Title
The misadministration of elections: An analysis of election practices and voting by age and race

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Publication Date
2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The misadministration of elections:

An analysis of election practices and voting by age and race

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Social Welfare

by

Jason Anthony Plummer

2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The misadministration of elections:

An analysis of election practices and voting by age and race

by

Jason Anthony Plummer

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Laura Wray-Lake, Chair

Safeguarding democracy in the United States requires ensuring that all citizens are able to vote and have that vote count. However, voter turnout rates by race and age are uneven. Employing a critical race theory approach to the analysis of election administrations for 3,111 counties and county equivalents, three research questions were examined in this study: 1) How do election administration practices cluster across counties; 2) What is the relationship between election administration profiles and overall youth (18 – 29) voter turnout? Does the relationship between election administration profiles and youth voter turnout vary by ethno-racial groups; and 3) To what extent do election administration practice profiles relate to voter turnout rates differently for youth compared to adult voters, within ethno-racial groups?

Latent profile analysis was conducted using three-step maximum likelihood estimation. Results indicated three typologies of election administration: 1) Well Administered, characterized by low registration rejections, felony removal, failure to respond removals, and

mail ballot rejections rates and low rates of provisional ballots cast); 2) Inadequately Administered, registration rejections and removal rates below the national average, but more than 10 times the rate of the Well Administered typology; and 3) Maladministered, characterized by high rejection rates and high variability across all indicators. A county's carceral climate, rates of adult incarceration and juvenile institutionalizations, was a significant predictor typology membership.

Youth voter turnout was higher in counties with well administered elections compared to the inadequately administered elections, but not maladministered ones. White youth in well administered counties had higher voter turnout than inadequately administered elections, but there were no associations between election administration typology and voter turnout for other ethno-racial groups. The turnout gap between youth and adult voters did not vary across election administration typology overall, yet for Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islanders, the youth-adult gap narrowed because of lower rates of adult voting in maladministered counties. Focusing on how election administration typologies vary across counties provides a pathway to protecting voting rights under state laws and constitutions that guarantee fair elections. For political social workers, understanding the typology of a county's election aids in tailoring voter engagement strategies.

The dissertation of Jason Anthony Plummer is approved.

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2022

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation was supported with funding from the Frank Gilliam Social Justice award and emotional support from my loving mother, Gay J. Plummer, and my chosen family Mary Jo Adgate and Allen O. Kpaway.

This dissertation is the culmination of the skills and knowledge that I acquired during this PhD program. With that said, I would like to acknowledge the faculty that helped to prepare me for independent research (in no particular order): Dr. Laura Wray-Lake for the multitude of comments on my work that helped push me to be rigorous; Dr. Aurora P. Jackson for her support throughout the program and encouraging me to be my authentic, scholarly self. Dr. Matt Barreto and Efrén Pérez for helping me connect the political process to aspects of social well-being and deepening my appreciation for science behind political analysis. I would also like to acknowledge members of my cohort who helped me process my ideas and supported me during my time in this program: Kristen Brock-Petroshius, Lei Chen , Javier Garcia-Perez, Jin Yao Kwan, Melanie Sonsteng-Person, Michele Wong. In addition to my awesome cohort, I have been fortunate to know Skye Allmang, Elena Maker Castro, Sid Jordan, Marcel Roman, Brenda A. Tully, and Sara Wilf who have been instrumental in my growth as a scholar. Additionally, I want to thank Bo Liu and Marcel Roman for being so generous with their free time in training me in R.

Black students matter. I would like to thank them for keeping me grounded and believing in me and my ideas: Victoria Copeland, Domonique Henderson, Dominique Mikell, Taylor Reed, and Vanessa Warri. Related to this, I want to thank SWARC for fighting to create a space where Black students can thrive and Dr. Laura S. Abrams for implementing aspects of the action plan.

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Wells, R., Wray-Lake, L., **Plummer, J.A.,** & Abrams, L. (preprint). 'I feel safe out here': Youth perspectives on community-based organizations in urban neighborhoods. *Journal of the Society of Social Work and Research*. https://doi.org/10.1086/714132

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Selected Research Awards and Grants

Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. Social Justice Award, UCLA (2022)	$2,400
Graduate Research Mentorship, UCLA (2019)	$20,000
The Institute on Inequality and Democracy at UCLA Luskin (2019)	$1,000
Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, UCLA (2018, 2019)	$6,000

Introduction

Safeguarding democracy in the United States requires ensuring that all citizens are able to vote and have that vote count. Beyond issues of governance, ensuring the full participation of all people strengthens social well-being (Dawes, 2020). Young adults who vote have positive health and mental health outcomes, higher rates of educational attainment, and higher incomes (Hope, 2022) and the social policies that result from a more representative electorate are thought to be more reflective of the needs of society. This concern with the representativeness of the electorate and the responsiveness of public policy is a concern of political social work practice (Pritzker & Lane, 2017). However, since young voters came out in record numbers in 2008 to election Barack Obama as the first Black president, voting rights, including youth voting rights, have come under threat. This contemporary assualt on voting rights has historical antecendents.

The United States' Declaration of Independence makes a bold claim that the purpose of government is to secure the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that government derives its powers from the consent of the governed. Yet, when Thomas Jefferson wrote these words, he did so while enslaving 130 persons (Hannah-Jones, 2021). In order to resolve the inherit tension between the ideals outlined in a Declaration of Independence that argued for an inherent right to self-governance and equality among citizens and the legality of chattel slavery, race became the justification for slavery and the political exclusion of free Black people through political violence and vote denial (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Olson, 2004; Taylor, 2016; Wang T. A., 2012). Hence, most states restricted the franchise to property owning (real property and enslaved persons), white[1] males (Keyssar, 2000). This decision shaped

[1] In this study, I will use the term white, with a lowercase 'w' to refer to white people. This is done out recognition that within the United States, whiteness is a form of social standing afforded to persons of European descent (Olson, 2004). Moreover, rather than use the terms people of color or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), I use non-white to reflect that Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian people are often excluded from the privileges that

American political institutions. Slaveholding states were granted additional representation on a prorated basis in the House of Representatives and the Electoral College (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Keyssar, 2020). The material effect of these decisions was that slaveholders controlled the presidency, Speaker's chair, and chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, respectively, for decades during the antebellum period (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Hannah-Jones, 2021). With passage of the Civil War amendments that prohibited slavery (13th Amendment), granted citizenship to the formerly enslaved by establishing that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States" are citizens (14th Amendment), and enfranchised all Black people (15th Amendment), the full political incorporation of Black people was anticipated (Burton & Derfner, 2021). For a brief period of American history, Reconstruction, this was achieved.

The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments are also known as the Reconstruction Amendments due to their effect on American democracy, chiefly, the political incorporation of Black people (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Joseph, 2020; Keyssar, 2000). In fact, the dominant narrative around the Reconstruction period is to cast it as a part of the United States' progress towards to expanding the electorate. However, expanding the franchise to Black Americans was the exception during the post-Civil War period (Joseph, 2020; Keyssar, 2000). In the northern and western parts of the United States, immigration from Ireland, Asia, non-English speaking European nations had the potential to transform the American electorate (Keyssar, 2000). These demographic changes combined with Southern effort to undermine Black political agency to form resistence to democracy and universal suffage (Joseph, 2020; Keyssar, 2000). This was most pronounced in the South where states devised ingenious ways to appear compliant with the Constitution while ensuring white rule in the South (Anderson, 2018; Joseph, 2020; Mickey,

whiteness affords. However, when discussing these groups in terms of demography, I use the term ethno-racial because ethnicity follows the same process of othering that race has within the United States.

2015). Hence, the efforts to finish the work that Reconstruction Amendments started took root in the South.

The Second Reconstruction, 1954 to 1965, encompasses the period between the decision in *Brown v Board of Education* decision and the signing of the Voting Rights Act (Joseph, 2020). However, this period is more widely known as the Civil Rights era where Black activists articulated claims of citizenship founded on the absence of injustice and violence as well as the ability to live in an integrated society with safe neighborhoods, quality schools, and economic security (Joseph, 2020). The dominant narrative around of the Civil Rights Movement centers on the Black freedom struggle. Yet, Black youth and veterans were an integral part of the Civil Rights Movement (Bromberg, 2019; Frost, 2021; Parker, 2009) and as such, the youth voting rights movement is bound up with the Civil Rights Movement. Youth engagement in social movements and politics is not new. For example, during the 1800s, youth, under the voting age of 21, campaigned and gave speeches on behalf of candidates and, often, parents encouraged an interest in politics (Grinspan, 2016). During the Civil Right era, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organized voter registration drives (Parker, 2009). For Black college students and young veterans who were disenfranchised due to age and race, this work must have been especially salient. Hence, the first bill that World War II veteran and civil rights activist Charles Diggs, Jr. introduced to Congress, in his first term in the House of Representatives was a bill to lower the voting age to 18 (Frost, 2021). Ultimately, the voting age was lowered through Constitutional amendment in 1971, and its expansion of the franchise and connection to the Civil Rights movement make it a part of America's Second Reconstruction (Bromberg, 2019).

In the modern era, the Supreme Court has weakened the legislative acts that sought to remedy the political exclusion of Black and other non-white people, arguing that such protections are no longer necessary since differences in the registration and participation rates between white and non-white voters are not as stark (Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder, 2013). Such a backlash to political ascendancy of non-white voters is reminiscent of the concerted efforts to resist democracy and universal suffrage during the Reconstruction era. This backlash coupled with a renewed focus on racial and economic justice has caused some to refer to the time period since the 2008 election as America's Third Reconstruction (Bromberg, 2019; Joseph, 2020). Much like the Civil Rights era, youth are at the forefront of this Reconstruction. The United States ethno-racial composition will soon be majority non-white (Frey, 2018). This protends a political see change. For example, Barack Obama won 66% of the youth vote, the largest share that a presidential candidate earned since exit polling began (Rosentiel, et al., 2008). In response, states like Wisconsin, Tennessee, Texas enacted strict voter ID laws that ensure that student ID cards are not valid proof of identification for voting purposes (Bromberg, 2019; D'Ercole, 2021). Much like the backlash of the First Reconstruction, the efforts to make voting harder target non-white voters and possibly youth voters in general. In contemporary politics, youth civic engagement has included participation in social movements that have propelled some candidates to victory and they have been a part of elections with high voter turnout (Cilluffo & Fry, 2019; Fry, 2017; Gillion, 2020; Gillion, 2013).

The extant political science and social work literatures focus on the chilling effect of election practices along racial lines. This study builds on that tradition to include age, assessing how historic and contemporary racialized election practices are associated with youth voter (18 – 29) turnout by race and age. The focus on youth voters is merited to for two reasons: First,

providing youth with meaningful opportunities to translate their interests to political pursuits is important for their development and the social good. Doing so allows for incorporating their voice in the political process (Milner, 2010). Second, unlike some political activities that require financial resources, voting is, ostensibly, available to all citizens (Martin, 2012). Yet, this second premise seems questionable considering recent Supreme Court decisions and state legislation that have the potential to make voting more burdensome (Brennan Center for Justice, 2021). In short, this study conceptualizes racialized election practices as a barrier to youth political engagement. Moreover, blocking the non-white youth vote may have generational effects.

Race, Age, and Election Practices

Some election administrators responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by making voting more accessible in the 2020 Presidential election (Scanlan, 2020), and there were record levels of voter turnout. Specifically, 17 million more people voted in the 2020 Presidential than in 2016 (Fabina, 2021). However, while the overall voter turnout increased 5.4% from 2016 to 2020, the turnout rate increased by 3% among Black voters while the turnout rate for Latinx and white non-Hispanic was twice as high at 6% (Fabina, 2021). This difference in turnout rates may be a product of the structural racism embedded in US election practices. The historical record of racism and voting is clear. Poll taxes, white primaries, and grandfather clauses are some of the most notable examples creating administrative barriers to the right to vote (Anderson, 2018; Gardner & Charles, 2018; Keyssar, 2000). In addition, some states and election jurisdictions changed elected offices, like sheriff, to appointed ones or opted to run elections for state and local office when there were no federal elections (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Keyssar, 2000). The net effect of these election practices in the South was to create a de facto authoritarian state in the American south, often enforced by political violence (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Mickey, 2015).

The remedy was a series of congressional actions to protect the right to vote, culminating with the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) (Gardner & Charles, 2018).

Three provisions of the VRA were designed to remedy the political exclusion of Black people, specifically, and voters in general: the coverage formula (Section 4), preclearance (Section 5), and disparate impact (Section 2). Section 4 of the VRA authorized the Attorney General to determine which states had a voter registration or presidential voter turnout rate less than 50% for the 1964 Presidential Election (Gardner & Charles, 2018). This coverage formula applied to nine states (Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia) and counties and towns in seven other states (California, Florida, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, and South Dakota) (Gardner & Charles, 2018). Section 5 of the VRA required that jurisdictions with a history of voter supression and low voter turnout submit changes to their electoral laws prior to their enactment (Gardner & Charles, 2018). Section 2 prohibited states and election jurisdictions from using any voting practice that discriminatorily abridges the right to vote, using similar anti-discrimination language found in the Fifteenth Amendment (Gardner & Charles, 2018). Since its enactment in 1965, through subsequent reauthorizations and court decisions, the protections of the VRA have been clarified and expanded, starting with attempting to extend the franchise to younger voters.

When the VRA was first reauthorized in 1970, Congress granted 18-year-olds the right to vote (Frost, 2021; Gardner & Charles, 2018). However, the Court ruled that Congress exceeded its authority in granting 18-year-olds the right to vote in all elections, but allowed for their enfranchisement in federal elections only (Frost, 2021; Gardner & Charles, 2018; Keyssar, 2000). Soon after this decision, the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, enfranchising youth 18 to 20, was introduced and ratified in about 100 days (Bromberg, 2019; Frost, 2021; Gardner & Charles,

2018; Keyssar, 2000). The 1982 amendments and Court decisions clarified Section 2's prohibition against discriminatory election practices by outlining a set of factors to help determine when the "totality of the circumstances" in a jurisdiction suggest racially motivated changes in or enactment of election practices (Department of Justice, 2017; Gardner & Charles, 2018). With the 2006 reauthorization of the VRA, the provisions were extended for 25 years; however, subsequent Supreme Court decisions have eroded voting rights protections.

The Court's decision in Shelby County, *Alabama v. Holder* (2013) weakened the preclearance provision of the VRA, allowing jurisdictions with a history of racially discriminatory practices enact new election practices without federal review prior to enactment. As a result, multiple states have erected barriers to voting (Anderson, 2018). For example, New Hampshire's legislature mandated that voters possess a New Hampshire driver's license or vehicle registration in order to prove residency, but the state's supreme court struck down the legislation, noting that the law had an unequal impact on young people (Swann, 2021). In another Court decision that weakened the VRA, Justice Samuel Alito noted, "because voting necessarily requires some effort and compliance with some rules, the concept of a voting system that is 'equally open' and that furnishes an equal 'opportunity' to cast a ballot must tolerate the "usual burdens of voting" (Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee, 2021, p. 16). Two issues were before the Court in this case: 1) Arizona's provision invalidating votes cast outside of one's precinct and 2) barring third-parties from collecting ballots (Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee, 2021). Opponents of these changes in Arizona's election practices argue that are discriminatory, undermining equal access to the ballot and (Brennan Center for Justice, 2021). The proponents argued that these provisions were race neutral in that they affect all voters. Yet, non-white voters are disproportionately more likely to cast a ballot outside of their

precinct (Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee, 2021). With these recent Supreme Court decisions, states and counties can revise and enact new election practices that may increase the difficulty of voting.

The efforts of state legislatures and election officials to restrict voting rights has garnered national attention. Most notably, Florida's Secretary of State Katherine Harris' administrative decisions during the 2000 Presidential Election came under scrutiny for their partisanship and adverse effect on voter enfranchisement (Kimball, Kropf, & Battles, 2006; Zelden, 2020). More recently, Georgia Secretary of State, Brian Kemp, while campaigning for governor in 2018, placed 530,000 registration applications on hold (Nadler, 2018), purged 340,000 votes, blocked the registration of 50,000 would-be voters (Durkin, 2018), and a court order was necessary for him to count provisional ballots (Associated Press, 2018), prompting his opponent, Stacey Abrams, to make a non-concession, concession speech (Abrams S. , 2020). Such high-profile actions are salient, especially when they can be cast in a partisan light. However, the role of county officials in election administration that cannot be ignored. County officials are at the center of election administration in the United States (Kimball, et al., 2006; Strengthening American Democracy, 2021; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2001). Specifically, county officials may place emphasis on preventing ineligible persons from voting over helping eligible voters cast their ballots (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2001). Lastly, county-level turnout can be determinative in winning or losing at the state level.

Critical Race Theory and Democracy

Critical race theory (CRT) focuses on the origins and continuity of racism in American social and political systems (Crenshaw, 2011). In fact, racial discrimination has been and continues to be a motivating factor behind changes in US electoral procedures (Gardner &

Charles, 2018; Scher, 2011). Yet, few studies use CRT to assess the relationship between racialized election practices and youth voter turnout. Political and developmental scientists have argued that a youth's understanding of political systems influence their decision to be politically engaged (Cohen, 2010; Flanagan, 2013; Gentry, 2018). Yet, in documenting that voting rates among youth voters (ages 18 – 29) are consistently lower than older voters (Fraga, 2018; Holbein & Hillygus, 2020), few studies seek to connect these lower voter participation rates to election practices that are associated with voter suppression. For example, while scholars recognize that homeownership, membership in professional associations, and educational attainment are associated with an increased likelihood of registration and voting (Ansolabehere, et al., 2012; Dalton, 2017; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), what is omitted is that these markers of social status are rooted in structural racism (Olson, 2004; Taylor, 2016). Moreover, whereas apathy is most often listed as a reason for the lower turnout rates among youth compared to adults (Gentry, 2018), it is important to note that youth and adults report similar levels of civic knowledge and intentions to vote (Holbein & Hillygus, 2020). Last, this current cohort of youth voters is the most diverse in American history. As such, election practices that are racially discriminatory will affect them. In all, a CRT approach to assessing the relationship between election practices and youth voter turnout allows for understanding whether youth voters, especially non-white youth, are especially vulnerable to restrictive voting practices. Hence, this study will add an understanding of how election practices affect youth voting.

Employing a CRT approach to the analysis of election administrations allows for understanding how we arrived at accepting an electorate process that consistently produces racialized gaps in voter eligibility and turnout. Specifically, using CRT allows for understanding race and racism as embedded in U.S. laws (Crenshaw, 2011; Snowden, et al., 2021). Although

there is no definitive set of methodologies or doctrinal cannon for critical race theory, scholars who employ this framework tend to engage in two approaches: 1) investigating the relationship between white supremacy and social institutions, and 2) advancing ideas that dismantle systems of oppression (Graham, 2007). CRT requires understanding that the relationship between white supremacy and social institutions means recognizing white supremacy is often codified by race-neutral language. For example, whereas the Fifteenth Amendment prohibits restricting the right to vote on account of race, the Fourteenth Amendment allows for disenfranchisement "for participation in rebellion, or other crime." Thus, the Constitution allows for facially neutral practices of criminal disenfranchisement. However, in practice, non-white communities bear the burden of felon disenfranchisement (Scher, 2011; Wang T. A., 2012). Hence, in this study, the first tenet of critical race theory is applied by recognizing that while in general the act of voting carries burdens, the racial disproportionality of these burdens have become institutionalized through election administration practices.

The dismantling of oppressive election practices requires assessing who bears a disproportionate burden in casting a ballot. The US Constitution provides for protection against race (Fifteenth Amendment) and age-based discrimination in voting (Twenty-Sixth Amendment). Yet, there remains a persistent voter turnout gap along ethno-racial lines and age (Fraga, 2018). Since the United States' youth electorate is approaching being majority non-white (Frey, 2018), understanding how the United States' history of racially disparate voters intersects with age becomes important to ensuring that constitutional rights, are indeed, protected. Moreover, dismantling of oppressive election practices requires recognizing that racism often manifests as indifference to racialized disparities (Jones, 2000; Kendi, 2019). For example, efforts to make mail-in voting more accessible to seniors, while placing restrictions on

types of ID for voter registration and in-person voting, favor a disproportionately older and whiter population are a form age-based discrimination (Harrow, et al., 2020) *and* it is a form of racism in that it furthers a racial inequity.

