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STATE LEVEL RECALL ELECTIONS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

In 2011 and 2012, Wisconsin brought recall elections to the political main stage when the electorate attempted to recall fourteen of its state level officials, including its governor, Scott Walker. After witnessing the historic recall attempts of Wisconsin, it may be surprising to some that recalls are extremely uncommon. Due to the rareness of its use, state level recalls have been relatively ignored by the political science community and important questions have gone unanswered. Why are recalls so rare? What factors encourage a recall? Do variations in a state's barrier requirements affect the ability of a state to force a recall? The existing literature on direct democracy offers two possible explanations: barrier requirements (eligibility, signature threshold, circulation days) and political context (competition within a state legislature, unemployment rates). In this research I apply these explanations to recall elections. While the current literature tends to overlook this direct democracy measure, recalls can drastically alter the political makeup of a state. After evaluating various logit models, I find that barrier requirements are not as important as previous literature has made them out to be, while contextual offer more promising results. The goal of this paper is to further our understanding of what prompts a state level recall, as well as which types of variables contribute to a state attempting a recall.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The original framers of the United States Constitution faced the fundamental problem of deciding on how much political participation would be given to citizens. While some believed in expanding the ability to participate in the political process to "promote liberty," others believed in limitations in order to establish "stability and energy in government" (Gerber 1999, 3). One hundred and thirty two years after the United States was founded, states began to amend their state constitutions in order to expand their citizen's ability to participate in the political process directly without the need to go through their state legislatures to enact change on their behalf. Various groups advocated for the implementation of safeguards against governmental corruption by corporate money, which included direct democratic measures like referendums (Gerber 1999, 4). Direct democratic measures were a way to circumvent legislatures that refused to be responsive to middle-class needs.

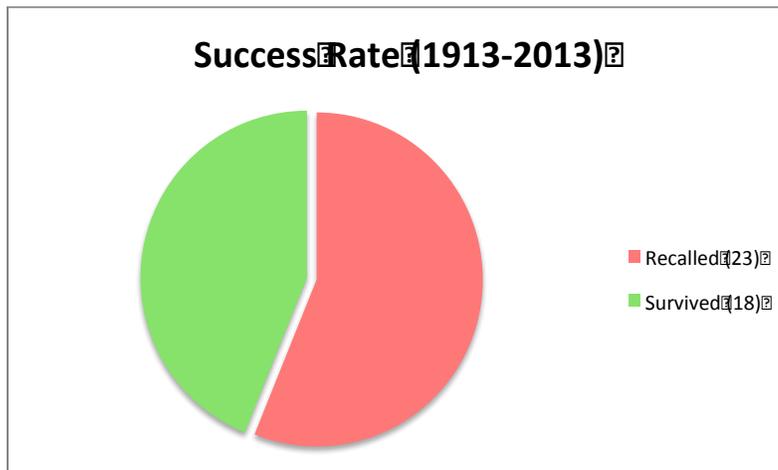
Due to Wisconsin's historic year of recalls in 2011, recall elections have become much more well known across the country, in recall states, as well as in states that do not allow recalls. The protests that led up to the attempted recall of nine of Wisconsin's state senators caused nationwide coverage, bringing recall elections to the forefront of national politics. The process caused many news outlets, political analysts, and broadcasting stations to discuss the pros and cons of the practice. Those on the pro-recall side say that it allows citizens to wield some form of control while their representatives are in office. Supporters also say that it is a way to get rid of incompetent and unresponsive representatives who are not representing the electorate well. Opponents of recall elections believe that it gives the public too much control over representatives and allows narrow interests to drastically alter the political arena. For opponents of the rules, they don't have to fear the rules past the state level.

While the state level recall election has been used much more frequently in recent years, recall elections are still extremely rare with only a small percentage making it to the ballot. Due to process barriers, as well as other hurdles, getting a recall successfully to the ballot is a tremendous feat with each state varying in its procedural requirements, and state histories, among other factors. Because of the rarity of state level recalls, the employment of this direct democracy measure prompts the research question: Why do some states utilize recall elections more than others?

Recall elections are used when a given electorate attempts to remove an elected official prior to the end of their term. The electorate is the sole initiator of recall elections and the legislature does not have the power to intervene, vote on, or reject them. Recalls are considered a direct democracy measure. Initiatives, as well as referendums, are the two other direct democracy measures because the public is able to decide on policy initiatives directly. In regards to initiatives, the legislature has no role in their creation, implementation, or rejection. Referendums, however, are policies, be it that are prompted to the public by the legislature to vote on. The public is able to affect their government and its policies without having to go through their typical local and state legislative channels.

While Los Angeles was the first municipality in the United States to enact the recall election process in 1903, Michigan and Oregon were the first states to allow the direct democracy measure in 1908 (NCSL, 2013). Today, a total of 19 states allow for the recall of state level officials and 41 recall elections have successfully made it to a state level ballot since the process' inception. Of those, 21 (52.5%) recall elections have occurred in the twenty first century alone, and 11 (26.8%) have occurred in a single year, 2011 (NCSL, 2013).

