

# Same-Sex Marriage Ballot Measures and the 2004 Presidential Election

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**D**ID BALLOT MEASURES banning same-sex marriage swing the 2004 general election to George W. Bush? In 2004, activists and state legislators placed anti-gay marriage questions on the general election ballots of 11 states. All of the ballot measures passed easily, receiving on average roughly 70 percent support.<sup>1</sup> Pundits argued that the marriage measures on the November ballot would be a major motivating factor in the election and would help ensure Bush's reelection. The measures, so the logic went, would receive broad support from social conservatives who would be mobilized to go to the polls primed to vote for Bush, who was firmly aligned with the issue.

Merging county-level religious, socioeconomic, and political data with the 2004 election results, this article examines the electoral effects of same-sex marriage ballot measures in two key neighboring presidential battleground states, Michigan and Ohio. In both states, the anti-gay marriage measures passed easily, and overall statewide turnout increased from the 2000 election. However, Bush prevailed only in Ohio. To test the impact of the anti-gay marriage measures in both states, the analysis proceeds in three stages, examining first the county-level voting patterns on the gay marriage bans, then patterns of county-

level turnout in 2004, and finally the county-level support for President Bush in 2004.

## The Mobilizing and Priming Effects of Ballot Measures

Following the election, numerous opinion-makers claimed that the anti-gay marriage measures—especially the initiative on the ballot in the swing state of Ohio—were the key to Bush's win (Davies 2004). Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, asserted after the election that gay marriage was “the hood ornament on the family values wagon that carried the president to a second term” (Cooperman and Edsall 2004, A-1). The director of the conservative Culture and Family Institute think tank, Robert Knight, claimed the anti-gay marriage measures “galvanized millions of Christians to turnout and vote, and George Bush and the GOP got the lion's share of that vote” (Lochhead 2004, A-1). For his part, Karl Rove, President Bush's principal advisor, told reporters at the Republican National Convention in August 2004 that “to the degree it energizes people who might otherwise not vote,” a ballot measure banning gay marriage “tends to help us” (quoted in Korte 2004, A-1).

After the election, reporters for many national and local papers, including the venerable *New York Times*, reported matter-of-factly that Issue 1 “helped turn out thousands of conservative voters on Election Day” and that support for the measure was “widely viewed as having been crucial to President Bush’s narrow victory in that swing state” (Dao 2004, A-28). Opining in his postelection *USA Today* syndicated column that “gay marriage was probably the issue that spelled the difference in hard-fought Ohio” and that Bush “directly benefited from the outpouring of social conservatives” who turned out in support of Issue 1, reporter Walter Shapiro (2004, A-9) concurred with an Ohio Democratic Party strategist who claimed that “if Issue 1 had not been on the ballot, John Kerry would have won Ohio.” A postelection analysis of the county-by-county presidential vote conducted by the *Wall Street Journal* found that “Bush won thanks to a pitch on morals that went beyond evangelicals to Roman Catholics” and “a strong effort to turn out rural voters” (Cummings 2004, A-4). Bush did particularly well, the paper reported, in small and conservative counties, including 12 of 14 with the most heavy job losses since 2000. A story in *USA Today* reinforced this conventional wisdom that smaller, more conservative exurban, or “micropolitan,” counties in Ohio were central to Bush’s victory, with the Republicans winning 27 of 29 such counties with “rural sensibilities” (El Nasser 2004, A-1).

In contrast to the conventional wisdom of the media following the election, recent scholarship on the electoral effects of anti-gay marriage amendments is decidedly mixed. Relying on aggregate national turnout data and statewide presidential votes, Abramowitz (2004) and Burden (2004) found that the 11 states with gay marriage bans in November did not have higher voter turnout or support for Bush than states without the bans (after controlling for a state’s rate of turnout in 2000) if a state had a 2004 U.S. Senate race or if it was a “swing” state in 2004. By extension, they contend that same-sex marriage bans did not

contribute to the reelection of Bush. Preliminary analyses using county-level data are more mixed. A few indicate that support for the gay marriage bans did not lead to higher turnout or a positive effect of support for Bush in Ohio (Jackman 2004; Freedman 2004), but others suggest that the measures may have influenced Bush’s victory across the 11 states with the gay marriage bans, though they did not boost turnout (Campbell and Monson 2005). Studies using individual-level data national surveys are also mixed. Some conclude that the issue of “moral values” (including support for banning gay marriage) was not central to Bush’s reelection (Hillygus and Shields 2005; Lewis 2005). Others, though, find that the issue of gay marriage was more important to voters living in states where the measures were on the ballot and, more significantly, may have helped to prime voters’ support for Bush (Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith 2005).

