

MARRIAGE DEFINITION VOTES IN 13 STATES AND VOTING OUTCOMES

JOHN DAVID RAUSCH, JR.
West Texas A&M University

In 2004, voters in thirteen states approved amendments to their state constitutions defining marriage as involving one man and one woman. Oklahoma was one of these states. This paper examines the political context of the voting outcomes in these states. It analyzes the influence of religion on the county-level votes for the marriage definition amendments, controlling for various political, demographic, and socioeconomic variables. The analysis reveals that while religious affiliation was an important fact in the political environment, the relationship between support for marriage definition and the 2004 Republican presidential vote was more important. The analysis also exhibits evidence that counties with large African-American populations strongly supported marriage definition amendments.

Same-sex marriage became legal in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on May 17, 2004, the result of a judicial decision and the most dramatic step in a decades-long movement. This movement seeks to allow same-sex marriage in state law. Reacting to the apparent success of the movement, voters in thirteen states, including Oklahoma, approved marriage definition amendments to their state constitutions in 2004. Missouri voters approved a legislative referendum at the August

3 primary election. A legislative referendum was approved in Louisiana at the September 18 primary. Voters in Oklahoma and eight other states approved ballot questions at the November 2 general election. In Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Utah, the question was referred by the legislature. Voters in Arkansas, Michigan, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, and Oregon approved citizen initiatives.

HISTORY AND POLITICS OF MARRIAGE DEFINITION

The state campaigns to define marriage in their constitutions in 2004 were one dramatic point in a decades-long conflict over the ability of same-sex couples to obtain marriage licenses (Barclay and Fisher 2003; Cadge, Olson, and Harrison 2005, 5-8). In 1970, the first gay male couple applied for a marriage license from Hennepin County, Minnesota. After the county clerk denied their application, they sued in state court. The Minnesota Supreme Court held that the men had no federal due process or equal protection right to marry (*Baker v. Nelson*, 291 Minn. 310, 314-15, 191 N.W.2d 185, 187 [1971]). A number of same-sex couples tried to obtain marriage licenses during the 1970s and 1980s and failed in court (Dupuis 2002).

Gay marriage entered the national political agenda in the early 1990s when the Hawaii Supreme Court ruled that the state's ban on granting same-sex couples marriage licenses violated the equal protection clause found in the Hawaii Constitution (*Baehr v. Lewin*, 852 P.2d 44 [Haw. 1993]). This decision was upheld by a Hawaii appeals court in 1996. During the period between the two decisions, same-sex marriage opponents organized. The opponents were able to persuade the Hawaii Legislature to propose a state constitutional amendment that was ratified by 69 percent of the state's voters in November 1998. In 1996, while several states were debating same-sex marriage, Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) defining marriage as an institution between a man and woman. The legislation prohibited federal recognition of same-sex marriages and permitted each state to ignore same-sex marriages performed in other states. President Bill Clinton signed the bill that was followed by similar legislation in a number of states.

The next legal action occurred in Vermont in 1999. The Vermont Supreme Court ruled that limiting marriage opposite-sex couples violated

the Vermont Constitution's "Common Benefits Clause" (*Baker v. State*, 744 A.2d 864 [Vt. 1999]). The decision forced the Vermont Legislature to develop a way for benefits and protections to same-sex couples. In 2000, the Legislature passed a "civil unions" law, granting to same-sex couples "all the same benefits, protections and responsibilities under law, whether they derive from statute, administrative or court rule, policy, common law or any other source of civil law, as are granted to spouses in marriage." This was the first legislative measure to provide the benefits and protections of marriage without the label of "marriage" (Cadge, Olson, and Harrison 2005).

Same-sex couples received additional support for their ability to obtain marriage licenses with the 2003 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* (798 N.E.2d 941 [Mass. 2003]). The court ruled "the marriage ban does not meet the rational basis test for either due process or equal protection." The first same-sex marriage licenses were granted in Massachusetts on May 14, 2004, over the objection of Governor Mitt Romney, a Republican.

Reacting to these court rulings and events like San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's granting of marriage licenses in his city in February 2004, conservative groups increased their efforts to amend state constitutions to prohibit same-sex marriage.