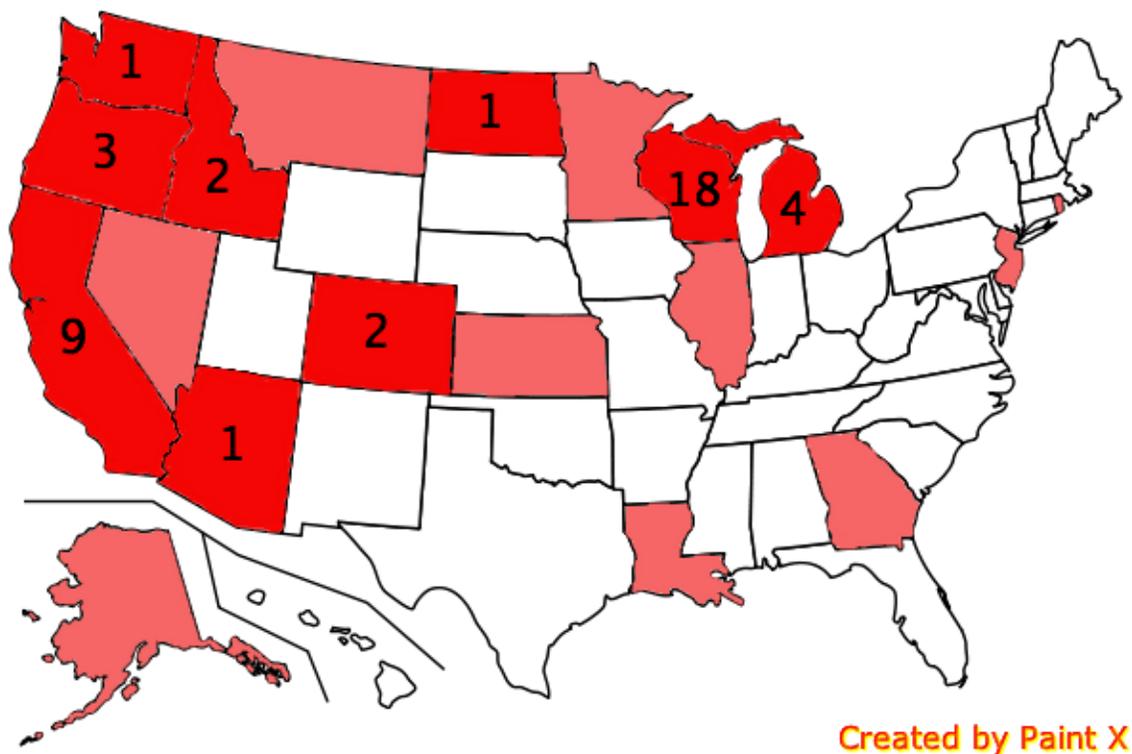
Figure 1. Success rate of recall elections that have made it to the ballot



State level recall elections may be rare, however, according to the success rate of the 41 recall elections that have made it to the ballot since the process' inception in 1908, a successful recall of a state official is more likely than not. In the 41 recall cases, 23 were able to successfully remove a state level official from office, while 18 state officials were able to retain their seat. Although it is historically more likely to recall a state official, it is only by a small margin. Twenty-three cases of successful recalls out of 41 cases comes to 56.1%, and 18 failed recalls out of 41 cases comes to 43.9%.

While recall elections have proven to be a viable option for removing elected officials at the local and state levels, recall elections have never been an option at the federal level. In the United States, it is possible to remove the President from their position prior to the end of their term; it can only come to fruition through the votes of the legislature, and not through an election by the public. And then only for the vague requirements in the constitution of high crimes and misdemeanors.

Figure 2. States that allow state level recall elections



The above map shows the states that allow state level recalls. The salmon colored states allow state recalls, and the red states allow state recalls and have also put a recall on the ballot with the number of recalls in it. The West predominantly allows recall elections, whereas the rest of the country doesn't tend to. The Midwest has less than half of their states allowing recalls, the South only has two states, and the East Coast only has two states. According to *Regional Receptivity to Reform: The Legacy of the Progressive Era*, Martin Shefter (1983) makes that case for why the West has been more receptive to reform like direct democracy measures than in areas like the Northeast of the United States.

Of the above nineteen states, only nine (AZ, CA, CO, ID, MI, ND, OR, WA, WI) have successfully put a recall on the ballot. One state, Wisconsin, makes up almost half of all state level recall elections (43.9%).

In the following section, I will explore the literature that has already been published on state level recall elections, and more broadly, direct democratic measures that also include referendums and initiatives. Next, I will state my hypotheses, present each of the independent variables that will be tested, operationalize each variable, and then state my hypothesis for each of the independent variables. Following the hypothesis section is the data analysis section. This section will test my hypothesis through various analyses and will include graphical representations of the models used. Lastly, there will be a conclusion section that will explain the findings of the research in the theory section. I will also include the limitations of my analysis and suggestions on how to further this research in the future.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Political Science has largely neglected the study of state recall elections, leaving us without clear theoretical guidance to explain when they are used and when they are successful. Most of the extant research focuses on a single recall election within the last ten years, neglecting cases that go further back in history, or failing to develop more generalized explanations across multiple elections or states. This could be for a multitude of reasons. Due to the small amount of cases that can be evaluated, some may argue that attempting to create an overarching theory across the states cannot be done and that case studies are the only way to go about this type of research. These studies may have overlooked state level recalls because some may view it as irrelevant because of how rarely they are utilized.

While it is true that state level recalls are extremely rare, there are ways to evaluate across states. Not only are there a multitude of theories in the political science realm that have small "n" studies, but there are also ways to create robustness tests in order to bolster one's findings and validate one's conclusions. Also, neglecting a political phenomena such as state level recall elections due to the sparseness of it's use completely disregards the importance of this direct democracy measure and how impactful it can be to the public and their elected officials.

