

Moral Values and Candidate Effects in Arkansas Elections, 2000-2004

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Many political observers and scholars credit the Republican Party's use of gay marriage bans and other wedge issues for boosting turnout among social conservatives thereby increasing the Republican vote totals in the 2004 general election. Using data from 2000, 2002 and 2004 election returns from the state of Arkansas we question this hypothesis and examine whether social conservatives are engaged in (1) isolated issue voting, (2) more permanent partisan voting or (3) making decisions based on candidate traits and appeal unique to President Bush. A comparison of the 2002 and 2004 results does show an increase in social conservative support for the GOP. However that support was also present in 2000, well before gay marriage became a major issue in the state. Increased social conservative support for the GOP is more contingent on the presence of George W. Bush on the ballot than any attempts to utilize a particular wedge issue. Our finding is confirmed by the inability of the Republican senatorial nominee Jim Holt to draw any additional support from this quarter even after centering his campaign on the "moral values" issue.

Introduction

On 24 February 2004, twenty days after the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that the state had "failed to identify any constitutionally adequate reason" to deny same-sex marriage and twelve days after San Francisco City Hall began to issue same-sex marriage licenses, President George W. Bush announced that he would support a Constitutional amendment that would define marriage as a strictly heterosexual institution (O'Brien 2004, ch. 3). By the first Tuesday in November, activists in no fewer than eleven states, nine of which were won by President Bush, had petitioned successfully to get voter initiatives banning same-sex marriage on the ballot (McMahon 2005, 25).

It became almost an article of faith for some observers that the president's announcement signaled a re-election strategy of rallying religious conservatives to the polls to vote against declining moral values (and for the president opposing it). Many of these observers also grudgingly admitted that the strategy was politically fruitful for the GOP. Arkansas, like many of its Southern counterparts, had on the 2004 general election ballot a voter initiative—Amendment Three—that would ban same-sex marriages. Bush's share of the presidential vote in the state also jumped from 51 percent in 2000 to 59 percent in 2004. While many people credit the Bush campaign's use of this and other wedge issues for boosting both turnout among

social conservatives and Republican vote totals in the 2004 general election, there are other possible alternatives. Using data from 2000, 2002, and 2004 election returns from the state of Arkansas, this article tests three possible hypotheses: whether (1) the already high levels of social conservative support for Bush and other Republican candidates were boosted by their support for Amendment Three, (2) social conservatives voted for Republicans out of natural partisan inclinations, or (3) Republican votes in 2004 owed primarily to Bush's appeal to social conservatives, as was also the case in 2000, before the same-sex marriage controversy had occurred.

Review of the Literature

The presidential support for state ballot initiatives that banned same-sex marriage generated almost immediate debate in both scholarly and non-scholarly circles. Gay conservative Bush supporter Andrew Sullivan set Washington on its ear the same day as Bush's February announcement by characterizing the announcement as a betrayal—a "Declaration of War" on gays. Bloggers such as Barbara O'Brien (*Mahablog.com*), John Hawkins (*rightwingnews.com*), Robert Garcia Tagorda (*tagorda.com*), and others quickly responded to the effect that Bush's announcement was entirely predictable, given strategist Karl Rove's argument that Bush had lost the popular vote in 2000 because he had turned out *too few* religious conservatives (O'Brien 2004, ch. 3; see also Ceaser & Bush 2005, 133-34). Within three months, an article in the APSA's new journal *Perspectives on Politics* by Rutgers political scientist Jyl Josephson began with the words, "When President Bush endorsed a federal constitutional amendment to prohibit same-sex marriage, he confirmed an electoral strategy of using "gay marriage" as a wedge issue in the 2004 elections" (Josephson 2004, 269).

According to the aforementioned "culture-war" literature, the same-sex marriage issue should highlight "red-versus-blue" differences, insofar as "whites without college degrees had significantly more positive feelings toward the Republican party than toward the Democratic party" (Shirayev & Sobel 2006, 173), and only 16 percent of Americans with high school diplomas and 18 percent of those with less than a diploma support the legalization of same-sex marriage, compared to 48 percent of those with post-graduate education (Shirayev & Sobel, 2006, 172, 175). Knowing this to be the case, Bush, "a divider, not a uniter" (Jacobson 2007), and Rove, who "believed that Bush lost the 2000 popular vote because millions of evangelical Christians failed to go to the polls" (Abramson *et al.* 2006, 46), had the "long-term strategic vision" to take advantage of the "manna from heaven [that] had fallen into their laps in the form of the same-sex marriage debate" (Ceaser & Busch 2005, 134). In so many words, the initiatives banning same-sex marriage that subsequently cropped up on the ballots of eleven states were consciously pushed by the Republican White House as part of its re-election strategy and worked as planned. The turnout of evangelical Christians is supposed to have risen from 15 million in

