Voting Early but Not Often*

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Objective. This article examines the correlates of early voting and its effect on voter turnout and electoral support for candidates. *Methods.* Aggregate data for early and election day balloting in Texas counties (N = 254) are analyzed for the 1992 presidential election. Additional data on the implementation of early voting in Texas counties were collected through a mail questionnaire sent to Texas county election clerks. *Results.* Early voting is strongly influenced by new voter registration, wealth, and the proportion of the population that is Hispanic. The location of early voting sites at socially familiar and frequented venues has a positive effect on the incidence of early voting, independent of the number of total early voting sites available in the county. The partisan mobilization of new voters through voter registration and early voting had a significant and positive effect on balloting for the Democratic presidential candidate in 1992. *Conclusions.* Unlike with previous electoral reforms (e.g., motor-voter registration), there is evidence to support a partisan impact from early voting in the 1992 Texas presidential election. This effect, however, was mediated by the campaign activities of parties and their candidates.

Introduction

Voting early has been given a new meaning in Texas and a number of other states (FEC, 1994).[1] Since 1991, Texas voters have had the opportunity to vote in person up to seventeen days before election day. Unlike absentee balloting in many other states,[2] which is restricted to the elderly and persons with disabilities, early voting in Texas is available to any registered voter. Approximately a quarter of the votes cast by Texans in the 1992 presidential election were cast before November 3.

In addition to the extra number of days, hours, and sites at which voters can cast their ballots, the sites for early voting include familiar and more frequented venues (e.g., grocery and convenience stores and mobile voting

sites) as well as traditional election day sites (e.g., schools, fire stations, and other government buildings). The expectation is that increasing the length of the voting period stimulates voter turnout by increasing the opportunity to vote. Similarly, locating voting at familiar and frequented sites is also expected to increase voter turnout.

What are the determinants of early voting and how does it affect turnout and support for partisan candidates? The incidence of early voting is expected to be related to the socioeconomic composition of the electorate and the way early voting is implemented. We find that the promise of early voting delivers a greater number of voters to the polls is realized, albeit modestly. Moreover, we find that partisan efforts to mobilize newly registered voters through early voting has significant, but weak, electoral benefits.

Early Voting and Partisan Voter Mobilization

The literature on early voting is sparse by virtue of the practice's recent adoption by only a handful of states. A useful analog for studying early voting is absentee or mail-in balloting. As with early voting, mail-in voting provides a means of reducing the cost of voting for individuals unable to present themselves at a voting place on election day (e.g., the elderly, the sick, students, the military, and persons traveling out of the state). Moreover, research on the correlates of absentee voting lends support for a party-mobilization explanation of voter turnout.

Examining absentee voting in California and Iowa, Patterson and Caldeira (1982) found the proportion of votes cast by mail to be related to many of the correlates of election day balloting (e.g., age, income, and urban residence). Their most striking finding, however, was that the correlates of absentee voting varied across elections and between states. The authors suggest that absentee voting and its impact on turnout and performance are sensitive to partisan efforts to mobilize voters likely to vote by mail. Absentee voting increases when political parties identify likely absentee voters among their supporters and work to turn out these persons for absentee voting. Patterson and Caldeira conclude that "the state in which one party mounted a substantial effort had a higher rate of absentee voting" (1982: 785). Absent any effort on the part of political parties to mobilize absentee voting among their partisan supporters, the effect of mail-in balloting on voter turnout is expected to be negligible.

Oliver's (1995) multistate study of absentee voting directly tests Patterson and Caldeira's partisan-mobilization hypothesis. Oliver finds that in states where absentee voting requirements are most liberal and where political parties invest time and resources to mobilize absentee voters, "the levels of absentee voting rise and the characteristics of absentee voters change" (1995: 25). The most important by-product of absentee voting and

liberalized absentee voting is "the greater mobilizing campaigns of the Republican party" (1995: 25). Curiously, Democratic candidates do not benefit from increased liberalization of absentee voting and Democratic efforts to mobilize absentee voting.

