

FACTORS OF FREEDOM:

WHY ARE CERTAIN STATES MORE FREE THAN OTHERS?

by

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The purpose of this study is to evaluate the 50 American states on an index of “freedom” to determine whether specific cultural elements present in certain states help foster an atmosphere of both individual and economic liberty. The hypothesis of this paper is that states with a rural population, and/or a generally homogenous population, will rank higher in “freedom” by enacting public policies that maximize human liberty and protect individual rights in the classical liberal understanding. Assisting this study will be the 2013 state ranking index (Ruger and Sorens 2013). The research design of this project will combine both a quantitative analysis of specific empirical data with a qualitative examination of specific political and cultural phenomenon within particular states and/or regions.

INTRODUCTION

Alexis de Tocqueville was perhaps the first observer to critique the unique cultural components present in the experiment in classical liberalism that was the young United States. Since the publication of his renowned work of history, political science, and sociology, *Democracy in America*, many experts of the social sciences have attempted to connect the American concept of democratic republicanism to American culture. However, since the American continent has drastically changed in identity from de Tocqueville’s time, a new cultural, and therefore political, realigning should be underway. Despite the ever expanding growth and control of the central government, the importance of the American federal structure can still be seen in the policy preferences of the 50 states, which remain largely free to enact policies that fit the needs of their citizens. This paper will be written from the view of a classical liberal and attempt to explain why certain states remain closer to manifesting the view of individual rights and

economic freedom, and why others have begun to treat their citizens as what de Tocqueville called “perpetual children” beholden to an “immense protective power (Democracy in America).” However, could what is reflected in the policy choices of the 50 states simply be a result of the polarization of the nation along partisan lines? In this research, the possible effects of culture will be balanced with political variables to determine the real factors of freedom in the 50 states

LITERATURE REVIEW

The consensus from existing social science literature is that political sectionalism in the United States is not divided solely on “liberal” or “conservative” lines.

Elazar (1994) has perhaps one of the most influential pieces of literature on American political culture to date. In his book on American federalism, he identifies three primary political cultures that have taken root in the United States.

The first of these is the moralistic subculture that originated in the New England colonies from puritanical influences. This subculture inherited the commonwealth understanding of government from the British. The commonwealth view holds that government is a means to achieve societal good through positive action and law. This understanding allows the government to be involved in both the social and economic sphere through necessary regulation. Officials working within the commonwealth view do not simply wait for the public to pressure for a particular policy, instead, they act whenever a public interest may be present. The modern manifestation of this could be the belief in need for a form of public health insurance paid for by “state” money. The bureaucracy in a moralistic culture is also viewed as a positive/neutral influence and public sector employees are often praised for their contributions to society. A strong

merit system is also present and everyone is expected to participate in the act of governing.

While originating in New England, the moralistic subculture spread westward with the early puritan settlers into New York State, northern Ohio, and eventually to states across the old Mid-West, up to the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi River. Immigrants from Northern Europe eventually joined these “Yankees” and their subculture spread as far west as Oregon and California and made up the largely abolitionist settlers in Kansas.

The individualist subculture originated in the Middle Atlantic States and viewed government as a marketplace that responds to demands. Governments in the individualistic subculture respond largely to economic demands with particular attention focused on encouraging economic development (early Whig Party). This form of government responds to public demand and citizens in an individualistic society have an ambivalent attitude toward bureaucracy and believe only professionals should participate in politics and governing.

The states in which the individualistic culture originated were largely diverse both ethnically and religiously and were truly the first pluralistic societies in the United States. Members of this subculture were united in the idea of seeking prosperity in the New World and began to extend their influence west along the Ohio River Valley, Indiana, the Missouri and eventually joined up with Western European immigrants to make up the population of the western territories between the Dakotas and Nebraska.

The final subculture that Elazar articulates can be found in the most unique region of the United States, the American South. Here, the government is influenced by the

traditionalistic subculture. The distinctiveness of the traditionalistic subculture originated from the largely agricultural society and plantation economy characterized by the “peculiar institution” of chattel slavery. This differs drastically from the commercial based economy found in the Mid-Atlantic and North East. This subculture valued preserving existing societal order and naturally saw governments’ primary aim to be protecting this established order. Taking this into account, it was only natural then that in a traditionalistic society, that the elites would participate in politics with the average citizens left largely under their protection. This elitist agrarianism spread from the Upper South down into the cotton states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi and up to as far north as Kentucky and as far west as eastern Texas. The traditionalistic subculture was eventually diluted in Oklahoma and the southern plains by members of both the individualistic and moralistic subcultures. Elazar helps explain the pattern of integration that occurred between the various subcultures on the frontier by identifying the stages of development beginning with the “rural land frontier” which led to the “urban-industrial frontier” and eventually the “metropolitan-technological frontier” that has resulted in a much more pluralistic society that we see today.

In this analysis of freedom in the states there might be a slight overlap between particular regions and a corresponding propensity to be more or less free. Both the Pacific Coast and the Northeast/New England have the highest number of low-ranked states in the Ruger and Soren measure. States that are identified as having historical links to the individualistic subculture generally appear higher in the rankings, yet these states have generally shifted to the middle of the continent in between the Rockies and Appalachian Mountains. A pattern within the traditionalistic subculture is much harder

to identify. States in the Deep South seem to have generally high levels of economic liberty yet lower levels of personal liberty. However, the level of personal liberty in these states greatly varies. Upon examining a map of the new integrated subcultures in Elazar's 1994 work, it seems that any statistical relation to liberty and one of three subcultures will be very difficult to identify on a concrete level. Furthermore, the mobility of contemporary of American society and racial diversity that is now present draws me to question the over simplicity of Elazar's three cultures which seem rooted in a very white, European understanding. There seems to be more in explaining what makes certain states more free these three subcultures alone.