2000 to 22 million in 2004 (McMahon 2005, 24), and Bush won 78 percent of their votes, carrying 9 of the 11 states holding such initiatives, including the critical state of Ohio, where “some thought that Republican turnout in the south and west of the state was driven partially by the amendment, and some credited Bush’s improved showing in Appalachian Ohio to it as well” (Ceaser & Busch, 2005, 162).

On the other hand, the Bush presidential campaign’s manager, Ken Mehlman, and chief strategist, Matthew Dowd, told questioners at Harvard’s quadrennial post-election campaign managers’ conference that the President’s endorsement of a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage had been a “reluctant” response to the then-recent events in San Francisco and in Massachusetts, rather than a strategic ploy to galvanize Christian conservative turnout, and that it played little role in the increased turnout of such voters (JFK School, 2006). Neither the Democratic managers nor the campaign correspondents present disagreed with this characterization, and opposing strategist Steve Rosenthal of America Coming Together (ACT) confirmed that self-identified “moral values” voters seldom had brought up gay marriage during exit interviews or post-election polls and discussions (JFK School 2006, 232).

In many ways, the weak relationship between support for these initiatives and willingness to vote for particular candidates is representative of a larger, older debate. Since the days of the Progressive movement, an argument has existed that the presence of ballot initiatives and other measures of direct democracy would increase voter turnout (Barnett 1915). However empirical evidence of this hypothesis has not been promising (see Magleby 1984).

While the plethora of ballot measures in 2004 spurred a corresponding plethora of scholarly analyses, their appraisals of the success of this electoral ploy were divided in terms of their impact. Some political scientists find no significant electoral effect (Abramowitz 2004; Burden 2004; Hillygus and Shields 2005) while others (McDonald 2004; Donovan, Tolbert, Smith, and Parry 2005) do conclude the tactic was effective. Barth and Parry (2005) conclude that the initiative was an important issue in the state and helped boost Jim Holt’s vote total in 2004.

Hypotheses, Data, and Methods

In this paper the authors investigate the impact of Arkansas’ 2004 amendment banning same-sex marriage, which passed with 75 percent of the vote, upon the statewide votes for President Bush and for Republican U.S. Senate candidate Jim Holt in 2004. The main theoretical question in this research is whether there is to be found any statistically significant relationship between the vote for Amendment Three and the votes for President Bush and his fellow Republican candidates in 2004. We take this approach not out of respect for the word of the president’s campaign managers, but rather because of the serious questions raised by Morris P.

Fiorina and others (2004) about the widely used “culture war” interpretation of the 2004 election (see below). If the null hypothesis is not proven, the focus will be to examine the earlier mentioned three possible explanations for such a linkage: (1) the already high levels of social conservative support for Bush and other Republican candidates were boosted by their support for Amendment Three, (2) social conservatives were voting for Republicans because of appropriate partisan affinity, or (3) Republican voting support in 2004—as in 2000, before the same-sex marriage controversy—stemmed primarily from Bush’s appeal at the top of the ticket.

Depicted by V.O. Key, Jr. (1949) as *the* prototypical one-party Democratic southern state, Arkansas in 1968 acted like a poster child for independents and ticket splitters by re-electing its Republican governor (Winthrop Rockefeller), its Democratic U.S. Senator (J. William Fulbright), and giving its electoral college delegates to George Wallace and his American Independent Party. Categorized in the 1960s as part of the southern, *traditionalist* stream of political culture by Daniel Elazar (1972) and by Ira Sharkansky (1969), Arkansas shortly thereafter was shown by Robert Savage and colleagues to contain several politoculturally distinct regions, including the *traditionalism* of the South in the Mississippi delta counties along Arkansas’ eastern border, the *moralistic* culture of New England and the northern tier in the state’s northwestern Ozark counties, and the *individualistic* culture of the nation’s urban corridors in Little Rock and its surrounding collar of suburban-exurban counties (Savage & Gallagher 1977, Savage & Blair 1984, Blair, Savage & Mangold 1988). Recent work by Parry and Schreckhise (2001) reaffirms that Arkansas continues to exhibit these still politically distinct regional subcultures; and the authors of this paper have established that delta Arkansas remains a Democratic domain, while Ozark Arkansas has become a Republican stronghold, and the greater Little Rock Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area is slowly becoming an electoral battleground (Wekkin 1998, 2003; Dowdle & Wekkin 2006).