Together, Patterson and Caldeira's and Oliver's findings suggest that the relationship between electoral reform and electoral behavior may be mediated by partisan campaign activity. Both absentee and early voting reduce the cost of voting by increasing the opportunities to vote before election day. Early voting, however, extends the opportunities for balloting in both time and space. Thus, early voting affords candidates and parties more opportunities for mobilizing their supporters than does absentee voting.

The Social Context of Early Voting and Voter Mobilization

Early voting is unique among electoral reforms designed to increase voter turnout. As noted, it not only increases the number of sites and times at which voters can cast ballots, but it also expands the setting in which voting occurs. As implemented in Texas and several other states, early voting sites can be located at both traditional and nontraditional venues. Traditional voting sites include government facilities (e.g., schools, fire stations, and courthouses). Nontraditional early voting sites include grocery and convenience stores, shopping malls, medical clinics, mobile voting places, and other locations that individuals are likely to frequent for reasons other than voting. The significant variation in the social context of early voting sites introduces another independent variable into our explanation of early voting and its effect on turnout and electoral outcomes.

Researchers (see Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1993) have shown that the social context in which individuals live can have a strong and independent influence on behavior. The familiar and supportive social context of nontraditional early voting sites may have two important effects on early voting. First, there is an increased probability of voting, especially by individuals with a lower probability of casting a ballot on election day. Second, the social context of nontraditional early voting sites may communicate cues to voters about candidate choices (see Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1949; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954; Price and Lupfer, 1973; Huckfeldt, 1979; Giles and Dantico, 1982; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987, 1988, 1992; Krassa, 1988; Leighley, 1990; Straits, 1990).

Given the potential for voter mobilization at nontraditional early voting sites, we might expect candidates and their parties to exploit this opportunity for their own electoral advantage. Just as Aldrich (1993: 249) found that politicians garnered voters by exploiting "citizens' ongoing obligations to friends, neighbors, and social groups," we expect that this social mechanism will be effective at increasing early voting.

Early Voting and Partisan Mobilization Efforts in the 1992 Texas
Presidential Election

The setting for this study is the Texas 1992 presidential election. Passed
in 1991, early voting in Texas was first implemented in 1992 for the pres-
idential election. The enabling legislation requires all counties to maintain
a minimum number of early voting places and hours of operation. The
minimum number of early voting sites, days, and hours of operation varies
with the county's population size.[3] Larger counties are required to provide
more locations, days, and hours of operation. There is no ceiling on the
number of sites a county may operate; discretion is given to the county
clerk. Days of operation are limited to a three-week period, including week-
ends, preceding the third day before the scheduled election. The choice of
early voting sites is unrestricted, allowing counties to use traditional sites
(e.g., courthouse, schools, fire stations) as well as nontraditional venues,
including mobile voting booths, grocery stores, health clinics, and shopping
malls.

Interviews with Democratic and Republican Party officials discovered an
asymmetry between the early voting mobilization strategies of each party.
Democratic strategy was directed at registering and turning out voters who
traditionally supported the Democratic ticket, but had a low propensity to
vote. Democratic partisans in Texas targeted Hispanic adults for voter reg-
istration drives through the summer and fall of 1992. Their efforts were
well justified. Estimates of voter registration among Hispanic adults range
between 27 percent and 49 percent, a figure Democrats could only improve
uoon. Moreover, polling data showed strong support among Hispanics in
Texas for the Clinton-Gore ticket.[4] Early voting efforts were similarly tar-
geted to counties where the Clinton-Gore campaign had successfully
registered Hispanic voters.[5] Republican Party officials and officials from
the Perot campaign reported no special efforts to turn out their supporters
for early voting.

