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PART III

Electoral Geography in the US

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Warf, Barney. Revitalizing Electoral Geography.

: Ashgate Publishing Group, . p 145

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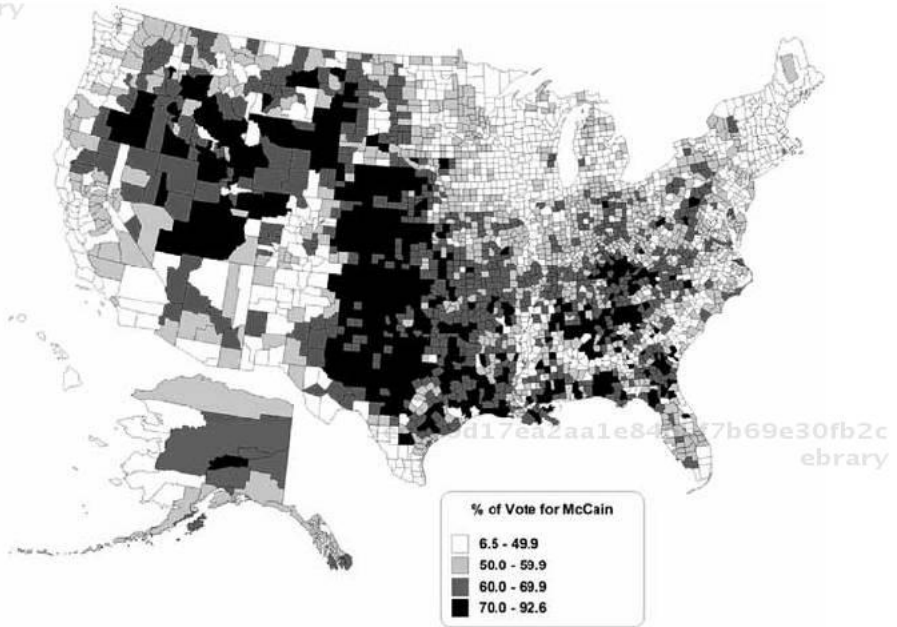


Figure 8.2 Percent of Votes for McCain by County, 2008

levels across the face of the nation. Obama's primary sources of strength lay in metropolitan areas, the West Coast, the upper Midwest, New England, and a belt of historically and predominantly African-American counties in the South (Figure 8.1). For the first time in decades, traditionally Republican-leaning states such as Virginia, North Carolina and Indiana joined the Democratic column. Conversely, McCain garnered majorities in most rural areas and small towns, notably in much of the South, the Great Plains, and the intermontane West (Figure 8.2).

However, underlying this geography are several sociospatial categories that profoundly shape American electoral landscapes, notably class, ethnicity, and religion. This chapter examines the 2008 presidential election through the lenses of each of these dimensions. The first three sections offer an overview of how each of these categories has shaped voting patterns, often in unexpected ways. Class, for example, traditionally absent in American politics, is not manifested in a simple dichotomy of wealthy support for Republicans and lower income support for Democrats, but rather the reverse; ethnic support for different political parties is widely variable among groups, and often within them; and the influence of religion varies markedly by denomination. The fourth section offers a quantitative analysis using geographically weighted regression, a means of examining the spatially uneven strength of different variables' influence on votes for Obama while statistically controlling for the influence of confounding forces. The results are

presented in a series of maps. The concluding discussion links these outcomes to a wider discussion of the geographies of identity, difference, and marginalization.

Class, Income, and Party Alignment: A Counterintuitive Pattern

Simplistic views of American politics tend to assume that the Republican Party represents vested corporate and business interests, whom they have consistently and zealously supported when in office, while the Democrats are allegedly sustained by a wide range of groups in civil society, including unions, teachers, low income people, and ethnic minorities. In this reading, support for the GOP should rise monotonically with median family income. Unfortunately, the reality is more complex, and less hopeful from the perspective of those concerned about the poor. Contrary to the stereotype, in fact statistically it was wealthier counties that were more likely to vote for Obama, while McCain garnered a majority in the poorest counties (Table 8.1). Thus, Obama, on average, won 58 percent of counties with above-average household incomes, including almost 63 percent of those with incomes over 120 percent of the national median, while McCain gained a slight majority of the vote in the poorest counties, i.e., those with incomes under 70 percent of the national median. In short, support for Obama rose steadily as median incomes rose, while they declined for McCain.

There are several forces at work that underpin this apparent discrepancy. Since the 1970s, the United States has been in the grip of a tremendous social transformation wrought by globalization, deindustrialization, stagnant incomes, rising inequality, growing demographic diversity, and wholesale class war launched by the ruling class under the banner of neoliberalism. Given its long history of individualism, anti-intellectualism, nationalist militarism, religiosity, anti-government rhetoric, obsession with a mythologized "free market," lack of social democracy, and weakened labor unions, no major political party effectively represents the interests of the working class, the poor, or the increasingly beleaguered middle class. Rather than a turn to

Table 8.1 Votes in 2010 Presidential Election by Household Income

Household Income as % of Average	Votes for Obama	% of Votes	Votes for McCain	% of Votes
> 120	7,512,019	62.8	4,450,295	37.2
100–119	8,721,561	55.1	7,118,178	44.9
90.0–99.9	8,556,514	57.8	6,258,803	42.2
80.0–89.9	15,958,416	55.1	13,021,362	44.9
70.0–79.9	14,570,760	51.2	13,869,966	48.8
< 69.9	14,159,650	48.2	15,216,153	51.8
Total	69,478,920	53.7	59,934,757	46.3

Source: Calculated by author.

working-class politics, mounting frustration at stagnant or declining standards of living, as well as deep seated fears about declining white hegemony, have driven countless millions of middle-income voters into the hands of conservatives, who preach a doctrine that substitutes liberals for the ruling class. The rise of conservatives since the 1970s, pioneered by Ronald Reagan and propelled by right-wing think tanks and conservative hegemony of the media (e.g., Fox News), has found widespread popular support among white Americans, particularly blue collar males, who often blame their economically precarious positions on the modest gains of marginalized groups such as women, immigrants, ethnic minorities, and gays. As a result, white Democratic voters began turning to the Republican Party en masse in the 1970s and 1980s, most particularly in the South (Aistrup 1996).

As Thomas Frank (2004) noted in his influential book *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, much of the popularity of American conservatism among the working class owes its existence to the propagation of a mythologized view of America as a uniquely blessed country increasingly overwhelmed by satanic force of moral deviance, as manifested by the rise of social indicators such as out-of-wedlock births, abortion ostensibly available on demand, multiculturalism, coddled criminals, and conservatives' favorite obsession, sexual permissiveness in various forms. In this reading, the roots of stagnant social mobility lay with the changes initiated during the 1960s, when evil began, an idea at the heart of many of the "cultural wars" fought over the last few decades. This notion of increasing liberal-promulgated decadence at home was accompanied by alarmist fears of declining US hegemony abroad. Neoconservatives have been highly successful at representing American politics in terms of a moral contest between good and evil, in which liberals, feminists, gays, immigrants, and environmentalists are equated with economic decline and moral decadence. Republicans have long popularized a mythologized view of a "liberal elite" intent of pushing a politically correct agenda down the throats of the innocent and young, whether through the corrupting values of the allegedly "liberal media" (including Hollywood) or the poisonous lectures of college professors. The real culprits, in this view, are those who have made modest gains allegedly at the expense of white males. Widespread ignorance and anti-intellectualism among a frighteningly gullible public contributed to the propagation of this worldview. Anti-intellectualism is nothing new in American political history (Hofstadter 1966), and is refreshed anew each generation by an educational system carefully designed to minimize any sense of criticality. The celebration of ignorance as a virtue among conservatives, for example, is evident in the growth of "tea party" movements following Obama's election, who soundly denounce government spending so long as it doesn't affect them.

The rhetoric of the radical neoconservative revolution admirably served the interests of neoliberalism, obfuscating the economic agenda of conservatives behind the rhetoric of family values, individualism, religiosity, and the ideology of the free market. In essence, the Republican Party has used a faux populism to disguise its deeply elitist politics, which are designed to assist the ruling class in extracting an ever-larger share of the country's surplus value. Thus, under the

administrations of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, income inequality grew markedly, in part due to deregulation and tax cuts on unearned income, which is the primary source for the well-to-do. In this context, what voters expect and what they receive are often two different things. As Frank (2004, 7) puts it:

Vote to stop abortion; receive a rollback in capital gains taxes. Vote to make our country strong again; receive deindustrialization. Vote to screw those politically correct college professors; receive electricity deregulation. Vote to get government off our backs; receive conglomeration and monopoly everywhere from media to meat-packing. Vote to stand tall against terrorists; receive Social Security privatization. Vote to strike a blow against elitism; receive a social order in which wealth is more concentrated than ever before in our lifetimes, in which workers have been stripped of power and CEOs are rewarded in a manner beyond imagining.

Essentially, such a strategy allows Republican candidates such as McCain to claim to speak on behalf of the middle class without offending their big business constituency. Many middle class voters, especially whites, are led enthusiastically to vote against their own economic interests, leading to what Frank labels a "French Revolution in reverse." Veterans, for example, eagerly supported McCain in 2008 even as the GOP voted to cut their benefits. It is important to note that the neoliberal agenda that has blamed government and liberals as the source of the country's problems has, with admirable efficiency, made great strides in rolling back many of the social and policy gains made during the 1960s and the Great Society, is now targeting initiatives launched during the New Deal (e.g., Social Security), and appears eagerly intent on taking the country back to a nineteenth century form of laissez faire and social Darwinism.

Ethnicity/Race: The Fault Line of American Politics

The influence of race or ethnicity on American voting patterns has been the subject of considerable scrutiny (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Hutchings and Valentino 2004), although its effects are difficult to disentangle from those of class and other bases of identity. Although there are many nuances to this story, in essence, since the 1970s Republican supporters, especially the most vehement ones, tend to be disproportionately white, whereas Democrats have traditionally attracted support from ethnic minorities. This pattern reflects, in no small part, the success of the GOP in capitalizing on white resentment against minorities for social and economic gains (often exaggerated in the minds of conservatives) that ostensibly come at the expense of working class whites. The GOP's famous "Southern Strategy" initiated in the 1970s, for example, led to widespread white abandonment of the Democrats in the South and the entrenchment of GOP politicians in what was once solidly Democratic territory (Black and Black 2002). By diverting white resentment toward minorities, the fundamental role of race and ethnicity has been

to obfuscate the role of class. As Huckfeldt and Kohfeld (1989, 12) note, "race served to splinter the Democratic coalition" because the federal policies initiated during the Civil Rights era provoked "[r]acial hostility, particularly on the part of lower-status whites." However, the mounting conservatism of American whites has, to some extent, been offset by the growing minority populations, now roughly 30 percent of the population, which tend Democratic. The rapid growth of Latinos, for example, who now form the country's largest ethnic minority, has problematized the traditional black-white binary (Segura and Rodriguez 2006).

Ethnicity also played an important role in the 2008 presidential election (Ansolabehere and Stewart 2009; Mas and Moretti 2009; Pasek et al. 2009; Philpot et al. 2009). Obama's racial composition obviously played a hugely important role. Widely touted as the first "African-American presidential candidate," Obama is in fact of mixed race (African father, white American mother), but in the racial discourses of American politics being of mixed race is tantamount to being equated with "black," a nomenclature reminiscent of the old racial stratification system found in the antebellum South. Race figured prominently in the heated Democratic primary contest between Obama and Hillary Clinton, who enjoyed more support among whites. Despite his attempts to appear "post-racially" transcendent on this issue, Obama suffered repeated and blatantly false conservative allegations that he was a Muslim, not born in the US, or was a closet Marxist, all of which reflected a deep racism on the part of a large chunk of the electorate. Obama's ethnicity, as well as his foreign-sounding name, helped Republican efforts to demonize otherness, albeit unsuccessfully, fueling latent white xenophobia and concerns about their declining proportion of the population. More subtly, even if they are not explicit racists, most whites exhibit a preference for white candidates (Bafumi and Herron 2009). Nonetheless, despite such obstacles, and due in part to widespread disgust with the Bush administration and a collapsing economy, Obama's campaign cobbled together a successful coalition of ethnic minorities and progressive whites, including Democrats, many independents, and even a few "Obamicans" (Republicans who voted for Obama).

While Obama's election was undoubtedly a historical achievement in the struggle for racial equality, the 2008 presidential election lent support to the notion that most backers of Democrat candidates are minorities and most Republican supporters are found in predominantly white regions. Table 8.2, for example, summarizes exit polls on the eve of the election, indicating that whites preferred McCain by a margin of 55 to 43 percent, whereas Obama enjoyed overwhelming popularity among blacks (95 percent), who were electrified by his candidacy, and solid majorities among Latinos and Asian-Americans. Given the numerical dominance of whites among the electorate, such a pattern would seem to indicate an inevitable victory for McCain. However, within the complex dynamics of the electoral college and its winner-take-all rule for amassing electoral votes, white support for McCain was largely rendered ineffectual, in part because it was so heavily concentrated in the South. In this sense, the Southern Strategy may have worked against Republicans. As Table 8.3 reveals, while minority-dominant

Table 8.2 Exit Polls of Voters by Ethnicity on Eve of 2008 Presidential Election

Ethnicity	% of the Electorate	% for Obama	% for McCain
White	74	43	55
Black	13	95	1
Latino	9	67	31
Asian	2	62	35

Source: *New York Times*. 2008. November 5. National Exit Polls Table. Available at: <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/national-exit-polls.html>.

Table 8.3 Votes in 2010 Presidential Election by White Percent of County Population, 2008

% Population White	Votes for Obama	% of Votes	Votes for McCain	% of Votes
> 90	31,783,205	53.2	27,993,460	46.8
80.0–89.9	11,260,897	52.1	10,365,811	47.9
70.0–79.9	8,056,834	54.5	6,736,108	45.5
60.0–69.9	7,142,757	52.6	6,442,390	47.4
50.0–59.9	5,306,683	53.0	4,697,883	47.0
< 50.0	5,928,544	61.6	3,699,105	38.4
Total	69,478,920	53.7	59,934,757	46.3

Source: Calculated by author.

counties voted heavily for Obama, in majority-white counties Obama still amassed a slim majority of votes. In short, many whites did indeed support Obama, and there are important geographic patterns that are hidden by these national data.