Measurement tools like the Cost of Voting Index use a state's election laws and procedures to quantify these burdens and provide a method of ranking the states (Li, et al., 2018), and the Election Performance Index assesses the administration of elections. These efforts are important, but limited. Specifically, such state-level measurements do not account for the fact that elections in the United States are administered by counties. Second, election administration practices may work together to have cumulative effects on voting. In other words, a combination of election practices may affect voter turnout rates across ethno-racial groups or age groups in specific counties. Hence, this study will new knowledge about how combinations of election practices are associated with voter turnout by race and age.

Specific Aims and Implications

This study will apply a CRT framework to recognize that disproportionate burdens of non-white voters are rooted in a long history of racism in U.S. institutions. Donald Trump, his campaign, and allies, well before the results were known, falsely claimed the election results were rigged (Parks & Karson, 2020). In addition to motivating the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capitol, these falsehoods have become the basis for legislation that restrict the use of mail-in voting, enact stricter or new voter ID laws, limit drop boxes, and limit the ability to correct provisional ballots (Timm, 2020). Proponents of these changes in election practices argue that the restrictions prevent future political violence by ensuring election integrity, while opponents note that implementation of such legislation harms democratic governance, especially when predicated on a lie. Voters need to have faith in election practices and such practices should

support the full participation of all voters (Vercellotti & Anderson, 2006). Yet, election practices can serve to block eligible voters from the ballot (Keyssar, 2000; Pritzker & Lozano, 2021), and often expand disparities in voter turnout along ethno-racial lines (Abrams S. , 2020; Anderson, 2018). The CRT framework explains how the erosion of democratic values since the election President Obama are a continuation of historic patterns of racial subordination (Joseph, 2020).

The disparities remaining between the voter participation rates of white and non-white voters and young and adult voters suggest that more research is needed that explores the relationship between election laws and voter turnout. Specifically, Black voter turnout is lower than white voter turnout, save for when Barack Obama was on the ballor, and Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islander voter turnout is lower than both Black and white voter turnout (Fraga, 2018; United Stats Elections Projects, n.d.). This study departs from the typical approach of ranking states on election practices to instead describe county-level profiles of election administration practices. Of particular concern in this study is the effect of election administration on youth voters, in general, and youth voters of color, in particular. In other words, the research questions center on determining the extent to which restrictive voting climates at the county level are associated with inhibiting voting by race and age. To that end, the findings from this study can be used to identify which set of election practices are associated with a representative electorate, across age and ethno-racial groups. Additionally, this study uses counties as the unit of analysis. Given that elections are administered at the county-level, understanding how state-level policy is applied at the county-level is important to ensuring citizens, regardless of county of residence, receive the benefits of state-level laws designed to protect the right to vote. Thus, the main research question of this study is to what extent does county-level election administration affect voter turnout by race and age.

Literature Review

The review of the literature begins with a discussion of political social work practice and how the discipline regards protection of voting rights as foundational to social justice. The second section provides an overview of the relation between election practices and voter turnout. The election practices discussed are voter registration and list maintenance, provisional ballots, and vote from home procedures. The final section reviews youth voting, highlighting how the barriers that youth voters face are similar to those of voters of color. The literature review chapter concludes with the aims of the study.

Political Social Work Practice and Voting

Racial disparities in voting are a social justice issue and threat to democratic governance (International IDEA, 2021). A key metric for democratic governance is conducting free and fair elections that are inclusive (International IDEA, 2021; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Rawls, 1999, 1972). Moreover, within democratic societies, voting is one method of challenging social injustice. Yet, within the United States, historic and contemporary election practices are often designed to restrict the ability of non-white voters to cast a ballot, thereby reducing the ability of all Americans to participate equally in elections. Social workers are ethically obligated to challenging social injustice and pursue political justice (Brown, et al., 2020; Pritzker & Lozano, 2021). The latter is the focus of the field of political social work. This subfield of social work sits at the intersection of social work practice that centers the health and well-being of individuals within a social context and the academic discipline of political science that attends to the allocation of social resources. Specifically, political social work attends to the role of power within political institutions and how such power either inhibits or promotes social justice and social welfare (Lane & Pritzker, 2018), engaging in efforts to protect and expand the right to vote

(Pritzker, et al., 2021) as well as advocating for socially just policies. This latter aspect of social work practice is understood by the general public (Smith & Santiago, 2020; Calhoun, et al., 2020). For example, more than two-thirds of Minnesotan fairgoers agreed with the statements that *social workers are important for addressing social problems* and *social workers help change social policies*; additionally, four out of five fairgoers identified advocacy and lobbying as fields of social work practice (Calhoun et al., 2020).

Within political social work, two modalities of practice have become central (Pritzker & Lane, 2017): 1) the Humphreys macro-orientated model, which focuses on voter engagement strategies and helping social workers run for office, and 2) the Fisher model, which emphasizes the role of both electoral and non-electoral political engagement, such as organizing and activism. The Humphreys macro-orientated model of political social work practice is exemplified by Black social workers such as Barbara Lee, Ed Towns, and Ron Dellums serving in Congress (Shepherd & Pritzker, 2021). During the Progressive Era, social workers organized to defeat corrupt politicians and advance legislation at the state and federal levels (Ritter, 2007). More recently, the Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work has been credited with sustaining the Congressional Social Work Caucus with a steady stream of social workers interested in holding public office (Smith & Santiago, 2020).

Social workers employing methods similar to the Fisher model are apt to engage in neighborhood organizing and community development. For example, Black social workers, employing electoral and other political social work methods, worked in concert with other Black women to found the National Association of Colored Women (Shepherd & Pritzker, 2021). Additionally, during the Civil Right era, Black social workers used various non-electoral strategies, like protests, to secure community investments (Bell, 2014). Regardless of the formal

model that political social workers use, the goal is to ensure the political participation and empowerment of the communities they serve. Specifically, social work's involvement in the political process centers on increasing the participation of marginalized communities (Sandler et al., 2020). Ultimately, the Fisher model of political social work is broad and focuses on investigating how policies and methods to support community and social change.

The imperative to supporting the self-determination of clients and communities in social change often translates into a mandate to engage clients and communities as voters. The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA), also known as the motor-voter law, was born from the activism of political social worker Richard Cloward (Pritzker & Lane, 2017). This law requires that state department of motor vehicle agencies provide eligible individuals with the opportunity to register to vote, and has been instrumental in increasing registration rates (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016), especially among communities historically excluded from voting (Piven & Cloward, 2000). Such work by social work activists and scholars is core to political social work practice and important to social work practice writ large since the people and communities with whom social workers interact are often excluded from political participation due to disenfranchisement and differing physical or psychiatric abilities (Pritzker et al., 2021) and for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian American communities, such exclusions amounts to second class citizenship (Snowden, et al., 2021). Other forms of social and community change can be translated into civic engagement work with young people, often with the goal of engaging them as change agents (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013), engaging individuals as voters (Brown, et al., 2020; Sandler, et al., 2020), or enhancing the political education of social workers so that they are aware of the policymaking process and/or consider running for office (Lane & Pritzker, 2018; Ritter, 2007). This concern for increasing community and political

participation is similar to political science theory of protective democracy, which argues that democratic governance is best suited for protecting the rights of the individual (Gardner & Charles, 2018).

As the United States will become majority non-white in 2045, with Latinx being the largest minority group (Frey, 2018), it is important to understand how political institutions can adapt to reduce racialized disparities in voting. Moreover, since this demographic shift is expected to take effect among youth voters by 2027 (Frey, 2018), it is important to understand how race-based voter suppression tactics and efforts to restrict the participation of youth affect their ability to cast a ballot. There are a few reasons to include a focus on youth voters when analyzing voter suppression. First, youth who are blocked from voting may become long-term nonvoters (Holbein & Hillygus, 2020). Second, the absence of youth from electoral politics means that their issues do not become a part of the political agenda (Milner, 2010). This is concerning because the health of democracy rests on the full participation of all its members (Rawls, 1999, 1972; Sandler, et al., 2020). If youth decide to forgo electoral politics, then the resulting legislation may not reflect their values or respond to their concerns. Third, the age of youth voters places them within a transitional period in human development, moving from adolescence to adulthood. Developmental scholars believe that adolescence and young adulthood are critical times for crafting interventions to promote civic engagement (Finlay et al., 2011; Kahne, et al., 2013; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Moreover, civic engagement is an indicator of positive youth development since it incorporates social responsibility and prosocial behavior (Hope & Jagers, 2014) and positions youth as empowered civic actors capable of making contributions to society (Hart, et al., 2012; Lerner, et al., 2014; Wray-Lake, 2019). Taken

together, the focus on the political self-determination of youth is both a political and developmental project.

The extant literature on political social work focuses on how best to engage voters (Abramovitz et al., 2019; Sandler et al., 2020), investigate the antecedents of the political participation of social work students and social workers (Ostrander, et al., 2019; Ritter, 2007; Ritter, 2008), encourage social workers in seeking political office (Lane et al., 2018), and election infrastructure (Pitzer et al., 2021). This study intends to add to this literature by analyzing how election practices influence voter turnout at the county level. Lastly, by focusing on county-level election practices, the findings can support social work and community organizers in advocating and organizing to remove voting barriers in their local communities. Thus, this study adds to the knowledge of both disciplines by focusing on how electoral laws and their administration shape the political participation of youth. Given that the current and future generations of youth voters are racially and ethnically diverse, this study will add new knowledge on how election practices affect voting by race and age.

Election Administration and Voter Turnout

Constitutional amendments authorize Congress to enact protections against race, gender, and age-based discrimination; however, states and localities are responsible for the administration of elections (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). Thus, in practice, federal, state and local jurisdictions share the legal authority to regulate elections (Springer, 2014; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). Despite this shared authority, ranking states based on election practices has been the primary method of assessing the relationship between election climates and turnout. The Elections Performance Index, currently housed at the MIT Election Data and Science Lab, is a nonpartisan assessment of the administration of

elections in each of the 50 states (Elections Performance Index, n.d.). The Elections Performance Index, like the Cost of Voting Index, ranks states. The difference between these indices is that in terms of registration, the Cost of Voting Index assesses the number of days prior to a election by which a person must register (Li, et al., 2018), while the Elections Perfomance Index includes both registration rates and the number of registrations rejected (Elections Performance Index, n.d.). In other words, the Cost of Voting Index assess the burdens of voting while the Elections Perfomance Index focuses on the administration of elections. Yet, the overall idea of these metrics are the same: A well administered election should have a high voter turnout rates and low a number of provisional ballots cast (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Springer, 2014; Zelden, 2020). As a result, these indices focus on aggregate voter turnout; however, such reporting misses the influence of racism in election practices.

Understanding the decision to make voting more restrictive requires interrogating the role of racism in American democracy. In fact, the racial composition of a state's residents is significantly associated with proposing restrictive voting legislation (Bentele & O'Brien, 2013; Fraga, 2018). Such legislation can affect a voter's ability to do the following: 1) become and remain registered to vote, 2) cast a ballot, and 3) have the ballot counted (Abrams, 2020; Anderson, 2018; Rigby & Springer, 2011). Within the area of casting a ballot, the extant political science literature and U.S. case law has made clear that voter identification (ID) and criminal disenfranchisement laws can have both discriminatory intent and impact (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Hajnal, et al., 2018). However, ranking states as comparatively easy or difficult to vote may mask how county-level election administration affect voter turnout. For example, in states that are ranked as comparatively more difficult for voting, local election officials may enact

voter engagement strategies that help voters understand their rights or seek to reduce administrative barriers.

Texas has ranked near the bottom fifth in terms of ease of voting. However, its largest county, Harris County, has been a pioneer in making it easier to vote. For example, during the 2020 Presidential election, county election officials offered 24-hour voting (Lozano, 2020). Additionally, in order to reduce the number of provisional ballots cast, Harris County implemented a countywide system of voting, which enabled voters to vote at any polling location, and to making voting easier for young people, created polling locations at two college campuses (Rice, 2019). The result of these efforts was record-breaking voter turnout, 67% of registered voters, the highest since 1992 (Bennett, 2020). Yet, in terms of voter turnout, Texas ranked 46th (United States Elections Project, 2020). Consequently, the effect of county-level election practices may be missed with a focus on state-level policy administration and overall voter turnout. In other words, merely focusing on state level turnout may mask lower turnout rates among non-white and youth voters at the county level.

Index approaches, like the Cost of Voting Index and Elections Performance Index, require that researchers either treat indicators equally or make decisions about weighting; in contrast, latent approaches allows for the relationships among indicators to emerge (Grumbach, 2022). Thus, specific aspects or combinations of election administration practices are allowed to vary across counties and influence voter turnout rates. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of how different combinations of election practices are related and may influence the composition of the electorate is important for ensuring the vitality of American democracy. Moreover, it allows for grouping counties by these combinations of election practices. In other words, the focus analysis shifts from election practices, in the abstract, to how counties

implement specific election practices and how this may influence voter turnout. In short, a county-level method of assessing election climates by registration procedures, vote by mail, and provisional ballots may adequately capture burdens and administrative practices that are associated with voter turnout in meaningful ways.

Getting and Staying Registered

Given that registration is the first act in casting a ballot, ensuring that all eligible citizens have access to an efficient registration process is important to an increased and equitable voter turnout. Two federal legislative acts govern the registration process: 1) the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) and 2) the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). The NVRA has increased the accessibility of the registration process through enabling voter registration through department of motor vehicle offices (the Motor Voter provision) and other points of government contact such registering via public assistance offices. In addition, states that opted out of the Motor Voter provision were required to offer election day registration (Larocca & Klemanski, 2011), which is associated with increased turnout (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016; Holbein & Hillygus, 2020; Wang T. A., 2012). Lastly, in response to Florida's election irregularities in the 2000 Presidential Election (Zelden, 2020), Congress passed HAVA, which provided incentives for states to make their registration process electronic, offer online registration, and maintain their registration list (Fraga, 2018; Gardner & Charles, 2018; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). Yet, these efforts at modernizing and increasing access to registration still place the burdens of registering on the individual.

Potential registrants have to comply with registration deadlines and may have to submit documentation to prove their voting eligibility. For this reason, registration is understood as a

significant barrier to voter participation (Larocca & Klemanski, 2011; Scher, 2011). To that end, the NVRA, in effort to reduce barriers, allows eligible individuals to register and update their registration at a motor vehicle office, public assistance offices, and disability agencies (Gardner & Charles, 2018). Such expansion in the accessibility of registration is key to equalizing democratic participation (Piven & Cloward, 2000; Rigby & Springer, 2011; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). Yet, the discretion that local election officials can exercise may undermine voter registration efforts (Scher, 2011; Wang T. A., 2012). For instance, in Florida, Black Miami-Dade County residents were 46.1% more likely to have their registration applications placed on hold compared to their white counterparts (Merivaki, 2020). Moreover, there is variation in how vigorously states enforce Section 7 of the NVRA Section that authorizes registration through public assistance agencies (Scher, 2011; Wang T. A., 2012). In Missouri, Indiana, and Ohio, office staff failed to offer clients voter registration forms during transactions that were covered by the NVRA (Project Vote, 2014). Additionally, in Georgia, 60% of counties registered fewer than 25 individuals through a public assistance office over a seven-year period (Project Vote, 2014). Consequently, the accessibility of registration varies not only by state, but by county.

Registration drives are another method for increasing the accessibility of the registration process. In contrast to state-driven methods of registration, like through motor vehicle and public assistance offices, community-based registration drives reach people in the course of their ordinary lives (Mortellaro & Cohen, 2014). Moreover, registration drives help to ensure that underrepresented groups, including college students and low-income individuals, have access to the registration process (Herron & Smith, 2013; Merivaki, 2019; Ulbig & Waggener, 2011; Wong & Fink, 2013). In fact, a door-to-door registration drive effort yielded a 4.4% increase in

voter registration for the targeted neighborhood (Nickerson, 2015) and campus registration drives were effective in getting students registered and increasing their turnout (Ulbig & Waggener, 2011). Moreover, since young people are less likely to drive, this implies that they are also likely to use registration via motor vehicle offices. Regardless of registration method, once received, registration offices have to verify the completeness of applications and screen out duplicate application (Merivaki, 2019). To that end, there is variability in rejection rates across and within states. For example, between January and December 2012, Florida's average registration rejection rate was 11% while Duval County and Orange County had a rejection rate of 15% and 6.1%, respectively.

In contrast to getting registered, being removed from the registration rolls is often initiated by government actors. In theory, maintenance of registration lists should be straightforward: voters are removed when they are no longer eligible to vote to death, change in residence, criminal conviction, if the voter wishes to be removed (Gardner & Charles, 2018). Specifically, there are two non-voter-initiated ways to be removed from the registration rolls that are vulnerable to weaponization: 1) conviction of a crime, commonly referred to as felony disenfranchisement and 2) failure to respond to contact from an election official after period of non-voting (Scher, 2011; Wang T. A., 2012). First, in terms of removal due to felony conviction, Maine and Vermont, along with the District of Columbia, are the only jurisdictions that do not disenfranchise citizens due to felony conviction (Fraga, 2018; Gardner & Charles, 2018; The Sentencing Project, 2021). For citizens living in the other 48 states, the relationship between felony convictions and voting rights is nuanced. Twenty-one states bar incarcerated persons from voting, 16 bar prisoners, parolees, and probationers from voting, and 11 bar any person

convicted of felony from voting (The Sentencing Project, 2021). This variation in felon disenfranchisement can be explained by structural racism.

While felony disenfranchisement laws have roots in ancient democracies, felony disenfranchisement in the United States is racialized, particularly targeting Black people (Behrens & Uggen, 2003; Gardner & Charles, 2018; The Sentencing Project, 2021). For example, Justice Rehnquist, in writing for a unanimous Court, noted that white supremacy was a motivating factor in establishing Alabama's felony disenfranchisement laws (Hunter v Underwood, 1985). Yet, the Court has consistently affirmed the constitutionality of felony disenfranchisement (Behrens & Uggen, 2003; The Sentencing Project, 2021). The consequence of this decision has been that 1.8 million Black citizens cannot vote (The Sentencing Project, 2021). Specifically, Black voter turnout decreases as the population of disenfranchised increases (King & Erickson, 2016). Moreover, various scholars have found that persons detained for questions, arrested, or incarcerated as well as individuals who live in over-policed communities are less likely to vote (Drakulich, et al., 2017; Owens & Walker, 2018; Shedd, 2015). Such findings suggest that in addition to felon disenfranchisement laws, the overall criminal justice climate of a state can shape political behavior. Yet, policing is a local matter, so investigating more proximal criminal justice climates may further illuminate how felon disenfranchisement laws interact with election practices to influence voter turnout.

NVRA and HAVA required election jurisdictions to maintain accurate registration lists. The NVRA designated two circumstances for removing eligible voters from registration rolls: death and change in residence (Gardner & Charles, 2018). List maintenance procedures often involve sending registered voters a notice and if the notice is returned as undeliverable, the voter is moved to an inactive list (Minnite, 2010). This removal is typically done when the voter has

not voted in two federal elections (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Wang T. A., 2012). However, relying on undeliverable mail is problematic. Wang (2012) notes that for people who live with roommates or in multi-unit complexes, but whose name does not appear on a mailbox, their mail may be returned as undeliverable. Lastly, residential instability and frequency of voting vary by race and age. For example, young people are highly mobile (Junco, et al., 2018). In all, the assumption built into registration list maintenance is that voters are residentially stable and habitually participate in elections.

Provisional Ballots

The accuracy of a voter's registration status is important to casting a ballot. When a voter's registration status is challenged or cannot be verified by a poll worker, they are asked to cast a provisional ballot (Merivaki & Smith, 2016). Such registration challenges may be a result of the voter's registration being placed on hold, the voter may have been removed in error, or the voter may not be in the appropriate precinct (Scher, 2011; Wang T. A., 2012). Additionally, in states with voter identification laws, voters without an acceptable form of ID must cast a provisional ballot (Belkhir, 2017). In terms of voter ID laws, there are four categories of state law: 1) strict photo ID, 2) non-strict photo ID, 3) strict non-photo ID, and 4) non-strict non-photo ID (Belkhir, 2017). In states that have strict voter ID laws, valid identification is typically an unexpired state-issued ID (Barreto, et al., 2018). In short, in order to avoid casting a provisional ballot, a voter's registration has to be verified and current and their identification has to conform to state law.