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[3] Early voting opportunities vary significantly across Texas's 254 counties. With the excep-
tion of counties over 400,000 population, all counties are required to provide a minimum
number of hours of early voting. Counties with populations over 400,000 are required to
provide early voting sites equal to the number of legislative districts in the county. Given these
statutory requirements, it is not surprising that we observe significant skewing in the distri-
bution of early voting sites across counties. For a more extensive discussion of the provisions
of this law, see Hannah (1992).
[4] Preelection surveys showed that Hispanic voters supported the Clinton-Gore ticket by a
margin of 65 percent (Houston Post, Oct. 25, 1992).
[5] This information is based on interviews with Daniel Cook, director, 1992 Texas Clinton-
Gore early voter campaign. The empirical evidence supports the articulated strategy of the
Democratic Party. Registration and early voting efforts were targeted to counties where the
percentage of Hispanic adult population exceeded 50 percent of total adult population. In
these counties, there is a significant and positive relationship between the change in registration
and the percentage adult population Hispanic ($\beta = .119$, $p < .01$).

Hypotheses and Data

Three questions are addressed in our empirical analysis: (1) What are the determinants of early voting? (2) Does early voting increase total voter turnout? That is, does early voting bring to the polls voters who would not otherwise have voted? (3) How does early voting affect the outcome of partisan elections? To answer these questions, we have analyzed early voting, total voter turnout, and the vote cast for each presidential candidate in Texas counties (N = 254) during the 1992 presidential election.

The Incidence of Early Voting. The incidence of early voting is expected to be a function of the sociodemographic makeup of the electorate, partisan mobilization efforts, and the social context in which early voting takes place. Independent of partisan mobilization efforts and the social context of early voting, we expect that the incidence of early voting will mirror the correlates of election day balloting (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Early voting should be most pronounced among the wealthy and higher-status voters.

In the 1992 Texas presidential election, only the Democratic Party engaged in an active campaign to register and turn out voters for early voting. Its target population was Hispanic voters. If the Texas Democrats were successful at mobilizing Hispanic voters, we should observe a positive correlation between the incidence of early voting and the change in voter registration and the proportion of population that is Hispanic in each Texas county. Finally, the social context in which early voting takes place should be positively related to the incidence of early voting; that is, early voting should be higher in counties relying on a larger number of nontraditional early voting sites.

To test these hypotheses, we constructed a multivariate OLS regression model in which the dependent variable was the percentage of total votes cast early in each county. The independent regressors were the percentage of adult population Hispanic; the percentage change in voter registration in each county between 1988 and 1992;[6] the number of early voting sites located at traditional government locales; the number of early voting sites located at nontraditional locales; and the adult population in each county and the median home value in the county.

Data on early voting in Texas counties are collected and published by the secretary of state.[7] No official records are kept by the secretary of state's

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[6] The percentage change in registered vote is calculated from the following formula:

% change = (registered voters in 1992 − registered voters in 1988) / registered voters in 1988.

[7] Early voting includes mail-in ballots. An overwhelming majority of early votes were cast in person in 1992. On average, only 15 percent of total early votes in a county were cast by mail ballot.

office about the number and location of early voting sites and the duration of their operation in each county. We sent a mail survey to all county election clerks soliciting information on the number of early voting site(s) in their county, the number of days and hours each site was open, and the location of each site.[8] We used a last piece of information to differentiate between traditional and nontraditional early voting sites: government buildings and facilities (e.g., schools, fire stations) were designated as traditional early voting sites; businesses, including malls, grocery and convenience stores, clinics, and mobile units, were identified as nontraditional early voting sites.

Change in voter registration between 1988 and 1992 was calculated for each county in order to identify those counties experiencing an increase in voter registration. Approximately 37 percent (N = 94) of Texas counties experienced an increase in the number of registered voters between 1988 and 1992.[9] Additional data were collected on the percentage of adult population Hispanic and mean home value in each county. The Clinton-Gore campaign targeted counties with a large Hispanic population for registration and early voter turnout. Higher median home values identifies counties where the voting age population was expected to be able to bear the costs of electoral participation, including the search costs associated with early voting. Since state law requires larger counties to provide additional early voting sites, the adult population of each county is included in our model as a control variable and is expected to be positively related to the incidence of early voting.

