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Political culture's effect on voter turnout: the 2004 election and beyond

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Political culture's effect on voter turnout: the 2004 election and
beyond

by

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ABSTRACT

I provide an account of the psychological elements that combine within an actor, motivating them to vote. Political scientists have written extensively on the topic of turnout, however, no one has attempted to explain turnout based primarily on political culture. Political culture has improved our understanding of states, parties, and elections alike. This thesis uses a political culture ordinal scale as the primary explanatory variable in an OLS regression. Political culture has rarely been used as an explanatory variable and to my knowledge never as an ordinal scale, as it is used within this thesis. I posit that political culture, like a sense of civic duty, or any other “interpersonal influence” can and does become a motivating force in an actor’s decision to vote and acts as a long-term aggregate psychological influence in the act of voting and as. This relationship is explored via the use of data from the 2004 presidential election.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It can and has been argued that the participation of citizens in the electoral process is one of the most important and required elements for a democracy to be successful. In this thesis, I focus on existing relationships among the citizens within a democracy and those elements that motivate them to vote. Thus, I strive to provide a fuller account of the psychological elements that combine within an actor motivating him or her to vote. Turnout is one of the most widely written about topics in the field of American political science?

Even though political scientists have written extensively on the topic of turnout, no one has attempted to explain turnout based primarily on the psychological forces that make up political culture. I do not offer a new technique of measurement nor any new theory, but what is offered within these pages is a new application of old theory. This thesis attempts to use political culture as the primary explanatory variable, a psychological influence in the act of voting. I posit that political culture, like a sense of civic duty, or any other “interpersonal influence” (Campbell *et al.*, 1960), can and does become a motivating force in an actor’s decision to vote or not. To accomplish the exploration of this relationship I use the 2004 presidential election as my backdrop.

The presidential election of 2004 is used because it was one of the most hotly contested in recent American history. The combination of a war unpopular both abroad and at home, presidential candidates who represented clear choices on that war, and a sagging economy set a particularly useful landscape for a cross-sectional study. This landscape provides a perfect backdrop for a study of political culture’s effects on voter turnout. The elements of the 2004 election led to an increased level of competition, which

should lead in turn to an increased level of voter turnout (Conway, 1981; Dawson & Zinser 1976; Gilliam, Jr., 1985; Hinckley, 1981; Jacobson, 1980, 1983), which in fact was the case (U.S. Census Bureau News).

Political culture has been a part of our understanding of politics since Daniel Elazar's *The American Federalist* (1972). Inherent within the three types of political culture outlined by Elazar is the description of how each type shapes and influences its political environment via its impact on the way the citizens of that environment view the role of politics. A prime example of this is how the traditionalistic culture impacts the citizens and the political structures that share its culture. Those who share a traditionalistic cultural outlook view politics as a marketplace coupled with paternalism and elitism. Because of the elitist and paternalistic elements, government and society are structured hierarchically. This hierarchical structure leads to political power being confined to a relatively small number of people drawn from an established elite, or by birthright. Due to the criteria established for involvement by the traditionalistic political culture we expect minimal parties, lack of openness and lower voter turnout.

Political culture has improved our understanding of states, parties, and elections, and informed our understanding of party development. However, in terms of voter turnout research, political culture has rarely been used as an explanatory variable. When scholars discuss the effects of competition, registration laws, or socioeconomic status (SES) on voter turnout, political culture takes the form of a truism, instead of being part of the intertwining theory. The role of political culture has not been used as part of the explanation of why citizens do or do not vote. This thesis will posit a theory of voter turnout which incorporates political culture. This thesis should grant increased leverage

on the motivating forces that compel a citizen to vote as well as provide a richer, more overarching voter turnout theory. By enhancing our understanding of the relationship between political culture and turnout we are better equipped in our ability to understand turnout.

CHAPTER 2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

At its core, this thesis seeks to address an age-old question in political science: Why do people vote? By and large I am not concerned with who citizens vote for, or with predicting the next presidential election. The intent of this thesis is to explore the motivating factors that culminate within a citizen that lead to the action of casting a ballot. To properly address the elements that exist which motivate a citizen to vote, we must necessarily explore the three most prominent models of voter turnout: the SES model, drawing upon Verba and Nie's 1972 work *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*, rational choice, stemming from Anthony Downs' 1957 *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, and the aptly dubbed "Michigan Model," originating from *The American Voter* by Campbell *et al.*

What we find is that the three models take different approaches to explaining the act of voting. Downs' substantive rationality is founded in the economic theory of utility maximization (Simon, 1985). Campbell *et al.* espouse the theory that there is a constellation of "psychological forces" at work, which in turn are what motivate a citizen to vote (Campbell, 1960). Verba and Nie take the stance that SES is the key determining factor in who votes. I believe there are common variables found in all three models that address whether an actor will vote or not.

2.1 Socioeconomic Model of Voter Turnout

The SES model originated in the 1940s after the consumer-based model researchers at Columbia tried to use to predict the 1940 election did not work. What they found was that in Roosevelt's bid for a third term, voters had made up their minds well in

advance of campaign advertising (Niemi & Weisberg, 1993). What the Columbia researchers ended up discovering about the 1940 election was the impact of social groups. This gave birth to the sociological model, which relates voters' SES (education, income, and class), religion, and place of residence (urban or rural) to their vote choice (Niemi & Weisberg, 1993, 8). SES models of voter turnout remain persistent because of the fact that, although varying models of turnout exist, most cite "socioeconomic status as one of the elements determining turnout" (Avey, 1989, 5).

As one of the three ways of studying the decision to vote (Abramson, Aldrich, & Rohde, 1983; Niemi & Weisberg, 2001), the sociological model employed by Columbia researchers viewed individuals as members of groups. The model works its way out from the narrow primary groups of family and peers, to clubs, unions, and voluntary associations, to those of social class and ethnic groups. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet created the "index of political predisposition" (IPP) in 1940 and, based on this index, claimed that social group factors accounted for most of the difference in voting. A typical example of how the IPP worked would be something like this: a rural area Protestant with high SES would be most likely to vote Republican (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976).

Over the years, scholars have amended the sociological model and now use the model more to interpret why people vote instead of for whom they vote. Today, SES models typically define individuals' SES via a composite of occupation, education, income, location of residence, membership in civic or social organizations, and certain amenities in the home. Based on these characteristics, SES models claim that those with higher levels of SES vote more often because their increased ability to bear the money, time, or registration cost of voting.

SES models have been so prevalent in the explanations of turnout that Verba and Nie called it *the* major finding about participation (1972). At its crux, SES holds that the higher the level of the actor's SES, the higher the level of the actor's politically relevant resources (Conway, 1991; Powell, 1982). These resources better equip the actor to bear the cost of participation. The most important element of the SES model influencing political participation is education. Citizens with higher levels of education are more likely to vote. Even when compared to those with the same income, citizens with higher levels of education are more likely to participate (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Income also has been found to have an effect on participation within the constraints to each level of educational attainment. That is, if education is the same, the higher a citizen's income the more likely she or he is to vote.

The SES model also assigns differences in the level of political participation to occupation. One of the interesting things about occupation is that among farm owners, clerical and sales workers, and government employees the level of turnout is higher than would be predicted based on educational attainment level (Beck, 1977). In my view should not be part of the list because it briefly demonstrates that it is more than SES that drives a citizen to vote. This is because for the most part these occupations neither require higher levels of education, nor provide higher levels of income, yet those who perform these jobs vote in higher percentages. There are many other social characteristics that complete the SES model of voting. These indicators include age, race, ethnicity, marital status, sex, region, and life experience (Conway, 1991; Weisberg, 1995; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). The problem with most of these indicators, especially education, is that they are highly correlated with their fellow indicators. Thus researchers are left

asking the question: “do poor people vote less because they have less money or because they have less education?” (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980, 2; Avey, 1989)?

This question has led scholars to interpret SES in this way: “social circumstances affect the level of resources available for political participation and serve to foster or inhibit development of the attitudes and beliefs that underlie various types of political participation” (Conway, 1991, 15). Accordingly, higher-status citizens possess greater resources and skills, and a higher level of psychological commitment (Avey, 1989; Milbrath, 1965; Verba & Nie, 1972). Those with higher levels of education are better equipped to navigate the perils of the voting world. Their educational attainment level, on average, will lead to higher incomes and more time, which allows them to vote at a higher rate.