Voter ID laws are problematic when state lawmakers narrow the forms of acceptable ID. This narrowing introduces uncertainty about what constitutes a valid ID for the purposes of voting. When asking for assistance about what type of ID would be acceptable for voting, there

was significant variation in the accuracy and type of information that emails with Latinx names received from election officials (White, et al., 2015). First, election officials are 5% more likely to respond non-informatively, asking whether the prospective wanted to cast an absentee ballot; second, Latinx emailers were 4 percentage points less likely to receive accurate responses (White, et al., 2015). Such difficulties run counter to the spirit of the VRA's protections for language minorities. When the VRA was reauthorized in 1975, Congress included for protections for language minorities, for example, Spanish, Chinese, and Navajo speakers, for (Higgins, 2015; Scher, 2011; Thernstrom, 2008). Under the VRA, language minorities in covered jurisdictions are supposed to receive election materials *and* voting assistance in their native language (Higgins, 2015; Scher, 2011). While the majority of Latinx, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Indigenous communities are proficient in English, when jurisdictions are in full compliance with the language of protections of the VRA (Section 203), voter turnout within these communities are higher (Fraga & Merseth, 2016; Parkin & Zlotnick, 2014; Tucker & Espino, 2007). Given that the Section 203 covers specific geographic areas, and not states, this underscores the local nature of election practices. Moreover, the inability to get accurate information about what forms of identification are acceptable for voting increases the likelihood that a person will end up casting a provisional ballot.

Vote by Mail Procedures

Instituting vote by mail procedures has a positive effect on voter turnout (Larocca & Klemanski, 2011; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). Washington and Colorado are the only states that have a fully mail-in election. In other states, vote-by-mail options vary from no excuse absentee balloting to absentee balloting with few exemptions. However, across all options, vote-by-mail ballots may be rejected for two reasons: 1) lateness or 2) voter errors.

Within voter errors, issues can be that the voter, and/or voter's witness, lack of signature, a mismatch between the signature on file with the registration and the returned ballot, or missing date of birth (Shino, et al., 2021). For young voters, signature mismatch may be more common since they are not yet accustomed to using signatures for official matters (Baringer, et al., 2020; Shino, et al., 2021). Additionally, during the 2018 midterm elections in Georgia, 45.2% of mail-in ballots cast by youth voters were rejected due to errors in their address compared 31% of those cast by adult voters (30 – 60+), while 3% of newly registered voters had their mail-in ballots rejected due late arrival (Shino, et al., 2021). In Florida, during the same time frame, 13% of mail-in ballots cast by youth voters were rejected compared to 5% adult voters (Baringer, et al., 2020). In addition to variation by state, counties within states vary. For example, Polk County, Georgia, had a rejection of 13%, while Fulton County's rate was below 2.5% (Shino, et al., 2021). Lastly, disparities within rejection rates can vary across counties. During the 2018 elections, while youth voters in Florida were more likely to have their mail-in ballots rejected than voters over 30, disparity was larger than 4.5 percentage points in Lafayette, Monroe, Santa Rosa, Volusia, and Walton counties while in Pinellas County, the rejection rate of mail-in ballots was roughly equivalent (Baringer, et al., 2020).

Summary

The extant literature provides support for the claim that election practices have an effect on voter turnout by race. Practices regarding registration make it difficult for non-white and youth voters to become registered and stay registered. Voter ID laws have a direct effect on voter turnout and increase the likelihood that voters who arrive at the polls would have to cast a provisional ballot. The existing statewide methods of assessing the effect of election practices on voter turnout, The Costs of Voting Index and the Elections Performance Index, assess such

practices within the areas of registration, vote-by-mail, and provisional ballots in order to rank the states on their relative ease of voting. However, these measures and the extant research do not focus on how the ease of voting may affect youth voting. There is reason to suspect that youth should be similarly affected by increasing the burdens of voting; however, newly eligible voters, e.g., 18- and 19-year-olds, may be especially vulnerable to a restrictive climate. In short, the effects of such county-level policies on the youth electorate is under-researched. Given the increasing ethno-racial diversity of the emerging youth electorate and the fact that voting is habit forming (Holbein & Hillygus, 2020), strengthening democracy against white supremacy requires understanding the effect of election administration on youth voters.

The Youth Vote

Since being granted the right to vote, youth voter turnout has been comparatively lower than other age groups (Fraga, 2018; Gentry, 2018). Many attribute this lack of engagement is to the fact that young voters, 18- to 24-year-olds, are less likely to actively seek out information on current events (Knight Foundation, 2020). Such evidence frames youth voters as disengaged from politics due to either cynicism or lack of a crystalized political identity (Gentry, 2018). Yet, their political participation is key to the vibrancy of democracy (Junco, et al., 2018). Incorporating youth into the political process is a necessity because with their fresh eyes, social institutions are renewed and updated to reflect contemporary challenges (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). The extant literature on election practices has found that such practices can either inhibit or promote voter turnout; however, because of assumptions about youth voters, there is scant attention paid to how election practices affect youth voter turnout. Additionally, categorizing all voters from ages of 18 to 29 as youth voters masks a lot of variation. Developmentally, youth is inclusive of late adolescence and young adulthood and a range of life experiences like first time

voting, students attending college away from home, young married couples, single parents, and working-class families. In terms of voting, first time voters, who have not adopted the habit of voting, may be distinct from older youth who may be embedded in social networks, such as unions and professional organizations, that give them resources; moreover, economic reasons to vote, like taxation and property values, may not be salient for youth (Dalton, 2017; Holbein & Hillygus, 2020; Wattenberg, 2020).

Barriers to voting

Scholarship notes that youth may face external barriers that inhibit their participation. For example, in states that rank low on the Cost of Voting Index (i.e., harder to vote states), youth were 10% less likely to vote than those youth who live in more voting accessible states (Juelich & Coll, 2020). In terms of voter ID laws, young people are less likely to drive and as a result, they are less likely to have driver's licenses (Fessler, 2016; Junco, et al., 2018). Additionally, a young person's understanding of the voting climate of their state may affect how they view voting. For example, 47% of youth incorrectly believe that being convicted of a misdemeanor crime can result in disenfranchisement, with Black youth being most likely to hold this belief (CIRCLE, 2020). This effect may be more pronounced in communities where criminal justice contact is high. The stigmatizing effect of incarceration may cause those convicted and their family members to withdraw from civic life (Burch, 2013). Given that Black and Latinx youth are more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system, this misinformation about criminal disenfranchisement may represent a barrier to youth voting (CIRCLE, 2020). Additionally, youth voters can also have criminal records (Hjalmarsson & Lopez, 2010).

The school-to-prison pipeline may operate to remove potential non-white voters from the electorate before they acquire the habit of voting. For example, approximately 50% of state

prisoners are between the ages of 18 and 35 (Burch, 2013). In a study on felony arrests of adults (average age at follow-up 24) who were either in foster care or received income assistance, 28% of former foster care youth were arrested for a felony and 22% of those who received income assistance (Barth, et al., 2010). Lastly, as of December 2021, 5.4% of the incarcerated population is between the ages of 18 and 25 (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2021). As already noted, criminal justice contact has a chilling effect on political engagement. Specific to youth voters below the age of 25, arrested youth were 6.6 percentage points less likely to vote in 2004 Presidential Election, while those incarcerated were 12.6 percentage points less likely to have voted (Hjalmarsson & Lopez, 2010). The long term effects of criminal climates on youth voting has yet to be thoroughly investigated.

In terms of voting by mail, for young voters, signature mismatch may be more common since they are not yet accustomed to using signatures for official matters (Baringer, et al., 2020). In terms of registration, youth voters are a highly mobile population, with some attending college away from home (Gentry, 2018). Although not statistically significant, Merivaki (2020) found that 45% of all on hold registration applications in Hillsborough County, Florida were from applicants between the ages 18 and 25. In sum, youth face barriers to voting that may be due to the design of the election system rather than psychological barriers.

Opportunity Structures for Voting

Providing with youth support in voting increases their participation. The media focus on the comparatively lower rate of voting among youth obfuscates the fact that youth do vote (Gentry, 2018). In the 2016 Presidential Election, youth voters were the only group to report an increase in their turnout rate (File, 2017). However, this increase was not uniform. Black youth voter (18 – 29) decreased by 6.4 percentage while non-Hispanic white youth voter turnout

increased by 3.0 percentage points, Hispanic and other non-Hispanic racial groups saw an increase of approximately 1 percentage point (File, 2017). More recently, the 2018 Midterm election and 2020 Presidential election saw an increase in youth voting (Thomas, et al., 2021). However, youth turnout rates vary substantially by state and locality (Thomas, et al., 2021). In Texas, the youth voter turnout rate 41% compared to 59% Oregon (CIRCLE, 2021). This uneven increase in voter turnout by age and race may be directly related to policies. Scholars have found that election practices, like election day registration and pre-registration, that expand access to registration increase voter turnout among youth (Holbein & Hillygus, 2020; Petering, et al., 2021; Lickiss, et al., Triemstra, 2020). For example, 44% of youth who registered to vote at an urban primary health care provider office, whose patient population was primarily Medicaid/Medicare payers, subsequently voted in the 2018 Midterm (Lickiss, et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts focused on making voting at home more accessible. Understanding how vote-by-mail election practices influenced youth voter turnout may provide insight into strategies that support youth political engagement.

Research Aims

Researchers typically use a state's ranking or change in ranking in the cost of voting to assess the effect of election administration on voter turnout. However, such indices do not consider the relationships among indicators (Voight & Torney-Purta, 2013). Moreover, state law provides a baseline from which county board of electors or election board administer elections may depart (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). As a result, the ease of voting may vary from county to county within the same state. Taken together, an examination of how election administration affects voter turnout at the county-level is important. This study uses a latent profile approach to assess for the heterogeneity of election administration in counties

across the United States. Of particular concern in this study is the effect of election laws on youth voters, in general, and youth voters of color in particular.

The purpose of this dissertation project is twofold: 1) to examine the effect of county-level election practices on voter turnout during the 2020 Presidential Election by race and age and 2) to assess which combinations of election practices are associated with high and low rates of youth turnout in general and for different ethno-racial groups. Additionally, given that the 2020 Presidential Election occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, assessing whether the general trend towards reducing barriers to voting in person 2020 is associated with increases in the youth vote is of interest. To that end, the research questions and associated hypotheses are as follows:

Research Question 1: How do election administration practices cluster across counties?

Hypothesis 1: At least two profiles of county-level election administration will be detected using a latent profile analysis to reflect variation in ease of voting across counties.

Hypothesis 2: The carceral climate of the county (per capita adult incarceration rates and/or per capita juveniles institutionalized) will predict membership in an election administration typology characterized by maladministration.

Hypothesis 3: Counties where white people are at or below their national proportion would be a predictor of membership in an election administration typology characterized by maladministration.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between election administration profiles and overall youth (18 – 29) voter turnout? Does the relationship between election administration profiles and youth voter turnout vary by ethno-racial groups?

Hypothesis 4: Counties that are comparatively harder to vote in would be associated with lower 2020 youth voter turnout rate among each non-white voter group: Black, Latinx, Asian Americans, and Indigenous voters.

Research Question 3: To what extent do election administration practice profiles relate to voter turnout rates differently for youth compared to adult voters, within ethno-racial groups?

Hypothesis 4a: Counties that are comparatively harder to vote in would be associated with a wider 2020 gap between the turnout rates of youth and adult voters.

Hypothesis 4b: Counties that are comparatively harder to vote in would be associated with a wider 2020 gap between the turnout rates of newly eligible youth voters and compared to adults.

Methods

This section discusses the statistical method and measures used to answer the research questions. The first research question concerns the identification of county-level patterns of election administration. Thus, the initial step was examining election administration patterns, using counties as the unit of analysis. In order to do this, latent profile analysis was used. Latent profile analysis is a statistical method for identifying distinct subgroups within a population (Collins & Lanza, 2010). In other words, the purpose of latent profile analysis is to identify patterned (similar groups of scores) and meaningful (theoretically or practically relevant) distinctions among counties. Election administration indicators were used to distinguish counties. These indicators are discussed in the measurement section. Additionally, since counties are within states, it is important to model the effect of state-level policy on county election administration. Thus, along with county-level demographics, state policy indicators were covariates. The second and third questions concern voter turnout rates. To that end, voter turnout was the outcome variable. Separate models for ethno-racial groups were ran. Figure 1 provides a visual of the conceptual model that was evaluated.

Data Sources

The data come from three sources: 1) The Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS), 2) Election Administration Policy Survey, and 3) Catalist's national voter database. Voter registration and turnout data for the 2020 presidential election will be purchased from Catalist, a data analytics company in the United States. Catalist's national voter database was collected from election officials in all 50 states and the District of Columbia (Catalist, LLC, 2021). The advantage of using Catalist's voter database is the company's proprietary method of

estimating individuals' race and age (Catalist, LLC, 2021; Fraga, 2018) and the availability of validated turnout data, rather than self-reported voter data.

The United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was established as an independent commission to provide guidance to election jurisdictions on fulfilling their obligations under HAVA (U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 2021). HAVA requires that states implement programs and procedures for provisional voting, voting information, modernization of voting equipment, maintenance of statewide voter registration databases, voter identification, and administrative complaint procedures (Gardner & Charles, 2018). In order to fulfill its statutory obligations, EAC administers two surveys: 1) the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) and 2) an election administration policy survey, which collects information related to state-level election policies (U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 2021). Data regarding county-level election administration and statewide election law come from these surveys.

The EAVS contains county-level data on the administration of elections such as number of registered voters removed from the rolls and absentee ballots rejected (U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 2021). The election administration policy survey included a series of close-ended questions. State election officials were asked to record the answer that best described their state's policies regarding voter ID laws and felony disenfranchisement (U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 2021). Such data have been used to calculate the Election Performance Index (EPI), which compares the administration and performance of elections across states and election cycles (Elections Performance Index, n.d.). The EAVS data for the state of Alaska is reported as a single county. As such, it was excluded from this analysis. Additionally, the District of Columbia was also excluded since it was not a county. Thus, in total,

there are 3,111 voting jurisdictions within the sample. County-level demographic data came from the Census Bureau's 2020 Survey.

Measures

The EAVS has three sections that are relevant to this study: 1) voter registration, 2) by-mail voting, and 3) provisional ballots. Within the voter registration section, questions pertained to the number of individuals registered to vote and removed from the registration rolls. Within the by-mail voting, the questions concerned the number of ballots rejected. Lastly, the provisional ballots section contains questions that report on the number of provisional ballots cast, number counted and rejected, as well as the reason for rejection. The election administrators in each county are responsible for submitting responses to the survey. In total, five items from the areas of voter registration, vote by-mail, and provisional balloting were used as continuous indicators for the latent profiles (See Figure 1).

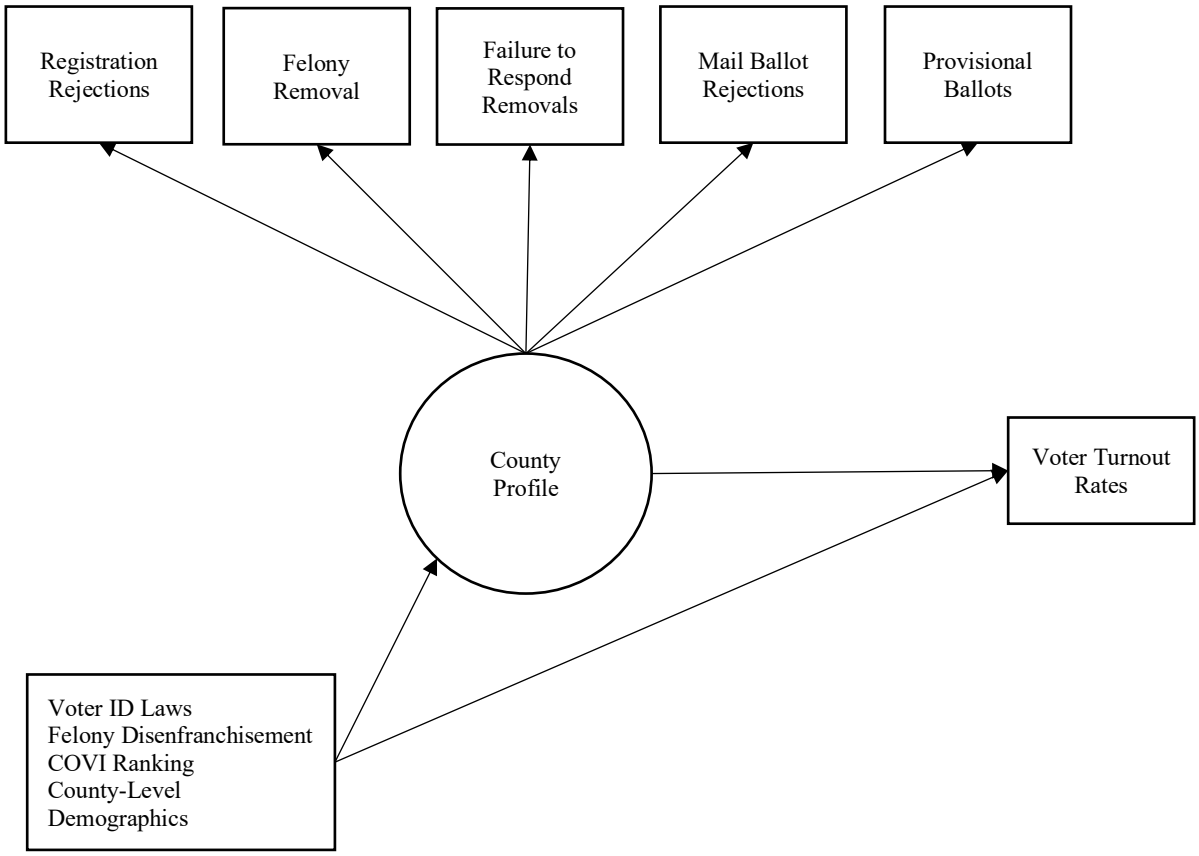

Figure 1 Conceptual model

Voter Registration Items. The following EAVS survey items reflect the voter registration climate within a county, which were subdivided into two categories: 1) Registration process: the number of voter registration applications rejected from the DMV, public assistance offices, disabilities agencies, and registration drives, and 2) Registration maintentance: voters removed from the voter rolls due to felony convictions, and "inactive" voters who failed to respond to a notice from the county election official regarding their registration status. In all, a single item, registration rejection rates, was used to assess the total number of registration applications rejected, excluding duplicate applications. A second variable, felony registration

removals, captured the removal rate due to felony convictions. Lastly, a third variable, failure to respond removals, capture the removal rate due to failure to respond to a notice from an election official. All rates were calculated as per 1,000.

Vote By-Mail. Election performance related to voting by mail was captured by a single item that the total number of mail ballots rejected and was calculated as a ratio of mail ballots rejected per 1,000.

Provisional Balloting. The Elections Performance Index notes that the use of provisional ballots may indicate an issue with the administration of the election, with an usually high number of provisional ballots indicative of an inefficient election process (Elections Performance Index, n.d.). Following the Elections Performance Index methodology, this indicator represents the ratio of provisional ballots per 1,000.

Voter Identification. Voter identification was measured with a single item: "For in-person voting (not including first-time voters), please select all of the options that are appropriate for your state. In order to establish their identity, a voter." There are seven response options: 1) *Is required to show a government-issued form of photo identification*; 2) *Can show a non-photo government-issued form of identification*; 3) *Can show a non-government form of photo identification*; 4) *Can show a non-photo non-government form of identification or proof of residence, such as a lease or a utility bill*; 5) *Can have a person registered to vote in the precinct/jurisdiction formally vouch for his or her identity (including but not limited to signing an affidavit)*; 6) *Can sign an affidavit affirming his or her identity (with no other action required for the voter to vote)*; and 7) *Can sign an affidavit affirming his or her identity, but the voter must later present appropriate identification to the election officials before his or her provisional ballot is counted*. Non-Strict Photo ID Law (photo identitification requirement in option 1 or

option 3 and either verification of identity option 5 or 6), Non-Strict Non-Photo ID Law (non-photo identification requirement option 2 or option 4 and either verification of identity option 5 or 6), Strict Photo ID Law (government issued photo identification and option 7), and Strict Non-Photo ID Law (non-government issued photo identification and option 7). These combinations of responses were used to create two dichtomous variables, strict photo ID, and strict non-photo ID. The difference between strict and non-strict is that within strict photo ID is that voters without the appropriate ID are required to take other actions (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2022).