Lieske (2012) greatly builds of the previous study of regional subcultures done by Elazar. In his work, Lieske attempts to operationalize culture by creating a factor-cluster analysis of census data to identify eleven distinct subcultures that extend across the United States. According to his paper, the three subcultures which can be tied to Elazar's moralistic tradition are the Nordic, Mormon, and Anglo-French subculture. The four which would be identified as individualistic are the Germanic, Heartland, Rurban, and Global subculture. The four which would over-simplistically be labeled traditionalistic are the Border, Black-Belt, Native-American, and Latino subcultures. Lieske notes that with the exception of large states such as California, New York, Texas, and Florida, his eleven -factor subculture model can be used to accurately predict how states will behave in regards to social disorganization, racial inequality, political partisanship, and government activity in taxing and spending. He notes that these subcultures are not distributed evenly across the United States, which is where Elazar's analysis was incorrect.

Of course, this paper will need to rely upon a clear ranking system based on complex analysis of various state policies. In their paper, Ruger and Sorens (2013) have created a complex index of over 200 variables ranked by the effect they have on individual liberty. They based this index on an individual rights framework that rewarded states for minimal use of coercion born of the Lockian, Hayekian, and Nozikian understanding. The index they created was composed of three categories: Fiscal Policy (35.3%), Regulatory Policy (32.0%), and Personal Freedom (32.7%).

The fiscal policy component of their index measured tax burden, government employment, government spending, government debt, and fiscal centralization. States were awarded higher scores for lower levels of each variable. They identified the freest states in this dimension to be South Dakota, Oklahoma, North Dakota, Tennessee, and Alabama and the lowest to be Vermont, Maine, New Jersey, Hawaii, and New York.

The regulatory policy dimension of the index measured states based on their labor regulations, liability system, violation of property rights (eminent domain), health insurance regulation, occupational regulation, land use regulation, and utility regulation. Again, states were rewarded for having lower levels of each. Ruger and Sorens identified Indiana, Delaware, Iowa, North Dakota, and Nebraska as ranking the highest in regards to regulations with Louisiana, New York, New Jersey, West Virginia, and California ranking the lowest.

The final component of the index measured laws affecting personal liberty. They measured laws that directly impacted how an individual lives his or her daily life and specifically studied victimless crimes laws, gun control restrictions, alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana laws, laws restricting the freedom to marry, the freedom to gamble, to drink

raw milk, to home school a child, to ride in a car without a seat belt or motorcycle without a helmet, as well as campaign finance laws and asset forfeiture laws. Once again, the more minimal a states' intervention in these areas, the higher it scored. The states of Alaska, Nevada, Maine, New Mexico, and New Hampshire were the most personally free with South Dakota, California, New York, Maryland, and Illinois being the least.

When the final ranking was compiled, the top five states in regards to overall freedom were North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma. The five least-free states were Rhode Island, Hawaii, New Jersey, California, and New York. Ruger and Sorens identified in their study that states in the middle of the continent, between the Appalachians and Rocky Mountains, as being the freest region of the country on average. In attempting to explain the rankings they looked at political ideology and found that there was no statistical relationship between ideology and personal freedom, with both "red" states and "blue" states preferring some restrictions of liberty over others. What they did determine, however, is that there is a negative relationship between liberalism and economic freedom. Furthermore, they identified a positive relationship between overall freedom and migration, with fiscal freedom registering as the highest factor influencing migration patterns and personal freedom as the lowest.

The research put forth by Ruger and Sorens serves as the inspiration for this paper. Since their study identified no link between overall political ideology and freedom, what explains the variants between the Dakotas and New York? This research will attempt to find a cultural link.

There are of course many institutional structures which impact how state policy is made. The work of Gray and Hanson (2012) has served largely as a counterbalance to the cultural studies. It highlights how certain structural factors in state government influence state policy and, therefore, overall freedom. The book specifically discusses the differences in state political parties, interest groups, ballot initiatives, legislative structure, judicial systems, as well as the differences in fiscal, welfare, education, and economic policies. While this study is not looking at the structural impacts on freedom, it is important to be aware that these differences exist as they might explain certain policies that affect freedom. This work also includes the Ranney Index for political control.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research will operationalize variables that appear to be the most likely to correlate to specific policies. Many of these variables were drawn from the Lieske study on subcultures and have been shown throughout social science literature to affect what policies are implemented. The dependent variables in this study are the four levels of freedom (state regulatory policy, fiscal policy, economic policy, and personal liberty) as determined in the Ruger and Sorens index. The independent variables will be the population density, percentage of population with a bachelor's degree, average state income, level of religiosity as measured by weekly church attendance, and racial homogeneity as measured by percentage of population that is white (non-Hispanic).

After examining the maps of both Ruger and Sorens, and the subcultures in both Elazar and Liekse, one can reasonably conclude that there are regions of the country that appear different from others in regard to freedom that neither distinct subcultures nor

political ideology can completely explain. Therefore, this paper will rely on these traditional variables used in social science to determine if there is a broader relationship between race, religion, rural living, education, and income to freedom. To identify any relationship between political parties and freedom this research will include in the data set a measure of political party by coding how each went in the 2012 election and which party controls each respective governor's mansion. As a measure of general party control, which better represents the other two political variables, the Ranney Index (Gray and Hanson) will be included to get a broader sense of how a state's level of freedom is dependent upon control by either Democrats or Republicans. In this index, scores are calculated on a scale of 0-1, with 0 being total Republican Party domination and 1 being total Democratic Party control.