Early Voting and Turnout. Does early voting bring out a voter who would not have voted on election day, or are early voters persons who would have voted on election day? Empirically, we are interested in determining whether the percentage of the vote cast early is positively related to total turnout (i.e., the percentage of registered voters who voted), independent of other correlates of voter turnout. If voter turnout increases as the

[8] We received responses from 170 counties. An examination of the nonresponding counties indicates that they are disproportionately smaller in population size. They are not, however, significantly different from the population of responding counties in terms of turnout, registration, and key demographic variables (i.e., race, income, home ownership). It is possible that this sample of counties is skewed on some other dimension and thus not a representative sample from which to generalize about all Texas counties. We performed a number of tests to determine the representativeness of our survey sample. One such test was to reestimate the model for the percentage of county votes cast early (Table 1) for only those variables for which we had complete information for all counties (i.e., percentage Hispanic, home value, and the change in voter registration). The estimates for the sample and universe of Texas counties are virtually the same, suggesting that, for at least some portion of our model, the 170-county sample is representative of all Texas counties.

[9] Texas county boards of elections purged their voter registration lists of "deadwood" (i.e., voters no longer residing at their previous addresses) prior to the 1992 presidential election. The effectiveness of this list purge is evident in the large number of counties in which the actual number of registered voters declined between 1988 and 1992.

percentage of votes cast early increases, independent of other determinants of turnout, we have tentative evidence that early voters are not likely to vote on election day. Absent this significant relationship, we have greater reason to believe early voters are merely substituting early voting for casting their ballots on the first Tuesday in November. We included the proportion of population Hispanic, change in voter registration, and median home value in the regression analysis of voter turnout as control variables.

Early Voting and Electoral Support for Presidential Candidates. We do not expect early voting, independent of partisan mobilization efforts, to produce an electoral advantage for any presidential candidate. The effect of early voting on balloting for presidential candidates is expected to depend on the nature and efficacy of partisan mobilization efforts. Mobilizing partisan supporters of a candidate through voter registration and early voting is expected to be associated with a greater number of ballots cast for that candidate. Democratic efforts on behalf of Bill Clinton included voter registration drives among Hispanic voters and efforts to mobilize these newly registered Hispanic voters through early voting.

We expected early voting in counties experiencing an increase in new voter registration to work significantly to the advantage of Democratic candidates, reflecting the efforts of Democrats to register and mobilize new Hispanic voters. To test these hypotheses, we completed six OLS regression models. The dependent variables in the models are the percentage of vote cast for each presidential candidate: Bush, Clinton, and Perot, respectively. The independent variables in the first set of regressions are the percentage of adult population Hispanic; the percentage of voter turnout among registered voters in the county; the percentage change in voter registration; median home value in the county; and the percentage of votes cast early in each county. The independent variables in the second set of regressions are the same as for the first set, with the addition of an interaction term between early voting and the percentage change in voter registration.

Findings

Nearly a quarter (24.6 percent) of the votes cast in Texas in the 1992 presidential election were cast in the three weeks preceding election day, November 3. Among the 170 counties responding to our survey, all reported at least one early voting site and a minimum of 154 hours of operation. The distribution of early voting sites, however, is highly skewed. A third of the reporting counties account for two thirds of all early voting sites. The distribution of early voting sites at nontraditional locations is similarly skewed, with 120 counties reporting no early voting sites located at nontraditional locales. Less than a third of the reporting counties account for 70 percent of all nontraditional early voting sites (see Appendix).

TABLE 1

Regression Estimates for % of County Vote Cast Early

Variable	Estimate	Standard Error
Intercept	.196**	.027
% population Hispanic	.106**	.034
Change in number of registered voters, 1988–1992	.237**	.016
Traditional early voting sites	−.004	.039
Nontraditional early voting sites	.0015*	.0008
Median home value#	.145**	.051
Total adult population	−2.89-E8	.03-E6
Adjusted R^2	.210	

N = 170

= $10,000 median home value.

**$p < .01$.

*$p < .05$.