Religion and American Presidential Politics

The role of organized religion in American politics is too important to ignore. From popular beliefs of the electorate and politicians to how issues are often discursively framed, religion saturates many political debates. From the country's founding, religion and politics were intertwined (Thompson 1988), as exemplified historically by the anti-slavery movement, agrarian socialism, Prohibition, and the civil rights struggle. In contrast to most of the industrialized world, such as Europe, in which secularism is more common than religiosity, the US exhibits significantly higher levels of religious adherence and participation (Hackett 2003). Religion's political influence reflects the unique circumstances of the United States – as claimed by the American exceptionalism thesis – including the peculiarly high degrees of religiosity found in the US.

A large political science literature has investigated how religion has played a critical role in shaping the political loyalties of vast swaths of the electorate (e.g., Green et al. 2002; Leege et al. 2002; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). Religion enters electoral politics through a variety of channels, including how it shapes the ideological propensities of the electorate and candidates as well as the inclination to vote itself. For example, large majorities of Americans indicate they would not vote for a candidate "who did not believe in God" (Servin-Gonzalez and Torres-Reyna 1999). Religious attitudes are also important to politicians, including presidential candidates and members of Congress, who "are not empty religious vessels, but indeed bring deeply held religious conceptions to the world" (Hertzke 1988, 829). Often Congressional religious preferences and voting records reflect the relative degree of religiosity in their respective districts. For example, generally, significant local membership in conservative Protestant churches is inversely related to liberal Congressional voting records (Green and Guth 1991). The relations between theological and political ideology are complex, however, and should not be oversimplified. While some maintain that religion inculcates a passive acceptance of the prevailing social order, others point to the role of religion in progressive trends such as the civil rights movement.

The rise of politically conservative Protestants is perhaps the most visible recent face of this phenomenon. In the late twentieth century, evangelical conservative religious activists surfaced as a highly influential political force (Guth and Green 1991; Wilcox 1992). In 1976, for example, Jimmy Carter ran as a "born again" Christian, and religion was openly embraced by Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. In the 1980s, leaders of the Republican Party, recognizing the size, militancy and potential power of this electorate, began to court such voters aggressively, leading them to become a pillar in a highly successful political alliance with business interests. The Moral Majority and religious leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson became vocal and influential voices on behalf of conservative Protestantism in particular and the Republican Party more generally. Today, many GOP state political platforms affirm the status of the US as a Christian nation, label the separation of church and state a myth, demand abstinence instead of sex education, reject evolution, and otherwise mirror the agenda of religious conservatives (Phillips 2006). Thus, Heinemann (1998) observes, the predominant impact of contemporary religion in the US has been to inspire, motivate, and produce conservatives. As Jacobs (2006) notes, the marriage of political and religious conservatives occurred precisely at the historic moment in which American economic and political hegemony was contested internationally, a moment in which multiculturalism and the postmodern relativity of moral values achieved widespread popularity. Indeed, the rise of the Religious Right fueled not only a series of "culture wars," but also a significant gender and ethnic gap in which white males increasingly turned toward the Republican Party whereas women and ethnic minorities remained predominantly Democratic in their voting behavior. Issues that particularly animate conservative religious voters include prayer in the schools, reproductive rights and contraception,

sex education, tolerance of homosexuality, the teaching of evolution, stem cell research, and a variety of other important topics often loosely lumped under the phrase “moral values.” As a result, the “religion gap” between Republicans and Democrats has become one of the most striking and important dimensions of US politics, rivaling or exceeding the significance of class, race, or gender in determining local and national electoral turnout and outcomes.

Religion played an important role in the 2008 presidential election (Espinosa 2008). President George W. Bush, a born-again Methodist, personified conservative Protestantism, with numerous public references to the role of God in his personal and public life (Mansfield 2003; Aikman 2004). He was arguably the most visibly religious president in decades, perhaps in national history. However, given widespread voter revulsion at the Bush presidency, the effects of religion played out differently among different denominations. For example, counties that were heavily Catholic tended to favour Obama by wide margins (Table 8.4), in part due to his popularity among Hispanics, whereas conversely McCain won substantial victories in the counties in which Baptists comprised 30 percent or more of county adherents (Table 8.5).

Table 8.4 Votes in 2008 Presidential Election by County Percent of Total Adherents who are Catholic

% Adherents Catholic	Votes for Obama	% of Votes	Votes for McCain	% of Votes
> 70.0	3,447,288	61.1	2,196,309	38.9
60.0–69.9	5,675,259	58.0	4,116,250	42.0
50.0–59.9	10,973,988	59.4	7,487,087	40.6
40.0–49.9	7,494,705	56.5	5,778,437	43.5
30.0–39.9	8,348,764	55.6	6,674,328	44.4
< 30.0	33,538,917	49.9	33,682,344	50.1
Total	69,478,920	53.7	59,934,757	46.3

Source: Calculated by author.

Table 8.5 Votes in 2008 Presidential Election by County Percent of Total Adherents who are Baptist

% Adherents Baptist	Votes for Obama	% of Votes	Votes for McCain	% of Votes
≥ 70.0	941,804	46.6	1,078,921	53.4
60.0–69.9	2,788,220	43.8	3,574,970	56.2
50.0–59.9	3,355,889	42.3	4,574,288	57.7
40.0–49.9	2,851,024	43.8	3,650,743	56.2
30.0–39.9	4,815,032	48.8	5,048,211	51.2
< 30.0	54,726,951	56.6	42,007,624	43.4
Total	69,478,920	56.6	59,934,757	46.3

Source: Calculated by author.

Table 8.6 Simple Correlation Coefficients between Percent of Votes for Obama and McCain and Income, Ethnicity, and Religious Denomination

	% Voting for Obama	% Voting for McCain
Household Income	0.26	-0.25
% White	-0.31	0.28
% Black	0.27	-0.24
% Latino	0.06	-0.05
% Asian	0.25	-0.25
% Catholic	0.36	-0.37
% Baptist	-0.41	0.43
% Methodist	-0.24	0.25
% Pentacostal	-0.13	0.12
% Latter-day Saints	-0.15	0.13
% Jewish	0.32	-0.32
% Muslim	0.18	-0.17

The Independent Effects of Class, Race, and Religion: Empirical Assessments

The simple relationships between the variables discussed above and votes for Obama and McCain can initially be approximated using simple correlation analysis (Table 8.6; given the large sample size, 3,138 counties, all of these coefficients are statistically significant). These numbers confirm many of the observations made above. Thus, average household income was strongly and positively correlated with support for Obama (.26), and negatively so with votes for McCain (-.25). Percentage white was strongly associated with opposition to Obama (-.31) and support for McCain (.28) while percentage black and Asian-American exhibited exactly the reverse trend; Latinos were not strongly associated with either candidate. Among religious denominations, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims supported Obama and opposed McCain, while Baptists, Methodists, Pentacostals, and Latter-day Saints (Mormons) demonstrated the reverse pattern. Indeed, the correlations for the two candidates are largely mirror images of one another.

However, simple correlations disguise as much as they reveal. First, the effects of class, race, and religion on electoral outcomes are hopelessly intertwined with one another and empirically difficult to segregate. Second, the impacts of even one variable are likely to vary spatially: For example, household income may have very different effects on the West Coast compared to the South. For these reasons, this chapter analyzed votes for Obama using a relatively recent methodology, geographically weighted regression (GWR), which allows not only independent effects of variables to be specified, but also allows for spatial variations in the influence of one variable (Brundson et al. 1998; Fotheringham et al. 2002).

Standard regression analysis assume spatial stationarity, i.e., that the relationship under analysis is constant over space. In contrast, GWR permits relationships to vary spatially within a study region (or spatial non-stationarity). Each observation receives a weight that is a function of its proximity to the center of a given window (in this case, 20 counties). While standard regression analysis finds correlations between two variables across an entire data set, GWR yields correlations across only a geographic subset of the entire data set and then estimates how its statistical significance varies across the region under study.

Including variables derived from the discussion above (but limiting religious denominations to only two), the multivariate linear GWR model utilized in this analysis is

$$p_{oi} = \beta_i + \beta_{hi} + \beta_{wi} + \beta_{bi} + \beta_{li} + \beta_{ai} + \beta_{ci} + \beta_{bi} + \varepsilon_i$$

where

- p_{oi} = % voting for Obama in each county i ;
- β_i = constant
- β_{hi} = county household income as % of national median;
- β_{wi} = percent white population in county i ;
- β_{bi} = percent black population in county i ;
- β_{li} = percent Latino population in county i ;
- β_{ai} = percent Asian population in county i ;
- β_{ci} = % of adherents who are Catholic in county i ;
- β_{bi} = % of adherents who are Baptist in county i ;
- ε_i = error term¹

Such an approach allows for a view of the geographically uneven independent effects of each variable controlling for the influence of the others. The results of the analysis for each variable are summarized in maps of the partial regression coefficients, and, when necessary, the results of a simple GWR bivariate model without controls as well as the results of the broader model with controls.

GWR Class Effects

Although it is an imperfect measure of class, income (in this case, county average income as a percent of the national median) is an important determinant of voter preferences. The spatial distribution of household incomes (Figure 8.3) reflect the uneven development that has long formed a centerpiece of the social and economic geography of the United States, with the highest levels found in the northeastern seaboard, the West Coast, much of the old Manufacturing Belt, and metropolitan

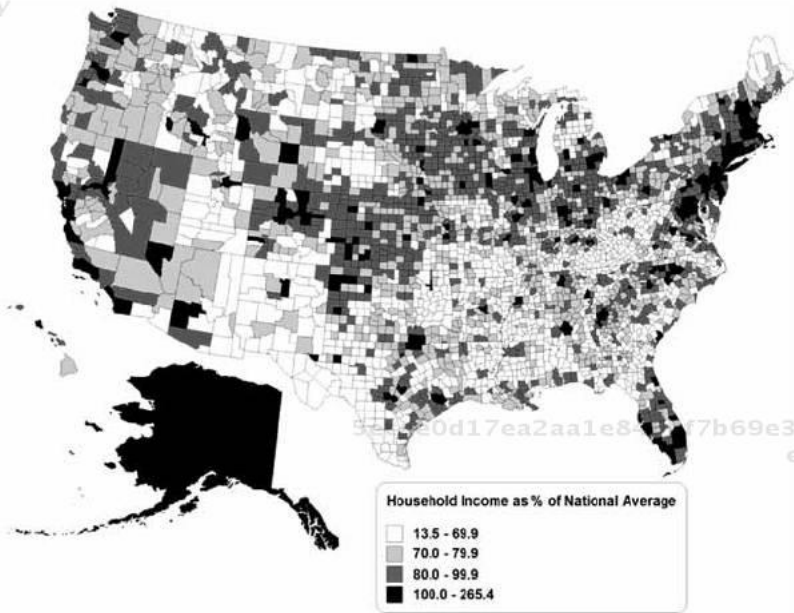


Figure 8.3 Household Income as a Percent of the National Average

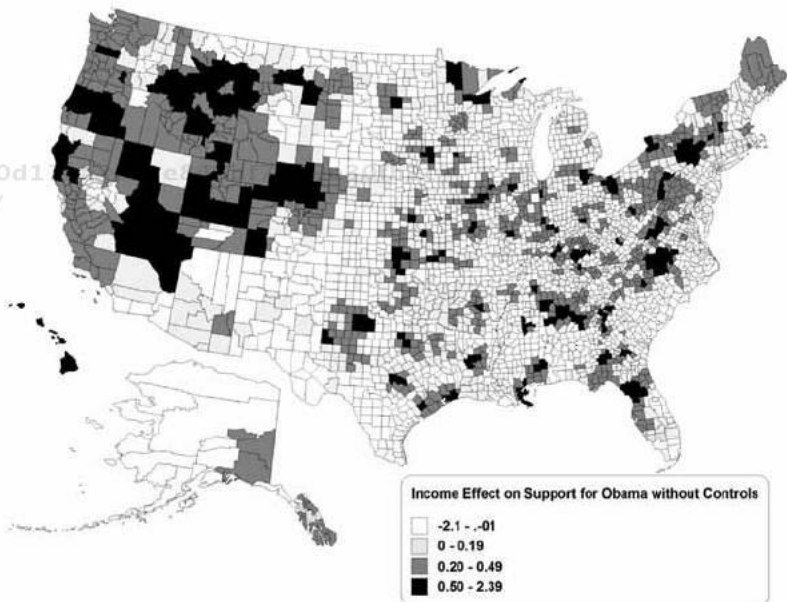


Figure 8.4 Results of Bivariate GWR of Support for Obama and Average Household Income without Controls for Ethnicity and Religion

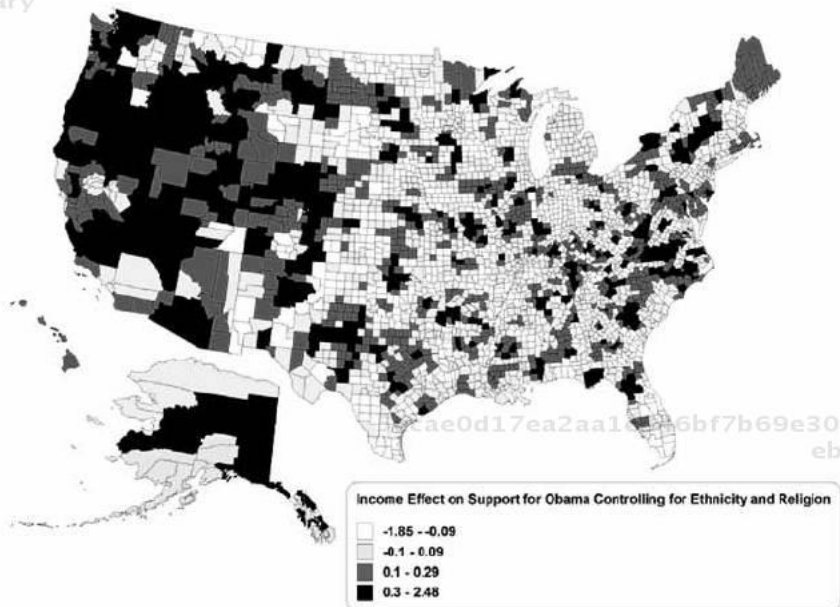


Figure 8.5 Independent Effects of Household Income on Support for Obama, Controlling for Ethnicity and Religion

areas generally, and lower levels distributed across rural areas, particularly in the South. A simple bivariate GWR analysis of income and support for Obama yields surprising results (Figure 8.4): higher income households demonstrated the most support for him in traditionally conservative regions such as the intermontane West, notably Utah and Idaho, the West Coast, and pockets widely distributed throughout the central and eastern thirds of the country. However, the bivariate relationship may be heavily affected by other variables. Once the controls for ethnicity and religion are introduced, the GWR nonetheless confirms that Obama's support tended to rise steadily with household income in the West more than most parts of the country (Figure 8.5). In contrast to their counterparts elsewhere in the country, it would seem that upper income Western voters are relatively more Democratic in their inclinations, even in regions dominated by conservative religious denominations such as the Church of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Such a result may reflect the particular cultural heritage of the Western United States, in which ideologies such as individualism and the cult of entrepreneurship are particularly strong (Etulain 1980).