The population density, average income, percentage white (non-Hispanic), and percentage bachelor's degree for each state were attained from the website of the 2010 US Census. The percentage weekly church attendance variable was acquired from a 2010 Gallup poll and the Ranney Index was acquired from the work of Gray and Hanson (2012). A regression analysis was run to determine if certain variables affected freedom more than others. Specifically, political effects were controlled for to flesh out the effects (if any) that the cultural variables had on freedom. Because the sample is the United States population at the time of the 2010 census, a test for statistical significance was unnecessary. The statistical data analysis was on SPSS software.

UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS

In this paper, the definition of freedom is used in the contemporary libertarian sense as defined by Ruger and Sorens and incorporated in their index. However, because

freedom is such a subjective word, there are many different interpretations that might completely change how the states are ranked and what the independent variables effect. If your conception of freedom is positive, instead of negative as in this paper, and revolves around a benevolent state and large welfare structure, then there might be fundamental problems in understanding.

Furthermore, the difference between the least-free state (New York) and most free (South Dakota) is somewhat minimal when contrasted with many foreign nations like Zimbabwe and North Korea. However, like the link that Ruger and Sorens identified between migration and freedom, it is innately understood that human beings value freedom for its own sake; after all, the whole reason behind the American founding was create a nation state that maximized both personal and economic liberty.

Finally, there is the factor of differences in state governmental structure. Because with an “N” of 50, the dictates of time, and inability to operationalize all the aspects of state structure, it was difficult to control for this in this research. However, because the 50 states are each different in their own ways, this should not affect the data significantly one way or the other. If there fails to be any connection between the dependent and independent variables then alternative explanations will be explored

EXPECTED RESULTS

From what is found in the studies on regional subcultures, and from Ruger and Sorens, it is predicted that the states with a relatively large rural population (Great Plains, Appalachia, and South) will have policies that promote freedom as this paper measures it. This will be due to their limited need for state regulation and limited population centers. It is believed that the relationship between income and freedom will be relatively flat as it

is often related to political ideology which Ruger and Sorens identified had little statistical impact on overall freedom. Furthermore, it appears, at face value at least, that states at the top and bottom of the overall rankings have no distinctly different economic characteristics. It is expected that something similar will happen with the number of individuals with an undergraduate degree or higher since education and partisan identification are related, with higher levels of education (up to post graduate degrees) being associated with Republican identification . Furthermore, this variable is often impacted by other factors such as socioeconomic status. Religiosity might have a marginal impact on freedom as the protestant work ethic has become an ingrained part of American society and tends to value individualism and limited government interference. Finally, it is hypothesized that states with a high level of racial homogeneity (Caucasian) will have higher levels of freedom than states that are not as racially homogenous. This impact will be largely based on the different racial attitudes toward government and the state interference that results from the belief that individuals at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum (African-Americans and Latinos) need government assistance in the form of redistributionist welfare policies.

FINDINGS

So what exactly does the United States look like? When we examine each variable we can begin to get a sense of the diversity of the 50 American States.

The mean population density of the United States as of the 2010 census is 196.45 persons per square mile with a standard deviation of 263. New Jersey has the highest population density in the nation with approximately 1205 people per square mile and Alaska has the lowest of 1.26. As a general pattern on the map, the Northeast and New

England region are the most densely populated, followed by the West Coast and Mid-Atlantic. The Mid-Western states fell on average between 100-200 person per square mile, with the South just slightly less populated than that, but not by a huge margin. The states in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains were the least populated according the census data, which is understandable considering they were the last to be settled due to their inhospitable climate and rough terrain.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the American States

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pop. Density	50	1203.74	1.26	1205.00	196.4528	262.99375
Aver. Income	50	33085.00	36919.00	70004.00	50515.5800	8141.92631
Percent White	50	71.70	22.70	94.40	71.4000	15.47961
% Bach Degree	50	20.90	17.30	38.20	27.0600	4.79226
% Church Atten.	50	40.00	23.00	63.00	41.6000	9.19405
Ranney Index	50	.56	.19	.76	.4858	.15491
Fiscal Score	50	158.70	-106.90	51.80	4.1398	28.88305
Regulatory Score	50	66.80	-42.30	24.50	-.5880	16.51332
Economic Score	50	206.40	-133.60	72.80	3.5418	37.92989
Personal Score	50	43.50	-22.10	21.40	-1.0220	9.11881
Overall Score	50	216.80	-150.20	66.60	2.5240	41.02747

In regards to income, the average household income in the United States is \$50,515 with a maximum of \$70,004 in Maryland and minimum of \$36,919 in Mississippi. There is less of a range in this variable, but what can be discerned from the data is that the states with higher per capita incomes can be found in the Northeast, New

England and Mid-Atlantic. Most of the states in the rest of the country fall in between \$40,000 and \$52,000, close to the mean of \$50, 515.