Theoretically, there are good reasons why ballot measures—particularly ones so polarizing as those banning same-sex marriage—might be expected to mobilize certain citizens to go to the polls and prime them to vote for candidates. First, there is solid scholarly evidence supporting the assumptions about the potential electoral effects of ballot measures (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Nicholson 2005). Research has shown that ballot measures increase voter turnout, particularly among partisans (Smith 2001; Tolbert, Grummel, and Smith 2001; Tolbert and Smith 2005). Moreover, voters tend to draw on elite and partisan cues to inform their decisions on how to cast their ballots (Lupia 1994; Bowler and Donovan 1998; Lewkowicz 2006), and the ensuing votes tend to be split along partisan lines (Branton 2003; Smith and Tolbert 2001). Recent scholarly evidence has shown that ballot measures may have priming effects on candidate races (Nicholson 2005; Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith 2005).

### The Political Context

In the buildup to the 2004 election, there were many reasons to expect that gay marriage

amendments might create a perfect storm in the reelection of the president. In late February 2004, the president expressed his support for a U.S. constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. Citing the efforts of activist judges in Massachusetts and local officials in San Francisco to redefine marriage, Bush claimed that the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), signed into law by President Bill Clinton, could be undermined by the courts and did not protect marriage in the states. Nearly 40 states already had their own versions of DOMA on the books, including both Michigan and Ohio (Williams 2004). Over the summer, though, the U.S. Senate rejected a federal marriage constitutional amendment, which many media outlets reported as “a big election-year defeat” for the White House (Cooperman and Edsall 2004, A-1). Meanwhile, in roughly a dozen states already having statutory DOMAs, including Michigan and Ohio, there were efforts under way in early 2004 to place amendments on statewide ballots that would constitutionally define marriage as between a man and a woman (O’Connell 2006).

By April, proponents in both Ohio and Michigan announced they would begin circulating petitions to place amendments with traditional definitions of marriage on the November ballots. In each state, the gay and lesbian community announced a countermobilization strategy and initiated court challenges to both the validity of the petitions’ signatures and the amendments’ constitutional language. State courts, though, rejected these challenges, and the measures were subsequently placed on the ballot for citizen approval.

In early August, the Ohio Campaign to Protect Marriage (OCPM) submitted 575,000 signatures to the Ohio Secretary of State, easily surpassing the 316,888 valid signatures needed to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot, and the Ohio Ballot Board unanimously approved the measure’s title and two-sentence ballot summary. Issue 1 would amend Section 11 of Article XV of the state

constitution, stipulating that “only a union between one man and one woman may be a marriage valid in or recognized by this state and its political subdivisions” and that the “state and its political subdivision shall not create or recognize a legal status for relationships of unmarried individuals that intends to approximate the design, qualities, significance or effect of marriage.” On September 29, the Ohio Secretary of State certified the initiative for placement on the ballot.

In Michigan, the State Court of Appeals announced in September that the more than 317,000 signatures gathered by Citizens for the Protection of Marriage and submitted in July for verification were valid, which secured the measure’s spot on the general election ballot. The court ruling was necessary after the Michigan Board of State Canvassers was deadlocked in its decision to place the issue before the voters. The court ruled that the proposed constitutional amendment’s stipulation that the state would only recognize a union between a man and woman as a marriage or “similar union for any purpose” was neither incomplete nor misleading. As in Ohio, critics of the measure (dubbed Proposal 2) had argued that the ballot language was overly broad and could force universities, governments, and other public agencies to stop giving domestic partner health benefits to same-sex couples and heterosexual couples who were not married. The appellate court ruled that the members of the Board of State Canvassers were wrong to consider the substantive merits of the proposal and that its legality could not be challenged unless it became law.

## **Research Design**

Two separate aggregate-level datasets for the 88 counties in Ohio and 83 counties in Michigan are used to probe where the ballot measures banning same-sex marriage gained electoral support and to test whether they helped increase levels of turnout and aid in the reelection of Bush across the counties in each state. Although aggregate-level data

cannot be used to infer individual patterns of political behavior without risking an ecological fallacy (King 1997), county-level data are useful when exploring the political, economic, and social environment in which voters make their electoral decisions (Key 1949; Giles 1977; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Hero 1998; Tolbert and Hero 2001). Aggregate-level data are especially useful when exploring turnout and voting patterns, as survey data may contain nonresponse and other sampling errors or may accentuate the social desirability of participation and vote choice (Belli et al. 1999). In both Michigan and Ohio, counties are particularly useful units of analysis because they are the administrative arms of the state and are key electoral arenas in which candidates and parties wage their campaigns.