Felony Disenfranchisement. Items assessing criminal convictions came from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission policy context survey and had a skip pattern. The first question assessed whether or not a felony conviction affects a person's right to vote and the second set of questions asked to what extent does a felony conviction affect voting rights. This item was used as dichtomous variable, with 1 indicating felony disenfranchisement.

The Cost of Voting Index. The Cost of Voting Index ranks states based on their election laws. The index assessed states on seven issue areas that corresponded to two main categories, registration laws and voting laws, and assigned a score based on holistic appraisal of the seven areas (Li, Pomante, & Schranufnagel, 2018). States were ranked based on this index, with 1 being the easiest state in which to vote and 50 being the hardest state in which to vote. To assess how the state's COVID-19 related election procedures affected the ease of voting, the COVID-19 COVI ranking was used. This reflected how states changed their election procedures.

Voter turnout. Voter turnout was calculated as a share of registered voters in each county who voted in the 2020 Presidential Election. Based on Catalist's model to calculate a

voter's age, three age groups were created 1) 18 – 19, newly eligible voters; 2) 18 – 29, youth voters, and 4) 30 and older (adults) for each ethno-racial group.

State-level Covariates. State election laws also affect county election administration. To that end, two categories from the Election Administration Policy Survey, voter ID laws and criminal convictions, were used as covariates. In addition, since there was a general trend towards making voting easier during the pandemic, this was assessed using the change in Cost of Voting Index for each state as an additional covariate. These covariates allowed for assessing the overall election administration climate of the state. However, since the research questions in this study were not multilevel, models used adjusted standard errors to account for counties nested with states (McNeish, et al., 2017).

County-level Covariates. County-level demographic factors were included to assess initial classification of the profiles. Using a method similar to the Brookings Institute, counties were grouped based on the percentage of white residents (Frey, 2019). Counties where white residents are at or below their share of the national population will be coded as 1. The percentage of ethno-racial groups was used a continuous predictor. Socioeconomic status of the county was assessed by the percentage of households below the poverty line and percentage of residents with a Bachelor's degree (BA) or higher. Two measures were used to capture the carceral climate of the county: 1) the per capita adult incarceration rate and 2) the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized, which includes the number of juveniles in juvenile justice detention centers, group quarters, and other institutional settings. These measures were from the Census Bureau.

Analytic Plan

Model specification for the latent profiles with covariates proceeded using a three-step process with maximum likelihood estimation (Ferguson, et al., 2020; Vermut, 2010). The first

step involves assessing different mean and covariance structures. This first step involved iterative model comparisons, moving from a single class model to models with more classes, and typically entails estimating five or six class models and/or proceeding until model convergence was no longer tenable (Ferguson, et al., 2020). The second step entailed including covariates of the latent profiles. This step allowed for assessing the effect of a state's policy context and the county's own demographics on its county's latent profile. The third and final step allowed for assessing the relationship between latent profiles and county-level voter turnout rates. For all other missing data, full information maximum likelihood was employed to handle missing data, as it is a best practice for latent profile analysis when there is missing data (Ferguson, et al., 2020).

Initial classification (Step 1)

The initial analysis step involved enumerating both the optimal number of latent classes and the appropriate variance-covariance structure. Specifically, four variance-covariances structures will be estimated to determine the optimal number of classes. The first structure is the class invariant, where the variances were assumed to be equal across classes and covariances were not estimated. The second structure was the class-varying structure where the variances were estimated across classes, but the covariances were not estimated. This structure allowed for describing the variation of Registration Rejection, for example, across potential classes. As a consequence, this structure allowed for describing both the average and variability of indicators across potential classes. The third was the class invariant, covarying structure, where the variances were assumed to be equal across classes and the covariances were estimated as equivalent across classes. The fourth structure uniquely estimated the variances and covariances across classes. The last structure estimated all variances and covariances for the classes

uniquely. From each of these variance-covariance structures, contender models were selected (Masyn, 2013). Models from each variance-covariance structure were evaluated statistically and theoretically (Ferguson, et al., 2020), using fit indices and class proportions.

In terms of the selection of the optimal number of classes, within a given variance-covariance structure, evaluation criteria included the number of counties within each class, interpretability of classification, parsimony, and fit indices (Collins & Lanza, 2010; Law & Harrington, 2016) The fit indices used in evaluating model fit included: 1) Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), 2) Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), and 3) Lo-Mendell-Rubin Likelihood Ratio (LMR-LRT). Although there were no threshold value for AIC and BIC values, when comparing models to determine an appropriate number of classes, the model with the lower AIC/BIC was preferred (Collins & Lanza, 2010; Wang & Wang, 2020). The LMR-LRT compared a model with k classes to ($k - 1$) classes, with the null hypothesis being that a model with one fewer class was the better fitting model (Wang & Wang, 2020).

In order to assess the quality of classification, several classification diagnostics were used in a holistic manner: entropy, average posterior class probability, and odds of correct classification ratio. Entropy assessed the probability that individuals are in the class to which they are assigned, with values of 0 indicating no separation (a high degree of misclassification) to 1, suggesting that classes are distinct (Collins & Lanza, 2010). Although there is no established threshold value for entropy to ensure good classification, .80 can be consider high and .60 is considered poor (Wang & Wang, 2020). These fit indices were examined holistically to determine the best-fitting model. Specifically, a low AIC or BIC score would not indicative of an appropriate fit if the LMR-LRT and entropy values were both poor. Lastly, in order for latent class models to have value, they needed to have a substantive interpretation as well as statistical

significance. The number of cases within a class was one measure of practical value. An acceptable threshold was that classes should contain at least 5% of the sample or a minimum of 156 counties. Lastly, to account for the clustering of observations of counties within states, standard errors were corrected using the TYPE = TWOLEVEL COMPLEX command (McNeish, Stapleton, & Silverman, 2017; Reboussin, Lohman, & Wolfson, 2006).

State Policy Context and County-Level Demographics (Step 2)

The effects of covariates can result in the over extraction of classes; as a result, it is recommended that inclusion of covariates is subsequent to model enumeration (Nylund-Gibson & Masyn, 2016). State voter ID laws and felony disenfranchisement were added to the model to assess how policy context influences county-level election administration. In addition, the county-level factors were also added at this step.

Assessing Youth Voter Turnout (Step 3)

Voter turnout was the dependent variable of this model and as a consequence was included after class enumeration and the addition of covariates. This step in the process involved using class membership as a predictor of voter turnout. Multiple turnout models were created to assess the effect of election administration on youth voter turnout in 2020 by ethno-racial group. These models provided an answer to research question 2, which concerned the relationship between county-level election administration and age. In order to assess the relationship between county-level election administration by race and age, Catalist's model to calculate a voter's race was used to create discrete ethno-racial categories within each age group, for example, Black voters, white, Asian young adults, Latinx, and Indigenous youth voters. Tests of parameter constraints were used to assess differences across latent profiles in voter turnout rates.

Results

This section presents all results from the study, beginning with the descriptive statistics and bivariate analysis of the election administration indicators and covariates. Subsequently, as step 1 of the results, the latent profile analysis is presented. This initial step produced a measurement model that describes how counties cluster in relation to the election administration indicators. Next, step 2, the latent profile analysis with covariates model is reported. The purpose of this step was to describe the relationship between the latent profiles and the covariates. Lastly, step 3, the results of the latent profile analysis with covariates and voter turnout are presented. This final step allows for describing the relationship between county-level voter turnout and latent profile membership, controlling for covariates. Thus, in short, this section is organized to first present the means and standard deviation of the election administration indicators and voter outcome data (descriptive analysis) and then the answers to the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do election administration practices cluster across counties?

Hypothesis 1: At least two profiles of county-level election administration will be detected using a latent profile analysis to reflect variation in ease of voting across counties.

Hypothesis 2: The carceral climate of the county (per capita adult incarceration rates and/or per capita juveniles institutionalized) will predict membership in an election administration typology characterized by maladministration.

Hypothesis 3: Counties where white people are at or below their national proportion would be a predictor of membership in an election administration typology characterized by maladministration.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between election administration profiles and overall youth (18 – 29) voter turnout? Does the relationship between election administration profiles and youth voter turnout vary by ethno-racial groups?

Hypothesis 4: Counties that are comparatively harder to vote in would be associated with lower 2020 youth voter turnout rate among each non-white voter group: Black, Latinx, Asian Americans, and Indigenous voters.

Research Question 3: To what extent do election administration practice profiles relate to voter turnout rates differently for youth compared to adult voters, within ethno-racial groups?

Hypothesis 4a: Counties that are comparatively harder to vote in would be associated with a wider 2020 gap between the turnout rates of youth and adult voters.

Hypothesis 4b: Counties that are comparatively harder to vote in would be associated with a wider 2020 gap between the turnout rates of newly eligible youth voters and compared to adults.

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Analysis

At the national level, across three indicators – mail ballot rejection rates, provisional ballots cast, and felony registration removals – the average rate of rejections was less than 1 person per 1,000 (see Table 1). For two indicators – registration rejection rate and removals due to failure to respond to a notice from election officials – the average rate was greater than 1 person per 1,000. Specifically, the registration rejection rate was 1.05 (SD = 6.38), and the failure to respond removals was 1.69 (SD = 8.08). Additionally, 22.5% of counties (n = 603) reported no registration rejections, whereas three California counties (Franklin, Los Angeles, and San Diego counties) and one Ohio county (Sonoma County) reported more than 100 per 1,000 rejections. As shown in Table 2, the correlations among the election administration indicators were in the small to moderate range, demonstrating that indicators are sufficiently unique but

related. The highest correlation was between mail ballot rejection rates and provisional ballots cast ($r = .467$, $p < .001$), and the lowest was between failure to respond removals and mail ballot rejection rates ($r = .238$, $p < .001$).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for election administration indicators

Variable	N [a]	Average [b]	Std Dev	% Missing	Min	Max
Mail Ballot Rejection Rates	2939	0.19	0.95	0.06	0.00	22.42
Provisional Ballots Cast	3111	0.54	2.74	0.00	0.00	60.11
Registration Rejection Rate	2677	1.05	6.38	0.14	0.00	166.30
Felony Registration Removals	3081	0.09	0.30	0.01	0.00	9.19
Failure to Respond Removals	3111	1.69	8.08	0.00	0.00	342.52

[a] Some counties did not report data to the Election Commission, which is the reason for missingness
[b] Units are per 1,000

Table 2 Correlations among election administration indicators

Election Administration Indicators	1	2	3	4
1. Mail Ballot Rejection Rates	-			
2. Provisional Ballots Cast	.467**	-		
3. Registration Rejection Rate	.412**	.323**	-	
4. Felony Registration Removals	.325**	.308**	.349**	-
5. Failure to Respond Removals	.238**	.416**	.424**	.391**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Voter Turnout Data

Nationally, voter turnout for youth (18 – 29) ranged from 1% (Newton County, Arkansas) to 100% (Billings County, North Dakota), $M = 58.61\%, SD = 11.71$. Newly registered youth voters had a voter turnout rate that ranged from 0% to 100%, $M = 58.61\%, SD = 11.71$. Counties at the two extremes had very small numbers of youth registrants. For newly eligible voters, 18 and 19-year-olds, 87 counties reported a turnout rate of 0% and 313 counties had a turnout rate of 100% ($M = 66.03\%, SD = 21.38$). The average newly eligible youth voter turnout was 7.42 points higher than the overall youth voter turnout, $t_{(4,379.99)} = 16.47, p < .001$. However, both the youth voter turnout and newly eligible voter turnout rates were lower than adult voter turnout, which was 79.33%, *SD* = 8.60 ($t_{(5,709.36)} =$

$79.55, p < .001$ and $t_{(3,723.11)} = 31.12, p < .001$, respectively). Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for voter turnout by age, race, and for newly eligible voter turnout.

White youth had an average voter turnout rate of 61.05% (*SD* = 11.18). This rate was higher than the turnout rate of Black (*M* = 49.09%, *SD* = 17.24, $t_{(5,014.88)} = 31.85, p < .001$), Latinx (*M* = 49.98%, *SD* = 18.46, $t_{(4,959.64)} = 28.32, p < .001$), Asian American and Pacific Islander youth (*M* = 51.53%, SD = 24.60, $t_{(3,373.41)} = 18.02, p < .001$), and Indigenous youth ($M = 51.69\%, SD = 22.69, t_{(3,842.45)} = 19.54, p < .001$). Black and Latinx youth had similar voter turnout rates ($t_{(5,967.31)} = 1.92, p = .055$); however, Black youth had a lower turnout rate than Asian American Pacific Islander youth ($t_{(4,434.98)} = 4.17, p < .001$) and Indigenous youth ($t_{(5,060.27)} = 4.82, p < .001$). The youth voter turnout of Latinx youth was lower than Asian American Pacific Islander youth ($t_{(4,616.76)} = 2.61, p = .009$) and Indigenous youth ($t_{(5,246.17)} = 3.11, p = .002$). There were no differences in the youth voting rates for Asian American and Pacific Islander youth and Indigenous youth, $t_{(5,128.82)} = .25, p = .80$.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for voter turnout

Turnout Rates	N	Average	Std Dev	% Missing	Min	Max
Newly Eligible Voter Turnout Rate [a]	2876	66.03	21.38	0.08	0.00	100.00
white youth voter turnout rate	2811	68.94	20.77	0.10	0.00	100.00
Black youth voter turnout rate	1756	51.93	28.87	0.44	0.00	100.00
Latinx youth voter turnout rate	1846	55.84	30.72	0.41	0.00	100.00
Asian American and Pacific Islander youth voter turnout rate	955	58.14	33.08	0.69	0.00	100.00
Indigenous youth voter turnout rate	875	51.35	33.82	0.72	0.00	100.00
Youth Voter (18 - 29) Turnout Rate	3111	58.61	11.71	0.00	1.06	100.00
white youth voter turnout rate	3111	61.05	11.18	0.00	1.13	100.00
Black youth voter turnout rate	2951	49.09	17.24	0.05	0.00	100.00
Latinx youth voter turnout rate	3029	49.98	18.46	0.03	0.00	100.00
Asian American and Pacific Islander youth voter turnout rate	2531	51.53	24.60	0.19	0.00	100.00
Indigenous youth voter turnout rate	2719	51.69	22.69	0.13	0.00	100.00
Adult Voter (30 and over) Turnout Rate	3111	79.33	8.60	0.00	2.36	98.96
white adult voter turnout rate	3111	80.82	7.99	0.00	2.38	99.03
Black adult voter turnout rate	3062	72.68	12.16	0.02	0.00	100.00
Latinx adult voter turnout rate	3086	67.78	15.67	0.01	0.00	100.00
Asian American and Pacific Islander adult voter turnout rate	2885	69.83	19.44	0.07	0.00	100.00
Indigenous adult voter turnout rate	3006	72.72	16.71	0.03	0.00	100.00

[a] Some counties are missing because data could not be estimated by race and age

State and County-Level Predictors

At the state-level, as of 2020, 19% of states had strict voter ID laws and 5% had strict non-photo ID laws, and 83% percent removed voters for felony convictions. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for county-level covariates of interest, which included percent of residents with a BA or higher, per capita adult incarceration rates, per capita rate of juveniles in institutional settings, percentage of families below the poverty line were selected, and percentage of county-level residents for each ethno-racial group. In terms of educational attainment, the county-level average was 22.60% with a BA or higher. The average per capita adult incarceration rate was 0.63 per 1,000 individuals. Two counties, Kern County, California and Pinal County, Arizona, had a per capita adult incarceration rate above 20 per 1,000 individuals. The average per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized was 0.03; only two counties had rates equal to or greater than 1 per 1,000: Los Angeles County, California and Maricopa County, Arizona. The average percentage of households below the poverty line was 13.75%, with three

counties, Issaquena County, Mississippi; Todd County, Mississippi; and Ziebach County, South Dakota having a poverty rate above 40%.

In terms of ethno-racial demographics, 29 counties, with most located in Nebraska (10 counties) and Montana (Carter, Daniels, Garfield, Granite, and Petroleum counties), had a Black population of 0%. Four counties, one in Alabama (Greene County) and three in Mississippi (Claiborne, Holmes, and Jefferson counties), had a Black population equal to or greater than 80%. There were 21 counties that had an Asian American or Pacific Islander population of 0%. These counties were primarily located in Nebraska (Arthur, Boyd, Garfield, Rock, and Wheeler counties), Texas (Borden, Briscoe, Loving, Motley, and Roberts counties), and North (Logan and Slope counties) and South Dakota (Harding and Jones counties). Honolulu County, Hawaii was the only majority Asian American or Pacific Islander county at 53.02%. Latinx people were present in every county in the U.S.; however, 98 counties had a Latinx population below 1%. In contrast, six counties (Hidalgo, Maverick, Starr, Webb, Zapata, and Zavala), all located in Texas, had a Latinx population equal to or greater than 90%. The county-level Indigenous population ranged from 0% (four counties in Nebraska, Arthur, Blaine, Hitchcock, and Loup counties; three counties in Texas, Foard, King, and Terrell counties; and Kiowa County, Colorado; Glascock County, Georgia; Hardin County, Illinois; Tensas Parish, Louisiana; Petroleum County, Montana; Daggett County, Utah; and Bland County, Virginia) to 93.78%. Five counties had an Indigenous population equal to or greater than 80% and these counties were located in North (Sioux County) and South Dakota (Buffalo, Oglala Lakota, and Todd Counties) and Wisconsin (Menominee, County), with Oglala Lakota County, South Dakota having the highest percentage of Indigenous residents in the dataset. Under representative white population, a dichotomous

variable that captured counties where white residents were at or below their national proportion, was evident in 38% of counties across the country.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics for county-level predictors

All Counties	N	Average	Std Dev	% Missing	Min	Max
Percent of residents with a BA or higher	3111	22.60	9.70	0	0.00	79.10
Percent of Black alone residents	3111	8.78	14.15	0	0.00	87.45
Percent of Asian American Pacific Islander alone residents	3111	1.49	3.01	0	0.00	53.02
Percent of Latinx residents	3111	9.83	13.74	0	0.34	97.68
Percent of Indigenous residents	3111	1.84	6.78	0	0.00	93.78
Per capita adult incarceration rate	3111	0.63	1.51	0	0.00	22.47
Per capita juvenile institutionalized rate	3111	0.03	0.09	0	0.00	2.41
Percentage of households below the poverty line	3111	13.75	5.42	0	3.00	43.9

Latent Profile Analysis to Define Election Administration Typologies

Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) was conducted to determine election administration typologies. A first step was estimating four sets of models that differed in their variance and covariance structure to empirically identify the most appropriate assumptions for the underlying data. A total of 1 through 5 class solutions were estimated within each model set: 1) fixed variances and covariances constrained to zero across all classes, 2) fixed variances and covariances estimated, but constrained to equality, across all classes, 3) uniquely estimated variances and covariances, but constrained to equality, across all classes, and 4) all variances and covariances uniquely estimated for each class. The first two variance, covariance structures each had a very small class size of less than 5% across solutions and thus were not considered. Moreover, for these structures, there were model estimation errors in the form of solutions that failed to converge or replicate, indicating non-viable variance and covariance structures for the data. Thus, given that these two structures that either fixed variances to zero or constrained them to equality were not viable, it is evident that uniquely estimating variances for each class is important to understanding county-level differences in election administration. The two

remaining variance, covariance structures differed in whether or not unique covariances added in interpretation of election administration typology.

