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# Changing Attitudes About Democratic Participation Through a Catalytic Experience

Emma Olson\*

## ABSTRACT

*Even with the United States' deep roots in democratic participation, studies indicate a steady decline in civic involvement. What most fundamentally influences democratic participation is unclear, but this Article posits that by engaging citizens in the political process through an initial catalyst democratic participation experience, these citizens will ultimately think more positively about government and democratic participation, and as a result, they will more readily vote and engage in other parts of civic life. This study finds that while serving as an exit poll administrator during a Chicago Election Day may make participants believe the government to be less effective, this experience positively changes attitudes regarding future plans to volunteer with political campaigns and engage in other civic opportunities.*

## INTRODUCTION

The United States has a long history of democratic participation. As Alexis de Tocqueville stated, “[i]n some countries the inhabitants seem unwilling to avail themselves of the political privileges which the law gives them; . . . but if an American were condemned to confine his activity to his own affairs, he would be robbed of one-half of his existence . . . .”<sup>1</sup>

But, even within this deep tradition of political involvement, studies show a downward trend in participation.<sup>2</sup> Only a small fraction of eligible voters actually vote, and even fewer citizens engage in other types of political participation, such as writing their congressman, volunteering on a campaign, or running for office.<sup>3</sup> As a nation, only 36.1% of all eligible voters participated in the 2014 general election, the lowest turnout rate since 1942.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE, *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA* 250 (1945).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Lisa Hill, *Deliberative Democracy and Compulsory Voting*, 12 *ELECTION L.J.* 454, 460 (2013); See generally LESTER MILBRATH, *POLITICAL PARTICIPATION* (1965); ROBERT DAHL, *WHO GOVERNS? DEMOCRACY AND POWER IN AN AMERICAN CITY* (1961).

<sup>3</sup> See Hill, *supra* note 2, at 460.

<sup>4</sup> Jose A. DelReal, *Voter turnout in 2014 was the lowest since WWII*, *WASH. POST* (Nov. 10, 2014), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/11/10/voter-turnout-in-2014-was-the-lowest-since-wwii/>; The Editorial Board, *The Worst Voter Turnout in 72 Years*, *N.Y. TIMES* (Nov. 11, 2014), [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/12/opinion/the-worst-voter-turnout-in-72-years.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/12/opinion/the-worst-voter-turnout-in-72-years.html?_r=0).

Current low levels of democratic participation in the United States, specifically as measured by voting, indicate a general trend where Americans appear to be less engaged. If citizens decline such a minimal task as voting, what chance is there that they will engage in public debate, volunteer to be an election judge, or even run for office?

This Article examines democratic participation, specifically through the lens of voter turnout. By investigating what influences democratic participation, this Article will examine why Americans choose to, or choose not to, participate. Essentially, this Article argues that providing an initial opportunity for democratic participation will change attitudes about democratic participation, serving as a catalytic experience and encouraging future democratic engagement.

To test this hypothesis—whether a catalytic opportunity for democratic participation changes attitudes about future engagement—researchers hired exit poll workers to administer an exit poll survey during the April 2015 Chicago run-off municipal election. Study participants completed a survey<sup>5</sup> prior to and after<sup>6</sup> administering the exit poll. The Pre-Election Day survey and Post-Election Day survey asked about attitudes and behaviors related to democratic participation. The changes, or lack thereof, were examined to determine how attitudes shifted. Ultimately, this study indicates that participating in a catalytic experience can influence an individual's attitudes regarding federal, state, and city governments, in addition to an individual's plans to volunteer with political campaigns and intentions to engage civically in the future.

Part I defines democratic participation and explains why it matters. Part II explores what influences democratic participation, mostly through the lens of voting. Part III describes the empirical study, including the context, research design, methods, and results. It also analyzes the findings, extrapolating possible conclusions. Part IV considers policy and legal implications of the research outcomes. The final part concludes.

## I. DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND WHETHER IT MATTERS

This Part defines democratic participation and explores whether it matters. This discussion will create a foundation for exploring what influences democratic participation.

### A. *Democratic Participation, Defined*

Democratic participation, as defined by Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie in their seminal 1972 study, *Participation in America*, is “those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take.”<sup>7</sup> Verba and Nie provide four modes of democratic participation: 1) voting, 2) campaign activity, 3) cooperative activity, and 4) citizen-initiated contacts.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B, Formal Application.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix E, Post-Election Day Survey.

<sup>7</sup> SIDNEY VERBA & NORMAN H. NIE, *PARTICIPATION IN AMERICA* 12 (1987).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 52–53.

Voting is narrowly confined to electoral voting conducted in a voting booth.<sup>9</sup> Much of this Article will use this mode to explore what influences democratic participation.<sup>10</sup> Campaign activity involves participating in political campaigns through canvassing, persuading others to vote for the candidate, contributing to a campaign, and other campaign-related activities.<sup>11</sup> Cooperative activity includes fundraising for a local community effort, volunteering, or giving to charity.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, citizen-initiated contact includes contacting a public official, attending a rally, signing a petition, and similar activities.<sup>13</sup>

### B. *Why Democratic Participation Matters*

Democratic participation is “at the heart of democratic theory.”<sup>14</sup> Participation in the democracy is a critical assumption in the United States governmental framework. The country’s Constitution and its democracy would ultimately fail if all citizens declined to vote, run for office, or affect legislation.

Further, engaged citizens make the democratic government stronger.<sup>15</sup> By encouraging more engagement, the democracy becomes stronger by better reflecting and responding to the interests of those participants.<sup>16</sup> More participants could also help maximize the allocation of societal benefits to better match the needs of society as a whole.<sup>17</sup> By encouraging a larger group of citizens to get involved, the government is more likely to reflect what the majority of people want.

In addition, society is better off if most, or all, people vote because it legitimates the government, which is a public good in itself.<sup>18</sup> Citizens who believe they have a legitimate government adhere more strongly to the principle that it is not justifiable to break a law, whereas those who believe electoral malpractices to be common are more likely to believe that breaking a law is justifiable.<sup>19</sup> Thus, society, at large, is more manageable and content when a legitimate government, reflective of the people, is in place.

Democratic participation is also an “educational device” by which citizens can learn.<sup>20</sup> For example, a recent study found that a young person is less likely to be

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *See infra* Part II.

<sup>11</sup> VERBA & NIE, *supra* note 7, at 52–53.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>15</sup> Richard L. Hasen, *Voting Without Law?*, 144 U. PA. L. REV. 2135, 2137 (1996).

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> VERBA & NIE, *supra* note 7, at 4.

<sup>18</sup> This article implicitly assumes that voters should vote in higher numbers. While this assumption may seem intuitive, there are a number of academics that have argued that uninterested, unknowledgeable voters should not vote. *See, e.g.*, JOHN DRYZEK, *DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AND BEYOND: LIBERALS, CRITICS, CONTESTATIONS* 172–73 (2000) (“[D]emocratic legitimacy needs to be couched in the terms of the right to participate, not in the compulsion to do so”). These arguments are without merit given that a well-functioning democracy is only better served when more people are engaged and trustful of the government. *See Hill, supra* note 2, at 455.

<sup>19</sup> PIPPA NORRIS, *WHY ELECTORAL INTEGRITY MATTERS* 122 (2014).

<sup>20</sup> VERBA & NIE, *supra* note 7, at 5.

disconnected from school or work if he volunteers.<sup>21</sup> This research indicates that democratic participation serves to create a better, more stable society.

Similarly, John Stuart Mill believed that, through education over time, individuals can develop a much greater public spirit.<sup>22</sup> In this belief, Mill thought that citizens could change to see public spirit as a public good, for the betterment of the community.<sup>23</sup>

Further, an examination of democratic participation is critical because it provides a better understanding as to why citizens choose to engage, learning new ways for more citizens to engage more deeply and creating a government more reflective of the society at large, supportive of all Americans.

Finally, if nothing else, a baseline level of democratic participation is important. Even Bruce Cain, one of the most pessimistic theorists on democratic participation, believes that an analysis of past democratic governments indicates that there must be a “lower boundary” or minimum threshold for basic democratic accountability.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, a minimum number of people must participate in the government for the entity to be viewed as legitimate. Even if one believes as Cain does<sup>25</sup> that democratic participation levels should only be encouraged to satisfy that base minimum, government supporters still need to figure out how to raise or maintain participation to that base level.

## II. WHAT INFLUENCES DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

This Part examines what influences democratic participation, mostly through the lens of voter turnout.<sup>26</sup> This Part will examine the influence through the following categories: resources, needs and problems, attitudes, social expectations, and social circumstances.

### A. Resources

Resources can be a significant factor in whether an individual chooses, or is even able to consider, participating in democratic life. Intuitively, this makes sense. At the most basic level, considering Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, one needs to satisfy his physiological and safety needs before advancing to social and esteem needs.<sup>27</sup>

Participation increases as one has more resources. Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie found that democratic participation is largely driven by an individual’s social

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<sup>21</sup> Cara Willis, *New Civic Engagement Report Released*, OPPORTUNITY NATION (Sept. 29, 2014), <http://opportunitynation.org/latest-news/new-civic-engagement-report-released/> (“Controlling for differences across 25 largest metro areas, the chance that a young adult is disconnected from work or school drops in half, from 11.1 percent to 5.7 percent, if he or she volunteers.”).

<sup>22</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, in VOL. XIX OF THE COLLECTED WORKS OF JOHN STUART MILL, 371–577 (1861).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> BRUCE CAIN, *DEMOCRACY MORE OR LESS: AMERICA'S POLITICAL REFORM QUANDARY* 18 (2014).