In 2004, voters in Oklahoma joined voters in twelve other states in approving constitutional amendments defining marriage as being between one man and one woman. During the campaign in Oklahoma, public opinion polls indicated that the state question would be approved overwhelmingly by voters (Satterthwaite 2006, 210). Polls conducted in other states indicated similar levels of support. By the end of the year, voters in all thirteen states had approved the constitutional amendments. The present research assesses the political context of the voting outcomes on these referenda.

METHOD

Using a method similar to the method used by Morgan and Meier (1980) in their study of voting on moral issues in Oklahoma, this paper examines the voting patterns on the question of marriage definition in

the thirteen states that considered the issue in 2004. Morgan and Meier used multiple regression analysis to study the county-level vote on several ballot questions. Their dependent variable was the percentage of each county's voters supporting the question. They used a number of independent variables including rural isolation, socioeconomic status, liquor consumption, and three categories of religion. They found that support for referenda on liberalizing liquor and gambling laws was found in Oklahoma counties with high socioeconomic status, a larger percentage of Catholics, and smaller percentages of both fundamentalist and other Protestants (Morgan and Meier 1980; Satterthwaite 2005a). Despite the relative simplicity of the method and the level at which the data are aggregated, Morgan and Meier's findings have been cited numerous times, especially on questions related to issues of morality (see Gibson 2004; Haider-Markel and Meier 1996; LeDuc and Pammett 1995; Oldmixon 2002; Satterthwaite 2005a, 2005b; Wald, Button, Rienzo 1996; Wilcox and Jelen 1990). Rausch (1994) uses a similar methodology to examine the politics of legislative constraint in Oklahoma.

Several hypotheses emerge to explain support for marriage definition state questions. One hypothesis is that votes on marriage definition were determined by religious affiliation. Public opinion research demonstrates that religion has an influence on opinions about homosexuality (Cochran and Beeghley 1991; Cotten-Huston and Waite 2000; Finlay and Walther 2003; Glenn and Weaver 1979; Roof and McKinney 1987), although Cadge, Olson, and Harrison (2005) show that religious affiliation may not specifically affect opinion on allowing same-sex marriages.

A second hypothesis considers the urban and rural populations in a state. Voters in rural areas are more likely to vote in support of marriage definition amendments while those in urban areas would oppose the measures. There has been little research on locality as a factor in voter outcomes on marriage definition amendments, except that some research has included "rural and urban" as variables (see, for example, Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel 2005). Examining Ohio and Michigan, Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel (2005, 16) find that rural counties were significantly more likely to support the marriage definition measure in Ohio.

A third possible hypothesis considers the role of political party on the marriage definition voter. A growing body of research (Campbell and Monson 2005; Donovan, et al. 2005; Hillygus and Shields 2005;

Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel 2005) links the success of President George W. Bush's re-election campaign with the state-level votes on marriage definition. This line of research supports the public opinion data that emerged out of the 2004 presidential election indicating that voters chose President Bush largely because he reflected their positions on moral issues, including gay marriage. The challenge, recognized by Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel 2005, 12), lies in identifying the number of Democratic and Republican party identifiers at the county-level, especially in states that do not register voters by party. This is discussed further below.

Using data collected from a variety of sources, the present research assesses the alternative hypotheses while testing for other potential explanations of support for state constitutional amendments defining marriage. Data were collected on each of 1,037 counties in the thirteen states. The counties are in state located in different parts of the country, providing some control on political culture. In addition, the counties vary in their support for the 2004 Republican presidential candidate. The Democratic candidate for president carried several of the states included in this analysis. In addition, there is a high degree of variability between the counties in terms of their populations.

The present research employs aggregate data collected at the county level. While individual-level data collected by a survey would be preferable to county-level data, the level of aggregation chosen is more practical for a study that includes a number of states. County-level data are useful for examining the political, economic, and social environment in which voters made their decisions on referenda (Giles 1977; Hero 1998; Key 1950; Morgan and Meier 1980; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Rausch 1994; Satterthwaite 2005a, 2005b; Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel 2005; Tolbert and Hero 2001). Of course, national surveys include respondents from a number of the subject states, but very few from some of the smaller states examined in this research, such as Montana and North Dakota.

Election return data were collected from the secretaries of state or the state election boards of the states examined. The data on religion were compiled from the Glenmary Research Center's *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States, 2000* (Jones 2002). Demographic data are from the United States Census.