Table 5 Model fit statistics for latent profile analysis selection

Variance-Covariance Structure	k	LL	Number of Parameters	AIC	BIC	aBIC	LRT Significance	Adjusted LRT Significance	Entropy
Fixed covariances across class	1	-30130.37	20	60300.74	60421.61	60358.06	-	-	-
	2	-2343.58	31	4749.16	4936.51	4838.01	0.866	0.867	.982
	3	4269.48	42	-8454.96	-8201.14	-8334.59	0.357	0.357	.961
	4[a]	6919.72	53	-13733.44	-13413.14	-13581.54	0.726	0.726	.945
	5	Did not converge							
Uniquely estimated covariances across class	1	-30130.37	20	60300.74	60421.61	60358.06	-	-	-
	2	-1999.06	41	4080.11	4327.89	4197.61	0.872	0.873	.981
	3	**4481.18**	**62**	**-8838.36**	**-8463.71**	**-8660.71**	**0.302**	**0.302**	**.961**
	4	Did not converge							
	5	Did not converge							

a Model did not run with optimal seed.
Values in **bold** indicate the model that was selected as the best solution

As shown in Table 5, models with 1-5 class solutions were compared for the remaining variance, covariance structures. Final model selection relied on interpretability of classification and fit indices (Collins & Lanza, 2010; Law & Harrington, 2016). In comparing models to determine an appropriate number of classes, the model with the lower AIC and BIC was preferred (Collins & Lanza, 2010; Wang & Wang, 2020). Moreover, an ideal class solution would have at least one distinct pattern among indicators for each class produced. In the two-class solution, the classes were distinct on one indicator, felony removals (see Table 6). However, the three-class solution produced a model with increased distinctions among classes, based on class separation diagnostics where a Cohen's d of 2 indicates good class separation. In the three-class solution, class 1 was distinct from class 2 across all election administration indicators, while felony removals became a distinguishing feature of membership in class 3 (see Table 7). Based on this, the three-class solutions for both variance, covariance structures were contender models (see Table 5). In the model with covariances fixed (constrained to equality) across classes, the AIC and BIC values were -8454.96 and -8201.14, respectively. However, when estimating covariances as unique across classes, the AIC and BIC values were lower, -

8838.36 and -8463.71, respectively. In addition, there were significant correlations between indicators in the third class, which added substantive nuance to the interpretability of the classification. Specifically, when the covariances were constrained to equality, there were no significant correlations; however, when the covariances were uniquely estimated, there were significant correlations. Thus, the three-class model that uniquely estimated the correlations was selected as the best fit to the data.

Entropy is important, but not determinative, in assessing quality of classification. Entropy values of .80 can be consider indicative of good classification (Wang & Wang, 2020). For all models that converged, the entropy values were above .90, and likewise, entropy was high in the final selected model, at .961. The classification diagnostics, average posterior probabilities and odds of correct classification, support the quality of the selected solution (see Table 8). For example, across each class, the average posterior probabilities was above .980, indicating that more than 98% of counties were able to be placed within a particular class and with the odds of correct classification (OCC) above 5, there can be confidence in the classification is correct. OCC values of 1 indicate that odds of correct classification are no better than chance and OCC values greater than 5, for all latent classes, indicate good latent class separation (Collins & Lanza, 2010).

Table 6 Class separation diagnostics (adapted Cohen's d) - two class solution

Election Administration Indicators	Class 1 v Class 2
1. Mail Rejection Rates	-0.72
2. Provisional Ballot Rates	-0.26
3. Registration Rejection Rates	-0.09
4. Felony Removal Rate	**-2.46**
5. Removals due to failure to respond	-0.08

Cohen's d values of 2 or greater bolded to highlight class separation

Table 7 Class separation diagnostics (adapted Cohen's) – three class solution

Election Administration Indicators	Class 1 vs Class 2	Class 1 vs Class 3	Class 2 vs Class 3
1. Mail Ballot Rejection Rates	**-6.711**	-0.959	-0.709
2. Provisional Ballots Cast	**-5.091**	-0.341	-0.251
3. Registration Rejection Rate	**-2.426**	-0.111	-0.081
4. Felony Registration Removals	**-3.898**	**-3.094**	**-2.015**
5. Failure to Respond Removals	-1.034	-0.091	-0.062

Cohen's d values of 2 or greater bolded to highlight class separation

Table 8 Classification Quality of final enumerated three class solution

Class k	Mean	mcaP	AvePP	OCC
Class 1	50.0%	0.496	.982	54.59
Class 2	35.8%	0.362	.982	97.94
Class 3	14.2%	0.142	.990	596.22

Note. mcaP (modal class assignment Proportion); AvePP (Average Posterior Probabilities); OCC (Odds of Correct Classification) which is odds of model estimated class assignment relative to random assignment by class proportion; OCC > 5 supporting adequate class separation and precision

Typologies of Election Administration

Hypothesis 1 – Typology of Election Administration

The first research question aimed to explore how election practices varied across counties, with the hypothesis that at least two profiles would emerge to indicate county-level variation in these practices. Results indicated three typologies of election administration. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 9 and Figure 3 displays the geographic diversity. Counties in Class 1 (blue line in Figure 1), named Well Administered, were characterized by low rates and low variability across all indicators. The Well Administered class's election administration indicators of misadministration were lower than the national average. For example, with the Well Administered typology, the average mail ballot rejection rate among counties was .009 (*SD* = .000) per 1,000 individuals while the national rate .190 (*SD* = .950) per 1,000 individuals, a difference of .181. Well Administered counties represented 50% of counties in the country. Similar to the Well Administered typology, Class 2's election administration indicators were lower than the national average, but higher than Well

Administered. Class 2 (orange line in Figure 2, named Inadequately Administered, was characterized by relatively low rejection rates across all indicators, except that the rejection rates and variances were higher than the Well Administered typology. The registration rejection rate in the Well Administered typology was .020 per 1,000 individuals, but in the Inadequately Administered typology, it was more than 10 times higher (visually presented in Figure 1). Specifically, the registration rejection rate in the Inadequately Administered typology was .364 per 1,000. In contrast, the national registration rejection rate was 1.050 per 1,000 individuals. Inadequately Administered counties represented 35.8% of counties in the country. Class 3 (grey line in Figure 1), named Maladministered, was characterized by high rejection rates and high variability. This typology's election administration indicators were higher than the national average. For example, the registration rejection rate in Maladministered typology was 5.871 per 1,000 individuals, which was five times higher than the national average rate of rejection. Maladministered counties represented 14.2% of counties in the country.

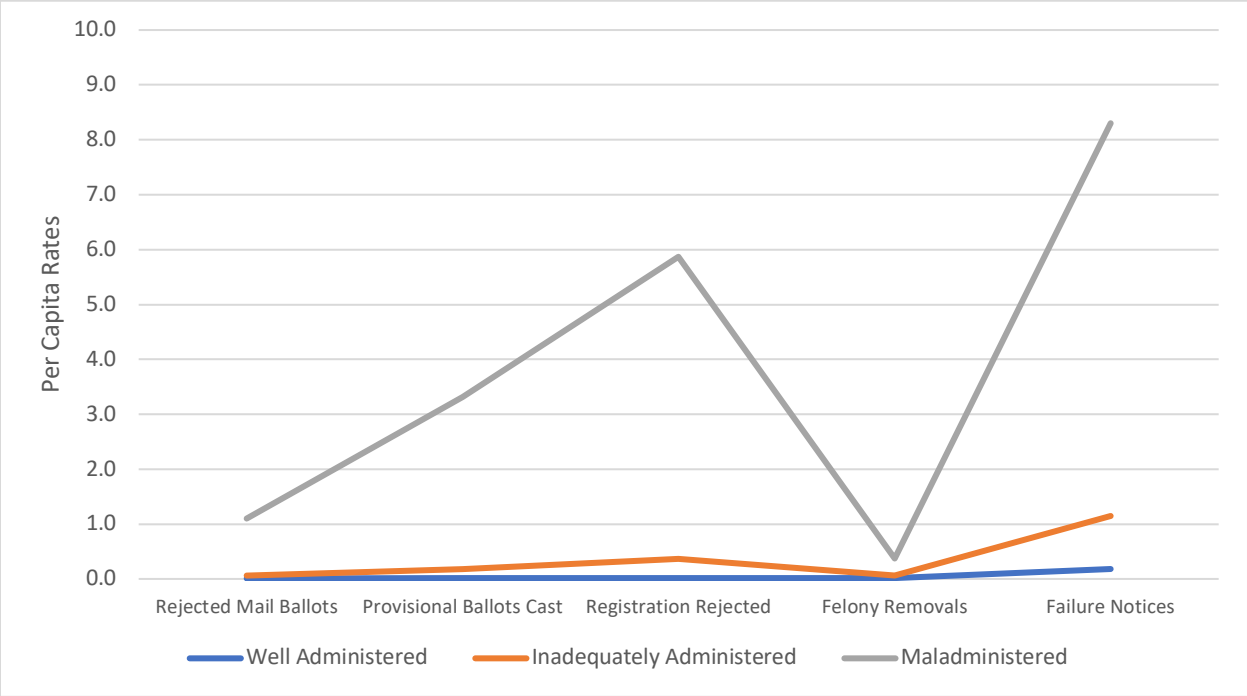

Figure 2 County-level election administration typologies

Table 9 Class specific descriptive statistics of election administration indicators

Class	Variable	Class Mean	Class SD	National Mean	National SD	Difference
Well Administered 50.00%	Mail Ballot Rejection Rates	0.009	0.000	0.190	0.950	-0.181
	Provisional Ballots Cast	0.013	0.000	0.540	2.740	-0.527
	Registration Rejection Rate	0.020	0.032	1.050	6.380	-1.030
	Felony Registration Removals	0.017	0.032	0.090	0.300	-0.073
	Failure to Respond Removals	0.181	0.214	1.690	8.080	-1.509
Inadequately Administered 35.80%	Mail Ballot Rejection Rates	0.061	0.077	0.190	0.950	-0.129
	Provisional Ballots Cast	0.179	0.245	0.540	2.740	-0.361
	Registration Rejection Rate	0.364	0.559	1.050	6.380	-0.686
	Felony Registration Removals	0.067	0.084	0.090	0.300	-0.023
	Failure to Respond Removals	1.147	1.409	1.690	8.080	-0.543
Maladministered 14.20%	Mail Ballot Rejection Rates	1.104	2.269	0.190	0.950	0.914
	Provisional Ballots Cast	3.310	6.606	0.540	2.740	2.770
	Registration Rejection Rate	5.871	15.409	1.050	6.380	4.821
	Felony Registration Removals	0.372	0.717	0.090	0.300	0.282
	Failure to Respond Removals	8.302	20.052	1.690	8.080	6.612

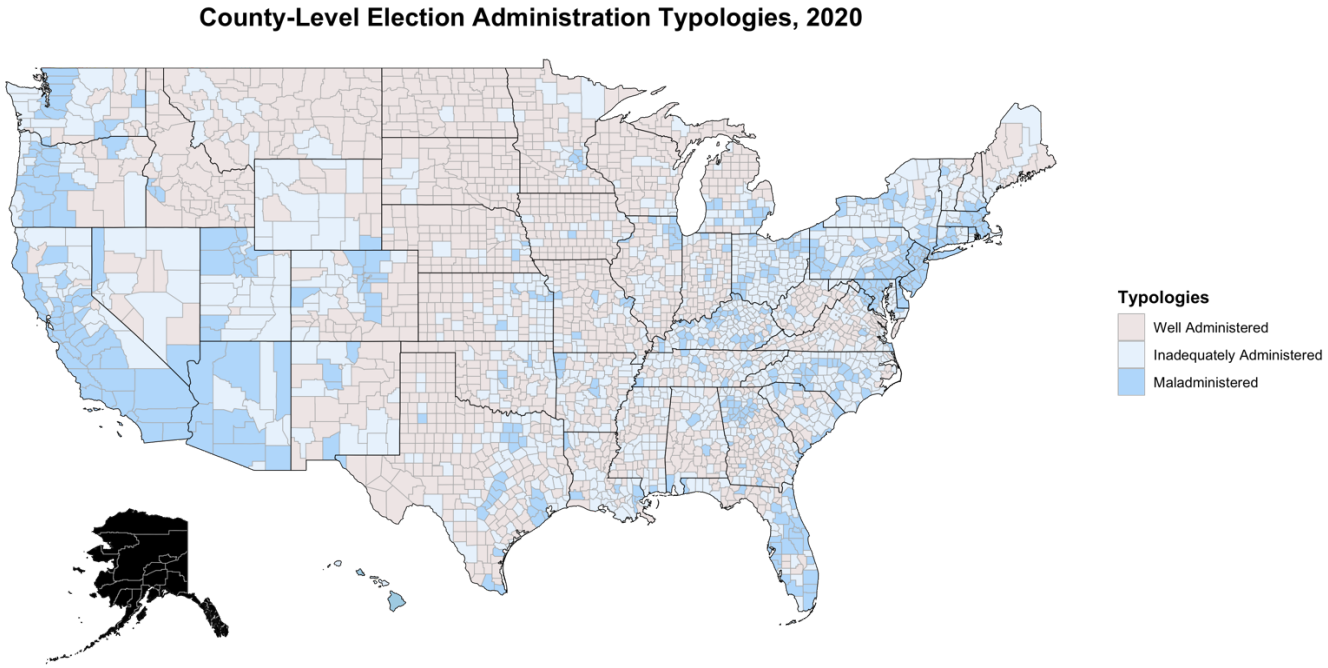

Figure 3 Map of county-level election administration, Alaska and DC not included in analysis

Predictors of Class Membership

Voter ID laws, whether or not individuals are disenfranchised for felony convictions, and the state's rank on the Cost of Voting Index during COVID were state-level predictors of election administration typology. County-level ethno-racial demographics, percentage of

residents with a BA or higher, percentage of families below the poverty line, and carceral climate were also predictors. The adjusted odds ratios for these covariates are presented in Table 14.

State-Level Predictors. States with strict non-photo ID voter laws were less likely to have counties in the Inadequately Administered typology compared to the Maladministered typology (AOR = .34, $p = .04$). In other words, states with strict non-photo ID laws were more likely to have counties with maladministered elections. No other state-level policies were significant predictors of typology membership.

County-Level Predictors. Unexpectedly, counties with a higher percentage of residents with a BA or higher had lower odds of being in Well Administered (AOR = .92, $p < .001$) and Inadequately Administered (AOR = .94, $p < .001$) counties relative to being in Maladministered counties. There was no difference between Well Administered and Inadequately Administered counties on having a BA or higher (AOR = .98, $p = .155$).

As for the ethno-racial demographics, counties with a higher percentage of Asian or Pacific Islander residents had lower odds of being Well Administered relative to Maladministered (AOR = .37. $p = .04$) or Inadequately Administered (AOR = .40, $p = .014$). Inadequately Administered and Maladministered counties did not differ on percentage of Asian or Pacific Islander residents (AOR = .93, $p = .109$). Counties with a higher percentage of Latinx residents had lower odds of being Inadequately Administered relative to Maladministered (AOR = .98, $p = .021$). However, the odds of being in the Well Administered relative to the Inadequately Administered typology or relative to the Maladministered typology (AOR = 1.02, $p = .301$) did not differ based on percentage of Latinx residents (AOR = 1.02, $p = .110$). Typologies did not vary by proportion of other ethno-racial populations.

Hypothesis 2 concerned the relationship between whether the proportion of white residents within a county was a predictor of election typology. As shown in Table 10, there is no relationship between county-level under-representation of white people and the county's election administration typology. Hypothesis 3 concerned the relationship between the rates of incarceration and juvenile institutionalization and their respective relationship with election administration typology. Counties with a higher per capita adult incarceration rate had lower odds of being Well Administered (AOR = .50, $p = .009$) and Inadequately Administered (AOR = .82, $p < .001$) relative to Maladministered. Additionally, counties with a higher adult incarceration rate had a lower probability of being Well Administered (AOR = .61, $p < .001$) compared to Inadequately Administered. Percentage of households below the poverty line did not predict typology.

To better understand the effects of carceral climates, the marginal effects at the means for each carceral climate indicator were calculated. The purpose of this is twofold: first, it illustrates how the probability of typology membership changes as rates increase; second, it shows which rates are associated with a probability greater than 50%. In other words, plotting the marginal effects allows for evaluating when the probability of being in the Maladministered typology is greater than 50%, holding other values at the sample mean. Accounting for other covariates, counties with a per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized greater than .175 per 1,000 have more than 50% probability of being in the Maladministered typology (see Figure 4, represented by the grey line). Thus, in general, as the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized increases, the probability of being in the Maladministered typology increases as well. As for the per capita adult incarceration rate, accounting for other covariates, counties with a per capita adult

incarceration rate of 11 per 1,000 residents had more than 50% probability of being in the Maladministered typology (see Figure 5, represented by the grey line).

Table 10 Predictors of election administration typology

	Well Administered v Maladministered	**Inadequately Administered** v Maladministered	**Well Administered** v Inadequately Administered
	AOR	AOR	AOR
State-level			
Strict photo ID voter laws	1.28	1.28	1.00
Strict non-photo ID voter laws	0.11	0.34*	0.32
Felon disenfranchisement	4.82	1.58	3.06
COVI rank during COVID	1.02	1.02	1.00
County-level			
Percent of residents with a BA or higher	0.92***	0.94***	0.98
Percent of Black alone residents	0.99	0.99	1.01
Percent of Asian American Pacific Islander alone residents	0.37**	0.93	0.40*
Percent of Latinx residents	0.99	0.98*	1.02
Percent of Indigenous residents	1.01	1.00	1.01
Under representative white population	0.46	0.60	0.76
Per capita adult incarceration rate	0.50***	0.82***	0.61***
Per capita juveniles institutionalized rate	6.47E-17***[b]	1.33E-06***[b]	4.87E-11***[b]
Percentage of households below the poverty line	1.02	1.03	1.00

Note. *$p \leq .05$ **$p \leq .01$ ***$p \leq .001$. AOR = Adjusted odds ratios, where values lower than 1.0 reflect lower odds and values higher than 1.0 reflect higher odds.

[b] The logit value for comparisons were -37.28 (Well Administered v Maladministered), -13.53 (Inadequately Administered v Maladministered), and -23.75 (Well Administered v Inadequately).

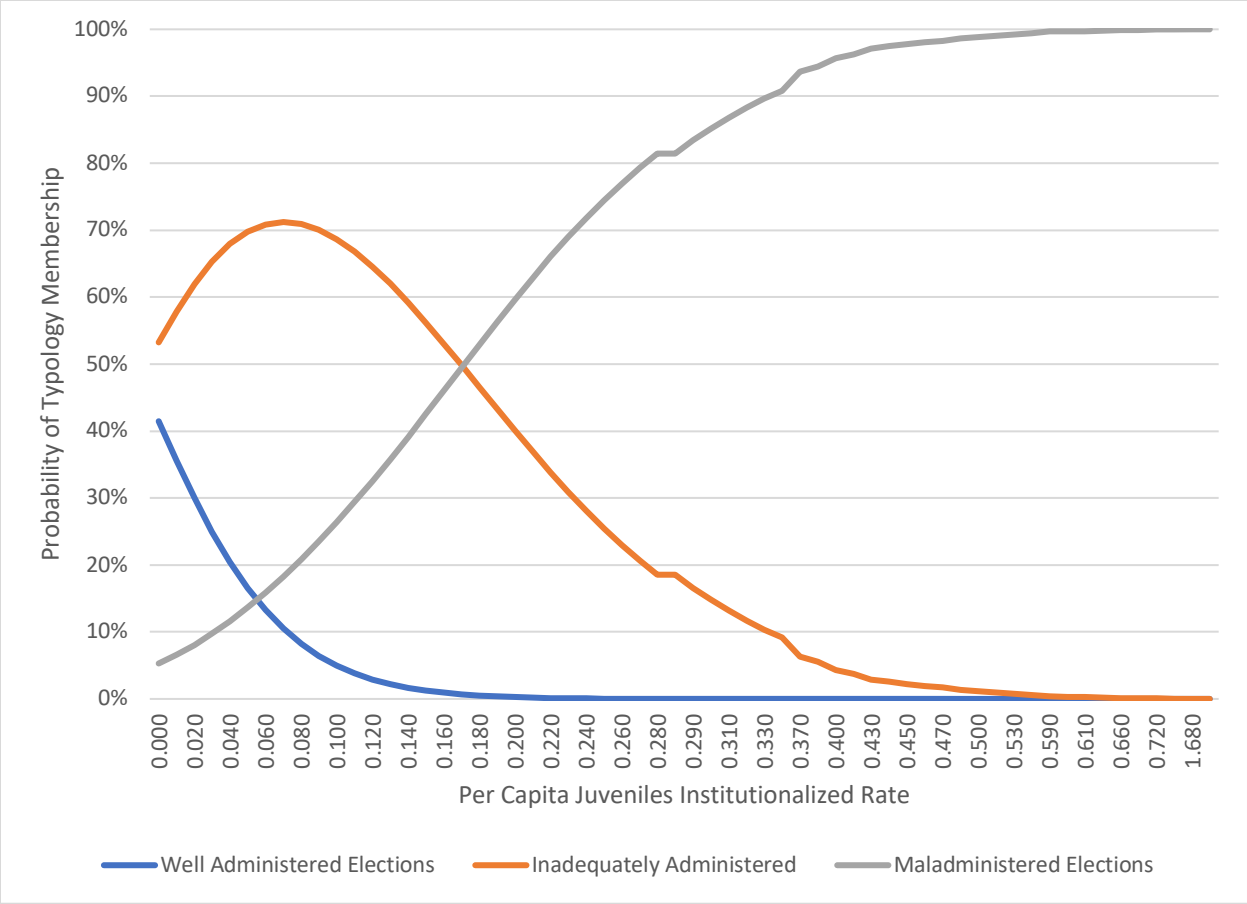

Figure 4 Probability plot for typology membership based on per capita juveniles institutionalized

