

Victim or Victor of the 'Culture War?' How Cultural Issues Affect Support for George W. Bush in Rural America

Peter L. Francia and Jody Baumgartner

Several studies have challenged the conclusions of Fiorina et al., that there is no "culture war" that divides America. A recent book by Thomas Frank, however, argues that cultural divisions not only exist, but are critical to understanding Republican success. This study contributes to this literature by examining how individual positions on cultural issues affect support for George W. Bush in rural America. Using both county-level data and individual-level data, our results demonstrate that there are significant differences between rural and urban residents, and that George W. Bush's success in rural communities during the 2004 election was at least partly a function of his socially conservative position on the issue of gay marriage.

The publication of *Culture War?*, by Morris P. Fiorina and his co-authors Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope (2005), has sparked a lively academic debate. Several studies, including an entire recent issue of *The Forum*, have re-examined whether polarization is indeed a myth (Abramowitz and Saunders 2005; Klinker and Hapanowicz 2005; Rosenthal 2005; Demerath 2005; see also Layman 2001; White 2003; Shepard 2004; Sperling 2004; Brewer and Stonecash 2006). In particular, Abramowitz and Saunders (2005) provide a powerful challenge to the claims of Fiorina et al. that a "culture war" does not exist. They find there are significant divisions between Democrats and Republicans, red state and blue state voters, and religious and secular voters.

If there is indeed a culture war, as Abramowitz and Saunders (2005) suggest, it raises an important and unanswered question in the literature: Who benefits from the culture war? During the 2004 election, there was wide speculation that gay marriage ballot propositions in battleground states, such as Ohio, were important in helping George W. Bush win re-election. Yet, little systematic evidence exists to confirm whether cultural issues did, in fact, help Bush win additional public support. In addition, if Bush did win additional support for his conservative positions on cultural issues, such as gay marriage, in what parts of the country did he benefit most?

So-called "red" states might seem to be the logical answer to this question, but as Fiorina et al. demonstrate, divisions between residents in red

We thank Amanda Hodges for her assistance in collecting some of the data used in this study.

PETER L. FRANCIA is assistant professor of political science at East Carolina University.

JODY BAUMGARTNER is assistant professor of political science at East Carolina University.

The American Review of Politics, Vol. 26, Winter, 2005-06: 349-367
©2005 The American Review of Politics

states and blue states may be exaggerated. While the red state-blue state divide may be misleading, this does not preclude the possibility that other significant geographic divisions may exist within the electorate. In particular, some studies have noted that there are political divisions between rural and urban residents (e.g., Zikmund 1968; Gainsborough 2001). Moreover, several political observers, notably Thomas Frank (2004), have speculated that cultural differences not only exist between rural and urban Americans, but that these cultural divisions are critical to understanding how and why Republicans have won the so-called “heartland.” Frank’s work, however, lacks empirical evidence and it does not specifically examine how cultural issues in rural America may have potentially helped George W. Bush in 2004.

This study is an attempt to understand the extent to which the “culture war” affected George W. Bush’s popularity and support in rural America. Using both aggregate level data from each county and individual level data from the American National Election Study, we present two important findings. First, we show that there are significant and substantive political divisions between rural and urban residents. Thus, consistent with other recent literature and contrary to Fiorina et al. (2005), we find at least some evidence of a polarized America. Second, and as importantly, we find that individual attitudes on gay marriage had a greater effect on support for Bush in rural communities than they did in urban communities during the 2004 election. Curiously, other issues such as tax cuts and the war in Iraq did not offer Bush any greater advantage in rural America, suggesting that cultural issues are important to understanding why Bush performed better among rural residents than he did among urban residents in 2004.

The Politics of the “Culture War”

Following the closely contested presidential contest of 2000 and 2004, the media have paid considerable attention to the polarization of the American electorate. Much of the early analysis following the 2000 election relied on a map of “red” and “blue” states, using it as a visual reference to show which states supported Republican George W. Bush (red) and those that supported Democrat Al Gore (blue). Since that election, the red and blue state map has grown into something more, as journalists began writing about a variety of differences that separated residents in red and blue states. For example, a few commentators observed that red states are generally net winners and blue states net losers in terms of dollars received from, as opposed to taxes sent to, Washington (Miller 2004; Pink 2004). Some political observers noted that blue states are, on average, “smarter” than red states (Farrell 2004), while others reported that red states are generally more

charitable than blue states (“Generosity Index 2004” 2004). Many have also discussed the so-called cultural divide in red and blue states (e.g., Lawrence 2002; Dionne 2003; McElvaine 2004).