One of the most striking things about the SES model and its interpretation of turnout is that, with the legal barriers to participation mostly removed, educational attainment levels increasing, and the increased participation of minorities, turnout has seemed to decline since it peaked in 1960. SES models have other weaknesses as well. Prime among them is the SES model’s lack of generalizability; it does not account well for black activism or the female vote. SES models account poorly for these groups because of the societal barriers that have largely suppressed both the education and income levels of these groups, yet they vote in large numbers.¹ Perhaps the most serious drawback is the theory’s need to be supplemented by alternative theories (Avey, 1989).

¹ Groups such as NOW and many black rights groups are not picked by SES models because of their typical low levels of education and income.

SES models are at their best when they are being supported by psychological explanations.

SES models are based on the same assumption that we will soon see rational choice theories make: to explain the empirical results, it assumes that higher-SES actors have more developed interests in the campaign, concern over the election outcome, and sense of citizen duty, or, in other terms, a higher level of political involvement (Brody, 1978; Conway, 1991). These are assumptions that are found in the rational choice model as well as the Michigan model. They are forms of psychological attachments and should be influenced by the existing political culture.

2.2 Rational Choice

Rational choice models hold that there are costs associated with the act of voting and “if the returns outweigh the costs, [an actor] votes; if not, [an actor] abstains” (Downs, 1957, 280). Downsian theory holds that two types of benefits derive from the act of voting. The first can be derived from the value the citizen places on democracy. The second is that every citizen cares about the outcome of a given election to some degree. The two types of benefits, taken collectively, lead to the assertion that democracy cannot operate if no one cares about who wins an election (Aldrich, 1993; Downs, 1957; Jackman, 1993; Sanders, 1980). Downs and other supporters of the rational choice model assume that if at least one person is not indifferent, no ties occur. Additionally, indifference does not reflect disgust with candidates; rather, it reflects equal satisfaction. Thus, traditional rational choice logic holds that when voting costs are zero, all those who are not indifferent will vote.

Because the second type of benefit holds that every citizen cares to some degree about the outcome of a given election, citizens who are truly indifferent can abstain and rest assured that democracy will continue to function. However, the idea that “*homo politicus*” demonstrates truly rational behavior assumes that she or he can order specified goals in a given situation (Simon, 1985, 294). What we find is that by assuming this we ignore the characteristics of the political actor and consider only those constraints arising external to the situation. What we are left with is a question of what drives rational choice’s powerful motor. Is it what happens in the black box of clearly aligned preferences, or is it all the external assumptions that scholars make about a rational actor?

The Downsian model of rational choice provides us with a “purely instrumental self-interest model of political action” (Calvert, 2002, 569). Downs’ model in turn produced a theory that both required information costs to be minimal and relegated partisanship and ideology to more or less rules of thumb. What was quickly discovered was that the Downsian model had no means of addressing the paradox of not voting (Verba & Nie, 1972). The answer to this paradox was provided (at least temporarily) by Olson, in 1965, who held that it was not strict utility maximization per se, but a selfish form of utility maximization that sacrifices sociological concepts or roles and norms that accounted for the collective action paradox problem highlighted by those who do not vote. The major problem with Olson’s explanation is that the selective incentive explanation seems incomplete unless sociological information is employed to fill it out (Calvert, 2002). Due to this lack of completeness, subsequent theorists have added to the rational choice model in an attempt to deal further with the inherent collective action problems.

The next group of scholars to tackle the collective action problem from the rational choice approach discussed rational choice in terms of solidary and expressive motivations (Moe, 1980; Salisbury, 1969). Overbye takes these solidary and expressive motivations one step further and places the act of voting in terms of the interaction between rational actors (1995). Overbye's approach gives voting a communicative or reputation value in addition to its inherent political effect, or what Riker and Ordeshook denote as the duty (D) term (1968). The D term is, according to Riker and Ordeshook, the sense of civic duty and the benefits derived from the act of voting, that are purely psychological in nature.

This very problem is why Downs and others use the assumption of "sophisticated voting" to explain Duverger's Law (1957, 48; Riker, 1982; Simon, 1985). It is this auxiliary assumption of sophisticated voting that when subjected to an empirical test demonstrates that human behavior is complex (Riker, 1982; Simon, 1985). Thus, when Riker and Ordeshook tackled turnout from the cost benefit approach, they added the now prevalent D term to the calculus (1968; Sanders, 1980). The D term, which represents sense of civic duty, demonstrates Downs' acknowledgment of long-term utility calculations (Sanders, 1980), or the long-term effects of psychological forces. What we quickly discover in an assessment of rational choice as an explanation of vote turnout is that it is the unexplained effects of psychological forces that drive its powerful motor. The rational choice model does not reach its power apex until it adds the D term, which is its all-encompassing account for the psychological forces at work in the decision to vote, namely the elements of political involvement.

Here we are presented with clear examples that damage rational choice models of voter turnout. As stated earlier, rational choice models are not without merit and quite honestly help to parse several of the psychological influences that lead her (*homo politicus*) to vote. It is in the context of not parsing the duty term that understanding rational choice becomes relevant. Because the D term, the real motor in the rational choice model of turnout (what is really going on inside the black box), encompasses all of the psychological forces and attachments experienced by the voter, it is by default necessary to explore the theory of turnout that explores the decision to vote by examining the psychological forces that lead to that decision.

2.3 The Michigan Model

The “Michigan Model” takes just that approach (Beck, 1986). Simply stated, the Michigan model holds that “the decision to vote ... rests immediately on psychological forces” (Campbell *et al.*, 1960). The odd thing here is that what Campbell *et al.* refer to as the psychological forces, interest in the campaign, concern over the election outcome, and sense of citizen duty, line up quite nicely with what Downs called the two types of benefits and what SES models attribute solely to one’s level of SES. The benefits that Downs posits as being derived from the value that the citizen places on democracy, and that every citizen to some degree cares about the outcome of a given election, is a characteristic that the standard SES model would attribute only to those with high SES. More important, this is what Campbell *et al.* describe as the psychological forces that lead to the act of voting (Desmoyer-Davis, 2001; Highton, 1997; Norris, 2006).

The Michigan Model posits that the act of voting exists at the end of the funnel of causality. In this funnel (whose axis is time) events follow one another and converge in a series of causal chains moving from the mouth to the stem of the funnel. All of the causes culminate in the voting act. At the mouth of the funnel exists background and social status characteristics (like those discussed in SES models), all of which affect an actor's party identification. As we move further into the funnel, party identification influences the actor's assessment of the candidates and the issues. These assessments help to move us even further into the funnel to the point in time where the campaign itself and conversations with family and friends even begin to affect the decision to vote (Campbell *et al.*, 1960; Niemi & Weisberg, 1976).

The Michigan Model, via the funnel of causality, psychologically anchors voters to a political party for extended periods of time. These strong party attachments are rooted in social structures and at times are unbreakable. Unlike rational choice models, which hold that citizens vote when the benefits outweigh the costs, and the SES model, which posits that only those who have high levels of political resources vote, the Michigan model posits that citizens vote because of their psychological attachments. Indeed, these attachments are so strong in the model of voting behavior that they even influence and inform short-term motivations such as issues, candidate image, and party image.²

The Downsian approach, the SES model, and the Michigan Model, though positing different causal relationships, agree on a couple of key variables. All the models

² Although it is necessary for the purpose of this thesis to make an analytical distinction between voting and vote choice, I would be remiss if I did not mention that the strength of preference does in fact account for part of the decision to vote. That is, intensity of preference affects whether the individual votes.

make use of variables that fall under the heading of political involvement. Key among these variables is interest in the campaign, concern over the election outcome, and sense of citizen duty (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Schur, 2002; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Interest in the campaign is the level of attention that an individual pays to a campaign. Concern about the election outcome is a person's orientation to a specific election, whereas sense of civic duty transcends a single election and is the belief of the citizen that he or she has a civic responsibility to vote (Campbell *et al.*, 1960). These forms of political involvement become psychological bonds. The psychological bonds that are the sense of civic duty are based, I believe, on the types of political culture an actor is predisposed to.

The rational choice literature reduces these rich contextual variables (interest in the campaign, concern over election outcome, and sense of civic duty) to a term in the calculus of voting, and the SES model makes them the domain of those with high SES. The Michigan Model holds that these psychological forces are the very reasons why the actor votes. It is possible to think of political culture as yet another psychological force that can be measured in an attempt to explain voter trends in the states. The difference is that political culture is an aggregate variable. Much like interest in the campaign, civic duty, and concern over the election outcome, political culture can be thought of as bearing upon the actor's psychological attachment, but passed on to the citizenry through the nurture of the environment and not the socialization of parents, friends, or colleagues. Thus political culture is an aggregate psychological force, which I argue predisposes the actor to either be more or less politically involved.