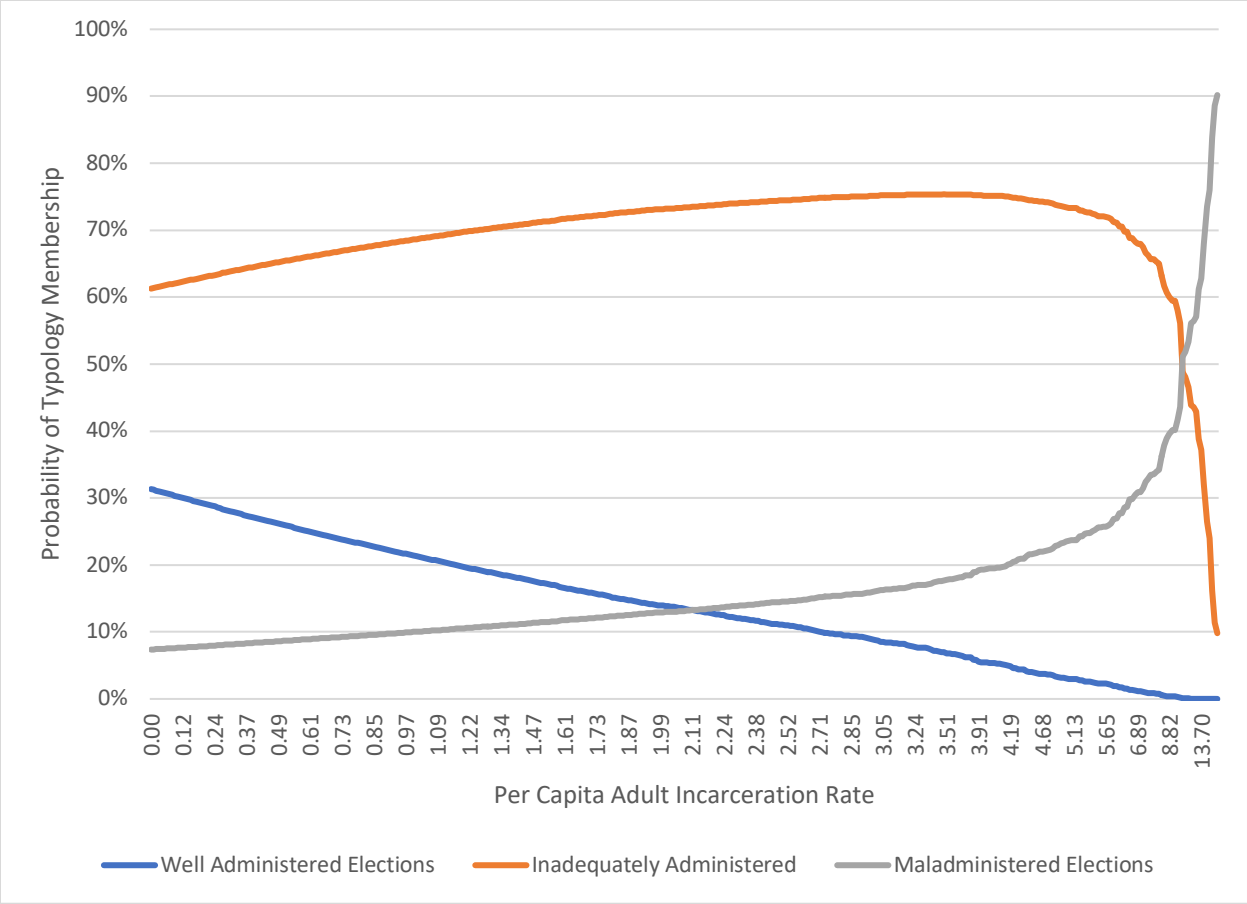

Figure 5 Probability of typology membership based on per capita adult incarceration rate

Youth Voter Turnout

Hypothesis 4 – Youth Voter Turnout Across Typology

Research question 2 concerned assessing the relationship between election administration typology and overall youth voter turnout and turnout by ethno-racial category. The hypothesis was that counties that are comparatively harder to vote in would be associated with lower 2020 youth voter turnout rate among each non-white voter group: Black, Latinx, Asian Americans, and Indigenous voters. To answer this question, six latent profile models were run: one for youth overall and then one for each of the 5 ethno-racial groups. First, the association between election administration typology and overall youth voter turnout was examined by building on the final latent class model with predictors from above. State and county-level predictors were included as

controls predicting voter turnout. Thus, the average turnout rates within typology reflects controlling for state and county-level predictors. To assess for differences across election typology, a Wald test of parameter constraints was used. If this test was significant, then the significance tests for individual parameters were examined. Due to the multiple comparisons, a p-value of less than or equal to .010 was used to determine statistical significance of follow-up tests.

In terms of overall youth voter turnout, a Wald test indicated significant differences in turnout by election administration typology, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 9.43, p = .009$. The youth turnout rate for Well Administered counties of 65.3% (95% CI: 56.7%, 73.8%) was significantly higher than the youth voter turnout rate for Inadequately Administered counties of 61.4% (95% CI: 53.1%, 69.6%), at an estimated difference of 3.9 percentage points (SE = 1.4), $p = .006$. However, the youth voter turnout rates for the Inadequately Administered counties did not differ from the youth voter turnout rates in Maladministered counties, which was 61.0% (95% CI: 52.1%, 69.9%), an estimated difference of .4 (SE = 1.1 $p = .730$). The difference between Well Administered and Maladministered did not differ from each other ($p = .054$).

The second part of the hypothesis involved assessing turnout rates by ethno-racial groups. Regarding Black youth voter turnout, there were no significant differences in turnout rates across election administration typologies $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 3.12, p = .209$. For Latinx youth, voter turnout was approximately 50% across all election administration typologies; thus, there was no statistically different turnout rates, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = .19, p = .909$. For Asian American and Pacific Islander youth, voter turnout ranged from 48.7% (Well Administered typology) to 54.9% (Maladministered typology). The Wald test of parameter constraints was statistically significant, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 6.53, p = .038$; however, none of the comparisons were significant at the adjusted

p-value of .010. As a result, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the turnout rate of Asian American and Pacific Islander youth varied across election administration typologies. Lastly, Indigenous youth voter turnout was approximately 50% across all election administration typologies, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 0.70, p = .704$. Thus, there were no significant differences across typologies.

The voter turnout for white youth ranged from 61.4% (Maladministered typology) to 65.4% (Well Administered typology). These differences were statistically significant, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 11.54, p = .003$. For white youth who lived in Well Administered counties, the turnout rate was 65.4% (95% CI: 56.5%, 74.3%). This was significantly higher than the youth voter turnout rate for Inadequately Administered counties of 61.3%, 95% CI: 52.8%, 69.8%, estimated difference of 4.1 percentage points (SE = 1.4), $p = .003$. However, the youth voter turnout rates for the Inadequately Administered counties did not differ from the youth voter turnout rates in Maladministered counties (61.4%, 95% CI: 52.4%, 70.5%; estimated different of 0.1 percentage points (SE = 1.1 $p = .917$).

Lastly, the voter turnout for newly eligible youth ranged from 70.2% (Maladministered typology) to 78.1% (Well Administered typology). These differences were statistically different, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 7.27, p = .026$. For newly eligible youth who lived in Well Administered counties, the turnout rate was 78.1% (95% CI: 66.8%, 89.4%). This was significantly higher than the youth voter turnout rate for Inadequately Administered counties of 72.1%, 95% CI: 59.6%, 84.6%, at an estimated difference of 6.0 percentage points (SE = 2.2), $p = .007$. However, the youth voter turnout rates for the Inadequately Administered counties did not differ from the youth voter turnout rates in Maladministered counties (70.2%, 95% CI: 55.6%, 84.7%; estimated different of 1.9 percentage points (SE = 2.3 $p = .409$).

Table 11 Voter turnout rates by typology and age group

	All		white		Black		Latinx		Asian		Indigenous	
	Rate	SE	Rate	SE	Rate	SE	Rate	SE	Rate	SE	Rate	SE
Youth												
Well Administered [a, b]	65.3	9.8	65.4	9.7	53.4	20.3	49.9	21.7	48.7	30.0	51.5	27.1
Inadequately Administered	61.4	8.9	61.3	8.9	51.3	10.1	49.7	10.5	52.3	16.3	53.3	16.1
Maladministered	61.0	7.5	61.4	8.1	50.0	8.4	50.1	8.3	54.9	8.9	53.4	8.7
Adults												
Well Administered	82.9	6.4	83.0	6.5	78.4	13.0	71.9	16.5	72.4	23.9	77.0	19.2
Inadequately Administered	80.2	6.5	80.3	6.2	76.3	7.7	69.7	9.0	73.9	9.1	76.8	8.4
Maladministered	78.4	7.7	79.1	6.7	74.0	8.2	67.8	8.5	72.6	8.1	75.0	8.0

[a] Overall, the turnout rate for youth
[b] This rate was different from the Adequate Administered typology for white youth only

Other Predictors of Youth Turnout

Table 12 presents the values for the predictors of youth voter turnout for each model ran. A Wald test of parameter was used to assess whether the predictors were different for the two age groups. A p-value equal to or less than .010 was used as the critical value. Holding election administration typology constant, across the different models, state-level factors did not predict youth voter turnout. However, for adult voters, state felony disenfranchisement laws was marginally associated with higher adult voter turnout ($\beta = 4.20, p = .045$). This effect was statistically different from the youth model, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 7.98, p = .005$. Thus, the effect of felony disenfranchisement laws may have a differential effect on youth voter turnout compared to adult voters. Additionally, strict non-photo ID laws were associated with higher adult voter turnout ($\beta = 3.99, p < .001$). This effect was not statistically different from the youth model. The remaining state-level factors for adults were not statistically significant or different from the overall youth model.

In white adult model, non-strict photo ID ($\beta = 4.67, p = .006$) and felony disenfranchisement laws ($\beta = 4.14, p = .038$) were associated with higher white adult voter turnout. These effects were not statistically different from the youth model. Thus, what can be concluded from these results is that while non-strict state voter ID and felon disenfranchisement

laws may be positively associated with adult voter turnout, this associated increase is not different from youth voter turnout. In other words, in both models, voter turnout increased, but only in the adult model was the increase statistically meaningful. In the Black adult mode, state-level factors did not predict adult voter turnout and were not different from the youth model. For Latinx adults, non-strict voter ID laws ($\beta = 6.46, p = .012$) and felony disenfranchisement ($\beta = 6.12, p = .023$) were associated with higher adult voter turnout, and the COVI ranking during COVID was associated with lower adult voter turnout ($\beta = -.12, p < .001$). However, only non-strict voter ID laws ($Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 11.98, p = .001$) and felony disenfranchisement ($Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 7.74, p = .005$) were different from the youth model. In the Asian American Pacific Islander adult model, non-strict photo ID laws ($\beta = 6.17, p = .0004$) was associated with increased adult voter turnout, but the COVI ranking during COVID ($\beta = -.20, p = .006$) were associated with lower adult turnout. These effects were not statistically different from the youth model. Hence, these state-level policies have similar effects on youth and adults; however, for youth, the effects were not statistically meaningful. Lastly, for Indigenous adult voters, felony disenfranchisement laws were associated with increased adult voter turnout, $\beta = 6.21, p = .012$. However, the effect was not statistically different from the youth model.

The percentage of residents with a BA or higher significantly predicted higher voter turnout for youth overall ($\beta = .35, p < .001$) and for each ethno-racial group: $\beta = .33, p < .001$ for white youth, $\beta = .41, p < .001$ for Black youth, $\beta = .43, p < .001$ for Latinx youth, $\beta = .49, p < .001$ for Asian American Pacific Islander youth, and $\beta = .43, p < .001$ for Indigenous youth. The same was true for adults in the overall model, $\beta = .26, p < .001$, and the separate ethno-racial models: $\beta = .23, p < .001$ for white youth, $\beta = .21, p < .001$ for Black youth, $\beta = .36, p < .001$ for Latinx youth, $\beta = .32, p < .001$ for Asian American Pacific

Islander youth, and $\beta = .24, p < .001$ for Indigenous youth. The effect of the percentage of residents who have a BA or higher was stronger in the youth model compared to the adult model, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 11.13, p < .001$, overall, and for white youth, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 11.32, p < .001$, Black youth, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 34.28, p < .001$, Asian American Pacific Islander youth, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 22.69, p < .001$, and Indigenous youth, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 22.64, p < .001$, but not Latinx youth.

In the overall youth turnout model, counties with a higher percentage of Indigenous residents had higher youth voter turnout, $\beta = .15, p = .017$. The percentages of residents of other ethno-racial groups were not associated with youth voter turnout. However, counties where white people were at or below their national percentage was associated with lower youth voter turnout, $\beta = -2.11, p = .033$. In the adult model, the percentages of Black, Latinx, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Indigenous residents were not a significant predictor of turnout and the effects were not statistically different from the youth model. However, in the adult model, counties where white people were at or below their national percentage was not associated with adult voter turnout, but this effect was different from the youth model, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 9.18, p = .003$. Thus, for youth voters, their turnout is associated with the population of white residents.

In the model for white youth, the percentages of Black and Indigenous residents were positively associated with white youth turnout, $\beta = .15, p = .003$ and $\beta = .18, p = .005$, respectively. There were no other significant ethno-racial predictors. In the adult model, only the percentage of Indigenous residents was positively associated with white adult voter turnout, $\beta = .12, p = .032$. However, this effect was not different from the youth model. There were no other significant demographic predictors. In the model for Black youth, counties with higher

percentages of Black and Indigenous residents had higher Black youth voter turnout, $\beta = .16, p = .002$ and $\beta = .22, p = .007$, respectively. For Black adults, only the percentage of Black residents was associated with increased voter turnout, $\beta = .16, p = .003$. However, this effect was not different from the youth model. Thus, for Black youth and adults, the percentages of non-white ethno-racial residents have similar effects on their turnout. Yet, for Black youth, counties where white people were at or below their national proportion was associated with lower Black youth voter turnout, $\beta = -2.96, p = .003$, which was different from Black adults, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 13.60, p < .001$. For Black adults, counties where white people were at or below their national proportion was not associated with their turnout. There were no other significant demographic predictors.

In the model for Latinx youth, there were no significant ethno-racial predictors. However, in the adult model, the percentage of Indigenous voters was associated with higher voter turnout, $\beta = .22, p = .030$. There were no other significant demographic predictors and effects of the demographic predictors were not statistically different. In other words, the percentages of ethno-racial residents within a county had similar effects for Latinx youth and adults. In the model for Asian American Pacific Islander youth turnout, counties with a higher percentage of Black residents was the only demographic predictor to be associated with Asian American Pacific Islander youth voter turnout, $\beta = .19, p = .016$, and this effect was statistically different from the Asian American Pacific Islander adult model, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 15.09, p < .001$. In the adult model, there were no significant ethno-racial predictors. Thus, for Asian American Pacific Islander youth, increases in the percentage of Black residents is associated with higher voter turnout. In the models for Indigenous youth and adult turnout, counties with a higher percentage of Indigenous residents had higher Indigenous voter turnout, $\beta = .27, p = .003$ (youth) and $\beta =$

$.24, p = .003$ (adults). There were no other significant ethno-racial predictors and the effects were similar.

In the overall youth turnout model, the percentage of households below the poverty line was associated with lower youth voter ($\beta = -.67, p < .001$) as well as in each ethno-racial group: $\beta = -.64, p < .001$ for white youth, $\beta = -.73, p < .001$ for Black youth, $\beta = -.65, p < .001$ for Latinx youth, $\beta = -.75, p < .001$ for Asian American Pacific Islander youth, and $\beta = -.76, p < .001$ for Indigenous youth. This was similar to the adult models overall ($\beta = -.54, p < .001$) as well as for white ($\beta = -.53, p < .001$) for Black ($\beta = -.73, p < .001$), Latinx ($\beta = -.75, p < .001$), Asian American Pacific Islander ($\beta = -.70, p < .001$), and Indigenous adults ($\beta = -.72, p < .001$).

At the county-level, for all youth and adult models, the per capita adult incarceration rate was associated with turnout, $\beta = .36, p < .001$ (youth) and $\beta = .33, p = .009$ (adults). This association was similarly positive and significant across all ethno-racial age groups (see Table 12). In contrast, the per capita rate of juvenile incarceration was not statistically associated with overall youth voter turnout, nor for youth voter turnout for particular ethno-racial groups. Yet, the effects were different from each other, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 8.01, p = .005$. For youth, the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized coefficient was positive, but significant while in the adult model, the coefficient was negative, but not significant. In terms of ethno-racial groups, for white youth and white adults, the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized coefficient was not associated with turnout; however, these effects were different from each other, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 13.26, p < .001$. This suggests that the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized may affect youth differently from adults, but this study could not detect the exact effect.

In the Black youth model, the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized was associated with lower turnout, but this effect was not statistically significant. However, for Black adults, the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized was associated with lower voter turnout, $\beta = -6.37, p = .011$, but this effect was not different from the Black youth model. Latinx, Asian American Pacific Islander, and Indigenous youth and adults, there was no association between the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized and their respective turnout rates.

Table 12 Predictors of voter turnout

Youth	**ALL**		**White**		**Black**		**Latinx**		**AAPI**		**Indigenous**	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
State-level												
Strict photo ID voter laws	0.13	3.01	0.00	2.97	-1.59	3.18	1.37	3.03	-1.13	3.06	-0.57	2.46
Strict non-photo ID voter laws	5.22	5.28	6.24	5.68	0.92	3.41	1.93	3.26	3.75	2.66	0.85	2.83
Felon disenfranchisement	1.05	2.24	1.49	2.17	-0.66	2.52	3.11	2.28	1.95	2.36	2.69	2.24
COVI rank during COVID	-0.12	0.10	-0.13	0.10	-0.10	0.09	-0.15	0.09	-0.16	0.09	-0.11	0.09
County-level												
% residents w/a BA or higher	0.35***	0.06	0.33***	0.06	0.41***	0.06	0.43***	0.05	0.49***	0.06	0.43***	0.07
% Black alone residents	0.02	0.05	0.15**	0.05	0.16**	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.19*	0.08	-0.01	0.06
% AAPI alone residents	0.01	0.12	-0.01	0.13	0.07	0.10	0.02	0.11	-0.14	0.11	0.06	0.12
% Latinx residents	-0.10	0.07	-0.04	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.00	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.00	0.07
% Indigenous residents	0.15*	0.06	0.18**	0.06	0.22**	0.08	0.14	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.27**	0.09
Undr. rep. white population	-2.11*	0.99	-1.39	1.06	-2.96**	1.00	-1.47	1.02	-1.72	1.44	-0.71	1.17
Per capita adlt. Incar. rate	0.36**	0.13	0.32*	0.14	0.46***	0.12	0.51***	0.12	0.59***	0.15	0.40**	0.13
Per capita juv. inst. rate	3.01	2.51	4.65	2.50	-3.26	2.13	-0.35	2.60	-0.06	2.84	1.05	1.92
% below the poverty line	-0.67***	0.16	-0.64***	0.17	-0.73***	0.16	-0.65***	0.18	-0.75**	0.25	-0.76***	0.19
Adults												
State-level												
Strict photo ID voter laws	1.46	1.94	1.33	1.91	0.22	2.42	1.54	2.64	0.08	2.80	-2.04	2.17
Strict non-photo ID voter laws	3.99*	1.58	4.67**	1.71	2.99	2.35	6.46*	2.57	6.17**	2.14	3.29	2.08
Felon disenfranchisement	4.20*	2.10	4.14*	2.00	3.60	2.48	6.15*	2.71	4.81	2.79	6.21*	2.66
COVI rank during COVID	-0.12***	0.07	-0.12	0.06	-0.14	0.08	-0.21**	0.08	-0.20**	0.07	-0.13***	0.08
County-level												
% residents w/a BA or higher	0.26***	0.04	0.23***	0.04	0.21***	0.05	0.36***	0.06	0.32***	0.06	0.24***	0.05
% Black alone residents	0.02	0.05	0.08	0.04	0.16**	0.06	0.00	0.05	0.04	0.07	-0.09	0.06
% AAPI alone residents	-0.20	0.13	-0.17	0.12	-0.11	0.11	-0.14	0.15	-0.25	0.15	-0.12	0.12
% Latinx residents	-0.09	0.06	0.00	0.05	0.04	0.04	-0.01	0.05	0.03	0.06	-0.04	0.06
% Indigenous residents	0.08	0.05	0.12*	0.06	0.13	0.08	0.22*	0.10	0.18	0.11	0.24**	0.08
Undr. rep. white population	0.06	0.59	0.14	0.63	-0.67	0.80	-1.13	0.92	-0.44	1.00	0.41	0.88
Per capita adlt. Incar. rate	0.33**	0.13	0.30*	0.12	0.41**	0.14	0.64***	0.15	0.52***	0.12	0.44**	0.13
Per capita juv. inst. rate	-1.56	2.31	-1.64	2.03	-6.37*	2.50	-2.93	2.82	-2.28	2.76	-1.34	2.24
% below the poverty line	-0.54***	0.12	-0.53***	0.12	-0.73***	0.13	-0.75***	0.15	-0.70**	0.22	-0.72***	0.14

Note. *$p \leq .05$ **$p \leq .01$ ***$p \leq .001$.