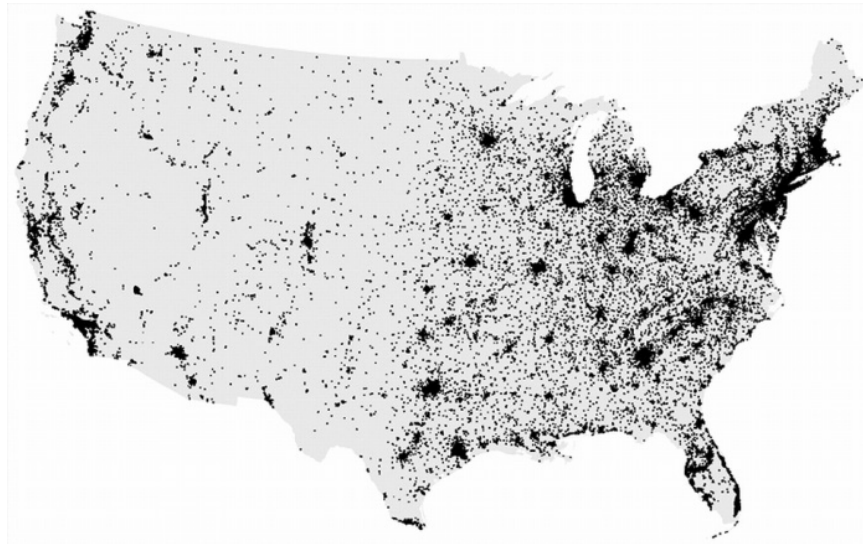
As mentioned earlier, Fiorina and colleagues have a much different perspective. They argue that the contrast between red states and blue states is a myth that derives in part from the fact that the political environment is being shaped by an increasingly partisan and ideological political elite.¹ The conflict that emerges from this partisan and ideological environment then becomes the focus of media gatekeepers, who have a commercial interest in highlighting conflict (see also Graber, 2005, Chapter 4).

We agree with Fiorina et al. that the “red-blue” language oversimplifies political differences within the electorate. However, other geographically-based divisions, such as those between rural and urban communities, may exist and coincide with significant political differences. These divisions, in turn, can lead to geographical splits along partisan lines. Indeed, election returns indicate that since the 1980 election, rural communities have been significantly more supportive of Republican presidential candidates, with Democratic candidates only somewhat competitive in 1992 and 1996 (Greenberg, Walker, and Greener 2005).² Accounts of the 2004 election further indicate that George W. Bush drew his strength from rural areas, whereas John Kerry drew his strength from urban areas (Farhi and Grimaldi 2004; Greenberg, Walker, and Greener 2005).

The maps in Figures 1 and 2, which are adaptations of maps that have been available in the Internet since the 2004 election, demonstrate Bush’s strength in rural areas throughout the nation. To standardize the figures for comparability, the black areas in Figure 1 represent urban areas. In Figure 2, the black areas represent the counties that Kerry won in 2004. While the black areas of each map do not perfectly coincide, there is a fair amount of congruence. County-level election maps from 2000 are similar, with Democratic presidential nominee Al Gore also winning decisively in most urban areas.

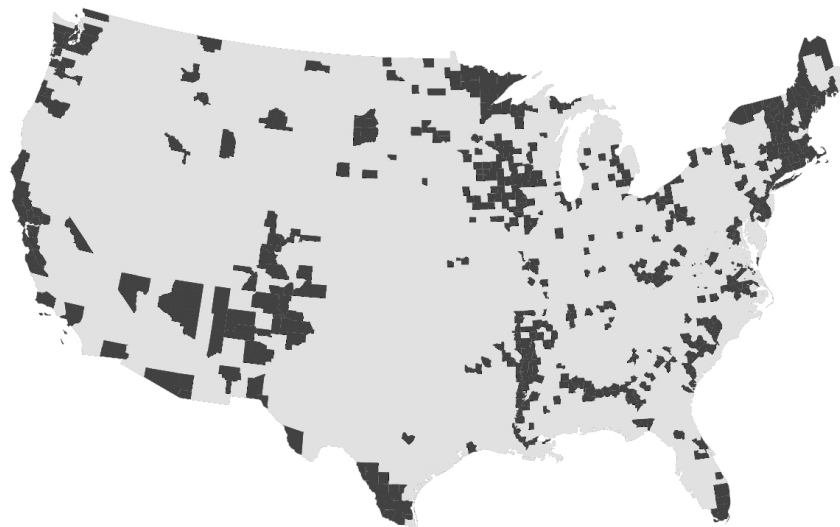
Together, these maps make clear that there is a partisan split between rural and urban communities in the most recent presidential elections. However, the maps fail to tell us the reasons for these divisions, which then begs the question: Why is it that rural communities were more supportive of Bush and urban communities more supportive of Gore and Kerry? One possible answer comes from the comparative politics literature, which suggests that rural and urban areas often have different political cultures and value orientations, which can give rise to their residents forming different political attitudes (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky 1990; McFaul 1997; Curtice and Park 1999; Wegren 2004).³

Figure 1. United States Population Density



Note: Black areas are urban.

Figure 2. Red and Blue Counties



Note: Black areas are pro-Kerry. Adapted from Vanderbei, Robert J. (no date). "Election 2004 Results." <http://www.princeton.edu/~rvdb/JAVA/election2004/>

Similarly, Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas?* also stresses value orientations. Frank argues that Republicans have "won" rural America by effectively exploiting cultural issues. He suggests that Republican success has occurred in spite of the fact that rural residents come disproportionately from lower-income backgrounds, and therefore, according to rational economic self-interest, should support the "economic populism" of Democratic candidates (but see Stonecash 2005 and Gelman et al. 2005 for a different perspective on this subject).