GWR Ethnicity Effects

Although the voting impacts of ethnicity have been well demonstrated among ethnic groups, very little insight has been shed on their effects within a given

ethnic group. GWR allows for such an analysis. Whites, who comprised roughly three-quarters of the electorate, demonstrated spatially uneven support for Obama. Thus, without the controls of income or religion, white support was highest in northern California and the Pacific Northwest (including southern Idaho!) and parts of Virginia near Washington, DC (Figure 8.6). Once the effects of income and religion are removed, however, this pattern changes significantly, with white support highest in the West Coast and Nevada, the Mississippi Delta, Colorado, southern New England, and the greater Washington, DC region (Figure 8.7). Such a pattern points to two possible forces contributing to a liberalized white electorate: the presence of a large minority population and local economies centered either on the public sector or professionalized producer services, as with Florida's (2004) celebrated "creative class."

Black support for Obama, which was almost universal, also demonstrated a geography in its own right. Without controls for income and religion, blacks voted for Obama most heavily outside of the South (Figure 8.8), particularly in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. Similarly, Latino support for Obama was heaviest outside of the Southwest, notably in parts of the South with large African-American populations, Illinois and Wisconsin, and New England (Figure 8.9). Such geographies, intimately tied up with the politics of identity, hint that in both cases minority support was accentuated in regions where they were less common numerically.

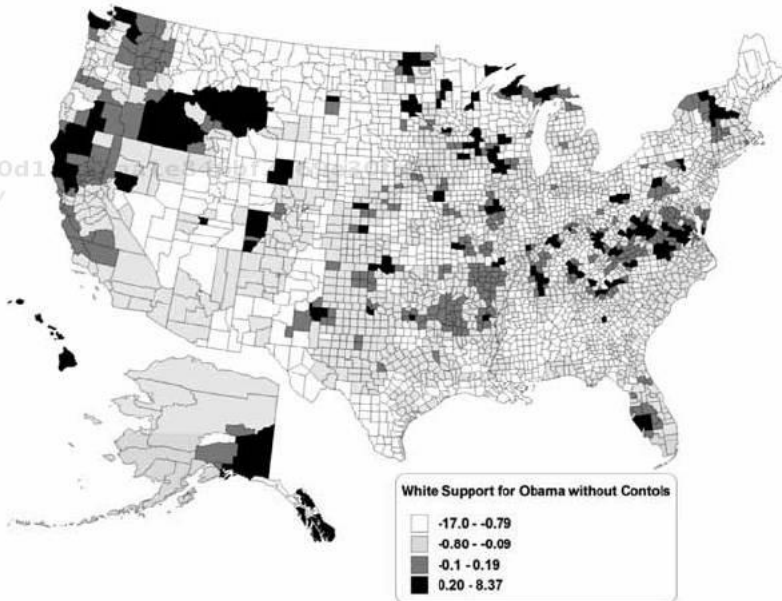


Figure 8.6 Results of Bivariate GWR of Support for Obama and White % of County Population without Controls for Income and Religion

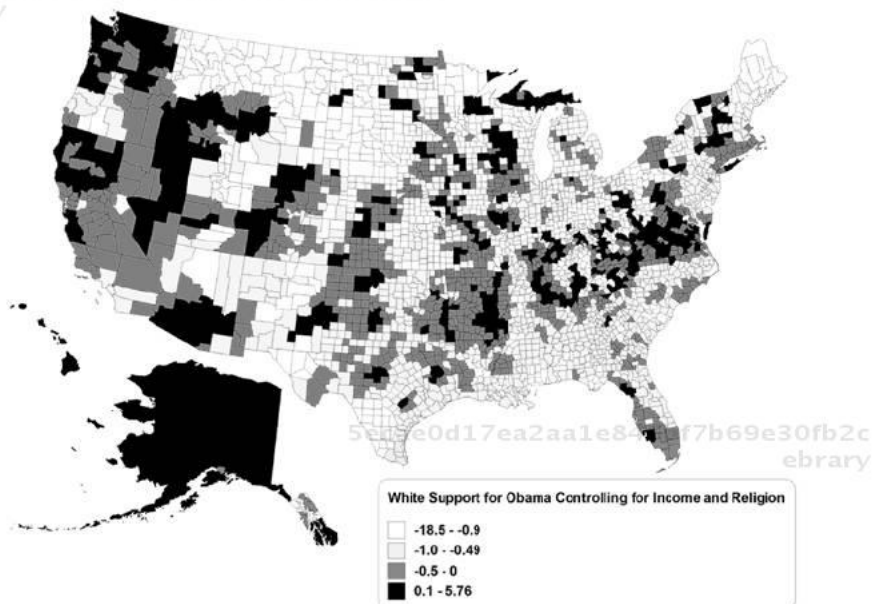


Figure 8.7 Independent Effects of White Support for Obama, Controlling for Other Ethnicities and Religion

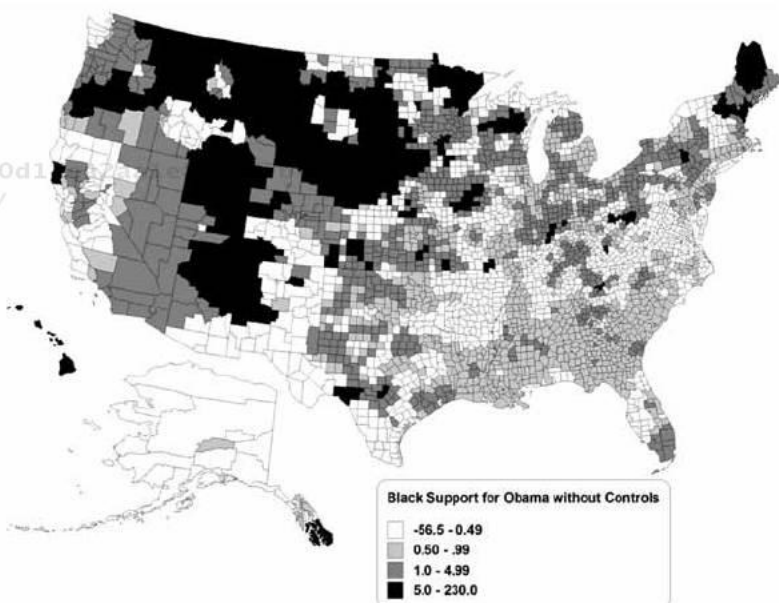


Figure 8.8 Results of Bivariate GWR of Support for Obama and Black % of County Population without Controls for Income and Religion

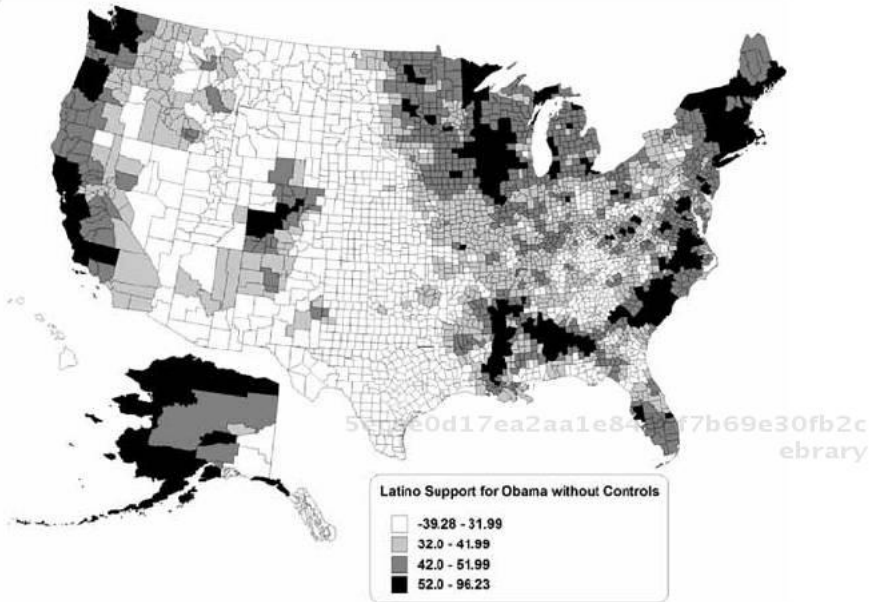


Figure 8.9 Results of Bivariate GWR of Support for Obama and Latino % of County Population without Controls for Income and Religion

GWR Religion Effects

Data on the distribution of religious denominations by county in 2000 were obtained from the census published by the Glenmary Research Center (2002). While the Glenmary data are widely recognized as the best available, they are not without flaws. Some denominations such as the Jehovah's Witnesses refused to participate. Also, the Glenmary database does not identify the religion of those who live in one county and worship in another. Because the data on religious adherents is geolocated by place of worship (which may be in a neighboring county) rather than place of residence, as in the case of voting data, there is the distinct possibility of a spatial mismatch between religious affiliation and voting patterns, although for purposes of studying the dynamics of the electoral college, which is based on states, not counties, this issue is irrelevant.

Catholics, for example, who comprise 37 percent of the electorate, form significant majorities in most of the Northeast, Wisconsin, and much of the Southwest, particularly California, New Mexico, and southern Texas (Figure 8.10). All of these regions voted for Obama in the general election. Catholics are an ethnically and politically diverse lot, of course, ranging from conservative Cuban-American voters in southern Florida to more liberally minded Puerto Ricans in Florida and New York, Italians and Irish in the Northeast, and Mexican-Americans

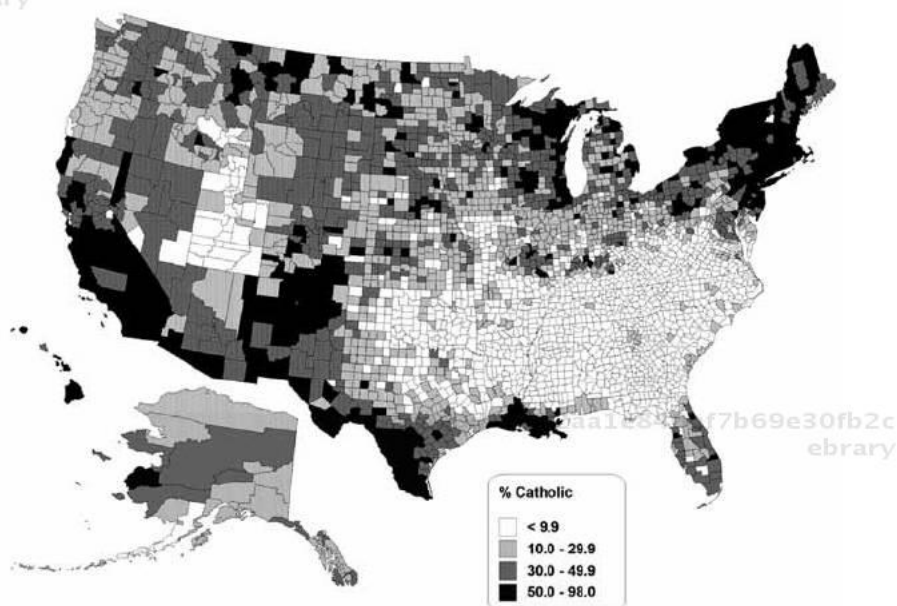


Figure 8.10 Catholics as % of Total Adherents

in the Southwest. GWR reveals that once the effects of income and ethnicity are removed statistically, Catholic support for Obama consisted of a hodgepodge of pockets of greater and lesser enthusiasm (Figure 8.11). Catholics in the South tended to vote him in greater proportions than elsewhere, although Catholics in southern New Mexico and Utah likewise were also supportive. Surprisingly, Catholic support in strongholds such as New England and the northern Midwest was relatively tepid.

Protestant denominations are quite another story. Baptists (14.3 percent of voters), who comprise the largest Protestant group, generally voted heavily in favor of the Republican John McCain. Concentrated heavily in the South, particularly interior counties removed from the coasts, Southern Baptists were located in states that all voted against Obama by large margins (Figure 8.12), although Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia did narrowly vote Democratic. Baptist support for Obama, such as it was lay for the most part outside of the South (Figure 8.13), including islands of support around the New York metropolitan region, Chicago, the northern Great Plains, the borderlands of Texas and New Mexico with Mexico, and the Pacific Northwest. Such a pattern reflects, perhaps, the willingness to consider candidates not actively supported by one's denomination when living as a minority outside of the region of denominational hegemony.

