

CHANGE THE RULES, SUPPRESS THE VOTE: USING ELECTION TIMING TO DISENFRANCHISE
STUDENT VOTERS, A LOOK AT 2011'S MEASURE A IN CHICO, CALIFORNIA

By
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ABSTRACT

There is a perception that university students have an undue influence upon local elections. In 2011, one such community with a university in its boundaries attempted to pass a measure that would change city-council elections in order to reduce turnout among student-age voters, faculty, and staff of a university campus. This paper looks at the attempt and in response to the broader question: Do Communities with a university in their boundaries encourage attempts to suppress student-age voter participation? This paper breaks the question down into four sub-hypotheses and finds an affirmative relationship between these hypotheses and student-age voter suppression efforts.

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Introduction

I set out to develop a theory that would explain why some communities with a university in their boundaries encourage or make possible attempts to suppress student-age voter participation in local elections. Are there defining characteristics that can be used to explain why such efforts have been made in some college towns but not others and to predict where these efforts might arise in the future?

This study focused on one effort to suppress student voter turnout, however the suppression of student voters is not limited to Chico, California. The Brennan Center for Justice has documented attempts to challenge, intimidate, and disenfranchise student voters in several states, including a 2004 attempt that targeted the students of a historically black college in Florida (Weiser and Agraharkar 2012, 4). In 2012, Republican lawmakers in New Hampshire introduced legislation that would prevent students and members of the military from acquiring voting residency in the state (Weiser and Norden 2012, 8). This bill specifically targeted students because they tend to vote Democratic (*ibid.*).

The passage of voter ID laws has also left students susceptible to disenfranchisement. The ID laws passed in South Carolina, Texas, and Tennessee expressly prohibit the use of a student photo ID for the purposes of voting (*ibid.*).

Laws impeding ballot access by university students are blatant attempts at preventing a fully enfranchised group from exercising their rights. These attempts come from a

belief that university students do not have an interest in the political outcomes of local elections, or that these students will have an outsized influence in the make-up of the local governing body. I argue that students must be allowed to vote in local elections in order for their interests to be considered. Indeed, the Supreme Court agreed in 1972 in the *Dunn v Blumstein* when it ruled that extended residency requirements were unconstitutional.

The proponents of Measure A were driven by a desire to replace a liberal majority city council with a conservative majority. This study shows that the measure's backers acted upon the assumption that the university population is responsible for electing the liberal majority. Therefore, moving the election to April, a time when the university population would most likely be absent from the community, could skew voter turnout to favor conservative candidates. Measure supporters also espoused the message that students were not a part of the community and therefore should not have the same right to vote in local elections.

The presence of students in the community, and the resulting impact on housing, are significant enough to be mentioned in the City of Chico's General Plan and the General Plan's Housing Element. First, the large student population skews the median age of the city down by five years, to 29.1, from the average age of the rest of the Butte County and the state of California, with both at 34.7 years (City of Chico 2009, 7-4). Second, meeting the housing needs of the student population is a challenge as students prefer to live close to the campus. Students congregate in the areas immediately north and south of the CSU Chico campus. These areas are "dominated by single-family homes- often subdivided into multiple units" (ibid., 7a-15) and "are in poor condition" (ibid., 7a-23). Finally, as the Housing Element also acknowledges "it is common for students to overpay (as a percentage of income) for housing" (ibid., 7a-6).

Students clearly have an interest in making sure they have representation in local government. The effort to move the election was an attempt to suppress the voter turnout of over one-quarter of the city's population. We know from Dahl that groups who do not have the franchise do not have their interests represented. When voter turnout is suppressed, the legitimacy of the election is in doubt.

Research Question/Hypotheses/Results

The perception that the intent of 2011's Measure A was to disenfranchise student voters was created during the signature gathering process. Paid circulators were using the phrase "Keep Local Elections Local" and were telling potential signers that university students should not be allowed to vote in local elections until they had lived in Chico for at least a year (Anderson 2010). There are statements and hints from the letters-to-the-editor and newspaper interviews of the measures' supporters. Additionally, supporters of Measure A carried the perception forward by writing letters to the editor of the daily paper claiming, for example, that full-time residents of Chico were the ones "disenfranchised" by students voting in local elections (Jones 2011).

Chico is a good case study to examine what factors might contribute to the likelihood of efforts to limit student voting because of its own history regarding student and faculty. A study of a community where proponents of the measure were open about their goal (to elect more conservatives to the city council), where their selected method of attaining that goal would result in reduced voter turnout among certain voters (namely students), and where it was expressed by the measure's proponents that university students should not be voting in local elections provides the ideal case study for testing my hypothesis that communities that

attempt to suppress or disenfranchise student voters will share certain characteristics. We know what the goals of the effort were, we know there is animosity towards student “outsiders” voting in local elections, and we know the outcome of the effort. Since this is an area that has not been studied in depth, I argue that this study can further our understanding of similar attempts by other communities. This first case study is an effort to build a general theory that can be tested in other jurisdictions.

In an attempt to further the understanding of the causes of student voter suppression, I began with the general theory that college towns with significant racial, ethnic, and ideological differences between student and non-student residents are more likely to see efforts to suppress student voting in local elections. Four sub-hypotheses were tested using the case study of the 2011 attempt to move the Chico City Council election from November to June in the college town of Chico, California. This move would have shifted the elections from a high turnout general election month to a lower turnout primary election month.