Blair and Barth (2005) also point to the importance of “Rural Swing counties” in Arkansas elections. These twenty-six counties exist in neither the Ozark nor Delta regions, do not contain large towns and typically are dry counties. While they did not support Winthrop Rockefeller, they did support Frank White in 1980 and Mike Huckabee on a number of occasions (Blair and Barth 2005). Strategically these counties could be characterized as socially conservative swing areas and were important sources of votes for both Bush and Holt in 2004 (Barth and Parry 2005).

The data consist of voting results for the state’s 75 counties, obtained from the Elections Division of the Arkansas Secretary of State’s Office, regressed against each other as well as against demographic data for each county obtained from the U.S. Census for 2000. In addition to multiple regression analysis, this study also uses GIS (Geographic Information Systems) mapping technology in order to contrast visually the county-by-county distribution of the vote for Amendment Three

(banning same-sex marriage) against the distributions of the vote for President Bush and for Republican senatorial candidate Holt, respectively.¹

Table 1. Multiple Regression Correlates of Republican Vote Share in Statewide Contests, 2002

Contest	Variable	B ^a	SE B ^b	Beta ^c	Sig T ^d
Senate-2002	Bush 2000	0.451	0.072	0.437	0.0
	Growth rate	0.017	0.025	0.029	0.482
	Pop. Density	0.001	0.004	0.010	0.745
	African-Amer.	0.035	1.273	0.001	0.978
	Amendment 3	0.031	0.068	0.015	0.653
	Senate 96	0.313	0.007	0.339	0.00
	Pryor 98	-0.265	0.006	-0.227	0.00
	Constant	19.378	6.817		0.006
	(adj. R2 = .951, sig. F = .000, N=75)				
Governor-2002	Bush 2000	0.494	0.095	0.609	0.063
	Growth rate	0.036	0.036	0.076	0.313
	Pop. Density	-0.003	0.006	0.010	0.648
	African-Amer.	1.230	2.018	0.032	0.544
	Amendment 3	-0.046	0.107	-0.029	0.665
	Govern 98	0.2470	0.083	0.288	0.004
	Constant	15.784	8.356		0.063
		(adj. R2 = .816, sig. F = .000, N=75)			
Lt. Governor-2002	Bush 2000	0.476	0.079	0.462	0.00
	Growth rate	0.078	0.037	0.130	0.035
	Pop. Density	-0.005	0.006	-0.036	0.458
	African-Amer.	1.720	2.075	0.829	0.41
	Amendment 3	-0.197	0.106	-0.096	0.067
	Lt. Gov. 98	0.541	0.075	0.470	0.00
	Constant	12.985	8.612		0.136
		(adj. R2 = .881, sig. F = .000, N=75)			

NOTES: Correlates are obtained by regressing GOP candidates' vote share in the 75 counties against county demographics and county returns for other statewide races. *Bush 2000* = George W. Bush's percent of the 2000 presidential; *Bush 2004* = George W. Bush's percent of the 2000 presidential vote; *Growth rate* = population growth rate from 1990 to 2000; *Pop. Density* = population density per square mile in 2000; *African-Amer.* = percentage of the 2000 population that is African-American; *Amendment 3* = percent of voters supporting Amendment 3; *Pryor 98* = percent of vote received by Mark Pryor in 1998 state attorney general's race; and *Senate 96*, *Senate 98*, *Govern. 98*, and *Lt. Gov. 98* = totals received by Republican nominees in those respective races.