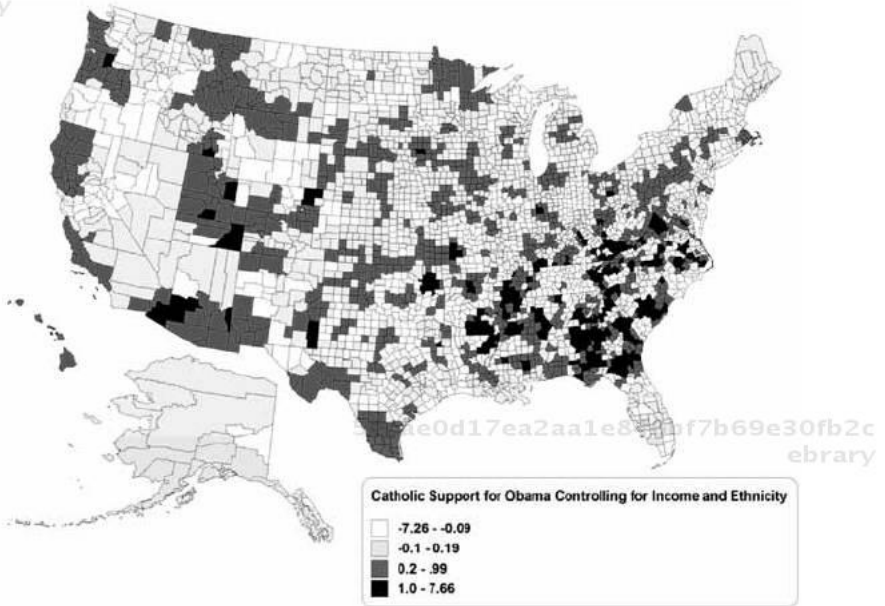


Figure 8.11 Independent Effects of Catholic Support for Obama, Controlling for Income and Ethnicity

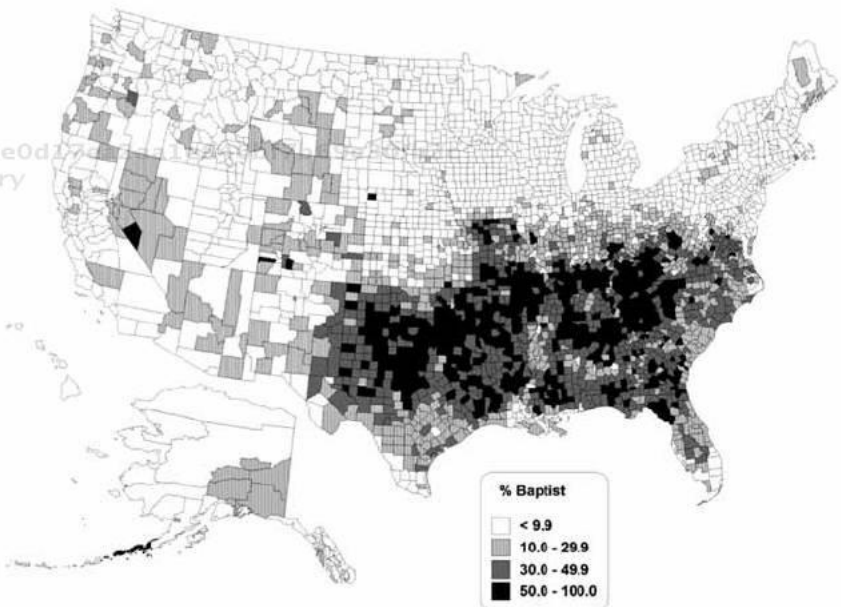


Figure 8.12 Baptists as % of Total Adherents

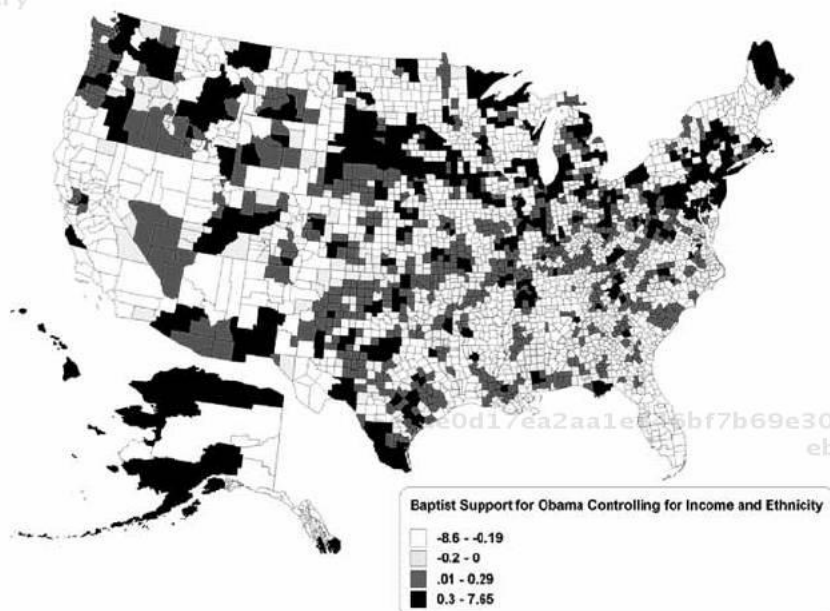


Figure 8.13 Independent Effects of Baptist Support for Obama, Controlling for Income and Ethnicity

Concluding Thoughts

The presidential contest of 2008 was a watershed moment in several respects, including a rejection of the policies of the George W. Bush administration and the election of the country's first African-American candidate. Obama's victory reflected a constellation of voters of many kinds with varying reasons. In this race, as always, class, ethnicity, and religion all had profound effects on the American electoral landscape. (No doubt so too did other markers such as age, gender, and sexuality). Contrary to much received opinion, among income groups, the Democrats' greatest strengths lay among upper income voters rather than poorer households, who generally supported McCain. Whites, at least outside of the South, tended to be split between the two parties, whereas blacks, Latinos, and Asians tended to support Obama whole heartedly. Using the two largest denominations as a marker of religious influence, Catholics tended to vote for Obama in large proportions, whereas Baptists were strongly opposed to his candidacy.

What is critical to note here is that the effects of these variables are not spatially uniform: contrary to the aspatial wonderland in which many economists and political scientists operate, there are enormous geographical variations in the intensity of the relationship of each category. Geographically weighted regression

offers a valuable means with which to interrogate such patterns in a statistically rigorous manner.

The results of the GWR model deployed here hint at one consistent, albeit surprising, finding: support for Obama within each economic, ethnic, and religious group tended to be highest in regions in which supporters were a relative minority. In most cases, support for Obama within each income, ethnic, or religious group was greatest when members of that group were relatively uncommon. Whites, the majority in most regions, did not conform to this generalization. However, black support for Obama was greatest outside of the South, and Latino support highest in regions removed from the Southwest or Florida. Some Baptists did indeed support Obama, but largely in areas outside of the South. Higher levels of household income tended to be more closely associated with votes for Obama in the Western US (parts of which are quite wealthy, belying the observation made above), including the Rocky Mountains, Nevada, and California. At the least, these results indicate the need to avoid simplistic, aspatial generalizations that essentialize groups and their political views.

More deeply, such a trend points to the politics of marginality that played an important role in electing Obama. If identity is largely constructed and maintained through difference (Sibley 1995; Natter and Jones 1997; Valentine 2008), then voters belonging to particular income, ethnic, or religious categories who live in regions in which they find themselves minorities may well have been more sympathetic to a candidate who was a member of an ethnic minority himself. Perhaps supporters of Obama who were not surrounded by others of similar wealth, culture, and beliefs were more willing to elect a candidate whose own background was so resoundingly non-traditional. In short, a geographical analysis indicates that the lines of difference so important not only to identity but to political attitudes are highly susceptible to local and regional variations.

Acknowledgement

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Chapter 9

The Emerging Geography of How Americans Cast their Ballots

Toby Moore¹

The first decade of the 2000s witnessed rapid change in how elections are run in the United States. Spurred on by the problems exposed by the Florida recount process after the 2000 presidential election, lawmakers, advocates and the public pressed for reform in a wide range of voting laws and practices. *Bush v. Gore* triggered a renewed sense that American election administration had become moribund and lax, in need of significant government investment and at least some measure of increased oversight and scrutiny. An initial focus was on voting technology, since the notorious “hanging chads” were the most visible sign of election failure in 2000, but other issues, from voter identification to voter registration to early voting, would also see new dynamism.

The landscape was actually already in some flux when *Bush v. Gore* hit, as a series of traditional concerns was prompting experimentation in the states and at the local level. Participation rates had long been a focus of political scientists and progressive reformers, who saw them as a measure of the health of American democracy, and new methods were adopted to make voting easier. Unsettled questions over the fairness of American elections, particularly to ethnic and racial minorities, and the continued salience of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 sustained efforts by the federal government to intervene in what is traditionally reserved for the states and local governments. Allegations of electoral fraud persisted, hotly contested by the political parties and the reform community. Electronic voting machines had already begun to replace paper ballots in some jurisdictions before Florida contemplated its hanging chads. The spark from the Florida recount process, therefore, hit dry tinder.

Reformers, however, confronted a country that stubbornly guards local prerogatives in determining how elections are run. The US famously lacks a constitutional right to vote, and the task of administering elections is left to the states, which in turn have historically devolved much responsibility to local jurisdictions. Filtered through the thousands of local election jurisdictions, then, the extreme federalism of US election administration was virtually guaranteed to

1 The author is a project director for the non-partisan, non-profit research institute RTI International. Generous support for this chapter was provided by RTI through a professional development award.

produce strong geographical variability as America grappled with how to improve its election methods.

This chapter describes the emerging spatial patterns of how Americans cast their ballots. It is “emerging” both because different changes are taking occurring in different places, and because we are only now collecting the data that makes seeing these patterns possible. This variance across space and between states and regions, it is argued, is of increasing importance to American democracy and the political system; the divergence appears to be growing, with potentially far-reaching effects. Investigation of this variation at the national level has only recently become possible due to newly-available data sources, including the federally-sponsored survey of election jurisdictions that forms the basis for this chapter.

While electoral geography has long been of interest to geographers, it has focused largely on the choices voters make or on the way electoral district boundaries are drawn. Little work has been done on the myriad ways that modern voters go about casting their ballots. Election administration has not generally been part of political geography, despite the rich geographic data available, to the detriment both of the discipline and American elections. Drawing largely from the results of the 2008 Election Administration and Voting Survey, sponsored by the US Election Assistance Commission and directed by the author, this chapter aims to lay the groundwork for a better engagement between geography and the question of how elections are run in the United States. Finally, the chapter discusses possible future directions for research, at scales from the local to the international, and ties the field to larger questions of democracy and equity.²

Elections in Electoral Geography

Traditionally, electoral geography has been divided into three branches (Taylor and Johnston, 1979). The first is the pattern of voters’ choices, aggregated to a certain spatial scale and analyzed through mapping and multivariate analyses. Often socio-economic or other variables are included in the analysis in the search for understanding the spatial patterns. The second, “geographical influences on elections”, was the subject of considerable debate on so-called “context effects” and their importance and value as a subject of inquiry (Agnew, 1996; King, 1996). This branch saw geographers defend the impact of local circumstances on voter choices, with mixed success. Finally, the “geography of representation” is focused on the drawing of district boundaries and the biases that develop from that process.

2 Unless stated otherwise, all the data used in this article are from the EAC survey and publicly available through the EAC’s website at www.eac.gov. Summary tables with statewide aggregations are available in the reports based on the survey issued by the EAC and also available at the same Web address.

This has been a particular interest in the United States, where little is done to constrain partisan gerrymandering, and where racial gerrymandering (for both the benefit and harm of minority voters) has a long tradition, but has proved important in other countries as well. Border delineation is an important part of the technical assistance provided to emerging democracies, who must often build constituencies from scratch.

Within these three branches of electoral geography, little has been written about the geography of the myriad ways in which people differ in the way they cast their ballots. The "geography of elections," to date, has referred almost exclusively either the spatial variation in the choices that voters make between candidates, parties or issues, or the division of space into electoral districts. A "...geography of election administration", by contrast, would focus on the way laws and procedures impact the molding of the electorate and their role in promoting or restricting democratic outcomes, and the variance of such laws and procedures across the thousands of election jurisdictions in the United States. A broad array of topics can be studied in such a geography of election administration; the intention here is to suggest some topics that other geographers might find of interest for their own work, as well as providing a high-level description of some of the ways election laws and practices are diverging across the country. The topics discussed below, as a starting point for this geography of election administration, include:

- when voters cast their ballots (i.e., on election day or before, or even afterwards);
- where they cast their ballots (i.e., polling places or remotely)
- how they cast their ballots (i.e., through the mail or in person); and,
- what barriers they face (i.e., ID laws, felony disenfranchisement or registration requirements);
- what technology they use to record their choices (i.e., electronic voting machines or paper ballots).

Such issues are of growing interest to political scientists, legal scholars and election professionals. Much of the literature they have produced focuses on the impact of specific election reforms either on participation as a whole, or on the participation of specific parts of the electorate. For example, the move by some states during the 2000s to impose new identification requirements on voters (discussed below) slowly gave rise to a small body of scholarly writings over the second half of the decade. Not surprisingly, it lacked consensus and mirrored the sharp political divide over the issue, but nonetheless was able to provide policy makers with some of the basic research needed to consider and debate ID laws. Much of the work done on the impact of voter ID laws was done by scholars or advocates with an interest in one side of the debate or the other, an indication of the shortage in election studies of independent social science.

The 2008 Election Administration and Voting Survey

Under the mandate given it by the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA), the US Election Assistance Commission began collecting election data following the 2004 election. Initially called the Election Day Survey, and later the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS), the project is somewhat misnamed; it is less a survey than an accounting process. Across a number of election administration topics, the EAVS attempts to collect data at the local level, generally the county or parish, but in some instances the town or township. The survey is administered to the individual states, territories and the District of Columbia, which either generate responses from central databases or collect the data from their own sub-jurisdictions. Some of the data requested is required by federal law (to measure compliance with the federal National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) and the Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)), but much of the data requested is voluntary on the part of the states and local governments. The data collects forms the basis for a series of reports issued by the EAC.