2.4 Political Culture

As Samuel C. Patterson noted, “political culture is a multifaceted, sensitizing concept [that focuses] attention on the symbolic, evaluative, and cognitive responses people have to the political system, and on the relationships of these orientations to other aspects of politics” (1968, 188). When placed in the context of electoral systems, “this suggests that interstate variations in voting procedures result from different cultural norms ... some value and promote citizen participation in the political process more than others do” (King, 1994, 118). Political culture is a distinctive and patterned form of political philosophy that consists of beliefs on how governmental, political, and economic life should be carried out.

Political culture is the orientation of the citizens of a nation toward politics, their perceptions of political legitimacy, and the traditions of political practice. Political cultures create a framework for political change and are unique to nations, states, and other groups. As a concept, political culture is part of general culture but separable from it for analytical purposes (Almond, 1956). The reality is that great differences can and do exist between a peoples’ general culture and political culture. Elements of political culture frequently have roots in historical events that cause long-term changes among those who shared the experiences. To this point, it may seem that political culture is rather synonymous with general culture. However, it is important to note that the analytical differentiation between general culture and political culture comes into play in the role that political culture plays in the shaping and “operation of the state political systems within the context of American Federalism” (Elazar, 1972, 90). Therefore,

political culture varies from state to state and because of migration patterns at times two forms of political culture can exist within one state. The psychological forces of political culture shape and define their relative political structures and those who operate within them.

American Federalism: A View from the States (1972) is a work that is intended to expand our understanding of the states as political systems. Additionally, Elazar's second edition explores the fundamental forces shaping states as civil societies, both presently and in the future. The definition of political culture used within is comprised of three important aspects, each of which bears upon the political system and the actors within the state in a unique and different way. First, political culture is the set of perceptions of what politics is. These perceptions have a wide and varied scope, ranging from what is expected of and from government by both those in the general public and elected officials, and the expected actions of the electorate (Elazar, 1972). The first of the three aspects of political culture deals exclusively with how the citizens of a state view their relationship with and within the political landscape. This element of political culture focuses on the political belief system held by the state's residents.

The second of the three aspects of political culture bears upon the people who become active within government and politics. This facet of political culture hones in on those who are elected officials, those who work in the bureaucracy and those who are active as political workers (Elazar, 1972). The second facet describes and can even determine who is allowed to take part in politics at every level. It is important to note here the distinction between these two aspects of political culture. The first facet deals with how citizens view their relationship within the landscape, or as the electorate should

they be involved or not. The second facet determines who should be allowed to hold elected offices.

The third characteristic of political culture draws attention to the way that the politics are carried out by moving from the way the citizens view their relationship with government to governmental actions. The first facet focuses on the external relationship of those who do not hold elected offices and are not members of the bureaucracy, whereas this facet focuses on those who are. This element of political culture focuses on the “art of government” (Elazar, 1972, 90). The key focal point of the third element of political culture is the manner by which government is “practiced by citizens, politicians and public officials in light of their perceptions” of what is politics (Elazar, 1972, 90). The three elements of political culture combined provide us with a comprehensive definition and also highlight how political culture resonates as a psychological attachment among the citizenry. Because the first aspect of political culture identifies what politics is and the second element defines those who operate within all aspects of the political environment and the third component denotes how politics are to be practiced, we are provided with a rich contextual environment from which to discuss the particular competing elements of political culture that tug at the core of the actors.

Elazar holds that political culture wrestles with the competing yet complementary concepts of power and justice. The concepts of power and justice are essential concepts in the American political arena and therefore any discussion of political culture has to address them. Because political culture is a psychological force that motivates actors, we must explore the concepts that are in juxtaposition within political culture, so that we can better understand its effect on the actor. The notions of power and justice are value

concepts that form the larger political cultural basis of America's political civilization. The key components of power and justice are the poles between which the three subsets of political culture exist. The power pole addresses the question of "who gets what, when, and how," whereas the justice pole focuses on the "development of the good society" (Elazar, 1972, 91). Political culture is the belief system that shapes and balances the relationships between the two poles.

Political culture pushes actors to take a stance somewhere between power and justice where the actor makes decisions on the basis of the following four concepts: efficiency, legitimacy, commerce, and agrarianism. Efficiency, in this context, is best viewed with a set of business-hued glasses. Efficiency is the manner of achieving goals that is both least wasteful and expends the least amount of resources. It makes sense to use the business definition here because commercial terms best fit our civil society, a society that was described in its earliest stages by *The Federalist* as a "commercial republic" (1982). The commercial republic delineated in *The Federalist* leads to a view of "commerce in America [that] embodies the exchange of goods, services and ideas" (Elazar, 1972, 92). Accordingly, efficiency and commerce work together to harness and diffuse power in the United States.

With efficiency and commerce working together to harness and limit the pole of power, legitimacy and agrarianism must also work in conjunction and have the same effect on the justice pole. To define legitimacy, I borrow from social organization theory and broadly define it as the right and privilege to use power (Robbins, 1987). Applying the concept of legitimacy to political culture necessarily addresses the aspects of the polity supported by the underlying values of its citizenry. Legitimacy gains meaning from

the “American complex of values and aspirations” (Elazar, 1972, 92). The values and aspirations that give legitimacy meaning become the very definition of agrarianism.

Agrarianism, in this sense, views America as a collection of self-governed individuals each with substantial stakes in their communities. These stakes in turn increase human civility via the diffusion of knowledge, religion, and morality (Elazar, 1972).

With the distinction made between general culture and political culture and the key concepts that comprise political culture delineated, it is possible to begin to discuss the three types of political culture that exist in the United States. Elazar held that there are three types of political culture in operation in America: individualistic, moralistic, and traditionalistic. Political culture affects the decisions, actions, and structure of government and the governed alike. Political culture is constrained by the poles of power and justice. The constraints force the three types of political culture to operate between the two poles. The three types of political culture exist as a culmination of these constraints, a unique synthesis of power and justice, and define the political structure that exists within its state and to an extent the actions of the electorate.

Within the individualistic political culture we expect to find an emphasis on the concept of democratic order as a marketplace. Individualistic political culture views government as being instituted to serve a utilitarian function. In an individualistic political culture, government is created to take care of the functions demanded by those who created it. Individualistic political culture places a premium on limiting governmental intervention into private activities (private enterprise) to the minimum necessary to allow the marketplace to function properly. Individualistic political culture encourages private initiative coupled with wide-spread access to the marketplace.

Because of this emphasis on private initiative and minimum interference in the marketplace, the individualistic political culture views politics as another way for citizens to improve themselves socially and economically (Elazar, 1972).

Additionally, party regularity is indispensable in the individualistic political culture because it serves as a means for coordinating enterprise within the political arena. Because of the commerce oriented disposition of the individualistic political culture, politicians become interested in political office as a means of controlling the favors and rewards of government, rather than as a way in which to exercise the power of government. Because of this political culture's businesslike emphasis, both the politician and the citizen look upon political activity as being specialized, as being of minimal concern to the lay person, and as having no room for amateurs. The individualistic political culture also views politics as a dirty business that is best left to those who are willing to soil themselves. Because the individualistic political culture is predisposed to viewing politics as dirty, when it is dominant there is little public outcry when corruption is actually found (Elazar, 1972).

Contrary to the individualistic political culture which views American society as being built upon the principles of commerce and the marketplace, moralistic political culture places emphasis on the idea that the commonwealth is the basis for democratic government. To the moralistic political culture, politics is conceived of as one of the grand actions of humans in search for the good society. It is true that politics is a struggle for power, but the effort is put forth in moralistic political cultures to exercise that power for the betterment of society. In the moralistic political culture, politics is conceived of as a public activity by both the public and the politician. In this political culture,

individualism is curtailed by the moralistic dominant society's commitment to using communal power, both nongovernmental and governmental, to intervene into private activities when it is necessary for the public good (Elazar, 1972).

In moralistic political cultures issues play an important role; they function to set the tone of politics. The moralistic political culture rests on the fundamental conception that "politics exists primarily as a means for coming to grips with the issues and public concerns of civil society" (Elazar, 1972, 97). The moralistic-dominant political culture holds that politics is a matter of concern for every citizen, not just the professional as the individualistic dominant political culture. It is the duty of every citizen in the moralistic dominant political culture to partake in the politics of her/his state. Because of this, government services are seen as public, placing moral obligations on both politicians and the marketplace, leading to more amateur politicians, much less acceptance of corruption, and a lack of taint associated with politicians in the individualistic dominated political culture (Elazar, 1972).