I argue that student voter suppression efforts are more likely to occur in university communities where these four factors (independent variables) are present:

1: the student population makes up a critical percentage of the total population of the city;

2: racial and ethnic minorities make up a higher percentage of the student population than the community at large, resulting in a more diverse population around campus than in the overall population;

3: the university population leaves the area during significant breaks in the academic calendar; and

4: the community at-large around the university shows a voting preference that is politically conservative.

Tests of Hypotheses

Size of Student Population

The first hypothesis is that student voter suppression efforts are more likely to occur when the student population is a critical portion of the total population of the city. The definitions of key terms are as follows: *Critical portion* is 20% of the population; *student population* is defined as individuals who have located in the city of Chico specifically for the purpose of attending school at CSU Chico; *undergraduate* is defined as “a student enrolled in a four- or five- year bachelor’s degree program, an associate degree program, or a vocational or technical program below the baccalaureate” (Common Data Set 2009-2010); *community-at-large* is the population of the city of Chico not affiliated with the university.

The official population level for the city of Chico, as reported by the US Census Bureau in the 2010 decennial census was 86,187. The census count includes student households, as the count occurred in April 2010 while the university was in session. At the time of the count CSU Chico reported a total enrollment of 16,934 graduate and undergraduate students (Common Data Set 2009-2010). During that time, the total student population of CSU Chico made up 20% of the total population of the city of Chico.

When Measure A was first proposed during the 2010-2011 academic year, the CSU Chico undergraduate student population made up 19.6% of the population. This calculation does not take into account the presence of Butte Community College students. Butte College has a campus within the city limits and a main campus about 15 miles outside the city.

According to the city of Chico 2009-2014 General Plan Housing Element, the city reported 6,493 Butte College students living within the city of Chico (City of Chico 2009, 7a-6). When added to the CSU Chico population, the student population rises to equal 27% of the city's population. Thus in Chico, the student population has exceeded the critical portion of 20% of the overall population, and the hypothesis is supported.

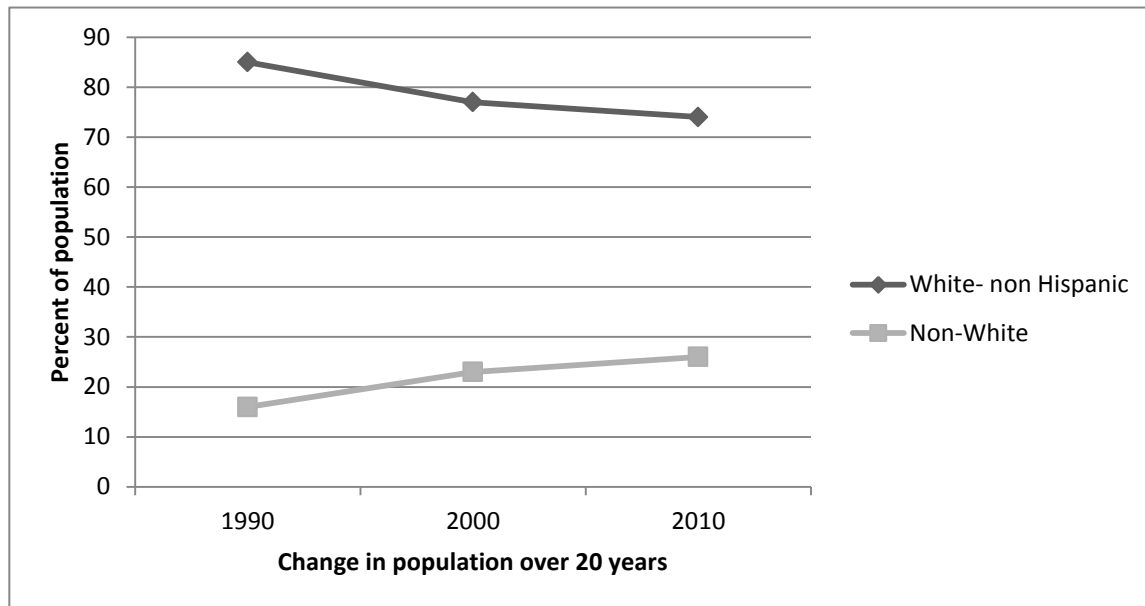
Racial and Ethnic Population

My second hypothesis is that efforts to limit student voting are more likely to occur in jurisdictions where non-whites make up a higher percentage of the student population than the community-at-large, resulting in a more diverse population around campus than in the other parts of town. Additional key terms used for this hypothesis are: *diverse* which is defined as the mix of the racial and ethnic population of the university and the city; *non-white* is defined as individuals who self-identify with any racial or ethnic heritage other than white, non-Hispanic on either the United States Census or the CSU Chico Common Data Set.

Since the graduate student information available on the Common Data Sets filed by the Office of Institutional Research does not include similar racial or ethnic data that is collected about undergraduates, this part of the study is only concerned with the undergraduate student population. Additional information about the racial and ethnic graduate student population would provide a more accurate picture of the overall student population.

U.S. Census data for 2010 shows racial and ethnic minorities now make up 26% of the total population of Chico. Figure 3 shows the rise in the non-white population over the past twenty years.