Every state has a different political history, political leaning, political trends, public tendencies, and so much more. When focusing solely on an individual recall election case or a single state's tendencies, we lose the complexity of how all of these factors interact and could affect one another. Comparing across states can also minimize factors that are only important in a single state or case, as well as show a broader picture of how recall electoral states use recalls as a direct democracy measure. A more comprehensive study of all states that allow recall elections can further expose regional factors,

demographic tendencies, or recall rage as a regional issue. Most importantly, a larger number of cases offers to potential to test more generalizable explanations.

I have found that state level recall elections are usually evaluated as individual case studies and most of those case studies focus on the more recent, and highly visible, election of Governor Gray Davis of California in 2003 (*The Economist*, 2003). Not only was it highly visible because it was a recall election for California's governorship, but also, the opponent that subsequently won Governor Davis' seat was Arnold Schwarzenegger, a well-known actor from Austria. Also, because it was the first recall election for a governor's seat since 1921 it was an anomaly even by recall election standards (NCSL, 2013). Along the same vein, there has been quite a bit of research that evaluates the various factors that could influence the voting outcome of the recall election, however, not as many political scientists research why the public prompts recall elections in the first place. It is important for the political science community to pursue more research on recall elections in general, as well as what conditions must be in place for a state to be more likely to push for recall elections.

Another example is from Bedolla and Scola's (2006) "Finding Intersection: Race, Class, and Gender in the 2003 California Recall Vote." Their research delved into the various indicators that could have affected the way that different demographic groups voted in the recall election of Governor Gray Davis. Bedolla and Scola's work revolves around the state public's innate characteristics like race, class, and gender, meaning that their research uses voters as their unit of research. Their work looks at two physical characteristics of the voters (i.e. race, gender), as well as their socioeconomic standing, and how that affects their voting behavior during the recall elections. This study looks at who votes for recalls rather than what causes a recall election to succeed and be placed on the ballot.

Bowler and Cain (2004) and Garrett (2004) demonstrate how differences between state recall procedures and how those differences can drastically affect the outcome of recalls. In some states it is more difficult to get a recall going than in others. For example, states with a lower signature threshold are more likely to have a recall election. Bowler and Cain looked at whether the rules governing recalls are

important by looking at the signature thresholds that are mandated in order for a recall election to come to fruition. They evaluate how signature thresholds and the allowance of time to get the required signatures affect how states are able to utilize the recall process. Garrett focused on the California gubernatorial recall but researched how it's not just the availability and difficulty of the recall paperwork, but how peripheral laws can largely affect whether recall elections are an option for states that allow them. She specifically explored how California's low signature threshold could actually be impeding the direct democratic process because people aren't able to take recalls seriously since it's so easy to get one.

Referendum and initiatives, on the other hand, have been studied extensively and the findings from these studies offer some guidance on what we might expect to find with recalls. This greater attention is not surprising. A larger number of states allow referendums, and many more referendums make it to the ballot, so referendums have received much more research attention. Elizabeth Gerber's The Populist Paradox (1999) shows that many hurdles must be overcome to get a referendum on the ballot. Gerber (40-41) briefly discusses the qualifying stage, which includes circulation time and required number of signatures for referendums, both of which are also needed in the qualifying stage of recall elections.

The book Citizens as Legislators edited by Shaun Bowler, Todd Donovan and Caroline J. Tolbert is a compilation of research written by various authors on the subject of referendums and initiatives. "Citizens as Legislators" uses the work of eleven of the most prominent political science researchers in the area of direct democracy measures including Elisabeth R. Gerber, Shaun Bowler, Daniel H. Lowenstein, and Caroline J. Tolbert. All are highly regarded and considered experts in their fields. Topics range from inquiries on the responsiveness of government due to initiatives to ideological consistence in regards to initiative voting.

The chapter in "Citizens as Legislators" by Susan A. Banducci called "Direct Legislation: When Is It Used and When Does It Pass?" discuss the factors that influence the passage of initiatives in the states that allow them. The focus of this essay is not on recall elections or referendums, but on initiatives.

Banducci uses a total of eleven variables to evaluate the factors that influence the creation of an initiative. Most of the variables that she chose revolved around the level of difficulty innate in the process (i.e. signature thresholds, time requirements, etc.), strength of political parties and interest groups, the level of potential conflict within the government (i.e. divided government at the legislative level, divided government between the legislators and the governor of the state) and the makeup of the state (i.e. population, constituency size.)

Jane Sabes (2004) and Herbert W. Helm Jr. wrote an article, as did Samuel Issacharoff (2004), focusing primarily on why recall elections happen in the first place. Sabes and Helm explored "Recall Rage" and found that "recall filings were quite regularly initiated against groups of elected officials rather than individuals." In the earlier years of recall elections (1910's, 1920's, and the 1930's) hardly any recalls came to actualization. This specific article looks at both local and state-level recalls, but could be helpful in evaluating the more recent and obvious bouts of recall rage. Issacharoff looks at median voters and how it's their rebellion that causes recalls. He also evaluates median votes and how recall elections are used as safety valves, that there is an increased non-responsiveness of political figures, and the role of constitutional law.