MEASURES

SUPPORT FOR MARRIAGE DEFINITION AMENDMENT

The dependent variable, support for marriage definition amendment, is measured by the percentage of voters in each of the 1,037 counties who cast a ballot in favor of the marriage definition amendment. While the statewide votes on the question appear to have little variation, the county-level data exhibit greater variation. The highest percentage of “Yes” votes was 94.06 percent in Itawamba County, Mississippi. The lowest support was 38.55 percent in Summit County, Utah. The mean county vote was 78.25 percent with a standard deviation of 9.45 percent. **Table 1** presents the counties where less than 50 percent of the voters supported the amendments. These counties primarily are either urban or have large university populations. Using Census data available at www.gaydemographics.org, no relationship was found between the number of same-sex couples in a county and its level of support for marriage definition, as suggested by Overby and Barth (2002).

RELIGION

Data were collected on the proportions of county residents affiliated with different religions. Although religion has been involved in American political life for a long time, social scientists have only seriously researched the role of religion in politics for about the past quarter century (Jelen 1998; Satterthwaite 2005a, 2005b; Wald, Silverman, and Fridy 2005). Jelen (1998) reviews much of literature that specifically examines the role of religion in political behavior. For example, the Catholic Church has worked in coalition with other groups to enact restrictions on abortion at the state level (Day 1992; O’Hara 1992). Religious conservatives became actively involved in the Republican Party in the late 1970s and early 1980s to advocate their positions on a number of social issues (Guth 1983; Oldfield 1996). Interestingly, it was during the period when religious conservatives began to strongly participate in politics that social science experienced a growth in interest in the role of religion in American politics. Recent research has found that religious affiliation played a role in the results of the marriage definition amendment votes

TABLE 1

**Counties with Less than 50 Percent Support for the
Marriage Definition Amendments in 2004**

| County (County Seat) | Percent |
|--|---------|
| Summit County, Utah (Coalville) | 38.55 |
| Multnomah County, Oregon (Portland) | 40.26 |
| Washtenaw County, Michigan (Ann Arbor) | 40.55 |
| Athens County, Ohio (Athens) | 44.22 |
| Benton County, Oregon (Corvallis) | 45.17 |
| Grand County, Utah (Moab) | 45.97 |
| St. Louis City, Missouri | 47.01 |
| Ingham County, Michigan (Mason) | 47.03 |

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

(Cadge, Olson, and Harrison 2005; Campbell and Monson 2005; Satterthwaite 2005b; Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel 2005).

The present research incorporates four variables for religious affiliation: evangelical Protestants; mainline Protestants; Catholics; and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). The Mormon variable presented some difficulty as will be discussed below. Using data from the Glenmary Research Center (Jones 2002), the proportion of county residents who are Evangelical Protestants was calculated using the "List of Religious Bodies" found at the American Religion Data Archive website. The percentages ranged from a high of 97.9 to a low of zero. The mean was 29.19 with a standard deviation of 18.12. It is expected that counties with greater percentages of evangelical Protestants will exhibit greater support for the marriage definition amendments (see Satterthwaite 2005b). In fact, this could be considered the key independent variable.

A similar procedure was used to calculate the percentage of Mainline Protestants. The range among all counties was from zero to 88.40 percent with a mean of 11.38 and a standard deviation of 10.48. Because mainline Protestants tend to be more liberal on social issues (see Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and Den Dulk 2004, 93), mainline

Protestant counties are expected to exhibit lower support for the amendments. In fact, the United Church of Christ voted in July 2005 to affirm equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender. Interestingly, Satterthwaite (2005b) finds that mainline Protestant population is positively related to vote on marriage definition, at least in Oklahoma.

The percentage of Catholics in each county was determined using the Glenmary data. Only the category labeled "Catholic" was included in this classification. The percentage of Catholics ranged from zero to 88.90 percent. The mean was 9.55 percent with a standard deviation of 13.79. Counties with greater populations of Catholics are expected to show more support for marriage definition.

