by mail should not be judged by changes in registration, which are outside the domain of the reform. As stated above, for this reason

percentage of registered voters is a more precise and accurate measure of determining the effectiveness of this reform.

Table 15

Oregon	VAP	REG	% REG of VAP	TURNOUT*	% T/O of VAP
1996	2,411,000	1,962,155	81.38%	1,377,760	57.14%

2000	2,530,000	1,943,699	76.8	1,533,968	60.6
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Source: The Federal Election Commission website accessed on June 6, 2003.

<http://www.fec.gov/pages/2000turnout/reg&to00.htm>

Changes after the Reform in Turnout

If the reform becomes more ingrained in the culture will it have a greater effect? One hypothesis is that the passage of time will increase trust in the new process, and voting, by the average person. Thus, turnout should continue to increase (or not decline) long after the reform was enacted. Another hypothesis is that people will desire to try a novel new reform, but thereafter turnout will not increase. If the “slow change” theory is true, then the relative turnout increase in 2002 should continue to rise. If the “novelty” theory is true, then the relative increase levels should fall in 2002. Since the reform was adopted in the 1998 referendum, there has been a substantial increase in voter turnout. The percent change for Oregon from 1996 to 2000 was 8.5 percentage points, and from 1998 to 2002 was 10.1 percentage points. It seems the reform affected 2 percent more Oregonians after two years of using the new system.

Presidential voting was up to 80 percent in 2000. If voting levels continue to grow at the rate of 2 percent every two years, voting levels could reach the 90th percentile in Oregon by the year 2010. Another possibility is that there is more room for an increase in mid-term election. If mid-term elections typically draw fewer people, perhaps the convenience of the reform may provide motivation for a less interested public. The data will be available to test this theory in the future. The research supports the “slow-change” hypothesis, but more evidence is needed.

Conclusion

The reform increases turnout in a state where voting is typically higher than other states. Other causes of turnout change did not impact voting rates. Although Oregon usually follows regional and national trends in voting, after the reform, there was a marked turnout increase only in Oregon. Oregon’s region did not have an increase in voting rates. In fact, Oregon’s increase was the most atypical of any state in 2000. Oregon’s status as a battleground state and the consequent mobilization efforts of parties was not responsible for the change since Oregon’s increase is far greater than other battleground states. The reform is the most likely source of the increase. If these findings are true, voting by mail is a reform that should be recommended elsewhere.

Voting rates increased, but did turnout increase more for some groups than for others. The second goal of this reform is stated as “removing barriers that can keep people from getting to the polls” (Elections Office p.1). If structural complications are lowering turnout, then the greatest increase in voting should occur among those who

confront the most barriers. The next chapter will determine if there are particular groups for whom voting increases at a higher rate than other groups. The assumption is that voting rates will increase more among people with more difficult lives, because of the convenience of voting by mail.

CH.4: Political Participation, Demography, and Oregon's Mail-in Ballot Reform

One central concern of Oregon's mail-in ballot reformers was making voting more accessible for the average citizen. The reformers also wanted to facilitate voting by marginalized groups. Recent scholarship shows that other voting reforms of convenience—e.g. early voting (Neeley, Richardson, and Lilliard 2001; Stein, 1998)—do not engender higher participation from marginalized groups. The central research question, then, is: if voting is made easier for poor and marginalized groups, will they vote more? This reform should make voting easier; therefore, those who have difficulty in getting to the polls should turn out at higher rates. If voting increases for these marginalized groups at higher rates than for the majority, then voting by mail succeeds in this goal. I find that these groups vote more after the reform. Once voting is simplified—and the structural barriers removed—these groups vote at higher rates. The research suggests that implementing similar reforms would be successful. I examine marginalized groups with lower voting rates, or groups where there is a reason why voting by mail would be helpful.

I examine the following common determinants of voting. I obtain racial, social, and economic demographic data from the Oregon Population Survey. Race is a primary factor in whether someone votes or not (Piven and Cloward p.43). Economic level also is correlated with whether someone votes (Piven and Cloward p.42). Education level is a determinant of turnout (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). The elderly vote more and the young less than other age groups (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Men vote less than

women, and voting by mail might facilitate their voting. I examine commuting time because those workers who commute long distances might not have time to vote on a Tuesday. Home ownership should provide an incentive to vote, and those who do not own homes might vote more after the reform.

I compare voting data with the corresponding Oregon Population Survey demographic data. I only analyze registered voters to eliminate confusion resulting from registration levels. If the reform disproportionately affects certain groups, this suggests that structural barriers are discouraging voting from that group. Due to changes in turnout in every election, a direct comparison of 1996 and 2000 turnout is not illuminating. A superior method is to compare the mean difference in turnout between majority and minority groups and see if it changes after the reform, using the independent samples T test (the full independent samples T test results are in the appendix). The independent samples T test is the most precise measure for comparing means (Studemund 2001). For example, if group A is the majority and group B votes at a five percentage points lower rate before the reform and at an equal rate after the reform, then the reform benefits group B's voting rate by five percentage points. The mean difference before and after the reform for each minority group is summarized in Table 15 with significantly ($p > .05$) different means marked with an asterisk.

Table 15 **Relative Change Between Minority and Majority Groups in**

Demographic	1996	2000	Change
Over65	14.9*	28.8*	13.9
Under25	-34.8*	-42.5*	-7.7
Poverty	-20.1*	-14.6	5.5
Unemployment	6.7*	20.9*	14.2
Bachelor	-15.6*	-19.4*	-3.8
Homeownership	21.3*	28.8*	7.5
Gender (Men)	-4.8*	-2.8*	2.0
Disability	3.5	3.3	-.2
Commute	-2.0*	1.2*	3.2
White	-	-	-
Black	-10.6	-10.8	.2
Asian	-27.8*	-34.6*	-6.8
Hispanic	-32.5*	-34.9*	-2.4
American Indian	-19.8*	-13.2*	6.6
Other Race	-20.9*	-26.4*	-5.5

Table 15 Cont. Statistically significant mean difference at $p > .05$

The reform facilitates voting for the poor, the elderly, American Indians, men, and the unemployed. These group's voting increase is higher than the majority. These group's turnout increase after the reform provides evidence that they wanted to vote but were prevented by a difficult system. It also provides evidence that reforms can work to influence voting behavior. It does not disproportionately help the young, the uneducated, Hispanics, Asians, members of other races, and renters. Below are each variable and the theoretical basis for each hypothesis. An analysis of the results is also shown along with other statistical tests.

Poverty

Poverty is positively correlated with voting abstention (Teixera p.83). The more economic hardships in a person's life, the less likely he or she will have time to vote. It has been noted how troublesome this is for democracy, and this could be one of the chief benefits of the reform (Teixera p.83). Definitions of poverty are controversial. The specific thresholds used for tabulation of income in the 2000 Oregon Population Survey are shown in Table 16.

TABLE 16. Poverty Thresholds in 1999, by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years of Age

Size of family unit	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine	+
One person (unrelated individual)	8,501										
Under 65 years	8,667 8,667										
65 years and over	7,990 7,990										
Two people	10,869										
Householder under 65 years	11,214 11,156 11,483										
Householder 65 years and over	10,075 10,070 11,440										
Three people	13,290 13,032 13,410 13,423										
Four people	17,029 17,184 17,465 16,895 16,954										
Five people	20,127 20,723 21,024 20,380 19,882 19,578										
Six people	22,727 23,835 23,930 23,436 22,964 22,261 21,845										
Seven people	25,912 27,425 27,596 27,006 26,595 25,828 24,934 23,953										
Eight people	28,967 30,673 30,944 30,387 29,899 29,206 28,327 27,412 27,180										
Nine people or more	34,417 36,897 37,076 36,583 36,169 35,489 34,554 33,708 33,499										

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey. Available at:

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/threshld/thresh99.html>.

Using the Oregon Population Survey data, I hypothesize that voting by those impoverished would increase after the reform.

H2: Those with higher levels of poverty will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

Poverty and Voting

		Poverty		Total	
		Above	Below		
Did you vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	Row %	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
		Column %	76.2%	56.1%	68.8%
	No	Row %	73.9%	26.1%	100.0%
		Column %	29.8%	32.3%	31.2%
Total		Count	78.9%	21.1%	100.0%
		Row %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Column %	78.9%	21.1%	100.0%

Poverty and Voting Cont.

			100% of Poverty Level		Total
			Above	Below	
Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	91.2%	8.8%	100.0%
		% within 100% of Poverty Level	86.9%	72.3%	76.3%
	No	% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	85.2%	14.8%	100.0%
		% within 100% of Poverty Level	22.0%	36.6%	23.7%
Total		Count	3594	463	4057
		% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	88.6%	11.4%	100.0%
		% within 100% of Poverty Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	88.6%	11.4%	100.0%

The results show that the poor's voting rates have a higher relative increase than the non-poor. The relative change between elections is 5.5 percentage points higher in voting rates. In 1996, the poor voted 20.1 percentage points less than the non-poor did, while in 2000 that gap diminished to 14.6 percentage points. The results support the theory that poverty creates conditions that prevent people from voting. Voting by mail produces more turnout from this group.

Race

I use the concept of race as the Oregon Population Survey defines it: through self-description. The following hypotheses, concerning the effects of race on voting participation, are based on evidence that whites vote at higher rates than other racial groups (Teixeira p.71).

H3: African Americans will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

H4: Asian Americans will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

H5: Hispanics will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

H6: Those with higher levels of "Other" will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

Did you vote in the 1996 election? & Race Crosstabulation

		Race					
		White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Other	
Did you vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	Row %	91.9%	1.5%	1.0%	1.3%	4.3%
		Column %	71.1%	60.5%	51.3%	43.3%	50.2%
	No	Row %	80.3%	2.3%	2.4%	4.3%	10.6%
		Column %	28.9%	39.5%	48.7%	56.7%	49.8%
Total		Count	4165	78	62	90	261
		Row %	89.5%	1.7%	1.3%	1.9%	5.6%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	89.5%	1.7%	1.3%	1.9%	5.6%

Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election? * Racial Groups Crosstabulation

			White	African American	American Indian	Asian/Pacific Islander
Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	Row %	92.2%	1.6%	2.1%	1.7%
		Column %	79.7%	68.9%	66.5%	53.3%
	No	Row %	83.7%	2.3%	3.3%	4.6%
		Column %	20.3%	31.1%	33.5%	46.7%
Total		Count	4272	92	127	141
		Row %	88.6%	1.9%	2.6%	2.9%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	88.6%	1.9%	2.6%	2.9%

The results are mixed as the reform benefits some racial groups more than others, and some not at all. Oregon's black population's higher relative level of voting increase is small and not statistically significant. American Indians had a much larger increase and benefit most from the reform. It can be assumed that many of the difficulties that were eased for Blacks and Indians would also help other minorities such as Asians or Other races. Yet they did not show a relative increase. The Hispanic population in Oregon is the largest ethnic minority population in the state and is not positively correlated with increased turnout from this reform. Please note, that since these respondents are all registered voters, they are all citizens and eligible to vote.

One thing that is clear is that groups that typically speak English as a second language are voting less than other racial groups. The ballots are only printed in English, and this is an obstacle for those who do not speak English. This difficulty also exists at the polling place, which also had solely English ballots. The increase, however, that is present in other groups is absent in typically English as second language groups. This

might be explained by the difficulty in filling out a ballot that someone cannot read. Allowing voters to choose the language of the ballots as they register might overcome this problem. Voters in others state like New Jersey and New York have ballots in multiple languages, and this might also benefit Oregon.

Education

In many studies education is positively correlated with voting (Wolfinger and Rosenstone p.35, Miller and Shanks p. 53, Teixeira p.83). The reform should have less effect on educated people. Measuring education is a complicated, and the Oregon Population Survey asks for the highest level completed. The data has been simplified to whether someone has above or below a bachelor's degree. The reform should not be as effective for those who already vote; thus people with more education should be less affected by the reform.

H10: Those with lower levels of baccalaureate degree holders will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

Did you vote in the 1996 election? * Bachelor Crosstabulation

			Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?		Total
			Yes	No	
Did you vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	Row %	33.1%	66.9%	100.0%
		Column %	79.9%	64.3%	68.8%
	No	Row %	13.8%	86.2%	100.0%
		Column %	20.1%	35.7%	31.2%
Total		Count	1364	3343	4707
		Row %	29.0%	71.0%	100.0%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	29.0%	71.0%	100.0%

Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election? * Do you have a Bachelor's Degree? Crosstabulation

		Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?		Total	
		Less than a Bachelor Degree	Bachelor Degree or Higher		
Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	Row %	64.1%	35.9%	100.0%
		Column %	71.8%	91.4%	77.5%
	No	Row %	80.5%	19.5%	100.0%
		Column %	28.2%	8.6%	22.5%
Total		Count	3421	1393	4814
		Row %	71.1%	28.9%	100.0%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	71.1%	28.9%	100.0%

Those with a bachelor's degree have a 3.8 percentage points higher relative turnout increase. The uneducated are voting more, but they have not benefited as much by this reform. Examining turnout for above and below average education counties tests the relationship between education and the reform. The increase in turnout for counties with above average education is about 1 percentage point higher than the less educated counties. The range in turnout for counties with less education is 17 percentage points. The less education counties are a volatile group, and they provide clues as to what effect the reform has on the uneducated. In counties that have more uneducated populations, voting does increase for some and for others it does not. By examining the population density of those counties, I find that the less educated rural counties are voting less, while the less educated urban counties are voting at higher rates. Thus, the urban less educated counties benefits from the reform more than the rural less educated counties.