The literature boils down to the idea of two different categories of variables. The first category of variables is about the importance of eligibility requirements (i.e. who is eligible within the state's government, time requirements for petitions, and signature requirements.) Almost all of the literature touches upon this category of variables in one way or another, be it in regards to recalls or referendums. The second category of variables revolve around factors that influence the state as a whole, which could include the demographic makeup of the state, conflict within a legislature, and others. For my research, I will use both categories to ascertain which affects the variance of state level recalls across states that allow them. I will include all of the above-mentioned first category variables (eligibility, time requirement, signature requirement), as well as three variables that would politically affect the state, including political apathy as evaluated by percentage of voting age population in general elections,

economic dissatisfaction as evaluated by unemployment rates by state, as well as party competition within the state legislature as evaluated by the Ranney Index (Klarner, 2015).

Table 1. Operationalization table

Variable	Definition	Operationalization	Source
ELIG	Elected officials that are eligible to be recalled at the state level	1 if Governor; 1 if Legislature	National Conference of State Legislatures
TIME	Time that recall petitions are able to be circulated	Number of days	National Conference of State Legislatures
SIGREQ	Amount of petition signatures required to force a recall.	Number of signatures required	National Conference of State Legislatures
ECON	Economic dissatisfaction	Unemployment Rate Annual	Bureau of Labor Statistics
COMP	Party competition	Scale of .5-1. Closer to .5, the more bipartisan a legislature is, closer to 1, the more homogenous a legislature is.	The Ranney Index

Chapter 3

Data and Hypotheses

I have broken down my hypotheses into 5 parts. The first three are in regards to the barrier requirements, and the final two are in regards to the political context.

Hypothesis #1:

In the states that allow state recall elections, the greater number of elected officials eligible for recall, the more likely a state will utilize recall elections.

Explanation:

If a state only allows their governor to be recalled and not the legislators in their legislature, there are fewer individual options for the state to recall. It is possible that the vast majority of a state really likes their governor, but would choose to recall their individual legislator if they were able. Since they aren't able to recall that individual legislator, they will not pursue a recall of their governor just so that they can recall someone; it has to be the individual state official they disapprove of.

Hypothesis #2:

In the states that allow state recall elections, the more time that is given for petitioners to circulate their recall petitions for signatures, the more likely the state will utilize recall elections.

Explanation:

If petitioners have more time to circulate their petitions, they have more time to find more volunteers to help collect signatures, more time to make their message more widely known across the state or jurisdiction, as well as more time for individuals to sign the petitions. If a state allows stricter time requirements, a state will have a harder time collecting the necessary signatures.

Hypothesis #3:

In the states that allow state recall elections, the more petition signatures that are required to force a recall elections, the less likely the state will use recalls.

Explanation:

The amount of required petition signatures is directly correlated with the difficulty of forcing a recall. The more signatures that are required the more people that need to be involved, the more resources that need to be used, and the more people that need to be aware of the recall attempt. On the opposite side, the less signatures that are required, the less people, resources, and awareness need to be involved in order to force a recall election.

Hypothesis #4:

In the states that allow state recall elections, the higher the state's unemployment rate (%), the more likely the state will attempt to recall a state level official.

Explanation:

While many Americans don't keep up with politics or policies at the state or federal level, economic security, as well as the perception of their economic stability, plays a large role in the American public's political activity.

If a state is suffering economically, as measured by the unemployment rate, it is logical for the public to become frustrated with their elected officials. With limited tools to alter their economic opportunities and lower the unemployment rate, the public will utilize recall elections to attempt to force change from their legislature. On the opposite side of the spectrum, a state will not want to change their state officials if they believe that they are doing a good job (for example: low unemployment rates.)

Following this line of thinking, a state will more likely become frustrated with their state's officials if the unemployment rate is higher and will more likely attempt to recall their state official.

Hypothesis #5:

In the states that allow state level recalls, the more competitive a state legislature is the more likely the state will attempt to recall their state level officials.

Explanation:

When a state legislature is more homogeneous, this typically implies that the state is more homogeneous in their political affiliations. If a state government has individuals that are in the same political party, there is typically less gridlock, less political drama, and less partisan fighting, leading to less discontent from the public that they represent. With a more competitive state government, there is more likely to be a more diverse state population in regards to political affiliation, which cause more tension. This tension, I hypothesize, will lead to more state level recalls.

The above six hypotheses, each related to a different independent variable, will makeup the bulk of my analyses. Below, I will restate them. For easy navigation, the hypotheses are in order of occurrence in the operationalization table.

H1: *In the states that allow state recall elections, the more state level officials that are eligible to be recalled in a given state the more likely a state will utilize recall elections.*

H2: *In the states that allow state recall elections, the more time that is given for petitioners to circulate their recall petitions for signatures, the more likely the state will utilize recall elections.*

H3: *In the states that allow state recall elections, the more petition signatures that are required to force a recall elections, the less likely the state will use recalls.*

H4: *In the states that allow state recall elections, the higher the state's unemployment rate (%), the more likely the state will attempt to recall a state level official.*

H5: *In the states that allow state level recalls, the more competitive a state legislature is the more likely the state will attempt to recall their state level officials.*

In summary, I believe that I will find that the more people who are eligible in a given state government, the more number of days allowed for circulation, and the less amount of signatures needed will mean a significantly higher number of state level recalls. I also believe

that a higher unemployment rate and a more evenly bipartisan state legislature will mean a significantly higher number of state level recalls.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

When evaluating the six hypotheses from the previous chapter called “Data and Hypotheses,” I will not be taking into consideration the states that do not allow recall elections at the state level. While the 31 states that don’t allow them are important in looking at the overall picture, they are not needed in my analysis nor would they add any additional insight.