The fourth religious category Mormons is a little more difficult to include in this research. In fact, had the state of Utah not voted on a marriage definition amendment in 2004, Mormons likely would have been excluded from this analysis. Across the thirteen states, the percentage of Mormons ranges from zero to 88 percent with a mean of 2.55 percent. Removing the 29 Utah counties produces a range of zero to 11 percent with a mean of 0.66 percent. In Utah, the range is 29 percent to 88 percent with a mean of 68.33 percent. For this reason, Mormons are combined with evangelical Protestants in several models and analyzed separately in others. The Mormon counties are expected to support marriage definition.

VOTERS IN RURAL AREAS

The independent variable tapping the effect of residence in rural areas is the percentage of county residents who are rural according to the United States Bureau of the Census. For simplicity, this research uses "percent rural"; therefore, the remainder of the county population can be considered urban. It is expected that counties with a greater percentage of rural population will exhibit more support for the marriage definition amendments.

POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION

The third hypothesis holds that counties with differing proportions of party identifiers will exhibit different levels of voting on the marriage definition amendments. The challenge is defining party affiliation. Some states report the number of party registrants by county while other states do not. Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel (2005, 12) indicate that neither Ohio nor Michigan records the party affiliation of registered voters. North Dakota does not register voters at all. In their analysis, Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel use data on the 2002 gubernatorial elections in the two states. This also may be problematic because gubernatorial contests could be affected as much by candidate personalities as by party affiliation.

In the present research, the percentage of each county that could be considered Democratic was calculated as follows. In Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Oregon, the actual party registration numbers were used. The election results from the 2002 Secretary of State races in Arkansas and Georgia, and in Montana in 2000, were used to determine county Democratic percentages in those states. The election results from Attorney General races in 2000, 2002, and 2003, were used to represent the Democratic vote in Utah, Michigan, and Mississippi, respectively. The 2002 Public Service Commissioner results were used in North Dakota and the 2002 State Auditor results were used in Missouri and Ohio.

In order to simplify the research and to be more certain in what I am measuring, I decided to use a different measure of county-level party attachment: 2004 Republican Presidential Vote. This measure also has shortcomings, primarily the fact that the data, election results, were primarily collected at the same time as the data on the dependent variable, Support for Marriage Definition Amendments. The protection against problems using 2004 presidential vote as a measure is the fact that two of the states included in the present research had marriage definition questions on their ballots in an election other than the November general election. Models will be tested by separating these states from the other eleven. It is hypothesized that the 2004 presidential vote will be related to the vote on the marriage definition amendments in a positive direction and that this relationship will hold in Missouri and Louisiana even though these states did not vote on marriage definition in November.

The mean county Republican vote for president in the 2004 election was 61.39 percent with a standard deviation of 11.41 percent. The county that provided the most support to President Bush was Garfield County, Montana, at 90.77 percent. The president received the least support from the voters in Claiborne County, Mississippi, with 17.80 percent. The population of Claiborne County is 83.61 percent African-American. The marriage definition amendment was popular in Claiborne County receiving the support of 76.37 percent of the voters.

CONTROL VARIABLES

Additional independent variables are entered into the analysis as controls. They are the percentage of each county's population with a high school diploma, each county's median age, and the median household income in each county. The percentage of each county's population who are African-American also is included in the analysis. Pastors of African-American churches supported efforts to define marriage as being between one man and one woman.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The present research examines the political context in which voters in thirteen states in 2004 approved state constitutional amendments defining marriage by prohibiting same-sex marriage. In order to allay concerns about multicollinearity and to determine if there are any potential relationships, a correlation matrix was calculated for all of the variables. This matrix is presented as **Table 2**.

Table 2 presents several surprises. The percentage of a county's population affiliated with an evangelical Protestant denomination is strongly correlated with the percentage of the county's voters who supported a marriage definition amendment. Rural counties also showed greater support for the amendments. The marriage amendment vote is significantly correlated with the 2004 Republican presidential vote. Two surprises are the correlations between Catholic population and Mormon population. The Mormon population correlation is suspect because the county percentages are small outside of Utah. The negative correlation

TABLE 2

Correlations

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| (1) % Yes on marriage definition amendment | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| (2) % Evangelical Protestant | .573 (p=.000) | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| (3) % Catholic | -.315 (p=.000) | -.456 (p=.000) | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| (4) % Mainline Protestant | -.032 (p=.300) | -.128 (p=.000) | .185 (p=.000) | 1 | | | | | | | |
| (5) % Mormon | -.106 (p=.001) | -.272 (p=.000) | -.079 (p=.011) | -.176 (p=.000) | 1 | | | | | | |
| (6) % Rural | .436 (p=.000) | .173 (p=.000) | -.169 (p=.000) | .138 (p=.000) | -.060 (p=.055) | 1 | | | | | |