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that a number of these ideas have not been studied enough to fully determine causation. Unless explicitly stated, the following concepts are hypotheses that indicate some influence on voter turnout. Regardless of causation, these strategies and policies are regularly cited as being an indicator of increased voter turnout; closer scrutiny is warranted.

<sup>27</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, 50 PSYCHOL. REV. 370–96 (1943).

status.<sup>28</sup> A person's job, income, and education largely determine how much that person will participate in democratic life.<sup>29</sup> As one increases his social status, that person is able to actively participate in broader democratic life.<sup>30</sup>

This finding is echoed in a more recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center that finds that the less educated, less affluent among us do not vote.<sup>31</sup> "Nearly half of nonvoters (46%) have family incomes less than \$30,000, compared with 19% of likely voters."<sup>32</sup> While it is not fully clear why less affluent people do not vote, it is clear that this pattern is recurring.<sup>33</sup>

### B. Needs and Problems

In addition, citizens may get involved because they believe the government is not adequately providing for their needs. For instance, the LGBTQ rights movement in the United States has gained tremendous steam in recent years.<sup>34</sup> "It's breathtaking change—I don't think there's any change that has happened more quickly," said a legal LGBTQ analyst.<sup>35</sup> Arguably, LGBTQ community activists largely drove this change to achieve equality because the system at the time was not serving their needs: to have the same rights as straight people.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, the Civil Rights Movement provides an illustration. The modern Civil Rights Movement began in earnest in 1954 with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, declaring segregation unconstitutional.<sup>37</sup> In 1963, 200,000 people joined Martin Luther King, Jr. at the March on Washington, advocating equal rights for all.<sup>38</sup> King's "I Have a Dream Speech" moved thousands of people and ultimately paved the way for the Civil Rights Act of 1964<sup>39</sup> and the congressional adoption of the Twenty-Fourth Amendment<sup>40</sup> outlawing poll taxes.

Just a year later, in 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law, barring voting participation barriers and prohibiting any election practice that denies the right to vote on account of race.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>28</sup> VERBA & NIE, *supra* note 7, at 13.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

<sup>31</sup> *The Party of NonVoters*, PEW RES. CTR. (Oct. 31, 2014), <http://www.people-press.org/2014/10/31/the-party-of-nonvoters-2/>.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*; see also *infra* Section E for some possible reasons why lower-income individuals may be discouraged from voting.

<sup>34</sup> See Erica Johnston, *Meet two activists who brought sweeping change to the gay rights movement*, WASH. POST (Oct. 3, 2014), [http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/meet-two-activists-who-brought-sweeping-change-to-the-gay-rights-movement/2014/10/02/5f5e5256-2d30-11e4-994d-202962a9150c\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/meet-two-activists-who-brought-sweeping-change-to-the-gay-rights-movement/2014/10/02/5f5e5256-2d30-11e4-994d-202962a9150c_story.html).

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

<sup>38</sup> *Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Remembered*, PBS (Aug. 28, 2003, 12:00 AM), [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/social\\_issues-july-dec03-march\\_08-28/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/social_issues-july-dec03-march_08-28/).

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> U.S. CONST. amend. XXIV.

<sup>41</sup> See *The Voting Rights Act of 1965*, U.S. DEPT. OF JUST., [http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/intro/intro\\_b.php](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/intro/intro_b.php) (last visited Feb. 24, 2015).

Voters turned out in record numbers during this period. In fact, 1960 (62.77%), 1964 (61.92%), and 1968 (60.84%) have been the three highest percentages of national voting age population turnouts since 1960,<sup>42</sup> including the 2008 Barack Obama-John McCain presidential race, which is considered a high water mark for voter turnout in modern elections.<sup>43</sup>

While it is difficult to clearly extrapolate how much the Civil Rights Movement swayed citizens to turn out, it is clear that voter turnout has not reached those numbers since that time. This is further complicated because one would think that the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 would have further increased voter turnout, but turnout decreased in 1968 compared with 1964 and 1960.<sup>44</sup> Arguably, turnout may have faltered because of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the fraying of the Civil Rights movement. The group commitment that was present in 1960 may not have been as present in 1968.

Furthering this idea, when examining a survey of 600 Black people in the South, scholars Kraig Beyerlein and Kenneth T. Andrews found that perceived group solidarity and commitment encouraged Black voters to turn out.<sup>45</sup> Southern Blacks who perceived a group commitment were 2.4 times as likely to vote compared to those who did not perceive this type of commitment.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, members of “politicized churches” and political organizations, such as the NAACP, were also more likely to turn out.<sup>47</sup>

This, like other movements, may have some perceived effect on voter turnout, but it is unclear just how long this effect lasts, especially after the movement has declined. While Black voting rates appear to be increasing nationally, as a group, Blacks still do not vote at the rates of other racial groups.<sup>48</sup>

### C. Attitudes

Attitudes may also play a role in democratic participation. Distrust in the government could be a motivator for democratic participation, or could lead to disillusionment and disengagement. This distrust may make voters feel as though voting is an illusory action that only legitimates an illegitimate government<sup>49</sup> and consequently may choose not to vote.

In a Pew Research Center February 2014 survey, only 24% said they trusted the federal government *all or most of the time*.<sup>50</sup> These low levels of trust are some of the

<sup>42</sup> *Voting Turnout in Presidential Elections: 1828-2012*, AM. PRESIDENCY PROJECT, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/turnout.php> (last visited Feb. 28, 2015).

<sup>43</sup> In 2008, 58.23% of the national voting age population voted in the presidential election. *Id.*

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> Kraig Beyerlein & Kenneth T. Andrews, *Black Voting During the Civil Rights Movement: A Micro-Level Analysis*, 87 SOC. FORCES 1, 15 (2008).

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> *Id.* at 15–16.

<sup>48</sup> Philip Bump, *The 2014 electorate wasn't just older and whiter than 2012. It also voted more Republican.*, WASH. POST (Nov. 5, 2014), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2014/11/05/the-2014-electorate-wasnt-just-older-and-whiter-than-2012-it-also-voted-more-republican/>.

<sup>49</sup> *Public Trust in Government: 1958-2014*, PEW RES. CTR. (Nov. 13, 2014), <http://www.people-press.org/2014/11/13/public-trust-in-government/> (last visited Feb. 24, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> The Pew Research Center survey indicates a yearly downward trend. *Id.*

lowest measured in fifty years.<sup>51</sup> In fact, public confidence in the government and politics has been eroding since the 1960s.<sup>52</sup> Plainly, many citizens do not trust the government, and surveys only indicate a further downward trend.<sup>53</sup> These decreasing levels of trust correspond with decreasing voter turnout, discussed above, indicating a possible correlation.

Similar to feeling distrustful of the government, some people feel apathetic towards the government, voting, and democratic participation.<sup>54</sup> The decision not to vote is supported by a number of rational choice scholars who have concluded that voting is an irrational act.<sup>55</sup> In considering whether to vote, a citizen must determine whether the benefits outweigh the costs.<sup>56</sup> Rational choice scholars view the decision as a microeconomic cost-benefit analysis that, while minimal, does require a sacrifice of time. This analysis is complicated further if the polling location has long lines or incompetent election staff, the polling location is a long distance from the voter's home, the voting hours are limited, or if the voter's employer allows time off for voting. Moreover, most voters take at least some time to research the candidates, elongating the entire process. In weighing this balance, some potential voters may feel that the process is not worth the investment.

In addition, the direct benefit of voting is unclear. Voters may look to the satisfaction of accomplishing one's civic duty, but no policy or candidate change can directly be attributed to a single vote. Coupling this rational choice theory of voting with increasing disillusion<sup>57</sup> sheds further light on why more and more citizens choose not to vote.

In addition to distrust, many young people feel that they do not have a stake in society.<sup>58</sup> Having a stake in society—for instance, getting married and having children—gives you a direct reason for caring about local government and the services all levels of government provide.<sup>59</sup> It appears that in addition to education, as argued by Mill,<sup>60</sup> having a family encourages long-term planning, which, in turn, may spur citizens to participate in their democracy. As young people continue to enter true adulthood—living

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<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> ALAN R. GITELSON ET AL., *AMERICAN GOVERNMENT* 124 (2d ed. 1991) (reporting the percentage of Americans expressing a great deal of confidence in leadership of U.S. institutions fell from 45% in the mid-1960's to 28% by 1984).

<sup>53</sup> The Pew Research Center survey indicates a yearly downward trend. *See* Pew Res. Ctr., *supra* note 50.

<sup>54</sup> STEPHEN J. WAYNE, *THE ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE 2000: THE POLITICS OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS* 71 (2000).

<sup>55</sup> *See, e.g.*, HOWARD MARGOLIS, *SELFISHNESS, ALTRUISM, AND RATIONALITY: A THEORY OF SOCIAL CHOICE* 85 (Univ. Chicago Press 1982) (1982).

<sup>56</sup> ANTHONY DOWNS, *AN ECONOMIC THEORY OF DEMOCRACY* 260 (1957) (“[E]very rational man decides whether to vote just as he makes all other decisions: if the returns outweigh the costs, he votes; if not, he abstains.”).

<sup>57</sup> WAYNE, *supra* note 54, at 75.