Like the individualistic political culture, the traditionalistic dominated political culture is rooted in the idea of politics as a marketplace. However, the traditionalistic-dominated political culture couples with the marketplace a notion of a paternalistic or elitist view of democratic government. Where the moralistic dominated political culture sees the commonwealth as the basis for democratic government, the traditionalistic political culture views the commonwealth as a hierarchical society. This hierarchical commonwealth authorizes "those at the top of the social structure to take a special and dominant role in government" (Elazar, 1972, 99). Similar to the moralistic political culture, traditionalistic political culture acknowledges government as an entity with a

positive role, but the traditionalistic political culture attempts to limit that role to maintaining the preexisting social order. The traditionalistic political culture functions to maintain the status quo (Elazar, 1972).

In the traditionalistic political culture, power is confined to a relative few. This group is drawn from an established elite “who often inherit their right to govern through family ties or social position” (Elazar, 1972, 99). Whereas personal ties are important in individualistic political cultures and communal ties are important in moralistic political cultures, family and social ties are of utmost importance in traditionalistic political cultures. Because of the emphasis placed on maintaining the elite oriented political order, political parties are of minimal importance to the traditionalistic political culture because parties promote a level of openness that elites do not want. Additionally, this elite orientation of the traditional political culture posits that citizens without definite roles are not expected to be active in politics, or to vote. Politicians in the traditionalistic political culture expect to benefit directly, much like those in the individualistic political culture.

When the three types of political culture are taken collectively what we can see is aggregate effects on citizen behavior. Because each form of political culture has a differing effect on the way citizens view their role in government, each form also affects the sense of civic duty held by the actor. Because at the aggregate level political culture determines the sense of civic duty, it necessarily has to affect the level of turnout. That is, political culture can either inspire or curtail voting.

In sum, we expect in a moralistic state to see more liberal registration laws. Moralistic states should, by use of government mechanisms, make it easiest to vote. This is because the moralistic political culture emphasizes most the civic role of citizens

within the political structure. Conversely, traditionalistic political cultures should attempt to maintain the status quo—existing social order—by making registration more difficult. Because the traditionalistic political culture encourages a form of elitism, it discourages citizen involvement in the political process. Under these political conditions, most are discouraged from voting. Additionally, we would expect to find that in individualistic political cultures, which neither values nor rebuffs citizen participation, registration laws that are moderate in nature (King, 1994). To best understand the relationship that exists between political culture and turnout we must first understand that the act of registration makes voting a two step process (Evans, 2004; Rhine, 1996; Timpone, 1998).

According to James King, registration laws are affected by political culture (1994). This demonstrates one part of the assertion posited earlier that political culture affects both the government and the governed. King found that political culture could explain some (about 45%) of the variation in the interstate differences in registration laws and that this relationship was significant at the .01 level. What he found was that moralistic cultures tended to have less restrictive registration laws compared to their cultural counterparts with traditionalistic cultures having the most restrictive registration requirements. Registration laws are essentially rules that require members of the electorate to register in order to vote. These rules apply to citizens in particular jurisdictions, in this case states, because voting laws are state laws.

We know that political culture has an effect on registration laws, but what are the connections between political culture and voter turnout? Before we can explore that relationship, we must understand voter turnout. Voter turnout is best operationalized as a division problem. The voting-age population or (VAP) is the most widely used

measurement of voter turnout and is produced by the Bureau of the Census. The VAP is an estimate of the total population of the United States 18 years of age and over and is placed as the denominator in a division problem that uses the total number of citizens that actually voted as the numerator. The result is a rate of voter turnout (Aldrich, 1993; McDonald & Popkin, 2001; Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1996).

Historically, we see that registration laws have been used as both barriers to the franchise, as well as mechanisms by which to prevent the franchise from becoming corrupted. The former are outside the scope of this research. The latter function of registration laws to prevent corruption is only loosely related, but provides an area wherein we can discuss origin—where registration laws came from—and purpose—what they are intended to do—simultaneously.

Voter registration originated in the nineteenth century. It originated as a mechanism to prevent fraud that results from citizens voting more than once or voting outside their jurisdiction. The success of registration laws at averting electoral fraud remains questionable (Harris; 1929; Evans; 2004). Voter registration laws are complicated further by the fact that voting laws are state laws and vary from state to state (Highton, 1997; Timpone, 1998). Because voting laws are state laws, the rules, regulations, and deadlines associated with registration are also state laws and also vary from state to state.

To this point, I have discussed the previous literature on voter turnout as well as the literature on political culture. This section of the paper hoped to accomplish two things. The first was to discuss the three primary turnout models used in the field today and their particular weaknesses. The second was to discuss political culture and terms of

how it was both a motivational psychological force, yet not one of the one of the forces presented in the three models. To follow is a theoretical discussion of how political culture operates in the world and the means by which it affects citizen action. By building off of the literature on political culture I will elaborate a theory of turnout that views political culture as an aggregate psychological force that motivates citizens to vote.

CHAPTER 3. THEORY

Political culture works as a long-term psychological attachment that predisposes an actor to take part (or not to take part) in the electoral process. Long-term influences such as partisanship, political ideology, and issues qualify as long-term forces of equal conceptual status which are known to have to have an effect on the decision whether to vote or not. Political culture is different from these other long term attachments. Political culture does not work like other forms of socialization where political associations of a voter's parents and the groups they or the voter belong to heavily influence the political identification of the individual voter. Political culture takes the form of an aggregate socialization process. This socialization process seems to psychologically attach its citizenry to a belief in the roles and responsibilities of the elected and electorate alike. This socialization process should affect turnout because of its influence on the mindset of those who comprise the electorate, predisposing them to either be involved in politics or not.³

Political culture affects many aspects of political life. As demonstrated in the discussion of previous literature, the very structure of the political system is influenced by the political culture. Key among the many aspects of political life that are influenced by political culture is the decision to vote or not. Political culture is more than just an additive index combining long-term variables present in the Michigan model. As an aggregate, long-term, socializing force, political cultures' effect on both the decision to vote and the political structure in which voting occurs should be different from the

³ Though political culture cannot be tested directly, I believe that the means by which it is tested within the thesis are an appropriate approximation.

psychological attachments espoused in the Michigan model which focused on individual, family, or group impact on the decision to vote. As a motivational mechanism in the decision to vote, political culture should have little if anything to do with partisan preference or the decision of *whom* to vote for. If we could place long-term influences on the decision to vote on a time continuum, political culture occurs both before the effects of partisanship are felt as a motivational force and at an environmental level. The belief in appropriate governance⁴ has long been implanted and occurs as part of the environmental shaping of an actor's belief in voting.

Theoretically speaking, political culture does not fluctuate from election to election. The motivational effects of political culture stem from how residents within a particular political culture view and value democratic governance. This, in turn, should affect the turnout rates among the states, because political culture has the capacity to alter how closely a citizen values the act of voting. States with political cultures that place a greater value on citizen participation in the affairs of government should vote at higher rates than states that do not.

Because political culture affects both the decision to vote and the structure that government takes, political culture necessarily affects the laws that are in place that govern the act of voting. Political culture has an affect on registration laws as well as turnout. Registration laws make the act of voting a two step process. This two-step process directly affects voter turnout. It negates the ability of a citizen to decide on the spur of the moment to vote, directly affecting the time and energy one must spend.

⁴ Governance as used here is a generic term used to represent the belief concerning who should vote, who is qualified to exercise power, the structure and roles that government should take and most importantly, belief in the act of voting.

Therefore political culture has a direct influence on the liberalness or restrictiveness of registration laws. Political culture, as discussed in the literature, can either have a motivating or debilitating affect on turnout. The effects of political culture occur regardless of the liberalness or restrictiveness of registration laws.