Early Voting. Table 1 reports the regression estimates for the percentage of votes cast early in each county. The findings point to some Democratic Party success at mobilizing supporters, particularly through early voting. Counties with large Hispanic populations and increases in voter registration were targeted by the Clinton-Gore campaign for early voter mobilization. The coefficients for both these variables are significant and in the positive direction, indicating that the Democrats' strategy may have been efficacious. On average, a 1 percent increase in adult population Hispanic was associated with a .1 percent increase in the percent of vote cast early. New voter registration had a significant and positive effect on the incidence of early voting. A 1 percent increase in voter registration between 1988 and 1992 is associated with a .24 increase in the percentage of vote cast early. This provides modest support for the view that newly registered voters are more likely to turn out when the costs of voting are subsidized by opportunities for early voting, particularly at familiar and frequented venues.[10]

Median home value was also positively related to the percentage of votes cast early, suggesting that for wealthier voters, early voting was a preferred mode of electoral participation. A change of $10,000 in median home value

[10] Our measure of the change in the number of registered voters does not differentiate between first-time registrants and those who reregistered to vote as a result of a change in residence. The net change in county voter registration will not, however, be affected by changes in residence within county, only by in-migration to the county. The mean change (1985–1990) in the population of Texas counties from in-migration was 6.5 percent (Texas State Data Center, 1990). Even if we assumed that all new arrivals to the average Texas county were adults and registered to vote, the majority of net change in voter registration could not be attributed to individuals reregistering to vote.

TABLE 2

Regression Estimates for % of County Voter Turnout among Registered Voters

Variable	Estimate	Standard Error
Intercept	.645**	.016
% of total vote cast early	.069*	.038
% population Hispanic	−.168**	.016
Change in number of registered voters, 1988–1992	−.059	.045
Median home value#	.153**	.026
Adjusted R^2	.448	

N = 254
# = $10,000
**$p < .01$.
*$p < .05$.

is associated with a .15 percent increase in the percentage of votes cast early.

The number of early voting sites located at traditional government venues is unrelated to the incidence of early voting. In fact, the coefficient for this variable is negative, suggesting that reliance on traditional sites for early voting is associated with a smaller percentage of votes cast early. The number of early voting sites located at familiar and frequented locations (e.g., supermarkets, convenience stores, shopping malls, and mobile units) is significantly related to a higher percentage of votes cast early, but the effect is marginal. For every additional ten nontraditional early voting sites, there is a .15 percent increase in the percentage of votes cast early.

Voter Turnout. Table 2 reports the regression estimates for voter turnout. In a departure from our findings for the incidence of early voting, we find that the percentage of adult population Hispanic and increases in voter registration are both negatively related to voter turnout. The absence of a significant and positive relationship between change in voter registration and turnout is consistent with Erikson's (1981) finding that newly registered voters are significantly less likely to turn out than are voters with a history of electoral participation. Increased voter registration does not necessarily endow new registrants with a significant investment in the electoral process.

Early voting, however, has a positive and significant effect on voter turnout. Again, this effect is very marginal. A 1 percent increase in the percentage of votes cast early increases total voter turnout by .07 percent. Though modest, this effect remains statistically significant when controlling for median home value, the percentage of adult population Hispanic, and the change in voter registration in the county.

Support for Presidential Candidates. Equations 1, 3, and 5 in Table 3 report the regression estimates for the percentage of votes cast for each presidential candidate. As expected, the percentage of adult population Hispanic and median home value have significantly different effects on electoral support for each candidate. The Clinton-Gore strategy of targeting Hispanic voters appears to have been successful, albeit modestly. A 1 percent change in the percentage of adult population Hispanic was associated with a .09 percent increase in the percentage of votes cast for the Clinton-Gore ticket. Bush's vote was unrelated to the Hispanic composition of a county's population, and Perot's vote shares declined in predominately Hispanic counties. Whereas Bush's vote share increased with median home values, Clinton's electoral support declined significantly in counties with higher median home values. Perot's vote share was unrelated to median home value.