^aSlope coefficient

^bStandard error of slope coefficient

^cStandardized regression coefficient

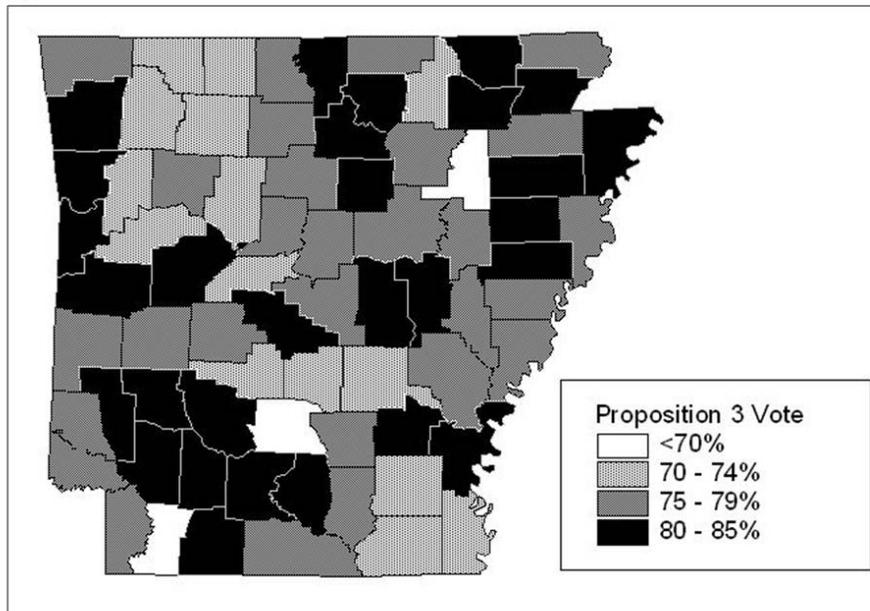
^dStatistical significance of slope coefficient

¹ We also ran models estimating turnout rates for the 2000, 2002 and 2004 elections. Once these past electoral results and growth figures were included, we found no significant relationship between turnout in 2004 and support for Amendment Three.

Analysis

One of the more universal assumptions of the 2004 Arkansas elections was that the presence of a ballot measure prohibiting same-sex marriage had helped Republican candidates in this state, as alleged elsewhere. At first glance, this conclusion seems accurate. Table 1 shows that Republican candidates in 2002 did not run particularly well in the more culturally conservative counties that would support Amendment Three (see Figure 1) two years later. In fact, the only significant correlation (at the .10 level) is a negative relationship between the county-by-county vote for Lt. Governor Winthrop Paul Rockefeller in 2002 and that for Amendment Three in 2004. Rockefeller's strong showing in the faster growing, mostly suburban counties, by contrast, suggests a potential division in the GOP ranks between primarily rural social conservatives and suburban party supporters (Dowdle & Wekkin 2006).

Figure 1. The Vote to Pass Amendment 3 in Arkansas, 2004



Map created by Matt Charton

In contrast, Table 2 shows Bush doing well in 2004 in the culturally conservative (pro-Amendment Three) counties that had not been so kind to Republicans in 2002. A reflexive reaction is to credit the same-sex marriage ban on the 2004 ballot with swaying voters in these areas away from the Democratic side.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Correlates of Republican Vote Share in Statewide Contests, 2004

Contest	Variable	B ^a	SE B ^b	Beta ^c	Sig T ^d
President-2004	Bush 2000	0.926	0.036	0.892	0
	Growth rate	0.041	0.02	0.067	0.048
	Pop. Density	0.001	0.004	0.008	0.77
	African-American	-1.663	1.153	-0.034	0.154
	Amendment 3	0.256	0.058	0.124	0
	Constant	-13.138	4.172		0.002
	(adj. R2 = .960, sig. F = .000, N=75)				
Senate-2004 w/o Bush coattails	Growth rate	0.099	0.055	0.151	0.078
	Pop. Density	-0.009	0.009	-0.06	0.326
	African-American	3.645	2.841	0.07	0.204
	Amendment 3	0.581	0.13	0.261	0
	Senate 98	0.686	0.079	0.339	0
	Constant	19.378	6.817		0.006
(adj. R2 = .794, sig. F = .000, N=75)					
Senate-2004 w/Bush Coattails	Bush 2004	0.51	0.139	0.473	0
	Growth Rate	0.085	0.051	0.13	0.101
	Pop. Density	-0.007	0.008	-0.048	0.4
	African-American	3.44	2.617	0.066	0.193
	Amendment 3	0.216	0.155	0.097	0.169
	Senate 98	0.327	0.122	0.352	0.009
	Constant	14.578	10.281		0.161
(adj. R2 = .825, sig. F = .000, N=75)					
Bush--2004 w/Holt Coattails	Bush 2000	0.897	0.056	0.864	0
	Growth rate	0.036	0.022	0.059	0.107
	Pop. Density	0.001	0.009	0.331	0.741
	African-American	-1.716	1.161	-0.035	0.144
	Amendment 3	0.249	0.059	0.121	0
	Holt 2004	0.036	1.161	0.664	0.509
	Constant	-12.63	4.258		0.004
(adj. R2 = .960, sig. F = .000, N=75)					