I have chosen to use Dr. Carl Klarner's dataset for the Ranney Index (approximately from 1940-2010) because it encompasses most of the recall elections that have occurred at the state level. This also means that six of the recall elections that have occurred (five state years) will not be included, as well as the state years for each state that didn't have a recall election occur. This is due to the lack of information for any of the independent variables prior to that time.

Due to the high quantity of literature that discusses barrier requirements (eligibility, signature threshold, circulation time) in regards to states' ability to successfully invoke state level recall elections, I begin by looking at Hypothesis 1. While eligibility seems to be an important factor when looking against states that don't allow recalls and those that do, it doesn't have variability when evaluating the eligibility processes only focused on states that allow recalls.

When looking at who within the state government is eligible to be recalled, only two states differ from the typical state level recall process. Seventeen states allow for both the legislature and the governorship to be recalled, while only two states allow for solely the governor to be recalled.

After running a two-sample t-test (see Table 2) with state years that have a recall and that don't have a recall against eligibility (coded 1 for governorship, 2 for both governorship and legislature), the p-value was shy of being significant (0.0683) at the lowest level of 0.05, but if scrutinized at the high level

of 0.1, eligibility is significant. No state that only allows the position of governor to be recalled has ever successfully made a recall election go to ballot.

Hypothesis 2 looks at the signature threshold that all states require in order to get a recall election to the ballot. States use percentage of those who voted in the previous general election for that position to create the threshold.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for signature threshold for state years

The t-test using the dependent variable recall, meaning the number of state years between 1940 or so to 2013 that either had a state level recall election or didn't, against my independent variable of

<i>State years with no recall</i>		<i>State years with recall</i>	
Observations	1420	Observations	1420
Mean	22.76	Mean	22.76
Standard Deviation	6.911	Standard Deviation	6.911
Range	30	Range	30
Minimum	10	Minimum	10
Maximum	40	Maximum	40

signature threshold. My p-value from this t-test

is 0.5624, signifying that we are 90% confident that the difference in the unemployment rates of state years that do have recall elections and state years that don't, is not significant.

Hypothesis 3 is the last of the barrier variables and looks at the circulation days permitted in order to get the required signatures to put a recall on the ballot.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for circulation days for state years

**One hundred fifty two observations were dropped due to Alaska and North Dakota not specifying their circulation days.*

<i>State years with no recall</i>		<i>State years with recall</i>	
Observations	1286*	Observations	18
Mean	110.89	Mean	100.56
Standard Deviation	55.64	Standard Deviation	59.36
Range	210	Range	210
Minimum	60	Minimum	60
Maximum	270	Maximum	270

The t-test revealed a 0.783 p-value for Hypothesis 3, meaning that is insignificant at all levels of scrutiny. The dependent variable is recall, meaning the number of state years between 1940 or so to 2013 that either had a state level recall election or didn't, against my independent variable of circulation days allowed for petition signature gathering. My p-value signifies that we are 90% confident that the difference in the circulation days of state years that do have recall elections and state years that don't, is not significant.

To test Hypothesis 4, in regards to unemployment rate, I will use a difference of means test in order to gauge whether there is any difference between unemployment rates of the state years where a state level recall election didn't occur and unemployment rates of the state years where a state level recall election did occur.