TABLE 2 (cont'd)

| Correlations | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) |
| (7) % 2004 GOP Presidential Vote | .386 (p=.000) | .147 (p=.000) | -.096 (p=.002) | .047 (p=.132) | .283 (p=.000) | .226 (p=.000) | 1 | | | | |
| (8) % HS Graduate | .142 (p=.000) | .130 (p=.000) | -.016 (p=.599) | .032 (p=.296) | -.185 (p=.000) | .351 (p=.000) | .114 (p=.000) | 1 | | | |
| (9) Median Age | .017 (p=.586) | .049 (p=.114) | .101 (p=.001) | .380 (p=.000) | -.282 (p=.000) | .437 (p=.000) | .106 (p=.001) | .325 (p=.000) | 1 | | |
| (10) Median Income | -.506 (p=.000) | -.346 (p=.000) | .186 (p=.000) | .001 (p=.977) | .142 (p=.000) | -.446 (p=.000) | .146 (p=.000) | -.116 (p=.000) | -.194 (p=.000) | 1 | |
| (11) % African- American | .259 (p=.000) | .156 (p=.000) | -.163 (p=.000) | -.177 (p=.000) | -.131 (p=.000) | -.139 (p=.000) | -.455 (p=.000) | -.237 (p=.000) | -.357 (p=.000) | -.250 (p=.000) | 1 |

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

on the Catholic population is more intriguing, suggesting that counties with larger Catholic populations show less support for the marriage definition amendments. Of course, since this research uses aggregate data, it is difficult to argue that Catholics voted against the amendments.

Multiple regression analyses were run to produce several models. The first two are presented in **Table 3**. These models include all 1,037 counties. The variables included in the first model were percent of evangelical Protestants in the county, the percent of mainline Protestants, percent Catholic, percent rural population, the percent of voters who supported the Republican presidential candidate in 2004, the percent of county residents who graduated from high school, the median age, the median income, and the percent African-American population. The first model explains a respectable amount of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2=.727$) and the model is significant.

The second model presented in **Table 3** combines the evangelical Protestant population with the Mormon population. The level of predication, or explanation, is reduced slightly to .674. Both models indicate that there is a strong relationship between the 2004 Republican presidential vote and the vote on the marriage definition amendments. The other important variable is the size of the African-American population. Counties with larger African-American populations voted at higher rates for the marriage definition amendments. Counties with large rural populations supported the marriage amendments. The control variables (education, income, and age) are as expected with the exception of age. The data show that counties with higher median ages had less support for the marriage definition amendments.

While most of the states examined this research considered marriage definition amendments on general election day in November 2004, two states voted on the amendments earlier in the year. This fact is presented in the models in **Table 4**. The first model includes the eleven general election states. The second model only considers counties in Missouri and Louisiana.

There are few dramatic changes from the models in **Table 3**. The best predictor variable remains 2004 Republican presidential vote; in fact, its predictive abilities become even stronger in Missouri and Louisiana. The African-American population also is a strong predictor with less strength in the Missouri and Louisiana model.

TABLE 3

**OLS Regression of County Vote on Marriage Definition Amendments
(with the County Percent of Evangelicals and LDS
Separated and Combined)**

| | Evangelical Protestants and LDS Separate | | Evangelical Protestants and LDS Combined | |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------|--|-------|
| | Beta | p | Beta | p |
| Evangelical Protestant | .275 | .0001 | N/A | N/A |
| Evangelical Protestant plus LDS | N/A | N/A | .184 | .0001 |
| Catholic | .017 | .372 | -.012 | .581 |
| Mainline Protestant | .044 | .016 | .060 | .003 |
| LDS | -.101 | .0001 | N/A | N/A |
| Rural | .209 | .0001 | .180 | .0001 |
| 2004 GOP Presidential Vote | .554 | .0001 | .526 | .0001 |
| High School Graduate | .048 | .010 | .097 | .0001 |
| Median Income | -.313 | .0001 | -.346 | .0001 |
| Median Age | -.134 | .0001 | -.059 | .011 |
| African-American | .380 | .0001 | .435 | .0001 |
| | R ² =.727 Adj. R ² =.724 p=.0001 | | R ² =.674 Adj. R ² =.672 p=.0001 | |