Journalists and political pundits made a similar argument following the 2004 election by noting that several polls found "moral issues" to be one of the most important issues cited by voters (e.g., Curl and Duin 2004). These "moral issue" voters were often most concerned with the issue of same-sex or gay marriage, which they strongly opposed. Many scholars have since found fault with this "moral issues voters" thesis, suggesting that abortion and gay marriage had little effect on presidential vote choice (Hillygus and Shields 2005). Lim (2005) disagrees, finding that values did matter, especially to voters who are religiously active. Certainly the importance of "moral issues" was not lost on Republican strategists, who worked to place gay marriage propositions on the ballots in 13 states (many of them battleground states such as Ohio) in the 2004 election (Eckstrom 2004).

Thus, there remains significant disagreement over whether the electorate is polarized and the significance of so-called "moral" issues in recent elections. This study's aim is to shed additional light on this debate. We begin by examining whether there are significant urban-rural divisions and then test Frank's "culture thesis" to determine if individual positions on cultural issues affected support in rural areas for George W. Bush in 2004.

Data

Our study utilizes two data sets. The first one consists of aggregate level data that contains information from almost all of the 3,114 U.S. counties.⁴ The aggregate level data is used to demonstrate that, *even when controlling for standard demographic factors*, rural counties are significantly more likely than urban counties to provide strong support for George W. Bush. We chose county-level data, as opposed to state or congressional district-level, because it provides more cases and greater variation among the cases. This makes it easier to draw meaningful comparisons between rural and urban areas. The county-level data set includes information about presidential election returns and demographic information about each county. The data for each county's presidential election returns come from results published by various state boards of elections or offices of the secretary of state. For demographic information of each county, we use data from the U.S. Census Bureau (for more information, see www.census.gov).

Our second data set consists of individual level data. We use individual level data to demonstrate that (1) residents in rural counties are significantly more conservative than urban residents on cultural issues, and (2) that these cultural divisions help to explain why Bush was able win the support of rural residents in 2004. Our individual level data set comes from the American National Election Study (for more information, see www.umich.edu/~nes).

Aggregate Level Analysis

Are there statistically significant differences in the presidential voting patterns of rural and urban counties, even when controlling for standard demographic factors? We examine that question using OLS regression analysis. The dependent variable is the percentage of the county-level vote that George W. Bush received in the 2004 election.⁵ Bush's percentage is based on the two-party vote (i.e., Bush's vote total is the numerator, while the sum of Bush's vote total and John Kerry's vote total serves as the denominator).

The primary explanatory variable is the percentage of the county population living in what the U.S. Census defines as a "rural" area (for more information about what constitutes a "rural" area, see www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/ua_2k.html). We control for standard demographic variables that are often associated with election results (e.g., National Election Poll 2004). These include the racial composition of the county (defined as the percentage of the county's residents who classify themselves as white), the median household income of the county, the educational levels in the county (defined as the percentage of county residents with a post-graduate degree), and the percentage of seniors in the county (defined as those over age 60).

The results demonstrate that as the percentage of the county's rural population increases so does the percentage of the vote for George W. Bush (Table 1). If we compare a completely rural county to a completely urban county, we find that Bush's share of the vote increases by almost 10 percentage points in the rural county, even when controlling for demographic variables. Given how competitive the 2004 presidential was between Bush and Kerry (Bush's popular vote margin over Kerry was just 2.5 percent), a 10 point margin represents a meaningful difference.

While these aggregate-level results demonstrate the significance of rural-urban divisions in 2004, one limitation of the results is that they do not demonstrate any broader trends over time—a development that Frank (2004) suggests has occurred. A study by Klinkner and Hapanowicz (2005), for example, finds that polarization at the county level did not increase from 2000 to 2004. However, a different study reports that polarization in presidential elections has *increased* dramatically between rural and urban areas

Table 1. Effect of Rural Population and Other Factors on Percentage of County-Level Vote Received by George W. Bush in the 2004 Election

Variables	B	Std Error
Rural population (%)	.096***	.010
White residents (%)	.292***	.011
Median household income (per \$1,000)	.176***	.025
Post-graduate residents (%)	-1.420***	.060
Residents over 60 years old (%)	-.695*	.051
Constant	44.928***	1.304

Note: Estimates are based on OLS regression analysis. ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

Source: *U.S. Census* (demographic data) and various state offices of the Secretary of State or Board of Elections (presidential vote totals).

Table 2. Percentage of Republican Presidential Vote, 1992-2004

	Rural Residents	Urban Residents	Difference
1992	37%	26%	11%
1996	39	32	7
2000	53	29	24
2004	57	35	22

Source: American National Election Study, Cumulative Data File (1992-2000) and the American National Election Study (2004).

since the 1990s (Greenberg, Walker, and Greener 2005, 5). Indeed, our own analysis confirms that polarization between rural and urban residents has increased substantially since the 1990s (Table 2).

Still, these results do not shed any light on the cause of the rural-urban split. Why, for example, did Bush perform better than Kerry in rural areas, especially when one considers Frank's argument that Bush's economic policy positions seem contrary to the interests of poorer rural residents? To begin to answer that question, we turn to the individual level data.