Table 17. Education Averages and Voting Percentage Increase.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
More Education Counties	15	7.82	13.01	10.4560	1.75139
Less Education Counties	20	1.82	18.30	9.7310	4.54905
Valid N (listwise)	35				

Employment

Generating a hypothesis for the employment category is complicated because there are two possible theories. The employed would possibly have difficulty getting to the polling place due to their work schedule. Thus, a hypothesis could be that:

H11: The employed will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

However, the marginalization associated with unemployment might result in lower voting rates. Lower voting levels for the unemployed have been confirmed by previous studies (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). An alternative hypothesis is that:

H12: The unemployed will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

Employment

		At any time during 1996 were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work?		Total
		Yes	No	
Did you happen to vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	% within 57.7%	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election? 42.3%	100.0%
	No	% within 60.1%	At any time during 1999 were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work? 66.8%	63.4%
Total		% within 76.8%	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election? 23.2%	100.0%
	Total	% within 39.8%	At any time during 1999 were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work? 33.2%	37.6%
Total		Count 3171	1646	4817
	Total	% within 65.8%	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election? 34.2%	100.0%
Total		% within 100.0%	At any time during 1999 were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work? 100.0%	100.0%
	Total	% of Total 65.8%	34.2%	100.0%

Employment Cont.

		At any time during 2000 were you working (including self- employed) or looking for work?		Total
		Yes	No	
Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	57.7%	42.3%	100.0%
	% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?			
	No	76.8%	23.2%	100.0%
	% within At any time during 1999 were you working (including self- employed) or looking for work?			
Total	Count	3171	1646	4817
	% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	65.8%	34.2%	100.0%
	% within At any time during 1999 were you working (including self- employed) or looking for work?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	65.8%	34.2%	100.0%

The employed show a larger increase, suggesting that they have more difficulty voting. Before the reform, whether someone voted depended on if they could get to the polling booth, which is difficult for working people on a Tuesday. Employment might be a surrogate for other factors less affected by the reform such as income and wealth, which are determinants of higher voting. The unemployed could be so skeptical about the benefits of voting that it will take more than a procedural reform to reach them.

However, this is not likely, since other marginalized groups such as the poor have shown an increase. Perhaps this is due to the unemployment category including those who traditionally vote at higher rates such as retirees and homemakers, because the question asks whether “you were employed in the last 12 months?”. Retirees and homemakers are unlikely to be helped as much by voting by mail, since they vote more often anyway. Thus, their inclusions in this category might be obfuscating the results.

Age

Age is a determinant of voting. Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) state, “The conventional view is that turnout is lowest at the beginning of adult life, rises to a plateau in middle age and declines as maturity fades in to old age”. A theory is that the older generation was exposed to a different and more engaging style of politics (Putnam 2001). Another explanation is that the elderly need to vote to ensure their positions and status since they have a precarious place in society. I hypothesize that the elderly will not benefit as much from the reform since they work less and have more available free time. The infirm, however, might benefit from the ease of access.

Those under 25 years of age have the lowest levels of voter turnout of any age group, and should benefit more from the reform (Southwell 2003). The hypotheses are that the convenience of voting by mail eases voting by these groups.

H11: Those Over 65 years of age will not have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

H11: Those Under 25 years of age will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

Did you vote in the 1996 election? * Are you Over 65? Crosstabulation

		Are you Over 65?		Total	
		No	Yes		
Did you vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	Row %	77.2%	22.8%	100.0%
		Column %	65.8%	80.7%	68.8%
	No	Row %	91.3%	8.7%	100.0%
		Column %	34.2%	19.3%	31.2%
Total		Count	3789	937	4726
		Row %	80.2%	19.8%	100.0%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	80.2%	19.8%	100.0%

Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election? * Are you Over 65 Crosstabulation

		Are you Over 65		Total	
		No	Yes		
Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	Row %	68.1%	31.9%	100.0%
		Column %	60.7%	89.5%	77.4%
	No	Row %	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
		Column %	39.3%	10.5%	72.6%
Total		Count	3713	1111	4824
		Row %	77.0%	23.0%	100.0%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	77.0%	23.0%	100.0%

Did you vote in the 1996 election? * Are you under 25? Crosstabulation

			Are you under 25?		Total
			No	Yes	
Did you vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	Row %	95.2%	4.8%	100.0%
		Column %	71.6%	36.8%	68.8%
	No	Row %	79.9%	20.1%	100.0%
		Column %	28.4%	63.2%	31.2%
Total		Count	4346	380	4726
		Row %	92.0%	8.0%	100.0%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	92.0%	8.0%	100.0%

Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election? * Are you under 25? Crosstabulation

			Are you under 25?		Total
			No	Yes	
Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	Row %	97.8%	2.2%	100.0%
		Column %	80.4%	37.9%	77.4%
	No	Row %	86.2%	13.8%	100.0%
		Column %	19.6%	62.1%	22.6%
Total		Count	4478	346	4824
		Row %	92.8%	7.2%	100.0%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	92.8%	7.2%	100.0%

Elderly people are more effected by the reform. The elderly are often thought to have difficulties getting to the polling places and they should benefit from this convenience. The reform would facilitate voting by elderly people who have disabilities or are in poor health. The under age 25 population is not helped by the reform. Perhaps this is because there is a greater apathy with young people, as some studies show (Southwell 2001). If they are not interested in politics, or do not believe in the efficacy of voting, then a reform of convenience will not have an effect.

Housing Ownership

Housing ownership might have a profound influence on a person's commitment to his or her society. Homeownership is positively correlated with voting (Miller and Shanks p.275). The Oregon Population Survey counts as owners those who own their property outright or mortgage it. My hypothesis is that due to the high commitment and turnout already present among homeowners, non-homeowners will have a greater increase in turnout:

H12: Non-homeowners will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

Homeownership and Voting

Did you vote in the 1996 election? *

Homeownership Crosstabulation

			Homeownership		Total
			Yes	No	
Did you vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	Row %	74.1%	25.9%	100.0%
		Column %	75.5%	54.2%	68.8%
	No	Row %	46.4%	53.6%	100.0%
		Column %	24.5%	45.8%	31.2%
Total		Count	3202	1491	4693
		Row %	68.2%	31.8%	100.0%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	68.2%	31.8%	100.0%

Did you vote in the 2000 election? * Homeownership Crosstabulation

		Homeownership		Total	
		Yes	No		
Did you vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	Row %	84.1%	18.6%	100.0%
		Column %	85.8%	57.0%	78.8%
	No	Row %	46.4%	53.6%	100.0%
		Column %	14.2%	43.0%	21.2%
Total		Count	3202	1491	4693
		Row %	68.2%	31.8%	100.0%
		Column %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Total %	68.2%	31.8%	100.0%

The home ownership category is interesting in that it shows two potential factors. Homeowners vote more after the reform, and non-homeowners have lower rates of increased voting. It is possible that owning a home is highly correlated with income, and thus, income is what is really being measured. Homeowners already vote at high levels, and they vote more after the reform. Perhaps, renters vote at lesser rates since their wealth is not invested in these communities through home ownership. The reform might not influence their decision to vote. If voting becomes more convenient, then they will not vote at higher increased rates, because they have less at stake in their community. But other marginalized groups have been affected. Note that renters' higher mobility rates might impact registration, but these respondents are registered. In sum, the homeownership category does not match the theoretical predictions for the reform.

Commuting

Some theorists suggest that increasing suburbanization, and the corresponding lengthening of commuting time is a possible reason for decreasing turnout (Putnam 2001). The Oregon Population Survey measures travel time to work in minutes. To simplify the measure, I use the mean commute time of 23 minutes, and create two

groups: those above and below the average commute time. Commuting should be positively correlated with the effects of the reform. Tuesday is a workday for most Americans, and longer commutes mean less available time to get to the polling place. The reform should be more beneficial to those with longer commutes. The commuting hypothesis is:

H13: Those with above average commutes will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

Voting and Commuting 1996

		Is your Commute above 23 Minutes?		Total	
		No	Yes		
Did you vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	% within Did you vote in the 1996 election? 68.2%	31.8%	100.0%	
		% within Is your Commute above 23 Minutes? 67.9%	65.9%	67.3%	
	No	% within Did you vote in the 1996 election? 65.7%	34.3%	100.0%	
		% within Is your Commute above 23 Minutes? 32.1%	34.1%	32.7%	
Total		Count	2158	1031	3189
		% within Did you vote in the 1996 election? 67.7%	32.3%	100.0%	
		% within Is your Commute above 23 Minutes? 100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
		% of Total	67.7%	32.3%	100.0%

Voting and Commuting 2000

			COMMUTE		Total
			.00	1.00	
Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	67.6%	32.4%	100.0%
		% within COMMUTE	79.1%	81.3%	79.8%
	No	% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	69.4%	30.6%	100.0%
		% within COMMUTE	20.9%	18.7%	20.2%
Total		Count	1865	858	2723
		% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	68.5%	31.5%	100.0%
		% within COMMUTE	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	68.5%	31.5%	100.0%

The reform made it easier to vote for those with longer commutes. However, the difference is smaller than anticipated at 3.2 percentage points higher voting rate. The reason could be that the average commute time in Oregon (22.2 minutes) which is less than the national average (25.5 minutes), and thus commuting is less of a problem (Census 2000). Additionally, there is little variation in the amount with a standard deviation of 3.8 minutes. If more people have longer commutes, perhaps voting by mail would register a larger change. But Oregon does not have that diversity.

Disability

One group that should benefit from the reform is the disabled, who have great difficulty getting to a polling place (Schur et. al 2002). Although by law Oregon's voting

booths were handicap accessible, and every polling place had helpers, the difficulty in getting to the polling place might dampen turnout. Thus, a hypothesis is:

H1: Those with disabilities will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

Voting and Disability

		Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?		Total
		Yes	No	
Did you happen to vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	18.5%	81.5%	100.0%
	% within			
	No	70.3%	66.8%	67.4%
	% within			
Total	Count	847	3953	4800
	% within			
	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	17.6%	82.4%	100.0%
	% within			
	Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	17.6%	82.4%	100.0%

Voting and Disability

		Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?		Total
		Yes	No	
Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	18.5%	81.5%	100.0%
	No	16.5%	83.5%	100.0%
Total	% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	80.1%	76.8%	77.4%
	% within Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	19.9%	23.2%	22.6%
	Count	847	3953	4800
	% within Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	17.6%	82.4%	100.0%
	% within Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	17.6%	82.4%	100.0%

The results show the disabled voted 0.2 percentage points less in 2000, but it is not significant. Now, there is as many disabled voting as before. This is probably because the disabled voted at higher rates than the non-disabled, and thus the effects of all mail voting are mitigated.

Gender

Men might benefit from the reform more than women because of lower voting rates. Thus, a hypothesis is:

H1: Men will have a greater increase in voting after Oregon's Mail-in voting reform.

				Gender		Total
				Male	Female	
Did you happen to vote in the 1996 election?	Yes	% within	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	40.2%	59.8%	100.0%
		% within Gender		63.7%	68.5%	67.3%
	No	% within	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	43.0%	57.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender		36.3%	31.5%	32.7%
Total		Count		1995	2823	4818
		% within	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	41.4%	58.6%	100.0%
		% within Gender		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total		41.4%	58.6%	100.0%

				Gender		Total
				Male	Female	
Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	Yes	% within	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	40.2%	59.8%	100.0%
		% within Gender		75.7%	78.5%	77.3%
	No	% within	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	43.0%	57.0%	100.0%
		% within Gender		24.3%	21.5%	22.7%
Total		Count		1995	2823	4818
		% within	Did you happen to vote in the 2000 election?	41.4%	58.6%	100.0%
		% within Gender		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total		41.4%	58.6%	100.0%

Men benefit more from the reform. Men's turnout has increased 2 percentage points more than women. The result of the increase is that men now vote at almost an even rate with women. Nationally, women tend to vote at higher rates, and this suggests that the

convenience offered by voting by mail overcomes the problems that keep some men from voting.

Conclusion

Some marginalized group's turnout increased at higher rates than mainstream Oregonians after the reform. Poor people, in particular, have experienced an increase in turnout much greater than those above poverty. Oregon does not have high registration levels, and the type of people who benefit from this reform most are those groups who traditionally register less often (Piven and Cloward 2001). If registration of these Oregonians can increase, potentially they could increase voting in even higher percentages than now. Bringing disenfranchised voters into the democratic system has the potential to affect politics radically. The new electoral power could lead to policies that reflect the needs of the marginalized. Marginalized people might receive more attention from politicians because they are voting at higher levels (Martin 2003). Politics often comes down to sticks and carrots, and with higher voting rates these groups have increased power over politicians with the potential to hurt or help them (Martin 2003).

The research also suggests that the cause of lower turnout amongst these groups is not lack of education or interest in politics. If the process is made easier, then people with difficult lives vote more. A simplification of the voting process allowed people who are not familiar with voting, or who have not previously tried voting, to become active. It is the potential to spark interest in politics or even political action that concerns the next

chapter on the unintended effects of this reform. By enfranchising the disenfranchised, it might lead to new feelings of commitment to society.

Perhaps most people, whether marginalized or not, will not show increased civic engagement after the reform. But if even a few are motivated to participate in political areas other than voting, then it could lead to a political change. Apathy is the strongest weapon held by the status quo. It exists because people are not engaged in their communities enough to care for the consequences of their actions, and the actions of others. If higher voting rates lead to more societal commitment, then electoral reform could be a powerful force in society.

The groups that disproportionately benefit from the reform were: the poor, the elderly, American Indians, men, commuters, and the employed. Voting among these groups increased at higher rates than the majority. The groups not helped as much--the young, the uneducated, Hispanics, Asians, Other Race, and renters--were not predicted. Why does convenience help some and not others? Perhaps it is something else in Oregon that is affecting these groups. When looking at the statewide averages for these groups, there is no discernable pattern suggesting why some should benefit while others do not. The language barrier, however, presented by all-English ballots has the potential to dampen turnout from those who use English as a second language. A recommended policy change for this reform is to create ballots in more languages, at least in Spanish, which is Oregon's most populous English as a second language group (Census 2000).