<sup>58</sup> *Why young people don't vote*, *THE ECONOMIST* (Oct. 29, 2014), <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/10/economist-explains-24> (last visited Feb. 24, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*

<sup>60</sup> *See generally* Mill, *supra* note 22.

independently—later and later, it seems that this extended adolescence may drive longer periods of apathy, making democratic participation less likely.<sup>61</sup>

Bruce Cain expands this view to all citizens more generally, arguing that little can be expected from an average citizen.<sup>62</sup> Cain argues that more democracy is not better democracy and that most reforms will likely fail.<sup>63</sup> For example, by encouraging engagement, reformers may actually turn off citizens, or provide a new tool for special interests to manipulate.<sup>64</sup> He argues that society should only encourage engagement as required to make the government legitimate.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to feelings about the government more generally, citizens' attitudes about specific candidates may also encourage or discourage people to volunteer and vote. In 2008, Barack Obama inspired unengaged citizens to register to vote and volunteer for his campaign.<sup>66</sup> President Obama's sweeping victory served as a high water voter turnout mark for modern elections—58.23% of the voting age population—seeing the highest level of national voter turnout since 1960.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to motivating people to vote *for* a candidate, many voters may be motivated to vote *against* a specific candidate. Candidates who may be inspiring to some may be divisive for others. Hostility towards the opposing party and candidates appears to be another motivator for voting.<sup>68</sup> For instance, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, a relative unknown when first elected, quickly became known for his anti-union beliefs after presenting a budget that eliminated collective bargaining rights for public-sector unions.<sup>69</sup> Enough Wisconsinites were motivated enough to demand a recall election,<sup>70</sup> indicating that particular candidates can motivate serious democratic participation. Even with this serious opposition, Walker beat the recall election and won re-election in 2014 with the highest voter turnout in a midterm election in the last fifty years.<sup>71</sup> This high turnout has been ascribed to the “partisan divide” in Wisconsin.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, while the attitudes discussed in this Section may be discouraging to those attempting to influence and increase democratic participation, attitudinal changes are important because they can lead to actual behavioral change. Studies indicate that

<sup>61</sup> *Why young people don't vote*, *supra* note 58.

<sup>62</sup> CAIN, *supra* note 24, at 7–9.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

<sup>66</sup> Susan Saulny, *Obama-Inspired Black Voters Warm to Politics*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 1, 2008), [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/02/us/politics/02first.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/02/us/politics/02first.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>67</sup> *Voting Turnout in Presidential Elections: 1828-2012*, *supra* note 42.

<sup>68</sup> *Political Polarization in Action: Insights into the 2014 Election from the American Trends Panel*, PEW RES. CTR. (Oct. 17, 2014), <http://www.people-press.org/2014/10/17/political-polarization-in-action-insights-into-the-2014-election-from-the-american-trends-panel/> (last visited Feb. 24, 2015).

<sup>69</sup> See Russell Berman, *Scott Walker, Anti-Union Man*, THE ATLANTIC (Mar. 9, 2015, 5:31 PM), <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/03/scott-walker-anti-union-man/387283/>; see also Zoe Sullivan, *Wisconsin Governor Walker holds seat amid record high voter turnout*, ALJAZEERA (Nov. 5, 2014), <http://america.aljazeera.com/blogs/scrutineer/2014/11/5/wisconsin-governorwalkerholdsseatamidstrecordhighvoterturnout.html>.

<sup>70</sup> Berman, *supra* note 69.

<sup>71</sup> Sullivan, *supra* note 69.

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

attitudinal changes can be an excellent predictor of behavioral changes.<sup>73</sup> Measuring attitudinal changes—like those described in the study conducted below—can be an indicator of future behavioral changes.<sup>74</sup> This indicates that while citizens may currently feel negatively about the government or democracy, if an experience changes their attitudes, the change could lead to behavioral changes and, potentially, increased participation in democratic life.

#### D. Social Expectations

A recent study indicated that social expectations or pressure may be one of the most effective means of encouraging people to vote. The study, conducted by Alan S. Gerber, Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer, used a novel approach for direct mailing, utilizing aggressive mailing techniques to create social pressure.<sup>75</sup> The mailings encouraged potential voters to vote, shared the neighborhood voting turnout average, and threatened to share that specific individual's voting record with his neighbors.<sup>76</sup> These techniques increased turnout by 8.1%,<sup>77</sup> a dramatic increase compared to standard mailing programs that typically only account for 2-3% increased turnout.<sup>78</sup> This study seems to suggest that social pressure provides an effective means for increasing turnout.

But these unique techniques are aggressive, potentially leaving some voters feeling uncomfortable or harassed. Campaigns supporting a specific candidate may not be inclined to use tactics that might ultimately increase turnout but actually decrease their vote share because voters are turned off by contentious tactics. Given that some voters get angry after finding out that canvassers know the names of the people who live in their house (which is public knowledge), having knowledge about their voting record seems even more invasive, possibly leading to negative voter reactions. Ultimately, while it is clear that these types of campaign tactics can increase turnout, it is unclear how useful they will be for campaigns long-term since campaigns may not want to be associated with tactics that appear dirty or too invasive.

#### E. Social Circumstances

In addition to societal expectations, social circumstances can make democratic participation, and specifically voting, more or less difficult. For instance, state voting laws vary widely, being extremely restrictive or seemingly too lax.

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<sup>73</sup> See Christopher J. Armitage & Mark Conner, *Efficacy of the Theory of Planned Behaviour: A Meta-Analytic Review*, 40 BRIT. J. SOC. PSYCHOL. 471, 471–99 (2001). *Contra* Thomas L. Webb & Paschal Sheeran, *Does Changing Behavioral Intentions Engender Behavior Change? A Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence*, 132 PSYCHOL. BULL. 249, 249–68 (2006) (indicating that behavior intentions can fail to predict behavior, especially when extinguishing negative activities (e.g. smoking), or starting positive activities (e.g. exercising)).

<sup>74</sup> See, e.g., *id.*

<sup>75</sup> Alan S. Gerber, Donald P. Green & Christopher W. Larimer, *Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment*, 102 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 33, 38 (2008).

<sup>76</sup> *Id.*

<sup>77</sup> *Id.*

<sup>78</sup> See, e.g., Alan S. Gerber & Donald P. Green, *The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment*, 94 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 653, 653 (2000).

Potential voters appear to be deterred by restrictive voting laws. These types of laws can be restrictive in a number of ways, including limited voting hours and inaccessible polling locations. For instance, if the polling location is only open from 9 AM to 6 PM or is located several miles away from a citizen's home, he may not be able to take time away from work to exercise his right.

One of the most common restrictive voting laws is requiring voter identification. These laws require voters to obtain a government-approved photo identification card prior to Election Day.<sup>79</sup> In reviewing the effects of the Texas voter identification law, early voter turnout prior to the 2014 general election was down by about 1% compared to a similar election where identification was not required.<sup>80</sup> This decrease is significant given the limited number of people who typically vote early. This additional burden may just be too much for some voters. Requiring an identification card arguably creates a substantial burden, even if that card is free.<sup>81</sup> For instance, people without adequate transportation may be unable to get to the licensing offices.<sup>82</sup>

Further, Nate Silver, a well-known statistician, believes that voter identification laws generally appear to reduce turnout by about 2% of registered voters.<sup>83</sup> This is significant given that the analysis accounted for all other contributing factors affecting elections. Further, voter identification laws appear to have a disproportionate impact on Black voters and young voters.<sup>84</sup>

These restrictive laws deter voters because they require additional stability and foresight in order to vote. For instance, in many states, to acquire a voter identification card, you must register weeks in advance and have a consistent address. For people who move frequently, like college students or people in transitional housing, this process is an extra burden.

Additionally, twenty-seven states use controversial voting software that removes voters from voting rolls.<sup>85</sup> This "voter-roll scrub" program removes voters who could be registered or voting in more than one state.<sup>86</sup> This program is designed to remove potentially fraudulent voters from the rolls so they cannot vote in more than one state. In the twenty-seven states using the program, there are 6,951,484 voters identified as potentially fraudulent voters.<sup>87</sup> In Virginia alone officials have started removing 41,637 suspected fraudulent voters from the rolls.<sup>88</sup> This is significant considering that out of *one billion ballots cast*, a comprehensive investigation conducted by Loyola University Law

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<sup>79</sup> See, e.g., *So, is it suppressing voters?*, THE ECONOMIST (Nov. 3, 2014), <http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2014/11/texass-voter-id-law> (last visited Nov. 3, 2014).

<sup>80</sup> *Id.*

<sup>81</sup> Reid Wilson, *Report: Voter ID laws reduce turnout more among African American and younger voters*, WASH. POST (Oct. 9, 2014), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2014/10/09/report-voter-id-laws-reduce-turnout-more-among-african-american-and-younger-voters/>.

<sup>82</sup> *Id.*

<sup>83</sup> See, e.g., *So, is it suppressing voters?*, *supra* note 79.

<sup>84</sup> Wilson, *supra* note 81.

<sup>85</sup> Greg Palast, *Jim Crow Returns*, ALJAZEERA (Oct. 29, 2014), <http://projects.aljazeera.com/2014/double-voters/>.