The EAC's work coincided with a push by academics and reformers to develop better data collection on election administration, and took place during what the journalist James Fallows has called "the decade of big data" across a variety of public policy fields from education to health to finance (Fallows, 2010). The Pew Charitable Trust's Make Voting Work project promoted a "Data for Democracy" effort, hosting conferences and issuing reports aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of election data available. A group of scholars, mostly law professors, argued throughout the decade that a reliance on empirical data on election administration was a way to overcome partisan and ideological divisions and avoid the traditional reliance on anecdotal evidence (for example, Tokaji, 2005; Overton, 2006; Gerken 2009).

Starting with a limited effort in 2004, data collection has improved with each iteration, netting higher response rates on most data elements and providing greater levels of disaggregated data. The 2008 EAC survey was the most complete data collection yet. Its baseline number of jurisdictions (including states or territories that only submitted aggregate responses; counties or parishes; and townships in some states) was 4,517, a 45 percent increase from the 3,123 jurisdictions covered by the 2006 survey. (The number of jurisdictions varies from year to year because some states aggregate their township data to the county level, or submit only statewide totals. Numbers of responses to individual items varied considerably). Data was collected from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa. While still incomplete, the 2008 Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) suggests that future data collections will come yet closer to providing a complete picture of how Americans cast their ballots.

The 2008 survey was composed of two parts³: a qualitative Statutory Overview, which sought to gather data on the laws, definitions and procedures used by the states, and the main, quantitative survey of 52 questions (many questions had multiple parts). The main questionnaire included questions on voter registration; registration and voting by overseas civilians and uniformed service members; polling place operations; voting technology; poll workers; and other election administration topics.

Data was collected through the state or territorial election offices. Data collection practices and capacity vary significantly across the country. Many states maintain central voter registration and voter history databases that can be readily queried for most of the information requested. In other states, little data is kept at the state level, and it instead must be collected individually from each local jurisdiction. Many of these jurisdictions are small and lack the staff or motivation necessary to complete the survey. In addition, states vary in the ways they define and code important election terms (such as absentee ballots). For these reasons the level of response to individual questions on the survey varies. For some items, data was widely available; for others, there are significant holes. Finally, states differ in their willingness to cooperate with the EAC on the survey; some states and local officials feel the survey unduly burdens their offices and constitute an unfunded mandate on the part of the federal government.

Spatial Variations of Elections in the United States

Results from the 2008 EAVS show the marked differences between states and regions in the United States in how voters cast their ballots and other aspects of election administration. While this chapter focuses on state- and regional-differences, the county-level data available from the EAC can be readily mined to highlight local differences as well. In addition, the EAVS supplies data on topics beyond those covered below.

Convenience Voting

The traditional method of voting in the United States has two main components. The first, and most common, is voting in-person, on election day, usually at a polling place near one's place of residence. The second component, discussed below, entails voting through an absentee ballot.

3 An additional data collection effort related to the survey was the collection of precinct-level data from five states, as part of a \$10 million Congressional program. This data, not included in this analysis, is also available at the EAC's website. The five states participating were Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Minnesota.

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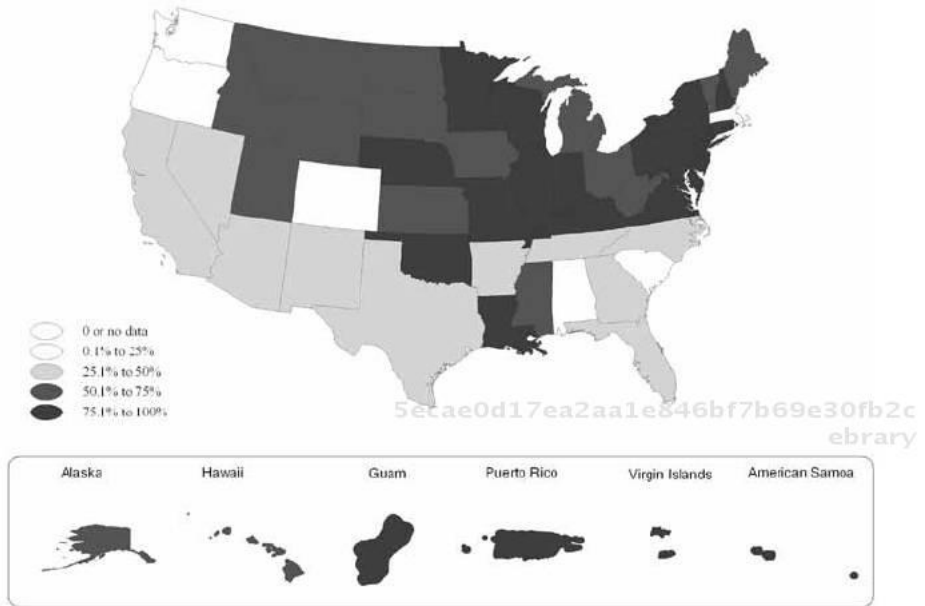


Figure 9.1 Percentage of Votes Cast In-person

Alongside this model have arisen a series of mechanisms intended to make it easier for people to cast their ballots, thus saving voters time and aggravation and encouraging participation. The actual impact on turnout of such measures is subject to debate; the literature at present suggests that the impact of most so-called convenience voting practices is minimal, and in some cases may even drive down overall turnout. States continue to experiment with convenience voting mechanisms, however, in part to save money through reduced administrative costs (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller and Toffey, 2008).

The most effective way of measuring convenience voting is to look at the rates of traditional voting, since convenience voting comes in many forms. In 2008, states reported that 60.2 percent of voters cast their ballots in-person on election day (see Figure 9.1).⁴ In-person voting on election day remains strongest in the Northeast and upper Midwest.

4 Not all states provided breakdowns of how their voters cast ballots; thus, another 6.1 percent of the ballots in the EAC survey were “not categorized”. Many of these were undoubtedly in-person voters. Even within traditional balloting systems, some states and local jurisdictions have experimented with relaxing the geographic constraints imposed by polling places. “Vote centers”, in which any registered voter in the jurisdiction can cast a ballot, have been implemented in some places.

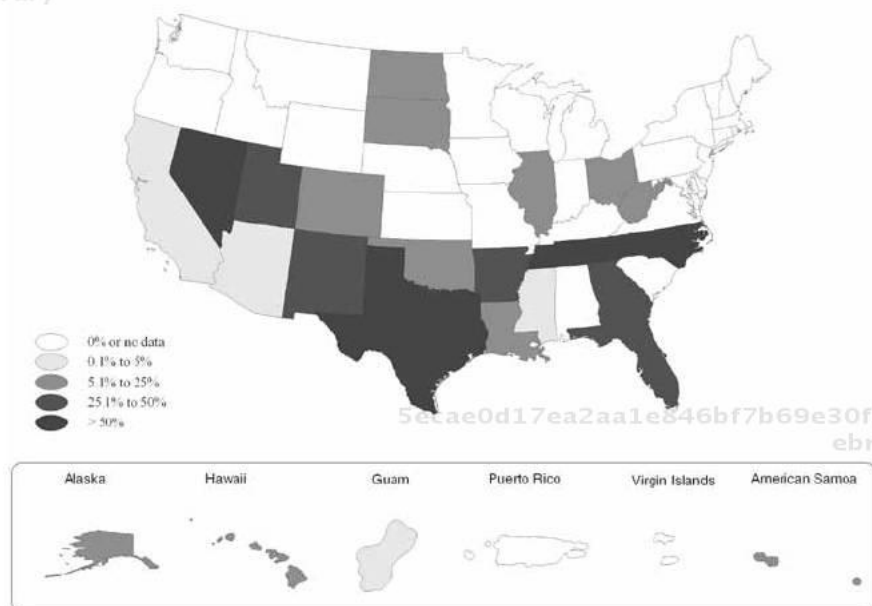


Figure 9.2 Map of Early Voting

The second component of traditional voting is through an absentee ballot, cast in a variety of means including through the mail or at an election office prior to election day. Absentee balloting dates to the Civil War, when Union states sought ways to allow soldiers to vote in the 1864 presidential election. Absentee ballot laws vary significantly across the country, with some states requiring valid excuses (such as being out of town on election day) while others allowing “no excuse” absentee balloting. In 16 of the 49 states that reported absentee voting figures, absentee voters made up 5.0 percent or less of the total voters. At the other extreme, three states (Arizona, Colorado and Washington) reported absentee voting comprised more than half of their total.

One of the more common forms of convenience voting is early voting, which allows for the casting of ballots before election day. In 2008, 24 states reported at least some level of early voting, with more than 17 million voters casting their ballots before election day. Early voting is a prominent part of the election process in Florida, Georgia, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas; in each state, at least 30 percent of voters were reported to have cast an early ballot. Other states with lower but still significant numbers (more than 10 percent) of early voters were Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, North Dakota, Utah, West Virginia, and American Samoa. Early voting is most common in the southern half of the country.

Early voting changes elections in several ways. Voters who cast their ballots early forfeit the information that might have become available in the last days or weeks of a campaign. The extended time that voting is open may privilege campaigns with the resources and organizational strength to get their voters to the polls, thus making campaign financing even more important than it already is. Administratively, early voting may help election officials minimize the risks of overburdening polling places on election day in high turnout elections, and cut the time voters must wait in line to vote. Some critics of early voting contend that casting ballots in this way dilutes the social aspects of voting, eroding an important community event and thus diminishing its perceived importance. Evidence of the impact of early voting on turnout has been mixed (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum and Miller, 2007).

Another convenience voting mechanism is vote-by-mail, in which entire precincts, jurisdictions or even states do away with traditional balloting entirely, and replace it with votes cast through the postal system. Voters are mailed a ballot, fill it out and return it through the mail. Oregon switched to all vote-by-mail in 1998 after the passage of a public referendum, and other states have moved at least some of their elections in that direction as well. The mode is most popular in the West: nearly all voters in Washington now vote by mail, as do many voters in California. (The EAC survey in 2008 conflated vote-by-mail with mail-in absentee voting; in 2010, the survey will separate the two options. Generally, vote-by-mail denotes the replacement of in-person voting, while mail-in absentee voting augments it).

Like early voting, vote-by-mail has its advocates and its critics. Advocates argue that it increases the convenience of voting and boosts turnout, while saving money by reducing the cost of administering elections. Vote-by-mail is also said to increase uniformity in the voting process, and the iterative process of mailing out ballots and receiving notices of non-delivery helps keep voter registration rolls up-to-date (Bradbury, 2005). Critics counter that vote-by-mail leaves voters at the mercy of a sometimes unreliable US Postal Service; does little if anything to boost turnout; is vulnerable to fraud; and privileges the affluent over low income voters (Slater and James, 2007). (On turnout and vote-by-mail, see Southwell and Burchett, 2000, and Berinsky, Burns and Traugott, 2001). While vote-by-mail has increased rapidly since Oregon adopted it 12 years ago, it remains to be seen whether its growth will continue and reach beyond the West Coast.

Same Day/Election Day Registration

While early voting and other forms of convenience voting are aimed principally at making ballot casting easier, same day registration (SDR) or election day registration (EDR) aims at lowering another barrier: voter registration. In SDR and EDR, voters are allowed to register and vote on the same day, either before or on election day itself. In addition to states that open SDR and EDR to all voters, some states offer it only to certain kinds of voters, such as recently discharged uniformed



Figure 9.3 Map of Same Day/Election Day Voting Rates

services personnel or new citizens. In still others, SDR can occur as a side effect of the election calendar; for example, when the close of registration comes after the start of early voting, creating a window in which people can do both on the same day.

The 2008 EAVS asked about SDR/EDR in a roundabout way, due to refusal of some states to classify their voting as SDR or EDR, and problems with states tracking the votes of those who registered at the same time they cast a ballot. The 2008 EAVS asked states to report the number of registration forms received on days that voters could register and vote on the same day. These figures give some indication of the prevalence of SDR/EDR.

Nationally, 17 states reported receiving 3,616,874 voter registration applications on days when the voter could then cast a ballot. At least 963,144 of these applications resulted in new voters being added to the voter list; however, because most states did not categorize the applications they received, the actual number was almost certainly much higher.

Like other non-traditional registration and voting practices, SDR/EDR has been criticized as creating a vulnerability to election fraud. Without effective registration lists that can be checked against databases in an effort to detect dead or ineligible voters, critics argue, non-eligible voters can walk in, register and vote without the necessary screening mechanism of the traditional registration process. In response to these concerns, and to facilitate other innovations such as vote

centers (see below), some states have adopted electronic pollbooks that update continuously during a voting period, enabling election officials to track who has voted in real-time.

Provisional Voting

Federal law guarantees voters in federal elections the right to cast a provisional ballot if they are otherwise refused a regular one. Generally, the need to vote provisionally occurs when a voter's name is not on the registration list, and the voter contends that he or she is lawfully registered to vote. Provisional ballots are used by states for a wide variety of other purposes, including the processing of change-of-address (in Ohio) and the failure by a voter to produce required ID. Another source of provisional ballots is voters who request absentee ballots, then either do not receive them or fail to return them.

In close elections, provisional ballots can be the focus of intense scrutiny, as their validity may not be determined for days or weeks after election day. In addition, some have looked to provisional ballots as an overall indicator of how well an election system works. Gerken has called provisional ballots the "miner's canary" for election administration, providing a warning sign that a particular election system is "under stress" (Gerken, 2009).