**Ch. 5: Civic Engagement, Community Involvement, and Social Capital after the
Change to Voting by Mail.**

The reform provides a simple and inexpensive way to encourage voter turnout. But does it transform other types of political participation? Poor and marginalized groups benefit most from the change, perhaps because they have more difficulties getting to a polling place. Do these same groups also have higher levels of social capital after the reform? The pamphlet Oregon Secretary of State Vote-by-Mail Frequently Asked Questions lists another goal of the reform as “allowing more time for people to study issues and candidates before marking the ballot” (Elections Office 2000). My theory is that the reform makes possible a style of voting that engenders political engagement because of its open style, which is no longer a secret ballot. The secret ballot dampens political participation and with it community involvement and civic engagement (Barbalet 2002). Recent scholarship finds that civic engagement and community involvement are very important for society. The social capital literature finds that more engagement and involvement can greatly improve a community (Putnam 2001). Social capital is defined as the amount of civic engagement and community involvement in society (Coleman 1990, Putnam 1993, 2001). This chapter will determine if voting by mail has changed the way people feel and act towards their society, by testing these measures of social capital.

Secret Ballots

There are two sets of theories on the Australian ballot system and its dampening effects on political participation. One is the vote market hypothesis which “assumes secret ballots were designed to end the buying and selling of votes. The secrecy the new ballot provided discouraged candidates from buying votes they could no longer verify, disproportionately affecting poor voters who would respond to this loss of payments by voluntarily abstaining.”(Heckelman 2000) Another is the strategic disfranchisement hypothesis that posits, “blacks and illiterates were specifically targeted for disfranchisement. The new ballots were expected to be more difficult for these voters to use and they would then be effectively prevented from participating in the active electorate.” (Heckelman 2000) Either way participation will decrease with a secret ballot. What this debate ignores is the loss of civic engagement, and access to information about politics, that also comes with the change to secret ballots.

Barbalet (2002) finds that the secret ballot had more impact than reducing fraud or increasing the difficulty of voting for illiterates. Barbalet says that the secret ballot is “better explained by its effects on working class organization and crowd control” (Barbalet p.135). The secret ballot not only separates the voter from undue influence, but also the possibly enlightening influence of his peers (Barbalet p.133). Barbalet (p.137) quotes Rokkan who says that

[In} secret voting the individual adult is cut off from all his roles in the subordinate systems of the household, the neighborhood, the work organization, the church and the civil association and set to act excessively in the abstract role of a citizen of the overall political system; there will be no feedback for what he does in this anonymous role to what he does in the other roles”

Thus, Barbalet concludes that low turnout is evidence of “alienation from the electoral process” (Barbalet p. 138). Political alienation will lead to less participation in all forms. The secret ballot limits both political engagement and other more negative influences on voters. The voting by mail system makes it is easier for the emotions of a campaign to spur the voter to action, due to the longer time and access to information in a potentially deliberatory setting. Sanders (1997) suggests that emotionalism and politics are not beneficial for civic life, often leading to pressuring and contention. As stated above, a concern with voting by mail is undue influence from family, peers, or bosses on a voter’s ability to freely choose. The reform, however, does not lead to undue influence (Southwell 2000). I hypothesize that the open system of voting by mail will encourage civic engagement and involvement.

Voting By Mail and Social Capital

This chapter will determine what impact the new voting system had on other types of political participation. The open voting process has the potential to change more than voter turnout rates. If people have more access to information about politics—due to the ballot being in their house three weeks before the election—they might be more aware of issues. If people are more aware of politics, then they might become more concerned about societal problems, and subsequently join volunteer groups. If people participate in the voting process, then they may feel more part of their community. The aggregate number of people influenced in this way by the reform is not large, but I find that a small increase in social capital results from voting by mail.

Bill Bradbury told me “Vote by mail produces a better-educated electorate. As one voter put it, with vote by mail, he can spread the campaign materials across the kitchen table and make thoughtful, well-reasoned decisions. Vote by mail gives citizens more time. It’s convenient. It works with today’s busy lifestyles. Citizens can hang onto ballots as long as they choose or mail them in early.” Having more time to consider the issues is particularly important in Oregon where ballot initiatives are a large part of the electoral process. There were 26 ballot measures on the 2000 general election ballot in Oregon. Bill Bradbury said, “many voters reported that it took over an hour simply to read through and mark their ballots.” Voting by mail provides the time to make reasoned thought-out choices, which is not feasible at a polling place. Rep. Jeff Baker told me “people are more involved in politics (after the reform) because they can sit down in their kitchen and read the campaign literature or the voter's pamphlet, so they can be informed on issues that they might not pay attention if they were at a polling booth (Baker 2003). Research shows that participation leads to more participation and salience of politics (Putnam 2001). For example, Tolbert et al. (2001) find that high salience elections increase voter turnout. Thus, knowledge of politics can lead to more participation, and with it more civic engagement and community involvement. I test whether this mechanical change in the style of voting increases these measures of social capital.

I use the Oregon Population Survey to examine if people have more social capital after voting by mail. The survey asks questions that measure social capital (see below for detailed explanations of question wordings). As was done in the voting section, I use survey data of various socioeconomic groups to determine who has more social capital

after the reform. The hypothesis is that people who vote by mail have greater levels of civic engagement and community involvement. To test this hypothesis, I compare the mean levels of the 1996 score of a question to the 2000 score. If it increases in 2000, it supports the thesis that voting by mail increases social capital. I test other socioeconomic determinants of social capital, to ensure there is not an alternative explanation for the rise in social capital.

The methodology must ensure that these results are not spurious. First, the questions are asked about the election of one year, and the social capital score is from the same person's answers for the following year. For example, the voting question was asked in 1998 about participation in the 1996 election. But the questions for social capital were asked for the year 1997. Thus, it ensures that the test is for levels of social capital after voting. I use the independent samples T test and relative change as the dependent variable to ensure the accuracy of the results. If someone has high social capital before the reform, it does not influence the test because I measure their relative change instead of their total level. Relative change ensures that high levels of social capital in 1996 are not obscuring the reform's impact. Finally, most previous measures of social capital include voter turnout as part of their index (Putnam 2001). If I use voter turnout to study the effect of a voting reform; it would create a feedback loop. To eliminate this problem, I do not use voter turnout in the social capital index. But, please note that by increasing turnout, voting by mail automatically increases social capital by most measures.

Controlling for Alternative Explanations for Changes in Social Capital

If social capital increases, how do we know it is due to the reform? There could be changes in other factors that are increasing social capital. Social and economic demographics of the voter are often cited as determinants of social capital (Putnam 2001 p. 197). In this literature there is an emphasis on race, education, and economic levels as predictors of social capital. If these indicators change, they might cause an increase in social capital. The seven independent variables listed below have been strongly correlated with social capital in various studies (Putnam 2001 p. 197). The independent variables are measured by the Oregon Population Survey, as used in chapter two. I gather the data for this model from 1990 through 2002. I measure social capital as feelings of civic engagement and community involvement for the dependent variables. I enter the variables into an OLS model, and check for collinearity as in Chapter three.

The only variable that is statistically significant is Voting By Mail for both models. The White, Over 65, Income, Under25 and Bachelor variables—which measure race, income, the elderly, the youth, and education—are not significant and did not affect social capital in Oregon. After the reform, social capital increases and the VBM variable shows a small positive effect on community involvement of 0.201. The feelings of civic engagement question shows -.097 impact, because the question is measured with a lower score being more positive (see below for detailed explanations of both question wordings) The main determinants of voting rates—Age, Education, Race, and the Economy—have not changed or are not affecting voting rates in Oregon. Thus, voting by mail is likely the cause of the increase in social capital.

Correlations		COM. INV.	Feelings of civic engagement
Pearson Correlation		1.000	1.000
	VBM*	.201	-.097
	INCOME	-.713	.486
	BACHELOR	.139	-.537
	WHITE	-.312	.386
	UNDER25	.055	.356
	OVER65	.795	-.857
Sig. (1-tailed)		.	.
	VBM	.050	.002
	INCOME	.143	.257
	BACHELOR	.431	.232
	WHITE	.344	.307
	UNDER25	.473	.322
	OVER65	.103	.071
N		7	7
	VBM	7	7
	INCOME	7	7
	BACHELOR	7	7
	WHITE	7	7
	UNDER25	7	7
	OVER65	7	7

* Significant at $p > .05$

Table 6

The model is significant ($p > .032$) and explains a high percentage of what is happening to the dependent variable ($r = .652$). Thus, the correlations and significance of the independent variables are trustworthy. No other occurrence in Oregon except voting by mail is responsible for the small rise in social capital shown below.

Civic Engagement

Engagement in community is crucial to a well working democracy (Putnam 1993, 2001). The willingness to sacrifice for the group—which is required by all members—is greater if we have better feelings about our society (Fukuyama 1995, Williamson 1993). The need for citizens to feel engaged in their society is important for social capital, which

often uses feelings of civic engagement in its definitions (Coleman 1990, Putnam 1993, 2001, O.C.E.D. 2001). If you are engaged in society, then you will be more inclined to be involved in groups that will help the society work well (Arrow 1974; Fukuyama 1995, Williamson 1993). In turn, these groups could ensure that their government is operating fairly and efficiently. If these groups are successful in making democracy work better, then better feelings about the community will be present. It is a cyclical process. If the reform works to engender civic engagement—which should lead to more social capital—then it should be reflected in a better working government, and subsequently lead to even more civic engagement. The reform could stimulate this cyclical process and have increasing impact over time.

I examine the results of a question that was asked after the 1996 and 2000 elections to measure feelings about society. The question asks “Trust?” and is rated 1 - very positive, 2 - somewhat positive, 3 - neutral (NOT PROMPTED), 4 - somewhat negative, and 5 - very negative. In this study, I compare the mean from this question’s score in 1996 and 2000 using the independent samples T test to determine if people’s feelings change after voting by mail. The lower the score the more feelings of civic engagement. The mean response for the feelings of civic engagement question for those who voted in 1996 is 1.97, and for 2000 it is 1.73 and is significant. After people voted by mail they have .2 points more civic engagement on a scale of one to five. Thus, the new style of voting has made small increase in the feelings of civic engagement of Oregon. The socioeconomic determinants did not change in Oregon, and thus, these factors do not affect its social capital.

Table 18

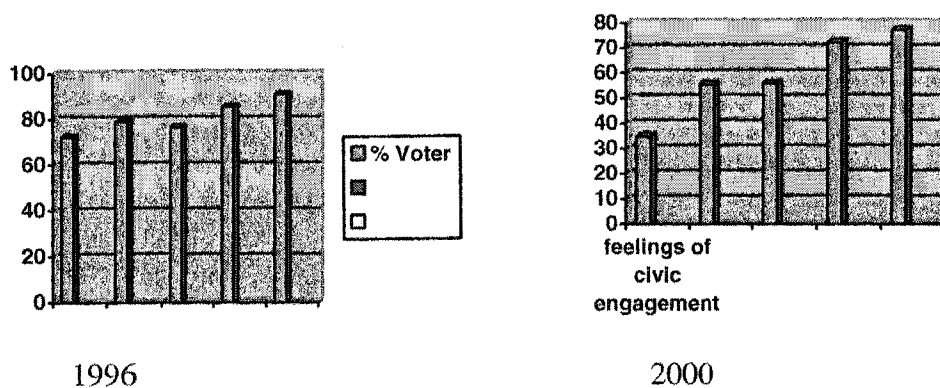
Mean	1996	2000
Did you vote?	Trust?	Trust?
No	1.7973	1.73
Yes	1.9782	1.78
Total	1.9444	1.76

Community Involvement

Another common measure of social capital is how much a person feels a part of his or her community (Neuhouser, 1995; Smith, 2000; Smith-Lovin & McPherson, 1993; World Bank, 2001). I need to test community involvement. Community involvement builds trust and connections through common networks that enable society to function well (Putnam 2001). Prior studies of social capital show that an increase in community involvement can lead to less crime, suicide, domestic violence, and drug abuse (Putnam 2001). People's connection to their community determines their willingness to work to achieve societal good. Those who are a part of their community might be less likely to do things to damage it. Similarly to civic engagement, if more people are involved in a community, it will be a better, more inclusive society. It might then create an environment where more people want to be a part of that community. Thus, the reform may trigger a change that could have broad future effects.

The test of community involvement uses the survey question "How strongly do you feel a part of your community?" This question is asked on both the 1996 and 2000 Oregon Population Survey. The answers are based on a scale of one to five. The possible answers are 1 - Not at all a part of community, 2 - Not a part of community, 3 -

In the middle, 4 - A part of the community, and 5 - Very strongly part of the community. For this question, a higher score means a higher feeling of community involvement. Table 22 and 23 shows that voting at a polling booth in 1996 produces little change in community involvement. After voting in the 1996 election, there is a positive skew of 19 percentage points between the most and least involved people. In 2000, however, there is a larger positive skew in voter's feelings of community involvement. In 2000, there is a 42 percentage points skew between the most and least involved people. Thus, the process of voting by mail pushes people to feel like they are an active part of their community. The mean score test shows that in 2000—when comparing those who did and did not vote—those who voted felt .10 more a part of their community than in 1996. Thus, the reform makes a small impact on feelings of community involvement in Oregon.



Volunteering

Volunteering creates social capital. Volunteering produces more civic engagement and involvement in society (Putnam p.117). Volunteers feel better about a society after sacrificing their time to make it better (Putnam p.117). They are associated with the community when they join a group, and, thus, have community involvement.

Unfortunately, the volunteering question was not asked in 1996 Oregon Population Survey. But the data from 2000 is still informative when comparing those who did vote against those who did not. Table 5 is a comparison of who votes and how much people volunteer hours per year. It shows that those who vote volunteer a half hour more per week. Table 6 shows that those who vote are 53% more likely to volunteer more than three hours a week. Table 7 shows that voters volunteer at higher rates. We know that voting by mail has increased voting, and that voting and volunteering are highly correlated. Thus, it can be speculated that volunteering might also go up. Due to data limitations, it is not possible to determine how much and for whom.