<sup>86</sup> *Id.*

<sup>87</sup> *Id.*

<sup>88</sup> *Id.*

School found *only thirty-one credible incidents* of voter impersonation.<sup>89</sup> The numbers of people removed from the rolls unnecessarily, compared with the number of confirmed fraudulent voting cases, is substantial.<sup>90</sup> In fact, in those states using the program, one in seven Blacks is listed as a suspected fraudulent voter.<sup>91</sup> This compares to one in eleven White voters who are at risk of having their names removed from the voter rolls.<sup>92</sup>

While it is unclear just how many citizens would vote in less restrictive voting environments, restrictive voting laws are still a clear deterrent. In addition to the voters who are actually turned away from the polls, there are certainly more potential voters who just decide not to participate given their past experiences or overall general distaste for the additional hassle.<sup>93</sup>

Just as restrictive voting laws appear to decrease voter turnout, transparent, fair voting laws appear to increase voter turnout. Voting laws that allow voters to register the same day or vote early, require limited identification, and have accessible hours and locations all likely increase voter turnout.

For instance, Minnesota consistently has the highest voter turnout rate.<sup>94</sup> There, voters have the opportunity to register and vote prior to Election Day and register the day of the election. Voters are also only required to provide limited identification information.<sup>95</sup> These laws provide Minnesotans with a relatively easy way to vote.<sup>96</sup>

In addition to the types of voting laws, the administration running the election is sometimes plainly inadequate, incompetent, or both. These failures likely influence democratic participation in regards to voting but also, potentially, in regards to serving as an election judge or volunteering for a campaign. For instance, during the 2014 midterm elections in Chicago, the Chicago Election Board administered same-day registration in the Chicagoland area for the first time.<sup>97</sup> Voters could register the day of the election, but only at certain locations (not at all polling locations).<sup>98</sup>

While an attempt to make voting more accessible, this foray into same-day registration was a difficult experience for many voters.<sup>99</sup> Voters waited in line up to five hours to register and then vote.<sup>100</sup> The polls had to stay open until midnight in some

<sup>89</sup> Justin Levitt, *A comprehensive investigation of voter impersonation finds 31 credible incidents out of one billion ballots cast*, WASH. POST (Aug. 6, 2014),

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/08/06/a-comprehensive-investigation-of-voter-impersonation-finds-31-credible-incidents-out-of-one-billion-ballots-cast/> (last visited Feb. 24, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> Palast, *supra* note 85.

<sup>91</sup> *Id.*

<sup>92</sup> *Id.*

<sup>93</sup> As discussed above, it appears that restrictive voter identification laws appear to reduce voter turnout by about 2%. *See So, is it suppressing voters?*, *supra* note 79.

<sup>94</sup> John D. Sutter, *5 reasons Minnesota is tops at voting*, CNN (Oct. 27, 2012), <http://www.cnn.com/2012/10/27/opinion/ctl-minnesota-best-voting/>. (“In 2008, 78% of eligible people voted in the presidential election. . .”).

<sup>95</sup> *Id.*

<sup>96</sup> *Id.*

<sup>97</sup> Paris Schutz, *Same Day Voter Registration*, WTTW (Oct. 30, 2014), <http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2014/10/30/same-day-voter-registration>.

<sup>98</sup> *Id.*

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Ruth Greenwood, Election Day Observer for the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee (Nov. 4, 2014).

<sup>100</sup> *Id.*

locations to ensure that all voters in line at the time the polling location closed could vote.<sup>101</sup> The most competitive election, the Illinois gubernatorial race, was called before some of the people even had a chance to vote.<sup>102</sup>

This instance is a clear case of inadequate and incompetent administration. First, there were an inadequate number of voting machines at the same-day registration locations. This bottleneck could have been anticipated. Further, the election judges at these sites appeared to be overwhelmed.<sup>103</sup> When an election observer asked an election official about the current wait time for voters, the election judge brought forth a security officer, stating that the observer was threatening the election judge.<sup>104</sup> Arguably, better training and adequate machinery could have avoided these issues.

After an experience like this, many voters may be deterred from attempting to vote again. Waiting five hours to complete a five-minute task is a frustrating experience. Moreover, how many people attempted to vote but did not have the time, or saw the line out the door and did not think the wait was worth it? While the total number of deterred voters is likely impossible to determine, it is probable that at least some voters were deterred.

In addition to restrictive and transparent voting laws, aggressive campaign tactics may also serve to increase or decrease voter turnout. Political campaigns, unions, non-profit groups, and candidates are constantly searching for new ways to engage and encourage citizens to vote. They look to consultants, data, and academics to find these answers. As a result, in areas where campaigns employ these tactics, potential voters may be more likely to vote.

Direct mailing is one typical tactic. Industry standards indicate that a standard direct mailing campaign increases vote share slightly.<sup>105</sup> These types of tactical campaigns include general information about the upcoming election and may persuade the potential voter in favor of a specific candidate or against another candidate. These attack pieces appear to be even more effective in turning out voters, but whether campaigns will ultimately use these tactics is unclear.<sup>106</sup>

A television advertising campaign is another standard campaign technique. Campaigners typically view this tactic as one of the most powerful,<sup>107</sup> but it is also fairly expensive. While it is unclear whether these ads actually increase turnout,<sup>108</sup> they appear to be a favored method of campaign strategists.

Direct voter contact through door-to-door canvassing and phone calling are two additional campaign tactics. As discussed, canvassing is considered by many to be the most effective direct voter contact method for persuading voters, but studies are

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<sup>101</sup> *Id.*

<sup>102</sup> *Id.*

<sup>103</sup> *Id.*

<sup>104</sup> *Id.*

<sup>105</sup> Gerber & Green, *supra* note 78, at 653.

<sup>106</sup> *Id.*

<sup>107</sup> Jonathan S. Krasno & Donald P. Green, *Do Televised Presidential Ads Increase Voter Turnout? Evidence from a Natural Experiment*, 70 J. POL. 245, 245–46 (2008) (describing the ongoing debate of the effectiveness of television advertisement effectiveness).

<sup>108</sup> *Id.*

conflicted.<sup>109</sup> For instance, nonpartisan mobilization campaigns appear to be more effective in turning out voters younger than thirty compared to voters older than thirty.<sup>110</sup> Phone calls can also be effective, but must be sufficiently personal to be persuasive.<sup>111</sup> Some studies find phone campaigns to be just as effective at turning out voters compared to canvassing campaigns.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to direct voter contact tactics in the months prior to the election, many campaigns place huge reliance and resources on turnout efforts in the weeks leading up to the election. By calling or canvassing their supporters prior to or on Election Day, campaigns believe these additional contacts could have an impact on the outcome. This type of program is called a “get out the vote” (GOTV) program.<sup>113</sup> It is estimated that a GOTV program can significantly increase voter turnout, up to 2-3%.<sup>114</sup>

But, an examination of the 2004 presidential election indicates that these grassroots efforts accounted for less than one-third of the increased voter turnout.<sup>115</sup> Rather, the increased turnout in the election appeared to be driven by the interest in an important election and its perceived competitiveness.<sup>116</sup>

Furthermore, these turnout campaigns arguably increase voter turnout inequality, as high propensity voters are more likely persuaded by these types of campaigns.<sup>117</sup> Essentially, this means that voter turnout campaigns are more effective with White voters than with voters of color.<sup>118</sup>

Considering the amount of staff planning and resources allocated to last-minute GOTV programs, the fact that campaigns are only persuading high-propensity voters may be discouraging to some campaigners. But, while television advertisements and press campaigns may be more fruitful, these tactics are also riskier in terms of cash spent compared to possible increased voter turnout.<sup>119</sup> Grassroots GOTV efforts prove to be less rewarding but more reliable.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, campaigns use tactics that attempt to assist with turnout for their individual candidates. Some campaigns may even attempt to decrease turnout by deterring their opponents’ supporters or enacting laws that dissuade

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<sup>109</sup> See, e.g., Elizabeth A. Bennion, *Caught in the Ground Wars: Mobilizing Voters During A Competitive Congressional Campaign*, 601 ANNALS AM. ACAD. POL. & SOC. SCI. 123, 123 (2005).

<sup>110</sup> *Id.*

<sup>111</sup> David Nickerson, *Volunteer Phone Calls Can Increase Turnout: Evidence From Eight Field Experiments*, 34 AM. POL. RES. 271, 271 (2006) (“[T]he phone calls are found to boost turnout by 3.8 percentage points.”).

<sup>112</sup> *Id.*

<sup>113</sup> Ryan D. Enos & Anthony Fowler, *Get Out the Vote interventions increase inequality in voter turnout*, LONDON SCH. ECON. & POL. SCI. (Mar. 27, 2014), <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2014/03/27/get-out-the-vote-interventions-increase-inequality-in-voter-turnout/> (last visited Feb. 24, 2015).

<sup>114</sup> *Id.*

<sup>115</sup> Daniel E. Bergan et al., *Grassroots Mobilization and Voter Turnout in 2004*, 69 PUB. OP. Q. 760, 760 (2005).

<sup>116</sup> *Id.* at 775.

<sup>117</sup> Enos & Fowler, *supra* note 113.

<sup>118</sup> *Id.*

<sup>119</sup> Bergan et al., *supra* note 115, at 776.

<sup>120</sup> *Id.*

non-supportive voters.<sup>121</sup> For instance, some Republicans support voter identification laws because the demographic groups that are discouraged from voting by these laws tend to vote heavily Democratic.<sup>122</sup>

A final societal circumstance is expansive state fiscal policies. While not initially intuitive, when states spend more on public programs such as hospitals, roads, and education, citizens may be likelier to vote.<sup>123</sup> A study conducted in 2007 examined voter turnout compared to tax burden across states.<sup>124</sup> The study found that states with a higher tax burden typically had a higher voter turnout.<sup>125</sup> For instance, Massachusetts, with an average tax burden of \$1,869.82, well over the average, had a 2.4% higher voter turnout compared to a state like Iowa, whose tax burden of just \$1,435.04 is near the national average.<sup>126</sup>

This indicates that voters may be spurred to vote when they observe an active government and want to be more engaged in that government. The study observed that not only did voters vote *for* the policies, they were also spurred to vote *against* the policies, indicating that voters can be provoked to vote for many different reasons.