Figure 3. Difference of means bar graph

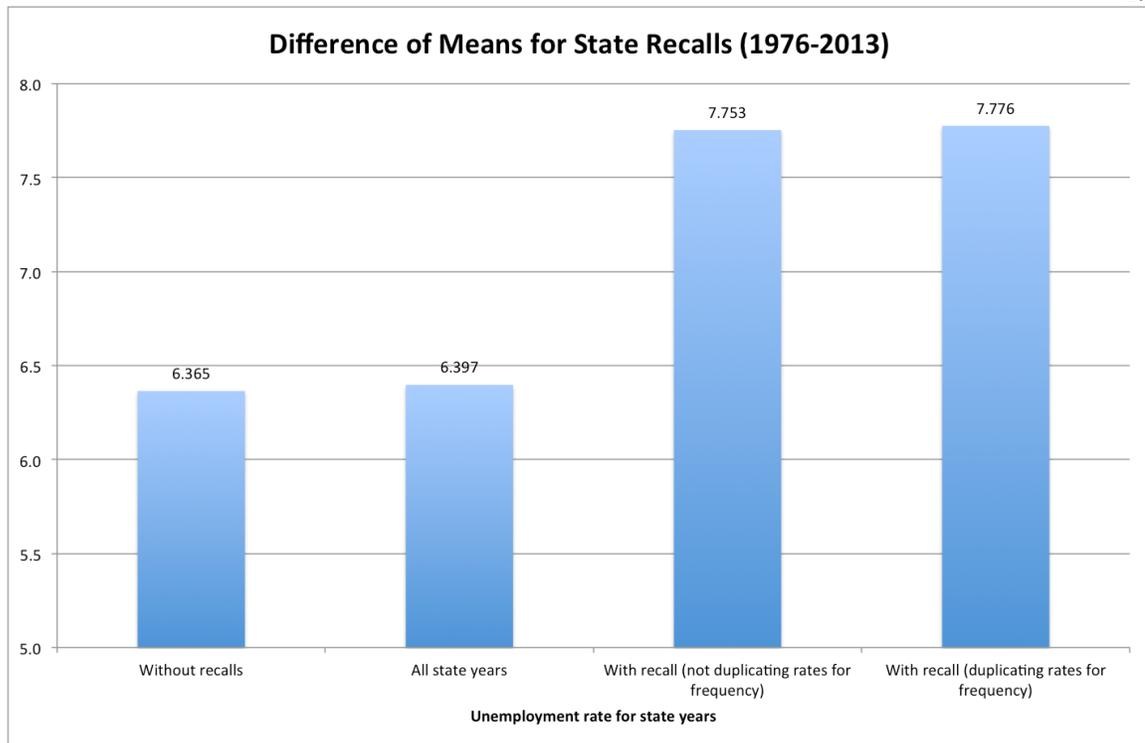


Figure 3 shows us that there is, in fact, a difference between average unemployment rates in state years where no state level recall occurred and average unemployment rates in state years where a state level recall occurred. The average unemployment rate for state years that no state level recall occurred is 6.365%, as opposed to the average unemployment rate for state years that a state level recall did occur at 7.753%. I then incorporated all state years unemployment rates regardless of recall election activity, which came out to be 6.397%, which is only slightly higher than the unemployment rates for state years that no state level recall occurred. This is probably due to the vast difference of observations, state years without a recall (705) and state years with a recall (17). I also decided to parse out state years that have duplicate recalls by duplicating the unemployment rates by how many recalls occurred in a given state year. The average unemployment rate when those changes are made comes out as 7.776%, which is slightly larger than when duplicates are not taken into account in the calculations.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for average unemployment rates for state years

<i>State years with no recall</i>		<i>State years with recall</i>	
Observations	705*	Observations	17**
Mean	6.365	Mean	7.753
Standard Deviation	2.107	Standard Deviation	2.522
Range	12.9	Range	11
Minimum	2.7	Minimum	3.6
Maximum	15.6	Maximum	14.6

**Seven hundred fifteen observations were dropped due to unemployment data not having been collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics prior to 1976.*

***Six recall elections (between the years of 1913 and 1971) weren't included, due to unemployment rates not being recorded prior to 1976.*

Table 4 shows us that the minimum and maximum unemployment rate for a state year that a state level recall election occurs (3.6, 14.6) is fairly comparable to the minimum and maximum unemployment rate of the state years in which there was no state level recall election (2.7, 15.6) with only a slightly larger range.

Next, I employed a two-sample t-test to see whether the two means are not only different, but significant. I used the dependent variable recall, meaning the number of state years between 1976-2013 that either had a state level recall election or didn't, against my independent variable of unemployment rate. My p-value is 0.0039, signifying that we are 90% confident that the difference in the unemployment rates of state years that do have recall elections and state years that don't, is significant.

Table 5. Unemployment rate vs. frequency table

Unemployment Rate (%)	Frequency
3.6	1
4.3	1
5.6	1
5.8	1
6.8	3
6.9	5
7.2	1
7.5	9
7.9	3
8.3	1
8.6	1
8.7	1
9.4	2
10.4	1
14.6	2

Above, in Figure H, we see the frequency of recall elections at different unemployment rates. The range is 11% points and varies from 3.6% at its minimum and 14.6% at its maximum. We can see that while there is a wide range, most of the occurrences of the recalls happened around 7.5% unemployment.

The Ranney Index is a comprehensive database originally created by Austin Ranney, a prominent political scientist. The folded Ranney scores that will be used for my measure of competition within state legislatures are currently from around 1940 (depending on the state) to 2010. These scores range from .5,

meaning that the state legislature was perfectly split between the two major parties, to 1, meaning that the state legislature was completely controlled by a single party.

I used a two-sample t-test to see whether the folded Ranney Index scores were significant. I used the dependent variable recall, meaning the number of state years between 1940 or so to 2013 that either had a state level recall election or didn't, against my independent variable of folded Ranney Index scores. The p-value for this test is currently 0.0111 signifying that we are 90% confident that the difference in the folded Ranney Index scores of state years that do have recall elections and state years that don't, is significant.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for average unemployment rates for state years

<i>State years with no recall</i>		<i>State years with recall</i>	
Observations	1311*	Observations	13**
Mean	.855	Mean	.937
Standard Deviation	.129	Standard Deviation	.013

**As of the submission of this thesis, Dr. Carl Klarner has not updated his Ranney Index to include the years 2011, 2012, and 2013. Observations have been dropped due to this lack of data.*

***Four of the observations have been dropped due to Dr. Carl Klarner having not finished adding the years 2011, 2012, and 2013.*

When evaluating the descriptive statistics of the folded Ranney Index scores, it is interesting to note that the mean for state years without a recall is .855, whereas, the mean for state years with a recall is .937. This would imply that the more homogenous a state legislature is, the more likely a state will

employ a recall election on someone in that government. This is the opposite of what I had hypothesized in Hypothesis 6.

Table 7. Effects of rules and political context on state recall elections

Logit models
Dependent Variable: Recall in State Year

Ind. Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Eligibility (dummy)	0 omitted	--	--	0 omitted
Circulation (days)	--	0.001 0.005 0.710	--	0.003 0.004 0.496
Sig. Threshold (%)	--	--	-0.025 0.049 0.616	-0.041 0.050 0.409
Folded Ranney (.5-1)	7.980 * 4.858 0.100	9.385 * 5.030 0.062	8.057 * 4.684 0.085	9.308 * 5.262 0.077
Unemployment (%)	0.234 ** 0.112 0.037	0.238 ** 0.111 0.033	0.227 ** 0.114 0.047	0.246 ** 0.114 0.031
N	595	595	665	525
Pseudo R-sq	0.0695	0.0795	0.072	0.0879

One Tailed Test: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$

The values under the coefficients are first standard errors and then p-values.