Table 24

Voting	How many hours per week do you Volunteer?
No	.5610
Yes	.9642
Total	.7923

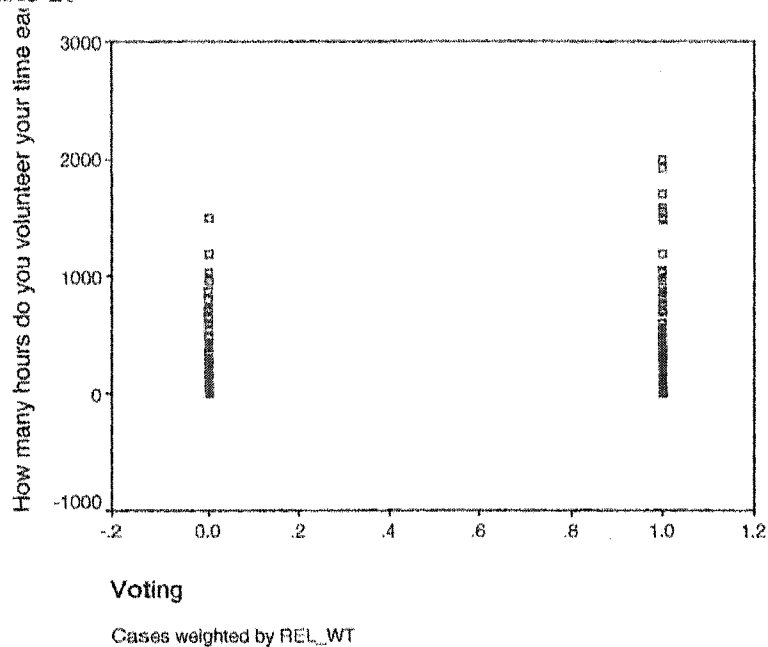
Table 25

Voting & How many hours per week do you volunteer?

How many hours per week do you volunteer?

		How many hours per week do you Volunteer?			
		0	1.00	2.00	3 or more
Voting	No	50.4%	40.2%	29.5%	23.2%
	Yes	49.6%	59.8%	70.5%	76.8%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 26



Demographics of Social Capital and Voting by Mail.

These data show that social capital increases after the reform. But for which societal groups did it increase, and for whom did it not increase? To test this question, I examine seven independent variables, and two dependent variables (feelings of civic engagement and community involvement) to determine for whom the reform increases social capital. The seven independent variables are strongly correlated with social capital in various studies (Putnam p. 187). I test those who voted in 1996 and 2000. Since only the 2000 election uses vote by mail, it tests the reform's impact on social capital. The independent variables are measured in the same manner as in chapter four. The variables are poverty, race, education, unemployment, age, disability, and gender. My hypothesis is that the groups that lack social capital, shown previously, will have disproportionately higher levels of civic engagement and community involvement after voting by mail.

The social capital index finds the mean of a three-part matrix of variables. The variables in the social capital index are: voting, feelings of civic engagement or community involvement, and a demographic variable that was split into two groups. I compare the mean of the majority and minority groups, to show which group had higher levels of social capital after that voting experience, using the independent samples t test to determine statistical significance. I define minority groups as those groups who are less than the majority of society. For example, those 18 to 25 years of age are a minority to those older. I compare the 1996's rate and 2000's rate to produce a highly controlled and accurate test of the reform's impact on the social capital of Oregon's various demographic groups. For example, I subtract the mean level of involvement of women who did vote and those who did not in both 1996 and 2000, and compare it to men, after determining the statistical significance of their mean difference. If there is a higher level of relative involvement among women who voted by mail in 2000, it provides evidence that the reform increases women's involvement in society. In this example, the women who voted by polling booth in 1996 have less societal involvement. I show above that no other changes have happened in Oregon in the interim that affects civil society.

This method controls for changes in each election—both in turnout and in social capital measures—by comparing the relative difference between the dominant social group and the minority group. By comparing the relative difference—rather than total level—it controls for changes that are extraneous to the analysis of voting by mail and social capital. Below is a comparison of the 1996 and 2000 rates of the social capital

index for each group for feelings of Oregon and community involvement on a five-point scale.

Table 27 Mean Difference of Feelings of Civic Engagement Between Minority and Majority Groups

Demographic	1996	2000	Change After Reform
Over65	-.27*	-.09*	.18
Under25	.07*	.52*	.47
Poverty	-.12	-.14	-.02
Unemployment	.05*	-.19*	-.24
Less than College Degree	.53*	-.27*	-.8
Gender (Men)	.12*	-.23*	-.35
Disability	.68*	-.73*	1.41
White	.32*	.49*	.17
Black	N/A	-.17	N/A
Asian	.35*	.68*	.33
Hispanic	.19*	.67*	.48
American Indian	-.42*	-1.30*	-.88

**Mean Difference of Community Involvement Between
Minority and Majority Groups**

Demographic	1996	2000	Change After Reform
Over65	.25*	-.26*	-.50
Under25	-.65*	-.23*	.42
Poverty	-.32*	-.12*	.20
Unemployment	.29	.25	-.04
Less than College Degree	0	-.09	-.09
Gender (Men)	-.26*	-.68*	-.42
Disability	.18*	.60*	.42
White	-.20*	-.01*	.19
Black	N/A	-.22	N/A
Asian	.13*	-.76*	.89
Hispanic	0*	-1.06*	-1.06
American Indian	.24*	0*	-.24

* Statistically significant mean difference at $p > .05$

Poverty

The poor would benefit greatly from an increase in their community attachment and feelings in society. It is also reasonable that the have-nots would not have these beliefs and feelings, as they have probably been excluded and discriminated against. The poor lack social capital compared to the more affluent (Putnam p.193). The inclusion of the poor into society will benefit both. The poor will benefit from connections to others who could provide needed information on education, jobs, and health care. If the poor have more feelings of community involvement, then they might try new programs and services designed to help them. Society will benefit by decreasing the life quality gap between rich and poor. Society might also benefit because those who are involved in the community will be less likely to engage in anti-social behavior.⁴ After the reform, poor people have more feelings of community involvement by .20 on a five-point scale. I find that there are slightly less (-.02) feelings of civic engagement of poor people than the non-poor after voting by mail.

Poverty		How Strongly do you feel apart of your community?		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?				
Did you vote in the 1996 Election?				1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No	Poverty	Above		70.0%	77.8%	60.3%	73.3%	66.7%
		Below		30.0%	22.2%	39.7%	26.7%	33.3%
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yes	Poverty	Above		92.3%	74.2%	84.6%	88.1%	84.4%
		Below		7.7%	25.8%	15.4%	11.9%	15.6%
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

⁴ Although it is outside of the discussion here, the potential for protest might be co-opted by feelings societal involvement. Thus, one of the few resources that the poor have—social protest movements—might be blunted by increased social involvement. However, social protest could be a form of social capital in itself, and thus, these issues are intertwined and complex.

Poverty Trust? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?				
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No Poverty	Above	61.7%	67.6%	50.0%	88.9%	100.0%
	Below	38.3%	32.4%	50.0%	11.1%	
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes Poverty	Above	83.9%	85.4%	82.4%	91.0%	66.7%
	Below	16.1%	14.6%	17.6%	9.0%	33.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2000 100% of Poverty Level. Feel like part of the community? Voting Crosstabulation
% within Supp-C4. Feel like part of the community?

Voting		1 - Not at all a part of community	2	3 - In the middle	4	5 - Very strongly part of the community
No 100% of Poverty Level	Above	85.7%	68.2%	78.9%	93.9%	83.9%
	Below	14.3%	31.8%	21.1%	6.1%	16.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes 100% of Poverty Level	Above	80.0%	81.7%	91.5%	94.4%	92.6%
	Below	20.0%	18.3%	8.5%	5.6%	7.4%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2000 100% of Poverty Level * Trust? * Voting Crosstabulation

Voting		1 - Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neutral (NOT PROMPTED)	Somewhat negative	5 - Very negative
No 100% of Poverty Level	Above	82.6%	80.6%	100.0%	66.7%	100.0%
	Below	17.4%	19.4%		33.3%	
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes 100% of Poverty Level	Above	90.9%	93.1%	66.7%	84.8%	81.8%
	Below	9.1%	6.9%	33.3%	15.2%	18.2%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Race

Race relations and social capital are a debated topic (McNulty and Bellair 2003). Race relations might improve from more social capital through an increase in feelings of civic engagement and community involvement (Putnam p. 280). One view is that if disparate groups grow more involved with each other, then their relationship would improve. Furthermore, as whites are the majority, perhaps more exposure to different

people through community activities would create better feelings towards minority groups. The alternative view is that social capital should be broken down into two distinct groups of bridging and bonding social capital (Gittell and Vidal 1998). Bridging social capital works as described above, as people from different groups come together to learn and share with each other (Putnam p.23). But there is an alternative type—called bonding social capital—in which people volunteer only with others of their same group (Putnam p.23). In aggregate, an increase in bonding social capital will appear as more engagement, but this will merely measure intra-group involvement (Putnam p.23). The effect for race relations will not be positive, as these different groups will actually move farther apart.

Unfortunately, this data does not distinguish between types of volunteer groups so it cannot be tested. It does show that Whites and Asians who voted by mail have increases in both feelings of civic engagement (.17, .33) and community involvement (.19, .89). Hispanic voters in Oregon show more feelings of civic engagement (.48), but a less community involvement (-1.06) than Whites. There was a reduced rate for American Indians with voting by mail as their feelings of civic engagement declined -.88, and their community involvement declined by -.24. There were not enough Black respondents in Oregon in 1996 to make a statically significant comparison, and it cannot be tested for this group. In sum, similar to voter turnout, the effect of this reform is mixed for different racial groups.

Did you vote in the 1996 Election? How Strongly do you feel apart of your community? Race			1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
Race							
White	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	No	25.0%	17.1%	20.1%	13.3%	8.7%
		Yes	75.0%	82.9%	79.9%	86.7%	91.3%
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Black	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	Yes			100.0%		
		Total			100.0%		
		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	No	66.7%	14.3%	20.0%	75.0%
American Indian	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	Yes	33.3%	85.7%	80.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	No		66.7%	25.0%	
Asian	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	Yes		33.3%	75.0%	100.0%	
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	No		66.7%	91.7%	50.0%
Other	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	Yes	100.0%	33.3%	8.3%	50.0%	100.0%
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Did you vote in the 1996 Election? Trust? Race					
Race			1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
White	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	No	19.9%	14.8%	20.0%	10.1%	11.1%
		Yes	80.1%	85.2%	80.0%	89.9%	88.9%
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Black	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	Yes		100.0%			
		Total		100.0%			
		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	No		71.4%		33.3%
American Indian	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	Yes	100.0%	28.6%	100.0%	66.7%	100.0%
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	No	40.0%	33.3%		
Asian	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	Yes	60.0%	66.7%			
		Total	100.0%	100.0%			
		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	No	71.4%	53.8%	100.0%	
Other	Did you vote in the 1996 Election?	Yes	28.6%	46.2%			100.0%
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%

Education

Those who are less educated should benefit more from the reform. The educated feel better about their community and are more likely to be trustful of society (Smith 2000). With voting by mail the less educated have more time to answer referendum

questions, and to ask for help when filling out their ballots. It is also possible that they might learn of issues, and have a chance to think more about politics as a result of marking the ballot at home. If they think more about politics and learn more about important issues, perhaps, they will feel more a part of their community. If they discuss politics with neighbors, friends, and family these political discussions could engender feelings of civic engagement and community involvement.

It is interesting then that this reform has a larger impact on the educated. Those people with less than a bachelor's degree who voting by mail had -.80 less feelings of civic engagement than those who are more educated. The less educated also have a lower increase in community involvement of -.09, when compared to the more educated. Voters with less education are 28.2 percentage points more in 1996 than the less educated who did not vote. In 2000, the difference between these groups had increased to 29.8 percentage points. Thus, there was a 1.6 percentage points increase in those Oregonians with less education that feel a part of their community. Feelings towards Oregon, however, does not show a similar increase. As a whole, the reform did not engender feelings of social capital in the uneducated.

Bachelor Trust? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?				
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No Bachelor	Bachelor's or Higher	8.3%	9.9%			50.0%
	Less than Bachelor's Degree	91.7%	90.1%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes Bachelor	Bachelor's or Higher	24.8%	28.3%	41.2%	25.4%	27.8%
	Less than Bachelor's Degree	75.2%	71.7%	58.8%	74.6%	72.2%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Bachelor How Strongly do you feel apart of your community? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?				
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No Bachelor	Bachelor's or Higher		5.6%	5.1%	20.0%	16.7%
	Less than Bachelor's Degree	100.0%	94.4%	94.9%	80.0%	83.3%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes Bachelor	Bachelor's or Higher	38.5%	17.9%	22.8%	34.7%	27.5%
	Less than Bachelor's Degree	61.5%	82.1%	77.2%	65.3%	72.5%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Do you have a Bachelor's Degree? Trust? * Voting			Voting				
			1 - Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neutral (NOT PROMPTED)	Somewhat negative	5 - Very negative
No	Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?	Less than a Bachelor Degree	76.3%	68.7%	100.0%	71.4%	100.0%
		Bachelor Degree or Higher	23.7%	31.3%		28.6%	
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?	Less than a Bachelor Degree	65.4%	58.0%	50.0%	62.5%	100.0%
		Bachelor Degree or Higher	34.6%	42.0%	50.0%	37.5%	
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?			Supp-C4. Feel like part of the community? Voting				
Voting			1 - Not at all a part of community	2	3 - In the middle	4	5 - Very strongly part of the community
No	Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?	Less than a Bachelor Degree	65.5%	72.3%	74.0%	73.1%	76.7%
		Bachelor Degree or Higher	34.5%	27.7%	26.0%	26.9%	23.3%
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?	Less than a Bachelor Degree	93.8%	57.6%	67.0%	54.8%	61.9%
		Bachelor Degree or Higher	6.3%	42.4%	33.0%	45.2%	38.1%
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Unemployment

Unemployment is not a category usually studied in social capital scholarship. Voting by mail might be a good way to encourage participation from those who are not a part of the workforce. By mailing a ballot to their home, the unemployed might become educated to referenda related to their chance for employment. In Oregon, referendum questions are often about health care, education, and the economy; which are issues that should interest the unemployed. The test, however, shows that the unemployed had less feelings of civic engagement (-.24) and community involvement (-.04) than the employed after voting by mail.