Figure 3: Change in Population Demographics, City of Chico

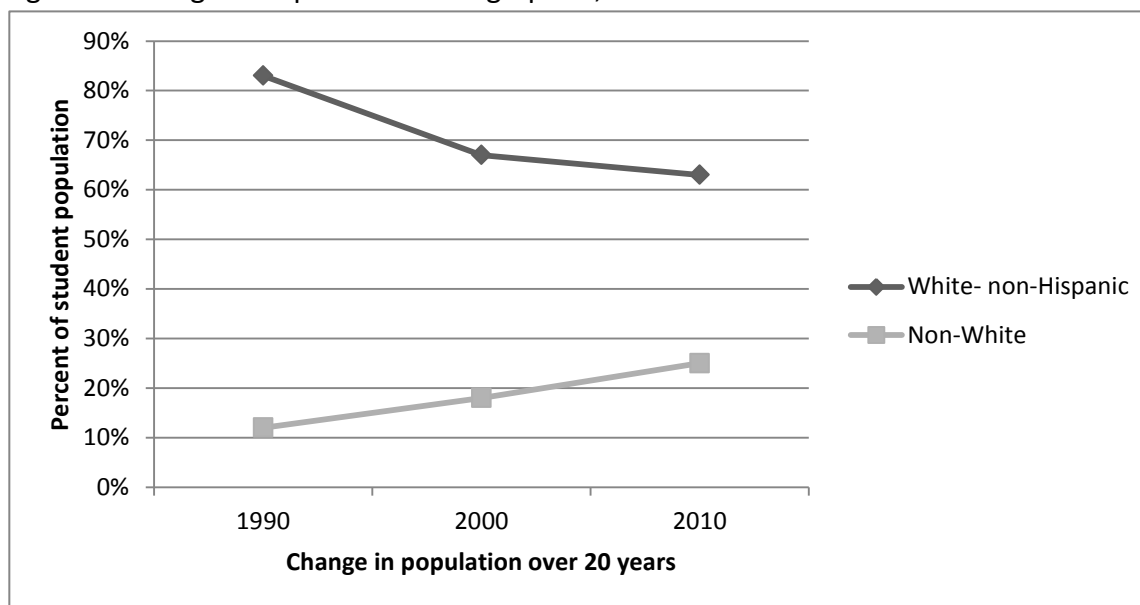


Sources: United States Census Bureau.

The data clearly show that Chico is becoming more diverse. According to census data, in 1990, 84% of the population identified themselves as 'white' with that number dropping to 74% in 2010 (US Census Bureau). The non-White population has risen from a low of 16% in 1990 up to 26% in 2010—a gain of 10% (ibid.). The 'non-white' population includes those who identified themselves as Black/African-American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, Hispanic Origin, 'Other Race', or 'Two or more races' on the US Census report.

As the city has grown more diverse, so has the university's student population. As Figure 4 shows, the non-white student population at CSU Chico has grown from just 12% of the student population in 1990 to 25% by 2010.

Figure 4: Change in Population Demographics, CSU Chico

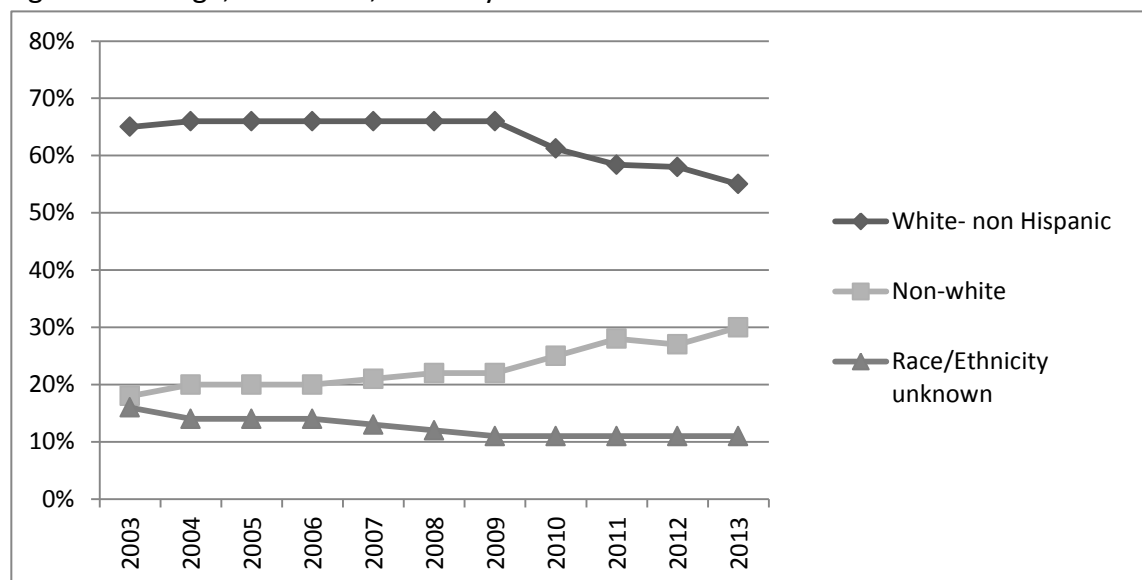


Sources: Office of Institutional Research, Common Data Sets filed for academic years 1990-1991, 2000-2001, and 2010-2011.