The range of the percentage of the population that was white (non-Hispanic) was the most drastic of all the variables studied. Maine and Vermont are the most homogenous, with nearly 94% of the population identifying as white. Indeed, this pattern is found throughout New England: with New Hampshire at 92%, Massachusetts and Rhode Island at 76%, and Connecticut at 71%. New England is joined by the upper Rockies and Great Plains states of Montana (87.8%), North Dakota (88.1%), South Dakota (84.7%), Utah (80.4 %), Wyoming (85.9%) and Idaho (80%). Racial patterns in the Midwest are quite similar with Indiana (81.5%), Iowa (88.7%), Minnesota (83.1%), Nebraska (82.1%), Ohio (81.1%), and Wisconsin (83.3%). Down in Dixieland, the white percentage of the population for the states of the former Confederacy generally ranges between 55%-65%. This is due to the large black population that still inhabits those states from the days of slavery in the cotton economy of the antebellum South. States in Appalachia differ from their neighboring southern states in that they much more homogenous with Tennessee at 75.6%, Kentucky at 86.3%, and West Virginia at 93.2%. States have a minority-majority are: Hawaii at 22.7%, the outlier of all states with its largely Pacific-Islander population, as well as Texas, California, and New Mexico, each with ever growing Hispanic populations.

The variable of percent of the population with a bachelor's degree had a mean of 27.06%. Massachusetts, home of the oldest university in North American (Harvard), has the highest number of college educated citizens with a total of 38% of the population having earned at least a four-year bachelor's degree. Most states in New England and the

Northeast down to the Mid-Atlantic state of Maryland (35.7%) followed this pattern with slightly lower percentages. West Virginia took last place in this category with only 17.3% of people living in the Mountaineer State having graduated with a baccalaureate degree. States with the lowest number of this variable were generally found in the Deep South and Appalachia with Alabama (22%), Arkansas (18.9%), Kentucky (21%), Louisiana (21.4%), Mississippi (19.6%), and Tennessee (23%) all graduating less than 23% of their residents from a four-year institution. Virginia differs in this regard from her fellow southern states in that Old Dominion has a population 34% college educated adults. This is most likely due to the proximity of the Northern Virginia counties to Washington, DC, the most educated region in the country. The states of the Great Plains also follow this trend with Wyoming at 23.8%, Oklahoma at 22.7%, and Nebraska at 21.8%. Midwestern states all fell very closely around the mean with Ohio at 24.1%, Michigan at 24.6%, Minnesota at 31.5%, Iowa at 25.1%, Wisconsin at 25.7% and Illinois at 30.6%. Indiana (22.5%) was the only state in Big Ten country to fall more than 4 points above or below the mean. Outside of New England, regions with higher rates of college graduates were the Rocky Mountain states of Colorado (35.9%), Utah (28.5%), and West Coast states of Oregon (29.2%), Washington (31%), and California (29.9%).

What is most interesting about the variable of weekly church attendance is that it virtually mirrors the variable of population with bachelor's degree, except the results are in the opposite direction. Perhaps this indicates that the more educated a state is, the more secular its population. States with the lowest rates of college graduates scored highest in the percentage of citizens that attend church weekly with Mississippi, the second lowest in Bachelor's education, coming in first with 63%. The rest of Dixie

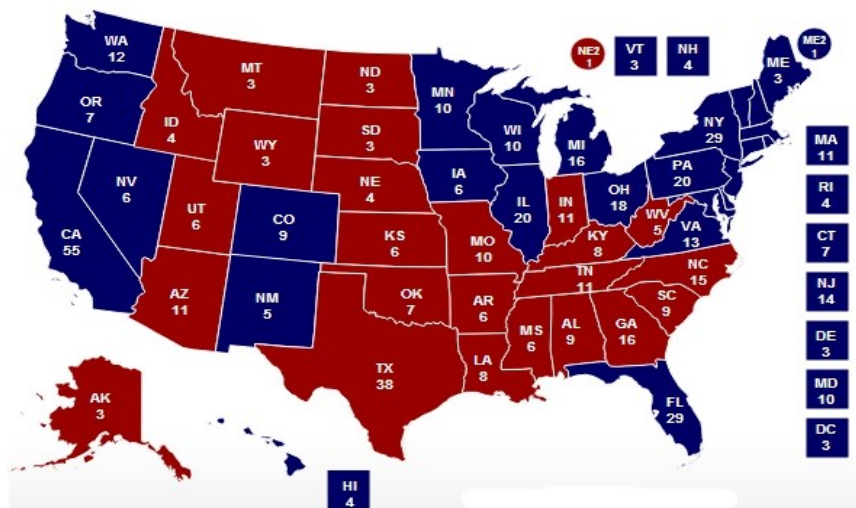
follows Mississippi's lead with Alabama coming in second at 58%, South Carolina and Louisiana third at 56%, followed by Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas all coming in just at or above 50%. Proving that the term "Bible Belt" is well deserved indeed for this region of the country. Of the states that scored the lowest, Vermont came in last with 23% followed by New Hampshire at 26% and Massachusetts at 29%. Indeed, there is not a state in either New England or the greater northeast region that reached the national average of 41%. Most states in the Midwest fell at or within four points of this national average with the Great Plains region scoring slightly higher (Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota) at around 46-49%. States in the Rocky Mountains and Pacific Coast saw slightly fewer people attend church each week with Oregon at 31%, Wyoming at 34%, as well as California and Colorado both at 35%. As for Nevada, known for "Sin City" and legalized prostitution, it not surprisingly came in at 30%.

