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The administration of American elections during the COVID-19 pandemic

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THE ADMINISTRATION OF AMERICAN ELECTIONS DURING THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC

A Thesis Submitted
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Introduction

A cornerstone of American democracy is elections; both the elections and their administration reflect the concept of federalism. Federalism's division of responsibility allows some aspects of implementation to fall under the states, but the overall responsibility lies with Congress. According to Article I, Section 4 of the United States Constitution, "The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations". Federalism's division of powers is visible within the establishment and administration of elections because the primary responsibility of implementation lies with the states, but the overall responsibility lies with Congress. This relationship has led to a great deal of confusion and added increased complexity to election administration. The system possesses its own challenges and complexities which continue to evolve from election to election and state to state.

Throughout American history, these elections have changed due to new Constitutional amendments providing additional portions of the population with the right to vote and the passage of laws designed to enforce those new amendments at the federal level. Most recently, elections have been impacted by a variety of technological advancements such as ballot tracking, online registration, and more. As these technological advances occurred, each state implemented its own rules on their systems of election administration, which led to a variety of different issues for the 2020 election. Along with those issues, the COVID-19 pandemic added its own complications. One possible way to understand these differences between states and the pressure of the pandemic is through the lense of political subcultures.

According to the political scientist Dr. Daniel J. Elazar, political culture is “the particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each political system is embedded” (Elazar 1984, 84-85). Essentially, he applies the national political culture and magnifies it until he is able to determine the contours of political subcultures at the state level. In order to properly function in a federal system, the United States government is reliant on a system of cooperation between each individual state, as well as the national government. Every state responds to this cooperation differently, which is what allows for noticeable differences in interactions with the federal government. Another area with such variables is the political system developed by each state over the course of their history. Shaping these systems are decades, if not centuries, of customs and attitudes towards the political process, which are summarized in the idea of political cultures.

Elazar identifies three main political subcultures that intermingle to form the national political culture: traditionalistic, moralistic, and individualistic. Traditionalistic cultures are mostly present within the southern United States. These states tend to view government as a means of maintaining the current system and participation is viewed as a privilege for the elite members of that culture. Those elite members are also the ones who are expected to participate within the system, not everyone (Elazar 1984, 100-101).

Moralistic cultures are often found within the northernmost states and spreading west until they reach the coast. Elazar’s moralistic cultures are defined with a “commonwealth” that views both government and political participation as necessary and good for the public interest. The average citizen is encouraged to become involved and it is every citizen’s responsibility to be aware of and participate in civic engagement (Elazar 1984, 100-101).

Individualistic cultures are present within the central Northeast and the central Midwest. States described as individualistic tend to view government as a marketplace, reliant on demands and the entire system of government and politics as a way to achieve personal benefits. Politics are generally viewed as dirty and the competition is between parties as opposed to over political issues (Elazar 1984, 120-122).

I am using these three political subcultures to see if they offer an insight into each state's decision regarding election administration. In times of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, will states react differently as they attempt to administer elections and does political culture inform such varied responses? I conducted case studies of Iowa, Georgia, and Pennsylvania and applied a series of variables including the strength of each state's voter ID law, the voter turnout, state office control, and relevant events. After completing my case studies, I was able to determine that Elazar's theory is slightly predictive when it comes to state responses to crises within the context of election administration. By the end of each the 2020 election cycle, each state was able to elect its candidate, deliver those results to the federal government, and ensure someone took office. Some states did it much more smoothly than others, but this can be explained with Elazar's political subcultures.

What is the State of Elazar's Framework?

While *American Federalism: A View from the States* was originally published during the Civil Rights Movement and times of conflict between state and federal powers, Elazar's work has become a relatively accepted piece within the realm of political science and has influenced a variety of academic works. From state administration (Parker and Przybylski 1993; Hale and McNeal 2010; Hale and Brown 2013; Biggers and Hinmer 2015) to the election of women to state legislatures (Sanbonmatsu 2002; Crowley 2006), it cannot be denied that Elazar's

framework has managed to provide a tool that has been consistently utilized over the past 55 years.¹

What is interesting is the significant amount of research that capitalizes on Elazar's idea and such research is not limited to one area of political science, exhibiting its wide applicability. These subcategories demonstrate applications of Elazar's research and provide unique insight into seemingly tangentially related areas of his research.

Election Administration

A large portion of the literature pertains to the administration of elections and use Elazar's subcultures as a predictor. According to some studies, key to the administration of elections after the turn of the millennium was the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). In 2002, HAVA was enacted by Congress as a response to some of the problems of the 2000 presidential election. Many of these reforms directly involved technological aspects of the election such as allowing states to choose technological systems and the vendors that developed and maintained those systems (Hale and Brown 2013). In this context, Elazar's political cultures were used as a potential predictor of whether or not states would implement, ignore, or adapt federal guidelines such as HAVA. It was found that when Elazar's cultures were applied in these studies, his concepts could not be used as a predictor a state's nonparticipation in federal guidelines (Hale and Brown 2013), but could act as a predictor when applied to specific issues such as post-HAVA voter identification (Hale and McNeal 2010).

Absentee Voting

A key component within the idea of political cultures is how citizens can be expected to participate within government. It ranges from a very helpful, fulfilling relationship in moralistic

¹ Elazar updated his framework through four different editions of *American Federalism: A View from the States* from its initial publication in 1966 to the fourth edition in 1984.

cultures to the much less involved, maintaining the status quo relationship in traditionalistic cultures. Some researchers have applied this perception of government involvement within each culture to the wider topic of absentee voting. These studies showed the process of adopting early and no-excuse absentee voting (Biggers and Hanmer 2015) and mail-in voting (Parker and Przybylski 1993) and the role of political culture in explaining the previous adoptions or predicting the next states to follow suit. This area of research relied heavily on the idea of convenience within American elections and whether the system was becoming more convenient with higher voter turnout (Parker and Przybylski 1993) or the opposite was occurring and the reform of absentee voting was leading to less convenience and less turnout (Biggers and Hanmer 2015). When convenience and the increase or decrease of voter participation was applied to Elazar's political cultures, states with moralistic cultures were overwhelmingly shown as the prime candidates for reforms making it easier to vote and subsequently saw an increase in voter participation (Parker and Przybylski 1993; Palazzolo and Moscardelli 2006). Considering moralistic cultures' views on government and the need to get involved in the political process, it is by no means surprising the research leans in this direction.

Party Influence on Election Administration

Elazar's research has also been used as a predictor of party lines and loyalty to party politics. The studies consistently showed the importance of analyzing the increased partisan nature of the American political system because that partisanship can be used to predict things like behavior within the electoral system (Burden and Greene 2000; Shin and Webber 2013). The perception of citizens' personal location on the ideological spectrum displays a similar prediction when it comes to adopting reforms of election law and party policies on elections (Palazzolo and Moscardelli 2006; Goodliffe et al. 2020), so these articles not only show the importance of party

politics in the general political system, but also in election administration. Considering the power of states to actually administer elections, these studies allow for greater insight into the conditions necessary for election reform stemming from partisan leaders and the role of state party tradition in the administration of elections. Within these studies, political subculture was used as a predictor, so any affects were often correlative.