NOTES: Correlates are obtained by regressing GOP candidates' vote share in the 75 counties against county demographics and county returns for other statewide races. *Bush 2000* = George W. Bush's percent of the 2000 presidential; *Bush 2004* = George W. Bush's percent of the 2000 presidential vote; *Growth rate* = population growth rate from 1990 to 2000; *Pop. Density* = population density per square mile in 2000; *African-Amer.* = percentage of the 2000 population that is African-American; *Amendment 3* = percent of voters supporting Amendment 3; *Pryor 98* = percent of vote received by Mark Pryor in 1998 state attorney general's race; *Holt 2004* = percent of vote received by Jim Holt; and *Senate 96, Senate 98, Govern. 98, and Lt. Gov. 98* = totals received by Republican nominees in those respective races.

a Slope coefficient

b Standard error of slope coefficient

c Standardized regression coefficient

d Statistical significance of slope coefficient

However, there are three problems with this conclusion. First, there was also a positive correlation between Bush's 2000 results and the vote for Amendment Three in 2004 (Dowdle & Wekkin, 2006). While Bush did especially well in the culturally conservative areas of Arkansas in 2004, he also did so in 2000, well before the same-sex marriage issue became a major controversy. This result raises the strong probability that Bush himself—not the placement of that particular issue onto the ballot—is what convinced culturally conservative voters to vote for him. This additional support is particularly striking when compared to the 2002 statewide results. To be fair, two of the three 2002 GOP nominees had problems that may have resonated negatively with culturally conservative voters. Rockefeller, like his father before him, was viewed by many as representing moderate as well as traditional wings of the state Republican party that had been surpassed by the growing influence of Christian conservatives within the party. Tim Hutchinson, a Baptist minister and the Republican incumbent in the U.S. Senate, had been involved in a scandalous affair and divorce that cut into his support.

However, the incumbent Republican Governor, Mike Huckabee, was also a Baptist minister without such political or personal liabilities, and he did not perform strongly, either, in the culturally conservative counties that would support Amendment Three in 2004. There is no particular reason to suppose any kind of conservative moral backlash against him in 2002. What is interesting, by contrast, is how well Huckabee, Rockefeller, and Hutchinson all did in 2002 in the counties in which Bush had done well in 2000. While it is difficult to conclude that those results are solely due to Bush's coattails, it does appear that Bush was able to mobilize support in areas that had been more pro-Democratic in 1996 and 1998, and Republicans were able to retain that support in those areas through 2002.

Second, there is no evidence to believe that candidates who made this issue a central part of their platform benefited from it. The results for the 2004 Senate race certainly call into question whether candidates who emphasized their endorsement of the measure were particularly helped by that support. Republican challenger Jim Holt was a candidate with little statewide recognition before the race, and too little financial support (\$148,682 spent, versus Sen. Lincoln's \$5.8 million) to achieve the kind of visibility that would alter that fact. When Holt nonetheless pulled 44 percent of the vote, most observers were, in the words of Jay Barth, "shocked," and credited Holt's unexpectedly strong showing to his centering of his campaign around Amendment Three (Blomeley & Kellams 4 November 2004): "Protect Marriage" signs had even been attached to "Holt" signs late in the campaign. Once again, this conclusion looks plausible at first glance. A multivariate model (*Senate-2004 w/o Bush coattails* in Table 2) shows that Holt does better in areas where support for Amendment Three was strong even when demographic and political factors are included. However, the variable becomes insignificant when Bush's 2004 support is included (*Senate-2004 w/Bush coattails* in Table 2). This finding is particularly odd