States have different political cultures. But how do we judge the effects of political culture on voter turnout when some states do not have registration laws that coincide with their political culture? This dilemma leads to the logical question of what happens to voter turnout when this is the case. Because of the existence of hybrid political cultures in states, some states enact registration laws that do not coincide with their dominant or secondary political culture. Therefore, what we are measuring is the underlying affect of moralistic political culture. If we recall from the literature, Elazar held that the moralistic political culture was the form of political culture that would produce the most involved citizenry. Because multiple forms, hybrids, of political culture can and do exist within a state we can create an index that ranks a state's political culture from no moralism to high moralism. Elazar routinely assigned hybrid political cultures to states, and he clearly stated that a "political culture can be so dominant that the representatives of other political cultures have never been able to challenge its position" (127-128, 1972). It is the level of moralistic political culture that is important. The presence, or lack thereof, of moralistic political culture is what ultimately affects turnout. When moralistic political culture is high, we will see higher levels of voter turnout even in the face of restrictive registration laws.

Viewing political culture in this light takes it out of the realm of both parent-child or group socialization processes and the ebb and flow of the traditional campaign cycle,

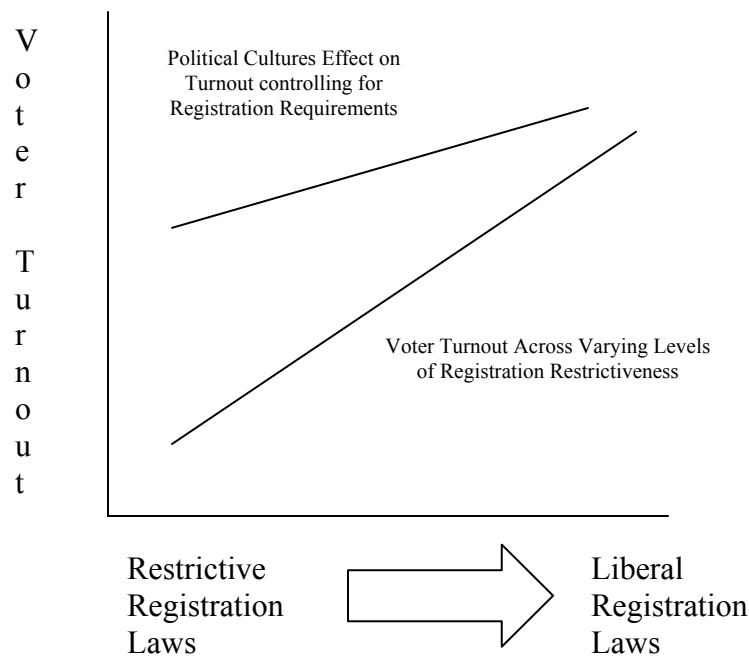
thus placing it firmly in the realm of an aggregate psychological socialization process. This process happens earlier in the chain of events on the mythical time continuum than previously examined long term variables. Because previous literature on political culture has asserted that political culture correlates with a myriad of the features of state government and policies ranging from the strength of political parties to liberalness or restrictiveness of registration laws, then logically scholars should assess political culture's affects on voter turnout.

CHAPTER 4. HYPOTHESIS

My hypotheses are rather straightforward. The first hypothesis is that political culture will have an effect on voter turnout (displayed graphically below). This hypothesis holds that when controlling for the effects of registration laws and other relevant state characteristics, political culture will produce an effect on turnout that can be both seen and measured. This effect may work in both directions. A state with a moralistic political culture may increase voter turnout when the registration laws are restrictive while a traditionalistic political culture will act to decrease turnout when registration laws are liberal.

4.1 First Hypothesis

H₁: Moralistic political culture has an effect on turnout separate from that of registration laws (see Graphic 1).

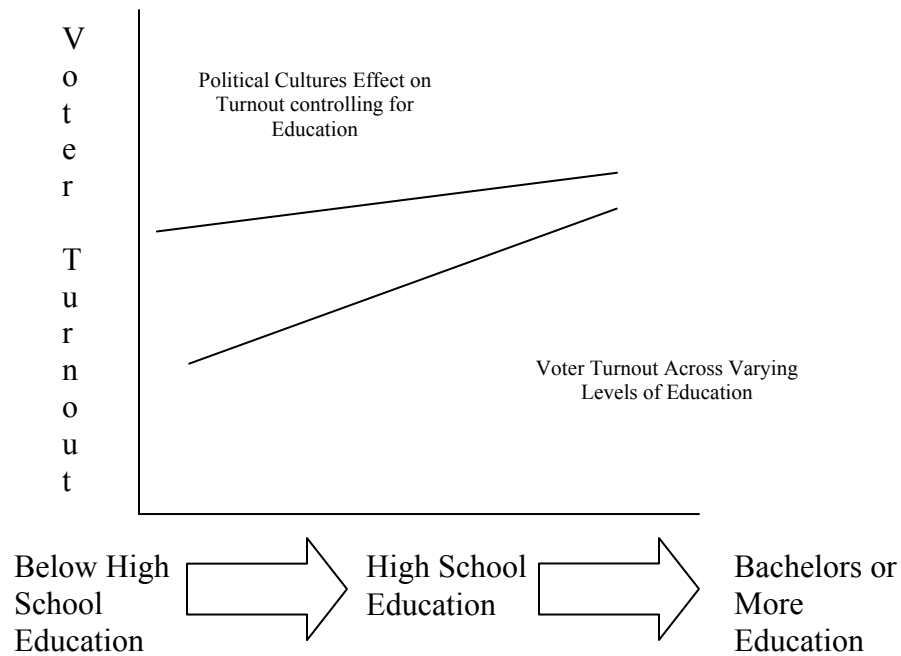


Graphic 1

The second hypothesis is that political culture will have an effect on voter turnout across educational attainment levels (displayed graphically below). This hypothesis posits that while controlling for education, political culture will have an effect on voter turnout. A state with high moralistic political culture may increase voter turnout among amongst its least educated voters while bringing the voter turnout to a statistical parity with their more educated counterparts. Education is a primary indicator of wealth and occupation, and all three are indicators of who votes. Therefore when estimating the effects of moralistic political culture it is imperative to control for education.

4.2 Second Hypothesis

H₂: The effects of education on voter turnout are smaller in moralistic and individualistic political culture states than in traditionalistic political culture states (see Graphic 2).



Graphic 2

CHAPTER 5. OPERATIONALIZATION, MEASUREMENT, AND DATA COLLECTION

This is a cross-sectional study which focuses on the effects of political culture on turnout in the November, 2004 election. A presidential election year was chosen for three reasons. First, because of the frequent nature of American elections, voter turnout tends to be fairly low, even in presidential election years. However, during presidential elections this nation enjoys its highest levels of turnout. Secondly, because presidential campaigns take on lives outside of their political parties, this allows us to see the effects of culture on turnout, and not simply party strength. Thirdly, presidential campaigns are national campaigns which, by definition, involve all fifty states. Since political culture is measured at the state level, I necessarily needed an election that encompassed all fifty states. Additionally, because political culture is measured at the state level, all other data is measured at the state level to avoid committing an ecological fallacy. None of the data used in this thesis is original; it is all of a secondary nature.

The dependent variable used for this thesis is voter turnout. To ascertain the rates at which individuals voted on a state by state basis, the U.S. Census Bureau was called upon to assess the percentage of a state's total citizen population that voted. The data were gathered from the "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004" census Website. Voter turnout is operationalized most simply as a division problem. The numerator is the number of votes cast in an election and the denominator is a state's voting age population. Thus, the measurement is the resulting decimal multiplied by one hundred, producing a percentage. The theoretic model and hypotheses all seek to answer the question of the level of impact that political culture has on turnout. To accomplish

this, the most widely used measurement of the denominator the Voting Age Population (VAP) was chosen to define the voter turnout percentage.

Elazar held that it was reasonable that people who believe they can accomplish positive results via the political process are more likely to vote. What we find through our discussion of the three basic types of political culture is that the moralistic political culture consistently “leads in percentage of voters turning out ... individualistic states, on the other hand, show no clear cut pattern ... [and] that the traditionalistic states have the lowest level of turnout” (Elazar, 1972, 130). Furthermore, Elazar routinely assigned hybrid political cultures to states. Although most states have two cultures assigned to them, Elazar is clear that when this happens, one political culture is dominant:

The juxtaposition of groups with different political cultures within the same political system...has invariably led to some form of culture conflict within many of the states. In some, one political culture has been so dominant that representatives of other political cultures have never been able to challenge its position (Elazar, 1972, 127-128).

This passage also makes it clear that there is a hierarchy to the political cultures when they coexist in a state. Because of the apparent hierarchy, in those state that were designated as having two cultures, the first of the two designated was accepted as the dominant political culture.