Previous research employing aggregate-level analyses of political behavior demonstrates that partisan, religious, and socioeconomic compositions often influence the overall political behavior of communities or counties (Putnam 1966; Foladare 1968; Huckfeldt, Plutzer, and Sprague 1993). For example, Foladare (1968) demonstrated that Protestants who lived in predominantly Catholic communities had significantly different partisan identification than those Protestants who lived in communities that had a large Protestant population, and vice-versa. Paralleling religious identification, scholars also have demonstrated that the racial composition of a state influences the type of racial policies it enacts (Giles and Evans 1986; Hero and Tolbert 1996; Hero 1998; Branton 2004). The research design combines elements from these perspectives in assessing the influence of various communities on the voting patterns on the gay marriage issue and changes in the level of turnout and the president's vote share in each state.

### **Expectations and Specifications of Models**

This investigation into the electoral and turnout effects of the anti-gay ballot measures lends itself to three testable hypotheses.<sup>2</sup>

H1: Counties with greater densities of Republicans, rural and exurban populations, and evangelical Protestants and Catholics will have higher levels of support for the ballot measures banning same-sex marriage compared with other counties.

H2: Counties with greater support for the measures banning same-sex marriage will have higher levels of turnout in 2004 compared with other counties.

H3: Counties with greater support for the measures banning same-sex marriage will have higher levels of support for Bush in 2004 compared with other counties.

The first hypothesis provides insight into the forces at play in the passage of the anti-gay measures, while the second and third hypotheses capture the impact the gay marriage bans may have had on turnout and vote for Bush in 2004. A series of weighted least-squares multivariate regression models estimate the aggregate-level patterns of voting on the ballot issues, turnout, and support for Bush in Michigan and Ohio in 2004, controlling for a host of other factors.<sup>3</sup> Across Michigan's 83 counties, turnout in 2004 was on average 4.9 percentage points greater than in 2000, and the vote for Bush increased 1.8 percentage points from 2000 to 2004. In Ohio, turnout across the state's 88 counties was 8.2 percentage points higher in 2004 than in 2000, and Bush's vote share increased 2 percentage points after his four years in office. Table 1 details the statewide averages and the county averages of the vote for same-sex marriage bans, the percentage point change in voter turnout, and the percentage point change in vote for Bush.

### **Expected Support for the Gay Marriage Bans**

The first model tests whether counties in Ohio and Michigan with greater densities of

**Table 1.** Statewide and County Averages

Variables	Michigan		Ohio	
	Statewide	County	Statewide	County
Vote in favor of initiative banning gay marriage (percent)	58.6	63.8	61.7	68.5
Percentage point change in turnout, 2000–2004	5.7	4.9	8.2	8.2
Percentage point change in vote for Bush, 2000–2004	1.7	1.8	0.8	2.0

religious conservatives, Republicans, and rural and exurban populations exhibited increased levels of support for the initiatives banning gay marriage, holding other factors constant. The dependent variable is the percent vote in favor of Issue 1 in each of Ohio’s 88 counties and the percent vote in favor of Proposal 2 in Michigan’s 83 counties.

Counties with dense populations of evangelical Protestants are expected to have stronger support for the measures in the two states. Evangelicals tend to view same-sex ballot measures, which restrict the rights of gays, as a tactic to battle against a way of life they perceive as threatening to their own social and cultural values (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997; Wald, Owen, and Hill 1990). There is also evidence at the aggregate level that communities with higher percentages of evangelicals are likely to adopt ordinances limiting the rights of gays and lesbians (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997, 80–82). There is therefore good reason to expect that the ballot measures banning gay marriage will have higher levels of support in counties with large percentages of evangelicals.