Lifestyles in Rural and Urban America

To understand why rural and urban residents differ politically, we begin by examining the lifestyle characteristics of rural and urban residents. One

Table 3. Selected Lifestyle Characteristics of Rural and Urban Residents

	Rural	Urban
Religion		
Church attendance (every week)	39%	34%
Prayer several times a day	37	30
Religion provides a great deal of guidance in everyday living	48	32
Bible is the actual word of God	49	35
Home Life		
Never married	8%	25%
Own a gun	69	31
Own a home	85	67

Note: All differences between rural and urban respondents are statistically significant at $p < .05$ with the exception of church attendance ($p < .278$).
Source: American National Election Study (2004).

important influence in most communities is religion and the church (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). When examining the role and importance of religion, we find significant differences between rural and urban residents. Rural residents are more likely than urban residents to attend church services every week and pray more regularly, although the differences separating rural and urban residents are only 5 and 7 percentage points respectively (Table 3). The more substantive differences involve the importance of religion in everyday living and biblical interpretation. Roughly 48 percent of rural residents report that religion provides a great deal of guidance in everyday living compared to only 32 percent of urban residents. Rural residents are also more likely to hold a literal interpretation of the Bible than urban residents (14 points).

These differences are important to recognize because Republican candidates have made a concerted effort to portray their party as more amiable toward religion in public life (e.g., Green and Guth 1991). In addition, Republican candidates have openly courted the vote of religious fundamentalists who hold a literal interpretation of the Bible (e.g., Wilcox 2000). The role of religion in the lives of rural voters may therefore be a factor in explaining why Republican presidential candidates have been more successful with these voters.

Rural residents are also less likely to have never married than urban residents (see also Rauch 2001). About 25 percent of urban residents report that they have never married compared to just 8 percent of rural residents. Republican politicians frequently campaign on so-called “family values,” which they often thematically connect to the sanctity of marriage. Former Vice-President Dan Quayle’s infamous scolding of the television character Murphy Brown for her out-of-wedlock pregnancy, and congressional Republicans’ attempts to end the so-called “marriage penalty” in the tax code are just two examples of how the G.O.P. has attempted to win the support of married individuals. The higher proportion of married couples in rural communities would thus seem to be yet another factor that favors Republicans in those areas.

Rural residents are also significantly more likely to report owning a gun (38 points) and owning a home (18 points). Most Republican candidates have adopted anti-gun control policy positions, making them more attractive to gun-owners who dominate rural communities. Republicans also campaign frequently on the promise of lower taxes. The tax issue is often particularly salient to home owners who pay property taxes (which may suggest a partial explanation for the “paradox” Frank sees in rural America voting “against” their economic self-interest). Indeed, economic self-interest has a direct effect on attitudes toward tax policy (e.g., Beck, Rainey, and Traut 1990). The much greater proportion of home owners in rural areas once again makes rural voters an ideal target for the “tax relief” message of the Republican Party.

Rural and Urban Residents’ Political Opinions and Attitudes

The lifestyle characteristics of rural America certainly would appear to make rural residents more likely to vote for Republicans. Table 4 provides a simple comparison of rural and urban residents’ attitudes on various political issues. The results indicate that rural residents are significantly more likely than urban residents to oppose government funding of abortion, and by a rather large margin of 16 percentage points. Rural residents were also more likely than urban residents to report that gay marriage should not be allowed. These results suggest that conservative positions on cultural issues have a more receptive audience among rural residents than among urban residents.

In addition, a recent study confirmed that cultural issues are extremely important to rural voters. The study reported that 71 percent of rural voters identified “cultural” disagreements with John Kerry on issues such as gay marriage and abortion as one of their main reasons for opposing him. The authors of the study conclude, “Rural voters also place an appreciably higher priority on moral values than the rest of the country” (Greenberg, Walker,

Table 4. Selected Lifestyle Characteristics of Rural and Urban Residents

	Rural	Urban
<i>Cultural Issues</i>		
Strongly oppose government funds for abortion	61%	45%
Gay marriage—should not be allowed	74	58
<i>Domestic and Foreign Policy Issues</i>		
Strongly favor Bush tax cuts	54%	39%
Government health insurance—extremely important issue	38	42
Strongly favor social security privatization	45	45
Strongly favor school vouchers	18	17
Strongly approve of the war in Iraq	38	24

Note: Differences between rural and urban respondents are not statistically significant for government health insurance, social security privatization, and school vouchers. All remaining differences between rural and urban respondents on cultural issues are statistically significant at $p < .05$.
Source: American National Election Study (2004).

and Greener 2005, 10). This conclusion suggests that the urban-rural split on cultural issues goes beyond simple inter-block disagreement (Demerath 2005).

Cultural issues, however, are not the only subjects that divide rural and urban residents. There are significant divisions on tax cuts as well, with rural residents more likely to support the Bush tax cuts than urban residents. There were *not* significant differences on the issues of government health insurance, social security privatization, and school vouchers, but there were significant differences concerning the war in Iraq. Nearly two of every five rural residents strongly approved of the war in Iraq compared to just one of four urban residents. Given that the Iraq war was one of the most salient issues in the 2004 election, Bush's advantage on this issue in rural communities appears to be yet another possible reason to understanding his success there.