A comparison of Figures 3 and 4 shows that the white and minority populations of the city and the university were equivalent in 1990: both reported populations that were 84% white. Over time, that symmetry in city and university racial and ethnic populations disappeared. By the time of the June 2011 vote on Measure A, according to the Common Data Set for 2010-2011, the non-white population of CSU Chico was at 28%, and the 2012-2013 Common Data Sets show the non-white population currently stands at 30% (see Figure 5). But what is the non-white population of the community-at-large? Since the census is taken in the spring while students are in Chico, they will be represented in both the census data and in the Common Data Sets. It is therefore necessary to adjust for this. The non-white student population was 4.5% of the overall population:

$$\frac{\text{non-white population}}{\text{total population}} = \frac{3,849}{86,187} = 4.5\%$$

Figure 5: Change, in Percent, Minority Student Enrollment at CSU Chico



Source: Office of Institutional Research

The U.S Census reported Chico's overall non-white population was 26%. The formula below adjusts for the double count of the non-white student population:

$$\frac{(\text{total population} \times \% \text{ of non-white population}) - \text{non-white student population}}{\text{total population of Chico}}$$

$$\frac{(86,187 \times .26) - 3,849}{86,187} = \frac{18,560}{86,187} = 21.5\%$$

These calculations clearly show that the non-white non-student population constitutes 21.5% of the city population. Thus, the non-white student population, at 25-30% of the total student population therefore is higher than the non-white population in the community-at-large.

In my third hypothesis I posit that student voter suppression efforts are more likely in jurisdictions where the university population leaves the area during significant breaks in the academic calendar. Indeed, the student population of CSU Chico does not appear to stay in the city during significant breaks in the academic calendar. Population data specific to these time periods is not available and no studies have been conducted on the break habits of the

university population. However, the Center for Regional and Continuing Education has data available on registration levels for the winter and summer intercession courses. As Table 1 shows, the registration levels for intercession classes are a small fraction of the

Table 1: Intercession Course Registration, 2010-2013

	2010	2011	2012	2013
January	1,400	1,215	1,080	1,147
Summer	3,009	2,707	2,640	n/a
Spring Semester	14,602	13,909	14,090	14,349

Sources: Office of Regional and Continuing Education; Office of Institutional Research

regular, spring semester enrollments. The enrollment information for the January and summer intercession courses reveals less than one percent of the student population takes classes during these two significant breaks in the academic calendar. In addition, some summer and January intercession courses are also available online, therefore they can be taken anywhere. Enrollment in the online courses does not mean the student is physically in Chico (McReynolds 2013) so, the summer enrollment numbers are higher than the number of students actually in Chico during these breaks. In 2010, 37% (1,109 students) of the summer intercession enrollment was for online courses (ibid.). The percentage of online enrollment increased in 2011 to 45%, and again in 2012 to 52% (ibid.). These figures support my hypothesis that the student population drops significantly during winter and summer breaks.

Data from the Office of Institutional Research also show that one percent of CSU, Chico's students live in on-campus housing and of this, 67% are first-year freshmen. The office of University Housing and Food Service rules require students living in campus dormitories vacate housing during Thanksgiving, winter, and spring breaks (University Housing and Food Service 2012, 8). Since the residence contract just "covers the academic year and ends in the

spring semester with the last day of finals week” students must vacate campus housing over the summer as well (ibid.).

I argue that the hypothesis stating that the student population leaves the area during the major academic breaks is supported by the data, and this data is the best data currently available to test this hypothesis.

Voting Characteristics

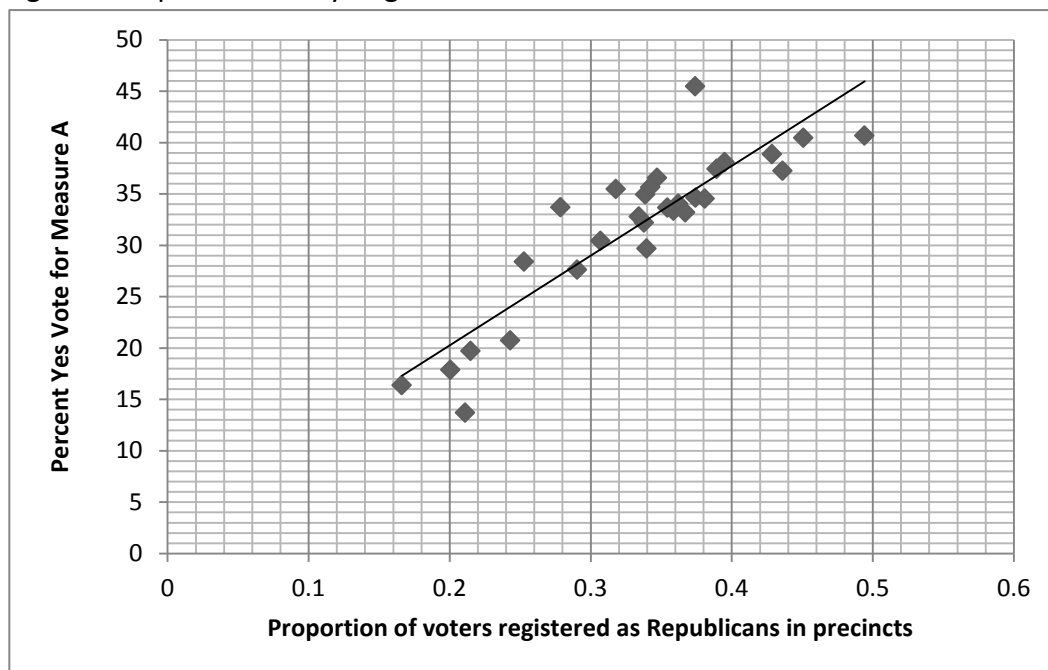
The final hypothesis I test is that efforts to limit student voting are more likely to occur in college communities where the community-at-large votes more conservatively than does the student population. Definitions for terms used in this section are: *student voter* is defined as a CSU,, Chico student who is registered to vote or is eligible to vote; *student voting* is defined as the ballots cast in a scheduled election by student voters; *conservative* is defined as the preference (as shown through voting behavior) for candidates for political office who identify as conservative or Republican; *liberal* is defined as the preference (as shown through voting behavior) for candidates for political office who identify as liberal or democratic; *voter or voting precinct* is defined as the polling place assigned by the Butte County Office of Elections to voters within a geographic boundary.