Last week, did you have a job either full- or part-time? How Strongly do you feel apart of your community? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?

Did you vote in the 1996 Election?				1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No	Last week, did you have a job either full- or part-time?	Yes		40.0%	66.7%	62.8%	73.3%	33.3%
		No		60.0%	33.3%	37.2%	26.7%	66.7%
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Last week, did you have a job either full- or part-time?	Yes		53.8%	50.7%	63.8%	59.1%	51.6%
		No		46.2%	49.3%	36.2%	40.9%	48.4%
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Last week, did you have a job either full- or part-time? Trust? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?

Did you vote in the 1996 Election?				1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No	Last week, did you have a job either full- or part-time?	Yes		60.0%	63.4%	50.0%	66.7%	50.0%
		No		40.0%	36.6%	50.0%	33.3%	50.0%
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Last week, did you have a job either full- or part-time?	Yes		50.7%	59.3%	64.7%	73.1%	77.8%
		No		49.3%	40.7%	35.3%	26.9%	22.2%
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

At any time during were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work? Feel like part of the community?

Voting				1 - Not at all a part of community	2	3 - In the middle	4	5 - Very strongly part of the community
No	At any time during the last year were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work?	Yes		76.7%	87.2%	73.4%	84.6%	80.6%
		No		23.3%	12.8%	26.6%	15.4%	19.4%
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	At any time during the last year were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work?	Yes		47.1%	44.1%	60.8%	68.9%	61.9%

At any time the last year were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work? Trust? Voting		Trust? Voting					
		1 - Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neutral (NOT PROMPTED)	Somewhat negative	5 - Very negative	
No	At any time during the last year were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work?	Yes	77.0%	83.1%	100.0%	50.0%	50.0%
		No	23.0%	16.9%		50.0%	50.0%
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	At any time during the last year were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work?	Yes	55.6%	68.4%	75.0%	46.8%	81.8%
		No	44.4%	31.6%	25.0%	53.2%	18.2%
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Age

The elderly have higher rates of social capital than the young (Subramanian et. al 2003). Different theories propose reasons for this. Perhaps it is because the society in which the old were raised was one with more communal involvement and feelings of civic engagement (Subramanian et. al 2003). Or perhaps as one ages, one is more inclined to commit oneself to volunteering activities (Subramanian et. al 2003). The young have lower levels of social capital (Southwell 2003). Perhaps, it is because they have many responsibilities; such as working, childcare, and education. I find that the young were the greatest beneficiaries as compared to other social groups. Voting by mail encourages the young to have more feelings of civic engagement and commitment to their community. After voting by mail, the young's feelings of civic engagement of Oregon rose .47 and their community involvement rose .42.

For the elderly the reform has brought about more feelings of civic engagement of Oregon, those over age 65 have a .18 increase. The feeling of community involvement, however, for those over age 65 is less than other age groups (-.50). The elderly tended to vote at higher rates, and by not having the communal engagement of going to the polls on Election Day, they might feel less a part of their community. Thus, for young and old the reform was beneficial, except for less community involvement of the elderly.

Are you Over 65? How Strongly do you feel apart of your community? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?

				1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No	Are you Over 65?	No	80.0%	100.0%	92.3%	90.0%	66.7%	
		Yes	20.0%		7.7%	10.0%	33.3%	
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yes	Are you Over 65?	No	76.9%	80.6%	78.0%	77.3%	71.3%	
		Yes	23.1%	19.4%	22.0%	22.7%	28.7%	
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Are you Over 65? * Trust? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?

				1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No	Are you Over 65?	No	90.0%	90.1%	83.3%	88.9%	100.0%	
		Yes	10.0%	9.9%	16.7%	11.1%		
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yes	Are you Over 65?	No	69.4%	79.8%	76.5%	85.1%	77.8%	
		Yes	30.6%	20.2%	23.5%	14.9%	22.2%	
		Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Are you Over 65 Feel like part of the community? 2000 Voting			1 - Not at all a part of community	2	3 - In the middle	4	5 - Very strongly part of the community
No	Are you Over 65	No	93.3%	95.7%	91.3%	96.2%	87.1%
		Yes	6.7%	4.3%	8.7%	3.8%	12.9%
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Are you Over 65	No	88.2%	88.3%	70.6%	78.5%	68.6%
		Yes	11.8%	11.7%	29.4%	21.5%	31.4%
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Are you Over 65? Trust? 2000 Voting			1 - Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neutral (NOT PROMPTED)	Somewhat negative	5 - Very negative
No	Are you Over 65	No	90.0%	96.4%		75.0%	100.0%
		Yes	10.0%	3.6%	100.0%	25.0%	
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Are you Over 65	No	70.0%	80.2%	75.0%	75.0%	81.8%
		Yes	30.0%	19.8%	25.0%	25.0%	18.2%
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Are you under 25? How Strongly do you feel apart of your community? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?			1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No	Are you under 25?	No	80.0%	66.7%	85.9%	86.7%	91.7%
		Yes	20.0%	33.3%	14.1%	13.3%	8.3%
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Are you under 25?	No	96.2%	97.0%	98.0%	97.2%	99.2%
		Yes	3.8%	3.0%	2.0%	2.8%	.8%
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Are you under 25? Trust? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?			1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No	Are you under 25?	No	83.3%	83.1%	83.3%	88.9%	100.0%
		Yes	16.7%	16.9%	16.7%	11.1%	
	Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Are you under 25?	No	98.2%	98.4%	94.1%	97.0%	88.9%
		Yes	1.8%	1.6%	5.9%	3.0%	11.1%

Are you under 25? Feel like part of the community? 2000 Voting		2000 Voting					
Voting		1 - Not at all a part of community	2	3 - In the middle	4	5 - Very strongly part of the community	
No	Are you under 25?	No	80.0%	74.5%	84.4%	96.2%	100.0%
		Yes	20.0%	25.5%	15.6%	3.8%	
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Are you under 25?	No	100.0%	100.0%	97.7%	97.8%	99.0%
		Yes			2.3%	2.2%	1.0%
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Are you under 25? Trust? 2000 Voting		2000 Voting					
Voting		1 - Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neutral (NOT PROMPTED)	Somewhat negative	5 - Very negative	
No	Are you under 25?	No	82.7%	86.1%	100.0%	95.2%	100.0%
		Yes	17.3%	13.9%		4.8%	
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Are you under 25?	No	99.2%	96.7%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Yes	.8%	3.3%			
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Disability

The reform would seem to be a great benefit for the disabled, who after the reform could vote with ease (Schur et. al 2002). Voting rates did not increase for this group, but levels of social capital increased for those who voted by mail. The convenience offered by the reform might make a disabled person feel more a part of their community. The hypothesis is then that the reform benefits the disabled more in comparison with the non-disabled. After voting by mail, the disabled have higher levels of feelings of civic engagement and community involvement. The disabled who voted by mail have increased their feelings of Oregon by 1.41. In a scale of one through five that is a large increase. The disabled's community involvement increased by .42 as a result of the

reform. Thus, the reform significantly increases the social capital of the disabled who voted by mail.

Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability? How Strongly do you feel apart of your community? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?

			1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
Did you vote in the 1996 Election?							
No	Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	Yes	50.0%	5.6%	15.4%	6.7%	8.3%
		No	50.0%	94.4%	83.3%	93.3%	91.7%
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	Yes	7.7%	32.8%	18.1%	9.7%	29.5%
		No	92.3%	67.2%	81.9%	90.3%	70.5%
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability? Trust? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?

			1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
Did you vote in the 1996 Election?							
No	Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	Yes	20.0%	8.5%	16.7%	22.2%	
		No	78.3%	91.5%	83.3%	77.8%	100.0%
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	Yes	20.5%	17.4%	17.6%	20.9%	27.8%
		No	79.5%	82.6%	82.4%	79.1%	72.2%
Total			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability? Feel like part of the community? 2000

Voting				1 - Not at all a part of community	2	3 - In the middle	4	5 - Very strongly part of the community
No	Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	Yes		3.3%	8.3%	16.8%	26.9%	12.9%
		No		96.7%	91.7%	83.2%	73.1%	87.1%
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	Yes		31.3%	49.2%	22.9%	17.8%	17.1%
		No		68.8%	50.8%	77.1%	82.2%	82.9%
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability? Trust? 2000

Voting				1 - Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neutral (NOT PROMPTED)	Somewhat negative	5 - Very negative
No	Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	Yes		5.8%	18.1%		40.0%	50.0%
		No		94.2%	81.9%	100.0%	60.0%	50.0%
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes	Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	Yes		24.2%	23.6%		27.1%	25.0%
		No		75.8%	76.4%	100.0%	72.9%	75.0%
		Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Gender

Men have less social capital than women (Smith 2000). This might be due to their lower voter levels, which as noted above are often included in social capital measurements. After voting by mail, men have less feelings of civic engagement as compared to women of -.42. Men have -.42 less feelings of community involvement than women do after the reform. It must be noted that men in general did show a rise in feelings of civic engagement and community involvement and that this measure is

designed to show the relative change between men and women. A more accurate description is that men increased at a lesser rate than women. But, women have more social capital after this reform than men.

Gender Feel like part of the community? 2000 Voting			1 - Not at all a part of community	2	3 - In the middle	4	5 - Very strongly part of the community
No	Gender	Male	33.3%	35.4%	42.0%	34.6%	35.5%
		Female	66.7%	64.6%	58.0%	65.4%	64.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yes	Gender	Male	31.3%	32.2%	40.8%	35.6%	19.2%
		Female	68.8%	67.8%	59.2%	64.4%	80.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Gender Trust? 2000 Voting			1 - Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neutral (NOT PROMPTED)	Somewhat negative	5 - Very negative
No	Gender	Male	41.0%	36.1%	100.0%	20.0%	
		Female	59.0%	63.9%		80.0%	100.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yes	Gender	Male	22.6%	42.5%	25.0%	54.2%	72.7%
		Female	77.4%	57.5%	75.0%	45.8%	27.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Are you male or female? How Strongly do you feel apart of your community? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?			1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No Are you male or female?	Gender	Male	10.0%	55.6%	44.9%	40.0%	41.7%
		Female	90.0%	44.4%	55.1%	60.0%	58.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yes Are you male or female?	Gender	Male	26.9%	49.3%	45.3%	40.9%	40.2%
		Female	73.1%	50.7%	54.7%	59.1%	59.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Are you male or female? Trust? Did you vote in the 1996 Election?		Did you vote in the 1996 Election?				
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
No Are you male or female?	Male	45.0%	38.0%	50.0%	55.6%	50.0%
	Female	55.0%	62.0%	50.0%	44.4%	50.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yes Are you male or female?	Male	34.2%	44.1%	47.1%	58.2%	61.1%
	Female	65.8%	55.9%	52.9%	41.8%	38.9%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Conclusion

Can an electoral system reform change the way people participate and feel about their society? This study concludes that, yes, the reform produces a small but statistically significant increase in feelings of civic engagement and community involvement. Moreover, there are certain groups such as the young or the disabled, which particularly benefit from this reform. Since this reform has the ability to change people's involvement in politics, then other reforms could also succeed in achieving this same goal. If public policy is shaped to be more engaging and make people feel more a part of their community, then we could expect more social capital.

Social capital is not a cure-all, and Oregon will not be a perfect society because of voting by mail. Although there is only a small increase of social capital, it is important to the analysis of this reform to include these unintended affects. If other states change to voting by mail they can expect an increase of social capital and voter turnout. Moreover,

considering the aforementioned cyclical potential of social capital, the reform might engender increasing levels of social capital. If people are more willing to participate after participating, then reforms that facilitate this process for only a few can have a larger impact in the long run. In the long run these unintended affects could have great consequence, as the few people motivated by voting by mail to be involved with their community will in turn motivate others. It could also be that these effects are spurious and that more time is needed to make a final conclusion. But, for now it can be tentatively concluded that the data does provide evidence that a small percentage of the population saw their civic engagement and community involvement increase due to the reform.

Ch 6: Conclusion

Voting by mail provides a model of how to increase democratic participation. I show that public policy influences political behavior; both in its basic forms like voting, and more complex forms like social capital. I demonstrate that political institutions can create structures that facilitate—or hinder—political participation. Voting by mail is a unique experience in American politics. In studying the reform movement, its effect on social capital, and several kinds of tests of voter turnout, I find that the reform has many positive benefits while costing less than other electoral systems. None of the predicted negative effects have materialized. Using quantitative analyses like regression models to study how, and for whom, participation changed, and qualitative analysis and interviews, I explain how this reform came about. I find that voting by mail increases turnout, especially for poor and minority groups. Interestingly, survey data suggests that the reform increases social capital.

Summary of findings, and which theory was supported

The change to voting by mail permits the testing of important theories in political science. As previously mentioned, these theories are often difficult to test empirically because electoral system reform was uncommon until recently.

Electoral Reforms and Rationality

Voting by mail raised turnout, and this research supports the structural barriers theories—including Riker and Ordeshook's—of nonvoting. These scholars maintain that

people want to vote, but the process is too difficult for some. Yet the logic of Downs's argument is still very persuasive, as one vote cannot make any substantive difference in an election. Voting by mail provides evidence for an expansion of Riker and Ordeshook's theory—which I offer below—that models the decision to vote.

The reform significantly increases voter turnout. In both national elections that used voting by mail there was a large increase in turnout. In the 2000 election, voting rates increased by 8.5 percent of registered voters over 1996 rates. The 2002 election had an even larger increase of 10.1 percent of registered voters from 1998. The increase in turnout occurred in period of voting rate decline for Oregon. My regression analysis determines that other factors did not cause this increase. I create a model that features the most commonly agreed demographic influences on turnout. I test race, age, education, and income from 1990 through 2002. The regression equation shows there were three statistically significant variables. These variables are Voting By Mail, Over65, and Income. The voting by mail statistic is highly positively correlated with Oregon's increase in turnout at 0.715. The Over65 and Income variables did not change during the period of the reform. The variables that are not significant are Under25, Education, and Race. The reform is the sole influence on the turnout increase in the 2000 and 2002 elections.