In all models, the dependent variable is recall in a state year.

After running four different logit models, we find that there are similarities among the models. In each of the four models, all of the barrier variables are insignificant at both the 0.10 and 0.05 levels, the

closest p-value being 0.409 in Model 4 for Signature Threshold. This tells us that although these barrier variables are important in the creation of the state level recall (meaning that their existence means that the state allows recalls) the specific nuances between the states do not, ultimately, matter.

The Eligibility variable was coded as 1 for allowing the position of governor to be recalled, and 2 for allowing both the legislative seats and the position of governor to be recalled. Singularly, this variable was considered to be significant at the 0.10 level, however, when controlling for all other variables, it is omitted because it predicts the data perfectly.

Next, the folded Ranney scores for the Competition variable prove to be significant at the 0.10 level throughout all four models. However, its findings are in the opposite direction than what I had previously hypothesized. The coefficients are all in the positive direction for the Competition variable. The folded Ranney scores tell us that the less competitive a state's legislature, the closer to 1 it is. This means that the more homogenous a state legislature is, the more likely a state level recall will occur. I had hypothesized that the more split the legislature was between the two parties, the more tension, and more gridlock would cause more tension among the state's public, giving them more reason to attempt a recall.

However, the Wisconsin recalls of 2011 and 2012 are great examples of how a highly heterogeneous state government can cause recalls. Wisconsin's House of Representatives, Senate, and Governorship were all Republican-controlled at the time of their historic recalls. Their conduct caused many of the public to believe that the government was taking advantage of their position to push through legislation that many of the public disapproved of, spurring the recalls.

The most consistent and low level p-values belong to the unemployment rate of a given state's year. Unemployment rates were below the 0.05 level of significance for all four models, with its lowest p-value recording a 0.031 in Model 4. Because all of its coefficients are positive, this means that the higher a state's unemployment rate is, the more likely a state level recall will occur.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

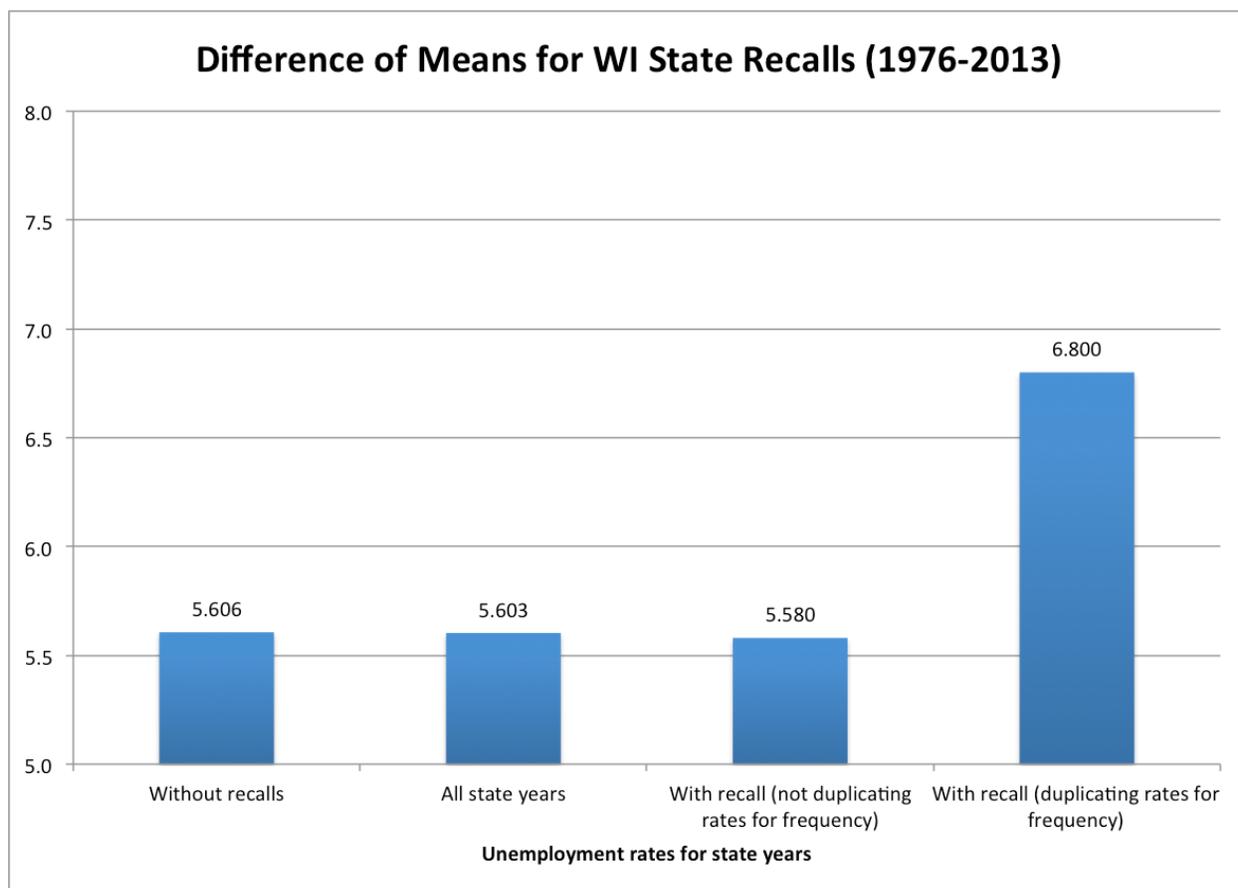
The state of Wisconsin is the only state that has used state level recall elections in the double digits, making history as the foremost user of recalls at the state level. With eighteen of the 41 cases of state level recalls, Wisconsin has shown that they not weary of this direct democracy measure. While the above analyses focused on all of the states that allow state level recalls, at the individual level, states may or may not follow those trends.