The city of Chico had 41 voting precincts when ballots were cast for Measure A in June 2011. Voter registration data is compiled by the Butte County Office of Elections. Voting precincts are made up of one or more regular precincts. In order to determine the party registration by voting precinct, it was necessary to cross reference the regular precincts with voting precincts, then add the party registration subtotals to determine the proportion of registered Republican or Democratic party members in each precinct. Using this data, two

bivariate regression analyses were run to examine the relationship between party registration and support for Measure A.

Figure 6 confirms that voting precincts with higher proportions of Republican Party registration were more likely to support Measure A. Each one percent increase in Republican Party registration produced a one percent increase in support for Measure A.

Figure 6: Republican Party Registration Effects on the Vote for Measure A



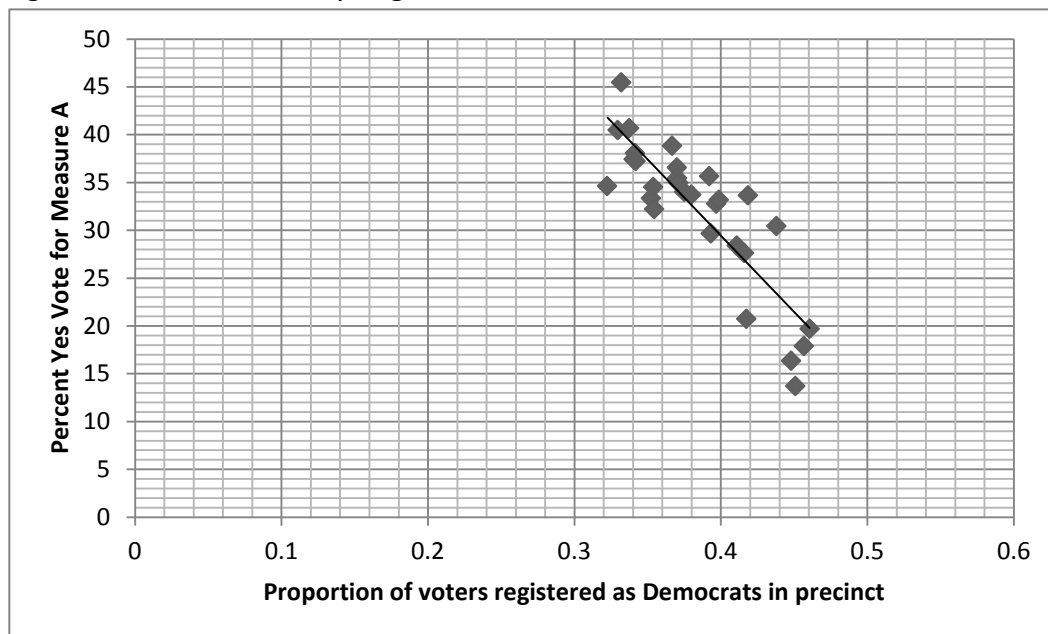
Source: Butte County Office of Elections

Adjusted R-Square = 0.789; P = .000

Figure 7 confirms that voting precincts with higher proportions of Democratic Party registration were less likely to support Measure A. Each one percent increase in Democratic Party registration produced a 1.6 % decrease in support for Measure A.

A multiple regression analysis comparing the registrations of the two parties confirmed the results, and showed an even stronger relationship between the registration levels of the two parties in a voting precinct and the 'yes' vote on Measure A.

Figure 7: Democratic Party Registration Effects on the Vote for Measure A



Source: Butte County Office of Elections

Adjusted R-Square = 0.740; P = .000

In the multiple regression, the standardized coefficients were both statistically significant (-.386 for Democratic precincts and .563 for Republican precincts, with an adjusted R-Square of .832) revealing that party registration counted for 83% of the variance in support for Measure A.

Because of the increasing rates of 'Decline-to-State' registered voters, a regression was run on this registration category to check for their possible influence on the vote for Measure A. This analysis revealed no statistical significance (Results: ANOVA = 0.920 with an adjusted R-Square of 0.00038). The percentage of Decline-to-State voters in a precinct had no influence on support for Measure A.

The test for party influence on the vote showed that the party effect was very strong when ballots were cast for Measure A. The hypothesis states: the community-at-large will vote more conservatively than the student population. This requires an additional analysis of votes cast for political office. In addition, we need to find out where student voters are located within

the city. These can be determined by taking a closer look at some additional voting precinct data.

Once the party significance was established, nine voting precincts were selected for analysis. The nine were chosen on the basis of percentage of 'yes' votes for Measure A and their proximity to the university. Two of the voting precincts were selected because they reported the highest percentage 'yes' votes, and two were selected because they had the lowest percentage of 'yes' votes. The remaining five voting precincts have reported 'yes' vote percentages falling in between the high and low returns.

The data in Table 2 are from the Butte County Office of Elections. Turnout data are from "Statements of Votes Cast General Election-November 2, 2010, Municipal: Turn out." The turnout is the percentage of registered voters in the voting precinct who actually cast a ballot—either in person or by absentee—in the City Council election. The top three candidate preference column data are from the same statement of votes cast but from the "City of Chico Council" section.