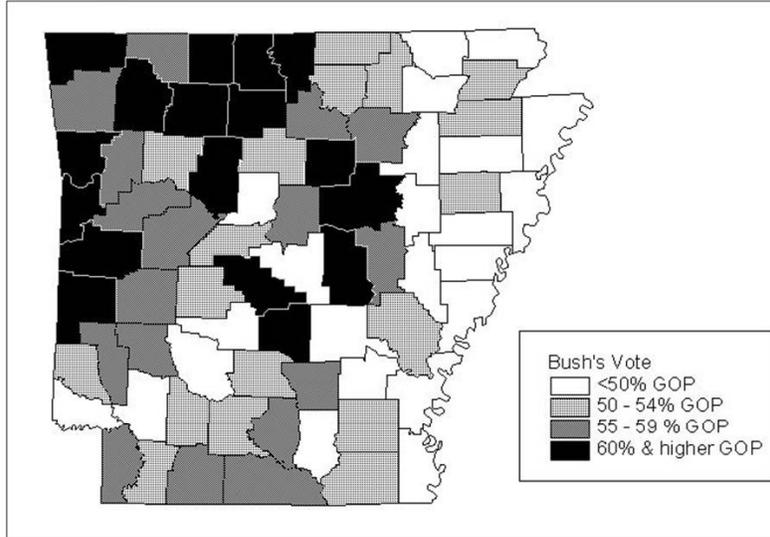
since Holt's campaign centered around his support for Amendment Three, while Bush's campaign did not.

Correlation is not causation, and it can be difficult to determine at times which variables are dependent and which are independent. The multivariate model without Bush's coattails does show a significant relationship between support for Holt and Amendment Three. Only by adding that factor to other variables did Amendment Three lose its statistically significant boost for Holt. The complexities of the Holt-Bush-Amendment Three Triad are such that it is necessary to test whether it wasn't Bush whose 2004 margin improved because he was actually gaining some boost from Holt supporters. Therefore, it is important to note that Bush's vote is not influenced by Holt's total when it is included in a multivariate model, so there is little possibility that a reverse-coattails effect might have been at work (*Bush-2004 w/ Holt coattails* in Table 2).

Finally, results from across the state showed that while Bush's campaign benefited from Amendment Three supporters, there were no independent coattails for Amendment Three in state legislative races. Table 3, which looks at state house races, shows no positive correlation between support for Amendment Three and vote totals for GOP candidates in state house races. Amendment Three is still not significant even when state house results in 2002 are used, instead of Bush's coattails, to control for existing levels of Republican support.

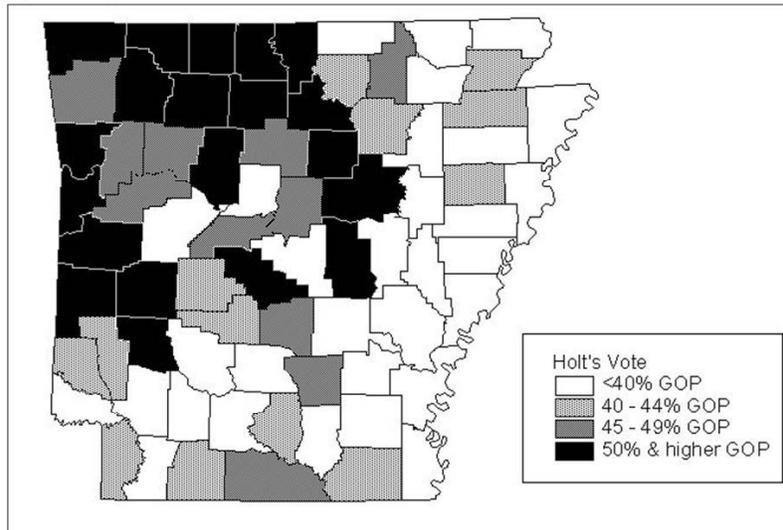
Finally, the evidence that Bush's voter appeal in 2004 predicted the vote for Holt better than the vote for Amendment Three predicted the votes for either Bush or Holt is available for visual inspection and face validation in the maps presented in Figures 1 through 3. It should be noted that a cluster of seven northwestern Ozark counties—Boone, Carroll, Madison, Newton, Franklin, Logan, and Pope—that have been reliably Republican for some time (see the maps in Wekkin 2003, 198, 202) and went strongly for Bush (see Figure 1 below) and in five of seven cases for Holt (see Figure 2 below) in 2004 also registered among the lowest (< 70 percent) rates of support for Amendment Three that same day (see Figure 3). In contrast, an equal number of east, southeastern delta counties—Desha, Lincoln, Mississippi, Poinsett, St. Francis, Randolph, and Lawrence—that are still considered strongholds for the Democratic party and proved it in 2004 by giving Bush less than 50 percent of the vote and Holt less than 40 percent nonetheless turned in among the highest (> 80 percent) rates of support for Amendment Three.