Evaluation of the Turnout Gap

Hypothesis 4a – Youth Voter Turnout Gap

It was hypothesized that counties that are comparatively harder to vote in would be associated with a wider 2020 gap between the turnout rates of youth and adult voters. To assess

this, a difference score was calculated between the turnout rates (i.e., adult voter turnout rate – Youth voter turnout rate) for each typology. Within the Well Administered typology, youth voter turnout was 65.3% while adult voter turnout was 82.9%, a difference of 17.7 (*SE* = 1.78, p < .001). For the Inadequately Administered typology, youth voter turnout was 61.4% while adult voter turnout was 80.2%, a difference of 18.9 (*SE* = 1.7, p < .001). In the Maladministered typology, youth voter turnout was 61.0% while adult voter turnout was 78.4%, a difference of 17.4 (*SE* = 1.8, p < .001). The Wald test suggested a significant difference in the voter turnout gap by typology, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 12.74, p = .002$. However, none of the pairwise comparisons were significant at the adjusted p-value of .010 (see Table 13). Thus, youth voter turnout gaps do not substantially differ by typology.

The second part of the hypothesis concerned whether the voter turnout gap differed by typology within ethno-racial groups. For Black youth, the turnout gaps across typologies were not significantly different, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 1.97, p = .374$. In the Latinx model, within the Well Administered typology, youth voter turnout was 49.9% while adult voter turnout was 71.9%, a difference of 22.0 (*SE* = 1.65, *p* < .001). For the Inadequately Administered typology, youth voter turnout was 49.7% while adult voter turnout was 69.7%, a difference of 20.0 (*SE* = 1.8, *p* < .001). In the Maladministered typology, youth voter turnout was 50.1% while adult voter turnout was 67.8%, a difference of 17.7 (*SE* = 2.1, *p* < .001). These turnout gaps differed by typology, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 15.94, p < .001$. The turnout gap was significantly smaller in the Maladministered typology than in the Well Administered (*p* < .001) and Inadequately Administered typologies (*p* < .001). Since Latino youth voter turnout did not vary across typology, this significant narrowing of the turnout gap with Maladministered counties is most likely due to changes in adult voter turnout.

In the Asian American Pacific Islander model, within the Well Administered typology, youth voter turnout was 48.7% while adult voter turnout was 72.4%, a difference of 23.7 (*SE* = 2.23, $p < .001$). For the Inadequately Administered typology, youth voter turnout was 52.3% while adult voter turnout was 73.9%, a difference of 21.6 (*SE* = 2.0, p < .001). In the Maladministered typology, youth voter turnout was 54.9% while adult voter turnout was 72.6%, a difference of 17.7 (*SE* = 2.2, p < .001). These turnout gaps differed by typologies, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 16.53, p < .001$. The turnout gap was in Maladministered typology was different from the Well Administered ($p < .001$) and Inadequately Administered typologies ($p < .001$). Since Asian American Pacific Islander youth voter turnout did not vary across typology, this significant narrowing of the turnout gap with Maladministered counties is most likely due to changes in adult voter turnout.

For Indigenous youth, the differences in turnout gaps were significant, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 16.53, p < .001$. However, none of the comparisons were statistically significant at the adjusted p-value of .010. Thus, when evaluating the turnout gap between youth and their ethno-racial adult counterparts, for Black and Indigenous youth, the turnout gap did not vary by typology. However, for Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islander youth turnout gap narrows in both Inadequately Administered and Maladministered typologies because adult voter turnout is lower. This finding is contrary to the hypothesis.

Table 13 Pairwise comparisons of the youth voter turnout gap

	Youth		white		Black		Latinx		AAPI		Indigenous	
Pairwise comparison of the turnout gaps	Est. Diff.	SE	Est. Diff.	SE	Est. Diff.	SE	Est. Diff.	SE	Est. Diff.	SE	Est. Diff.	SE
Well Administered v Inadequately Administered	-1.2	0.9	-1.4	0.9	0.0	1.0	2.0	0.9	2.1	1.8	2.1	1.3
Well Administered v Maladministered	0.3	1.3	-0.1	1.3	1.0	1.4	**4.3**	1.2	**6.0**	1.8	3.9	1.7
Well Administered v Maladministered	1.5	0.7	1.3	0.6	1.0	0.7	**2.3**	0.6	**3.9**	1.2	1.9	1.3

Values in **bold** indicate that a p-value $\leq .010$

Hypothesis 4b – Newly Eligible Youth Voter Turnout Gap

It was hypothesized that counties in which it is comparatively harder to vote would be associated with a wider 2020 gap between the turnout rates of newly eligible youth and adult voters. To assess this, a difference score was calculated for each typology. The turnout gap between newly eligible youth voters and adult voters did not differ across election administration typologies, $Wald\ \chi^2_{(2)} = 2.66, p = .265$. Newly eligible youth turnout could not be examined within ethno-racial groups due to amount of missing data (i.e., counties failing to report age and race).

Discussion

The results from this study suggest that the overall youth voter turnout rate was higher in counties with well administered elections compared to the inadequately administered elections, but not maladministered ones. Moreover, white youth had higher voter turnout when they resided in counties with well administered as opposed to inadequately administered elections. Given that there were no associations between election administration typology and voter turnout for other ethno-racial groups, findings suggest that only white youth benefitted from well administered elections. In terms of the turnout gap between youth and adult voters, the turnout gaps did not vary across election administration typology. Yet, when considering ethno-racial differences, for Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islanders, the youth-adult gap narrowed because of lower rates of adult voting in maladministered counties. Lastly, county-level carceral climate indicators were a significant predictor of election administration. Specifically, increases in the per capita adult incarceration were associated with a higher probability of being maladministered counties.

Overview of County-Level Election Administration Typologies

There were three election administration typologies, Well Administered, Inadequately Administered, and Maladministered. This finding adds nuance to the conceptualization of election administration practices and voter turnout. The dominant method within political science is to use a variable-centered approach to analyzing election administration and state election laws (see Li, Pomante, & Schranufnagel, 2018 and Grumbach, 2022 for examples). Such approaches conceptualize election administration occurring on a continuum, e.g., very well to very poorly administered. In effect, the underlying assumption of variable-centered approaches is that there is one homogenous population, i.e., the relationship among the variables holds true for all units in the population (Collins & Lanza, 2010; Masyn, 2013). The findings from this

provide evidence that there may be subpopulations of counties that vary by election administration. Specifically, the three-class, or typology, solution was the best fitting model for the data, not the one class solution. This underscores that there are distinctions rather than a continuum. As such, this finding allows for characterizing counties based on indicators.

In conceptualizing voter suppression, activists and scholars suggest that it is useful to think of voter suppression as affecting a voter's ability to do one or more of the following: 1) get and remain registered to vote, 2) cast a ballot, and 3) have the ballot counted (Abrams, 2020; Anderson, 2018). The election administration typologies in this study can be mapped onto that conceptualization. For example, well administered counties can be characterized as easy to get and stay registered as well as cast a ballot; inadequately administered counties can be characterized as hard to get and stay registered, but east to cast a ballot; and maladministered counties can be characterized as hard to get and stay registered as well as cast a ballot. This characterization has practical implications. Political social workers could target their voter engagement and education efforts to county-level issues. For example, in inadequately administered counties, additional resources may be spent on providing voters with information on completing and verifying their registration, while in well administered ones, resources could be spent solely on issue-based advocacy. In addition, the findings of this study underscore that election administration is a local matter. Even states like California, which is in the top five on the Cost of Voting Index, have counties that are maladministered, and states like Texas, which is in the bottom third of the Cost of Voting Index, have counties that are well administered. To that end, county-level election administration indices can help connect policy interventions to specific aspects of election administration, like reducing mail ballot rejection rates in states that conduct all-mail elections.

Well Administered. This typology of election administration was characterized by low rates of rejection across all election administration indicators, registration rejections, mail ballot rejections, provision ballots cast, removal of voters due to felony conviction, and removal due to failure to respond to a notice from an election official. Moreover, the variability, as measured by the standard deviation, was lower than the national rate, suggesting consistency in the application of procedures across these counties. Central to effective election administration is procedural certainty in the process (Hall, 2018). Said simply, individuals need to have confidence that their registration applications will be processed and that their ballots will be counted. If there are errors, these errors in processing applications or ballots would be few and easily remedied. Thus, the low rejections and variability that characterized the Well Administered typology are examples of what indicates a just elections. When the system runs smoothly, this may allow political campaigns and other groups to focus on mobilizing voters.

Inadequately Administered. Within Inadequately Administered counties, registration rejection and removal rates were below the national average, but both were more than 10 times the rejection rate of Well Administered counties. Thus, these counties can be characterized as hard to become registered and hard to stay registered. Registration is understood as a significant barrier to voter participation (Larocca & Klemanski, 2011). Three landmark legislations – the VRA, NVRA, and HAVA – made voter registration more accessible. In fact, the VRA has been credited with increasing the registration rates of Black people in the south (Bullock, III & Gaddie, 2009; Thernstrom, 2008) and social workers have effectively used aspects of the NVRA to register groups typically less likely to vote (Lickiss, et al., 2020; Petering, et al., 2021). However, increased access may not translate to increased ease of registering (Merivaki, 2019). In addition to registering, NVRA and HAVA required election jurisdictions to maintain accurate

registration lists. List maintenance procedures often involve sending registered voters a notice, and if the notice is returned as undeliverable, the voter is moved to an inactive list (Minnite, 2010). This is typically done when the voter has not voted in two federal elections (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Wang T. A., 2012). However, such maintenance procedures can disproportionately affect non-white and highly mobile voters by making it more likely that they are removed from registration lists without cause (Scher, 2011; Wang T. A., 2012). Thus, the differences in registration and removal rates in the Inadequately Administered counties suggests that some voters are harmed by the manner in which these counties administer process their registration applications and manage their lists, which is a violation of the principles of a just election.

The concept of just elections is an extension of Rawls' concept of procedural justice (Thompson, 2002). For Rawls, procedural justice was achieved when the deliberative process that produced laws was open to all members of society and the laws did not privilege one social group (Rawls, 1999, 1972). With elections, this principle translates to equal respect, with the rules governing elections placing the burdens of voting equally across voters (Thompson, 2002). This ideal of equality is not just a philosophical concern. The VRA, in particular Section 2, was designed to ensure that election systems provided equal opportunity for all to vote (Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee, 2021; Gardner & Charles, 2018). One of the issues argued in Bush v Gore was that having different procedures for adjudicating ballots across counties was a violation of the equal protection clause of the Constitution (Zelden, 2020). In short, even absent racial disparities, the fact that elections are administered differently across counties is a violation of the just election principle.

Maladministered. This typology had the highest rejection rates of any profile. In fact, its registration rejection rate was more than four times the other typologies and the national average. In this study, Alachua, Marion, and Palm Beach counites in Florida were members of this typology. This finding is similar to a previous study, where, during the 2012 election cycle, the registration rejection rates for these Florida counties increased from the previous cycle and were higher than the state average (Merivaki, 2019). For potential voters who live in counties with maladministered elections, the high rejection rates of registration applications may help to explain why not registering to vote is a common reason for not voting (Zukin, et al., 2006). While federal legislation has expanded access to registration applications, the legislation did not specify what constitutes a valid registration application, beyond applications submitted within 30 days of an election or period specified by state law (Merivaki, 2019). Absent clear federal guidance, this allows states to set eligibility requirements for registration applications to be valid. For example, in Florida during the 2012 election, registration applications were rejected due to missing or invalid date of birth, last four digits of social security number, or residential address (Merivaki, 2019). Such requirements, rather than aiding in verifying eligibility, may increase the likelihood of missing or illegible information, thereby, increasing registration rejection rates.

Predictors of Typology Membership

The carceral climate, adult incarceration rate and rate of juveniles institutionalized, increased the probability of being in inadequately and maladministered counties. This finding adds to the literature on community-level incarceration rates and its effect on social well-being. Within this body of research, scholars have found associations between incarceration rates and lower rates of life expectancy, weakened social capital, and negative attitudes toward government (Clear, 2007; Hochschild, Weaver, & Burch, 2012; Holaday, et al., 2021). The

connection between incarceration rates and election administration typology may be present for at least two reasons. First, higher incarceration rates have been associated with residential instability and decreased social capital (Holaday, et al., 2021). The connection between residential instability and incarceration rates may, in part, explain the association with election administration typologies. Individuals who move frequently, i.e., highly mobile, are more likely to be removed from registration lists (Scher, 2011; Wang T. A., 2012). Additionally, Clear (2007) argued that incarceration is associated with higher rates of residential mobility for formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. Second, the financial strain of incarceration and convictions affects the ability of individuals to contribute to the maintenance of community institutions (Burch, 2013; Clear, 2007). To the extent that potential voters rely on community institutions for voter education and engagement, the reduction in contributions may be connected to election administration via higher rates of incomplete/inaccurate registration applications and mail ballots. Both rationals suggest that incarceration erodes the social capacity of communities and that election administration may not be designed to respond to this erosion.

The fact that the carceral climate measures are associated with election administration typology should concern social workers. The Grand Challenges for Social Work initiative lists smart decarceration as a challenge for the profession (Charles, et al., 2022). The finding that counties with higher rates of incarcerations are more likely to have inadequately or maladministered elections reduces the ability of the profession to achieve the goals of smart decarceration. The framework for promoting smart decarceration includes building social capacity and making changes in the criminal legal system (Charles, et al., 2022). These aspects of the framework require communities to have access to well administered elections where voters can elect district attorneys and legislatures who would allocate funds for mental health,

social services, and alternatives to incarceration. More broadly, the other challenges that center on health and wellness require engaging with political processes. The link between political process and health outcomes is that voters elect politicians who shape the social determinants of health (Brown et al., 2020; Rodriguez, 2018). Thus, building the social capacity of communities affected by the criminal legal system should include improving the administration of elections in these communities.

In this study, the racial disparity was not between white and Black individuals. Asian American and Pacific Islanders were less likely to reside in counties that were well administered while Latinx individuals were more likely to reside in maladministered counties than inadequately administered ones. The fact that any demographic was a predictor suggests that election administration may be racialized. Moreover, since these ethno-racial groups are the fastest growing demographic groups (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021; Frey, 2018; Scher, 2007), the fact that they are less likely to reside in well administered counties does not bode well for their electoral representation. When the VRA was reauthorized in 1975, Congress included for protections for language minorities, which expanded VRA coverage beyond the South; for example, parts of New York City and California became covered jurisdictions (Scher, 2011; Thernstrom, 2008). Under the VRA, language minorities (Spanish, Chinese, and Navajo speakers, for example) in covered jurisdictions are supposed to receive election materials and voting assistance in their native language (Higgins, 2015; Scher, 2011). However, compliance with the language provision has been problematic (Higgins, 2015; Scher, 2011).

During the Congressional hearings for the reauthorization of the VRA in 2006, it was found that Asian American, Latinx, and Indigenous communities were denied ballots in required languages and that in some Asian American communities, ballots were mistranslated (Scher,

2011). Additionally, nearly 19% and 13.3% of covered jurisdictions surveyed reported that they did not provide language assistance for Asian and Spanish languages, respectively (Tucker & Espino, 2007). Jurisdictions with compliance issues can be characterized has having administrative barriers that impede effective implementation or general awareness of the langauge provisions of the VRA, lack of awareness of the growth of populations that require language assistance, or such jurisdiction may be overseen by election officials hostile to language minorities (Higgins, 2015). When jurisdictions are fully compliant, the voter turnout rate for language minorites is higher (Tucker & Espino, 2007). This may be indicative of a well administered election. The finding that the percentage of Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islanders residents reduces the probability that counties have well administered elections suggests that research is needed on compliance with the langauge provisions of the VRA and its effects on election administration.

In Brnovich (2021), the Democratic National Committee argued that the racial differences in rates of out of precinct votes cast were a violation of Section 2. While Justice Alito, writing for the majority, dismissed the differences in out of precinct votes cast by white versus Black residents as marginal, Justice Kagan, in dissent, noted that the goal of the VRA was to eliminate all discrimination in election systems (Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee, 2021). Prior to the Court's ruling in Brnovich, such a racial disparity would violate Section 2 of the VRA. The failure of the Court to protect voting rights in this case may secure electoral advantages for white people. However, using a county-level approach to election administration, voting rights lawyers and activists may also seek remedies under state laws. Eighteen states have constitutional clauses that have language guaranteeing free and equal elections (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). Given the current conservative majority on the

Supreme Court and partisan Congressional gridlock, state-level policies to protect voting rights are necessary. In light of the finding that Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islanders are less likely to reside in counties that are well administered, federal efforts to protect voting rights should strengthen protections for language minorities. Yet, strengthening the language protections only affects 30% of Latinx and 25% of Asian American Pacific Islander individuals (Fraga & Merseth, 2016; Parkin & Zlotnick, 2014).

Summary of County-Level Election Administration Typologies

Scholars have found that the quality and location of precincts may affect voter turnout (Barreto, et al., 2009). Other have noted that poll worker age, training, and discretion are related to turnout (Atkeson, et al., 2014). In addition, voting technology and the funds available for administering elections are important aspects of county-level election administration that may influence a voter experience (Hall, 2018; Zelden, 2020). Thus, the election administration indicators and contextual features used in this study should be used as a baseline for understanding administrative barriers to getting and staying registered as well as casting a ballot.

Youth Voter Turnout

Youth voters are often stereotyped as apathetic and disengaged from politics (Gentry, 2018). Various scholars have framed the turnout gap between youth and adult voters as a product of the life cycle (Dalton, 2017; Zukin, et al., 2006), arguing that youth voters are not yet connected to communities or the economy, or may choose other forms of civic engagement, like volunteering or protesting, because they are either turned off by politics or see community service as a more direct means of helping their community (Lawless & Richard, 2015; Zukin et al., 2006). The findings of this study add another possible explanation for lower youth voter turnout: election administration. Not being able to register to vote is a common reason that youth

list for not voting (Zukin, et al., 2006). The youth voter turnout rate was higher in well administered counties, which was characterized by low registration rejection rates. In contrast, for youth in inadequately and maladministered counties, where it may take several attempts to become registered voters, turnout was lower. Other scholars have noted that youth civic education needs to move beyond factual knowledge and to preparing youth on how to navigate barriers in the voting process (Holbein & Hillygus, 2020). Thus, addressing low youth voter turnout may involve thinking about how election administration practices may be a barrier to youth political involvement.

Youth voter turnout was highest in the Well Administered typology; however, when analyzed by ethno-racial group, white youth were the only group of voters to benefit from residing in a county with Well Administered elections. Said differently, non-white youth had relatively lower turnout across all three typologies. This finding is contrary to the study's hypothesis, which was that non-white voter turnout would be lower in counties with poorly administered elections. Yet, the finding is concerning. Based on the election administration indicators presented in this study, white youth voters benefit when rejection rates are low. This could be the product of two related factors: 1) the historic legacy of restricting the franchise to economically independent white males and 2) sociopolitical context influences youth political participation.