The Importance of Cultural Issues to Republican Success in Rural America

While Bush held an advantage in rural communities on various political issues (notably abortion, gay marriage, tax cuts, and the Iraq war), it is not

clear which of these issues were ultimately significant in explaining his greater success among rural America in the 2004 election. Of course, as noted earlier, political observers such as Frank (2004), contend that cultural issues are ultimately paramount to understanding Republican success. To test Frank's culture thesis, we examine whether cultural issues were more important to rural residents than they were to urban residents in predicting positive feelings toward George W. Bush and the probability of voting for George W. Bush in the 2004 election.

We begin by analyzing the factors that predict positive feelings toward Bush, because understanding presidential popularity is often a precursor to winning a citizen's vote (e.g., Holbrook 2004; Lewis-Beck and Tien 2004; Wlezien and Erikson 2004). The dependent variable in this equation is the ANES feeling thermometer question on President Bush. The ratings are based on a 0 to 100 scale (with 100 representing a most favorable feeling toward Bush and a 0 representing a most negative feeling toward Bush). In testing the probability of voting for Bush, the dependent variable is the ANES question that asks respondents to identify the candidate they voted for in the 2004 presidential election. The variable is coded so that a vote for Bush equals 1 and a vote for another candidate (e.g., Kerry, Nader, or other) is coded 0.

The primary explanatory variables in both equations are the respondents issue positions on the four issues that were statistically significant in Table 4: government funding of abortion, gay marriage, tax cuts, and the Iraq war. Respondents expressed strong or weak preferences on each question. We coded responses so that the highest values reflected a strongly conservative position on the issues, while a low score reflected a strongly liberal position on the issue (see the Appendix for more coding information of the variables). To test whether any of the issues were especially important to rural voters, we created four interaction terms. We interacted a dummy variable for whether the respondent resided in a rural community (coded 1) or an urban area (coded 0) with each of the four issue questions. If the "culture thesis" is accurate, we would expect rural residents who have the most strongly conservative positions on cultural issues (abortion and gay marriage) to have significantly more positive feelings toward George W. Bush than others, and to be significantly more likely to vote for George W. Bush than others. The model controls for the standard set of socio-economic variables, including party identification, income, education, marital status, age, race, and gender. We rely on OLS regression for our analysis of feelings toward George W. Bush. In the vote-choice model, we rely on probit regression analysis because of the binary nature of the dependent variable (see Eliason 1993 for more information).

Table 5. Factors Influencing Positive Evaluations for George W. Bush

Variable Description	Variables	B	Std Error
Issues	Oppose govt. funding abortion	.633	.452
	Oppose gay marriage	1.856*	.791
	Support tax cuts	4.150***	.589
	Support Iraq War	7.918***	.518
Residency	Rural	-2.564	5.967
Interaction Effects	Rural * Oppose govt. funding abortion	-1.473	1.090
	Rural * Oppose gay marriage	4.483*	2.020
	Rural * Support tax cuts	-.149	1.232
	Rural * Support Iraq War	-.755	.923
Controls	Party identification (Republican)	4.974***	.402
	Income	.082	.090
	Education	-.567*	.256
	Married	1.479	1.316
	Age	.152***	.037
	Race (white)	4.182**	1.453
	Gender (female)	-2.055	1.209
	Constant	1.065	4.343
Adjusted R ² = .64			
N = 1,114			

Note: The dependent variable is based on public feeling thermometer evaluations of Bush. Estimates are based on OLS regression analysis. ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.
Source: American National Election Study (2004).

The results in Table 5 indicate that all individuals, regardless of where they resided, had a more positive feeling toward Bush if they opposed gay marriage, supported tax cuts, or supported the war in Iraq. The issue of government funding of abortion, however, was not a significant issue for either rural or urban residents. Gay marriage appears to have overshadowed abortion as the dominant cultural issue in 2004.

The effect for residency alone was statistically insignificant. However, the result for the interaction term of rural residents and opposition to gay marriage (Rural * oppose gay marriage), demonstrates support for the culture thesis. Residency in a rural area and opposition to gay marriage had a synergistic effect in increasing positive feelings toward Bush. This result demonstrates that the attitudes on gay marriage had a greater effect in rural communities than they did in urban communities during the 2004 election. None of the other interaction terms were statistically significant, suggesting

that abortion, tax cuts, and the war in Iraq did not offer Bush any greater advantage in rural communities than in urban communities.

We find similar support for the culture thesis in Table 6. Consistent with the results in Table 5, the interaction term of rural residents and opposition to gay marriage (Rural * oppose gay marriage) is statistically significant and further confirms that individual attitudes on gay marriage had a greater effect in rural communities than they did in urban communities. Once again, none of the other interaction terms were statistically significant. This reinforces the notion that the gay marriage issue appears to have played a unique role in rural America during the 2004 election. Unlike the other issues we tested, only the gay marriage issue played a more significant role in rural America than in urban America when it came to voting for George W. Bush.