Federal Voting Guidelines

As previously stated, the administration of elections is both a federal and state power, so in order to truly be effective, both levels must acknowledge their role and accomplish their specific powers. Over time, a sort of balance has been achieved, which establishes the mechanics of elections as a state and local government responsibility, and the accessibility and fairness of elections belonging to the federal level (Hale and Brown 2013). Numerous studies have detailed this relationship, but a number of articles also focus on the ability of the federal government in establishing equity of elections. The understanding of the power balance has been established by the courts and other federal agencies, although the true nature of that balance is always subject to change. It is necessary to understand the actions of states when it comes to acknowledging, implementing, adapting, or ignoring federal guidance within the realm of voting and elections. HAVA is just one recent example of this concept (Hale and McNeal 2010; Hale and Brown 2013), but the approach of state governments to federal rules is a common subject throughout this area of research.

Election Administration During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In 2020, not only was the country gearing up for a contentious presidential election, but it had to do so during a global pandemic. One of the biggest impacts this had on the election was the role of the elderly. Traditionally, the older members of the population are the most constant

voters and are most likely to volunteer in administrative roles such as poll workers (Burden and Milyo 2015, 39). Some states decided to protect this portion of the population by issuing calls for young people to step up as poll workers or support more absentee voting efforts (Fuchs 2020). Other states did not implement these mitigation efforts and moved forward with their standard administration of elections (Ballotpedia 2020a).

Regardless of each state's mitigation efforts to protect their population (or not), the nature of the United States meant that states were receiving different guidance on mitigation efforts from the federal government and their own public health officials. States such as California and New York completely shut down while others such as Iowa and Arkansas remained relatively open (New York Times Staff 2021). This lack of uniformity led to additional challenges in implementing the often-changing federal guidance and balancing it with each state's individual mitigation efforts.

Methodology and Expectations

This research was conducted using case studies because it was the most appropriate method given the recent (or often real-time) nature of events and the lack of academic data about the 2020 election. Considering many of the events I was studying were happening as I was writing this paper, I did not have access to a large amount of quantitative data to conduct statistical analyses. The case study method allowed me to evaluate a few states, each representing one of subcultures and the larger United States of America, but specifically focused on three states with minimal mixes of each subculture that is found in many (Seawright and Gerring 2008, 294).² After assessing all 50 states, I decided on Iowa to represent moralistic,

² The consistent nature of each state's subculture allowed me to gauge the effect on the administration of elections.

Georgia to represent traditionalistic, and Pennsylvania to represent the individualistic subcultures (seen below in Figure 1).

Figure 1. Elazar's Map of Subcultures



Source: Elazar, Daniel J. 1984. *American Federalism: A View from the States*. 3rd ed. New York City: Harper & Row Publishers. 106-107.

These case studies are typical cases because their identified culture is internally consistent and does not vary much within the state (Elazar 1984, 106-107). Elazar acknowledged that states may possess pockets of hybrid political subcultures such as Moralistic-Individualistic (MI) or Traditionalistic-Moralistic (TM). The status of Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Georgia as typical examples is cemented due to their lacking of widespread hybrids (Seawright and Gerring 2008, 299).³ Prior to the 2020 election, these three states were selected to represent each political subculture in order to determine how they would respond to an emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Would state subculture predict how they administer elections in the midst of this crisis?

³ Pennsylvania does have pockets of moralistic and traditionalistic subcultures; however, the individualistic subculture has a much stronger hold on the state.

Variables of Interest

Each state was examined within a series of independent variables: voter participation rates, strength of voter ID laws, state office control, and events. The independent variables of voter participation rate as well as the strength of voter ID laws and state office control provide some indication of the subculture within each state based on how those variables present themselves. The events independent variable sets the environment of the 2020 election and while that has also been affected by subculture, it is mostly intended to explain the circumstances going into the election. Once examined, each independent variable was then applied within the context of the dependent variable: state response to COVID-19 with respect to election administration.

Different measures can be applied to study a state's subculture. For example, political scientists have applied a numerical scale to explain the qualities of each political subculture and their hybrids (Sharkansky 1969, 70-71). That route was not necessary for this study due to how Elazar's research was applied. The focus was how states respond in regards to their election administration with aspects of political subculture serving as predictors.

Strength of Voter ID Law

Whether a state has adopted voter id and the strength of such laws may help illustrate its political subculture. Due to Iowa's description as a moralistic state, it is expected to have a much less strict voter ID law and Georgia's is expected to be one of the strictest. Pennsylvania is expected to have a voter ID law much less restrictive than Georgia's, but more restrictive than Iowa's.

This variable was determined using the National Conference of State Legislature ("Voter Identification Requirements" 2020) rating of voter ID laws of states around the country. Ranging from classifications of "No Documentation Required to Vote" to "Strict Photo ID", this system

allows for a consistent examination of all three states. The purpose of examining the strength of voter ID laws was to understand the capacity each state has to make changes for crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. If it has a very strict voter ID law enshrined in state law, it is unlikely that the government may ease some of the restrictions on identification due to legal and administrative barriers.

Voter Participation

Voter participation can help measure a state's subculture. Baseline voter participation gives an idea of the ability and desire of that states' citizens to partake in the civic process of voting. Due to Elazar's general expectations for the moralistic and traditionalistic subcultures, I theorize that Iowa will have the highest baseline voter participation rate and Georgia will have the lowest. Moralistic subcultures tend to view the political process as an arena in which everyone has a responsibility to participate. Since traditionalistic subcultures view politics as another area in which the elite dominate, Georgia's voting rates are expected to be much lower than Iowa's.

This variable was found by examining Dr. Michael McDonald's "United States Election Project" and comparing the voting-eligible population (VEP), "an estimate of persons eligible to vote regardless of voter registration status in an election", to the members of the VEP who voted for the highest office on the ballot (McDonald 2020). It was necessary to use the number of VEP votes for the highest office because the data were not available for Pennsylvania's VEP total turnout and each state needed to be examined within the same lens. Within the context of highest office on the ballot, I specifically focused on the presidential elections since 2000 because midterm elections see natural drop-off in voter participation rates and 2020 was a presidential election. McDonald's work allowed me to examine voter participation rates of Pennsylvania,

Iowa, and Georgia for the presidential elections between 2000 and 2020 and helped illustrate differences in subculture.

State Office Control

In some states, the control of state offices such as governor, the state senate, etc., could influence election administration. If one party maintains control of the governor's seat, the state legislature, and the secretary of state's office, that one party would be responsible for most, if not all aspects of election administration and legislation. The party itself will have little to no bearing on the administration of elections in any state and will ultimately be overridden by the state's subculture, but the influence could present itself in instances of one-party control or trifecta situations. If a state has split control between parties, bipartisan efforts may be able to temper the partisan response more strongly.

Due to the openness of Iowa's political process and the expected involvement of a variety of social and political groups, the moralistic culture is most likely to have the most variety in control. Georgia is most likely to have straight party control of its state offices due to its reliance on the status quo. Once again, Pennsylvania is expected to fall somewhere in the middle with a mix of both parties, but not necessarily to the same extent as Iowa.

Events

In order to accurately assess each state's relationship with their process of election administration, I found it necessary to identify events that provide needed context. These events directly influenced the administration of the 2020 elections. On November 4, 2020, many statewide election results were announced and both federal and state races knew preliminary results. The final certified results (along with a few runoffs) took longer. It is necessary to properly examine the most relevant events that attributed to the confusion of holding elections

during a pandemic because such confusion could lead to post-election chaos and affect how each state chooses to prevent similar occurrences. I focused on each state over a period of five years, between 2015 and 2020. Such a time frame is necessary because it provides the context in which the 2020 was taking place. This time frame is also necessary due to the previous presidential election in 2016 and its accompanying campaign cycle that would have implemented its own changes.

