

High School Voter Registration Education

Using Research to Inform Policy

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Overview

- The study
- How can we best influence policy?
- Strategic communication
- Impact



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Rationale for the Study

- CA Latino youth population is 53% (CDE, 2014)
- Latino youth are “civically alienated”
 - In 2012, turnout was 37%
 - Youth feel disempowered (CIRCLE, 2014)
- U.S. ranked 139th out of 172 nations (McCormick Tribune Foundation, 2007)



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Gaps in the literature

- Latino youth political engagement in high schools remains remarkably understudied
- LWV & Project Vote (2010) illustrated the difficulty in registering students, but did not explore whether registration was institutionalized in schools.



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Research Questions

- Who are the actors in high school voter registration?
- What are the organizational practices, policies or programs that influence whether high schools teach youth how to register to vote and vote?



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Research Design

- 2011-12
 - Exploratory study
- 2012-13
 - Comparative case study with ethnographic methods (Yin, 2008; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995)



Data Collection

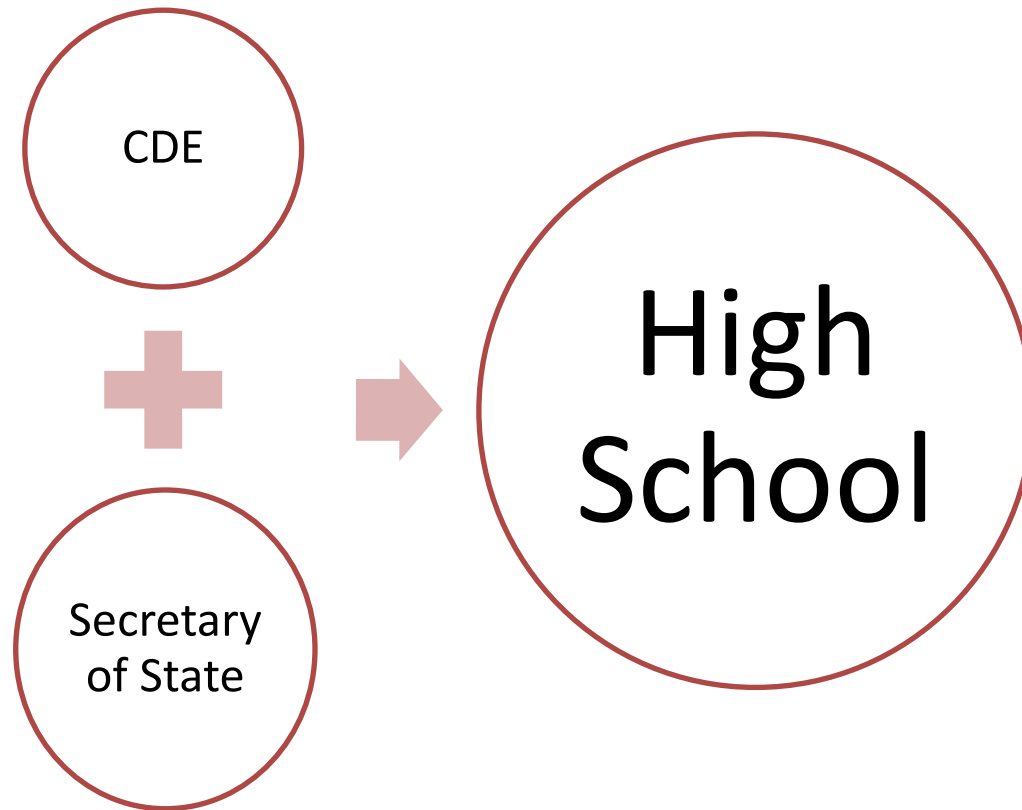
	Central Coast 2010-11	Bay Area 2012-13
<i>Participant Observation</i>		60 hrs. U.S. History U.S. Gov't
<i>Interviews</i>		
Administrators	4	2
Teachers	3	4
Latino students	3	12



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Who are the organizational actors?



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CDE U.S. Government Standards

- Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness; including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service (CDE, 2009:55).
- Describe the means that citizens use to participate in the political process (e.g., voting, campaigning, lobbying, filing a legal challenge, demonstrating, petitioning, picketing, running for political office) (CDE, 2009: 54).