Of the political variables, the first revealed that for the time period in which the freedom rankings were compiled, there were 30 states with Republican governors and 20 with Democratic ones. The data for this variable generally reflected the partisan composition of each respective state. The region with the most Republican governors is the American South with Arkansas being the only state of the ex-Confederacy to be governed by a Democratic executive. New England and the greater Northeast exhibit a similar pattern in the opposite direction, with Maine and New Jersey being the only states governed by members of the GOP. While the Midwest is full of swing states come presidential election time, when it came to governor political affiliation, only Illinois and Minnesota are governed by Democrats. Ohio, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Wisconsin, and

Michigan, all states that Barack Obama carried in 2008 and 2012, were all governed by Republican executives. In the Appalachian states of West Virginia and Kentucky, while both very red in 2004, 2008, and 2012, in this data set they were coded for Democratic gubernatorial control. The West Coast well in keeping with its moniker as the “left coast,” had the states of California, Oregon, and Washington all with Democrats occupying their respective governor’s mansions. The Great Plains states of Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and both Dakotas very much kept their Republican steak alive while the Rocky Mountain region was very much in play for both parties, making it about as “purple” as the come. Colorado and Montana were governed by Democrats Hickenlooper and Schweitzer respectively, while Wyoming, Idaho, Utah all had Republican governors. In the demographically changing American Southwest, Nevada and New Mexico differentiated themselves with Democratic governors from the Republican controlled governor’s mansion in Phoenix.

Obviously the Republicans did not carry the same 30 states that their governors held during the recent 2012 election, or we would have President Mitt Romney. Nevertheless, conventional trends held with the South solidly Republican (VA and FL aside) along with the Great Plains and upper Rocky Mountains, with both coasts overwhelmingly Democratic. See Figure 1 on the opposite page.

Figure 1: Electoral College Map: 2012 Election¹



Red = Republican; Blue = Democrat

In operationalizing the Ranney Index of political control it is easier to identify the extent to which political power rests with the two political parties in each respective state. This gives us a more complex understanding of partisan differences in the 50 states than from just simply looking at either the Governor's political party or recent Electoral College map. According to this index, the state with the most Democratic control was Massachusetts with a score of 0.758. If this proves anything, it is that the Bay State more than deserves its reputation as the bastion of American liberalism. In what might surprise some people, West Virginia, the nationally red but locally blue state, came in second with a score of 0.722. However, it must be noted that the Democratic Party in West Virginia is slightly more conservative than their counterparts in Massachusetts. Indeed, while both Scott Brown (R-MA) and Joe Manchin (D-WV) served together in the US Senate,

¹“2012 Electoral College.” Map.

http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2012/president/2012_elections_electoral_college_map_no_toss_up_s.html

you would probably find yourself hard pressed to identify who was the more liberal of the two. Nevertheless, partisan identification still matters a great deal in contemporary politics. The index scores indicate that the nation is very closely divided between the two major parties with the national mean of 0.486 - indicating divided government. Regional differences still hold, but to a lesser degree than with the other political variables. The Great Plains region was the most Republican in the nation, according to the index, with Idaho having the lowest score of 0.194. Wyoming, Nebraska, and Kansas too all came in with scores below 0.3. The American South, while mostly Republican in the statehouses, still has pockets of Democratic control, particularly with the large black population and remnants of the Blue Dog coalition. Arkansas is a prime example of this with a score of 0.717. Alabama and Mississippi, both often considered the most conservative states in the Union, came in right in the middle of the Ranney Index with scores of 0.512 and 0.5 respectively. As a general rule, states whose Governor's party matched their electoral vote in the 2012 election scored higher in either the Republican or Democratic direction. Divided government, more often than not, indicated a score closer to the mean.

For the dependent fiscal policy variable, scores varied from the highest of 51.8 in South Dakota, to the lowest of -106.9 in New York. This low score was more than twice what Hawaii received (-42.7), the state ranked 49th in fiscal policy. The mean score for the fiscal policy variable was 4.13, which corresponded to the score of the 25th ranked state of North Carolina (4.1). The range of 158.7 indicated the wide disparity between various states in how they orient their fiscal policy in either a more free or less free direction. The states with the top 5 highest scores of this variable were: 1. South Dakota (51.8), 2. Tennessee (48.5), 3. Oklahoma (43.7), 4. North Dakota (43.1), and 5. Alabama

41.7. On the opposite end of the table, the 5 lowest ranking states were: 46. Maine (-36.6), 47. Vermont (-37.4), 48. New Jersey (-37.9), 49. Hawaii (-42.7), and 50. New York (-106.9).

With regards to the dependent variable of regulatory policy, the policy extremes were not as pronounced as they were for fiscal policy. Indeed, the range of 66.8 was less than half that of the fiscal policy variable. The highest score on the Ruger and Sorens index was Indiana and Delaware, with 24.5 and the lowest was California with -42.3. The top five states went as follows: 1(a) and 1(b). Indiana and Delaware (24.5), 3. Iowa (24.4), 4. North Dakota (22.5), and 5. Nebraska (21.7). The bottom 5 on the index were: 46. Louisiana (-23.5), 47. New York (-26.7), 48. New Jersey (-31.3), 49. West Virginia (-34.6), and 50. California (-42.3).

When combining the fiscal and regulatory policy variables, we are left with the economic freedom independent variable. Not surprisingly, the same suspects show up in the top and bottom 5. Coming in as the most free economically were: 1. South Dakota (72.8), 2. North Dakota (65.7), 3. Tennessee (62.1), 4. Idaho (51.8), and 5. Oklahoma (50.1). Their opposite number in the bottom 5 were as follows: 46. Vermont (-39.4), 47. Hawaii (-56.4), 48. New Jersey (-69.2), 49. California (-71.8), and 50. New York (-133.6).

For the dependent variable of personal freedom, the variable pattern of highest and lowest ranking states differed dramatically from the first three dependent variables. The range of 43.5 was also the lowest of all the dependent variables, illustrating that social policy differed only moderately from state to state. The top 5 states in this dimension were led by The Last Frontier of Alaska with a score of 21.4 followed by: 2.

Nevada (18.7), 3. Maine (14.5), 4. New Mexico (14.5), and 5. New Hampshire (14.5).