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

TABLE 4

**OLS Regression of County Vote on Marriage Definition Amendments
(with the Eleven General Election States and with Missouri
and Louisiana Analyzed Separately)**

| | Eleven General Election States | | Missouri and Louisiana | |
|---------------------------------|---|-------|---|-------|
| | Beta | p | Beta | p |
| Evangelical Protestant plus LDS | .182 | .0001 | .167 | .014 |
| Catholic | -.067 | .005 | .331 | .741 |
| Mainline Protestant | .101 | .0001 | -.213 | .0001 |
| Rural | .183 | .0001 | .171 | .007 |
| 2004 GOP Presidential Vote | .507 | .0001 | .601 | .0001 |
| High School Graduate | .066 | .002 | .201 | .001 |
| Median Income | -.340 | .0001 | -.256 | .0001 |
| Median Age | -.054 | .030 | -.055 | .329 |
| African-American | .430 | .0001 | .280 | .0001 |
| | R ² =.690 Adj. R ² =.686 p=.0001 N=857 | | R ² =.732 Adj. R ² =.717 p=.0001 N=178 | |

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

In order to compare the voting patterns in Oklahoma with the other states, a regression analysis was conducted on just the 77 Oklahoma counties. The results are presented in **Table 5**. The strongest predictor variable is the vote for President Bush in 2004, indicating that the pattern

found in all of the counties is duplicated in Oklahoma. The number of evangelical Protestants in a county also is an important variable. The two variables that contribute negatively to the vote are the variables measuring the number of mainline Protestants and the median income of a county. Following the model, counties with more mainline Protestants had weaker support for the marriage definition amendment. Of course, an examination of data collected at the aggregate level cannot take into account such variables as church attendance. The Glenmary data only record church membership, not how often those members attend church. It is possible that Mainline Protestants who rarely attend were more likely to vote against the amendment. Counties with higher median incomes also displayed weaker support for the amendment. The African-American population of each county does not appear to be as important among the Oklahoma counties as it does in other states.

TABLE 5

**OLS Regression of County Vote on the
Marriage Definition Amendment in Oklahoma**

| | Beta | Oklahoma p |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Evangelical Protestant plus LDS | .264 | .001 |
| Catholic | .151 | .064 |
| Mainline Protestant | -.227 | .011 |
| Rural | .153 | .104 |
| 2004 GOP Presidential Vote | .662 | .0001 |
| High School Graduate | .205 | .011 |
| Median Income | -.234 | .011 |
| Median Age | .146 | .105 |
| African-American | -.031 | .648 |
| | R ² =.766 | |
| | Adj. R ² =.735 | |
| | P=.0001 | |
| | N=77 | |

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present research seeks to understand the political context in which voters approved marriage definition amendments in thirteen states in 2004. Three hypotheses were tested. The first suggests that counties with large evangelical Protestant populations would strongly support marriage definition amendments. The second hypothesis posits that rural populations would be more supportive of such amendments. Finally, the third hypothesis indicates that counties that voted strongly in support of the Republican presidential candidate in 2004 also would exhibit higher levels of support for marriage definition.

The findings presented here suggest that there is a strong association between 2004 presidential vote and the vote on the constitutional amendments. This association is maintained even in those states that did not consider the amendments at the same time as the presidential general election. Evangelical Protestant population also contributed to the vote in each county as did the amount of rural population.

An intriguing finding, and one that suggests the need for future research at the level of individual voter, is the level of support for the marriage definition amendments in counties with large African-American populations. The data collected in this research do not allow for interpretation at the level of individual voter, but it would be informative to examine the intersection of race, religion, and vote on marriage definition amendments.

The findings presented in this paper come with caveats. The data collected for this study are aggregate in nature. This situation introduces concerns about the ecological fallacy. The data presented in the present research should not be used to attribute support for marriage definition amendments at the level of the individual voters.