Table 6. Factors Influencing Vote Choice for George W. Bush

Variable Description	Variables	B	Std Error
Issues	Oppose govt. funding abortion	.090	.058
	Oppose gay marriage	.059	.100
	Support tax cuts	.310***	.072
	Support Iraq War	.463***	.060
Residency	Rural	-.252	.825
Interaction Effects	Rural * Oppose govt. funding abortion	.032	.134
	Rural * Oppose gay marriage	.412*	.243
	Rural * Support tax cuts	-.169	.151
	Rural * Support Iraq War	-.062	.120
Controls	Party identification (Republican)	.426***	.048
	Income	.017	.013
	Education	.044	.038
	Married	.135	.175
	Age	.007	.005
	Race (white)	.402*	.187
	Gender (female)	-.174	.165
	Constant	-5.371***	.729
N = 766			
Pseudo R ² = .70			

Note: The dependent variable is based on the respondent's vote choice in the 2004 presidential election. It is a binary variable (coded as 1 = voted for Bush; 0 = voted for Kerry, Nader, or other candidate). Estimates are based on probit regression analysis. ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

Source: American National Election Study (2004).

Thus, it seems plainly evident that to understand why Bush was more popular among rural residents than among urban residents, the issue of gay marriage appears to have been a major factor.⁶

Conclusion

The results of this study shed light on several important questions. First, is the American public polarized? While the recent work of Fiorina et al. (2005) suggests that the American public is not divided, our results reveal deep divisions between rural and urban residents, which is consistent with the conclusions of other recent studies that find evidence of polarization within the electorate (e.g., Abramowitz and Saunders 2005). Second, what drives the divisions between rural and urban residents, and more specifically, what role do cultural issues play in explaining George W. Bush's success in presidential elections among rural voters? Here our results indicate that while taxes and the war in Iraq played a role in Bush's ability to win support from both rural and urban voters, the issue of gay marriage was especially significant among rural voters. In short, gay marriage appears to have been the dominant cultural issue of 2004 and was important in understanding the success of George W. Bush among rural voters.

This is not to suggest that taxes, foreign policy, and other issues are unimportant in rural communities. Indeed, the high levels of gun and home ownership in rural America make its residents prime targets for the Republican Party's message of anti-gun control and lower taxes. Nevertheless, we find ourselves in the position of supporting popular media accounts that indicate that George W. Bush's success in rural communities during the 2004 election cannot be understood without also recognizing the importance of the gay marriage issue.

Whether cultural issues will remain important enough to rural voters to affect their support of George W. Bush in his second term of office is an issue worth monitoring. George W. Bush's popularity took a major hit in 2005 following Hurricane Katrina and the CIA "leak" investigation that led to the indictment of Vice President Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby. By November 2005, Bush's overall approval dropped to a low of 37 percent (Moore 2005). Yet, this Gallup Poll does not separately examine Bush's approval among rural and urban voters, making it difficult to draw any definitive conclusions about the staying-power of cultural issues in rural America.

However, given that Bush has already benefited from his conservative positions on cultural issues in rural America, it seems likely—indeed entirely probable—that Bush and future Republican presidential candidates will try to shape the issue agenda in a way that brings cultural issues to the

forefront. While President Bush and future Republican presidential candidates are certainly limited in their ability to shape the issue agenda, Republican strategists succeeded in placing gay marriage propositions on the ballots in the 2004 election, and may be able to develop another effective strategy in 2008 and beyond. If Republicans can move the issue agenda toward cultural issues again, rural America should continue to provide President Bush and future Republican presidential candidates with its support.

APPENDIX Variable Definitions

Age: Based on question V043250 of the 2004 ANES. Coded based upon the age of the respondent.

Education: Based on question V043252 of the 2004 ANES. Based upon the highest grade that respondent complete (e.g., 11th grade is coded as 11, 12th grade as 12, etc. Graduate education is coded 17).

Gender (female): Based on question V041109a of the 2004 ANES. Coded 1 if the respondent is female; 0 if male.

Income: Based on question V043293x of the 2004 ANES. Coded as follows: 1. None or less than \$2,999; 2. \$3,000–\$4,999; 3. \$5,000–\$6,999; 4. \$7,000–\$8,999; 5. \$9,000–\$10,999; 6. \$11,000–\$12,999; 7. \$13,000–\$14,999; 8. \$15,000–\$16,999; 9. \$17,000–\$19,999; 10. \$20,000–\$21,999; 11. \$22,000–\$24,999; 12. \$25,000–\$29,999; 13. \$30,000–\$34,999; 14. \$35,000–\$39,999; 15. \$40,000–\$44,999; 16. \$45,000–\$49,999; 17. \$50,000–\$59,999; 18. \$60,000–\$69,999; 19. \$70,000–\$79,999; 20. \$80,000–\$89,999; 21. \$90,000–\$104,999; 22. \$105,000–\$119,000; 23. \$120,000 and over.

Married: Based on question V043251 of the 2004 ANES. Coded 1 if the respondent is married; 0 otherwise.

Oppose gay marriage: Based on question V043210 of the 2004 ANES. Coded as follows: 1. Should be allowed; 2. Should not be allowed to marry but should be allowed to legally form a civil union; 3. Should not be allowed.