### III. THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

#### A. Context

This study builds on existing research examining whether a catalytic experience—in this case, working as an exit poll administrator—can be an effective method for changing attitudes about democratic participation.

#### B. Research Design

This study examined democratic participation attitudes by hiring Chicago residents to work as exit poll administrators during the Chicago mayoral race run-off on April 7, 2015. The workers received exit poll training prior to Election Day and then administered exit poll surveys on Election Day. The workers were given the same survey prior to serving as an exit poll administrator and after serving as an administrator. Ultimately, this study examines whether a democratic experience can serve as a catalyst for changing attitudes about the government and democratic participation.

#### The Subjects

This study had a total of 184 participants, i.e. potential exit poll administrators. Ninety-three of the participants were selected for the treatment group and ninety-one of the participants were selected for the control group. In an experiment, a control group is a baseline group that receives no or neutral treatment. The treatment group receives some

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<sup>121</sup> See, e.g., Janelle Bouie, *Republicans Admit Voter-ID Laws are Aimed at Democratic Voters*, DAILY BEAST (Aug. 28, 2013), <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/08/28/republicans-admit-voter-id-laws-are-aimed-at-democratic-voters.html>.

<sup>122</sup> *Id.*

<sup>123</sup> See Garrick L. Percival et al., *Taxing, Spending, and Voting: Voter Turnout Rates in Statewide Elections in Comparative Perspective*, 39 ST. & LOC. GOV'T REV. 131 (2007).

<sup>124</sup> *Id.* at 140.

<sup>125</sup> *Id.*

<sup>126</sup> *Id.* at 138.

kind of treatment. In this study, the treatment group administered the exit poll survey. The results of the control and treatment groups were then compared to determine the change that occurred during treatment. In this instance, both groups were surveyed prior to treatment, with similar attitudes. The analysis below examines how the treatment group's attitudes changed after their participation in the treatment. The treatment-control method is utilized as a way to make the test results valid, i.e., a study where a more causal connection can be drawn.

In this experiment, control and treatment designations were selected through a randomization process using block random assignment. This type of assignment places subjects into subgroups, called blocks, and then completes random assignment in each block.<sup>127</sup> This type of randomization reduces sampling variability and ensures that certain groups are available for sub-analysis.<sup>128</sup> The method also ensures that all members of a specific demographic are not randomly placed in the control group or the treatment group. In this experiment, the researchers used this method to account for race/ethnicity and gender.

Once selected for the treatment group, an individual subject's participation in the study lasted for up to one month, including the time from when they took the study up through Election Day. Exit poll workers had to be at least eighteen years old, Chicago residents, and English speaking to participate in the study. Once they electronically signed the consent forms and submitted the Formal Application, they were enrolled in the study and divided into a treatment population and a control population using block randomization, as discussed above.

The control population was informed that they were selected for the control group and would not be part of the exit polling work. They were not contacted again and were not paid for their time. The treatment population was assigned a training date and Election Day shift, and they were notified that they were selected. They were notified via e-mail at least three times and via phone at least twice. These additional reminders appeared to be crucial to reduce the attrition rate of the participants. Members of the treatment group were paid \$75 if they completed their training and their shift on Election Day.

### The Treatment

Next, the treatment group attended the training and then administered the exit poll survey on Election Day. The training lasted one hour and the Election Day work lasted six hours. The researchers conducted three exit poll worker trainings. The trainings were identical but were provided at different times to provide better access for the exit poll workers. The training provided logistical information to help the exit poll workers complete their work by explaining the project and how to administer the exit poll survey.

To manage the exit poll workers, the researchers hired seven exit poll managers and selected polling locations for all exit poll workers. These managers oversaw the work of the exit poll administrators on Election Day. The researchers selected the polling

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<sup>127</sup> ALAN S. GERBER & DONALD P. GREEN, FIELD EXPERIMENTS: DESIGN, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION 71 (2012).

<sup>128</sup> *Id.* at 71–73.

location based on accessibility to the base of operations (the Northwestern University School of Law) and the proximity to the subjects' homes.

On Election Day, April 7, 2015, exit poll workers conducted exit polls for six hours. After voters completed their ballots, exit poll workers approached voters and requested their participation in a short survey.<sup>129</sup> After the exit poll workers finished their shift, they completed the post-Election Day survey<sup>130</sup> and received compensation for their work (\$75).

### Measurements

To analyze whether this activity changed the subjects' attitudes, the researchers used a number of measurements. The researchers compared the Formal Application<sup>131</sup>—which included questions regarding the subject's attitudes towards the government, politics, and other indicators of democratic participation—and the Post-Election Day Survey<sup>132</sup> to observe any changes in the subjects' attitudes. The researchers also asked whether the subjects would be interested in additional democratic participation opportunities as an indicator for future democratic involvement.

The data was gathered using the Formal Application,<sup>133</sup> prior to their participation in the exit poll work, and then directly after their participation, in the Post-Election Day Survey.<sup>134</sup> The participants were asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, to rate the following sentences (1=strongly disagree, 2=moderately disagree, 3=neutral, 4=moderately agree, 5=strongly agree).

<b>The United States government is effective.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The Illinois government is effective.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The city (Chicago) government is effective.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I follow politics.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I typically vote.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I like to volunteer.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I read the newspaper.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I volunteer with political campaigns.</b> <sup>135</sup>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I engage with other civic opportunities.</b> <sup>136</sup>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Do you plan to vote in the upcoming municipal election?</b>	Yes	Maybe	No		

<sup>129</sup> See Appendix C, Exit Poll Survey.

<sup>130</sup> See Appendix E, Post-Election Day Survey.

<sup>131</sup> See Appendix B, Formal Application.

<sup>132</sup> See Appendix E.

<sup>133</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>134</sup> See Appendix E.

<sup>135</sup> Please note that the Post-Election Day survey used slightly different wording: "I volunteer with political campaigns" was altered to read, "I plan to volunteer with political campaigns." This reflects a forward-looking approach as to how the subjects may act in the future.

<sup>136</sup> Please note that the Post-Election Day survey used slightly different wording: "I engage with other civic opportunities" was altered to read, "I will engage with other civic opportunities." This reflects a forward-looking approach as to how the subjects may act in the future.

The participants were also asked these questions prior to and after participation:

**Do you identify with a political party?**      Yes    No  
**If yes, what party?**    Republican    Democrat    Libertarian  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**If yes, how strongly?**

Very Strongly    Somewhat Strongly    Moderately    Not at All

In addition to the above questions, the participants were asked the following two questions after their participation with the first question using the same rating scale as above and the second question using a yes, maybe, no scale.

**This exit polling experience was positive.**                      1      2      3      4      5

**I would be interested in learning more about additional civic and political opportunities in the future:**                      Yes              Maybe              No

### *C. Empirical Results*

This Part analyzes the effects of the experiment.<sup>137</sup> First, this Part examines the participants' responses regarding the United States, Illinois, and Chicago governments before and after their participation in the study. Next, this Part observes the participants' responses regarding their plans to volunteer for political campaigns and engage in additional civic activities. Finally, this Section scrutinizes the respondents' feelings about their participation and whether they would be interested in participating in a similar project in the future. Finally, this Part examines theories to explain the subjects' attitudinal changes.

The first three questions consider the effectiveness of the federal government, Illinois government, and Chicago government. The average Pre-Election Day responses, prior to participation in the study, were 3.12 (The city (Chicago) government is effective), 3.24 (The Illinois government is effective), and 3.5 (The federal government is effective). See Figure 1. The average Post-Election Day responses, after participation in the study, were 2.56 (The city (Chicago) government is effective), 2.71 (The Illinois government is effective), and 3.15 (The federal government is effective). See Figure 2.

Effectively, the study appears to cause the participants to believe the federal, Illinois, and Chicago governments to be less effective. Participation appeared to reduce participants' belief in the effectiveness of the Chicago government by .56 ( $p = .0111$ ), of

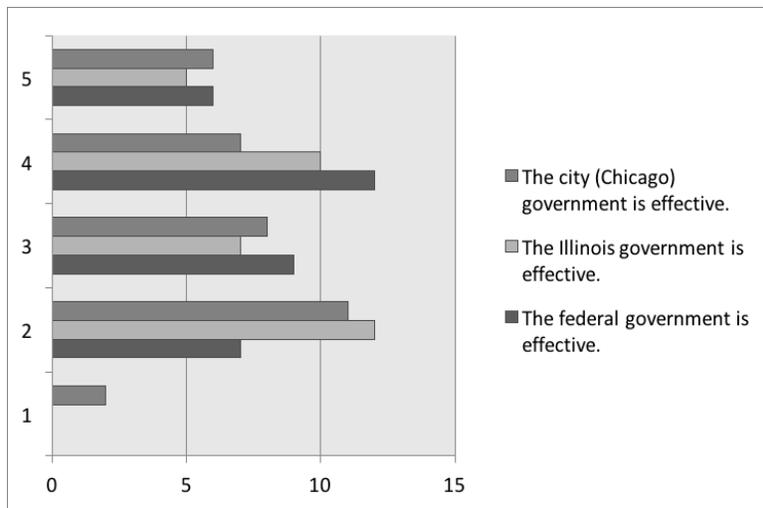
<sup>137</sup> First, a number of the above questions did not reach statistical significance. Thus, the researchers can make no conclusions regarding the subjects' change in attitudes regarding these variables. The following variables did not have statistically significant results: "I follow politics"; "I typically vote"; "I like to volunteer"; "I read the newspaper"; "Do you identify with a political party"; "If yes, what party?"; and "If so, how strongly?". Second, the researchers acknowledge that outside factors beyond the experiment may have influenced the subjects' attitudinal changes. We nonetheless suggest a likely causal relationship and identify this as an area for further research.

the Illinois government by .53 ( $p = .0087$ ), and of the federal government by .35 ( $p = .0965$ ). See Figure 3.