During the founding era, the political elites restricted the franchise to a white electorate that was economically independent (Gardner & Charles, 2018; Keyssar, 2000). As the franchise expanded, the idea of being white or male could no longer be a requirement for voting. Yet, economic independence may still be a de facto prerequiste for voting. For example, scholars have accepted that factors like homeownership, employment, and education are correlates of

voting (Dalton, 2017). In fact, income and education are viewed as important determinants of political participation (Fraga, 2018). However, the relationship between education and voting may be unique to the United States. In a comparative study, a strong relationship between education and voting was only found in the United States, but not the United Kingdom (Milligan, et al., 2004). Moreover, to the extent that non-white voters are disproportionately poor (Hochschild, Weaver, & Burch, 2012; Olson, 2004; Taylor, 2016), the manner in which we perceive a relationship between income and voting may reflect a tactic acceptance of economic independence as prerequiste for voting. Hence, white youth benefiting from well administered election may reflect that the system was designed for their participation.

Overall, the white youth voter turnout finding suggests the importance of thinking critically about how the status quo advantages white people. This is not a new argument. It is an extension of Du Bois' argument in *Black Reconstruction* that we need to practice abolition democracy, rooting out systematic racism. In terms of this study, practicing abolition democracy would mean ensuring that all voters benefit from well administered elections. More broadly, it involves redesigning American political and social institutions to eliminate white advantage and ensuring that no social group is capable of dominating another (Allen, 2020; Du Bois, 2007; Olson, 2004). The Grand Challenges for Social Work initiative added eliminating racism as a 13th Grand Challenge. Meeting this challenge requires that the profession confronts racism and white supremacy within society and social work (Teasley, et al.). For political social work practice, this means thinking about the ways in which election practices and outcomes either maintain or worsen racial disparities.

The sociopolitical context of counties may shape youth political participation. Previous studies have either found and/or explored individual-level factors like educational attainment,

income, and incarceration (Dalton, 2017; Fraga, 2018; Lerman & Weaver, 2014). Other scholars have investigated these factors at the community-level to argue that social disadvantage (high rates of these factors) erode the political power of these communities by creating a social context where political participation is not encouraged (Burch, 2013; Clear, 2007; Shedd, 2015). In contrast, in communities with a higher percentage of residents with a BA or higher, voters are more likely to turnout. This could be that within these communities there is a culture of voting. Specifically, for youth voters, regardless of ethno-racial group, the percentage of residents with a BA or higher is associated with increased voter turnout. Essentially, contextual features may give youth resources to overcome administrative barriers to political participation.

Carceral climate had a nuanced relationship with youth voter turnout. Increases in the per capita adult incarceration rate were associated with higher youth voter turnout and greater likelihood of being in a maladministered county. Prior research has connected criminal justice contact with lower rates of political engagement at the individual level. For example, individuals detained, arrested, or incarcerated are less likely to vote (Drakulich, et al., 2017; Owens & Walker, 2018), and even vicarious criminal justice contact reduces political behavior (Burch, 2013; Shedd, 2015). This study adds to that literature that incarceration rates are associated with election administration. Second, it adds that higher incarceration rates are associated with higher youth voter turnout. However, since the 2020 Presidential co-occurred with mass mobilization against police brutality, specifically, and criminal legal system, in general, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Youth in counties with high incarceration rates may have been motivated to participate in the electoral process.

Resistance to the carceral state is one of the reasons for the rise of Black Lives Matter and other social justice movements. In fact, consecutive federal elections have occurred during

large-scale social movements: the emergence of Black Lives Matter during the 2016 presidential election, March for Our Lives during the 2018 midterm election, and the collective actions associated with the killing of George Floyd. With each election cycle, youth electoral participation has increased (Cilluffo & Fry, 2019; Fry, 2017). Thus, the finding that the per capita adult incarceration was positively associated with increased youth voter turnout suggests that incarceration rates may influence how youth make meaning of their social world. Social scientists, and even the Supreme Court, have recognized that carceral climates shape how individuals respond to the government. Utah v Strieff was a Supreme Court case that centered on whether police can use evidence from an unfounded stop of a person (Utah v Edward Joseph Strieff, Jr., 2016). In her dissenting opinion, Justice Sotomayor noted that racism and disparate criminal justice contact give rise to a double consciousness, and when the authority of police officers is not checked, this double consciousness is legitimized and sends the message a person is a subject, not a citizen (Utah v Edward Joseph Strieff, Jr., 2016). The concept of double consciousness originates with W.E.B. Du Bois' work in which he argued that the experiences of Black people allow them to see how white supremacy operates to define and marginalize them as Black people; yet, the concept of double consciousness can be extended to other groups that experience marginalization (Cammarota, 2016). When double consciousness is interpreted as a critical world view, it has been associated with increased civic engagement.

Within the developmental sciences, sociopolitical development is used to explain how youth become aware of and challenge oppressive structures (Watts & Guessous, 2006; Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). Central to sociopolitical development is understanding and reflecting on the role of social power (Plummer, et al., 2022), i.e., a critical world view. For example, social power may be exercised through (1) the construction of barriers to participation, (2)

influencing or shaping consciousness through narratives, and (3) rewarding and/or punishing individuals (Speer, 2008). For this generation of youth voters, who are coming of age in a multiracial United States, they be socialized in environment where they hear both racial justice and color-blind messages that shape their sociopolitical development. Essentially, youth can be motivated to engage in politics because of their understanding of how social power operates in their lives (Flanagan, 2013; Plummer, et al., 2022). While some scholars have found that carceral contact reduces political and civic engagement (Burch, 2013; Shedd, 2015), others have found that youth can be mobilized by criminal justice contact (Walker, 2020). What unites these conflicting findings is the differences in how individuals interpret criminal justice contact. When such contact can be interpreted as an injustice that should resisted, there is motivation; however, when others see this injustice as just how things are, these individuals choose not to participate. Thus, in considering the relationship between contextual factors and youth voter turnout, it is important to evaluate how youth make meaning of those factors.

The rate of juveniles institutionalized was not a significant predictor of youth or adult voter turnout. However, when considering ethno-racial groups, for Black adults, the effect was significant. Higher rates of juveniles institutionalized, which includes juveniles in detention centers as well as group homes, was associated with lower Black adult voter turnout. However, when comparing this effect for Black youth and adults, there was not a significant difference. Yet, for both Black youth and adults, the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized was negatively related to voter turnout. Although, for most groups, the main effect was not significant, explaining why there is an effect for Black adults is merited. For Black adults, having their children arrested or placed in the child welfare system may represent a cruel extension of the carceral state. Scholars have argued that the child welfare system acts as a form

of family policing, especially for Black families (Copeland, 2022). This may create a climate that undermines the importance of voting.

For Black and Latinx youth, two groups that have disproportionate police contact, the per capita rate of juveniles institutionalized was negatively related to voter turnout; however, this was not significant. Future research should consider the long-term effects of criminal justice contact on political engagement. For some youth, contact with the juvenile justice system may help them desist (Abrams & Terry, 2017; Richardson, Jr & St. Vil, 2016). In other words, some youth may leave institutionalized settings and successfully transition to adulthood, which may include voting or prosocial commitments; however, others may struggle. There is no one story of desistance (Abrams & Terry, 2017). Some youth may desist and become voters while others desist, but may be barred from voting, yet mentor and support other youth. This may create a culture that supports voting. Yet, understanding how juvenile incarceration and contact with the child welfare system influence voting behavior is an under researched area.

Ethno-racial Diversity and the Youth Vote

Recent Supreme Court decisions that have eroded the protections of the VRA and proposed state legislation that may make voting harder coupled with the changing demographic composition of the United States beg the question of whether the United States is reverting to its historical origins. Thus, the hypothesis at the outset was that a county-level white population at or below their national percentage would either be associated with election administration typology and/or higher youth voter turnout, driven largely by high white youth voter turnout. However, the finding of this study was that a county-level white population at or below their national percentage was associated with lower overall youth turnout. In terms of other ethno-

racial groups, overall, increases the percentage of Indigenous residents was associated with higher youth voter turnout.

When evaluating the relationship between the percentages of ethno-racial groups and youth voter turnout rates by ethno-racial group, for white youth, the percentage of Black and Indigenous residents was a significant predictor of white youth voter turnout. For Black youth, the percentage of Black and Indigenous residents were associated with higher Black youth voter turnout, but having a white population at or below the national percentage was associated with lower Black youth voter turnout. For Asian American and Pacific Islander youth, only the percentage of Black residents was associated with their turnout. Specifically, increases in the percentage of Black residents was associated with increased Asian American Pacific Islander youth voter turnout. For Indigenous youth, increases in the percentage of Indigenous residents was associated with increased Indigenous youth voter turnout. For Latinx youth, their turnout was not associated with any demographic percentages. In short, for Black and Indigenous youth, higher percentages of their co-ethnics increased their voter turnout; however, this was not true for other youth.

There are various reasons for the association between ethno-racial groups and turnout. First, protests led by Indigenous peoples around social justice issues may have galvanize youth voters in their counties, which helped to increase their turnout. In particular, climate and Indigenous rights activists staged protests against the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline (Saul, 2017), and the pipeline was also a campaign issue (Oliphant, 2020). These protests centered tribal sovereignty and climate change. As such, it may have had a mobilizing effect on Indigenous youth and their allies. Protests can send information cues to voters about who can best represent their interests (Gillion & Soule, 2018; Gillion,2013). When protests have a clear

policy objective, this has the potential of informing youth about the policy itself and helping them determine which candidate is supportive of the policy. For Black youth, the murder of George Floyd sparked the large-scale, multiracial protests (Barroso & Minkin, 2020). Latinx adults, compared to their national percentage, were overrepresented at these protests, and large shares of Asian (8%) and white (46%) people also attended (Barroso & Minkin, 2020). Moreover, an estimated 41% of youth (18 – 29) reported attending a racial justice protest (Barroso & Minkin, 2020). However, some caution is required in accepting this explanation as protest was not a variable in this study and other explanations like ethnic solidarity and political empowerment are equally plausible (see Fraga, 2018).

The finding that white people at or below their national representative was associated with decreased voter turnout is important to explore, given the changing demographics of the United States. First, counties with a smaller share of white people may have had a lower youth voter turnout rate since white youth vote at a higher rate than non-white youth. This is in line with the general trend in the relationship between race and voter turnout, such that white people tend to vote at higher rates than non-white populations (Frey, 2018). However, in light of the finding that only white youth benefit from well administered elections and that for youth white, increases in the percentage Black residents was associated with increased white youth voter turnout, there may be another explanation. White youth were motivated to uphold white supremacy. In 2016, although Hillary Clinton won the youth vote, but white youth reported more enthusiasm for Donald Trump, a candidate who mainstreamed white supremacy (Fording & Schram, 2020; Galston & Hendrickson, 2016). Additionally, approving views of Trump was associated with an increased intention to vote; however, approving views of Trump were also associated with a decline in recognizing societal inequalities (Dunn, et al., 2022). Racial

ideologies, the ways in which individuals are socialized to make meaning of race and racism, are politically salient (Desante & Watts Smith, 2020). However, this study did not directly test racial ideologies. Rather, the approach was to assess whether there was a relationship between a white population that is equal to or smaller than the national population and election administration.

Youth Turnout Gap

The findings of this study show that in counties with maladministered elections, the youth-adult voter turnout gap was smaller because of declines in adult voter turnout. However, this narrowing was only significant for Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islanders. This finding is interesting since Asian American Pacific Islanders and Latinx were more likely to be in the Inadequately and Maladministered typologies. In the overall model, for adults, the Cost of Voting Index during COVID was associated with lower voter turnout. Thus, as state voting laws made it harder to vote, adults were less likely to turnout. When analyzing this effect by ethno-racial groups, only Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islander adult turnout was lower when voting laws made it more difficult to cast a ballot. This may be attributable to the demographics of this population. Although Latinx is the second largest ethno-racial group, followed Black, and rapid growth in the Asian American population, these ethno-racial groups have a smaller share of eligible voters (Frey, 2018). For foreign-born voters, voting is a three-step process, becoming naturalized, registering to vote, and casting a ballot (Bass & Casper, 2001; Pantoja, et al., 2001). Two findings are important to note: 1) maladministered counties are characterized by high rates of registration rejections and 2) residing in a state that has lower ease of voting as measured by the Cost of Voting Index during COVID was associated with lower Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islander adult voter turnout. Taken together, this suggests that naturalized voters may

face barriers in registering and casting a ballot. However, other factors, like the salience of political issues and length of residence, may influence naturalized voter turnout ballot (Bass & Casper, 2001; Pantoja, et al., 2001). Since factors related to immigration status and size of the immigrant population were not incuded, this study is limited in the answers that it can provide on this issue.

Limitations

This study did not include county-level partisanship. There are electoral incentives for political parties to devise election regimens that benefit their candidates (Wang T. A., 2012). Thus, the partisan lean of a county may be an important control of the effects found in this study. For example, counties where Republican officials are in charge of Democratic-leaning counties may have higher odds of being in the Maladministered county. However, in at least one study, the partisanship of the county official was not a predictor of registration rejection rates (Merivaki, 2019).

Second, this study did not control for county population. County-level educational attainment was a significant predictor of a county's typology membership. However, this finding was paradoxical and may be a product of population density. Counties with a higher percentage of residents with BA or higher were more likely to be in the Maladministered typology than the Well and Inadequately Administered typologies. For example, Fall Church City, Virginia has a population of 14,658 and 79.1% of its residents have a BA or higher in contrast, Arlington County, VA, which was in the Maladministered typology, has a population of 238,643 and 75.8% of its residents have a BA or higher. In fact, nearly a third of residents in urbanized counties have a BA or higher compared to less than a quarter of residents in rural counties (McElrath & Martin, 2021; Parker, et al., 2018). Additionally, educational attainment varied by

region, with the majority of low-attainment counties (less than 9.9% holding a BA or higher) located in the South (McElrath & Martin, 2021). Thus, more populous counties may be more likely to have maladministered elections. To that end, future research should examine county-level factors that predict election administration practices should control for population density.

Future Studies

Future studies on election administration, voting rights, and voter turnout should assess a county's capacity to implement voter protection laws and how this may influence election administration and voter turnout. There is evidence to support that managerial capacity is associated with a lower residual vote rate (Kropf, et al., 2020). Such managerial capacity is achieved through education and experience as well as being well compensated (Kropf, et al., 2020). This is important to note since in this study, increases in the per capita adult incarceration rate was associated with a higher probability of being in the maladministered typology. There are fiscal impacts of incarcerating individuals (Clear, 2007). Understanding how counties have to allocate funds and how this, in turn, shapes election administration should be an area of future studies.

Engagement in strategies of resistence is not new for youth of color; however, developing a connection between resistence and voting behavior could be a new line of inquiry. For youth of color, voter turnout rates were similar across typologies. This could have been due to candidates on the ballot. During Trump's first campaign, fear motivated youth of color to vote and, subsequently, disapproving views of Trump were associated with increased commitment to voting and other political behaviot (Dunn, et al., 2022; Galston & Hendrickson, 2016). This is consistent with sociopolitical development theory, which posits that worldviews and organizational settings are important for the societal involvement of youth (Watts & Guessous,

2006). In particular, critical worldviews have been associated with engagement in high-risk activism like blocking traffic while protesting (Hope et al., 2019), and predicted higher likelihood of boycotting and demonstrating (Bañales et al., 2019). Future studies should investigate how political issues and candidates may motivate youth of color to overcome voting barriers.

Although Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islanders are the fastest growing ethno-racial groups in the United States, this population has a smaller share of eligible voters, skewing younger than other ethno-racial groups (Frey, 2018). Moreover, this and other studies have found that Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islanders are more likely to encounter barriers to registering and casting a ballot (Higgins, 2015; Scher, 2007; Tucker & Espino, 2007). Thus, a new line of inquiry could be investigating how U.S.-born Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islander youth support their parents in voting. As noted, the youth-adult voter gap narrowed among Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islanders because of declines in adult voting. This may represent the issues stemming from limited English proficiency and/or failures to implement Section 203 of the VRA. Future studies could focus on how youth civic education programs may help parents under their voting rights.

Implications

The advantage of using a latent profile approach is that it allows for characterizing election administration in distinct ways. To that end, the implications are organized to address the issues that characterize election misadministration: 1) high rates of registration rejections and removals, 2) high rates of provisional ballots cast, and 3) issues with mail balloting.

Addressing Rejections and Removals

The findings from this study can advance our understanding of the effects of election administration on youth voter behavior across ethno-racial groups, which can help design policy interventions to support the inclusion of youth voters in the political process. Prior research has noted that registration is a barrier to political participation (Piven & Cloward, 2000; Scher, 2011). To that end, political social workers advocated for increased access to voter registration applications by requiring that government agencies, inclusive of public assistance offices, provide them, so that the electorate could be more representative (Piven & Cloward, 2000). Yet, registration applications from public assistance offices represent a small share of the applications received (Merivaki, 2019). This may have policy consequences. For example, the class bias in voter turnout has been associated with restrictive welfare requirements (Avery & Peffley, 2005). Specifically, means-tested public assistance programs, like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), have asset limits, which require families to spend-down rather than save assets (Huang, et al., 2022). Political social work campaigns, like Vot-ER (see vot-er.org), have focused on voter registration. However, leveraging the NVRA to expand access to registration may not be sufficient.

The findings from this study identified that registration rejection rates are not uniform across counties. This suggests that in addition to registering voters that social workers need to follow with voters to ensure that their registration applications were accepted and/or educate voters on how to verify their registration. Voter engagement, through field and classroom instruction, has been a value experience for field faculty, students, and the communities that social workers serve (Hill, et al., 2019; Lane, et al., 2019). Incorporating registration verification should be equally well received. Additionally, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission does not report the reasons for rejections, but political social workers and community-based organizations

may be able request this information from their county election officials prior to voter engagement campaigns.

Reducing Provisional Balloting

Involving social workers in helping voters verify their registration status may help to reduce the rate of provisional ballots cast. Additionally, timing voter registration drives so that there is sufficient time for newly registered voters to verify their registration would also help reduce the rate of provisional ballots cast. During the 2008 Presidential Election, Florida voter registration applications completed in October were not processed till months later and as such the rates of provisional ballots cast increased (Merivaki, 2020; Merivaki & Smith, 2016). Latinx and Asian American Pacific Islanders are more likely to reside in counties that are inadequately or maladministered. These counties also have high rates of provisional ballots cast. This may suggest a need for multilingual poll workers. Currently, political social work initiatives focus on voter engagement (Hill, et al., 2019; Lane, et al., 2019) and/or preparing social workers to run for office (Pritzker & Lane, 2017; Ritter, 2007; Smith & Santiago, 2020). Encouraging social workers to volunteer as poll workers is a natural extension of the extant political social work practices and can help address inequalities in election administration across counties.

Increasing Access to Mail Balloting

In response to COVID-19, election administration officials expanded access to vote-by-mail. However, seven states have age restrictions on voting by mail, which has the effect of favoring older, whiter voters (Harrow, et al., 2020). The anti-discriminatory language of the Twenty-Six Amendment allows for bringing suit against election practices that disproportionately affect youth (Bromberg, 2019; Turner, 2015). This presents an opportunity for policy advocacy and litigation. First, in terms of advocacy, much like social workers

advocated for requiring public assistance offices and other social service agencies provide clients with opportunities to register to vote (Piven & Cloward, 2000), social workers can advocate for universal access to vote by mail. Second, in terms of litigation, social workers can work with lawyers to gather information on why narrowing access to vote by mail does not serve the public good. In fact, given that vote by mail procedures has had a positive effect on voter turnout (Larocca & Klemanski, 2011; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016), continuing with age restrictions post-COVID may adversely affect the youth vote. Further, the literature on youth civic engagement suggests that youth derive benefits from voting and being involved in their communities (see Ballard & Syme, 2016; Hope, 2022; Malin, et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Youth vote within a social context. In discussing youth voter turnout, political scientists and social workers should be mindful of how elections are administered within the locality in which youth live. A thriving democracy requires elections that fair and accessible to allow eligible voters (Thompson, 2002). Towards the end of his first joint address before Congress, President Joe Biden stated, "The insurrection was an existential crisis – a test of whether our democracy could survive. It did. But the struggle is far from over" (Biden, 2021). Supreme Court decisions regarding the VRA have made challenging election practices based on racial discrimination difficult, undermining voter access. Focusing on how election administration typologies vary across counties provides a pathway to protect voting righting under state laws and constitutions.

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