Oppose government funding abortion: Based on question V043179 of the 2004 ANES. Coded as follows: 1. Favor strongly; 2. Favor not strongly; 3. No opinion/did not answer; 4. Oppose not strongly; 5. Oppose strongly.

Party identification (Republican): Based on question V043116 of the 2004 ANES. Coded as follows: 0. Strong Democrat; 1. Weak Democrat; 2. Independent-Democrat; 3. Independent-Independent; 4. Independent-Republican; 5. Weak Republican; 6. Strong Republican.

Positive Evaluations of George W. Bush: Based on the feeling thermometer question V043038 of the 2004 ANES. Coding is based on a 0 to 100 scale with 100 reflecting a very warm evaluation of Bush.

Race (white): Based on question V043299 of the 2004 ANES. Coded 1 if the respondent is white; 0 otherwise.

Rural: Based on question V041213 of the 2004 ANES. Coded 1 if the respondent is classified as living in a rural area; 0 if urban.

... continued

Appendix (continued)

Support Iraq War: Based on question V043133 of the 2004 ANES. Coded as follows:

1. Disapprove strongly; 2. Disapprove not strongly; 3. No opinion/did not answer;
4. Approve not strongly; 5. Approve strongly.

Support tax cuts: Based on question V043149 of the 2004 ANES. Coded as follows:

1. Opposed strongly; 2. Opposed not strongly; 3. No opinion/did not answer; 4. Favored not strongly; 5. Favored strongly.

Voted for George W. Bush: Based on question V045026 of the 2004 ANES. Coded as follows: 0. Voted for Kerry, Nader, or other; 1. Voted for Bush.

NOTES

¹For additional research on how party activists and elected officials have polarized the political process, see Polsby 1983; Miller and Jennings 1986; McCann 1995; Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Fleisher and Bond 2000.

²In 1992, Clinton received 40% of the rural vote, compared to Bush's 39%; in 1996, he received 46%, while Dole polled 44% (Greenberg, Walker, and Greener 2005).

³While criticisms of political culture theory abound (e.g., Almond and Verba 1989), there are several seminal works in the discipline by noted scholars which suggest that it may not be entirely unsound. The notion that shared values may be present among members of a given political community (however defined) and that these differing value orientations affect political action has been with us since Almond and Verba's seminal work in 1963 (also Elazar 1966; Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky 1990; Inglehart 1990; Putnam 1993).

⁴We excluded Alaska because county-level data were not available.

⁵To standardize the cases, we weight the data based on population.

⁶We also tested the substantive impact by generating the predicted probabilities using Clarify (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2001). The results indicate that there was an 82 percent probability of voting for Bush among typical voters (defined as a voter with all of the control values set at their means) who resided in a rural community and strongly opposed gay marriage. This confirms that Bush effectively locked up support among rural residents who were staunchly opposed to gay marriage. By comparison, the probability of voting for Bush dropped by a substantial margin of 34 percentage points among typical voters who resided in an urban community but strongly supported gay marriage.

REFERENCES

- Abramowitz, Alan, and Kyle Saunders. 2005. Why Can't We All Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America. *The Forum*. 3(2), Article 1.
- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba, eds. 1989. *The Civic Culture Revisited*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Baker, Wayne. 2005. Social Science in the Public Interest: To What Extent Did the Media Cover "Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America? *The Forum*. 3(2), Article 4.
- Beck, Paul Allen, Hal G. Rainey, and Carol Traut. 1990. Disadvantage, Disaffection, and Race as Divergent Bases for Citizen Fiscal Policy Preferences. *Journal of Politics* 52: 71-93.
- Brewer, Mark D., and Jeffrey M. Stonecash. 2006. *Class and Culture in American Politics* (Washington, DC: CQ Press).
- Curl, Joseph, and Julia Duin. 2004. Focus on Moral Values Tipped Vote for Bush. *Washington Times* (November 4): A1.
- Curtice, John, and Alison Park. 1999. Region: New Labour, New Geography? In Geoffrey Evans and Pippa Norris, eds., *Critical Elections: British Parties and Voters in Long-term Perspective*. London: Sage.
- Dionne, E.J., Jr. 2003. One Nation Deeply Divided. *Washington Post*, November 7, p. A31.
- Eckstrom, Kevin. 2004. 2004: Religion Glowed Red Hot. *Herald News*, December 30, p. E1.
- Elazar, Daniel J. 1966. *American Federalism: A View from the States*. New York: Crowell.
- Eliason, Scott R. 1993. *Maximum Likelihood Estimation: Logic and Practice*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Farhi, Paul, and James V. Grimaldi. 2004. GOP Won With Accent on Rural and Traditional. *Washington Post*, November 4, p. A1.
- Farrell, Maureen. 2004. Are Blue States Smarter than Red States? BuzzFlash.com <http://www.buzzflash.com/farrell/04/08/far04027.html>.
- Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2005. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Longman.
- Fleisher, Richard, and Jon R. Bond. 2000. Partisanship and the President's Quest for Votes on the Floor of Congress. In *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Frank, Thomas. 2004. *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Gainsborough, Juliet F. 2001. *Fenced Off: The Suburbanization of American Politics*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University.
- Gelman, Andrew, Boris Shor, Joseph Bufumi, and David Park. 2005. Rich State, Poor State, Red State, Blue State: What's the Matter With Connecticut. The Society for Political Methodology, <http://polmeth.wustl.edu/workingpapers.php?year=2005&how=alpha>
- Generosity Index 2004. 2004. Catalogue for Philanthropy, <http://www.catalogueforphilanthropy.org/cfp/db/generosity.php?year=2004>.
- Graber, Doris A. 2005. *Mass Media and American Politics*, 7th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Green, John C., and James L. Guth. 1991. The Bible and the Ballot Box: The Shape of Things to Come. In *The Bible and the Ballot Box: Religion and Politics in the 1988 Election*, ed. James L. Guth and John C. Green. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Greenberg, Anna, David Walker, and Bill Greener. 2005. The Message from Rural America: The Rural Vote in 2004. W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Available at <http://75.wkkf.org/DocumentPDFHTML.aspx?ID=14>.