The effects appear to be strongest with the Chicago government given the larger decrease. This makes sense given that the subjects were interacting with election judges that were city employees (compared to state or federal employees). If the subjects believed the election judges to be less effective at their work, the subjects may have perceived the governments, more generally, to be less effective.

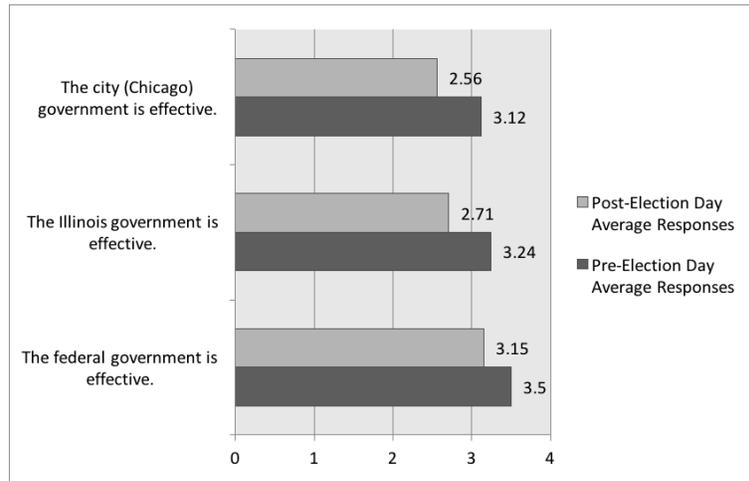
It is unclear why the participants also thought the state and federal governments were less effective. It could be that some mistakenly thought the election judges were state employees. It could also be that their thoughts about the election judges actually echoed far enough to affect their thoughts about government more generally, including the state and federal governments.

**Figure 1: Pre-Election Day Responses**



**Figure 2: Post-Election Day Responses**

**Figure 3: Pre-Election Day and Post Election Day Responses, Compared**

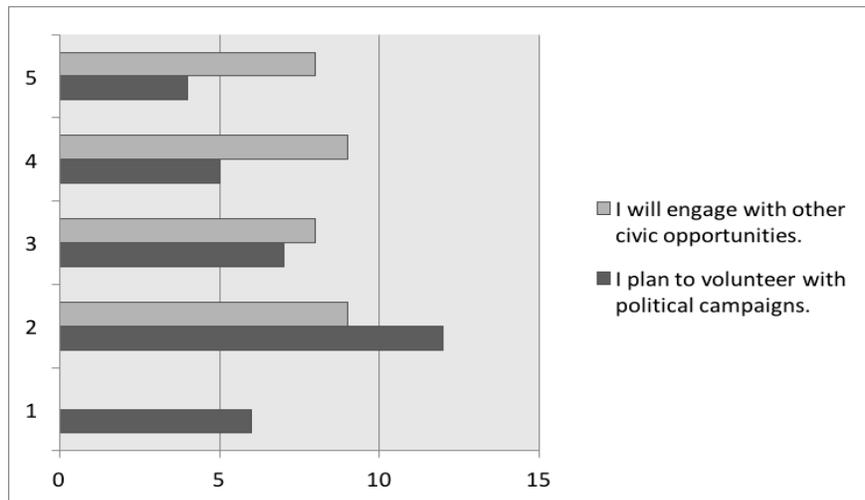


Although the subjects, after participating in the study, believed the governments to be less effective, the likelihood that they would volunteer with political campaigns and other civic activities increased. The average responses, prior to participation in the study, were 2.68 (I plan to volunteer with political campaigns) and 3.47 (I will engage in other civic activities). The average responses, after participation in the study, were 3.32 (I plan to volunteer with political campaigns) and 3.85 (I will engage in other civic activities). See Figures 4, 5, and 6.

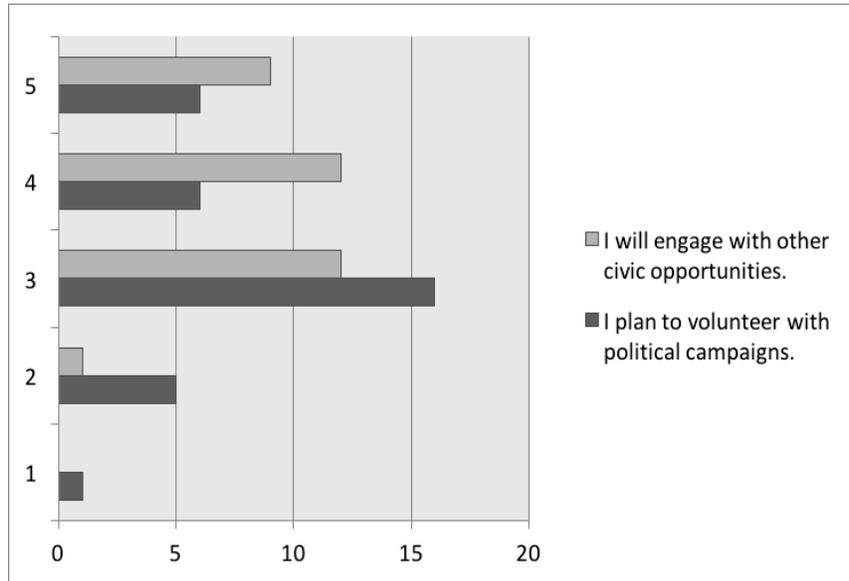
The participants’ average responses, when asked whether they plan to volunteer with political campaigns, increased by .65 ( $p = .0025$ ), indicating that they would be more willing to volunteer with political campaigns. See Figure 6.

Similarly, the participants’ average responses, when asked whether they planned to engage in other civic opportunities, increased by .38 ( $p = .0622$ ), indicating that they would be more willing to engage in other civic opportunities. See Figure 6.

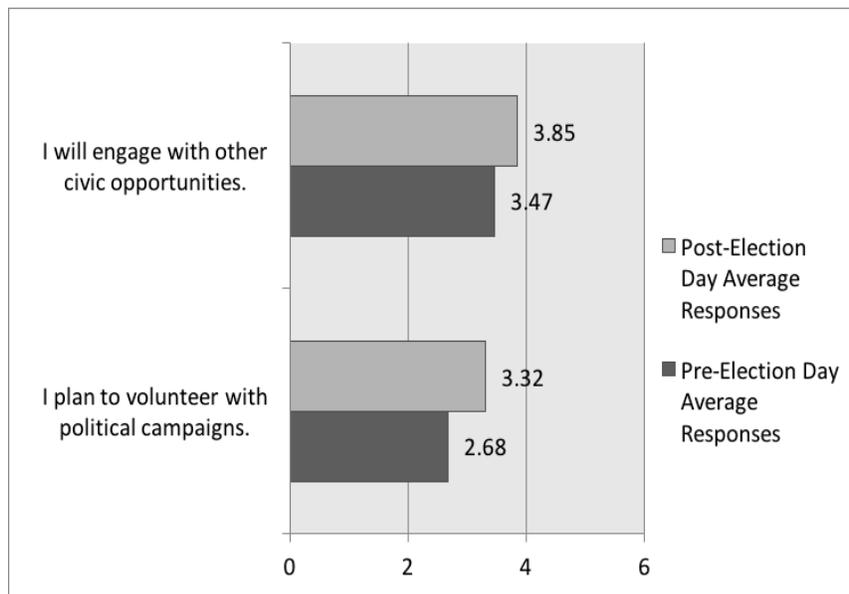
**Figure 4: Pre-Election Day Responses**