For Wisconsin, due to its barrier variables (eligibility, signature threshold, circulation days) being the same throughout the measure's existence, they are all omitted due to it predicting failure perfectly. Also, due to the Ranney Index only going to 2010, our data has to omit 2011 and 2012 for Ranney scores, which is a large chunk of the recall activity in that state.

While we found that a given unemployment rate for a state year is significant in predicting a state level recall election, we find that the state of Wisconsin does not abide by that trend. Below, we see that the unemployment rates for all state years from 1976-2013 average at 5.603%, while the unemployment rates for state years without a recall average at 5.606%. The third column shows us the unemployment rates for state years (5) that a state level recall election occurred averages at 5.580%, which is slightly lower than the other two figures. This is the first indicator that the state unemployment rate isn't significant to the state of Wisconsin in regards to pursuing state level recall elections. The fourth column uses duplicate unemployment rates for state years that have a frequency higher than one. For example, in 2011, nine state level recall elections occurred in the state of Wisconsin with a state unemployment rate of 7.5%. When

calculating the average, I used 7.5% nine times in order to match the frequency of the recall elections.

Figure 4. Difference of means bar graph for the state of Wisconsin



While state level recall elections are incredibly rare, the reasons and factors that affect or influence the pursuit of a recall can be as predictable as unemployment rates and competition within a state legislature, or as ambiguous as disagreeing with a state governor's Act 10.

The above research project has helped illuminate some of these factors across state's that allow recall elections at the state level, which previous literature has largely neglected. In the future, I believe that evaluating the concepts of general economic dissatisfaction and competition within a state legislature with more measures would add robustness to my findings.

If I were to redo the entirety of the project over again, I would attempt to find the aforementioned robustness checks, as well as to work more qualitatively evaluating factors like approval/disapproval of various legislative or gubernatorial activity through outlets like newspapers and televised news. As is quite plain in the recalls of 2011 and 2012 in Wisconsin, the primary motivator of the recall elections were due to Act 10 of Governor Scott Walker's budget plan. These types of recall rage would be fascinating to qualitatively analyze across the states that all state level recalls. I would also include change in party control to see if this would significantly affect the amount of state level recall elections.

As it were, the above research has helped fill the hole of literature that has refused to assess state level recalls across the states. Knowing that the barrier variables are not significant in the pursuit of recalls, state legislatures can bypass extended discussion on their minimum requirements of circulation days and signature thresholds. State legislators and governors can also be less concerned about getting recalled if their state's unemployment rate is lower, while they should be more concerned about a recall if their state's unemployment rate is higher. Also, as the logit models have shown us, if a state's legislature is more homogenous, recalls are more likely to occur. These revelations can give state politicians indicators as to when they are more susceptible for a recall.

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ACADEMIC VITA

Education

Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs-Madison, WI

Master's in Public Affairs

Pennsylvania State University-University Park, PA

B.A. in Political Science, Significant Minor in Spanish

Schreyer Honors Scholar

Dean's List

Fall of 2011-Spring of 2015

Paterno Fellow

The President's Freshman Award

Universidad de Sevilla-Sevilla, España

All courses were taught in Spanish.

Spring of 2014

Experience

Governor's Office of Correspondence

Intern

Summer of 2014

- Performed constituent casework via telephone, email, and letters.
- Evaluated constituent correspondence and assigned to correct governmental agency.
- Wrote, edited, and prepared proclamations and greetings for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Daily Collegian

Copy Desk Editor & News Reporter

Fall of 2013-Present

- Received News Reporter designation after a semester-long candidacy program.
- Promoted to Copy Desk Editor with responsibilities in editing, creating story layouts, and verifying fact-checks.
- Published eight front-page articles for the main newspaper source for Penn State University.
- Attended numerous lectures regarding journalism ethics, writing style, and plagiarism.
- Accomplished many extensive writing activities that help in the growth of writing and journalistic ability.
- Continuing to maintain quota of one published story per week.
- Responsible for weekly Breaking News Desk shifts.

Governor's Office of Correspondence

Intern

Summer of 2014

- Performed constituent casework via telephone, email, and letters.
- Evaluated constituent correspondence and assigned to correct governmental agency.
- Wrote, edited, and prepared proclamations and greetings for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Bee House Benefiting THON

THON Weekend Family Liaison

Fall of 2011-Present

- Active member in the largest student-run philanthropy in the world, Penn State's IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon.
- Participate in the raising of over \$13.3 million last year for pediatric cancer research (Four Diamonds Fund) through THON.
- Leading member Bee House, the special interest organization that raised over \$45,000 for THON.
- Facilitate communication between the organization's Four Diamonds family and dancers during the 46-hour marathon weekend.

One Team International

Member

Fall of 2013-Fall of 2014

- Financially support a girls' sport organization in Mumbai, India to encourage young women to participate in sports.
- Empower women through the dissemination of information and awareness of women's sports domestically and internationally.
- Planned and facilitated fundraising activities for the organization.

Work Experience

McLanahan's

Stocker / Cashier

Spring of 2015

Cracker Barrel

Server

Summers of 2012, 2013

Old Country Store and Restaurant

JCPenney

Sales Associate

Summer of 2011