I also needed to create a system to research and study each event from every state that allowed me the most uniformity possible. In order to do so, I used newspaper articles from the major state newspaper of Iowa, Georgia, and Pennsylvania, which was the *Des Moines Register*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, respectively. The goal was to find events that would have impacted the 2020 election regardless of COVID-19. These events could be instances where the voter ID law was challenged in court, the legislature implemented new procedures at the polling place, or other general changes to election administration and voting laws. Ultimately, the purpose is to understand the baseline environment going into the 2020 election that was then impacted by the pandemic.

I expect that Elazar's subculture characteristics make Georgia ripe for events impacting its administration of elections, both in quantity and in quality. Georgia will have the most in number and complexity. Georgia's restrictive view on the political process indicates that events challenging election administration or leading to changes are much more likely to occur. Iowa's approach towards government and involvement will allow for very few instances of such events and will have minimal complexity. Such events are expected to have been solved and solved quickly. I would expect Pennsylvania to have more than Iowa, but nowhere near as many as Georgia. Pennsylvania's focus on individual opportunity does require some involvement from

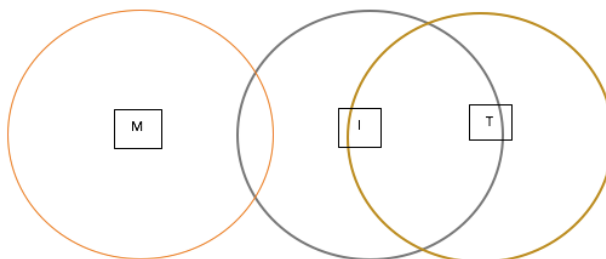
the population and thus, will have some events that may lead to changes in the system, but do not possess the ease or complexity of Iowa or Georgia.

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Considering COVID-19 reached the United States in the early spring of 2020, it impacted both the primary and general elections of the 2020 cycle. Some states relied on legislative action or the actions of state officials to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 while administering elections. Others maintained the status quo regardless of the pandemic. By determining what changed (or remained the same), I am able to understand the role of crises in election administration as potentially illuminated by political subcultures.

This is the dependent variable, which was assessed to answer the research question within the context of each independent variable. Given what we know about the decentralized nature of elections, will states react to a global pandemic differently in the way they administer elections? Does political culture inform the variation in state reaction?

It is important to note that a common critique of Elazar's subcultures is their inexact nature (King 1994, 120). Much of the determination of a state's subculture relies on personal assessment, even when provided Elazar's characteristics. Though the idea is inherently linear due to the categorical nature of the subcultures, they are truly only linear in certain conditions (King 1994, 120-121). That being said, they can offer an indication of how states are likely to act under circumstances related to election administration. Individualistic and traditionalistic subcultures have a significant amount of overlap with a key developmental difference; both subcultures saw a variety of groups settling amongst each other, but the unifying feature for individualistic subculture was the desire for equal opportunity, while the traditionalistic subculture was able to unify around the agrarian plantation. This relationship is illustrated below in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Relationship Between Subcultures

Typically, states do tend to behave with moralistic and traditionalistic values at either end of the continuum with individualistic subcultures in the middle, but that is not a given. Once again, Elazar's subcultures are more an indication of state behavior rather than a definition.

Case Studies

Iowa

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, modern-day Iowa was under French and briefly Spanish control. After the Seven Years War ended in 1762, the British controlled land stretching from the eastern coast to the Mississippi River (Schwieder 1996, 23). After the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, Louisiana and the land beyond the Mississippi fell under American control and settlers began making their way west (Schwieder 1996, 25). Though both the French and Spanish controlled Iowa at various points, it was the descendants of English Puritans that had the greatest influence on its political subculture (Elazar 1984, 108).

This American settlement brought largely British ideals to the future state of Iowa, which explains its description as a moralistic subculture in Elazar's *American Federalism: A View from the States*. Areas of the United States settled by Puritans included many New England states such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York, and into Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. Pockets of Puritan influence were established in the northern sections of Pennsylvania,

Ohio, and Illinois, but such sections remained as pockets instead of the dominant political subculture (Elazar 1984, 107-109).

In Iowa, the moralistic subculture did establish and maintain its dominance without a strong hybrid presence. This subculture does indicate that Iowa is more likely to view government as a community achievement through which positive actions can be conducted. It is every citizen's responsibility to be involved in or aware of politics and politics is a way to accomplish goals that are in the best interest of the public. Iowa's elections are expected to be more open and competitive with a much stronger participation rate of amateur politicians. They are also more likely to view party as a useful political tool, but not a defining characteristic of their political approach. The desire to better the community is expected to outweigh the party influence. With these conditions, a diverse group of people should be in office and party power should be secondary to the advancement of the common good (Elazar 1984, 100-101).

That being said, Iowa is no stranger to total party control and saw House, Senate, and Governor totally controlled by either the Democratic or Republican party. Over the years, that control has also been broken up by periods of split control where the Republicans may have the House and Governor, but the Democrats have the Senate. Some level of competition is still expected between each election cycle, even if one party is in power within the three offices (Hoffman and Larimer 2015, 265).

Currently, Iowa's state government is controlled by one party: The Republican party. The office of the governor has been held by a Republican since 2011, but Democrats were able to maintain a strong grasp on the office for just over a decade. Kim Reynolds, the current governor, is serving in her first elected term. Previously, she served as Lieutenant Governor for Terry Branstad, the longest serving governor in US history, until he resigned to take an

ambassadorship. The party has held a majority in the Iowa House of Representatives for 24 out of the last 28 years, while the party control has been much more varied in the Senate. This split in party power led to mixed control overall. The Republicans were able to gain a majority within the Iowa State Senate in 2016 and have maintained a trifecta of House, Senate, and Governor ever since (Ballotpedia 2021a).

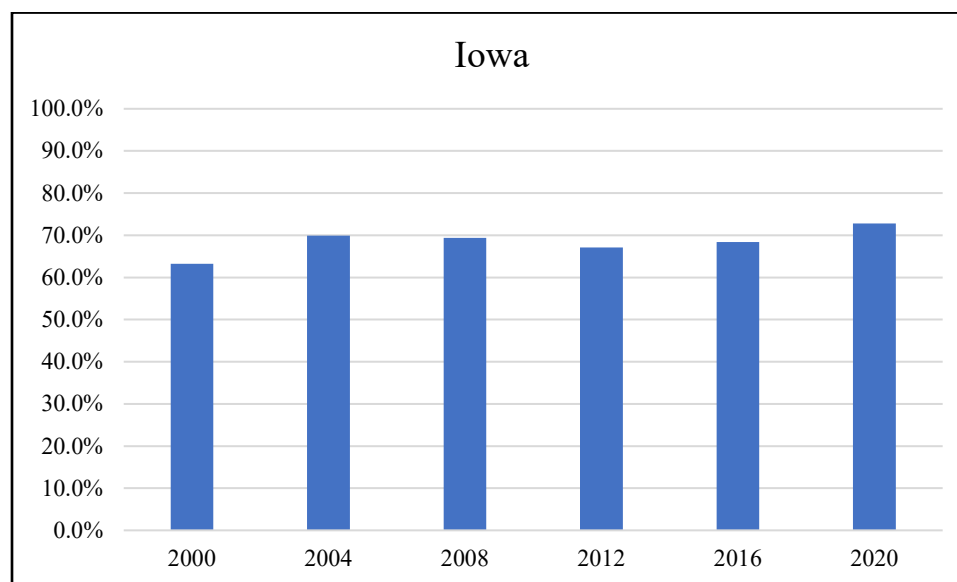
Iowa's elections have seen their fair share of controversies. In 2017, the Iowa House of Representatives worked with the Secretary of State, Paul Pate, on HF 516, which would require Iowans to produce a form of government-issued voter identification and reduce the early voting window. Under this bill, five forms of voter identification would be accepted at the polls, four of which would require a photo. HF 516 did include a provision that created a voter verification card that would be issued to every Iowan that registered to vote (Petroski 2017).