I test other potential influences on Oregon's turnout increase. I compare turnout data from urban and rural counties to determine which increased more. Urban counties voted at slightly higher rates both before and after the reform. In 2000, urban counties

voted at 80.1 percent of registered voters, while rural counties voted at 78.7 percent. I compare national and regional voting trends with Oregon's data to determine if they caused the turnout to increase. In national elections from 1980 through 1996, Oregon closely followed the national and regional trends in voting rates. Oregon's voting patterns are .80 correlated with the national patterns, and the correlation is significant. Oregon's voting patterns are .87 correlated with the regional patterns, and the correlation is significant. But after the reform, national and regional turnout levels remained the same while Oregon's turnout increased. This increase shows that there was something unique to Oregon that increased turnout, and the only determining factor in Oregon that changed was the introduction of voting by mail.

I test Oregon's turnout versus all other states' turnout. The test ran a regression of all fifty states' 1996 turnout against their turnout in 2000. Oregon is significantly higher than the regression line, which signifies that its change in turnout is atypical. Finally, while a recent report posits that increased mobilization from Oregon's status as a battleground state is the reason for its turnout increase, this analysis uses the less precise VAP. When the test uses percent of registered voters turnout data, Oregon has a five percentage point larger turnout increase than other battleground states. In conclusion, these tests confirm that the reform results in a large increase in turnout.

The reform achieves its primary goal of increasing voting rates, despite being enacted in a period of decreasing turnout. Several electoral system reforms have not increased turnout. Some examples of these reforms are the early voting, an amendment

to allow 18-year olds to vote, and easier registration procedures. What does the increase in turnout after the reform tell us about decreases in participation? There are two types of theories on America's low voting rates (Piven and Cloward 2001). The first is the legal-institutional school, which points to decreased party competitiveness, decreased party constituencies, and complicated voting and registration requirements; as opposed to individual attributes (Piven and Cloward 2001). Alternatively, the social-psychological scholars state that who a person is has a significant effect on participation rates (Piven and Cloward 2001). The evidence that voting by mail increases turnout supports the legal-institutional scholars' theory that structural barriers keep people from voting. Why then do so many people not vote after these other reforms were implemented? If the answer is not because of socio-psychological factors, then we must examine Anthony Downs's model of (non)voting to determine why people abstain.

Downs changed the topic of study from why people do not vote; to why do they bother to do it at all. He studied politics with methods borrowed from welfare economics. He posited that voters act "rationally" in order to maximize political support and control. He defined rationality as acting to create and utilize politics to benefit the political or economic means of the actor (Downs p. 260). Downs's "self-interest axiom" holds that individuals are not only rational but also selfish, thus, they will only vote when it is individually beneficial (Downs p. 279). Voting has costs like taking the time to register or going to the polling place. If the outcome of the election does not matter, or if the costs are higher than the benefits, then people will choose not to vote. In a large modern democracy it is almost impossible for one vote to change the outcome of an

election. Thus, the model predicts that even if costs are reduced, it will not increase turnout because it will never be lower than the benefits of voting. Yet, voting by mail reduces costs and turnout increases. Down's model of the decision to vote can be written as:

$$V = (B)P - C$$

V = Voting
 B = Benefits
 P = Probability
 C = Costs

William Riker and Peter Ordeshook offer another model, which tries to explain why half of the population votes, even though a person's vote will not change the outcome of the election (Riker and Ordeshook p.25). Voting is a paradox because the costs are always higher than the benefits, and the probability of your vote deciding the election is literally one in a million. But Riker and Ordeshook add another variable by suggesting that the experience of voting is more than a cost, it also has benefits. Riker and Ordeshook offer five experiential benefits that people get from voting that have nothing to do with winning an election. The five experiential benefits are patriotism, fulfilling civic duty, supporting a candidate, enjoying the polling place activities, and mistakenly believing in the efficacy of voting (Riker and Ordeshook p.25). Camaraderie of the polling place is not present in voting by mail, and turnout still increased. Perhaps the social capital benefits I show in chapter 5 can explain this increase, but the other factors below improve this model. Thus, Riker and Ordeshook's model reads:

$$V=(B)P - C + D$$

V=Voting

B= Benefits

P=Probability

C=Costs

D=Experiential Benefits

But Riker and Ordeshook's model omits other influences that could motivate someone to vote. There are two areas that could be added to Riker's model that would better explain why people want to vote. Mobilization is a key determinant of why people vote. Rosenstone and Hansen find that "people participate in politics not so much because of who they are but because of the political choices and incentives they are offered" (Rosenstone and Hansen p.3). This is not to discount the influence of "resources, interests identification, and beliefs of individual citizens" (Rosenstone and Hansen p.5). But the decision to vote must include the push that various political agents give any citizen. The choices of politicians, parties, and interest groups amount to strategies to delineate the pool of political participants and direct its expansion and contraction (Rosenstone and Hansen P.38). Thus, the model of someone's decision to vote needs to expand to include mobilization.

Another concern is that the model needs a methodological correction. All models must include an error term (Studenmund Ch.1). An error term is not an error in someone's decision, but rather all the random or systemic factors that are missed by the social scientist's model. The countless contextual reasons why someone might want to vote cannot be understood or modeled in advance. An example is the 1998 Minnesota gubernatorial race, where former professional wrestler Jesse Ventura won the election

due to a large increase in turnout. One major group that turned out for Ventura was motivated by a fraternity campaign to ridicule the political establishment in Minnesota by electing a professional wrestler as governor (Southwell 2003). This type of localized turnout increase is impossible to model, except through the inclusion of an error term. The error term simply includes all the reasons (systemic or random) for turnout change that are not in the model. Below I offer a new model of the decision to vote that contains enough benefits to account for Oregon's rise in turnout, despite the logic of Downs's argument. The new model combines the emotional benefits of Riker and Ordeshook with real world events like mobilization and local aberrations in turnout. Thus, the new model would read:

$$V=(B)P - C + D + M + E$$

V= Voting

B= Benefits

P= Probability

C= Costs

D= Experiential Benefits

M= Mobilization

E= Error

Voting by mail increases turnout by lowering costs, and if this reform was implemented elsewhere it would have wider effects. The reasons other reforms did not work were in their design, and not because voting is an irrational act. The focus of the reform was to lower the cost (C) variable in the model, but unless we recognize that voting has benefits, the model is not functional. Oregon's turnout increase demonstrates that the benefits of voting are more complicated than Downs had theorized. The experiential model of Riker and Ordeshook, however, needs to expand to include other influences. These are influences that can be known in advance and modeled like

mobilization, or they can be left unsaid and accounted for by the error term. Thus, the benefits of voting are real, even if one vote does not affect the outcome of an election. People want to partake in these benefits, and the method of voting can be changed to encourage their participation. The turnout increase after the reform shows that the average citizen does want to vote. The convenience of this process enables more of them to vote at higher rates.

Demographics and Voter Abstention

The study of the reform also tests whether government can encourage marginalized populations to be more politically active. If people are not voting because the process is too difficult, then the reform's convenience will have more affect on those people with the hardest lives. The reform produces more turnout from some of these groups. This shows that they vote at lower rates because of structural interference, which is more severe for them than for others in society. People do not abstain solely because of cultural or other reasons.

Voting rates in America are lower than in Europe because of our onerous voting procedures (Miller and Shanks 1995). Low turnout, however, is a problem that is disproportionately true of certain groups of citizens. If politicians know that these groups are not going to reward or punish them at the polls, then they will likely push an uneven amount of a policy's costs onto these groups (Martin 2003). A famous example of the benefits of increased turnout is the enfranchisement of Southern Blacks in the 1960's, and their subsequent rise in status and economic level. Higher levels of voting should

produce government policies that will benefit those who support winning politicians. There are several theories as to why voting rates are disproportionately lower among certain groups. These theories include reasons for lower turnout such as the extension of the franchise to socioeconomic groups who do want to vote, a decline in partisanship, weakening social involvement, less mobilization, and declining efficacy (Piven and Cloward 2001). The reform demonstrates that some groups are voting less because of the difficulty of the electoral process. By making the electoral process simpler these groups vote at higher rates.

I find some marginalized group's turnout increases at higher rates than mainstream Oregonians. The poor's turnout change, in particular, is larger than the non-poor's increase. Voting by mail succeeds in facilitating more voting than the majority from the poor (5.5 percentage points higher), the elderly (13.9 percentage points), African Americans (0.2 percentage points), American Indians (6.6 percentage points), men (2.0 percentage points), and the unemployed (14.2 percentage points). Voting among these groups increases at higher rates than the majority. Other marginalized groups, however, have less of an increase than the majority. These groups are the young, uneducated, Hispanics, Asians, Other Race, and renters.

Thus, some of those with harder lives respond to voting by mail more than others in society. Other policies could facilitate voting for these groups. For example, the ban on felon voting disproportionately impacts marginalized groups. Structures facilitate or hinder participation from marginalized groups. Other reforms could be implemented that

would be successful for groups continuing to vote at lower rates. The language barrier with mail-in ballots might easily be overcome by printing the ballots in multiple languages. The closer voting rates come to achieving full participation, the more government's policies should become fully representative (Martin 2003). The fact that some groups benefit—while others do not—suggests the potential for other reforms to increase their participation. Voting by mail's success in this area points toward the possibility of creating a system in which all citizens participate.

Social Capital and Institutional Influence

Did the reform engender more engagement in society? By changing the voting system to an open style, it also increases social capital, albeit modestly. Putnam would argue that social capital is outside the realm of influence of government. He argues that social capital is what influences government. Others like Coleman and Skocpol say that institutions are needed to facilitate the development of social capital, and thus a reform like voting by mail might stimulate its creation. Changing the institutional process can produce a more engaged citizenry.

The reform had unintended consequences, which are beneficial to political life in Oregon. In the social capital test, I find that feelings of civic engagement in Oregon rose for those who voted by mail. The mean response for this question for those who voted in 1996 is 1.97, and for 2000 it is 1.73. Thus, after people voted by mail they feel .2 more positive of Oregon on a scale of one to five. Voter's feelings of community involvement rise after the reform. In 1996, there is little difference for those who voted in terms of

caring about their community. 2000 voters have a 24 percentage points more positive skew than 1996. Thus, if you vote by mail you have a greater chance of feeling a part of your community than if you voted in a polling place. The mean score test shows that in 2000—when comparing those who did and did not vote—those who voted felt .10 more a part of their community than in 1996. The data also suggest that volunteering should increase, although no statistical proof is available.

I use demographical data to determine for whom social capital increased. I test American Indians, Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, the disabled, men, the uneducated, the unemployed, the poor, those under age 25 and over age 65. I test these groups for change in feelings of civic engagement and community involvement. Those who voted by mail from marginalized groups who feel more engaged than the majority are Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, the disabled, the unemployed, those under age 25 and over age 65. After voting by mail the marginalized groups who feel more involved in their community than the majority are Asians, Blacks, the disabled, the poor, and those under age 25. Thus, the reform results in a small increase in the social capital levels in Oregon. In particular, groups who were likely to have low social capital like the poor or the young experienced a higher increase after participating in the reform.

The change in electoral systems encourages social capital by producing an increase in civic engagement. Theories on the need for more civic engagement are linked to a long democratic philosophical tradition that stretches from Habermas in the twentieth century back to Rousseau, and even Aristotle (Habermas 1984 p.10 see also Bent p.2).

To be a political animal means that we have the ability to use politics to resolve our differences (Yack 1993). Civic engagement makes us complete, because we are fulfilling our teleological goal of human social interaction (Valelly 1993). This theoretical line sees civic engagement as a way to mitigate rational self-interest, and thus, avoid the tragedy of the commons (Yack 1993). These theorists believe that if everyone is rationally self-interested it will not lead to a superior outcome, but to mutual degradation (Yack 1993). The ability of humans to resolve our problems in methods other than conflict is what is essential to being human, mainly because it is what separates us from animals.

Rousseau was specific on the need to create institutions that engender civic engagement (Rousseau p.185). Voting by mail creates just such an institutional context. Voting by mail facilitates civic engagement, and thus people can become more human. Civic engagement creates self-reflection in one's community. People in civil society are more likely to be thoughtful of the needs of others than in the economic world (Habermas 1984; 1987). It was this point from Rousseau that was so important to Hegel, Feuerbach, and subsequently to Marx. For Marx becoming a "species-being" is how humanity gains its ultimate freedom, by seeing oneself as a member of a species, and caring for its betterment (Marx and Engels p33). Marx theorized that this could only happen in an institutional context that makes humans engaged in society, rather than a tool of it.

These theorists thought that seeing yourself reflected in your society—rather than a means to society's end goals—is crucial to achieving your humanity. But the process

needs an institution to promote these experiences (Valelly 1993). Voting by mail increases social capital and facilitates more feelings of civic engagement and community involvement. I show above that encouraging opportunities where humans can become engaged does create feelings of civic engagement and community involvement. As previously stated, more feelings of civic engagement and community involvement should motivate people to join groups and participate in other activities that will only further their feelings of involvement. Eventually this should lead to groups that pressure government to become more responsive. Thus, reforms can stimulate the enactment of other reforms. It is worth remembering the referendum and initiative was a reform in 1902, and it enabled the passage of the voting by mail reform. Political process reforms can enable future reforms. If voting by mail encourages more political participation, it could create an environment where more reforms are enacted in the future.

Putnam criticizes Habermas's reliance on constitutions to promote the institutional structures that enable the "life-world" (Putnam 1993, discussed in Bent p.3). In this life-world, scientific rationality and the efficiency of capitalism are tempered with more human concerns. Habermas desires reforms that create structures that permit and encourage participation (Habermas 1984). But Putnam counters that institutional contexts rarely produce engagement (Putnam 1993 p.18). Putnam says "[t]wo centuries of constitution-writing around the world warn us ...that designers of new institutions are often writing on water...That institutional reforms alter behavior is an hypothesis, not an axiom."(Putnam 1993 p.18) The research on voting by mail supports this hypothesis, and more reforms designed to promote civic engagement should be considered and implemented.