The model includes the county population in each state belonging to the Catholic Church. While not so evident in Ohio, where the backing for Issue 1 came principally from the Ohio Campaign to Protect Marriage, in Michigan the Catholic Church actively campaigned and financially supported Citizens for the Protection of Marriage, the primary backers of Proposal 2. In mid-October, for instance, the Michigan Catholic Conference mailed a letter and a brochure touting marriage between a man and a woman to all 596,000 households in the state with a regis-

tered Catholic. Seven Catholic dioceses (led by the Archdiocese of Detroit) contributed \$1 million to Citizens for the Protection of Marriage, accounting for 61 percent of the war chest accumulated by the primary umbrella group advancing the amendment (O’Connell 2006; Cooperman and Broder 2004). In Michigan (but not Ohio), due to the Catholic Church’s heavy involvement in the campaign, the percentage of Catholics in a county is expected to have a positive effect on county-level support for the initiative. The model also controls for the percentage of a county’s population belonging to other denominations that did not officially oppose the gay marriage bans. As with Catholics and evangelicals, the expectation is that as the density of adherents belonging to conservative denominations increases in a county, so too will the support for the measures banning gay marriage. By default, the excluded (reference) category is the percentage of a county’s population belonging to liberal denominations, combined with the percentage of a county’s population with no official religious adherence.<sup>4</sup>

Backers of the measures also hoped that the initiatives would mobilize socially conservative Republicans, priming their support for Bush. Partisanship has been shown to be the most predicable indicator of support or opposition for ballot measures (Smith and Tolbert 2001; Branton 2003). In 2004, the issue of gay marriage was defined along partisan lines, with the Republican Party generally supporting (if sometimes tacitly) the ban and Democrats generally opposing it. It is expected that there will be greater support for the ballot initiatives in counties with larger

percentages of Republicans; partisanship is therefore controlled with a measure of the county percent vote for Bush in 2000 in both states, as neither state officially records the party affiliation of registered voters.<sup>5</sup> Proponents of the measures also targeted support from voters living in rural and exurban counties. Using a 9-point scale created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (ranging from 1 = metropolitan area of 1 million population, to 9 = completely rural population in jurisdictions with fewer than 2,500 residents) to control for the rural/urban nature of a county, the expectation is that more rural counties would exhibit greater levels of support for same-sex marriage bans.

Also included in the model are traditional socioeconomic control variables that researchers have found to be significant predictors of support or opposition to gay rights measures (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997; Donovan and Bowler 1998). Advocates of the measures also hoped to garner the support of socially conservative African Americans, envisioning that the wedge issue would pry them away from the Democratic Party's candidate. While many African Americans self-identify as evangelicals and have a theology that often reflects that of the Christian Right, their voting habits tend to be defined by liberal economic issues (Wilcox 2000). As such, counties with dense African American populations, measured by the percentage of African Americans residing in each county in 2000, are likely to be cued by the Democratic Party to vote against the anti-gay marriage initiatives.

Educational attainment and age have been found to be major cleavages in the larger gay rights debate; individuals with lower levels of education and older individuals generally oppose extending the rights of gays and lesbians (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997). Counties with a higher median age and lower level of education (as measured by the percentage of the county's population over 25 years old with at least a high school education) are expected to have greater support for the bans on same-sex marriage.

Finally, the economic well-being of a county is controlled with a measure of the percent change in a county's rate of unemployment between 2000 and 2003.<sup>6</sup> Many counties in both Ohio and Michigan were hit hard by rising unemployment levels during President Bush's first term. Organized labor in these two heavily unionized states decided to stay on the sidelines in the pitched battle over same-sex marriage, focusing attention instead on economic issues. Citizens in counties with increasing rates of employment may have grown frustrated with the Bush campaign's symbolic crusade on moral issues. Motivated instead by job growth and more immediate material relief, counties experiencing increasing levels of unemployment between 2000 and 2003, controlling for other factors, are expected to have less support for the anti-gay marriage initiatives relative to other counties.

#### **Expected Voter Turnout in 2004**

The second model estimates the possibility of a mobilization effect of the two ballot measures. The dependent variable is the percent turnout in each of Michigan's 83 and Ohio's 88 counties in 2004. As mentioned previously, supporters of same-sex marriage bans claimed that the measures on the ballot would mobilize conservative evangelicals, Catholics, and rural voters. Most notably, evangelicals were considered to be a bloc of voters who had allegedly stayed home four years earlier (see Teixeira 2004). Previous studies find that the mobilization of evangelical Protestants is maximized when issues such as abortion, the rights of gays and lesbians, and school prayer are either on the ballot or are major components of a political campaign (Wilcox 1989; Jelen 1991; Rozell and Wilcox 1996; Carmines and Layman 1997; Wilcox 2000), and gay rights ballot measures are often seen as polarizing issues, with clear partisan cleavages (Donovan, Wenzel, and Bowler 2000; Donovan and Bowler 1998; Witt and McCorkle 1997). Of course, the strategy to mobilize evangelicals in support of the anti-gay

marriage measures was vulnerable to counter-mobilization strategies (Reichley 1986; Green 1994; Rozell and Wilcox 1996; Haider-Markel and Meier 1996; Wilcox 2000). In estimating the 2004 county-level turnout in each state, the model uses the same control variables as in the previous model but adds percent turnout in 2000 and the percent vote in favor of the anti-gay measures in 2004. Both variables are expected to have positive effects on county-level turnout in 2004, all else held equal.