In May of 2018, a student at Iowa State University and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) of Iowa filed a lawsuit against Pate for HF 516. The plaintiffs alleged that the new law would make the process "more complicated, cumbersome, and time-consuming without adequate justification for doing so" (Spoerre 2019a). A Polk County District Court Judge granted a temporary injunction to block some of the absentee voting changes and the injunction was upheld by the Iowa Supreme Court until the case was resolved in October of 2019 (Spoerre 2019b). Parts of HF 516 were upheld, while others were declared unconstitutional. The presiding judge ruled that the lack of voter fraud was not significant enough reason to dismiss the bill designed to alleviate such fears and thus upheld the core of the legislation. He did strike the portions of HF 516 that included prohibiting election officials from using Iowa driver's license or non-operator ID records as the basis for issuing voter identification cards and allowed election officials to dispute voter signatures (Spoerre 2019b). Voter ID laws still stand in Iowa,

but due to litigation, it changed from the original form that was passed by the legislature and signed into law by the governor.

Even though many opponents of HF 516 were concerned about its impact on voter turnout, Iowa has maintained fairly high voter turnout over the years. In 2000, Iowa's turnout of its Voting Eligible Population (VEP) for highest office was 63.2%, or 9% higher than the national average. It jumped to 69.9% in 2004 before staying fairly stagnant at 69.4% in 2008. The 2012 general election saw Iowa with the third highest VEP turnout in the nation at 67.1%, a number which rose to 68.4% in 2016 and 72.8% in 2020. 2020 was the first time Iowa did not fall within the top 10 states with the highest VEP, but it was the state's best turnout in its history (McDonald 2020).⁴

Figure 3. Iowa Voter Turnout 2000-2020



Source: McDonald, Michael, P. 2020. "National and State Turnout Rates 2000-2020." *United States Election Project*. December 14, 2020.

<http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data>.

⁴ Voter turnout increased nationally, which explains how Iowa was able to have its highest turnout in history, but fall out of the two 10 states.

Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania state government differs from the other identified within this case study. Rather than designating itself as the ‘State of Pennsylvania’ or some iteration of a state government, Pennsylvania identifies itself as a commonwealth. In *A View from the States*, commonwealths tend to occur in states with moralistic subcultures, which is largely due to the idea that they are achieving a good through community action. Even though this characteristic does not fall within the individualistic subculture, it does make sense for Pennsylvania because its commonwealth status can be explained through the state’s settlement patterns.

As previously mentioned, the Puritan settlement of the Northeast and sections of the central United States influenced many modern-day political subcultures. Part of that Puritan settlement did occur within northern Pennsylvania; however, other than a few pockets of individualistic-moralistic subculture, the Puritan influence was largely overridden by the later arrival of settlers from non-Puritan England and the inner Germanic states (Elazar 1984, 109). It was the diversity of this group that ultimately led to the foundation of the individualistic subculture because the main unifying factor was their desire for individual opportunity. They did not have the religious cohesion of the Puritans, so their sole unifying characteristic needed to be strong enough to unite the various groups reaching the New World (Elazar 1984, 109-110). Thus, with the original presence of Puritans and the remaining pockets of moralistic subculture within the state, it is no surprise that Pennsylvania’s state government identifies itself as ‘the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’.

The desire for individual opportunity left a lasting influence on northeastern states such as New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Eventually, these groups spread West and reached areas of the country that already felt the influence of moralistic and traditionalistic subcultures.

No subculture was truly able to establish dominance, which ultimately led to the prevalence of individualism within those states. When the only defining characteristic was the opportunity for individual advancement, this system was one of “mutual obligations rooted in personal relationships” (Elazar 1984, 95). Rather than relying on religion, political beliefs, or ethnicity like the other two subcultures, individualistic subcultures arose from melting pots desiring personal advancement (Elazar 1984, 94-96).

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is unique within this case study because it is governed by Tom Wolf of the Democratic party and possesses a majority of Democratic state officers. This dominance does not continue into the legislative branch where the Republicans have held both the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and the Senate for 11 and 26 years respectively (Ballotpedia 2021c.). The state government possesses a split between a legislature entrenched in Republican control and a governor’s office that has no such one-party control.

It is this split in Democratic and Republican control that has led to some interesting developments in Pennsylvania’s elections over the last five years. One such event is its voter ID law. Pennsylvania does not have active voter ID laws and the emphasis is on *active*. In 2012, the Pennsylvania Legislature modified its Election Code by passing Act 18, which required in-person voters on election day to have photo identification and eliminated the ability to present alternate forms of identification. In order to prevent widespread disenfranchisement, the Secretary of the Commonwealth was required to disseminate educational information about Act 18’s new requirements of voters and the Department of Transportation was required to issue proper identification to any voter without the proper documents for free (Faherty 2013, 278-79).

The strict nature of Act 18 combined with partisan statements of Mike Turzai, the House Majority Leader, led various organizations to file a suit asking to halt the legislation through a

preliminary injunction.⁵ These opponents alleged it violated the Pennsylvania Constitution by “unduly burdening the fundamental right to vote” by imposing too many burdens and qualifications (Faherty 2013, 279). The opponents of Act 18 were initially unsuccessful in their bid to receive a preliminary injunction because of the provisions regarding the educational and administrative burdens of the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Department of Transportation. Upon appeal, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania disagreed with the Commonwealth Court due to the new argument regarding problems implementing Act 18. The opponents alleged that Pennsylvania lacked the infrastructure to properly educate and issue IDs prior to the 2012 election and voters would be disenfranchised as a result. The state’s need for IDs could not be met by the Department of Transportation. When the ruling was remanded, the Commonwealth Court ruled that the proposed changes by the state were not enough to prevent disenfranchisement and Act 18 was not implemented for the 2012 election (Faherty 2013, 280-282). The Commonwealth Court’s eventual ruling was never overturned and thus, Act 18 was not implemented (Lyman 2014).

Another controversy occurred during the lead-up to the 2020 general election, which saw constant debate of Governor Wolf’s emergency powers during the pandemic and that debate extended to the election itself. In 2019, Act 77 expanded mail-in voting by modifying Pennsylvania statute to include a definition of “proof of identification” under the identification of “qualified mail-in elector” and greatly expanded Pennsylvanian voting options in general (Pennsylvania General Assembly 2019).⁶ For the first time, Pennsylvanians could vote by mail up to 50 days before the election, had the option to fill out an annual ballot application, which

⁵ Turzai’s full statement, “Voter ID, which is gonna allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania, [is] done”, from a Republican State Committee meeting.