A comparison of the City Council election choices by the voters and the 'yes' vote on Measure A in the selected precincts provides evidence of the ideological and political leanings of the voting precincts. Table 2 shows the voters' candidate preferences for the Chico City Council election held in November 2010, seven months prior to the vote on Measure A and the precinct's 'yes' vote on Measure A in June 2011. Chico City Council elections are at-large contests in which voters are asked to cast ballots for the number of candidates running for the number of seats available.

Table 2: Top Three Candidates, Chico City Council Elections, November 2010 and Vote on Measure A, June 2011.

Voting Precinct	Percent Turnout	Top Three Candidates	Conservative /Liberal	Where Located	% Yes on 'A'
2202	71.3	Sorenson (21.9) Evans (19.1) Kromer (15.3)	Conservative Conservative Conservative	NW Chico	40.5
2203	76.5	Sorenson (24.4) Evans (23) Kromer (20)	Conservative Conservative Conservative	NW Chico	45.4
2205	72.5	Sorenson (19.1) Gruendl (16.5) Flynn (16.4)	Conservative Liberal Liberal	SW Chico	16.4
2206	43.7	Herrera (24.8) Flynn (20.2) Grundle (16.7)	Liberal Liberal Liberal	South Campus	13.7
2207	22.9	Herrera (27.6) Flynn (16.9) Gruendl (11.6)	Liberal Liberal Liberal	North Campus	20.7
2208	46.8	Herrera (24.6) Flynn (19.4) Gruendl (19.2)	Liberal Liberal Liberal	North Campus	28.3
2209	38.3	Herrera (25.6) Flynn (19.7) Gruendl (16.5)	Liberal Liberal Liberal	Chapman	17.9
3202	72.3	Sorenson (19.1) Evans (16.4) Grundle (15.6)	Conservative Conservative Liberal	NE Chico	37.2
3210	70.6	Flynn (18) Gruendl (17.8) Sorenson (17.04)	Liberal Liberal Liberal	Central Chico	19.7

Sources: Butte County Office of Elections "Statement of Votes Cast" general election, Nov. 7,2010 and Special Municipal Election, June 7,2011; Precinct map, Butte County Office of Elections.

In 2010, a total of nine candidates were running for three openings on the council. Only the top three vote recipients (the winners in each precinct) were selected for the table.

The number and location of each voting precinct is mapped out by the Office of Elections and can be viewed in Appendix B. This election was chosen because the same voting precincts were used during the balloting for Measure A. The percentage of ‘yes’ votes for Measure A were taken from the “Statement of Votes Cast, Special Municipal Election, June 7, 2011, City of Chico: Measure A Charter Amendment.” The conservative and liberal labels are how the candidates self-identified during the council election.

The two precincts—2202 and 2203—showing the highest level of support for Measure A, chose three candidates for the council that identified as ‘conservative’ during the election. The voting precinct with the highest level of support for Measure A is 2203, located in far Northwest Chico, with 45.4% in favor of Measure A, to move the City Council election to June. Conservative candidates had strong showings in this precinct, with none of them receiving less than 20% voter support. Precinct 2202 had the second highest rate of ‘yes’ votes with 40.5% in favor of Measure A in 2011 and this precinct also supported conservative candidates in 2010.

Both of these precincts can be considered as serving the community-at-large because neither of these precincts are in close proximity to the university (see Appendix B, City of Chico Special Election Precinct Map). Precinct 2203’s southern edge is 3.9 miles north of the university. Precinct 2202, which is split by precinct 2210, starts at the southern edge of West 12th Avenue, 3.1 miles from the university, with a second southern edge of the voting precinct starting 3.9 miles from the university.

Precinct 2206, the precinct with the highest level of opposition to the measure, chose three candidates that self-identified as ‘liberal’ or ‘progressive’ during the campaign. It should

also be noted that the precincts with the lowest support for Measure A are in close proximity to the university. Precinct 2206 begins at Big Chico Creek at the university's boundary and moves south to Little Chico Creek, less than a mile away. Precinct 2205 is made up of what is known as the Barber Neighborhood in Southwest Chico. Its northern edge is right along the south boundary of 2206.

There were three precincts with mixed results: 2205, 3202 and 3210. These precincts split their votes with support split between liberal and conservative candidates. Of these three precincts, in 2205 16.4% of voters supported Measure A, in precinct 3202 a much larger 37.2% supported Measure A, and in precinct 3210 19.7% voted yes on Measure A.

What is interesting to note is the allotment of votes for city council candidates split 2-to-1 favoring liberals in 2205, and a 2-to-1 split favoring conservatives in 3202. These two split votes have very similar out comes. One candidate (Sorenson) received exactly the same percentage of votes in both precincts, while the two second-place and ideologically opposing candidates were also equally favored. These two precincts are geographically positioned at opposite ends of the city: 2205 is the Barber Neighborhood in Southwest Chico, the other is in Northeast Chico.

Two of these three split ticket districts are in close proximity to the university. As already noted, 2205 begins one mile south of the campus. Precinct 3210 is in the section of town called "The Avenues" just north of the university. The farthest voting precinct from the campus is 3202, with its closest edge 3 miles from the university.