The social capital debate about whether institutions are needed to facilitate these experiences of mutual self-recognition is thus based on a fine distinction between types of institutions. Putnam cannot be anti-institutionalist because volunteer groups are also institutions. Social capital then requires some type of device—or conduit—to enable us to be engaged. The marketplace or civil society need not be the only spaces of mutual recognition and societal engagement. Government can also be a source of these spaces (Valelly 1993). The rationalized efficiency of market economics makes it unlikely that anything other than government will provide the institutional structures needed to promote civic engagement. The government could be coercive in processes of engagement, and this needs to be resisted. But a reform like voting by mail has increased civic engagement, and at the same did not enforce it.

Electoral Reform and the Demobilization Theory

Studying the reform enactment tested the theory of demobilization. The demobilization theory states that politicians will not expand the electorate if it will make it more difficult for them to be reelected. Yet the electorate did expand in Oregon. Studying the reform process that led to voting by mail—which was predicted to increase voter turnout—tested which politicians were supportive of this change. The reform process needed the convergence of unrelated circumstances to facilitate its enactment. These circumstances came about both directly and indirectly. Yet all were crucial to the reform's enactment. First, state's rights in elections procedures in our national institutions, facilitated the reform. The United States' federal institutional context

promotes the powers of states to determine their own election processes. The Supreme Court, thus, refused to hear the case to have voting by mail ruled unconstitutional. Second, the political culture in Oregon was such that it was experienced with successful reforms. For example, Oregon used an open voting process in the 1850's where people said the name of their candidate in public. Oregon led the way in instituting referendum and initiative voting, the process that enabled voting by mail to be enacted. Oregon experimented with many recent successful reforms. Oregon's political development makes the enactment of new reforms—like voting by mail—easier. The 1981 voting by mail experiment provided empirical evidence to the reform's benefits and safety. There was a coalition of non-governmental organizations, Democratic politicians, and unions that would benefit from the reform's enactment. Further, the reform did not endanger powerful corporations, causing them to lobby against it. If the reform coalition was not present, the reform would have stalled. The coalition pushed the reform, and gathered enough petitions to get it included on the 1998 referendum ballot. Also, Oregon was facing decreasing turnout, raising elections costs, and increasing negative political advertising. These factors created a window of opportunity for policy change that enabled the reform's enactment.

The reform overcame the public's fear of fraud, undue influence and loss of polling place camaraderie. Republicans, also, worked against its enactment, and continue to attempt to constrain its effects. The theorists who posited that there are social-psychological reasons for non-turnout were shown to be wrong. People want to vote, and do if the process is convenient enough for them to participate. Thus, I need to

examine who supports these difficult processes in America. The demobilization theory explains why the Republican Party fought against easing the voting process in Oregon.

Voting by mail was predicted increase turnout and lower costs. Republican politicians acted against the reform, even though it lowers state expenditures, something usually associated with their agenda. Their resistance is due to the other predicted outcome of increased turnout. After it was enacted, fraud was not a problem, yet the Republicans still resist this change. The demobilization theory posits that parties will change the voting processes and requirements to mobilize the masses if it benefits them. If the expansion of the electorate hurts a party they will be against it. Most Democrats supported the reform, and most Republicans fought it. Due to the reform's potential to increase turnout from groups that usually vote Democratic, it benefits the Democratic Party to promote voting by mail. Thus, the demobilization theory explains the Republican resistance to voting by mail.

Yet, some argue the reason America has low turnout is not structural barriers, but because our politicians are not concerned with issues of salience to blacks and industrial working-class whites (Piven and Cloward 2001). These groups abstain more from the voting process. Apathy exists because the moneyed elite control politics and create a lack of deliberation about issues these Americans care about. The demobilization theory further explains the drop in turnout after 1896 as part of mutually reinforcing process of lower turnout and less relevance of political party platforms. It posits that mutually reinforcing historical barriers were created as "parties turned away from the issues and

campaign stratagems needed to win lower-class support...The resulting marginalization of working people not only from political influence but from the political culture created by the parties in turn reinforced their tendency to abstain”(Piven and Cloward p.18-19). It is in the interest of elites to keep turnout low. However, if it suits them, they will push for higher turnout, as the Democrats did in Oregon. Politicians reduce the difficulty of the voting process when it benefits their electoral goals, and fight a convenient reform when it hurts their chances for reelection.

The fear of the have-nots controlling the electorate, and subsequently having control over wealth, is a powerful force in America’s political development. This fear may have created the various reforms that decreased America’s voting rates after the defeat of the populists in 1896 (Burnham 1974). The potential of poor and marginalized groups to use their electoral muscle to change the power structure is real. Karl Marx quotes Alexander Hamilton who said that in doing away with the property qualification “the masses have gained a victory over property owners and financial wealth”(Marx and Engels p33). With that victory, there was a natural desire to use government to change the economic and social systems. The poor and middle class greatly outnumber the rich, and universal enfranchisement was thought to lead to a significant redistribution of wealth and power. The demobilization of the masses was how the elite prevented the ensuing push towards redistribution, embodied in the labor and populist movements at the end of the 19th century. Only through limiting the number of participants can the elite maintain control over the economic and social systems in a democracy.

After 1896, the battle in America for control of the economy, between free market Republicans and the potential of labor coalitional politics—whether from populists, socialists, or New-Deal Democrats—was fought under conditions of electoral demobilization. Perhaps if more poor and marginalized groups were voting, America's exceptionalism in responding to the rise of labor politics might not have occurred. In modern America, economic issues are still debated with vigor, and this reform—and others like it that increase turnout—has the potential to expand the electorate to include many poor and marginalized groups that could permanently swing the electorate to the left, if they vote as their socioeconomic status predicts they will.

The American electorate is now split evenly with about half voting for the Democrats or Republicans (Gallup 2003). Safe districts will continue to be safe, because the reform can only have a limited impact. But, there are many close districts that would go to the Democratic Party if the electorate includes more poor and marginalized voters (Citrin et al 2001). That is something Republicans need to fight. The socioeconomic status of these new voters predicts they will tend to vote for a Democratic candidate (Miller and Shanks 1995). If the parties respond to this change by offering class-based economic policy, there is a chance for the type of electoral socialism predicted by Bernstein, Schumpeter, and the Fabian socialists. Increased voter turnout might produce a slowly enacted, non-revolutionary socialism built through legal means of regulation and increased governmental control over the economy.

Thus, expanding the electorate is an issue with dire potential consequence for certain groups, and great benefit for others. Current Republicans—who are likely to be supportive of free market economics—are also fighting the expansion of the electorate based on these economic concerns. Their ability to be reelected is connected directly to their support of the current system of low turnout. If the status quo is threatened by the engagement of many more poor people into the system, then it will be harder to be elected for two reasons. First, these new voters should not want to vote for them, as their economic policies were not designed to benefit the poor. Second, their base of support is corporations and the moneyed elite, who will be far less powerful in the new system. It is then clear why these Republican politicians did not support this reform. If they did there is a chance that in time their ability to be reelected, and their political agenda, will not be viable.

Another question not answered by this research here but one that needs to be addressed is why the Democratic Party has not worked effectively to expand participation, when it is so clearly in its interest to do so (Citrin et al. 2001). The security of certain powerful politicians in their seats might offer a clue. As the most experienced politicians usually make the decisions of the party, and probably will not want to change a system they are enjoying. They might not want a redistribution of power and wealth, despite their Democratic label. Further, increased turnout would require the expense of increased mobilization of these voters. Perhaps the Democratic leadership has counseled the party to ignore these goals due to their personal benefits from the current system.

Admittedly, the Democrats try to mobilize voters and run get-out-the-vote campaigns, but this research shows that another effective way to increase turnout is through systemic reform. The Democratic Party would be advantaged if it could change the national electoral system to encourage turnout. The adoption of voting by mail would help all Americans due to its ease and lower costs, but in particular social justice politics would benefit by this reform. The process through which voting by mail was enacted was the referendum and initiative. America does not have a national referendum and initiative, so a national election law would have to be approved by Congress. The demobilization theory suggests that politicians will not want to expand the electorate. Subsequently any national change would have to be accepted by the federal judiciary, which as previously mentioned, is currently promoting state's rights in election procedures.

Thus, the state-level referendum—particularly in western states—is the most likely process to expand the reform. The Secretary of State of Washington has co-authored an “op-ed” in the New York Times encouraging its adoption (Bradbury and Reed 2001). Colorado had a poorly promoted voting by mail referendum on the 2002 ballot, and it lost by a significant margin. But many referenda are on the ballot for years before voters become familiar enough with their benefits to approve them. The potential of voting by mail to spread, however, is directly related to the amount of support it receives from the Democratic Party. If the Democrats are rational they will pursue these goals. If, however, the party follows the individual goals of its leadership, then it might further stagnate and not pursue electoral reform. The relationship between who votes and

who benefits from government shows that increasing turnout is crucial for the success of social justice politics (Martin 2003). If voting by mail—or any reform that boosts turnout—is adopted it will have to overcome the resistance of politicians who fear a change in the status quo.

Should voting by mail be tried elsewhere?

Voting by mail is a reform that would work elsewhere. The federally funded mail system is universally available, trusted, and works well in any state. Thus, this national institution provides the facilities to enable this reform to work anywhere in United States. When weighing the benefits over the negative aspects, the reform is a success. The American system has declining voting rates, and a simple and inexpensive reform like voting by mail could facilitate more turnout. Besides an increase in general turnout, voting by mail would increase turnout rates for marginalized populations. It is also a less expensive electoral system. There are more marginalized populations in other states than in Oregon, which has greater equality in social and economic levels (Census 2000). Marginalized groups in other states could greatly benefit from this reform. Oregon has fewer racial minorities and lower commuting time than other states in America. In states where there are larger problems with these issues, it is possible there would be greater success with this reform.

The benefits in social capital also have the potential to reduce the apathy that currently defines American politics. The effects of social capital are still being tested and debated. But it is reasonable enough that a population monitoring its government is

going to have a better government than a less engaged and politicized population. Thus, this reform has the potential if enacted in other states to increase political participation and awareness of issues, and perhaps promote more volunteering and community involvement. The effects of this reform were small, and most people were not affected in this way. Nevertheless, voting by mail should have similar small effects on the social capital of other states.

The future will probably feature some type of Internet voting, which would be even easier than voting by mail. But the current doubts over computer security will make voting by mail a logical first step toward this end. When considering the lack of computer access by all it is doubtful that the problems with Internet voting will be sufficiently addressed. The public will be too wary of potential fraud and lack of computer access and literacy to change to an Internet system of voting anytime soon. It might take decades before these problems are overcome. In the meantime, voting by mail would be a beneficial system if it were to be adopted throughout America.

Areas for future research

Future research should continue the study of the relationship between public policy, political participation, and voting behavior. This research also begs the question of what role institutions play in promoting civic engagement, and what is necessary for participation in one's community. Other voting reforms have been tried in other states, with some success. Comparisons between the alternative systems like voting by mail, early voting, and same day registration would yield useful knowledge. Other research

should address the politics of these reforms. Possible research questions are whether the referendum process was used, and whether politicians in these states fought or supported these reforms. In a comparative perspective, it would be interesting to determine if elsewhere in the world there are reforms similar to voting by mail, and to study their effect on participation.

Conclusion

Thus far, voting by mail is a success. This evidence informs important political science debates. These debates go to the heart of our understanding of the nature of political behavior. Participation is of the highest importance to democracy, and also to the fulfillment of our humanity. The research shows that institutions pattern the level of involvement in society. Oregon approved a referendum that eases the electoral process, and the effect was increased participation. Thus, institutional reforms can succeed in influencing political behavior. Since there are great benefits from increasing participation of all kinds, it then follows that more institutional reforms should be enacted that promote participation. Other governmental processes could be changed to make their practices facilitate societal involvement.

The reasons for resistance to the reform are based on a desire to fight the redistribution of wealth and power. The Republican Party has fought this reform, both as official policy and through the continued attack on its efficacy. Some Democrats have been against it, and some Republicans have been for it, but the majority of both parties have sided with their rational party interests as depicted in the demobilization theory.

The Republican opponents state their objections to the reform are due mainly to concerns about fraud. But after fraud was not a problem in the last two elections, they continue to draft legislation to curtail the influence of this reform. Voting by mail is a threat to any politician who does not want marginalized groups voting at higher rates. The ability of the reformers to enact this legislation rested on the referendum process, which is not available nationally. State-level referenda may offer the best path to the enactment of future reforms of voting procedures, due to the demobilization theory's predicted resistance of politicians in power.

Voting rates and social capital rose due to the change in the election system. Governmental process should be changed to consider how any policy would encourage political participation and civic engagement (Valelly 1993). All government policies are calculated with a cost-benefit analysis, including an estimation of environmental impact. The impact of a policy on participation and civic engagement should be considered in a similar manner (Valelly 1993).

For democracy to function properly all citizens should be fully active participants. If policies can be designed to encourage engagement they would be greatly beneficial. Although participation is not the only aspect that should influence a policy's acceptance, its effect on participation should be included as part of the calculation of costs and benefits.