Figure 2. Support for Bush in 2004



Map created by Matt Charton

Figure 3. Support for Holt in 2004



Map created by Matt Charton

Table 3. Multiple Regression Correlates of Republican Vote Shares in Contested Races for State House of Representatives, 2002-2004

<i>Contest</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>B^a</i>	<i>SE B^b</i>	<i>Beta^c</i>	<i>Sig T^d</i>
2002	Bush-2000	0.016	0.005	0.821	0.003
	Growth Rate	-0.003	0.002	-0.329	0.221
	Pop. Density	0.001	0.000	0.039	0.844
	African-Amer.	-0.018	0.153	-0.025	0.877
	Amendment 3	-0.010	0.006	-0.351	0.115
	Constant	0.397	0.439		0.375
(Adj. R ² =.297, sig. F=.023, N=28)					
2004	Bush-2004	0.012	0.003	0.806	0
	Growth Rate	-0.001	0.001	-0.016	0.684
	Pop. Density	0.001	0.001	0.203	0.179
	African-Amer.	-0.037	0.086	-0.055	0.668
	Amendment 3	-0.002	0.004	-0.065	0.684
	Constant	-0.094	0.288		0.748
(Adj. R ² =.564, sig. F=.000, N=33)					
2004 w/o Bush coattails	Growth Rate	0.002	0.002	-0.248	0.332
	Pop. Densit	-0.001	0.001	-0.339	0.305
	African-Amer.	-0.126	0.134	-0.055	0.365
	Amendment 3	-0.005	0.006	-0.286	0.385
	ARHOUSE02	0.272	0.218	0.309	0.236
	Constant	0.793	0.483		0.126
(Adj. R ² =.222, sig. F=.156, N=17)					

NOTES: Correlates are obtained by regressing GOP candidates' vote share in contested state house races against county demographics and county returns for other statewide races. *Bush 2000* = George W. Bush's percent of the 2000 presidential; *Bush 2004* = George W. Bush's percent of the 2000 presidential vote; *Growth rate* = population growth rate from 1990 to 2000; *Pop. Density* = population density per square mile in 2000; *African-Amer.* = percentage of the 2000 population that is African-American; *Amendment 3* = percent of voters supporting Amendment 3; ARHOUSE02 = percent of the Republican Arkansas State House of Representatives vote in 2002.

^aSlope Coefficient

^bStandard error of slope coefficient

^cStandardized regression coefficient

^dStatistical significance of slope coefficient

There are enough other counties that either fit or just miss fitting into one of these two counter-intuitive patterns to justify concluding that the same-sex marriage-as-wedge issue card—and the “culture war” narrative that subsumes it—are, as folks in Arkansas and neighboring “flyover” states might say, “dogs that won’t hunt.” Indeed, contrasting the county-by-county vote for Amendment Three in Figure 3 against the counties that went red and blue, respectively, in Figures 1 and 2 even raises the question of to whom those dogs really belong.

One potential concern might be using midterm and presidential electoral results in the same model. Obviously important differences exist between the midterm and presidential year electorates both politically and demographically. Campbell's (1966) "surge and decline" theory proposes that presidential supporters are less likely to turn out while Kernell (1977) proposes that negative evaluations of the president are more likely to be detrimental than positive ones helpful. Born (1990) proposes a third alternative: successful presidential candidates are able to woo some members from the opposing party. On the individual level, demographic factors such as race and ethnicity (Rosenstone and Hanson 1993) or even the size of television markets (Althaus and Trautman 2004) influences the turnout differential between midterm and presidential elections (see Shields and Goidel 1997 however for an argument that declining rates of participation in midterm elections are broadly based demographically).

The models utilized are able to control for some of these individual factors such as race and population density. However it is more difficult to effectively account for some important categorical differences such as religion and using county-level data on education to create a valid index. This latter problem is particularly indicative of the shortcomings of trying to address what is at its core an individual-level question using county-level data.