More than 2 million provisional ballots were cast during the 2008 Presidential election. Nearly three-quarters of these ballots were cast in just four states: California, New York, Ohio and Arizona (Table 9.1). Nationally, 28.2 percent of provisional ballots, or 609,016 ballots, were rejected, while another 5.5 percent were counted only in part. The most common reason for rejection, accounting for slightly more than half the rejections, was the determination that a voter was not properly registered in the state; another 16.8 percent were rejected for not being properly registered in the local jurisdiction or in the wrong precinct. Failure to provide sufficient identification resulted in the rejection of 12,321 ballots.

In spite of Gerken's assertion, interpreting provisional ballot statistics remains problematic. States employ provisional ballots in very different ways, and acceptance rates are difficult to interpret. High rates of provisional ballot acceptance may mean that voters are being improperly denied a regular ballot; low rates of acceptance may mean that many voters who think they are properly

Table 9.1 Top Provisional Ballot States, 2008

State	Provisional Ballots Cast	Provisional Ballots Rejected	% Rejected
California	798,332	136,286	17.1
New York	279,319	111,843	40.0
Ohio	204,651	39,390	19.2
Arizona	151,799	44,473	29.3

registered are in fact not. Both suggest problems in the election system, so establishing a normative basis is a challenge. In any case, provisional ballots remain a time bomb in American elections, providing fertile ground for recount controversies.

Voter ID

The introduction of more stringent identification requirements for voters was one of the most hotly contested election administration issues of the past decade. A weak ID requirement was included in HAVA, but covered only first-time voters who registered by mail and did not provide an ID when they registered. The list of acceptable IDs was also long, and included photo IDs and forms of identification such as utility bills. Pushed mainly by Republicans as a weapon against voter impersonation, voter ID laws caused considerable controversy when they were passed in Georgia and Indiana in 2005, and later in Florida and Arizona. Controversy also arose when a voter ID proposal was included among the recommendations of the Commission on Federal Election Reform (the "Carter-Baker Commission") in 2005. The Supreme Court's ruling in *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board* in 2008 validated the Indiana law, although litigation and public controversy continue. To opponents, tougher ID requirements are a partisan ploy to discourage voting among the poor, ethnic and racial minorities and the elderly, all of whom opponents claim are more likely to lack the required forms of ID.⁵

Voter ID laws are generally complicated pieces of legislation, making comparison between states difficult. The number of states requiring photo ID as a prerequisite to voting, however, remains small. The EAC survey found that only two – Florida and Indiana – require photo ID of all voters (Georgia did not respond to the Statutory Overview portion of the survey; three other states nominally require photo ID but accept an affidavit in its absence). Twenty-four of the 49 responding states required some form of ID beyond oral self-identification or provision of a signature; most of these accept non-photo ID.

Voting Technology

The notorious failure of punch cards in the Florida Presidential race in 2000 launched a federal drive to replace voting equipment: some \$3 billion was spent on voting technology through the EAC and HAVA, and there was wide expectation that electronic voting machines would replace the myriad punch card, optical

5 There has also been an attempt to require proof of citizenship in order to register or vote. Fewer states have moved on this issue, Georgia and Arizona being the exceptions, although with illegal immigration a leading national issue, more states are expected to follow suit.

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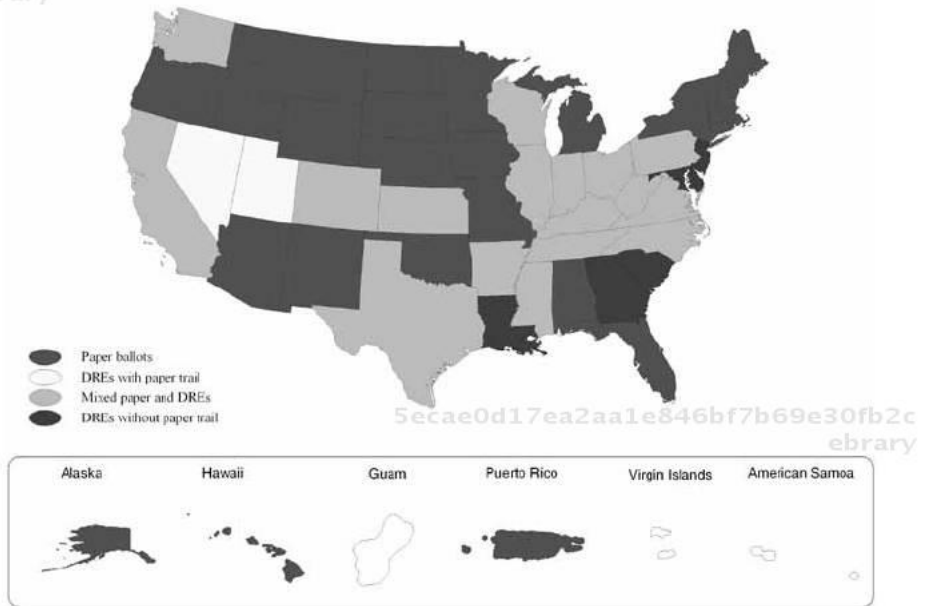


Figure 9.4 Map of Voting Technology

scan and lever machines in place across the country. Deploying direct recording electronic voting machines (DREs) turned out to be more difficult than anticipated, however. Concerns over their reliability and susceptibility to tampering spawned a cottage industry of electronic voting skeptics, who advocated for more traditional systems such as optical scan ballots that leave a paper ballot behind for recounting and auditing purposes (see Warf, 2006). Called voter-verified paper audit trails, or VVPAT, they were adopted by a series of states such as Maryland, who had been early adopters of DREs. The 2008 election, by one estimate, was the first in which the number of voters casting ballots by DREs actually declined over the previous election (Election Data Services, 2008).

Legacy technology, local discretion and controversies such as the one surrounding electronic voting has resulted in a patchwork in the deployment of voting technology (see Figure 9.4).⁶ While lever machines and punch cards were doomed by the requirements of HAVA, surviving were a wide variety of systems, including those using optically scanned ballots; various makes and models of DREs; and hybrid systems incorporating multiple technologies. Some jurisdictions

6 Because the EAC survey collects data on the number of machines rather than on how the technologies are used, I have used data from a nonpartisan advocacy group, Verified Voting, here rather than the EAC. The map in Figure 9.4 is adapted from Verified Voting's data. Available at: <http://www.verifiedvoting.org/verifier/index.php?ec=standard&state=&year=>

use one technology for in-person voting, another for absentee ballots, and a third for voting by disabled persons.

States that rely on DREs without a paper record are clustered along the East Coast. With New York's decision to adopt paper ballots, lever machines have vanished from the country's electoral landscape, and punch cards are in use only in some Idaho counties. Many states use combinations of technologies, either through serving different groups of voters or through variation from county to county; the state-level map in Figure 9.4 actually understates the spatial variation in voting technologies deployed.

Emerging Issues

Changes in voting technology, convenience voting and other election administration issues will continue to be foci of election scholars over the coming decade. In addition, a number of new issues appear poised for the next decade's battles over election reform. Voter identification laws are still being introduced in state legislatures in the wake of the Supreme Court's upholding of the Indiana ID law, and many of those same states will consider changes to the way they maintain their voter registration lists. In 2010 Georgia won federal clearance for a new database matching procedure which would compare new voter registration applications against drivers' license and Social Security databases, in an effort to confirm the citizenship of new voters. Arizona has a similar law. Opponents claim the matching procedure will place an unequal burden on minority, elderly and poor voters (Keefe, 2010). Other states may consider implementing such procedures on the heels of the federal clearance.

Voting by overseas citizens and uniformed services members will continue to be a focus both of research and policy, for a number of reasons. Almost alone among the major election topics, efforts to ease participation by these voters enjoys strong bipartisan support. The federal UOCAVA also gives federal lawmakers an unusual lever over what is traditionally a local and state prerogative. Finally, new technologies may be more of a boon to distant voters than to domestic ones. State experimentation in UOCAVA voting, such as allowing voter registration over the Internet and transmitting ballots electronically, will be watched closely for potential broader application. In 2009, Congress passed the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act, which will prompt further changes in how these voters cast their ballots.

Conclusions

The ways that American cast their ballots shows considerable spatial variation across the United States, and while reliable historical data is lacking, it appears that this divergence is increasing. Strong regional patterns appear as well. In the

West, voters increasingly cast their ballots through the mail. In the upper Midwest, and in selected other states, governments are lowering barriers to registration by allowing voters to register and cast their ballots on the same day. Early voting has become popular across the South and Southwest. Finally, some Southern and Western states have passed new laws that place additional burdens on voters to prove their identity and citizenship.

This divergence is important in several ways and at several scales. Nationally, the variation introduces a potentially significant variable in the ways that federal elections, including presidential ones, are decided. Combined, factors such as convenience voting, voter ID and registration rules, provisional ballots and voting technology can help mold the electorate and the number of counted ballots, and therefore can impact candidates' vote totals. Lengthening the window in which ballots are cast through early voting and extended deadlines for some voters means that people now vote with different sets of political knowledge. Late-breaking events, such as the disclosure of President George Bush's 1976 drunk driving charge, may come before election day but after substantial numbers of voters have already cast their ballots in some states. In addition, campaigns run under early voting laws may be more expensive or place a premium on a good campaign organization, which is needed to leverage the increased time to get a candidate's backers to the polls. The impact of all of these variations is still poorly understood.

At the state level, election laws are vulnerable to manipulation for partisan advantage. Laws that restrict or expand access to the ballot through raising or lowering the bar for registration and voting will rarely fall equally on all segments of the electorate. It is an article of faith among both parties that the marginal voter – the voter who will vote only in high turnout elections and even then may need additional motivation through get-out-the-vote techniques – will tend to vote Democratic in most places. Generally, Republicans, citing fear of electoral fraud, favor putting additional burdens on voters to ensure that only eligible voters cast ballots. Democrats, emphasizing the importance of broad participation and leery of laws that might disenfranchise, argue for making registering and voting easier. Both parties are well aware of the partisan impacts of changes in election laws.

Locally, changes in election laws inevitably raise questions of equal protection, particularly if discretion is left to local election officials in implementation and enforcement. Equal access to the franchise for voters of ethnic or racial minorities has been guaranteed relatively recently, and deep suspicions remain about the country's ability to preserve equal voting rights from discrimination and the push for partisan advantage. Barriers to voting can be both formal, through the imposition of laws that disproportionately impact certain groups, or informal, through the use of administrative policies that discriminate. Formal barriers may include restrictive registration or polling place laws, while informal techniques may be such seemingly mundane administrative decisions such as the distribution of voting machines or the location of polling places or early vote centers. New types of data, such as information on waiting times at polling places for white

and minority voters, may be needed to measure disparate impact of some of the voting changes outlined in this chapter. In fact, given the growing divergence in American voting laws, such issues may be the new battleground for voting rights as the twenty-first century progresses.

Beyond the impact of election laws and practices on the political process, scholars interested in American regionalism can glean insights by the ways states and regions run their elections, and the discourses of reform that are produced. Debates over voter ID, for example, can help us understand the ways that meanings of citizenship are contested in different parts of the United States. The gulf between those who see voting as a right and those who see it primarily as an obligation or a privilege intersects with national and regional debates over race and illegal immigration, among other topics.

This chapter has relied upon new and improving datasets, but the push for improved data collection is still in its early stages. There is still a crying need for more and better quality data, at lower scales (including, most importantly, the precinct level), and for better and more widely available maps. Data the county (or equivalent) and state levels don't tell us much about the way variation in balloting laws and practices may discriminate against particular communities. Since few states maintain voter registration data by race, reference to demographic variables will generally be accomplished through Census data at the tract- and lower levels. Calculating these variables will require more accurate and up-to-date precinct maps, made available through election websites. Few jurisdictions provide such maps at present.

Geographers, particularly political geographers, should be attuned to the potential research and service opportunities available in helping improve election data, cartography and analysis. Research into the geography of election administration can be a valuable and engaging teaching tool, and an outlet for student and professor community outreach. Every university, community college and high school resides in an election jurisdiction, and many of these jurisdictions are eager for research and service partnerships. On the scholarly side, disputes over voting rules will demand the expertise of scholars who can evaluate their potential impact; litigation over voting rights and other election topics shows no signs of abating. Geographers are well positioned to make valuable contributions to this field.

The tug-of-war that is embedded in the current landscape of American voting and described briefly in this chapter is largely the result of two distinctly American facets of democracy: local control of election administration, and more fundamentally, longstanding differences in how Americans view democracy and the right to vote. The extreme federalism of the US election system leaves states and their local jurisdictions with wide discretion on how to run the voting process; local preferences and histories are producing different solutions to the challenges of casting and counting ballots in twenty-first century. These local practices combine with deep disagreements over the value of the right to vote and the obligations that can be placed upon a voter by the state. These differences predate

the US Constitution and have never been entirely resolved: it is no accident that since the Bill of Rights, nearly half of the Constitution's 17 amendments have concerned the right to vote. Despite these amendments and the passage of such landmark federal laws as the Voting Rights Act, Americans have yet to arrive at a national consensus on who should be allowed to vote and the role of the state in making voting easier or harder to do. The divergence across the country in how Americans cast their ballots will be well worth studying in coming years.

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The 2008 US Presidential Primary Elections in Geographic Perspective

Fred M. Shelley and Heather Hollen¹

The 2008 US presidential election was one of the most riveting and fascinating presidential elections in the country's history. Two months before the general election, it was all but certain that the voters of the United States would either elect an African-American president or a female Vice President for the first time in US history.

The selections of Senators Barack Obama and John McCain as the presidential nominees of the Democratic and Republican parties, respectively, followed many months of intensive campaigning among potential nominees in both parties. Voters throughout the country expressed their preferences among these potential nominees in primary elections and caucuses in all 50 states. The results of these primary elections themselves reveal a fascinating portrait of geographic differences within states as voters expressed their preferences for the Presidential nominees of the two major parties.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the geography of the 2008 primary elections. In doing so, it is possible to describe the history and geography of the United States' unique system of selecting major-party Presidential candidates. Detailed discussion of the 2008 campaigns for the Democratic and Republican nominations are presented along with the results of cartographic and statistical analysis of county-level voting outcomes in some key states. Furthermore, analytical issues associated with using electoral-geographic analysis of US presidential primary elections are called to attention. A general discussion on the impacts of the primary election campaign on the general election, and on future elections concludes the chapter.