Previous speculation that new voter registration would work to the advantage of the Clinton-Gore ticket receives further confirmation. Clinton was the only presidential candidate to be significantly aided by increased voter registration. His average vote share was significantly higher than the other candidates' in counties that experienced an increase in the total number of registered voters between 1988 and 1992. Conversely, the mean vote cast for Bush was significantly lower in counties experiencing an increase in voter registration. Perot was helped by increased voter registration, but the average vote cast for Perot in counties with increased registration was significantly smaller than that observed for the Clinton-Gore ticket.

Bush and, to a lesser degree, Perot were helped by higher voter turnout. Bush's vote share rose .51 percent for a 1 percent increase in voter turnout. Perot's votes share rose only .14 percent for the same increase in turnout. Clinton's electoral fortunes, however, declined with voter turnout. His share of the vote cast declined .65 percent with a 1 percent increase in voter turnout.

The percentage of votes cast early did not help any presidential candidate. The estimates for early voting are negative and statistically insignificant for Bush and Perot, and positive but also statistically insignificant for Clinton. The tentative conclusion to be drawn from these results is that early voting did not work to the advantage of any presidential candidate. This conclusion, however, may be premature. This analysis does not take into consideration how early voting may have interacted with the Democratic Party's efforts to register and mobilize Hispanic voters.

Is it possible that early voting produced an electoral advantage for Bill Clinton only in those counties where the Texas Democratic Party registered and mobilized Hispanic voters for early voting? To answer this question, we have regressed the share of votes cast for each candidate on the interaction between change in voter registration and the percentage of votes cast early. If the Democrats' strategy to register and turn out their supporters

TABLE 3

Regresssion Estimates for % of County Vote Cast for Presidential Candidates, 1992 Texas Presidential Election (Standard Error)

Variable	Bush		Clinton		Perot	
	Eq1	Eq2	Eq3	Eq4	Eq5	Eq6
Intercept	-.035	-.023	.889**	.872**	.149**	.154**
	(.07)	(-.079)	(.070)	(.071)	(.040)	(.041)
% Hispanic	.043	.044	.089**	.087**	-.136**	-.135**
	(.033)	(.034)	(.031)	(.031)	(.017)	(.017)
% turnout	.513**	.513**	-.653**	-.653**	.135*	.135*
	(.111)	(.111)	(.101)	(.100)	(.057)	(.057)
Change in voter registration	-.236**	-.161	.105*	-.476	.132**	.316
	(.081)	(.318)	(.073)	(.288)	(.041)	(.164)
Median home value#	.162**	.157**	-.184**	-.172**	.021	.013
	(.048)	(.049)	(.044)	(.044)	(.025)	(.025)
% of total vote cast early	-.062	-.082	.065	-.095	-.005	-.014
	(.067)	(.069)	(.061)	(.063)	(.035)	(.035)
Change in voter registration × % of total vote cast early	—	-1.2	—	1.76*	—	-.557
		(.934)		(.846)		(.482)
Adjusted R	.185	.187	.443	.450	.406	.407

N = 254

= $10,000

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

through early voting was efficacious, we should observe a positive rela-
tionship between the percentage of votes cast early and the percentage of
votes cast for the Clinton-Gore ticket in those counties targeted by the
Democrats for new voter registration. We expect the interaction between
early voting and the change in voter registration to be positively related
only to Clinton's vote share. No other presidential candidate undertook a
strategy to register and mobilize his supporters for early voting.

Equations 2, 4, and 6 in Table 3 report the estimates for candidate vote
share for the same independent regressors reported in equations 1, 3, and
5, plus the interaction between early voting and the change in voter regis-
tration. The interaction term has a significant and positive effect on
percentage of votes cast for the Clinton-Gore ticket. The same interaction
term has an insignificant effect on the vote shares for Bush and Perot. The
effect of early voting on candidate vote share is significantly pronounced
only in counties experiencing an increase in voter registration and only for
those candidates who undertook a strategy to register and mobilize early
voting in these counties. This magnitude of this effect, however, is weak.
Clinton's vote share increases only three percentage points when we vary
the value of the change in voter registration and the percentage of votes
cast early one standard deviation above and below the mean for both var-
iables, holding all other independent variables at their mean values.