**Figure 5: Post-Election Day Responses**

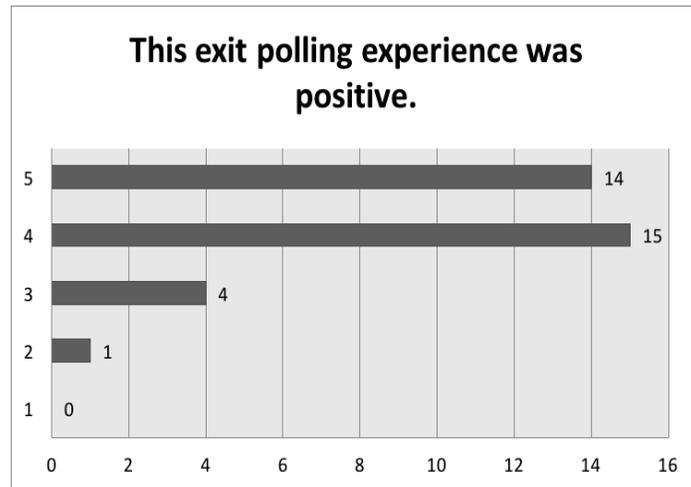


**Figure 6: Pre-Election Day and Post Election Day Responses, Compared**



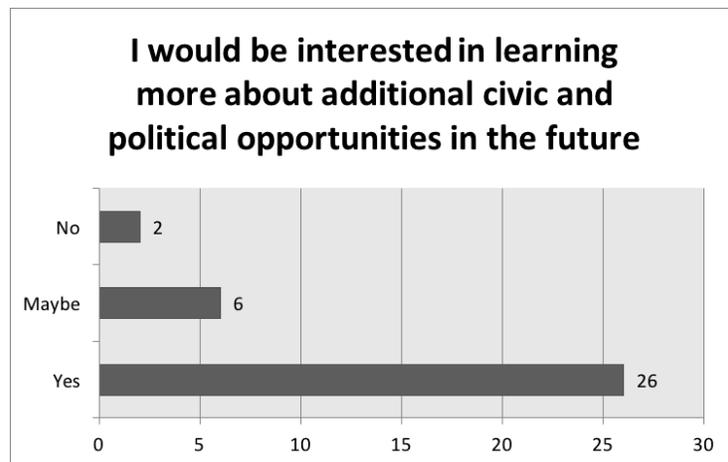
When asked whether the participants enjoyed the poll experience (on that same 1-5 scale), 85.29% responded that they “moderately agree” (44.12%) or “strongly agree” (41.17%). See Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Post-Survey Responses**



Finally, when asked whether they “would be interested in learning more about additional civic and political opportunities in the future” 76.47% said *Yes*, 17.65% said *Maybe*, and 5.88% said *No*. See Figure 8. This indicates that the participants are highly interested in future opportunities. Whether these attitudes will actually shift to action is unclear; longitudinal research should be conducted to fully understand whether this experience leads to action.

**Figure 8: Post-Survey Responses**



There are a number of possible explanations for these combined results of the negative attitudinal changes regarding the governments’ effectiveness but positive

attitudinal changes regarding political volunteering and engagement in other civic opportunities.

First, the election judges could have changed the subjects' opinions about the government. Given that most of the participants had relatively low exposure to the political process prior to participation in the study, they may not have formed strong opinions about the three governments, generally having neutral or positive feelings about them. But, after having negative experiences with the judges, their opinions about the judges could have decreased. Extrapolating this assumption, as the exit poll workers interacted with these government officials, their opinions about government effectiveness, more generally, decreased.

This is supported by the participants' complaints regarding the election judges' attitudes, directions, and general negativity. Most of the complaints the researchers received from the subjects during Election Day were to troubleshoot problems regarding rude or disagreeable election judges.

In addition, the positive attitudinal changes regarding political volunteering and civic engagement could also be explained in connection with the judges: after seeing the officials' negative actions, the subjects could have become more motivated to get involved in politics and other civic opportunities to change the process. These interactions with the judges, along with the bonding effect and positive training support discussed below, could have attributed to the attitudinal changes as well. This theory appears to be supported because the exit poll administrators almost uniformly complained about the election judges but appeared to enjoy the experience overall, as indicated by their survey responses, discussed above.

Conversely, the number of rejections the exit poll administrators received from voters could have influenced their attitudes. If the administrators believed that they would have relatively few rejections, but then received many because of the cold weather or other reasons, they could have projected this negativity towards the governments. These rejections could have also provided the change in motivation to volunteer and engage in other opportunities, but it is less clear why this would be linked.

Moreover, if the subjects had not previously participated in democratic processes, the administrators may have found that they enjoyed working in the political system, even if some voters rejected them. The training also prepared the administrators for possible negative interactions with voters and election judges so they may have been better prepared for this, thus potentially affecting them less negatively.

However, this theory is not directly supported by the administrators' comments. They appeared to have a positive experience, even considering the rejections. For instance, one administrator who stated that she was rejected numerous times, stated that she thought the voters were very nice and agreeable, even if some did not want to participate in the exit poll. She appeared to blame the cold weather rather than anything to do with the survey or her approach.

Alternatively, the voters' comparatively positive treatment of the exit poll workers, in contrast with strict election judges, could have further influenced the exit poll administrators' views of the government. For instance, if the voters were relatively nice, compared with the election judges who required the administrators to go outside beyond the 100-foot barrier (see a more detailed discussion below), this treatment could have altered the attitudes regarding the government while also spurring the administrators to

get more involved. This explanation appears to be supported: the exit poll administrators frequently complained about the election judges but infrequently complained about rude voters.

In addition, the weather may have played a role in the change in attitudes. Since the weather was about forty degrees Fahrenheit most of the day, it was relatively cold for the season. Further, many of the exit poll administrators were not dressed for the cold. Since most of the administrators had to stand outside, the cold could have dampened their moods and altered their attitudes towards the governments' effectiveness. But this does not necessarily explain why they would be more likely to volunteer and get involved in other political opportunities. This also fails to explain why 76.47% of the administrators would be interested in another similar opportunity.

Peer effects also could have played a role in the changes. Since each exit poll administrator had a partner, that partner's opinions and attitudes could have led to the change in attitudes. If the partners had a bad experience with the election judges or voters, they could have complained about the experience with one another, intensifying their negative opinions about the governments but also creating a bonding effect. However, this scenario still assumes a bad experience with an election judge or voter, indicating that something outside the partner caused the change in attitudes regarding the governments' effectiveness.

This bonding effect could also explain why the exit poll workers mostly enjoyed the experience and were interested in participating in future similar experiences. This is also supported by the friendly atmosphere the researchers observed before and after the experience among the exit poll administrators.

The training administered by the researchers could also have influenced the exit poll workers' attitudes. The training included logistical information and was generally upbeat. In addition, the trainers prepared the workers for possible negative interactions with the election judges. This preparation could have primed the workers to expect the election judges or voters to act negatively, and just reinforced their newly acquired beliefs if the election judges or voters were negative or disrespectful in any way.

Alternatively, the training could have steeled the administrators for possible negative interactions with voters and election judges. This may have better prepared the administrators for these interactions when confronted with adverse voters or election judges, thus affecting them less negatively.

The training could also have created a group bonding effect, leading to a positive group experience, explaining their increased desire to participate in future similar activities. The administrators appeared to enjoy the training; a number of the comments in the post-Election Day survey reflected this positive experience. For instance, one exit poll administrator said, "The training was great!" This comment is just one of many comments that indicated a positive training experience.

Additionally, since the training experience was so positive, the administrators could have been primed to have a positive Election Day experience, but when the election judges or the voters rejected them, the administrators may have thought even more negatively about the government. Yet, this fails to explain why the administrators were more interested in getting further engaged, or why they specifically thought more negatively about the government but did not have strong reactions to questions that failed to have statistically significant changes (e.g. I read the newspaper, I follow politics).

Finally, the exit poll administrators may have failed to identify with the experience. Since most of the polling locations were selected for their proximity to the Northwestern University School of Law, most of the workers were not in their local neighborhoods or communities. This could have led to a more negative experience compared to if they had been located in their home polling location. Furthermore, dissimilarities in the exit poll administrators' class, race, or sex with the election judges or voters could have also made for a more negative experience. But this theory fails to explain why the subjects' opinions about the governments would have changed so drastically or why they would be more interested in future similar opportunities.

#### IV. POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Taken together, the data reveal patterns that may be suggestive of useful policy and legal reforms. First, it is clear that those partaking in the Chicago election system believe the Chicago government to be less effective. Alienating participants in the democratic process, while effective in encouraging attitudes regarding volunteering and engagement, is not a useful outcome for the Chicago Board of Elections or the City of Chicago government more generally. Policy and legal changes that could provide a more hospitable experience might make the entire activity more appealing for everyone, including election judges and voters.

For instance, many of the exit poll workers worked with election judges that sternly enforced a City requirement that all electioneering activities, including non-partisan activities, take place at least 100 feet outside the polling location.<sup>138</sup> Given that 100 feet outside the polling location is typically outside, and many Chicago elections take place in the fall or winter, this requirement seems unnecessarily extreme, especially for non-partisan electioneering activities. The City of Chicago could alter the 100-foot barrier rule<sup>139</sup> for those participating in non-partisan activities.

In addition, it is clear that this experience altered the participants' plans for future political and civic engagement. This study indicates that providing a catalytic experience can spur more positive attitudes about democratic engagement. Policymakers should consider how to use this new information to more fully engage the populous. For example, policymakers could better encourage people to engage in democratic opportunities by funding these types of opportunities and making them more available to less-engaged communities.

Finally, as indicated in the Armitage & Conner study,<sup>140</sup> a shift in attitudes can create a shift in behavior. This finding, connected with the research conducted in this Article, indicates that changed attitudes related to democratic participation may lead to changed behaviors regarding democratic participation. To more definitively determine whether attitudinal changes regarding democratic participation will lead to behavioral changes, future research should look at whether these attitudinal changes ultimately lead to changed behavior. A longitudinal study following the subjects in this study may provide a better sense of actual behavioral change.

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<sup>138</sup> See 10 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/7-41(c).

<sup>139</sup> *Id.*

<sup>140</sup> See Armitage & Conner, *supra* note 73, at 471–99.

## CONCLUSION

This study is a part of a larger dialog about democratic participation. These findings indicate that while participation as an exit poll administrator during a Chicago Election Day may make participants believe the federal, state, and city governments to be less effective, this experience positively changes attitudes regarding future plans to democratically volunteer and engage.