A second caveat involves the nature of state politics in each of the thirteen states examined. It is possible that there were factors other than the ones included in the regression analyses acting on one or more states and not involved in the others. For example, all Democratic, Republican, and Libertarian candidates for attorney general in Utah issued a joint statement opposing that state's marriage definition amendment. They were not united in their opposition to the idea of marriage definition, but they each had significant concerns about the

second part of the amendment: “No other domestic union, however denominated, may be recognized as a marriage or given the same or substantially equivalent effect.” The candidates were concerned about the clause’s effect on heterosexual common law marriages. It is important to recognize that the voters in the thirteen states that approved marriage definition constitutional amendments in 2004 did not consider identical pieces of legislation. Voters in Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Utah also constitutionally proscribed civil unions; the voters in the remaining states did not ban civil unions.

Oklahoma counties are found to follow the same patterns as the counties in other states. There is a close connection between the vote for President Bush’s reelection and the vote on the marriage definition amendment. There does appear to be some support for the idea that mainline Protestant voters oppose the amendment, but the overwhelming strength of the amendment’s support makes it difficult to specify the importance of this finding.

Despite the caveats, this research presents several models of county-level voting outcomes that can be tested in other states, especially in states that vote on marriage definition constitutional amendments in non-presidential election years. Does the relationship between the 2004 Republican presidential vote and marriage definition hold in those elections? Analyses of the exit poll data collected during the 2004 elections also may provide some interesting findings of who supports and who opposes constitutionally-defining marriage. This line of research would be strengthened if there are more counties in which more voters choose to reject the amendment than support it. Bringing statistical analysis to bear on elections with such lopsided outcomes is difficult, but the present research suggests that more questions can be asked and answered with different data.

REFERENCES

- Barclay, Scott, and Shauna Fisher. 2003. "The States and Differing Impetus for Divergent Paths on Same-Sex Marriage, 1990-2001." *Policy Studies Journal* 31(3):331-352.
- Cadge, Wendy, Laura R. Olson, and James Harrison. 2005. "Religion and Public Opinion About Same-Sex Marriage: A Systematic Examination." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society, Washington, DC.
- Campbell, David E., and J. Quin Monson. 2005. "The Case of Bush's Re-election: Did Gay Marriage Do It?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.
- Cochran, John K., and Leonard Beeghly. 1991. "The Influence of Religion on Attitudes Toward Nonmarital Sexuality: A Preliminary Assessment of Reference Group Theory." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30(1):45-62.
- Cotten-Huston, Annie, and Bradley M. Waite. 2000. "Anti-Homosexual Attitudes in College Students: Predictors and Classroom Interventions." *Journal of Homosexuality* 38(3):117-133.
- Day, Christine. 1992. "Abortion and Religious Coalitions: The Case of Louisiana." In *The Catholic Church and the Politics of Abortion: A View from the States*, Timothy A. Byrnes and Mary C. Segers, eds. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- Donovan, Todd, Caroline Tolbert, Daniel A. Smith, and Janine Parry. 2005. "Did Gay Marriage Elect George W. Bush." Paper presented at the 5th Annual State Politics and Policy Conference, East Lansing, MI.
- Dupuis, Martin. 2002. *Same-Sex Marriage, Legal Mobilization, & the Politics of Rights*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Finlay, Barbara, and Carol S. Walther. 2003. "The Relation of Religious Affiliation, Service Attendance, and Other Factors to Homophobic Attitudes among University Students." *Review of Religious Research* 44(4):370-393.
- Fowler, Robert Booth, Allen D. Hertzke, Laura R. Olson, and Kevin R. Den Dulk. 2004. *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*, 3rd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Gibson, M. Troy. 2004. "Culture Wars in State Education Policy: A Look at the Relative Treatment of Evolutionary Theory in State Science Standards." *Social Science Quarterly* 85(5):1129-1149.
- Giles, Michael. 1977. "Percent Black and Racial Hostility: An Old Assumption Reexamined." *Social Science Quarterly* 58(3):412-417.
- Glenn, Norval D., and Charles N. Weaver. 1979. "Attitudes toward Premarital, Extramarital, and Homosexual Relations in the U.S. in the 1970s." *Journal of Sex Research* 15(2):108-118.
- Guth, James L. 1983. "The New Christian Right." In *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation*. Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, eds. New York: Aldine.
- Haider-Markel, Donald P., and Kenneth J. Meier. 1996. "The Politics of Gay and Lesbian Rights: Expanding the Scope of the Conflict." *Journal of Politics* 58(2):332-349.
- Hero, Rodney. 1998. *Faces of Inequality: Social Diversity in American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hillygus, D. Sunshine, and Todd G. Shields. 2005. "Moral Issues and Voter Decision Making in the 2004 Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 38(2):201-208.