Discussion

The evidence presented in this article tentatively supports a number of
hypotheses about the determinants of early voting and its impact on turn-
out and balloting for candidates. The incidence of early voting is
significantly influenced by the social context in which it occurs. The number
of early voting sites located at nontraditional locations has a positive and
independent effect on the percentage of votes cast early. Curiously, how-
ever, the number of traditional early voting sites in a county has no
significant effect on the incidence of early voting. In the administration of
early voting, it is quality, not quantity, that matters. We know of no other
research that has shown that where voting occurs has a significant and
independent effect on turnout.

In Texas, counties with a higher proportion of the vote cast early had
significantly higher total voter participation in the 1992 presidential elec-
tion. We conclude from this finding that early voting did turn out voters
who would not have voted on election day. It is unclear, however, whether
the effect of early voting on turnout is independent of partisan mobilization
efforts. Our design does not permit us to test for the independent effect of
partisan campaign strategies on turnout and candidate electoral support.

Democratic Party efforts to turn out core supporters through early voting
appears to have been efficacious. Clinton's share of the vote increased sig-
nificantly in counties where the proportion of votes cast early and the

percentage change in new voter registration were high. No other candidate experienced a significant boost in electoral support from the interaction of new registration and early voting. The electoral boost the Clinton candidacy received from the union of these two factors cannot be dismissed as coincidence. We interpret this finding to mean that Democratic Party efforts to register and mobilize core supporters through early voting in Texas was effective in the 1992 presidential election.

A note of caution. There are two potential threats to the validity of our findings that need to be addressed in future research. First, we have conducted an aggregate-level analysis of a micro-level phenomenon. There is a possibility that our analysis is susceptible to an ecological fallacy. Survey data, preferably exit polls, are needed to test our central propositions about the correlates of early voting and its effect on turnout and vote choice.

Practical problems impede implementing this remedy. Neither the National Election Studies nor other national surveys (e.g., New York Times/ CBS News) currently query voters about early voting or other alternatives to election day balloting. Moreover, voter recollection about early voting may be suspect. An alternative strategy is to collect archival voting histories on individuals from the official voting records compiled by state and county governments. These data can be used to obtain validated measures of voting and can be supplemented with survey-generated measures.

The modest effect early voting has on total voter turnout and election outcomes may be a function of the election studied. Turnout rates in presidential elections may be too high to allow early voting, or any other electoral reform, to boost voter turnout. This ceiling effect is not operative in lower-turnout elections, where we might expect that early voting will have a strong effect on voter turnout.

The findings reported in this study show that early voting is significantly different from other popular electoral reforms. For example, the new motor-voter law, which enables any citizen to register to vote merely by renewing a driver's license, has had a positive effect on voter registration, but has had no consistent effect on turnout or voting for candidates of either party (Governing, 1995). Early voting, at least as practiced in Texas, affects both turnout and balloting for presidential candidates. Both effects are obtained because early voting affords parties and candidates opportunities to employ different electoral strategies during the campaign and while some voters are casting ballots. With motor voter registration, the opportunities for strategic candidate behavior are limited because voter registration takes place well before intense campaigning and never while voters are balloting.

At present, early voting and its variants are practiced in only six states. There is some reason to believe that the popularity of early voting is likely to spread to other states. The Federal Election Commission (1994: 4) reports, "Every jurisdiction that has introduced early voting agrees that once it has been started, it cannot be stopped. Voters love it." For these reasons,

we believe early voting provides a significant opportunity for scholars to study the dynamics of campaign activities and their effect on turnout and electoral performance.

APPENDIX

Descriptive Statistics

Variable Description	Mean	Standard Deviation
% of adult county population Hispanic	.237	.229
% change in number of registered voters between 1988 and 1992	−.015	.086
Median home value	$50,299	$16,236
% of total vote cast early	28.9	9.7
Number of nontraditional early voting sites	2.9	10.5
Number of traditional early voting sites	1.9	2.1

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