

Methodology Example – Case Studies

This thesis project is based and formulated through the use of qualitative analysis, in particular through the use of case studies. Three specific case studies are used and analyzed in this thesis project. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to both analyze and find out whether Monsanto's political contributions increase the likelihood of the outcome of GMO-labeling initiatives passing in their favor.

The three case studies center on three states: Oregon, California, and Washington. These states are unique in that they have voted on these GMO-labeling initiatives. However, it is useful to discuss the unique political culture of U.S. states in order to realize the differences between how these measures were treated. Daniel Elazar (1966) defines political culture as the “particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each political system is embedded”. In other words, each state has a different orientation to politics. This thesis exemplifies the ideas that Elazar highlighted in attempting to identify each state by being moralistic, traditionalistic, or individualistic.

The state of Oregon is primarily dominated as having a moralistic political culture. The moralistic political culture emphasizes the commonwealth conception meaning it strives to achieve the good society (Elazar, 1966). Furthermore, the moralistic political culture embraces the notion that politics is a matter of concern for every citizen, not just politicians, and it is the duty of every citizen to participate in the political affairs of his commonwealth (Elazar, 1966). Essentially, Elazar depicts the state of Oregon as being traditionally formed around the notion of the common good for all.

Currently the state of Oregon has a population of 3,930,065 citizens (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Oregon is heavily dominated by whites whom account for 85.3% of the state population, followed by Latinos whom account for 12.2% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In terms of political demographics Oregon is dominated by the Democratic Party with 42% of the registered voters affiliating themselves as Democrats (Oregon Blue Book, 2010). Those who are registered voters belonging to the Republican Party account for 32% while the remaining registered voters pertaining to the other category account for 26% (Oregon Blue Book, 2010). Oregon is known to be one of the most liberal and progressive states in the nation, currently it is the sixth most liberal state (Gallup, 2014). The liberal nature of Oregon can be seen manifested in some of the laws it has passed. Oregon was the first state in the U.S. to legalize physician-assisted suicide after its citizens voted in favor of the ballot measure in 1994 (Lyn & Brette, 2013).

California, similar to Oregon is known for possessing a moralistic political culture. However, unlike Oregon, it is also known as being a state also associated with a traditionalistic political culture. The traditionalistic political culture is rooted in a mixed attitude towards the marketplace coupled with a paternalistic and elitist conception of the commonwealth (Elazar, 1966). In this political culture, government is seen as an actor with a positive role in the community, but the role is largely limited to securing the maintenance of the existing social order (Elazar, 1966).

California is the most populated state in the nation with more than 37 million residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Compared to Oregon, the state of California is much more highly diversified. Whites account for the biggest percentage of race at

40.1%, followed very closely by Hispanics at 37.6%, then Asians whom account for 12.8% of the state's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In terms of political demographics, California in recent years has sided with the Democratic Party. In addition to being a democratic state California ranks in the top ten liberal states (Gallup, 2014).

Washington is a state that shares a mixture of two different political cultures. However, as was the case in Oregon, the dominant political culture in the state of Washington is the moralistic political culture. In addition to what was stated previously in regards to moral political cultures, it is the primary source of the continuing quest for the good society (Elazar, 1966). Washington is home to over 6,720,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Similar to Oregon, whites account for the biggest percentage of the population at 81.6% followed by Hispanics at a distant 11.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Washington recently has gained a reputation of being a liberal state. In 2012, Washington was one of two states to legalize marijuana for recreational use (Wells, 2014). Thus the three specific case studies this thesis analyzes are centered in three of the more liberal states in the nation.

In conducting these three specific case studies, I recognize the limitation imposed by the fact that all three cases are ballot initiative in states that are found on the western coast of the United States. These three specific states were chosen without bias because they are the only three states to propose and vote on GMO-labeling ballot initiatives thus far. With that being said, had there been more states with GMO-labeling initiatives on their ballots, this thesis would have included those initiatives as well. At the end of the analysis, this manuscript turns to the question of whether or not

we will see similar effects in other states, which are currently considering to put these GMO-type measures on the ballot.

Measure 27 (Oregon):

The first case this thesis focuses on is the “Oregon Labeling of Genetically-Engineered Food Act”, more commonly known as Measure 27. The proposed measure was on Oregon’s general election ballot in 2002. The measure landed on the ballot as a result of an initiative petition meaning at least 67,000 signatures were required (Anderson, 2013). More than 100,000 citizens signed the petition supporting GMO labeling, easily more than the required signatures needed (Anderson, 2013). If passed Measure 27 would require genetically engineered foods sold or distributed in the state of Oregon to be labeled. Furthermore, Measure 27 if passed would be the nation’s first law requiring GMO labeling. At the time of the election, early polls showed citizens in the state of Oregon supporting Measure 27 (Anderson, 2013). Thus, the likelihood of winning a GMO-labeling initiative in a progressive state such as Oregon should have been relatively easily.

Proposition 37 (California):

The second case this thesis analyzes is Proposition 37, “The California Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act” (hereafter referred to as Proposition 37), which was a ballot measure on the statewide election of California in 2012. Although, there is a ten-year span between Oregon’s effort to pass Measure 27 and Proposition 37 both ballot initiatives share similar qualities. For one, Proposition 37 required

970,000 signatures before the measure was approved for the November 6, 2012 ballot (Anderson, 2013). If passed, Proposition 37 would have required the mandatory labeling of raw or processed foods made from genetically engineered plants or animals. In addition, it would prohibit labeling or advertising such food, or other processed food, as “natural”. As was the case in Oregon for Measure 27, virtually all the polls leading up to the election indicated the proposition would pass (McFadden and Lusk, 2013).

Initiative 522 (Washington):

The third and final case this thesis focuses on is Washington Initiative 522 (hereafter Initiative 522). Initiative 522 was on the general election ballot of Washington in 2013. The ballot initiative if passed would require foods produced entirely or partly with genetic engineering, as defined, to be labeled as genetically engineered when offered for retail sale in Washington, beginning in July 2015 according to the official ballot measure summary. As was the case in previous attempts to pass GMO-labeling ballot measures (Measure 27 & Proposition 37), early polls showed the ballot measure had plenty of support.

The three cases were specifically chosen for this thesis project for more than one reason. For one, these cases were chosen due to the fact they are all ballot initiatives that if passed would have required the mandatory labeling of genetically engineered food products in each respective state. Second, all three cases showed signs of early support from the general public of passing. However, in each case the early support for the initiative quickly disappeared once the biotechnology companies and food

corporations entered the battle and rallied against the initiative. In each case, Monsanto was the strongest to react and rally against the proposed ballot initiative. Monsanto led the charge against all three initiatives by flexing its financial power via political contributions. The last reason these three cases were chosen was because all three initiatives failed to pass. What were the reasons each ballot initiative failed to pass? Did Monsanto's political contributions play any role in affecting the outcome of each proposed initiative? In the following results section, this paper addresses each of these concerns to find that Monsanto was dramatically influential in the GMO-labeling debate.