The five least free states in this dimension were led by Illinois, the home state of President Barack Obama, with a last place score of -22.1. The runners up to Illinois were: 46. South Dakota (-11.4), 47. California (-13.9), 48. New York (-16.6), and 49. Maryland (-17.9). What is significant about these findings is that states which people assume are generally socially liberal, like California and New York, finished almost dead last when Ruger and Sorens considered the full policy implications of this label.

Finally, the dependent variable of overall freedom combines the other dependent variables and gives us a detailed look at which states may favor the more freedom orientated individual through their respective polices. The range of 216.8 is so great that it is clear which states are basing their policy on what the average libertarian might call “statism.” The rankings for over all freedom are as listed below:

<u>Top 10 States</u>	<u>Bottom 10 States</u>
1. North Dakota 66.6	41. Mississippi -29.0
2. South Dakota 61.3	42. West Virginia -29.4
3. Tennessee 60.8	43. Vermont -34.0
4. New Hampshire 55.6	44. Maryland -35.2
5. Oklahoma 47.9	45. Illinois -35.2
6. Idaho 43.2	46. Rhode Island -40.4
7. Missouri 37.6	47. Hawaii -67.3
8. Virginia 37.3	48. New Jersey -78.8
9. Georgia 36.6	49. California -85.8
10. Utah 35.7	50. New York -150.2

So, what exactly influences a particular state to orientate towards a more free or less free direction in each of the respective policy dimensions? After a bivariate analysis (see Table 3 below) it was revealed that seven variables statistically correlated with various types of freedom.

First, how did population density affect freedom in its various measures? Having a lower population density correlated at $-.333$ with a higher fiscal policy score (more freedom) with a significance of $.018$. In regulatory policy, population density correlated at the $.01$ level with a significance of $.003$. In terms of overall economic freedom, there was a positive correlation between lower population density and a higher level of economic freedom with a significance of $.005$. For the personal freedom variable, once again it correlated with a $.05$ significance of $.027$. Finally, with the overall freedom index measure, having a lower population density resulted in a higher freedom score with a strong significance of $.001$.

So, when looking at income, did it really have no impact on freedom as predicted? The bivariate analysis revealed that income correlated with fiscal policy at the $.05$ level with a significance of $.023$. However, there were no statistically significant correlations with either regulatory policy or economic policy. Similarly, there was no correlation with personal freedom and, naturally, no statistically significant relationship with overall freedom. Therefore, it can be said that the average income of a particular state had no bearing on how a free a particular state was or was not.

Do states with a higher percentage of white non-Hispanic population actually have higher levels of freedom? According to the cross-tab analysis, regulatory freedom correlated with higher regulatory freedom at the $.01$ level with a significance of $.005$, but

not with economic freedom. Despite no correlation with personal freedom either, in terms of overall freedom score, percentage of the white population positively correlated with a statistically significant score at the .05 level of .03.

For the independent variable of percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree, there was also a slight statistical correlation with a specific freedom measure. For the fiscal policy variable, percent with a bachelor's degree correlated at the .05 level with a significance of .044. There was no such effect with regulatory policy or overall economic freedom with this variable. However, in terms of overall freedom there was only a slight positive significance of .043 at the .05 level.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Freedom
Correlations

		Fiscal	Reg.	Economic	Personal	Overall Score
Pop. Density	Pearson Correlation	-.333	-.410	-.432	-.312	-.469
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	.003	.002	.027	.001
Av. Income	Pearson Correlation	-.321	-.068	-.274	-.091	-.274
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.640	.054	.530	.054
Percent White	Pearson Correlation	.125	.395	.267	.268	.307
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.388	.005	.061	.060	.030
% Bach Degree	Pearson Correlation	-.286	-.134	-.276	-.141	-.287
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	.353	.052	.330	.043
% Church Atten	Pearson Correlation	.437	.152	.399	-.263	.311
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.292	.004	.065	.028
Ranney Index	Pearson Correlation	-.386	-.599	-.555	-.057	-.526
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000	.000	.696	.000
Fiscal Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.346	.913	.159	.879
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.014	.000	.271	.000
Regulatory	Pearson Correlation	.346	1	.699	.260	.704
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014		.000	.069	.000
Economic	Pearson Correlation	.913	.699	1	.234	.976
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.102	.000
Personal	Pearson Correlation	.159	.260	.234	1	.438
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.271	.069	.102		.001
Overall Score	Pearson Correlation	.879	.704	.976	.438	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.001	

Highlight = statistically significant correlation

After coding for weekly church attendance, the data did reveal a correlation between higher rates of church attendance and greater levels of freedom. While it was predicted that the effect would be small if any, in reality, it was significant with fiscal policy score at the .01 level with .002 significance and with overall economic freedom at .008 which is significant at .01. As one might expect, this naturally transitioned to a correlation with overall freedom score of .028 which is significant at the .05 level.

What is particularly interesting to note is that the only cultural variable that had any statistical effect of personal freedom was population density. The economic freedom dimension saw many more correlations, showing how fiscal and regulatory policy varies more from state to state and appears to be more of a focus for policy makers.

So, are these cultural variable correlations the only factors of freedom which are of importance for this study? When looking at the political control variables, the picture became clear, but not in the direction expected. After coding for governors' political party affiliation, the results showed that it correlated very strongly with regulatory policy variable, economic freedom, and overall freedom. Similar effects were seen from the 2012 election control with fiscal policy, economic freedom, and overall freedom scores statistically correlating with each states electoral choice. In general, Republican states in both the governors' mansions and on the 2012 map had higher levels of each of the culture variables.