⁶ At the time of Act 77’s creation, Pennsylvania did not have an actual voter ID law because Act 18 had never been reinstated by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania or the legislature.

would automatically mail a ballot each year, and had a larger window in which they could register to vote. Another major change was the implementation of no-excuse absentee voting. Act 77 was lauded as a bipartisan measure designed to modernize the state's election system and ease the process for voters (Office of the Governor Tom Wolf 2019). In the end, Act 77 was passed by a vote of 138 to 61 in the House and 35 to 14 in the Senate. About 40 Democrats joined the Republicans in passage of Act 77 (Pennsylvania State Senate 2020).

The controversy began once the bill was passed and signed into law. Signed in October of 2019, Act 77 did not go into effect until the April 2020 primary. Within the ongoing conversation of COVID-19 mitigation efforts and the powers of each branch of government, questions began to arise about the implementation of Act 77. When voting rights activists and Democrats requested additional guidance from the Republican majority in the legislature, they were told everything they needed to know was already explained within the bill and such requests were “a failure to read the plain English language” (Albiges 2020b). Eventually, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Kathy Boockvar, and the Department of State stepped in to provide guidance to county officials, specifically regarding mail-in ballots. Act 77 did not specifically state that mail-in ballots would be thrown out if returned without the second, “secret” envelope, but it did contain language about voiding the ballot if the secrecy envelope contained markings or text. In the process of clearing up this confusion, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court did rule that ballots without secrecy envelopes could not be counted (Lai 2020). At the same time, the court ruled that voters could return the ballots using drop boxes and extended the window of time to extend mail-in ballots. These provisions of Act 77 led to confusion, which the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office attempted to clarify before the election. The Republican state leadership as well as a number of Republican state legislators

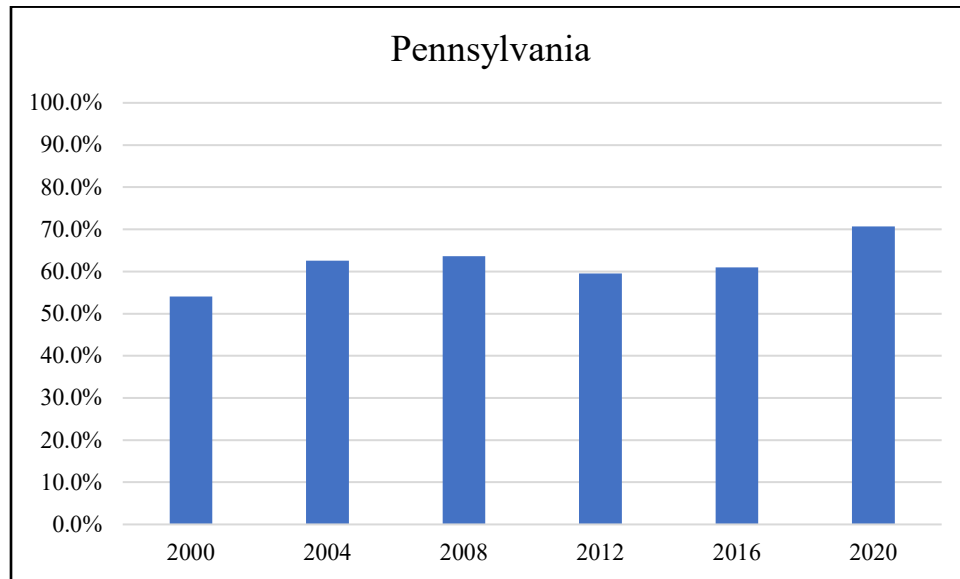
allege that this was an overstep of her powers and that Secretary Boockvar's actions were actually an attempt to ensure a Biden victory, an attempt aided by a Pennsylvania Supreme Court with a Democratic majority.⁷ On the other hand, Democrats and Boockvar claim that the real problem was a lack of guidance on the issue of implementation (Albige 2020b).

Act 77 greatly expanded the capabilities of Pennsylvanian voters and is currently ruled a success due to the use of mail-in ballots during the pandemic; however, it is unknown if Act 77 will continue in its current form beyond the 2020 general election. The confusion led to contentions on both sides and a variety of challenges to the election results from state senators and representatives and outside entities such as the Trump campaign. Some criticisms of Act 77 are warranted and based on comments from state officials, will most likely be revisited in upcoming legislative sessions. They also acknowledge that some portions of Pennsylvania's Election Code do not provide clear guidance and could lead to additional issues that would need further clarification, most likely from the state Supreme Court or Secretary Boockvar (Albige 2020b).

Act 77 updated and expanded many of Pennsylvania's election laws with the hopes of increasing voter turnout. Prior to the 2019 legislation, Pennsylvania ranked around 25th in the nation for voter turnout. In the 2000 general election, Pennsylvania a 54.1% turnout of its Voting Eligible Population (VEP). It rose to 62.6% within four years and remained fairly steady with 63.6% before dropping again to 59.5% in 2012. The 2016 election saw Pennsylvania's VEP for highest office return to 63.6% before jumping to 70.7% in 2020. (McDonald 2020).⁸

⁷ The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is elected through partisan elections and if a seat is vacant, the governor is able to appoint an interim justice (Ballotpedia 2021d).

⁸ It is necessary to not that these percentages do not include write-in votes.

Figure 4. Pennsylvania Voter Turnout 2000-2020

Source: McDonald, Michael, P. 2020. "National and State Turnout Rates 2000-2020." *United States Election Project*. December 14, 2020.

<http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data>.

Georgia

Georgia is similar to Pennsylvania in that it is also one of the original thirteen colonies; however, its settlement pattern is much different. According to Elazar, this settlement only partly contributed to the establishment of the traditionalistic subculture. The states dominated by individualistic subculture focused on commercial opportunities, while the southern states focused on plantation systems and the use of slavery (Elazar 1984, 112). The combination of plantation systems and a focus on individual opportunity led to the creation of the traditionalistic subculture that is present within Georgia.

This subculture means that Georgia is more likely to view government as a means of maintaining the status quo and political involvement as a privilege. In order to maintain the existing order and privileged status, involvement in the political sphere is viewed as something for the appropriate elite (Elazar 1984, 100-101). A key component to southern politics, including

Georgia, is elitism. For example, in Georgia, a candidate is required to obtain more than 50% of the vote in order to win the election. This system was widely implemented during the Jim Crow era of the South and helped maintain the power of traditional white southerners (Glaser 2006, 777-778).

After the 2020 general election, Georgia maintained its Republican trifecta within state government. The current governor of Georgia, Brian Kemp, previously served as the Secretary of State, a role that will be discussed later. The Georgia House of Representatives' Republican majority has been in place since 2004, but the margin between the two parties has slowly been decreasing. The Republicans in the Georgia State Senate have a similar history of control stretching back to 2002 (Ballotpedia 2021b).

It was easily apparent that even though the Republicans have maintained strong party control, it has not been a simple maintenance. A series of events have managed to come close to dislodging the Republican control in Georgia and were ultimately successful in dislodging congressional Republican control.

Georgia cannot be discussed without mentioning Stacey Abrams, the former Minority Leader in the Georgia House of Representatives and former gubernatorial candidate. One of the biggest controversies in Georgia involves the 2018 governor's race of Abrams v. Kemp, but the story begins well before the 2018 election. In the buildup to the 2016 election, Georgia had been flagged for illegally removing inactive voters from the registry. Secretary of State Brian Kemp argued that the Department of Justice's lawsuit should be dismissed because the state's actions were not illegal due to clauses within the national Voting Rights Act (VRA) (Torres 2016). Opponents to the state's purges included the NAACP, the ACLU, and other groups that were nervous about such changes in the wake of the Supreme Court's 2013 dismissal of "Section 5" of

the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). This section required states with a history of racial discrimination in voting to work with the Department of Justice prior to making any changes to voting laws, which applied to Georgia (Torres 2016).