This thesis is primarily concerned with political culture’s effect on voter turnout. Based on the evidence presented above that the three political cultures have a scaled effect on turnout, and that a dominant culture exists within those states with two cultures, I created a moralistic political culture scale. This was accomplished by creating a 9-point scale (based on the 9 possible political culture combinations) where a score of 0 represented the least moralistic (or purely traditionalistic cultural), and score of 8 the

most moralistic. The result is an ordinal scale that measures political culture on a continuum from traditionalistic to moralistic. I believe that Elazar supports this formulation when he posits that “moralistic political culture ... is the primary source of the continuing American quest for the good society [and] the traditionalistic political culture [who] in the name of continuity, its representative try to deny [minorities] their civil rights” (1972, 125).

The first hypothesis posits that political culture (primary explanatory variable) will affect voter turnout across the spectrum of registration laws (control/independent variable). Registration laws will be operationalized as the legal requirements to vote in a state. The measurement of registration laws will take the form of a 7-point additive index constructed using 2006 registration requirement data.⁵ Two of the legal requirements that comprise the 7-point scale are borrowed from King (1994). The index will measure the two criteria on a 0 to 3 scale consisting of closing date and where citizens can register. The resulting index is coded so that the most restrictive state registration laws can hypothetically receive a composite score of 0 and the most liberal a score of 7. Because North Dakota requires no registration, it automatically receives a score of 9.⁶ Because North Dakota has no legal requirements for its citizenry to register (other than age), I believe that it should be coded as even more liberal than the most liberal legal registration requirements. With no existing registration barriers to voting, it was code as a 9, or two points more liberal than states with the most liberal registration barriers.

⁵ 2006 registration laws were used because it was readily accessible and a randomly selected batch of Secretary of State Offices was telephoned and no significant changes were made between 2004 and 2006. Furthermore, no telephoned Secretary of State office made any changes to the criteria that compose the index used.

⁶ See Appendix A for detailed description of index including the coding of individual states.

The second hypothesis claims that political culture will affect voter turnout above and beyond that of education, my proxy for SES. This claim made it necessary to gather data on state educational levels. These data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Statistical Abstract⁷ and are measured as the percentage of individuals within a state that have obtained a Bachelor's degree. This is computed by dividing the number of those within a state with a college education by the state's total population. This produces a snapshot of the level of education within a state. The resulting percentage can be interpreted as reflecting the level of education within a state; the higher the percentage, the more educated the state, and vice versa.

In American presidential elections, a turnout motivating factor is the level of competition perceived by the voters (Bowler, Lanoue, & Savoie, 1994; Gray & Hanson, 2004; Key, 1949; Prior, 2005; Timpone, 1998). In order to test properly the hypotheses forwarded within this thesis, competition becomes a control variable of primary concern. I believe that competition needs to be controlled for because it takes the form of a psychologically motivating force in the decision of citizen to vote. To control for competition, I turn to Gray and Hanson's measurement of Austin Ranney's index known as the Ranney Competition Index. Gray and Hanson calculate the average percentage of the popular vote won by Democratic gubernatorial candidates, the percentage of state seats held by Democrats in both the house and senate, and the percent of the legislative sessions where that were controlled by Democrats (2004). The four measurements are

⁷ 2000 Educational Attainment data were used because they offered a more precise breakdown of educational categories. The 2004 data only offered percentages on those with high school diploma and bachelors or higher, whereas the 2000 data had percentage without high school diploma, percentage with high school diploma, percentage with bachelors degree, and percentage with graduate, professional or higher. The two scales were highly correlated (.91) and the correlation was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

then indexed to provide an index of party competition, from which a measurement of two-party competition is derived, wherein no competition is denoted as .500 and perfect competition is 1.000.

Income is operationalized as the average state citizen's disposable income. Thus personal income is the sum of wage and salary disbursements, other labor income, proprietor's income (rental income), dividend and interest income, and transfer payments to individuals (welfare, unemployment insurance, etc.). Disposable personal income then is the portion of personal income that is left after personal taxes are subtracted, and thus is the amount of personal income available to people for consumption spending and saving. Per Capita Disposable Personal Income (PCDPI) is found by dividing a state's total disposable personal income by its population. This number is calculated via U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Regional Economic Information System estimates. Substantively, PCDPI reflects the average annual net income earned by citizens of each state. Since income has often been used as a measure of SES and has been correlated with education and voting behavior, it seemed admissible to control for that variable.

The minority percentage of a state's population is calculated as the state's white population divided by its total population. The resulting proportion is then multiplied by 100 to produce a percentage. The descriptive statistical data on these particular demographic groups come from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) 2004. Percent Minority is, then, an interval variable with a maximum possible range of 0 to 100. Region is a dichotomous variable that sets off the 11 southern states

that were the focus of 1965 Voting Rights Act. This variable is coded so that those 11 states are coded as 1 and the remaining 39 states are coded as 0.

CHAPTER 6. RESULTS

Figure 1 demonstrates the nature of the relationship that exists between moralistic political culture and turnout in a scatter plot. What is easily discerned is the reasonably linear pattern that exists. As the level of moralistic political culture increases, so does turnout. I present a scatter plot with an overlaid estimated linear prediction to emphasize the appropriateness of OLS regression and to demonstrate the relationship of political culture with turnout.

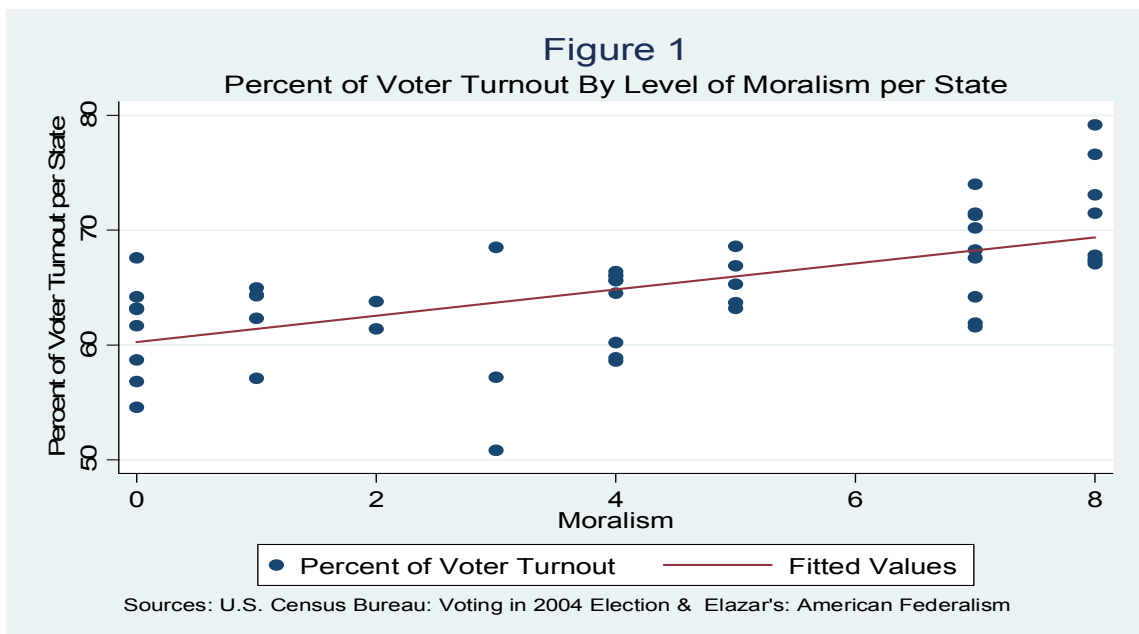


Table 1 reports the results of a multiple regression model estimating the effects of moralistic political culture on turnout. What I find is that the estimated effect of moralistic political culture is both positive and statistically significant. The coefficient suggests that a one-unit increase in moralistic political culture will lead to a 0.65 percentage point increase in voter turnout. Registration is also statistically significant, with a positive coefficient. The coefficient suggests an inverse relationship, where a one-

unit decrease in the restrictiveness of registration laws will lead to a 0.68 percentage point increase in turnout. Additionally, this model displays the negative effect of an increase in the proportion of minority population on turnout. What I show in Table 1 is that a one percentage point increase in the minority population within a state leads to a 0.1 percentage point decrease in turnout. The percentage of a state's minority population approaches traditional levels of statistical significance ($p = .09$).⁸ The low p-value for the minority effect leads me to believe that this effect is more tendency than real.

Furthermore, the model demonstrates that competition, income, and education are all statistically insignificant at this aggregate level of measurement. What the model demonstrates is that moralistic political culture appears to be a driving force behind the relationship between political culture and turnout.