The Ranney Index, which is a much more in depth measure of state political control revealed the most insight into the importance of politics and partisanship on state policy. With fiscal policy, the correlation was .006 and significant at the .01 level. The relationship was even stronger with regulatory policy and economic freedom, both highly

correlated at .000. There was no relationship between a higher level of political control and personal freedom, but overall freedom was statistically significant at the .01 level at .000. Such a strong relationship reveals that perhaps political control is the most important variable of all those measured. A state strongly controlled by the GOP was much more likely to score higher when all cultural variables were controlled. The regression equations revealed this to the case

Now, what is actually impacting the various measures of freedom? Is it the cultural measures of population, income, education, homogeneity, and church attendance? Or, instead, is it all related to political parties and level of control? We all know there are fundamental differences between Republicans and Democrats, but when controlling for politics, does anything else matter at all? After running a regression analysis, the answer becomes crystal clear. The results showed that the only variable that still significantly correlated with overall freedom, other than the Ranney Index and political control, was population density at .021 at the .05 level.

What Tables 4,5, and 6 indicate is that the only two factors that were found to statistically influence whether a state is more-free or less-free is the density of its population and level of control by one particular political party. The findings for population density might explain why Ruger and Sorens found that states in the upper Great Plains and Rocky Mountains had the highest aggregate freedom scores. With this data in mind, it is easy to see why states like North Dakota and South Dakota, both with population densities of less than 11 people per square mile and low Ranney scores of less than .27, are the two highest ranked states on the Ruger and Sorens freedom chart. Yet, when it comes to economic freedom by itself, the regression indicates that the only

statistically significant factor in influencing a state's economic policy is political parties. States with more Republican control have more free-market oriented policies than Democratic ones that opt for higher levels of regulation and taxation. Now, this should not come as a surprise to anyone who follows the policy orientations of the nation's two major parties, yet the fact that partisan affiliation out ways all other cultural components is important to recognize.

Of course, when it comes to personal freedom, there was no direct relationship with political party. In terms of this dimension, Ruger and Sorens were correct when they stated that partisanship affiliation and ideology appears to have no impact on aggregate personal freedom, with Republican states preferring certain types of individual freedom like gun rights and homeschooling and Democratic ones choosing marijuana legalization and homosexual marriage. However, what did prove significant in determining personal freedom was population density. The regression showed that once population was controlled for, the only significant factor in determining personal freedom was church attendance, with a significance of .008 at the .01 level. This is exhibited in the states of Alaska and Nevada, both of whom have low population densities and low church attendance at around 30%, yet have the two highest respective scores on the personal freedom index. This goes along with the general hypothesis that the less populated a state is, the less desire there is to control the behavior of one's neighbors through the coercive force of government.

Regression Tables

Table 3: Excluded Variables in Overall Freedom

Model	Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics	
					Tolerance	
1	Pop. Density	-.306 ^b	-2.391	.021	-.329	.836
	Av. Income	-.160 ^b	-1.278	.208	-.183	.946
	Percent White	.234 ^b	1.936	.059	.272	.978
	Bach Degree	-.107 ^b	-.811	.421	-.117	.864
	Church Attend.	.130 ^b	.982	.331	.142	.857
2	Av. Income	-.039 ^c	-.286	.776	-.042	.756
	Percent White	.193 ^c	1.641	.108	.235	.953
	Bach Degree	.045 ^c	.310	.758	.046	.671
	Church Attend.	.092 ^c	.715	.478	.105	.842

a. Dependent Variable: Overall Score

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Ranney Index

c. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Ranney Index, Population Density

Table 4: Predictors in Model of Overall Freedom

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	70.249	16.557		4.243	.000
	Ranney Index	-139.414	32.502	-.526	-4.289	.000
2	(Constant)	63.702	16.034		3.973	.000
	Ranney Index	-106.625	33.911	-.403	-3.144	.003
	Pop. Density	-.048	.020	-.306	-2.391	.021

a. Dependent Variable: Overall Score

Table 5: Model Summary for Overall Freedom

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.526 ^a	.277	.262	35.24445
2	.596 ^b	.355	.328	33.63106

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ranney Index

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ranney Index, Population Density

Table 6: Excluded Variables in Economic Freedom

Model	Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics	
					Tolerance	
1	Pop. Density	-.248 ^b	-1.945	.058	-.273	.836
	Av. Income	-.153 ^b	-1.250	.218	-.179	.946
	Percent White	.189 ^b	1.582	.120	.225	.978
	Bach Degree	-.083 ^b	-.637	.527	-.093	.864
	Church Attend.	.220 ^b	1.735	.089	.245	.857

a. Dependent Variable: Economic

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Ranney Index

Table 7: Predictors in Model of Economic Freedom

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	69.611	14.970		4.650	.000
	Ranney Index	-136.007	29.387	-.555	-4.628	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Economic

Table 8: Model Summary for Economic Freedom

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.555 ^a	.309	.294	31.86673

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ranney Index

Table 9: Excluded Variables in Personal Freedom

Model	Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics	
					Tolerance	
1	Av. Income	.083 ^b	.522	.604	.076	.757
	Percent White	.213 ^b	1.542	.130	.219	.958
	Bach. Degree	.045 ^b	.271	.788	.039	.697
	Church Atten.	-.372 ^b	-2.792	.008	-.377	.930
	Ranney Index	.083 ^b	.551	.584	.080	.836
2	Av. Income	-.170 ^c	-.994	.325	-.145	.562
	Percent White	.158 ^c	1.193	.239	.173	.933
	Bach Degree	-.226 ^c	-1.282	.206	-.186	.523
	Ranney Index	-.041 ^c	-.275	.784	-.041	.758

a. Dependent Variable: Personal Freedom

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Population Density

c. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Population Density, Church Attendance