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In summary

Organizational factors that influenced Latino students' learning to register to vote and why their vote matters:

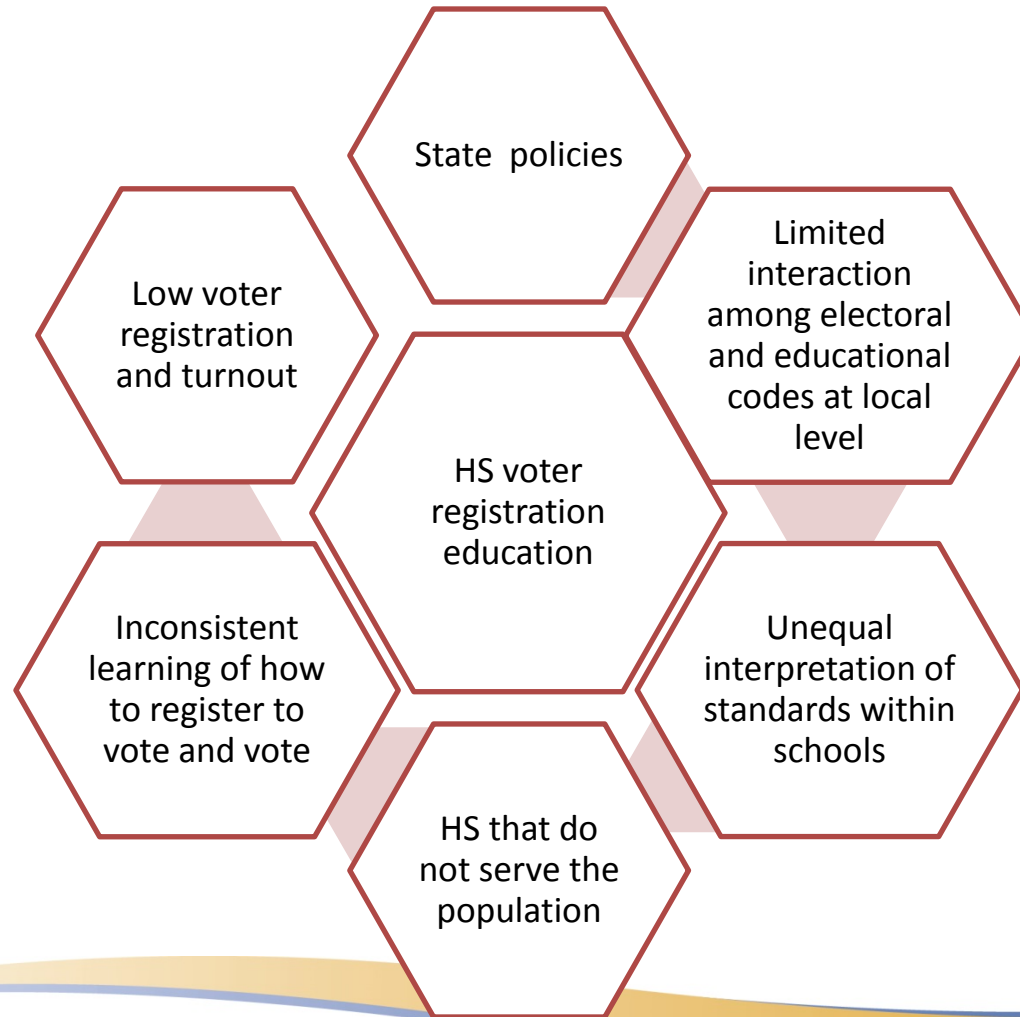
- Barriers:
 - Ambivalent educational and electoral policies
 - Lack of accountability (Fox and Glass, 2012)
 - Disengaged teachers
 - Absent from textbooks
 - Adulthood: youth as “citizens-in-the-making”
- Strategies:
 - Highly motivated teachers and mock elections
 - -League of Women Voters



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Institutionalized Ambivalence



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Recommendations

- Policy
 - Change CDE standards
 - Change Electoral code to expand role at the local level
 - Link educational and electoral codes