### Expected Vote Share for Bush in 2004

The final model, also essentially a panel model, estimates the effect same-sex ballot measures had on presidential vote choice in 2004 in each state. The dependent variable is Bush's share of the county-level presidential vote in 2004. The main control variable estimating the vote for Bush in 2004 is the level of support Bush received in 2000 and is expected to be strongly positive. Even though evangelical Protestants are not always a cohesive voting bloc and are sometimes apolitical (Smidt 1988; Wilcox 1989; Jelen and Wilcox 1992; Green 1994; Rozell and Wilcox 1996; Shibley 1998; Wilcox 2000), the density of evangelicals in a county is expected in Ohio to help explain support for Bush, as Issue 1 was vigorously pushed by evangelical leaders. Similarly, in Michigan, the county density of Catholics is expected to be positively related to the vote for Bush. The other independent variables are identical to those in the previous model, with the same expected directions.

### Findings

The results of the weighted least-squares regressions for both states are presented in Tables 2–4. What is most striking about the results is that support for anti-gay marriage measures in both states affected the vote for Bush in 2004, even when controlling for his level of support in 2000. A county's percentage of evangelicals was also positively significant in Ohio (but not in Michigan) when estimating support for Bush in 2004. County-level

turnout in 2004, however, was not affected by the level of support for same-sex marriage measures in Ohio and was actually negatively related in Michigan. In sum, counties with higher levels of support for the measures banning same-sex marriage appear to have had greater support for Bush in 2004, though not higher turnout, compared with the 2000 election.

### Support for the Gay Marriage Bans

Consistent with scholarly research showing partisanship at both the individual and aggregate levels to be a strong predictor of vote choice on ballot measures (Branton 2003; Smith and Tolbert 2001), anti-gay marriage measures in both states received greater support (as measured by the percent vote for Bush in 2000) in counties with greater percentages of Republicans (see Table 2). In Michigan, for every percentage point increase in a county's support for Bush in 2000, support for Proposal 2 increased by nearly half a percentage point (.48). Similarly, in Ohio, support for Issue 1 increased by a third of a percentage point (.31) for every percentage point increase in a county's support for Bush in 2000.

The results also indicate that in both Michigan and Ohio, the density of evangelicals was positively related to county vote in support of gay marriage bans. Stated differently, support for the two ballot measures in counties with denser populations of evangelical Protestants was more than in counties with less dense populations, *ceteris paribus*. In both Michigan and Ohio, support for the anti-gay marriage measures rose by almost a quarter of a percentage point for every one point increase in a county's percentage of evangelicals. Furthermore, consistent with research on gay rights ballot issues showing that levels of tolerance are commensurate with educational attainment (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997; Donovan and Bowler 1998), as educational attainment increased, the vote for the gay marriage ban decreased in both states (more so in Michigan than Ohio). Finally, controlling for other factors, the Ohio model shows

**Table 2.** Percent Vote for Initiatives Banning Same-Sex Marriage, 2004

County-level Variables	Michigan (percent vote for Proposal 2)	Ohio (percent vote for Issue 1)
Percent evangelical Protestant, 2000	<b>.231 (.098)</b>	<b>.245 (.110)</b>
Percent Catholic, 2000	<b>.084 (.041)</b>	.000 (.036)
Percent other conservative denominations, 2000	.137 (.112)	.072 (.082)
Percent African American, 2000	-.031 (.047)	<b>-.257 (.049)</b>
Urban/rural continuum, 2003 (1 = urban; 9 = rural)	-.002 (.002)	<b>.006 (.003)</b>
Median age, 2000	.001 (.001)	<b>.012 (.002)</b>
Change in percent unemployment, 2000–2003	-.075 (.369)	<b>-.778 (.401)</b>
Percent population with high school degree, 2000	<b>-.864 (.092)</b>	<b>-.511 (.101)</b>
Percent vote for Bush, 2000	<b>.482 (.057)</b>	<b>.312 (.041)</b>
Constant	<b>.969 (.102)</b>	<b>.468 (.114)</b>
Adjusted $R^2$	.868	.678
F	<b>61.170</b>	<b>21.360</b>
N	83	88