Table 10: Predictors in Model for Personal Freedom

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.104	1.551		.712	.480
	Pop Density	-.011	.005	-.312	-2.276	.027
2	(Constant)	17.109	5.914		2.893	.006
	Pop Density	-.014	.005	-.411	-3.085	.003
	Church Atten.	-.369	.132	-.372	-2.792	.008

a. Dependent Variable: Personal Freedom

Table 11: Model Summary for Personal Freedom

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.312 ^a	.097	.079	8.75310
2	.475 ^b	.226	.193	8.19242

a. Predictors: (Constant), Population Density

b. Predictors: (Constant), Population Density, Church Attendance

CONCLUSION

So what does this all mean? For one, these findings highlight a classical American debate that has gone on since the days of the Constitutional Convention in 1787. One of the main points of contention between the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists surrounded what type of nation the United States was to become. While the Federalists, in the mold of Alexander Hamilton, envisioned the United States as strong economic nation with cities fostering banking, industry, and a mercantile economy, the Anti-Federalists yearned for the vision of Thomas Jefferson of an agrarian republic with citizen yeoman farmers. While the institutions established with the ratification of the constitution facilitated the development of the United States to the Hamiltonian vision, the urban/rural divide, as shown by the data, plays as much a role in the formation of public policy today as political party orientation. Indeed, the correlation between population density and overall freedom would serve to prove Jefferson correct in that the more agrarian states implement policies that better protect individual liberty than those states in which the population cannot spread over a vast frontier. Such states would justifiably have very different aspirations for what the ideal government ought to do. Look no further than the current debate over gun rights to see this divide in action. The phenomenon of the urban/rural divide has long been a phenomenon of American politics and was noted by de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, “In this case the different fractions of the people may more properly be considered as distinct nations than as mere parties; and if a civil war breaks out, the struggle is carried on by rival peoples rather than by factions in the State.” De Tocqueville’s foreshadowing of a Civil War eventually can to fruition in 1861 between a Southern people with an Agrarian slave labor economic

system and an industrial and mercantile Northern people with a wage labor economic system. While the divide between urban and rural is not as fractious as it was in the early days of the republic up until the Southern secession, the data illustrates that it is still having an effect on public policy.

Today, much has changed from the days of the founding in regards to citizenship, race, and gender roles which has naturally had an effect on both policy makers and public policy. Of course, at the end of the day, discussion of modern American public policy making must generally start and end with a discussion of political parties and the role of partisanship. In his farewell address as President of the United States, George Washington warned against what he saw as the “the baneful effects of the Spirit of Party.” The sentiment expressed by the Father of Our Country reflects very similar the views of James Madison on factions in Federalist 51, yet the institutions of government they created necessitated the creation of a two party system. No matter how much distrust the founders had in political parties, they are here to stay and it is best to work with the system we have, rather than just sit idly by and yearn for the two parties to go away entirely.

This problem is especially prevalent within the libertarian movement in general. Many who openly identify as libertarian scorn voting and dismiss anyone who attempts to work within the Republican Party as a “sell-out.” Now, of course, it is especially easy to get frustrated with the current hyper-partisan political climate, but we cannot stick our heads in the sand and pretend that politics does not have an effect on our everyday lives. Indeed, the public policy variables studied by Ruger and Sorens have very real world consequences. As a rebuttal to many libertarian friends, the findings from this study

indicate that those who care about freedom should choose to vote for and participate in Republican Party politics. Of course, not all Republicans embrace the idea of liberty and limited constitutional government, but they come much closer to this ideal than do the Democrats. In this study, a high level of Republican political control strongly correlated with higher levels of freedom. There is a reason that the libertarian leaning Ron Paul, Rand Paul, and Justin Amash have all chosen to run in the party of Reagan. While the GOP does not always run candidates up to this standard (John McCain, Mitt Romney), part of maturing as a political movement is realizing that voters cannot get everything they want in electoral politics. The Libertarian Party has been around for more than 30 years now, but it has never come remotely close to achieving mainstream success in either state or federal elections and is not the preferred electoral vehicle for libertarians by any means. Now, many left-libertarians, who yearn for acceptance from mainstream progressives, might say “But we have social issues in common with the Democratic Party. Why not work with them as well?” The answer to that is that the data simply does not support this claim with each party preferring certain freedoms to others. Indeed, there are many more personal freedom issues, like homeschooling and firearm ownership for instance, than simply homosexual marriage and smoking marijuana, which the Democrats generally support. Because elections have consequences for public policy, all those who value liberty in this country should be part of the solution, not the problem.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the 50 American states on an index of “freedom” to determine whether specific cultural elements present in certain states help foster an atmosphere of both individual and economic liberty. The hypothesis of this paper is that states with a rural population, and/or a generally homogenous population, will rank higher in “freedom” by enacting public policies that maximize human liberty and protect individual rights in the classical liberal understanding. Assisting this study is the 2013 state ranking index (Ruger and Sorens 2013). The research design combines both a quantitative analysis of specific empirical data with a qualitative examination of specific political and cultural phenomenon within particular states and/or regions.

When controlling for the effects of political party control, it was found that the only cultural effects that shaped state policy in a more freedom oriented direction was lower population density. The major controlling factor in economic and overall freedom was political control. With strong Republican control correlating with higher levels of freedom. This was not the case with personal freedom, however, with population density and weekly church attendance being the controlling factors.