- Hillygus, D. Sunshine, and Todd G. Shields. 2005. Moral Issues and Voter Decision Making in the 2004 Presidential Election. *PS: Politics and Political Science*. 38: 201-209.
- Holbrook, Thomas M. 2004. Good News for Bush? Economic News, Personal Finances, and the 2004 Election. *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 37:759-762.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- King, Gary, Michael Tomz, and Jason Wittenberg. 2000. Making the Most of Statistical Analyses: Improving Interpretation and Presentation. *American Journal of Political Science* 44:347-361.
- Klinkner, Philip A., and Ann Hapanowitz. 2005. Red and Blue Déjà Vu: Measuring Political Polarization in the 2004 Election. *The Forum* 3(2), Article 2.
- Lawrence, Jill. 2002. "Values, Votes, and Points of View Separate Towns B and Nation." *USA Today*, February 18, p. 10A.
- Layman, Geoffrey C. 2001. *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Charles Tien. 2004. Jobs and Job of President: A Forecast for 2004. *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 37:753-758.
- Lim, Elvin T. 2005. 'Values' and the 2004 Presidential Election. Paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, September 1-4, 2005.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Stein Rokkan. 1967. Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments, in Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives*. New York: The Free Press.
- McCann, James A. 1995. Nomination Politics and Ideological Polarization: Assessing the Attitudinal Effects of Campaign Involvement. *Journal of Politics* 57:101-120.
- McElvaine, Robert S. 2004. Red State; Blue State; A Democrat's Lonely Stand. *Washington Post*, October 10, p. B1.
- McFaul, Michael. 1997. *Russia's 1996 Presidential Election: The End of Polarized Politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- Miller, Matt. 2004. This Land Is Red Land, Paid For by Blue Land ... *Fortune Magazine*, 150(11), November 29, <http://www.fortune.com/fortune/articles/0.15114.781000.00.html>.
- Miller, Warren E., and M. Kent Jennings. 1986. *Parties in Transition: A Longitudinal Study of Party Elites and Supporters*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Moore, David W. 2005. Bush Approval at 37%: Lowest Approval Rating Measured by Gallup. *The Gallup Poll*, November 15.
- National Exit Poll. 2004. National Exit Poll Results: Presidential Election." *Washington Post*, November 2. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/elections/2004/graphics/exitPolls_national.html.
- Pink, Daniel H. 2004. Givers and Takers. *The New York Times*, January 30.
- Polsby, Nelson. 1983. *Consequences of Party Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Poole, Keith T., and Howard Rosenthal. 1997. *Congress: A Political Economic History of Roll-Call Voting*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Putnam, Robert. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Rauch, Jonathan. 2001. The Widening Marriage Gap: America's New Class Divide. *The Atlantic Online* Internet source. Available at www.theatlantic.com/politics/nj/rauch2001-05-23.htm.
- Rosenthal, Cindy Simon. 2005. Local Politics: A Different Front in the Culture War? *The Forum* 3(2), Article 5.
- Shepard, Scott. 2004. Bush-Kerry Contest a Sharp Contrast in Charting America's Future. Cox News Service, March 6.
- Sperling, John. 2004. *The Great Divide: Retro vs. Metro America*. Sausalito, CA: PoliPoint Press.
- Stonecash, Jeffrey M. 2005. Scaring the Democrats: What's the Matter with Thomas Frank's Argument. *The Forum* 3(3), Article 4.
- Thompson, Michael, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky. 1990. *Cultural Theory*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Tomz, Michael, Jason Wittenberg, and Gary King. 2001. CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, June 1. <http://gking.harvard.edu>.
- Vanderbei, Robert J. (No Date). "Election 2004 Results." <http://www.princeton.edu/~rvdb/JAVA/election2004/>.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wegen, Stephen K. 2004. The Communist Party of Russia: Rural Support and Implications for the Party System. *Party Politics* 10:565-582.
- White, John Kenneth. 2003. *The Values Divide*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Wilcox, Clyde. 2000. *Onward Christian Soldiers: The Religious Right in American Politics*, 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Wlezien, Christopher, and Robert S. Erikson. 2004. The Fundamentals, The Polls, and the Presidential Vote. *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 37(4):747-751.
- Zikmund, Joseph II. 1968. Suburban Voting in Presidential Elections. *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 12:239-258.