**Table 3.** Percent Turnout, 2004

County-level Variables	Michigan	Ohio
Percent vote for same-sex marriage bans	<b>-.092 (.048)</b>	-.220 (.156)
Percent evangelical Protestant, 2000	.056 (.041)	.087 (.156)
Percent Catholic, 2000	.006 (.018)	.008 (.050)
Percent other conservative denominations, 2000	.013 (.046)	-.029 (.112)
Percent vote for Bush, 2000	<b>.084 (.036)</b>	.089 (.083)
Percent voter turnout, 2000	<b>.861 (.052)</b>	<b>.594 (.153)</b>
Percent African American, 2000	-.029 (.019)	-.079 (.079)
Median age, 2000	.000 (.000)	<b>.010 (.003)</b>
Urban/rural continuum, 2003 (1 = urban; 9 = rural)	<b>-.003 (.001)</b>	.000 (.004)
Percent population with high school degree, 2000	.067 (.057)	-.108 (.164)
Change in percent unemployment, 2000–2003	<b>.253 (.149)</b>	-.835 (.561)
Constant	.089 (.062)	.199 (.173)
Adjusted $R^2$	.959	.402
F	<b>176.748</b>	<b>6.323</b>
N	83	88

\* $p < .10$ .

Notes: Least-squares regression is weighted by total population of county. Each model reports unstandardized regression coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses. Bold coefficients indicate observed statistical reliability at 90 percent confidence intervals.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; Ohio Secretary of State, 2004; Michigan Secretary of State, 2004; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2004; Glenmary Research Center (Jones et al. 2002); Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Bureau of Labor Market Information, 2004; Michigan Office of Labor Market Information, Bureau of Labor and Economic Growth & Strategic Initiatives, 2004.

that counties experiencing poor economic conditions exhibited less support for Issue 1 relative to other counties.

In addition to the independent variables that help to explain a county's level of support for the gay marriage bans in both Michigan and Ohio, there were a handful of other

significant variables, but none were found in either state. The Ohio model indicates that the density of African Americans in a county was significant; controlling for other factors: as the percentage of African Americans residing in a county increased, support for Issue 1 decreased. This finding appears to run

**Table 4.** Percent Vote for Bush, 2004

County-level Variables	Michigan	Ohio
	β (se)	β (se)
Percent vote for same-sex marriage bans	<b>.269 (.047)</b>	<b>.212 (.053)</b>
Percent evangelical Protestant, 2000	-.045 (.041)	<b>.105 (.053)</b>
Percent Catholic, 2000	<b>-.057 (.017)</b>	.015 (.017)
Percent other conservative denominations, 2000	<b>-.172 (.046)</b>	-.019 (.038)
Percent vote for Bush, 2000	<b>.775 (.032)</b>	<b>.957 (.025)</b>
Percent African American, 2000	<b>-.102 (.019)</b>	-.038 (.027)
Median age, 2000	.001 (.000)	.001 (.001)
Urban/rural continuum, 2003 (1 = urban; 9 = rural)	-.001 (.001)	.000 (.001)
Percent population with high school degree, 2000	<b>.169 (.055)</b>	.054 (.054)
Change in percent unemployment, 2000–2003	.175 (.149)	-.068 (.191)
Constant	<b>-.158 (.062)</b>	<b>-.180 (.059)</b>
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.992	.989
F	<b>1073.604</b>	<b>797.993</b>
N	83	88

\* $p < .10$ .

Notes: Least-squares regression is weighted by total population of county. Each model reports unstandardized regression coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses. Bold coefficients indicate observed statistical reliability at 90 percent confidence intervals.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; Ohio Secretary of State, 2004; Michigan Secretary of State, 2004; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2004; Glenmary Research Center (Jones et al. 2002); Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Bureau of Labor Market Information, 2004; Michigan Office of Labor Market Information, Bureau of Labor and Economic Growth & Strategic Initiatives, 2004.

counter to individual-level survey data, which show that nonwhites in Ohio (but not in Michigan) were more likely to support Issue 1 (Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith 2005). The Ohio model shows that, as expected, more rural counties and those with older populations were significantly more likely to support the ban and those experiencing higher levels of unemployment were less likely to support the ban. In Michigan, the model shows that the density of Catholics in a county was a significant predictor of support for Proposal 2, as anticipated. For each percentage point increase in a county's density of Catholics, support for Proposal 2 increased by a little less than a tenth of a percentage point, holding constant other factors. In both states, the percentage of other conservative denominations in a county had no significant impact on level of support for the measures.