The differences in ideology of the voting precincts can also be seen in the overall choice for federal offices. In the same November 2010 election, analysis of the voter returns show the

precincts with greater support for Measure A showed greater support for the conservative candidate for United States Senate. Precinct 2203 went for Republican candidate Carly Fiorina by 66.4%, 2202 by 54.9%, 3202 by 48.7%, and 3203 by 57.2%. The two precincts that showed the lowest support for Measure A chose Democratic candidate Barbara Boxer, precinct 2205 by 48.7% and precinct 2206 by 58.2%.

So far I have shown that the student population makes up a critical percentage of the population in the city of Chico. I have also shown that the non-white student population is growing faster than the non-white population of the community-at-large. By looking at voting precinct data, I have also shown that the community-at-large votes more conservatively than precincts considered to have a heavy student voter presence.

All of the tests have supported the general hypotheses that college towns with significant racial, ethnic, and ideological differences between student and non-student residents are more likely to see efforts to suppress student voting in local elections. However, several of the hypothesis can be subjected to additional testing by combining more detailed demographic data with voter data.

Demographic and Voter Data Combined

So far, each of the sub-hypotheses has been subjected to analysis. However, the tests did not answer an important question: are the student voting precincts more diverse than the precincts that supported Measure A? There are two demographic traits that can help us confirm a precinct has a high student voter presence: income and age. I argue that precincts with high student populations will have low median incomes and low median ages. In addition,

determining the settlement pattern of non-white residents will further test the theory that the area around the university is more diverse.

The information in Table 2 comes from four different sources. Three sources have already been discussed—the voting precincts, the precinct registration by party, and the percent ‘yes’ vote on Measure A were explained in previous sections. The remaining demographic data come from The U.S. Census Bureau’s 2007-2011 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates. These reports were accessed through the bureau’s American FactFinder web service. Two reports were generated for each census tract: Selected Economic Characteristics and ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates.

Two maps were used to determine which census tract lined up with the selected voting precincts. The first map is the precinct map prepared by the Butte County Office of Elections. The second map is the 2010 Census Block Map: Chico CCD, CA. Each map was printed out as close to the same scale as possible in order to create an overlay. This was done by tracing the lines of the census map onto tracing paper and then fitting the traced map over the precinct map. The composite map was then scanned and printed out, providing a visual guide to selecting the correct census tracts.

Table 3 shows that the median household income in the three voting precincts that provided the most support for Measure A are all above the median household income of \$41,632 per year for the City of Chico. These precincts also fall comfortably within the statewide middle-class income range of \$53,264 to \$68,300. These precincts also have higher median ages than all the other precincts (at 32.7, 39.2, and 25.7 years old). The two precincts that showed the greatest support for Measure A do not appear to have significant

commonalities. Precinct 2202 is older (39.2 years to 25.7 years), whiter (93.4% to 79.9%), wealthier (\$63,385 to \$57,576), and more Republican (45% to 37%) than 2203. Yet, 2203 gave 5% more votes in support of Measure A than precinct 2202. Precinct 2203 also gave more votes to the conservative council candidates in the November 2010 council race. This suggests that although 2203 has a close to equal registration of Republicans and Democrats, the Democrats living in the precinct are ideologically conservative.

One precinct, 3202, is split between two census tracts: 1.02 and 1.03. The data on the table reflect the information for tract 1.03. Tract 1.03 has a lower median age, higher median income, and a lower percentage of residents who identify as White, non-Hispanic than tract 1.02. Census tract 1.02 has a median age of 41.1, a median income of \$52,649, and a reported White, non-Hispanic population of 87.5%. This high white, non-Hispanic population is consistent with the hypothesis that less diverse areas would support voter suppression efforts. We also see this holds for precinct 2202, with its very high white, non-Hispanic population, which was pegged at 93.4%.

The high median ages in the precincts 2202, 2203, and 3202 provide evidence that university students do not heavily populate these voting precincts. However the median ages in precincts 2206, 2207, 2208 and 3210 are between 21.5 and 22.8 years of age. I argue that this is evidence that the student voting population is concentrated in these voting precincts.

The four precincts showing the strongest opposition to the measure—precincts 2205, 2206, 2209, and 3210—fall below both the statewide middle-class income range and the city of Chico median income level, with median income ranging from \$28,513 to \$34,571. Precinct 2209 also has the highest median age of the voting precincts that came out against

Measure A and reported a higher level of diversity, with a reported white population of 73.5%.

This precinct is made up of the Chapman neighborhood.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Voter Precincts Ranked by Median Household Income, and Vote for Measure A

Voting Precinct	Median Age	% White	Median Household Income	% Republican	% Democratic	% Yes on 'A'
3202	32.7	83.5	\$73,313	44	34	37.2
2202	39.2	93.4	\$63,385	45	33	40.5
2203	25.7	79.9	\$57,576	37	33	45.4
2205	24.9	85.6	\$34,571	17	45	16.4
2206	22.8	89	\$33,417	21	45	13.7
2209	28.8	73.5	\$31,660	20	46	17.9
3210	22.4	82.7	\$28,513	22	46	19.7
2207	21.5	79.3	\$21,867	24	42	20.7
2208	21.5	74.2	\$17,057	25	41	28.4

Sources: Precinct Map, Butte County Office of Elections; 2010 Census Block Map: Chico CCD, CA; Butte County Office of Elections, precinct registration by party; U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates.