More research is required to fully determine whether an initial catalytic experience, such as serving as an exit poll administrator, can change not only attitudes, but also behavior related to democratic participation. Ultimately, this research provides a foundation for future research into what drives democratic participation.

**APPENDIX A  
RECRUITMENT EMAIL**

**Subject Line:** Sign Up for Research Study

**Northwestern University School of Law  
Senior Research Project**

Sign up to do a civic engagement research study. You may earn \$75 for seven hours of work if eligible. No previous experience required but you must be English speaking, a Chicago resident, and at least eighteen years old.

You will be required to attend an hour training prior to Election Day and conduct exit polls on Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

Please see link to sign up: [Link to formal application in SurveyMonkey]

Application is no guarantee that you will be selected for participation. Please contact Emma Olson with any questions: e-olson20\*\*@nlaw.northwestern.edu or [\*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\*].

The Effects of Civic Behavior: Examining How Political Work Affects Long-term Civic Behavior; Len Rubinowitz, Principle Investigator; IRB Number STU#200432.

## **APPENDIX B FORMAL APPLICATION**

### **Consent to Participate in Research**

Dear Participant:

You are being given the opportunity to participate in a study; this survey will determine whether you are eligible to participate. To participate you must be at least eighteen years old, English-speaking, and a Chicago resident.

If you are eligible to participate, you may be assigned to the treatment or control group. The treatment group will be hired as exit poll workers for the study. The control group will be notified that they have been selected for the control group but will not be further involved in the study. If you are deemed ineligible to participate, your data will be destroyed.

### **Description of the study and study procedures**

We are conducting a research study to examine civic engagement. The IRB Project is STU200432. The person in charge of the study is Len Rubinowitz, Professor of Law at Northwestern University. If you are eligible to participate, you will be assigned to the treatment or control group. The treatment group will be hired as exit poll workers for the study and you will be asked to attend training, assist with exit polling, and complete a post-Election Day survey.

The control group will be notified that they have been selected for the control group and will not have any other participation in the study activities.

The public voting record and criminal record going forward may be examined as part of this research. These are already publically available information and you will not be contacted by the study team.

### **Risks, Benefits, and Alternatives**

Your participation does not involve any risks other than what you would encounter in daily life. You are unlikely to receive any direct benefit from participating in this study. You may choose to not participate in this research study.

### **Financial Information**

Participation in this study will involve no cost to you. If selected for the treatment group, you will be paid \$75 for completing the entirety of the study. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. If you withdraw before the end of the study, you will be paid \$10 an hour for the hours you complete; if you withdraw you will be mailed a check card within three weeks of April 7, 2015. If you complete the study, you will be paid at the completion of your shift on Election Day via a check card. If selected for the control group, you will not be paid for your participation.



**Are you a Chicago resident?** Yes No

**What is your racial/ethnic background?** **What is your native language?**

**What is your education level?**

Some High School High School/GED Some College  
 College Degree Graduate Degree

**Do you identify with a political party?** Yes No

**If yes, what party?** Republican Democrat Libertarian  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**If yes, how strongly?**

Very Strongly Somewhat Strongly Moderately Not at All

**On a scale of 1 to 5, 1=strongly disagree, 2=moderately disagree, 3=neutral, 4=moderately agree, 5=strongly agree, please rate the following sentences:**

<b>The United States government is effective.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The Illinois government is effective.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The city (Chicago) government is effective.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I follow politics.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I typically vote.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I like to volunteer.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I read the newspaper.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I volunteer with political campaigns.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I engage with other civic opportunities.</b>	1	2	3	4	5

**Do you plan to vote in the upcoming municipal election?** Yes Maybe No

**Have you ever worked as an exit poll worker?** Yes No

**If yes, please explain:**

**Have you ever been convicted of a crime?** Yes No

**If yes, please explain:**

*Please note: this information will only be used for our study purposes.*

**How much does your household currently make per year (provide your best estimate)?**

\$0-\$24,999	\$25,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$74,999	\$75,000-\$99,999
\$100,000-\$124,999	\$125,000-\$149,999	\$150,000-\$174,999	\$175,000-\$199,999
\$200,000 and up			

**Please identify the dates you are available for a one-hour training (circle all that apply):**

Friday, April 3, [2015], 2:00 PM-3:00 PM,  
 Saturday, April 4, 2015, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM  
 Tuesday, April 7, 2015, 8:30 AM-9:30 AM

*All trainings will be held at the Northwestern School of Law located at 375 E. Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611.*

**Please identify the times you are available for the six-hour exit polling work (circle all that apply):**

Tuesday, April 7, 2015; 6:00 AM-12:00PM  
 Tuesday, April 7, 2015; 10:00 AM-4:00 PM  
 Tuesday, April 7, 2015; 1:00 PM-7:00 PM

*Note: If you choose the Tuesday training, you cannot choose the first Election Day shift.*

Application for this position is no guarantee that you will be selected for participation. Please contact Emma Olson with any questions: e-olson\*\*\*\*@nlaw.northwestern.edu or [\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*].

**APPENDIX C  
EXIT POLL**

**Note:** The formatting was adjusted on the actual exit poll to fit it all on two pages. In addition, there were four versions of the exit poll to randomize the order of the options.

**On a scale of 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree, 2=moderately disagree, 3=neutral, 4=moderately agree, 5=strongly agree) please rate the following sentences by circling a number; you can also choose No opinion.**

**Today's voting experience was positive.**

Strongly 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly  
Disagree Agree

No opinion

**The ballot was easy to understand.**

Strongly 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly  
Disagree Agree

No opinion

**The election judges were helpful.**

Strongly 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly  
Disagree Agree

No opinion

**I trust the United States government.**

Strongly 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly  
Disagree Agree

No opinion

**I trust the Illinois government.**

Strongly 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly  
Disagree Agree

No opinion

**I think the United States campaign finance laws are adequate.**

Strongly 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly  
Disagree Agree

No opinion

**I think the Illinois campaign finance laws are adequate.**

Strongly 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly  
Disagree Agree

No opinion

**Who did you vote for mayor in this election?**

Rahm Emanuel Jesus "Chuy" Garcia

**Policies that treat people of different races differently are acceptable if they are attempting to correct past discrimination or avoid a racially disparate result.**

Strongly 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly  
Disagree Agree

No opinion

**Policies should not treat people of different races differently, regardless of circumstances.**

Strongly 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly  
Disagree Agree

No opinion

**In your vote today, how significant a factor was the candidate's opinions about race and ethnicity?**

Not 1 2 3 4 5 Deciding  
Relevant Factor

No opinion

**Do you think it's important to have people of color in local government?**

Yes Maybe No

**Do you think you are better represented when your alderman or mayor is of the same race/ethnicity to you?**

Yes Maybe No

**What types of campaign finance laws are important to you? (Circle all that apply)**

Laws that limit spending by candidates

Laws that limit spending by third party organizations (e.g. PACs)

Public financing

Comprehensive disclosure of spending and contributions by candidates and third parties

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How confident are you that your ballot will be counted?**

Very confident

Somewhat confident

Not too confident

Not at all confident

**For questions (a) to (d), please state whether you think the following items would qualify as being a corrupt act by a government official in office.**

(a) After two months of leaving office, a state senator, who served on the agricultural committee, is employed in the government relations division of a major agricultural products firm.

Yes No

(b) A state legislator, currently in office, tells the top five donors to his campaign they can call him on his cell phone at any time of the day or night.

Yes No

(c) A state senator tells a potential donor from the manufacturing industry that he will vote in favor of a bill that will give state funds to companies engaged in manufacturing in the state if he contributes to his campaign.

Yes No

(d) A state congressman agrees to meet with local campaign donors, but does not agree to meet with a group that did not contribute to his campaign.

Yes No

**Please rank the following scenarios from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most corrupt, and 4 being the least corrupt. You can only use each number once. (These are the same scenarios you just were just given.)**

(a) After two months of leaving office, a state senator, who served on the agricultural committee, is employed in the government relations division of a major agricultural products firm.

**Rank** \_\_\_\_\_

(b) A state legislator, currently in office, tells the top five donors to his campaign they can call him on his cell phone at any time of the day or night.

**Rank** \_\_\_\_\_

(c) A state senator tells a potential donor from the manufacturing industry that he will vote in favor of a bill that will give state funds to companies engaged in manufacturing in the state if he contributes to his campaign.

**Rank** \_\_\_\_\_

(d) A state congressman decides to meet with local campaign donors, but does not have a meeting with a group that did not contribute to his campaign.

**Rank** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you identify with a political party?**

Yes    No

**If yes, what party?** Republican    Democrat    Libertarian

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**If yes, how strongly?**            Very Strongly    Somewhat Strongly

   Moderately        Not at All

**What is your racial/ethnic background?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**What is your native language?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please feel free to make any comments.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for participating in this survey!**

**APPENDIX D  
REJECTION CHART**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>White</b>		
<b>Person of Color</b>		



**The Illinois government is effective.**

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

**The city (Chicago) government is effective.**

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

**I follow politics.**

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

**I typically vote.**

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

**I like to volunteer.**

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

**I read the newspaper.**

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

**I plan to volunteer with political campaigns.**

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

**I will engage with other civic opportunities.**

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

**This exit polling experience was positive.**

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

**I would be interested in learning more about additional civic and political opportunities in the future:**

Yes                      Maybe                      No

**Please comment on your experience in terms of the training and working as an exit poll worker. What did you learn? What did you like/dislike about the experience?**

**Additional Comments/Questions [Continue on back if necessary]**