While the political differences between midterm and presidential electorates may raise initial concerns as well, two things seem to mitigate the seriousness of that problem. First, the results do not seem to differ for most variables whether we compare elections in presidential years to presidential years (e.g., the 2000 and 2004 presidential votes), midterm contests to midterm contests (1998 and 2002 gubernatorial contests), and presidential years and midterm contests (1998 senatorial race to 2004 senatorial race OR the 1996 senatorial race to its 2002 counterpart), respectively. Second, the one major systematic difference is that Republican candidates in presidential years ran stronger in areas in which Bush did well in 2000 and 2004 while their peers didn't get that same boost in 2002. The results do not seem to differ for most variables whether we compare elections in presidential years to presidential years (e.g., the 2000 and 2004 presidential votes), midterm contests to midterm contests (1998 and 2002 gubernatorial contests), and presidential years and midterm contests (1998 senatorial race to 2004 senatorial race and the 1996 senatorial race to its 2002 counterpart).

The one major systematic difference is that Republican candidates in presidential years ran stronger in areas where Bush did well as opposed to their 2002 peers. The fact that this advantage is significant after controlling for the effects of Amendment Three is important. Therefore it seems likely that the GOP's fortunes in 2004 were boosted less by the ballot measure than by traditional presidential tides – whether they were from a surge in turnout or from election year conversions of Democrats who voted in 2002. While public opinion scholars may rightfully point to the

importance of why these electoral results occurred, it is probably beyond the ability of county-level data to provide a definitive answer.

Obviously more research needs to be done to test this supposition and address some of the shortcomings of the study. Arkansas is only one state and arguably its unique characteristics prevent applying this study's conclusion beyond it. While county-level information was the only available data to address the subject of this study, individual-level data would address more definitively our original question and sidestep the problem of possible inferential issues.

Jim Holt's 2006 campaign for Lieutenant Governor of Arkansas demonstrates how difficult it is to establish causality with 100 percent certainty. One of the important points made by Barth and Parry (2005) was that Holt ran approximately 2 percent higher in the Rural Swing counties than he did in the rest of the state after controlling for the 1998 senatorial race. By contrast, our calculations show that he ran worse in those areas in 2006 by two measures: (1) his vote compared to Win Rockefeller's 2002 race and (2) his own 2004 senatorial campaign. The average drop off in the first contest was 16.61 percent in each county and the average decline Holt saw from 2004 to 2006 was 2.75 percent per county. However he saw larger drops in 17 of the 26 Rural Swing counties when compared to Rockefeller and 21 of the 26 counties from 2004 to 2006. Was the drop because of the lack of a popular Republican president at the top of the ballot, as suggested by this study, or by the absence of a popular ballot initiative that would have mobilized social conservatives? Ultimately, only further study of the 2006 and upcoming 2008 electoral cycles will reveal more about how much of the linkage between Arkansas voters and the GOP is personality driven and how much of it rests on social conservatism.

Conclusion

These findings do suggest that George W. Bush is popular in areas where there are high levels of support for traditional moral values even when preexisting levels of Republican are taken into account. However, it appears that much of that support is of a personal nature and therefore limited primarily to support for Bush. Since Bush also had done well in these areas in 2000, it seems unlikely that Amendment Three in 2004 was the cause for any surge in 2004. While this finding contradicts some other studies (McDonald 2004; Donovan, Tolbert, Smith, and Parry 2005; Barth and Parry 2005), it is in line with those that find no significant electoral effect (Abramowitz 2004; Burden 2004; Hillygus and Shields 2005). We believe this finding is largely because this study is limited to the state of Arkansas, utilizes county-level data and incorporates a series of multivariate models focusing on changes from 2000 and 2002 to 2004.

While Bush was able to tap into that base of support, the ability of other Republicans to do the same in 2004 seems to have been limited. Unlike in much of the South, such additional votes are crucial for Republicans in Arkansas, given that most statewide races between the two parties are still highly competitive. And although Republicans such as Jim Holt may or may not have been able to capitalize on such support in 2004 without Bush on the ticket, the experience of Republicans in 2002 and 2006 highlights how problematic it will be for Republicans to rely on linking themselves to moral issues as a method of winning elections in the state.

As Figure 3 also shows, voters in a number of Arkansas' *traditionalistic*, eastern and southeastern delta counties are perfectly capable of differentiating their candidate and/or partisan preferences from their views on "moral values" in the voting booth. So, for that matter, can otherwise reliable conservative Republicans in the *moralistic*-influenced Ozarks. Voters in Central Arkansas during the 1980s also demonstrated a propensity for differentiating their partisan ties in national elections (Wekkin 1991; Wekkin *et al.* 1988). These examples demonstrate that simple coats of red and blue paint over everything cover up a lot of natural shades and tones underneath.

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