### Voter Turnout in 2004

The outcome variable in Table 3 is percent turnout in a county in 2004. Controlling for

several factors (most notably, county-level turnout in 2000), the Ohio model shows that support for the gay marriage ban had no statistically significant impact on county turnout in 2004. In Michigan, the anti-gay marriage measure had a slight negative effect: for every percentage point increase in county support for Proposal 2, turnout was less by one-tenth of a percent. Furthermore, in neither state was the percentage of evangelicals related to increased levels of turnout in 2004. These findings indicate that the higher county-level turnout in both states in 2004 was not due to the support for the anti-gay measures or to those counties with dense evangelical populations having heavier turnout. Rather, in both states, turnout in 2004 was up across all counties, irrespective of the aggregate religious persuasion of a county or whether the median voter in a county supported the anti-gay marriage amendment. Perhaps surprisingly, there is no single common explanatory factor in the two states for the increase in turnout. In Michigan, the model shows

that more rural counties had lower levels of turnout, whereas counties with higher levels of unemployment had higher turnout compared with other counties. In Ohio, counties with older populations had higher turnout in 2004, controlling for other factors.

### **Vote Share for Bush in 2004**

The results shown in Table 4 provide considerable evidence that support in both states for same-sex marriage ballot measures led to increased levels of support for Bush and that, in Ohio, counties with dense evangelical populations contributed to Bush's reelection. Consistent with survey research showing that the gay marriage bans had a priming effect for Bush in 2004 (Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith 2005), county-level support for Ohio's Issue 1 and Michigan's Proposal 2 appears to have given the president a boost. In Ohio, controlling for the level of support the president received in 2000 and other factors, the vote for Bush in 2004 was positively related to support for the ban on gay marriage, as was the density of a county's evangelical population. In Ohio—a state where Bush ended up winning by only 118,000 votes in 2004—the model reveals that for every percentage point increase in the vote for Issue 1, support for Bush increased by two-tenths of a percentage point; support for Bush increased an additional tenth of a percentage point for every percentage point increase in density of evangelicals in a county. Thus, while there is no evidence that counties in Ohio with denser evangelical populations and support for Issue 1 had higher turnout (Table 3), they did provide more support for Bush in 2004 relative to other counties.<sup>7</sup>

As in Ohio, county-level support in Michigan for the proposal to ban same-sex marriage positively affected the vote for Bush in 2004 (see Table 4). For every percentage point increase in the vote for the anti-gay marriage measure, county-level support for Bush went up by a quarter of a percentage point. Bush also received stronger support in counties with more educated populations, controlling

for other variables. However, Bush's support in the state was offset by several other factors. Unlike in Ohio, the county-level density of evangelicals in Michigan was not significant and does not help to explain county vote share for Bush in 2004. Additionally, the coefficients for the density of Catholics and the percentages of African Americans and adherents of other conservative denominations in a county all were significant but in a negative direction, indicating that these counties had lower levels of support for Bush in 2004 relative to other counties.

### **Conclusion**

The county-level findings from the 2004 battleground states of Michigan and Ohio support but also raise questions about the electoral impact of same-sex marriage bans. There is evidence that counties with dense levels of evangelical Protestants in both states and counties with sizeable numbers of Catholics in Michigan voted strongly in favor of the anti-gay ballot measures. Even more impressive was the positive correlation in both states between support for the anti-gay marriage measures and the vote for Bush in 2004, even after taking into consideration the strong predictive value of the vote for Bush in 2000. Additionally, in Ohio the percentage of evangelicals in a county was a positive predictor of the vote for Bush. Any gains for Bush from the same-sex marriage measure in Michigan, however, were seemingly countered by significantly lower levels of support for him in counties with higher percentages of Catholics, adherents to other conservative denominations, and those with dense populations of African Americans. These findings are consistent with research showing the tendency among many Catholics to switch back and forth between supporting the official stance of the Catholic Church and voting for Democratic candidates (Welch and Leege 1991). More broadly, the findings comport with survey data on the topic, particularly that Protestants were significantly

more likely than non-Protestants to support the bans on gay marriage and that those who supported the ballot measures were more likely to vote for Bush (Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith 2005).

Regarding voter turnout, county-level support for the measures in the two states does not appear to be linked to more citizens coming out to vote. The aggregate-level findings show that turnout in Ohio was not higher in counties with greater support for Issue 1, and in Michigan, turnout was lower as support for Proposal 2 increased. Counter to some postelection claims, there is no evidence from either state that counties with higher proportions of evangelicals, rural voters, or even supporters of the gay marriage bans had higher turnout levels than other counties. Turnout in both states, then, increased across the board, irrespective of support for the anti-gay marriage amendments.