Table 1. *Multiple Regressions: Effects of Moralistic political culture Scale on Turnout, Controlling for Competition, Registration, Race, Income, and Education*

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standard Error
Moralistic political culture	.654**	.289
Competition	12.378	8.261
Registration	.681**	.3277
Percent Minority	-.099*	.057
Per Capita Disposable Income	.000	.000
Bachelor's Degree	-.074	.248
Adjusted $R^2 = .4560$		
$N = 50$		
* = $p < .1$ ** = $p < .05$		
Dependent Variable = Turnout		

⁸ The model in table 1 was tried with interaction terms for competition, registration, education, region and race separately and in a single model. The result was the same in every case...all variables lost statistical significance. The implications of this follows!

CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION

The above results clearly delineate an empirical relationship between political culture and turnout. However, what do these results mean theoretically? The theory I posit holds that political culture is an aggregate-level, long-term psychological attachment that predisposes a citizen to either believe in participation or not. What we see from the results is that a definite relationship between political culture and turnout exists. There is a 0.65 percentage point increase in turnout for every unit increase in moralistic political culture. Thus, as an aggregate force, political culture can be observed in its effect on turnout. Moralistic political culture is statistically significant ($p < .05$). This leads me to construe that political culture acts a long-term force that seems to have a positive effect on turnout.

As an aggregate psychological force, moralistic political culture has an effect on turnout above and beyond that of registration laws. The 0.65 percentage point increase in turnout that is gained for a one-unit increase in moralistic political culture is only half the story. Since the moralistic political culture represents a change across cultures, moving from a completely traditional state (0 moralistic political culture score), to a fully moralistic state (9 moralistic political culture scale), we would see nearly a 6 percentage point increase in turnout. This is important because a 6 percentage point increase in turnout is a large increase that can make a difference in an election. To put this in perspective, the last two presidential election popular votes were decided by less than two percentage points. This leads me to believe that my theory is right and that political culture exists almost as a natural phenomenon. Therefore, political culture within a state seems to be part of the social fabric that wraps around those who reside within its borders.

I believe this is so because we see these effects while controlling for registration. What appears to be happening in the model is that since the structural impediment to individual action (registration) is being controlled for, what we are seeing is that political culture does act as a natural psychological force where voting is concerned, reducing turnout in traditional states and increasing it in moralistic ones. This confirms H_1 , which holds that political culture will have an effect on turnout, controlling for registration and other relevant state characteristics.

H_2 is a different story. Education does not even approach traditional levels of significance. Education may be statistically insignificant for several reasons. Chief among them could be that states with the highest levels of college graduates are also the states with higher levels of moralistic political culture.⁹ Again, we know that at the individual level, education is important, but at the aggregate level, like competition, it fades away. What appears to be behind this is that at the aggregate level political culture subsumes education. Good schools, and going to college, are all parts of what it means to be part of a moralistic culture. I believe this is so because at the aggregate level, education is part of political culture.

The effects of registration were also statistically significant, consistent with previous findings. At the aggregate level one could say that registration laws are part of political culture, but what I think is really being demonstrated in this model is that registration effects are structural impediments to individual actions. I think that the aggregate effects of political culture are separate from that of the individual structural impediments of registration laws. More importantly, I believe that the aggregate nature of

⁹ See Appendix B for results of correlations among the independent variables in the regression model.

this analysis and the smallness of the sample do not allow for us to delve deeply into the relationship that exists between political culture and registration at the aggregate level. It is also possible that there is a problem with multicollinearity. Because the two variables are theoretically distinct they should be measured separately, allowing us to reject H_1 . Because of this it is difficult to go beyond the data, so to speak, and theorize about the world at large.

That stated, at the aggregate level I would liken registration laws to a wall and political culture to a means of climbing over that wall. Thus, even though one may predict the other with a positive correlation of .5439, what I find is that many states that rank 7 or 8 on the moralistic political culture scale have a 3 or lower on the registration index.¹⁰ These include Utah, Colorado, and Michigan, all of which rate an 8 on the moralistic political culture scale but 3, 1, and 1 respectively on the registration index. Of the 22 states that rank at 5 or higher on the moralistic political culture scale, only 8 rank 4 or higher on the registration index. Because at the aggregate level the correlation between of political culture and registration is not perfect, and because I tested for interaction effects, I feel confident in my earlier analogy of political culture and registration. At the aggregate level, the structural impediment of registration is negotiated because on the motivational force of political culture.

Next, my discussion of the analysis of political culture's effect of turnout will examine the results of the percentage of minorities within a state.¹¹ We know that minorities vote in lower proportions than their Caucasian counterparts, so this is an

¹⁰ Recall that the lower the number on the registration index the more restrictive the registration laws, and the higher the number on the moralistic political culture scale the more moralistic a state is.

¹¹ What I really think is going on here is the results of the less than stellar track record of the United States incorporating minorities into the fold as equal citizens.

unsurprising result. Race might also interact with political culture, producing different effects on turnout for different racial and ethnic groups. When this was tried, the result was statistically insignificant coefficients. Intuitively, what I think we are picking up is institutionalized exclusion of minorities in the American political arena.

Table 1 also demonstrates that competition and income are both statistically insignificant. Both of these variables are deemed important in political science discussions on turnout. In the case of competition, what I believe is happening is that competition becomes a byproduct of the political culture. The more moralistic a state is, the higher the levels of competition it achieves ($r = -.0293$). However, the correlation indicates an ever so slight relationship in the opposite direction. The correlation score is hardly significant but that fact that it is a negative score makes me hesitant to posit with much certainty about what is really happening in this model. What we could be seeing in these results are the effects of this particular election, 2004 was very competitive election and since all measurements within are aggregate, the competition may either be being masked or accounted for by something else. However, what I believe is happening with competition in this model is that competition is distributed unequally to states whose residents are already predisposed to vote, whereas I believe that education is part of what it means to be in a moralistic political culture.

It is widely held that those with higher levels of income are more likely to vote and that as the level of competition increases, so does voter turnout. What I find is statistically inconclusive. Income is also positively correlated with education ($r = .3639$). The reason I believe income fails to reach any level of statistical significance is because of the way it is measured. Per Capita Personal Disposable Income is a summary measure

that really reflects the average annual income of each state. That is to say, it really does not reflect the excess money, which is I believe the key to income in SES models. A wealthy state is no more likely to have a moralistic political culture than a poor state ($r = .3078$). This leads me to believe that wealth, or lack thereof, exists separately from political culture, and, although measured at an aggregate level in this thesis, is not suited for aggregate analyses.

The results in Table 1 provide evidence that allows to us to reject H_1 but requires that we fail to reject H_2 . What I believe this indicates is that political culture has an effect on turnout that is not only prior in time to SES variables, but also moderates their effect. The fact that neither of these variables was statistically significant, nor did anything to counteract the effects of political culture, leads me to believe that political culture is an aggregate psychological attachment that bears upon the decision to vote.

Although an empirical relationship between political culture and turnout is strongly suggested in the results, the adjusted R^2 value warns me to be cautious. The adjusted R^2 indicates how well my model explains the variation from state to state in voter turnout. The adjusted R^2 value in the model is .456, meaning that I explain about 46% of the variation in turnout. This could be a result of the data themselves. The low value of adjusted R^2 could be a result of the small sample size or of the fact that I use aggregate data. This tells me that no matter how much I would like to claim that I have found fire, I merely have smoke.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

Political scientists have written extensively on turnout, but to my knowledge no one has attempted to explain turnout based primarily on the psychological forces that make up political culture. This is where my model differs significantly from previous psychological models, the Michigan Model in particular. In this thesis I use political culture as the primary explanatory variable, a psychological influence in the act of voting, and posit that political culture, like a sense of civic duty, or any other “interpersonal influence” (Campbell *et al.*, 1960), can and does become a motivating force in an actor’s decision to vote. Elazar makes it clear that not only can we expect to see different political carried out differently among the political cultures, but that the manner in which the citizens of a state approach and interact with politics will be different also. The 2004 presidential election set a unique stage for a cross-sectional study on turnout. The combination of an unpopular war in Iraq, candidates who represented clear choices on that war, a sagging economy, and a high level of competition between those candidates, sets a table with all trimmings of an analysis measuring the effects of political culture’s effects on voter turnout. Thus, using data from the 2004 presidential election as my backdrop, I tested two hypotheses.