Another test of the diversity hypothesis compares the percentage of non-white residents in the voting precincts. Three precincts close to the campus have higher minority populations: precinct 2209, the Chapman neighborhood, and precinct 2208, the North Campus neighborhood. The Chapman neighborhood has a non-white population of 26.5%, the highest of all the voting precincts examined in this thesis. The North Campus neighborhood is divided between two voting precincts and two census tracts. One, precinct 2208, has a minority population of 25.8, while 2207 has a minority population of 20.7 %. These three voting precincts have the highest percentage of minority populations of all the precincts examined in this thesis.

The three precincts outside the immediate campus area are not as diverse. The precinct with the least diversity is 2202, which is 3.1 miles north of the university, has a minority population of 6.6%. Precinct 3202 has a minority population of 16.5%, and precinct 2203 has the highest minority population at 20.1%. It is interesting to note that the minority population of 2203 is very close to that of 2207. Finally, the three precincts at the edge or within one mile of the campus—2205, 2206, and 3210—have minority populations of 14.4, 11, and 17.3%.

The hypothesis that less diverse areas would support voter suppression efforts is strongly supported by the data.

One of the voting precincts stands out in the table: 2208. This precinct has the youngest median age at 21.5 years. It has a Democratic Party voter registration advantage (25% Republican to 41% Democratic), and a high rate of diversity with just 74.2% of its residents reporting White, non-Hispanic racial identity. This precinct also has the lowest reported median income at \$17,057 a year. The precinct is adjacent to the university and is an area identified by the city as a residential area for students. What stands out is that the precinct returned a 28.39% 'yes' vote on Measure A. What does this signify? I argue that this is additional evidence supporting the hypothesis that students leave the city during significant breaks. Since the Measure A election was in June, many of those voting in this precinct may have been non-student residents living in this area.

One indication of ideological leanings is party registration. Republicans tend to be ideologically conservative and Democrats tend to be ideologically liberal. The fourth hypothesis is that the areas supporting student voter suppression will be ideologically conservative. The

North Campus, South Campus, Chapman and Barber neighborhoods have a heavy Democratic Party registration, while the North East Chico (3202) and North Chico-Amber Grove area (2202 and 2203) have heavily Republican Party registrations (see Appendix C, party registration by precinct). The remaining Chico voting precincts tend to be mixed party neighborhoods, with neither party holding a significant ideological advantage. Appendix C, when combined with the precinct map, shows us that the precincts that supported Measure A in higher numbers had higher Republican registration. We can infer this to mean that these precincts were ideologically more conservative than precincts with higher Democratic registration.

As predicted, the precincts that showed more support for Measure A are more conservative in their candidate preference and party registration. Precincts 2202, 2203, and 3202 selected candidates for Chico City Council who self-identified as conservative during the November 2010 election. These precincts also clearly show a registration preference for the Republican Party.

The voting precincts with the least support for Measure A showed a preference for Chico City Council candidates who identified as liberal. These precincts are all within proximity to the university and have student populations. For example, precinct 2206 rejected Measure A with 83.6% voting 'no' on Measure A. In the 2010 city council election, precinct 2206's top three candidates self-identified as liberal. Precinct 2209, the precinct with the highest minority population, also gave their city council votes to the same candidates as 2206. All of the data presented show a very strong correlation between ideology and 'yes' vote on Measure A, and supports the general hypothesis.

All four of the sub-hypotheses are strongly supported by the data analysis. I found the university population makes up 27% of the city's total population; that the university population is more diverse than the population of the community-at-large, that the university population leaves the city during significant breaks in the academic calendar; and that the community-at-large is more conservative than the student population.

Some of the limitations encountered in this study may also be encountered if the study is replicated in other areas. These limitations include inadequate studies on how or where the university population spends time during significant breaks in the academic calendar. Another is the need to work around the lack of information on the racial and ethnic make-up of graduate student populations. Yet, my research has still provided strong support that the independent variables I have examined are good indicators of where we might expect to find efforts to suppress student voting.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The data used in this study support the hypothesis that communities with universities in their boundaries may have characteristics that encourage attempts to suppress student-age voter turnout. However there is more work that needs to be done.

There are several studies that can lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon of student disenfranchisement efforts. First is to test the general theory and sub-hypotheses presented in this study in additional communities. My study was designed to develop a set of measures that will allow for more extensive analysis of the phenomenon of student voter suppression efforts. Application of the theory to other locations needs to be done in order to see if the theory holds true in other university towns.

Action needs to be taken to discourage attempts to suppress student voter participation. Enforcing voting laws falls upon both state and federal authorities. States can ensure local communities follow current law through the proper training of county election officials. Another option is to turn partisan elections' offices into non-partisan offices. Since state (and many local) offices overseeing elections are held by partisan elected officials, turning these positions into independent non-partisan positions can remove the party influence on the election management process.

A third policy proposal is more radical: remove states from the voter registration process entirely. Turning voter registration over to the federal government can ensure that no one group becomes a target of registration suppression efforts at the local level. It would also be advantageous to place the federal government in charge of election management rule making. By taking these two roles away from the states, the patchwork of regulations that have been used to suppress voter turnout can be eliminated. All states would be required to function under the same set of rules.

In Chico, the decisions made by the city council can have an impact on this large segment of the population. For example, in the past two years there have been changes made to the local noise ordinance in response to loud parties in student neighborhoods. Housing conditions in student neighborhoods are overcrowded and overpriced. City zoning and approval of building permits can affect both the cost and the availability of housing. Keeping representation open to university students in the communities where they go to school is important and, as history has shown us, representation is not given to those who do not have the right to vote.

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