US Presidential Primary Elections in Geographical and Historical Context

The process of selecting the president of the United States is a two-step process. First, both major parties select their presidential nominees. Once these nominees are chosen, they run against each other in the November general election.

1 The authors thank Trung Vinh Tran for assistance with the graphics.

Methods of selecting nominees for high public offices such as the president of the United States vary among the world's democracies. A party's nominee can be chosen in one of several ways: by party members who are elected officials, by the party elite, by party activists, and by ordinary voters (Punnett 1993). In the United States, all four methods of selecting party nominees to run for President have been used at various times over the course of American history. Over the past two centuries, major American political parties have moved from selection of presidential nominees by members of Congress to selection by party elites to selection by representatives chosen by ordinary voters. The system of presidential primary elections used today gives ordinary voters much more influence in the selection of presidential nominees than was the case in the past, or is the case in many other countries.

Relative to political parties in many other countries, US political parties are loose coalitions of often disparate interest groups. Although each party drafts a platform that expresses the policy positions of the party on major domestic and international issues, these party platforms are not binding on the party's candidates and its members. Frequently, battles within a party for its presidential nomination reflect deeper divisions within the party over the party's priorities and its underlying political philosophy. Both parties attempt, with varying degrees of success, to unite diverse economic and cultural interests that are often diametrically opposed to one another. Tensions between these interests are often especially evident during primary elections. The 2008 election was no exception.

Prior to the New Deal of the 1930s, two key elements in the Democratic Party's uneasy coalition included Southern conservatives and Northern urban dwellers. The South had been strongly Democratic since the end of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Many Southern Democratic leaders and officeholders were nativists, supporters of prohibiting the manufacturing and sale of alcoholic beverages, supporters of state's rights, and vehement opponents of civil rights for African-Americans and other minorities (Key 1949). In the North, however, many Democrats were blue-collar urban dwellers and labor union members. Many were European immigrants themselves, or the children or grandchildren of immigrants. Describing the Democrats of the 1930s, Barone (1990, 28) wrote that "The Democracy was a party of white southerners and northern Catholics, of Southern Baptist Prohibitionists and immigrant imbibers, of nativists and those who spoke no English, of teeming eastern cities and the wastelands of the Great Basin. Its members had little in common except that most of its members were not native-born white Protestants."

Barone went on to describe the constituencies of two leading Democrats in the House of Representatives at this time: Eugene Cox of Georgia and Adolph Sabath of Illinois. Barone wrote, "Two such different constituencies as the worn-out cotton lands of south Georgia and the mostly abandoned slum streets of Chicago's river wards could hardly be imagined; little wonder that their representatives, members of the same party who were yoked together on the Rules Committee, could agree

on almost nothing" (224). Franklin D. Roosevelt, however, was able to create a Democratic majority during the 1930s and 1940s by linking these two traditional Democratic constituencies with African-Americans, ideological liberals, and academics and other highly educated professionals. This "New Deal" coalition elected Roosevelt four times. Even after it broke down at the presidential level, the Democrats controlled the House of Representatives for all but four years between 1931 and 1994. Although the Democrats have held the White House for only 12 of the previous 40 years, this coalition continues to impact Democratic Party politics. Tension between old-line, working class Democrats and ideological liberals and professionals has characterized the party's politics for decades, and was critical to the 2008 primary elections (Shelley 2008).

The Republicans have often been as divided as the Democrats over the past several decades. Prior to the 1960s, the Republicans were split between what some historians have termed "Wall Street" and "Main Street" Republicans. The "Wall Street" Republicans were based in the large metropolitan areas of the East and Midwest. They were internationalist in outlook, oriented to big business, and supportive of an assertive foreign policy; after World War II, they strongly supported an aggressive stance against the Soviets in the Cold War. "Main Street" Republicans, on the other hand, tended to come from small towns and rural areas west of the Appalachians. They were much more skeptical of foreign involvement and supported agrarian interests.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Republicans drifted to the conservative side of the political spectrum. The nomination of Barry Goldwater, whose candidacy was strongly opposed by Northeastern liberal Republicans, for President in 1964 signaled the rise of conservatives, who often opposed the continued expansion of government, within the Republican Party. As conservatives became increasingly prominent within the Republican Party, they became divided into several distinct factions. Economic conservatives favored restricting government influence on the economy. Social conservatives favored increased government control over such issues as abortion, gay marriage, and immigration. Neoconservatives, who support an aggressive foreign policy stance, represent a third major interest group in the Republican Party.

Just as Roosevelt succeeded in uniting the Democratic factions in the 1930s, Ronald Reagan was successful in uniting Republicans, both economic conservatives and social conservatives, in the 1980s. Since Reagan's time, however, the Republicans have faced continuing tension between economic, social, and foreign policy conservatives. These tensions were evident in the early primaries in 2008 as well.

The task of resolving intraparty tensions and attempting to unite the disparate interests that comprise major political parties has been undertaken in different ways over the course of US political history. During the early nineteenth century, members of Congress selected their parties' nominees for President and Vice President. In 1831, however, the Anti-Masonic Party held the first national party convention to select the party's 1832 nominees. The Democratic Party soon

followed suit, and the Whig Party held its first national convention in 1839. Since that time, US political parties have chosen their nominees at national party conventions.

The transition from selecting nominees by members of Congress to selecting them at national party conventions was facilitated by the development of the railroad, which enabled delegates from most parts of the country to attend them after at most a few days of travel.

Nineteenth-century nominating conventions were held at locations easily accessible by rail. The 1831 Anti-Masonic convention was held in Baltimore, as were the first six Democratic national conventions between 1832 and 1852 and five of the six Whig national conventions between 1839 and 1860. After the Civil War, Chicago emerged as the center of the nation's railroad network. Between 1860 and 1916, nine of the Republican Party's 15 nominating conventions took place in Chicago. Today, delegates from throughout the country can reach the convention site within a day. Since transportation time and cost are no longer critical factors in selecting convention sites, political or symbolic factors have taken precedence in site selection. For example, the Republicans held their 2004 convention in New York in part to remind voters of Republican President George W. Bush's response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on New York's World Trade Center.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Republican and Democratic Party conventions were dominated by party elites, including political bosses whose decisions were made in "smoke-filled rooms." The public had little input in the selection of convention delegates or party nominees. In 1910, however, Oregon established the first presidential preference primary. Oregon's delegates to the parties' national conventions were required to support the winner of the state's primary. Between 1920 and 1968, 13 to 20 states held primary elections each presidential election year (Ware 2002). However, many of these primaries were "beauty contests." In many states, delegates were selected independently of the presidential primaries, and they were under no obligation to support the candidate who got the most votes in their state's primary election.

In 1968, the Democratic Party held a bitterly contested nomination battle. In March of that year, President Lyndon Johnson almost lost the first-in-the-nation New Hampshire primary to his challenger, Senator Eugene McCarthy, who opposed continuing US involvement in the Vietnam War (White 1969; Shelley 2008). Johnson withdrew from the race soon afterwards and Senator Robert Kennedy and Vice President Hubert Humphrey entered the race for the Democratic nomination. Kennedy, who also opposed continuing US involvement in the Vietnam War, ran head-to-head in several primaries against McCarthy before Kennedy's tragic assassination after the California primary in June. Most of the delegates selected in primary elections were pledged to either Kennedy or McCarthy. Humphrey did not enter the primaries. Nevertheless, he was supported by enough delegates and party leaders from non-primary states to win the nomination. He lost the subsequent general election to the Republican nominee, Richard Nixon.

After the bitter intraparty battle of 1968, the Democrats initiated party reforms that gave greater input to ordinary voters in the selection of their party's presidential nominees. These reforms were used for the first time in the 1972 election. The Republicans initiated similar reforms in the 1970s. These new rules mandated more public participation in the selection of convention delegates. All states now hold either primary elections or caucuses in order to select convention delegates.

Primary election procedures vary between parties and from state to state. Some states hold "closed" primaries in which a voter is required to be a registered party member in advance in order to participate in that party's primary. Others use "open" primaries, in which a voter can choose either party's primary ballot at the polls and is not required to be a registered party member. Delegates chosen through primary elections or precinct caucuses are pledged to particular candidates and are required to vote for their candidate in the first round of balloting at the national convention. The methods by which the parties allocate pledged delegates between candidates for the nomination also vary between parties. The Democrats use a system of proportional representation. The number of delegates pledged to each candidate in a state's primary is proportional to that candidate's percentage of vote in the primary. In contrast, in many states the Republicans use a "winner-take-all" system in which all the elected delegates are pledged to the candidate who wins the most votes in that state's primary. About 20 percent of Democratic delegates are so-called "superdelegates." Superdelegates, who include Democratic members of Congress, state governors, and leading party professionals, are free to vote for whomever they wish and are not bound by primary results.

In 2008, the winner-take-all system worked to McCain's advantage in his quest for the Republican nomination, because McCain won several primaries over his leading opponents by narrow margins. For example, in the Missouri Republican primary on February 5 McCain got 194,053 votes (33.0 percent), Mike Huckabee got 185,642 (31.5 percent), and Mitt Romney got 172,329 (29.3 percent) (Figure 10.1). However, in accordance with the winner-take-all system McCain got all 58 of Missouri's pledged delegates. In Oklahoma, McCain got 122,722 votes (36.6 percent) as compared to 111,899 for Huckabee (33.4 percent) and 83,030 for Romney (24.8 percent) (Figure 10.2). Under Oklahoma's rules, three of the state's 25 delegates go to the winner in each of the state's five House of Representatives districts, with the other ten going to the statewide winner. Huckabee won pluralities in two of the five districts and gained six delegates, while McCain got 19 delegates by winning pluralities in the other three districts and a statewide plurality. Romney, despite finishing a close third in both Missouri and Oklahoma, won no delegates from either of these states.

Furthermore, when compared to the Democratic party, the proportional system helped Obama, who lost most of the larger states to Clinton but won a majority of primaries and caucuses in the smaller states. In Missouri, Obama had 406,917 votes (49.2 percent) with 395,185 (47.9 percent) for Clinton. Each got 36 of the state's 72 delegates. In Oklahoma, Clinton won a substantial majority, with 228,480 votes (54.8 percent) to 130,130 (31.2 percent) for Obama and 42,725 (10.2 percent)

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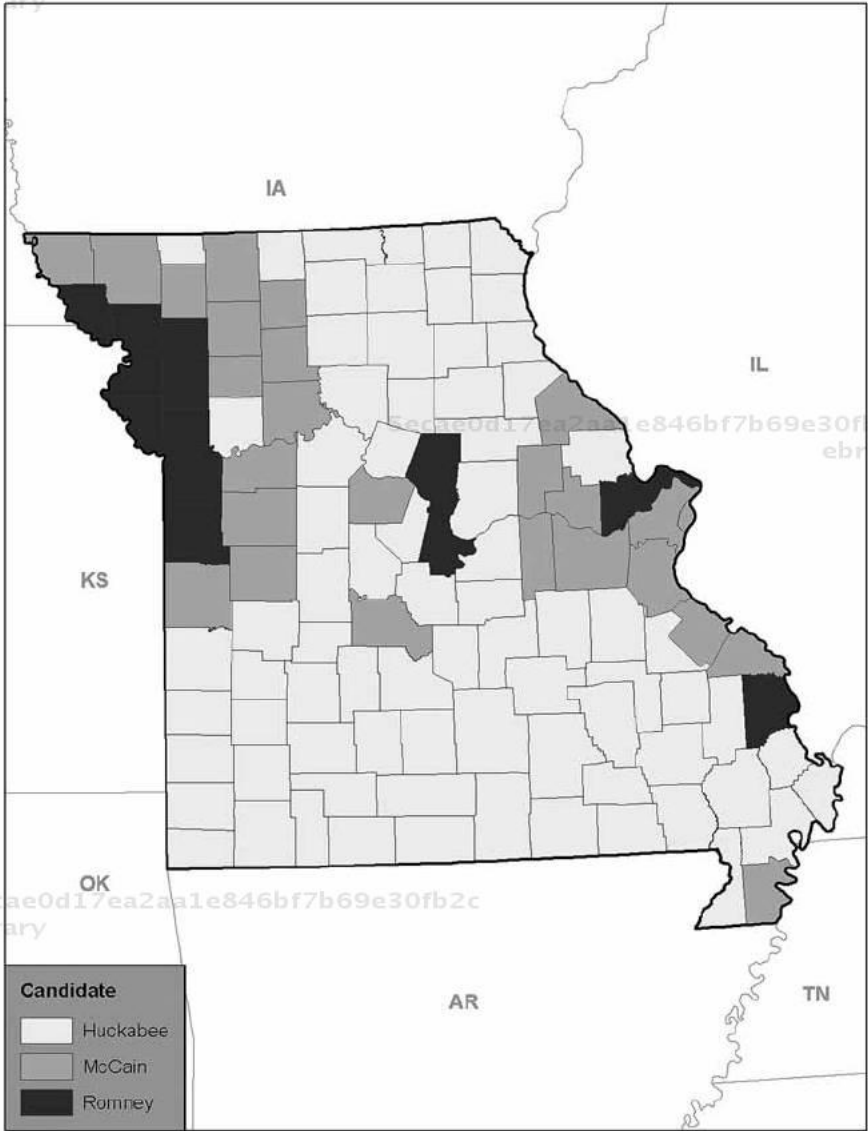


Figure 10.1 Map Showing the Results of Missouri Republican Primary, 2008

for the third-place finisher, John Edwards. Clinton won 24 of the 38 Oklahoma delegates, with 14 going to Obama. Because Oklahoma Democratic Party policy requires a candidate to achieve at least 15 percent of the vote to get any delegates, Edwards got no pledged delegates. Under Republican rules, Obama would have won all of Missouri's delegates and Clinton would have won all of Oklahoma's