The strategy of using polarizing ballot measures as partisan cues may rest in part upon the assumption that potential voters are willing to politicize what are considered to be core issues (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Nicholson 2005). With evangelical leaders as the driving force behind Issue 1 in Ohio, this rationale seems to have been the case, as counties with dense populations of evangelicals supported not only the ballot measure but also the president. In Michigan, although counties with heavy populations of evangelicals and Catholics supported Proposal 2, there appears not to have been an attendant priming effect for Bush. Perhaps this outcome was due to the fact that Bush did not campaign on the issue in Michigan nearly as much as he did in Ohio. As for the fact that there is no evidence in either state that counties with higher levels of support for same-sex marriage bans and denser evangelical populations had higher turnout relative to other counties, scholars of religion and politics have noted that there are good reasons why socially conservative issues, such as the anti-gay marriage ballot measures, may not mobilize all evangelicals equally (Jelen

1994; McCann 1997). While in both states, same-sex marriage bans on the 2004 ballots likely primed Bush's share of the presidential vote, the electoral impact of the measures was not universally attributable to the support of counties with denser evangelical populations, as the data from Michigan suggest.

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## Notes

1. State legislatures in Georgia (76 percent yes), Kentucky (75 percent yes), Mississippi (86 percent yes), Oklahoma (76 percent yes), and Utah (66 percent yes) placed referendums on the ballot. Initiatives were on the ballot in Arkansas (75 percent yes), Michigan (56 percent yes), Montana (67 percent yes), North Dakota (73 percent yes), Ohio (62 percent yes), and Oregon (57 percent yes).
2. There are two different ways to model hypotheses 2 and 3. The first (results not shown) considers the dependent variable as a dynamic change value, specifically percent change from 2000 to 2004 in turnout (model 2) and percent change from 2000 to 2004 in vote for Bush (model 3). This type of modeling leads to the problem of regression toward the mean because the dependent variable contains information

that should be on the right side of the equation. Alternatively, both hypotheses can be considered as panel models, as they include a lagged value of the dependent variable. The models seek to isolate the effect on a variable measured at  $T_2$  (e.g., same-sex marriage measures on the ballot), holding initial conditions ( $T_1$ ) constant. This second approach, used here, offers a much more conservative test of the impact of the anti-gay measures, as the lagged  $T_1$  values (2000 turnout in model 2; 2000 Bush vote in model 3) are huge forces that drive  $T_2$  in both models.

3. The unit of analysis for these models is state counties. Due to heteroskedasticity concerns, weighted least-squares regression is used to account for the wide variation in county size and relative influence on statewide electoral results. The weighted variable is the 2000 population of a county.
4. Measurement of evangelical Protestants is a subject ripe for academic debate. Following Steensland et al. (2000), a collapsed denominational typology measuring evangelical Protestants, Catholics, other conservative denominations, and liberal denominations/no religious adherence is used because it is compatible with aggregate-level data. For further debate surrounding religious measurement, see Wilcox (1992), Layman (2001), Jelen (1989), and Kellstedt et al. (1996). The proportions of evangelical Protestants, Catholics, other conservative denominations, and liberal denominations/no religious adherence per county in Ohio and Michigan were calculated using census data from the Glenmary Research Center's *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States: 2000* (Jones et al. 2002). The methodology and actual codes for the religious denominations are available from the authors.
5. Alternative specifications for county percent vote for the Republican gubernatorial candidate or the Republican Attorney General candidate in the 2002 contests in both states had no statistical or substantive differences.
6. Unemployment statistics for 2004 are from the Michigan Office of Labor Market Information, Bureau of Labor and Economic Growth & Strategic Initiatives, and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Bureau of Labor Market Information. The models were run using both a static unemployment variable, which measured the rate of unemployment in a county in 2003, and the dynamic variable measuring the rate of change in unemployment from 2000 to 2003. There is no predictive advantage in using one measure over the other, but there is greater theoretical value in utilizing the dynamic unemployment variable, as it helps differentiate between counties that suffered greater increases in unemployment during the first term of the Bush administration and those with chronically high unemployment rates.
7. In two counties (Coshocton and Van Wert) in Ohio, Issue 1 actually had more total votes cast (for and against) than the total votes cast for all the presidential candidates on the ballot.

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