Political culture has been a part of our understanding of politics since Elazar’s *The American Federalist*. The three types of political culture outlined by Elazar provide a description of how each type shapes and impacts the way the citizens of that environment view their role within politics. Political culture has improved our understanding of states, parties, and elections, and informed our understanding of party development. However, in terms of voter turnout research, political culture has rarely been used as an explanatory

variable. Scholars in previous research have discussed the effects of competition, registration laws, or SES on voter turnout, but in that research political culture takes the form of a truism, instead of being part of the intertwining theory and is treated somewhat dismissively as a “grand residual category.”

This is a shortcoming in the literature that I believe this thesis speaks to directly. Both SES and Rational Choice Models have to be supplemented with psychological assumptions to reach their fullest explanatory power. But in these models, the psychological steroids are never fully explained, developed or acknowledged. Furthermore, I would hold that the “Michigan Model” never truly accounts for the environmental effects, that is, those psychological aspects that exist outside the family, group, or peer unit. This thesis posits a theory of voter turnout that incorporates political culture, holding that it is a long-term aggregate psychological attachment. I believe that we have gained a better understanding of voter turnout and have provided a richer, more overarching theory of voter turnout. By enhancing our understanding of the relationship between political culture and turnout we are better equipped to predict turnout. Though I have only been able to find what I denote as smoke, this smoke is not without relevance.

Consistently the analyses of the data produced significant results. Political culture has a positive impact on voter turnout. This relationship is highlighted and demonstrated via a scatter plot and OLS regression; furthermore, the regression results allow me to reject the null hypotheses for H_1 but not H_2 . My theory claims that political culture (the moralism aspect particularly) serves as an aggregate socialization process that psychologically attaches an actor to a belief in citizen participation or not. In other words, moralistic political culture serves an aggregate psychological motivating force; I believe

my data and results demonstrate this idea. Using aggregate data, I demonstrated that this aggregate variable has an effect on turnout. However, the problem is that I cannot disaggregate the data and demonstrate the causal mechanisms between the actor and the political culture. Furthermore, the size of the dataset presents problems.

Although I technically have the entire population in this sample (50 states), 50 is still a relatively small number of observations. This is a problem that could have been alleviated by an individual-level analysis. However, political culture could operate only as a contextual variable in that analysis. Future research endeavors along these lines would take this or the multi-level (HLM) model approach. If the funding were available I would design and administer a nationally representative sample to capture political culture, turnout, and a myriad of control variables at the individual level. That stated, at the aggregate level, the moralistic political culture index is a much finer tool by which to ascertain the effects of political culture on turnout. I believe that some form of question wording that correlated to the individual-level equivalent of the moralistic political culture scale also would be more useful at the individual level than a blunt categorization of actors into political culture groups.

What I believe I have presented within this thesis is a relatively discrete and powerful analysis of the aggregate socialization force that is political culture and its effect on turnout. I believe that the results found within both require future research and strongly suggests the import of aggregate psychological forces. Although the data are not without issue—as discussed previously—given the limited resources and time constraints placed upon MA candidates, this thesis represents a realistic research approach to a real-life issue conducted with scarce resources.

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APPENDIX A. REGISTRATION LAW INDEX

The index of registration laws was computed by recording data on states' registration laws that pertained to closing date and place of registration. The original data were recoded into two scales with closing dates ranging from 0 to 4 and registration location ranging from 0 to 3. Substantively, then I claim that the effects of registration closing dates are 20 percent more important than location of registration. The two scales are summed, creating an additive index. Each scale for the components of voter registration law is coded so that the most restrictive laws yield a scale score of 0 and the least restrictive laws yielded a scale score of 3 (or 4). The data and scaling procedures were:

1. Closing date – number of days before the election that voter registration closes with states permitting citizens to register to vote at the polls coded as 3. Interval scale recoded as follows:
 - 0 = 25 or more days
 - 1 = 16 - 24 days
 - 2 = 8 - 15 days
 - 3 = 1 – 7 days
 - 4 = same day (including registering at the polls)

2. Because of the motor voter laws a citizen can register at just about any public building. In order to assess the possible difference in states' registration restrictiveness the following scale was constructed. Again a score of 0 represents the most restrictive means of registering: only motor voter (MV).
 - 0 = MV (in person/ by mail), or can request a registration app on line only.
 - 1 = registration application available on line (and MV)
 - 2 = may register on-line
 - 3 = at polls on election-day

Each state's scores on these two scales are summed to produce an index of registration laws ranging from 0 (most restrictive) to 6 (least restrictive). North Dakota, which does not require citizens to register to vote, will be assigned a score of 9. If we think of the two scales as including a sixth and a fifth option (scores of 5 and 4), the options would be no closing dates and no registration requirements, respectively. There is only one state in the union that fits this description: North Dakota.

State	Registratio Closing Date	Closing Date Score	Where Citizen can Register	Place of Registration Score	Index Score
Alabama	10	2	reg app on line	1	3
Alaska	30	0	reg app on line	1	1
Arizona	29	0	Register to Vote On-Line	2	2
Arkansas	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
California	15	2	Register to Vote On-Line	2	4
Colorado	29	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Connecticut	14	2	Registration Application On-Line	1	3
Delaware	20	1	Register to Vote On-Line	2	3
Florida	29	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Georgia	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Hawaii	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Idaho	25	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Illinois	28	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Indiana	29	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Iowa	10	2	Registration Application On-Line	1	3
Kansas	15	2	Registration Application On-Line	1	3
Kentucky	28	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Louisiana	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Maine	0	4	Registration at Polling Place/No On-Line App	3	7
Maryland	21	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Massachusetts	20	1	Request a Voter Registration Form On-Line	0	1
Michigan	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Minnesota	0	4	Registration at Polling Place/No On-Line App	3	7
Mississippi	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Missouri	25	0	Request a Voter Registration Form On-Line	0	0
Montana	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Nebraska	17	1	Registration Application On-Line	1	2
Nevada	10	2	Registration Application On-Line	1	3
New Hampshire	0	4	Registration at Polling Place/No On-Line App	3	7
New Jersey	21	1	Registration Application On-Line	1	2
New Mexico	21	1	Registration Application On-Line	1	2
New York	25	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
North Carolina	25	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
North Dakota	0	5	No Registration Requirement	4	9
Ohio	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Oklahoma	24	1	Registration Application On-Line	1	2
Oregon	21	1	Registration Application On-Line	1	2
Pennsylvania	30	0	Motor Voto Only	0	0
Rhode Island	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
South Carolina	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
South Dakota	15	2	Registration Application On-Line	1	3
Tennessee	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Texas	30	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Utah	15	2	Registration Application On-Line	1	3
Vermont	6	3	Registration Application On-Line	1	4
Virginia	29	0	Registration Application On-Line	1	1
Washington	15	2	Registration Application On-Line	1	3
West Virginia	20	1	Registration Application On-Line	1	2
Wisconsin	0	4	Registration at Polling Place/No On-Line App	3	7
Wyoming	0	4	Registration at Polling Place/No On-Line App	3	7

APPENDIX B. CORRELATIONS AMONG INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Appendix B: Correlations Among Independent Variables in the Model

	Moralism	Competition	Registration	Percent Minority	Per Capita Disposabl	Bachelors Degree
moralism	1.0000					
competiton	-0.0293	1.0000				
registration	0.5439	0.0723	1.0000			
percent minority	-0.5508	0.0575	-0.3965	1.0000		
pcdpi	0.3078	0.2331	0.1944	0.2586	1.0000	
bachelors degree	0.3731	-0.1098	0.1393	-0.0307	0.3639	1.0000

APPENDIX C. MORALISM INDEX

State	Elazar's Political Culture	Index Score
AK	T	0
AL	T	0
AR	T	0
GA	T	0
LA	T	0
MS	T	0
SC	T	0
TN	T	0
VA	T	0
FL	TI	1
KY	TI	1
NM	TI	1
OK	TI	1
TX	TI	1
AZ	TM	2
NC	TM	2
HI	IT	3
MO	IT	3
WV	IT	3
DE	I	4
IL	I	4
IN	I	4
MD	I	4
NJ	I	4
NV	I	4
NY	I	4
OH	I	4
PA	I	4
CT	IM	5
MA	IM	5
NE	IM	5
RI	IM	5
WY	IM	5
CA	MI	7
IA	MI	7
ID	MI	7
KS	MI	7
MT	MI	7
NH	MI	7
OR	MI	7
SD	MI	7
WA	MI	7
CO	M	8
ME	M	8
MI	M	8
MN	M	8
ND	M	8
UT	M	8
VT	M	8
WI	M	8