These voter purges were not the only issue leading up to the 2016 elections. Due to a lack of funding, many polling places across Georgia were either closed or relocated. One county went from 36 to 19, while another was considering going from 12 to one polling location. This trend was by no means new considering one county, Lowndes, has fallen from 37 to nine over a ten-year period (Torres 2016).

After the 2016 election ended for most of the nation, Georgia continued on with a congressional runoff as required under Georgia's unique system. The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law filed a lawsuit that claimed Georgia violated federal law when it closed voter registration in March and did not reopen it for the runoff election in January. Kemp viewed this measure as a purely partisan attempt to ensure Democrat Jon Ossoff's win of the seat. Another plaintiff in the lawsuit was Third Sector Development, which is a progressive group founded by then Georgia House Minority Leader, Stacey Abrams (Joyner 2017). This would become only one of many times Abrams and Kemp found themselves on opposing sides of a lawsuit.

In July of 2017, Georgia began sending out 383,487 address confirmation notices in an attempt to clean up the voter rolls. If a voter received such a notice, they had 30 days to either confirm their address or provide their new information. Complications arose when municipal governments were added to the equation. Both local and state government officials were supposed to update and maintain the voter registry, but that relationship did not exist. In many situations, local governments were updating their lists using municipal bills or other forms that

could be influenced by the voter's movement to another part of Georgia. When they could not be verified by local means, countless Georgians received a letter that, if not answered, could mean they were removed from the rolls. These voters would not be moved to the inactive list due to the failure of Georgia's verification system (Torres 2017).

Eventually, the Georgia House became involved when Minority Leader Bob Trammell introduced legislation that would no longer allow the removal of inactive voters who had not had contact with government officials. In 2017 alone, that provision had been used to cancel the registration of more than 500,000 voters. Secretary of State Kemp advocated against the proposal because the so-called "no contact" rule allowed for a greater integrity in elections (Bluestein 2017). Though the proposed legislation did not go anywhere in the Republican-dominated legislature, the Supreme Court of the United States did provide a ruling on the overall issue of voter purges. Originally focused on a case in Ohio, the court did rule that removing inactive voters was legal (Niese 2018).

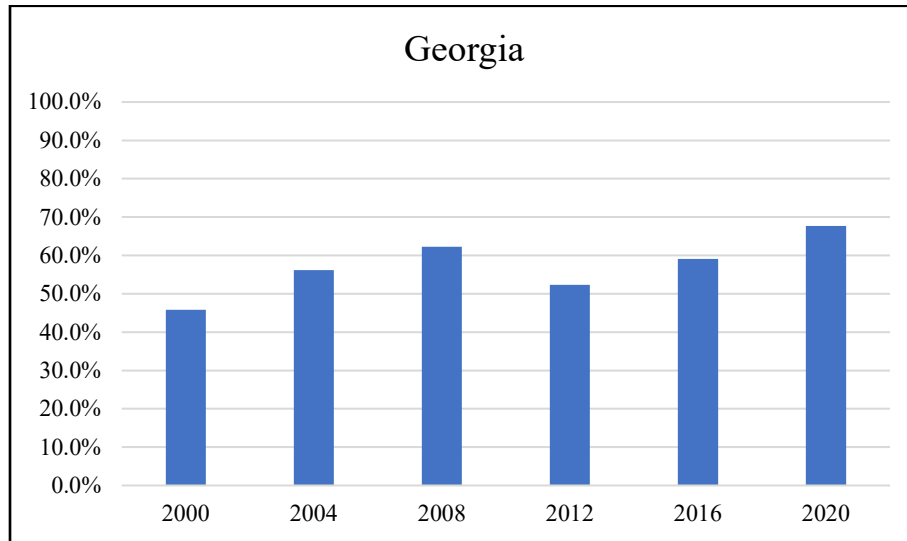
By the time the 2018 gubernatorial election rolled around, both Abrams and Kemp had been working opposite sides of the same issue for over four years. Abrams had made it a personal and professional goal to boost minority voter turnout, while Kemp suspected such actions were fraud. Prior to the 2014 election, another voting rights organization founded by Abrams, the New Georgia Project, ramped up its efforts and submitted around 85,000 applications to local election offices. When faced with a number of this size, Kemp began looking into claims of incomplete forms and forged signatures. It took months to verify many of these applications and just under half were able to vote in the 2014 election. 18,000 were validated by the Secretary of State's office in 2015, 7,000 were cancelled, 5,000 were duplicates,

and 10,000 applications could not be reconciled with municipal or state information.⁹ Allegedly, 53 applications were forged, but no one was charged with a crime. Investigators concluded the forgery was done by independent contractors, not the New Georgia Project (Niese 2018a).

The 2018 election was only an extension of this ongoing battle. As Kemp was Secretary of State and responsible for maintaining the voting rolls while his name was on the ballot, the drop in voter removal was no surprise. Between 2010 and 2018, Kemp removed more than 1 million Georgians from the voting registry and 668,000 registrations were cancelled in 2017 alone (Niese 2018a). On November 7th, 2018, Brian Kemp declared victory with 50.2% of the vote compared to Abrams' 48.8%. He resigned from his position as Secretary of State the next day and was eventually replaced by Brad Raffensperger, in a runoff election in December 2018 (Niese 2018b).

Considering Georgia has been dealing with ongoing voter consolidation issues and widespread polling location closures, the voter turnout rate is surprising. Beginning in the 2000 general election, Georgia had one of the lowest VEP turnout rates in the country with 45.8%. Over the next eight years, that percentage jumped to 56.2% and then 62.5%. That number dropped to 52.3% in 2012 before rising to 59.1%. 2020 saw Georgia's VEP turnout, 67.7%, rise above the national turnout for the first time in 12 years (McDonald 2020).

⁹ Under Georgia law, the New Georgia Project was required to turn in every voter application, even if they were incomplete. That may account for some of the applications that were not validated.

Figure 5. Georgia Voter Turnout 2000-2020

Source: McDonald, Michael, P. 2020. "National and State Turnout Rates 2000-2020." *United States Election Project*. December 14, 2020.

<http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data>.

Findings

On November 3rd, 2020, millions of Americans went to the polls and cast their vote for local, state, and federal offices, including the presidency. By the time most polling locations closed that night, the race was too close to call in some states and would not be called for a number of days (Montanaro 2020). Finally, on November 7th, Joe Biden declared victory when enough states' preliminary totals gave him the votes he needed to win the electoral college (Domonoske and Sprunt 2020).

