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THE IMPACT OF A VOTING REGISTRATION LAW ON  
TURNOUT AND PARTISANSHIP: A CASE IN KANSAS

by

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A MASTER'S REPORT

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requirements for the degree

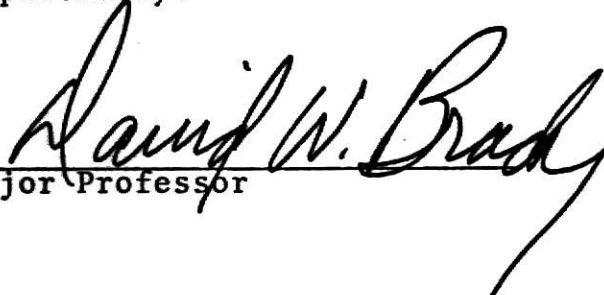
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## INTRODUCTION

That there exists a connection between institutional structural election arrangements and electoral behavior is not in doubt. Maurice Duverger among others<sup>1</sup> has shown that electoral structures do indeed affect such variables as the number of people voting, the number of parties in the system as well as the electoral results -- who wins. Further, politicians themselves are not adverse to expending great efforts to affect these institutional electoral structures. While this conceptual scheme has engendered a number of studies demonstrating the effects of electoral arrangements on elections and party systems, there remains a void: that is, we do know that structural voting arrangements make a difference, but we do not have many precise quantitative studies detailing the specific electoral effects of such arrangements. The basic question to be addressed in this descriptive study concerns the effect of voter registration laws on electoral turnout and outcomes in the state of Kansas. During the 1960 to 1968 election period, voters living in rural areas of Kansas voted without prior registration, whereas their urban counterparts were required to register.<sup>2</sup> Did this law benefit either major party in the state? What is

the effect of non-registration in rural areas on the proportion of eligible voters casting ballots? These questions obviously have relevance to political science as a discipline and also appear to have been relevant to practicing politicians in the state of Kansas.

We believe that registration for voters should be the same for all Kansans regardless of the area or community in which they live. Currently, it is mandatory to register in certain cities and counties. All Kansans are not treated fairly and equally in this respect.<sup>3</sup>

#### Report Organization

The body of this report is divided into the following five sections. Section one provides an overview which establishes the base from which we can begin our study. Three separate, yet related topics concerning American voting behavior will be examined. First, the political party will be discussed as a major determinant of how the voter casts his ballot. Second, we will examine the establishment of a "normal" or baseline vote among the electorate. Finally, we will discuss the ebb and flow of voting in America with the alternations of Congressional and Presidential elections. The discussion of these three topics and their relationships will provide a structural foundation from which the research paper can be developed. Section two will present the methodology