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Recommendations

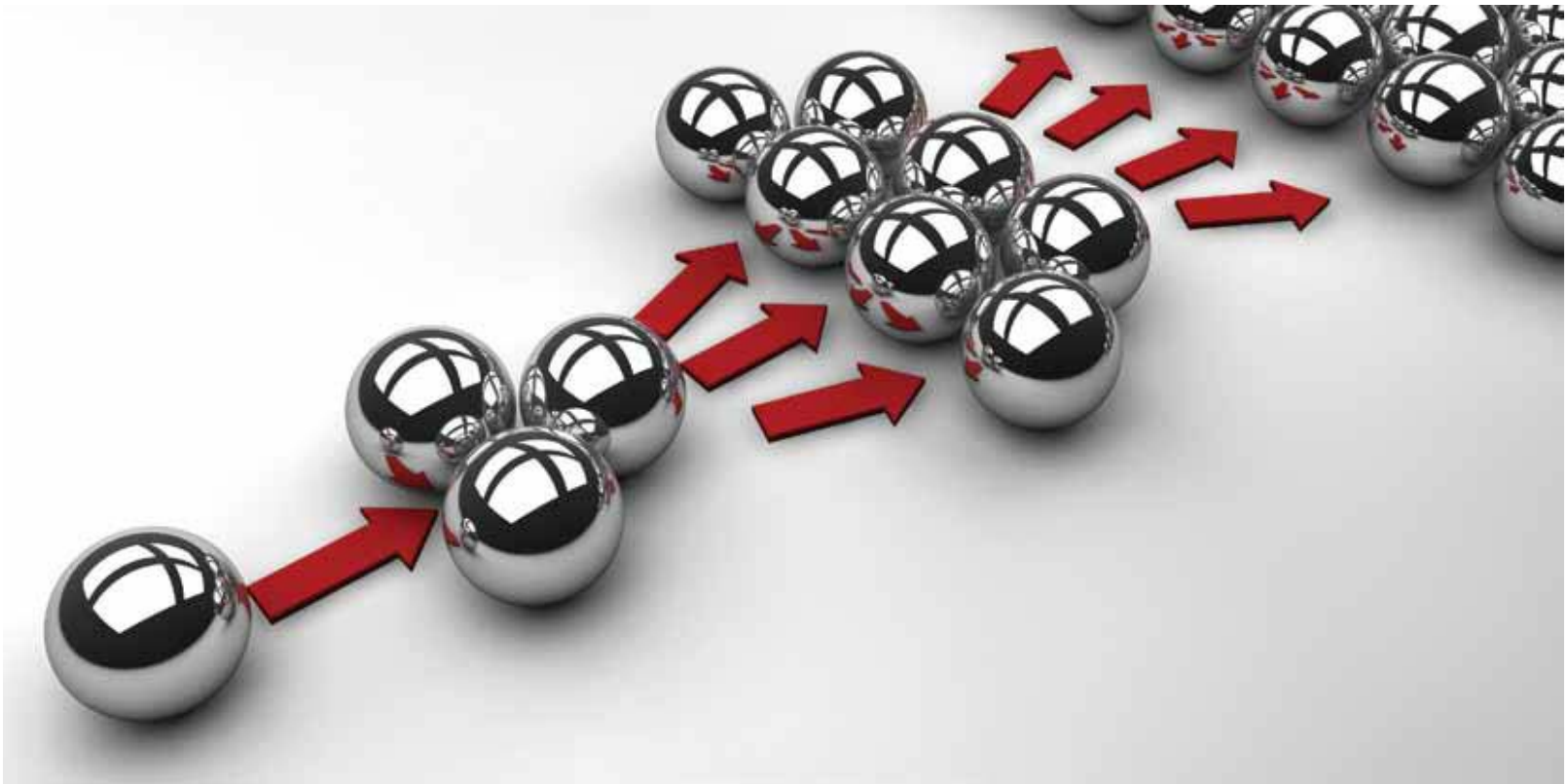
- Schools
 - Online voter registration link on school website
 - System-wide voter registration policy and promote student voter registration drives
 - Provide existing voter registration education materials to teacher



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Strategic Communication



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Strategic Communication

- Social network analysis to ID key players
- Use of intermediaries and influential people to communicate findings
 - CA Association of School Superintendents
 - CA Association of Clerks and Election Officials
 - Mindy Romero, Director of California Civic Engagement Project, UC Davis Center for Regional Change



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Publications

Policy brief by colleagues

– Personal meetings with key players

- Research paper
- Mindy used media and social media



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My Role

- Responsive
- Consultant: provided insights and science based information
- Inform policy development
 - Paper as part of invited testimony
 - Clarify who is accountable
 - ...”may” to “shall”
 - Electoral and education codes



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Impact

- AB 700 and Ed code 33540: CDE social science standards will include voter registration education
- AB 1817 and Ed Code 49040-01
 - High school youth can serve as voter outreach coordinators
 - 2 weeks in April and September be designated “high school voter registration *education*” week.



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Selected References

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