Interestingly, two of the states that were responsible for the delay in results were Georgia and Pennsylvania. In Georgia, Biden was originally declared the winner by a margin of about 14,000 votes, an incredibly small number considering about millions of Georgians voted in the 2020 general election (Niese 2020). Under Georgia law, the Secretary of State was required to

conduct a Risk Limiting Audit after the November elections and, due to its close results, the Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, chose to audit the presidential election (Georgia Secretary of State 2021).¹⁰ The audit was ordered on November 11th, which gave the state 9 days to certify the results.¹¹ The recount was done by hand which would take even longer (Niesse 2020). Pennsylvania's delay was due to their handling of the absentee ballots. The deadline to receive the ballots was extended to the Friday after the election (November 6th) as long as they were mailed on election day at the latest. Many state election officials did not begin counting the 2.5 million mail-in ballots until the morning of the general election, while some even waited until Wednesday due to logistical concerns. Either way, it would take a significant amount of time to count and verify Pennsylvania's absentee ballots, which meant it would take a long time for Pennsylvania to announce its results (Timm and Przybyla 2020). Even though both Georgia and Pennsylvania were important to determining the results of the 2020 presidential election, such importance was unexpected and unplanned. All three states were selected prior to the November 3rd general election because of their general representation of the three subcultures. Only one state- Iowa- behaved as expected based on an analysis of factors related to the subcultures and the administration of elections.

Voter ID Strength

In terms of behaving as expected, it is important to discuss how each state behaved within each independent variable compared to their expected behavior. Voter ID is one independent variable that did not behave as expected and the results, which can be found in Table 1, were mixed. As a moralistic subculture, Iowa was expected to have the least restrictive voter ID law of

¹⁰ The Risk Limiting Audit was a statewide, manual tally of all ballots cast in the presidential election that was supposed to affirm the machine tally.

¹¹ Under Georgia law, the final day to certify election results is November 20th.

the three and that was ultimately true. Iowa’s voter ID law does require voters to present some form of identification in order to vote, but allows multiple types of identification as well as requires the Secretary of State’s office to provide each registered voter with a voter ID card (National Council of State Legislatures 2020b). Even though the state requires the identification, it allows Iowans multiple ways to prove their identity and still manages to keep elections decently accessible.

As an individualistic subculture, Pennsylvania was expected to have a voter ID law much less restrictive than Georgia’s, but more restrictive than Iowa’s. This as an indicator of the individualistic subculture was outright wrong because Pennsylvania does not have voter ID and has not had it since 2014 (Lyman 2014).

Finally, Georgia did affirm the originally expectation that it would have the strictest voter ID law. According to the National Council of State Legislatures, Georgia falls into the “Strict Photo ID” category because a failure to provide valid identification means that the individual would vote using a provisional ballot and would need to verify their identity with the proper documentation within three days (National Council of State Legislatures 2020b). Considering Georgia’s traditionalistic subculture emphasizes the maintenance of power within the elite, this result is not surprising. Those in power would be the most likely to have the proper identification needed to cast their ballot while those outside of that structure would be much less likely.

Table 1. Voter ID Strength Results

Subculture	State	Voter ID Strength	Expectation
Moralistic	Iowa	Moderate	Affirm
Individualistic	Pennsylvania	Does Not Exist	Does Not Affirm
Traditionalistic	Georgia	Strict	Affirm

Source: National Council of State Legislatures. 2020b. “Voter Identification Requirements.” Accessed December 3, 2020.

<https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx#Table%201%20Footnote>.

Voter Participation

The second variable examined to help operationalize the subcultures was each state's voter participation between 2000 and 2020, which is represented in Table 2. This variable consistently met the expectations for each state. Iowa always had the highest voter turnout amongst the three, while Georgia was always lower than the other two states. The turnout is represented graphically in Figure 6. Even though each state behaved as expected in terms of Georgia with the smallest and Iowa with the highest turnout, it is important to note the results of the 2020 election.

Table 2. Voter Participation Between 2000 and 2020

Subculture	State	Voter Turnout	Expectation
Moralistic	Iowa	High	Affirm
Individualistic	Pennsylvania	Moderate	Affirm
Traditionalistic	Georgia	Weak	Affirm

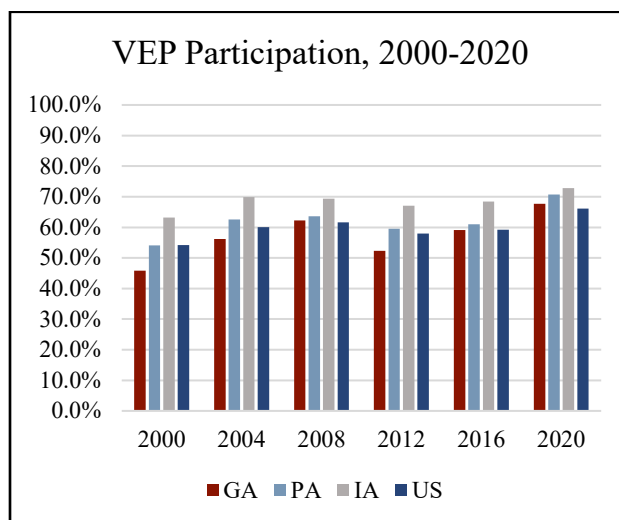
Source: McDonald, Michael, P. 2020. "National and State Turnout Rates 2000-2020." *United States Election Project*. December 14, 2020.

<http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data>.

In this general election, many states increased their voter participation rate, including Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. The most dramatic increase in this study was shared between Georgia and Pennsylvania because both jumped up by almost 10 percentage points (McDonald 2020). This nationwide increase in voter participation could reflect a new trend of increasing voter participation, but not in a uniform rate. Iowa had its largest turnout in history even though it did not increase at the same rate. Georgia's participation in 2020 defied expectations while Iowa continued to meet them, which may be indicative of an effect that impacts states differently rather than a national effect that impacts each state equally. Elections are becoming more

important nationally, but the potential impact of their importance- higher voter turnout- is not necessarily occurring on a national basis.

Figure 6. Participation of Voting Eligible Population between 2000 and 2020



Source: McDonald, Michael, P. 2020. "National and State Turnout Rates 2000-2020." *United States Election Project*. December 14, 2020.

<http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data>.

State Office Control

State office control saw Iowa's expectation as incorrect considering it is currently under complete Republican control with a trifecta between the state House, Senate, and governor's office (Ballotpedia 2021a). Pennsylvania and Georgia both affirmed their expectations because Pennsylvania is split between a Democratic governor and a Republican legislature, while Georgia is under complete Republican control (Ballotpedia 2021b; Ballotpedia 2021c).

Table 3. State Office Control

Subculture	State	State Office Control	Expectation
Moralistic	Iowa	Trifecta	Does Not Affirm
Individualistic	Pennsylvania	Split Control	Affirm
Traditionalistic	Georgia	Trifecta	Affirm

Sources: (Ballotpedia. 2021a; Ballotpedia, 2021b; Ballotpedia 2021c)

Events

The final independent variable of “Events” is the most qualitative in nature and required assessment of the impact of each event on the 2020 election. Part of that assessment required examining the frequency of such relevant events and how easily they were resolved. For example, Iowa as a moralistic subculture was expected to have the smallest number of events and they were expected to be resolved fairly quickly. This was true in the case of the lawsuit against Secretary of State Paul Pate and his proposal of HF 516, the voter ID law. The case was settled through the Iowa legal system and even though the plaintiffs were successful, the state was able to make allowances that satisfied the legal system and move forward with elections (Spoerre 2019b).