- Jelen, Ted G. 1998. "Research in Religion and Mass Political Behavior in the United States: Looking Both Ways after Two Decades of Scholarship." *American Politics Quarterly* 26(1):110-134.
- Jones, Dale E. 2002 *Religious Congregations & Membership in the United States, 2000*. Nashville, TN: Glenmary Research Center.
- Key, V.O. 1950. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- LeDuc, Lawrence, and Jon H. Pammett. 1995. "Referendum Voting: Attitudes and Behaviour in the 1992 Constitutional Referendum." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 28(1):3-33.
- Lewis, Gregory B. 2005. "Same-Sex Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 38(2):195-199.
- Mead, Frank S., and Samuel S. Hill. 1995. *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 10th ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Melton, J. Gordon. 1999. *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 6th ed. Detroit: Gale Research.
- Morgan, David R., and Kenneth J. Meier. 1980. "Politics and Morality: The Effect of Religion on Referenda Voting." *Social Science Quarterly* 61(1):144-148.
- O'Hara, Thomas J. 1992. "The Abortion Control Act of 1989: The Pennsylvania Catholics." In *The Catholic Church and the Politics of Abortion: A View from the States*, Timothy A. Byrnes and Mary C. Segers, eds. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Oldfield, Duane. 1996. *The Right and the Righteous: The Christian Right Confronts the Republican Party*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Oldmixon, Elizabeth A. 2002. "Culture Wars in the Congressional Theater: How the U.S. House of Representatives Legislates Morality, 1993-1998." *Social Science Quarterly* 83(3):453-477.

- Oliver, Eric, and Tali Mendelberg. 2000. "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of White Racial Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3):574-589.
- Overby, L. Marvin, and Jay Barth. 2002. "Contact, Community Context, and Public Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbians." *Polity* 34(4):433-456.
- Rausch, John David. 1994. "Anti-Representative Direct Democracy: The Politics of Legislative Constraint." *Comparative State Politics* 15(2): 1-16.
- Roof, Wade Clark, and William McKinney. 1987. *Mainline American Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Satterthwaite, Shad. 2006. "Oklahoma: A Battle of Good versus Evil." In *The Values Campaign? The Christian Right and the 2004 Elections*, John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox, eds. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Satterthwaite, Shad. 2005a. "Faster Horses, Older Whiskey, and More Money: An Analysis of Religious Influence on Referenda Voting." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44(1):105-112.
- Satterthwaite, Shad. 2005b. "Cashing In On Sin? You Bet: Assessing the Impact of Religion on State Ballot Questions." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwestern Political Science Association, New Orleans.
- Smith, Daniel A., Matt DeSantis, and Jason Kassel. 2005. "Was Rove Right? Evangelicals and the Impact of Gay Marriage in the 2004 Election." Paper presented at the 5th Annual State Politics and Policy Conference, East Lansing, MI.
- Steensland, Brian, et al. 2000. "The Measure of American Religion: Toward Improving the State of the Art." *Social Forces* 79(1):291-318.
- Tolbert, Caroline J., and Rodney Hero. 2001. "Facing Diversity: Racial/Ethnic Context and Social Policy Change." *Political Research Quarterly* 54(3):571-604.

- Wald, Kenneth D., James W. Button, and Barbara A. Rienzo. 1996. "The Politics of Gay Rights in American Communities: Explaining Antidiscrimination Ordinances and Policies." *American Journal of Political Science* 40(4):1152-1178.
- Wald, Kenneth D., Adam L. Silverman, and Kevin S. Fridy. 2005. "Making Sense of Religion in Political Life." *Annual Review of Political Science* 8:121-143.
- Wilcox, Clyde, and Ted Jelen. 1990. "Evangelicals and Political Tolerance." *American Politics Quarterly* 18(1):25-46.