Appendix

Oregon Voter Participation 1970-2002

Primary Election

*Presidential election year

Year	Registered Voters	Voted	Percent
1970	1,018,017	568,551	55.8
1972*	1,158,711	734,551	63.4
1974	1,248,596	593,172	47.5
1976*	1,310,248	798,986	61.0
1978	1,390,005	603,478	43.4
1980*	1,376,573	780,649	56.7
1982	1,437,693	669,529	46.6
1984*	1,457,067	767,565	52.7
1986	1,458,300	693,821	47.6
1988*	1,366,294	753,112	55.1
1990	1,437,462	660,990	46.0
1992*	1,543,353	758,459	49.1
1994	1,730,562	661,717	38.2
1996*	1,851,499	698,990	37.8
1998	1,906,677	665,340	34.9
2000*	1,808,080	927,351	51.3
2002	1,839,072	858,52	46.6

General Election

Year	Registered Voters	Voted	Percent
1970	955,459	681,381	71.3
1972*	1,197,676	953,376	79.6
1974	1,143,073	792,557	69.3
1976*	1,420,146	1,048,561	73.8
1978	1,482,339	937,423	63.2
1980*	1,569,222	1,209,691	77.1
1982	1,516,589	1,063,913	70.2
1984*	1,608,693	1,265,824	78.7
1986	1,502,244	1,088,140	72.4
1988*	1,528,478	1,235,199	80.8
1990	1,476,500	1,133,125	76.7
1992*	1,775,416	1,498,959	84.4
1994	1,832,774	1,254,265	68.4
1996*	1,962,155	1,399,180	71.3
1998	1,965,981	1,160,400	59.0
2000*	1,954,006	1,559,215	79.8
2002	1,872,615	1,293,756	69.1

Oregon USA

Population, 2001 estimate	3,472,867	284,796,887
Population percent change, April 1, 2000-July 1, 2001	1.5%	1.2%
Population, 2000	3,421,399	281,421,906
Population, percent change, 1990 to 2000	20.4%	13.1%
Persons under 5 years old, percent, 2000	6.5%	6.8%
Persons under 18 years old, percent, 2000	24.7%	25.7%
Persons 65 years old and over, percent, 2000	12.8%	12.4%
Female persons, percent, 2000	50.4%	50.9%
White persons, percent, 2000 (a)	86.6%	75.1%
Black or African American persons, percent, 2000 (a)	1.6%	12.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2000 (a)	1.3%	0.9%
Asian persons, percent, 2000 (a)	3.0%	3.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, percent, 2000 (a)	0.2%	0.1%
Persons reporting some other race, percent, 2000 (a)	4.2%	5.5%
Persons reporting two or more races, percent, 2000	3.1%	2.4%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2000 (b)	8.0%	12.5%
White persons, not of Hispanic/Latino origin, percent, 2000	83.5%	69.1%
Living in same house in 1995 and 2000, pct age 5+, 2000	46.8%	54.1%
Foreign born persons, percent, 2000	8.5%	11.1%
High school graduates, percent of persons age 25+, 2000	85.1%	80.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher, pct of persons age 25+, 2000	25.1%	24.4%
Mean travel time to work, workers age 16+ (minutes), 2000	22.2	25.5
Homeownership rate, 2000	64.3%	66.2%
Per capita money income, 1999	\$20,940	\$21,587
Persons below poverty, percent, 1999	11.6%	12.4%
Persons per square mile, 2000	35.6	79.6

Source: 2000 Census.

Oregon Counties Change in Voter Turnout % 2000 from 1996

% Change Of Reg. Voters 2000	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
County				
- .89%	1	2.7	2.8	2.8
.45	1	2.7	2.8	5.6
1.12	1	2.7	2.8	8.3
2.93	1	2.7	2.8	11.1
3.68	1	2.7	2.8	13.9
3.79	1	2.7	2.8	16.7
3.92	1	2.7	2.8	19.4
3.99	1	2.7	2.8	22.2
4.00	1	2.7	2.8	25.0
4.54	1	2.7	2.8	27.8
5.06	1	2.7	2.8	30.6
5.44	1	2.7	2.8	33.3
5.80	1	2.7	2.8	36.1
5.97	1	2.7	2.8	38.9
6.04	1	2.7	2.8	41.7
6.53	1	2.7	2.8	44.4
6.88	1	2.7	2.8	47.2
6.95	1	2.7	2.8	50.0
6.96	1	2.7	2.8	52.8
7.81	1	2.7	2.8	55.6
8.01	1	2.7	2.8	58.3
8.18	1	2.7	2.8	61.1
8.22	1	2.7	2.8	63.9
8.43	1	2.7	2.8	66.7
9.22	1	2.7	2.8	69.4
9.39	1	2.7	2.8	72.2
9.53	1	2.7	2.8	75.0
9.83	1	2.7	2.8	77.8
9.90	1	2.7	2.8	80.6
10.34	1	2.7	2.8	83.3
10.37	1	2.7	2.8	86.1
10.51	1	2.7	2.8	88.9
10.52	1	2.7	2.8	91.7
10.90	1	2.7	2.8	94.4
12.63	1	2.7	2.8	97.2
13.82	1	2.7	2.8	100.0
Total	36	97.3	100.0	
Total	36	100.0		

Oregon Counties Change in Voter Turnout % 2002 from 1998

% Change Of Reg. Voters 2002		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
County	1.82%	1	2.7	2.8	2.8
	3.07	1	2.7	2.8	5.6
	3.89	1	2.7	2.8	8.3
	5.54	1	2.7	2.8	11.1
	5.62	1	2.7	2.8	13.9
	7.59	1	2.7	2.8	16.7
	7.82	1	2.7	2.8	19.4
	8.05	1	2.7	2.8	22.2
	8.09	1	2.7	2.8	25.0
	8.65	2	5.4	5.6	30.6
	8.69	1	2.7	2.8	33.3
	8.71	1	2.7	2.8	36.1
	8.99	1	2.7	2.8	38.9
	9.07	1	2.7	2.8	41.7
	9.25	1	2.7	2.8	44.4
	9.45	1	2.7	2.8	47.2
	9.48	1	2.7	2.8	50.0
	9.93	1	2.7	2.8	52.8
	9.96	1	2.7	2.8	55.6
	10.56	1	2.7	2.8	58.3
	11.05	1	2.7	2.8	61.1
	11.18	1	2.7	2.8	63.9
	11.93	1	2.7	2.8	66.7
	11.97	1	2.7	2.8	69.4
	12.31	1	2.7	2.8	72.2
	12.57	1	2.7	2.8	75.0
	12.78	1	2.7	2.8	77.8
	12.82	1	2.7	2.8	80.6
	13.01	1	2.7	2.8	83.3
	13.03	1	2.7	2.8	86.1
	13.55	1	2.7	2.8	88.9
	14.60	1	2.7	2.8	91.7
	15.14	1	2.7	2.8	94.4
	16.31	1	2.7	2.8	97.2
	18.30	1	2.7	2.8	100.0
	Total	36	97.3	100.0	
Total		36	100.0		

Collinearity Statistics for Chapter 4

1996

Coefficients

Model	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
Did you vote in the 1996 election?	.822	1.216
Are you Over 65?	.742	1.347
Are you under 25?	.879	1.138
Poverty	.851	1.175
Homeown ership	.862	1.160
Race	.937	1.068
Bachelor	.940	1.064
Are you male or female?	.970	1.030
Last week, did you have a job either full- or part- time?	.707	1.414
Do you have a lasting mental, developme ntal, or physical disability?	.951	1.051

a Dependent Variable: How Strongly do you feel apart of your community?

Coefficients

Model	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
Did you vote in the 1996 election?	.822	1.216
Are you Over 65?	.740	1.351
Are you under 25?	.879	1.138
Poverty	.847	1.181
Homeown ership	.862	1.160
Race	.937	1.067
Bachelor	.940	1.064
Are you male or female?	.970	1.031
Last week, did you have a job either full- or part- time?	.704	1.421
Do you have a lasting mental, developme ntal, or physical disability?	.950	1.052

a Dependent Variable: Trust?

2000
Coefficients

Model	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
Home ownership/rental	.824	1.213
Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	.968	1.033
Are you Over 65	.978	1.023
Are you under 25?	.832	1.202
Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?	.967	1.034
How many minutes did it usually take you to get from home to work each day last week	.925	1.081
Racial background	.961	1.041
Gender	.903	1.107
100% of Poverty Level	.821	1.218
At any time during 1999 were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work?	.932	1.073

a Dependent Variable: Supp-C4. Feel like part of the community?

Coefficients

Model	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
Home ownership/rental	.822	1.217
Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	.964	1.038
Are you Over 65	.977	1.023
Are you under 25?	.832	1.201
Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?	.968	1.033
How many minutes did it usually take you to get from home to work each day last week	.918	1.089
Racial background	.961	1.040
Gender	.900	1.111
100% of Poverty Level	.821	1.218
At any time during 1999 were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work?	.930	1.075

a Dependent Variable: Supp-O1. Trust?

Chapter 4 Independent Samples T Test
1996
Independent Samples Test

	Sig. (2-tailed)
Are you Over 65?	.000
	.000
Are you under 25?	.000
	.000
Poverty	.000
	.000
Homeownership	.000
	.000
Bachelor	.000
	.000
Are you male or female?	.001
	.001
Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	.101
	.101
Last week, did you have a job either full- or part-time?	.009
	.007
Is your Commute above 23 Minutes?	.014
	.039

2000	Sig. (2-tailed)
Home ownership/rental	.000
	.000
Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	.436
	.034
Gender	.054
	.054
Are you Over 65	.000
	.000
Are you under 25?	.000
	.000
Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?	.000
	.000
COMMUTE	.009
	.009
100% of Poverty Level	.000
	.000
At any time during 1999 were you working (including self- employed) or looking for work?	.000
	.000

Chapter 5 Independent Samples T Test
1996

Fellings toward Oregon Independent Samples Test

	Sig. (2-tailed)
Are you Over 65?	.000
	.000
Are you under 25?	.000
	.000
Poverty	.100
	.100
Homeownership	.000
	.000
Race	.000
	.000
Bachelor	.000
	.000
Are you male or female?	.001
	.001
Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	.022
	.021
Last week, did you have a job either full- or part-time?	.309
	.307

2000	Sig. (2-tailed)
Home ownership/rental	.000
Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	.006
Gender	.004
Are you Over 65	.054
Are you under 25?	.054
Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?	.000
100% of Poverty Level	.000
At any time during 1999 were you working (including self-employed) or looking for work?	.120
Racial background	.120
	.287
Community Involvement Independent Samples T Test 1996	.287
Independent Samples Test	.000
	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)
Are you Over 65?	.000
Are you under 25?	.000
Poverty	.000
Homeownership	.000
Bachelor	.000
Are you male or female?	.070
Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	.070
Last week, did you have a job either full- or part-time?	.000
Is your Commute above 23 Minutes?	.022
	.021
	.499
	.497
	.014

2000

Sig. (2-tailed)

Home ownership/rental	.000
	.000
Do you have a lasting mental, developmental, or physical disability?	.036
	.034
Gender	.050
	.050
Are you Over 65	.000
	.000
Are you under 25?	.000
	.000
Do you have a Bachelor's Degree?	.120
	.120
COMMUTE	.009
	.009
100% of Poverty Level	.000
	.000
At any time during 1999 were you working (including self- employed) or looking for work?	.562
	.562

Registration by Party in Oregon.

Year	Democrats		% Voting	Republicans		% Voting	Non-Affiliated Voters	
	Registered	Voted		Registered	Voted		Registered	Voted
2000	769,195	637,391	82.86%	699,179	598,507	85.60%	428,406	288,562
1998	791,970	502,210	63.41%	704,593	466,812	66.25%	420,314	173,966
1996	805,286	604,147	75.02%	714,548	561,376	78.56%	400,248	214,843
1994	786,990	554,840	70.50%	665,956	498,810	74.90%	334,073	179,622
1992	792,551	662,500	83.59%	642,206	542,237	84.43%	321,532	243,328
1990	692,100	539,621	77.97%	570,933	456,657	79.98%	160,917	102,443

List of Interviewees

Bill Bradbury

Vicki Ervin

Joe Meyer

Jeff Barker

Bill Dialto

Jim Kruse

Tim Fuerfeldt

Sarah Seele

Elizabeth Sheller

Bill Sizemore

Del Riley

Steve Drunkenmiller

> Oregon Mail-in Voting Questionnaire >

> Please tell me about yourself.

>

> Please describe the economic, racial, and social demographics of your
> district.

>

> Select One Answer Please:

> How much did the change to voting by mail increase voter
participation

> in your district?

> 1. A Lot

> 2. A Little

> 3. Not Much

> 4. None.

> 5. Don't Know.

>

> How much did the change to voting by mail increase the interest in
> politics in your district?

> 1. A Lot

> 2. A Little

> 3. Not Much

> 4. None.

> 5. Don't Know

>

> Do people discuss politics more in your district because of the
change to voting by mail?

> 1. A Lot

> 2. A Little

> 3. Not Much

> 4. None.

> 5. Don't Know

>

> How much of an increase in participation in community activities have
> you seen because of the change to voting by mail?

> 1. A Lot

> 2. A Little

> 3. Not Much

> 4. None.

> 5. Don't Know

>

>

Do people understand politics more because of the change to voting
> by
> mail?
> 1. A Lot
> 2. A Little
> 3. Not Much
> 4. None.
> 5. Don't Know
>
> Do you feel that the change to voting by mail has led to voter more
> voter
> fraud in Oregon?
> 1. A Lot
> 2. A Little
> 3. Not Much
> 4. None.
>
> Do you discuss people voting decisions more with the change to voting
> by mail?
> 1. Yes.
> 2. No.
> 3. Some.
> 4. Don't Know.
>
> As a politician, has the change to voting by mail affected the way
> you run your campaign?
> 1. Yes.
> 2. No.
> 3. Some.
> 4. Don't know.
>
> Has the change to voting by mail increased the costs for you as a
> candidate to run for office?
> 1. Yes.
> 2. No.
> 3. Some.
> 4. Don't Know.
>
> What affected your 2002 campaign the most?
> 1. Local social and economic factors
> 2. The War on Terrorism/Iraq.
> 3. National social and economic factors (other than the War On
> Terrorism/Iraq).
> 4. Voter turnout.
>
> What was the history of Oregon's change to voting by mail? >
> What are the advantages and disadvantages of the change to voting >
> by mail?
>
>
> Does the change to voting by mail benefit any political party more
> than any other?
>
> Has the change to voting by mail been beneficial for Oregon, and why
> or why not? >

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