In Pennsylvania, the number of events did increase compared to Iowa’s and were more complicated in nature. The involvement of the former Secretary of the Commonwealth, Kathy Boockvar, and the state’s struggles with the implementation of the bipartisan Act 77 designed to expand voting access were extremely impactful on the 2020 election and did not have simple solutions.¹² The Pennsylvania Supreme Court issued guidance regarding counting ballots without secrecy envelopes that, at one point, the Secretary of the Commonwealth seemed to openly contradict. The situation was further complicated when the Republican legislature began accusing Boockvar of partisanship designed to get Biden elected president. At this point in time, the situation has not been fully resolved and the legislature is in the process of creating bills

¹² Kathy Boockvar resigned as Secretary of the Commonwealth after her office failed to advertise a potential constitutional amendment, not because of her actions during the election (Couloumbis 2021).

designed to prevent this situation from occurring again (Albige 2020b). Due to the complexity of the events and their strong impact on the 2020 election, Pennsylvania did behave as expected.

Finally, Georgia. The issues impacting Georgia's system of election administration can be traced back to the Stacey Abrams and Brian Kemp. Their 2018 candidacies did have a significant impact on some of the behaviors and issues impacting the 2020 general election, but some very important events began years before they decided to face each other in the 2018 gubernatorial race. One of the key issues is the ongoing prevalence of voter purging and voter consolidation in the state of Georgia. In 2013, Georgia was one of the states that was no longer forced to comply with Section 5 of the NVRA, which required states with a history of racial discrimination in voting to work with the Department of Justice prior to making any changes to voting laws (Torres 2016a). The state also saw massive consolidation of polling places, with some counties more than halving their number of voting sites (Torres 2016c). Georgia's problem with maintaining accurate voter lists without purging registered, active voters, has been ongoing for years and is honestly a saga of its own. With no easy solution in sight and the largest number of impactful events, Georgia behaved as expected in this category. Considering its status as a traditionalistic state and its commitment to politics and civic engagement as a tool for personal power, its system is expected to be riddled with problems with difficult solutions (Elazar 1984, 100-101). If Georgia's system was efficient and more open, then it would be easier for everyone to vote instead of just those they want to vote.

State Response to COVID-19

When it came time to determine the state response to COVID-19 within the context of the administration of elections, each state behaved as expected. Iowa's moralistic subculture meant that it was expected to make changes to its administration of elections based on the COVID-19

pandemic. Such decisions would ultimately be designed to ensure as many Iowans as possible could safely vote. Pennsylvania's behavior was expected to be some modifications of its election administration due to the individualistic subculture's need for competitive elections. Georgia's administration of elections was not expected to change in the face of a COVID-19. In a system already focused on maintaining the existing power structure, a traditionalistic subculture like Georgia would not change its election system for a pandemic (Elazar 1984, 100-101).

State Response to COVID-19 was a large variable with strong observances in Iowa and Pennsylvania. In Iowa, the Secretary of State's office automatically sent out ballot request forms for both the primary and general elections and set up drop boxes at county auditors' offices. Each of these decisions were designed to prevent large numbers of Iowans from interacting with each other on election day and potentially increased the spread of COVID-19 (Ballotpedia 2020a). Pennsylvania had a similar response with dropboxes for completed absentee ballots, but also prepaid return postage for mail-in ballots and increased both the request and receipt deadline for those ballots (Ballotpedia 2020b). Georgia's modifications to its election administration in response to COVID-19 were almost nonexistent. For the primary election, Georgia did automatically send out mail-in ballot applications, but not for the general election. Georgia's only response for the general was to modify the filing dates for candidates (Ballotpedia 2020b).

Table 4. State Response to COVID-19

Subculture	State	Changes in Administration	Response	Expectation
Moralistic	Iowa	Mailed out absentee ballot request forms to all voters in the general election; set up drop boxes at county auditors' offices ²	Strong	Affirm
Individualistic	Pennsylvania	Extended both absentee ballot return and receipt deadlines for the general election; prepaid for postage on absentee ballots; dropboxes	Strong	Affirm
Traditionalistic	Georgia	Automatically sent mail-in ballot applications to all voters in the primary, but no changes were made for the general election ²	Weak	Affirm

Source: Ballotpedia. 2020a. "All-Mail Voting." Accessed September 24, 2020. https://ballotpedia.org/All-mail_voting.

Part of the difficulty for these states- whether they responded or not- was the constantly changing guidance from their own health officials as well as federal officials. The question was, who will voters believe when it comes to health guidelines? Much of that answer relies on one person: President Donald Trump. Trump was issuing statements that often contradicted his own health officials such as drinking bleach or suggesting random drug cocktails, but what was especially important to the administration of elections was his derision of absentee voting as "ballot harvesting" (Kelland and Satter 2020; Parks 2020). In numerous speeches, Trump spoke about the potential risks of absentee voting and actively encouraged his supports to vote in-person. They listened to him and many voted in person on election day (Parks 2020). Even though Elazar's subcultures are the guiding theory behind this research, Trump's cult of personality cannot be denied as a potential influence in this election. He was able to get his

followers to listen to his rhetoric about the dangers of voting by mail and 2/3 of those supporters voted in-person during a global pandemic (Pew Research Center 2020). The perception of COVID mitigation efforts within the context of election administration may not be solely attributable to political subculture, but may also include the impact of Trump.

Conclusion

Elazar's political subcultures did offer guidance on how states' administration of elections would respond to a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. With Iowa's open political system and encouraged civic engagement, it was able to handle the problems of COVID-19 and still administer the election without any major controversy. Even in a federal race that was decided by just six votes, Iowa was able to rely on its system to recount the votes and solve the problem until the candidates decided to turn to the courts (Pfannenstiel 2021). In Pennsylvania, they were able to certify the election results after the initial delay and even in the face of Act 77's difficult implementation (Albiges 2020b). Georgia faced the greatest controversy before and after the election considering it made minimal mitigation efforts for COVID-19 and completed a recount of about 5 million ballots by hand (Niesse 2020). Even though it was not done in the smoothest or most efficient manner, Georgia was able to announce the winner of its electoral votes. Though they all got there in the end, each state responded in the way their political culture would have been expected to respond.

Ultimately, Elazar's theory does lend some indication of behavior to these states. Considering it was created in the mid-1960s, its relevancy in the current age will always be questioned by casual observers, but it still stands in regards to the 2020 election. It is possible that some of Elazar's classifications of states could be changing, but the idea of political subcultures still stands. If Georgia follows its behavior in 2020 as well as the 2021 runoff

election, an argument could be made that Georgia is undergoing a transformation with pockets of other subcultures. This is one limitation of Elazar's work considering establishing subcultures requires understanding a state's view of politics, civic engagement, bureaucracy, etc., and determining if a major change within a major population center (such as Atlanta) would be enough to change the overall state subculture.

Many different avenues could be taken in pursuit of follow-on research, but the most interesting question is whether or not the changes made in the 2020 general election will stand in subsequent elections. Will Georgia's higher turnout continue? Will Pennsylvania continue to rely on secrecy ballots? Or, most importantly, was the election of 2020 just an anomaly? The election of 2024 and even 2028 will be very important when it comes to answering these questions and also give some insight into the limitations of this study. At this point in time, 2020 is either the start of a new trend or an anomaly of an election. That distinction will not be made until follow-on elections have been observed.

At the same time, some potential answers to these questions are already present within American politics. As of April of 2021, 47 states have either introduced, pre-filed, or carried over restrictive voting provisions based on the events of 2020. Iowa and Georgia have already passed such laws and Pennsylvania is in the process of drafting such legislation (Brennan Center for Justice 2021). As states change their election laws, it may prevent 2020 from happening again or potentially alter the landscape enough that a state starts to shift in subculture. Either way, the election of 2020 was an interesting period of political history to observe in real time, especially while attempting to conduct research.

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