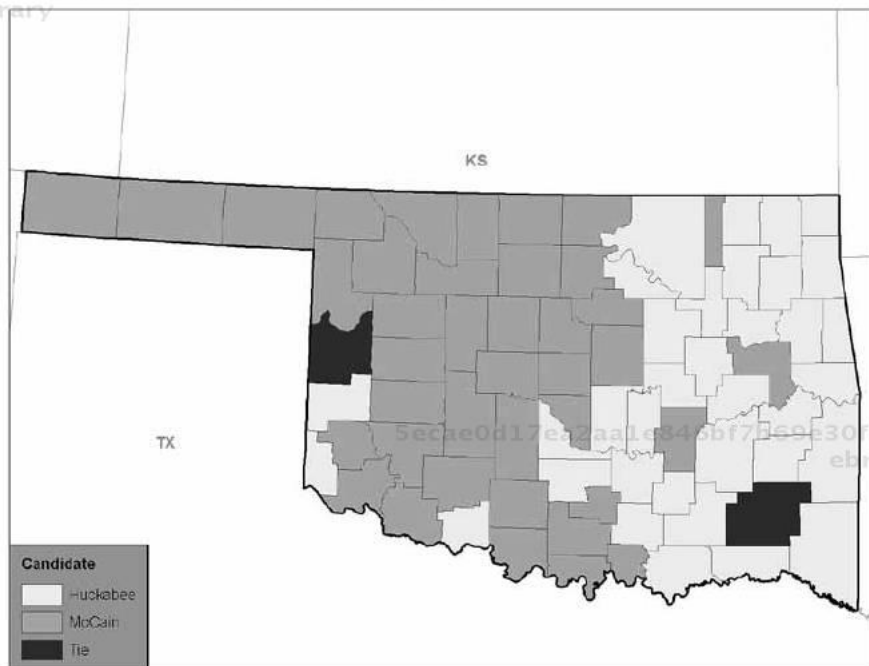


Figure 10.2 Map Showing the Results of Oklahoma Republican Primary, 2008

delegates. However, if all states had used winner-take-all systems, Obama would have lost the Democratic Party nomination to Clinton, who won many large-state primary elections including those in California, Texas, and New York.

The Primary Calendar and its Impact

The United States' primary election system is also unique in that primaries are not held simultaneously. Rather, various states hold their primary elections at different times over a period of several months. In 2008, the first primary elections took place in January; the final ones occurred in June.

The order in which the states hold primary elections is critical to the eventual outcome of the process. Candidates who do poorly in early primaries often drop out of the race. Thus, voters in states that hold later primaries may be unable to vote for their initial candidates of choice. In January 2008, for example, voters in New Hampshire, which has a monopoly over the first primary each election year, could choose among seven Republicans and six Democrats. By March, all of the viable candidates except for McCain, Obama, and Clinton had dropped out of the race. McCain had clinched the Republican nomination by early March, and Republican voters in late-voting states had no input into the selection of their

party's nominee. As a general rule, the number of viable alternatives available to voters declines from earlier to later primaries (Shugart 2004).

Because states holding early primaries tend to have more influence on the outcome, there was considerable controversy about what states would be permitted to hold the earliest primaries in the 2008 cycle. Since 1952, New Hampshire has held the first primary election in the United States. New Hampshire has held a primary election every four years since 1916 (Gregg and Gardner 2000). The New Hampshire primary proved to be an early and important gauge of voter support for the Democrats in 1952 and 1968, and for the Republicans in 1952, 1960, 1964, and 1968. By the late 1960s, the New Hampshire primary had become recognized as the first important test of voter support each presidential election year.

After the two parties reformed their nominee selection processes in the 1970s, the state of Iowa initiated a system of precinct caucuses, which were held prior to the New Hampshire primary. Democratic and Republican voters in each precinct across the state meet to elect delegates to county conventions (Hull 2007). Delegates pledged to that potential nominee at the precinct level are allocated proportionally on the basis of support levels within the precinct (Squire 1989). The county conventions select delegates to Congressional district conventions, which in turn select delegates to statewide conventions. The Iowa caucus system gained nationwide attention in 1976, when then little-known Jimmy Carter, the former governor of Georgia, won a plurality. Carter's success in Iowa helped propel him to victory in the New Hampshire primary and eventually to the Democratic Party nomination and the Presidency.

Since 1976, Iowa and New Hampshire have held the first caucuses and first primary, respectively, in the country each presidential election year. In 1977, the New Hampshire legislature passed a law requiring New Hampshire's primary to precede those of any other state (Gregg and Gardner 2000). The parties were authorized to move the New Hampshire primary to an earlier date if another state announced plans to hold its primary earlier than that of New Hampshire. On several occasions, New Hampshire has moved its primary earlier and earlier as other states have scheduled early primaries also. In 1968, the New Hampshire primary was held on March 12; in 2008, it took place on January 8. Critics have pointed out that Iowa and New Hampshire with their small populations, few minority voters, and lack of large metropolitan areas are unrepresentative of the US electorate as a whole. It is also argued that the early scheduling of Iowa's caucuses and New Hampshire primary gives these states a disproportionate influence in the outcome of presidential elections. Since 1952, only Bill Clinton in 1992 has won the Presidency without winning either the Iowa precinct caucuses or the New Hampshire primary. Moreover, Clinton did not contest the Iowa precinct caucuses that year because one of his rivals for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination that year was an Iowan, Senator Tom Harkin. Clinton and George W. Bush in 2000 were the only Presidents since 1960 to have won the general election without winning the New Hampshire primary. In 2008, Obama and Huckabee won Iowa, while Clinton and McCain won New Hampshire.

In response to the perceived disproportionate influence of Iowa and New Hampshire in the electoral process over the years, party leaders in other states considered holding their primaries earlier, or working with leaders in neighboring states to hold their primaries on the same day in order to increase the influence of their regions on the nomination process. In the 1980s, some southern Democratic leaders became concerned that Southern candidates would be uncompetitive in the Northern states of Iowa and New Hampshire. In response, they decided to hold their primaries on the same day with the idea that a Southern-oriented candidate who did well in several states at the same time would get a boost toward the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. Thus the "Super Tuesday" concept was born, and was used for the first time in 1988. In that year, the Southern primaries were divided among several candidates and a Northern candidate, Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts, won the Democratic nomination. Four years later, however, Clinton swept the Super Tuesday states in 1992 en route to the Democratic nomination and victory in the general election.

Before the 2008 election cycle began, party leaders in other states also explored the idea of adjusting the primary calendar in order to give voters in their states more influence in the nomination process. In August 2006, the Democratic National Committee agreed to allow South Carolina and Nevada, along with Iowa and New Hampshire, to hold "early" primaries prior to February 5. South Carolina and Nevada are Southern and Western states, respectively, and both contain larger minority populations than do Iowa or New Hampshire. Between them, the four "early" states were seen as representative of the country as a whole in terms of both geography and demography. The Committee ruled that these four states could hold their primaries prior to February 5, but that no other state could do so.

In 2007, this ruling was challenged in Florida and Michigan. The Michigan Legislature, without the support of the Democratic National Committee, passed a bill scheduling that state's primary for January 15. Florida scheduled its primary for January 29. In response, the Committee stripped the Michigan and Florida Democratic Parties of their delegates, rendering the primaries meaningless. The Democratic candidates agreed not to campaign in these states, and Obama and several other candidates had their names taken off Michigan's Democratic ballot. Nevertheless, Democratic voters in both states participated in the primaries, both of which were won by Hillary Clinton. Later in the campaign, Clinton would argue for seating delegates from these states. As the nomination campaign drew to a close and Obama's nomination was assured, the Committee eventually agreed to seat the delegates from the two states.

As the controversy associated with the Florida and Michigan primaries continued, other states scheduled their primaries. Twenty states including California, New York, and Illinois chose February 5, the first day that the Democratic National Committee set aside for primary elections. Thus, February 5 became the 2008 version of Super Tuesday. The remaining 26 states held primaries at various times between February 9 and June 3.

The 2008 Candidates and Outcomes

As the 2008 primary season approached, potential nominees in both parties announced their intentions to run for the Presidency. The Republicans anticipated a protracted battle between several candidates, each of whom brought very different strengths. Meanwhile, Clinton was seen as the front-runner for the Democratic nomination throughout 2007. Most experts expected her to clinch the Democratic nomination early, whereas they expected a drawn-out battle for the Republican nomination. As events turned out, the Republican nomination was decided quickly whereas the Democratic nomination was not decided until the end of the primary season in June.

This uncertainty occurred in part because neither the incumbent President nor the incumbent Vice President sought the Presidency. For only the second time since 1928, both parties knew going into the 2008 presidential election campaign that neither President Bush nor Vice President Dick Cheney would be on the 2008 general election ballot. In 1951, the 22nd Amendment, which limits Presidents to two terms, was adopted. Between 1951 and 2000, only three Presidents – Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1960, Ronald Reagan in 1988, and Bill Clinton in 2000 – completed two four-year terms. Vice Presidents Richard Nixon, George H.W. Bush, and Al Gore, respectively, won their parties' presidential nominations. Bush was elected in 1988, while Nixon and Gore narrowly lost to John F. Kennedy and George W. Bush respectively. The younger Bush's Vice President, Dick Cheney, had low popularity ratings and had faced a long history of health problems. Cheney said repeatedly during Bush's Presidency that he had no interest in running for President (Barnes 2005), and he made no effort to contest the 2008 Republican nomination.

With neither George W. Bush nor Cheney on the ballot, the race for the Republican nomination was wide open. During 2007, several candidates announced plans to run. These included Senator John McCain of Arizona, former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, former Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, former Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, former Senator Fred Thompson of Tennessee, and Representative Ron Paul of Texas. In addition to these potential nominees, several other candidates including Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas and Representatives Duncan Hunter of California and Tom Tancredo of Colorado also initiated campaigns. None of these campaigns generated momentum, however, and all three dropped out early in the process.

Each of these candidates appealed to a very different constituency, reflecting the long-standing tension between economic, social, and foreign policy conservatives within the Republican Party. McCain, who had contested and lost the Republican nomination to Bush in 2000, emphasized his role as a maverick and an independent voice. McCain was a strong supporter of the war in Iraq, but took a more moderate position on many social and environmental issues than did many Republican voters. Giuliani, who had been Mayor of New York at the time of the 9/11 terrorist attack, emphasized national security issues. Huckabee, an ordained

Southern Baptist minister, emphasized social conservatism. Romney emphasized his business experience and the economy in his campaign, while Thompson tried to appeal to the Republican Party's conservative base. Paul, who had been the Libertarian Party's presidential nominee in 1988, argued against the war in Iraq and against government interference in the economy and in social issues.

Despite this vigorous competition within the Republican Party, many observers expected that the Democrats would win the 2008 election. Several factors appeared to boost the Democrats' chances. Since the adoption of the 22nd Amendment, a party had won three consecutive elections only once – in 1988, when George H.W. Bush succeeded Reagan. However, Reagan had won landslide victories in 1980 and 1984 and he left office four years later as a highly popular incumbent. The younger Bush, however, had been elected only narrowly in 2000 and 2004 and his popularity among voters eroded throughout his second term. By the beginning of 2008, the unpopular war in Iraq had been going on for nearly five years. Many Americans believed that the economy was weakening and expected it to continue going downhill. Corruption scandals forced the resignation or humiliation of several Republican members of Congress. In part because of these issues, Bush's popularity rating among the American electorate remained low throughout most of his second term.

Throughout most of 2007, many commentators and party professionals expected Senator Hillary Clinton to receive the Democratic nomination. However, the perceived likelihood of a Democratic victory in 2008 induced several other candidates to contest the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. The Democratic field included Senators Joseph Biden of Delaware, Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, and Barack Obama of Illinois, former Senator John Edwards of North Carolina, Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico, and two fringe candidates, Representative Dennis Kucinich of Ohio and former Governor Mike Gravel of Alaska.

Biden, Dodd, and Richardson brought extensive governmental experience to their campaigns. Biden, who would eventually be selected as Obama's running mate, had served in the Senate for 35 years and was Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Dodd had served in the Senate since 1980 and had previously served in the House of Representatives. Richardson had also served in the House of Representatives for 14 years, and had also served as the US representative to the United Nations and as Secretary of Energy under President Bill Clinton.

Clinton, Obama, and Edwards had had much less formal governmental experience. Although Clinton emphasized her experience during her campaign, her formal governmental experience was limited to seven years in the Senate. Edwards had held public office for only six years, serving a single term in the Senate before running unsuccessfully for Vice President in 2004. Obama had been elected to the Senate in 2004, and his previous political experience had been limited to eight years in the Illinois State Senate. Nevertheless, as 2007 ended polls showed that Clinton, Obama, and Edwards were most popular among Democratic voters. Obama and Edwards in particular emphasized the need for

change in their campaigns, and it became clear as the campaign continued that the desire for change resonated more with many voters than did the experience factor. Obama also emphasized his opposition to the war in Iraq, criticizing Biden, Clinton, Dodd, and Edwards for having voted in favor of authorizing expenditures to support it in 2003. (At that time, Obama had not yet been elected to the Senate.)

The Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary began to winnow down the field. Huckabee, with strong support from evangelical voters, won the most votes and delegates in the Republican caucuses in Iowa on January 3, 2008. Huckabee won 34 percent of the vote and carried 74 of Iowa's 99 counties. Romney finished second with 25 percent of the vote and carried 24 counties. On the Democratic side, Obama won with 38 percent of the vote. Edwards with 29.7 percent edged Clinton with 29.4 percent for second place. Richardson, Biden, and Dodd split less than three percent of the vote and dropped out of the race.

The New Hampshire primary took place five days later, on January 8. On the Democratic side, a poll taken shortly after Obama won the Iowa caucuses showed him with a 13-point lead over Clinton (Page 2008). However, Clinton won a narrow victory over Obama. Clinton won 39 percent of the vote, Obama won 36 percent, and Edwards won 16 percent (Shelley 2008). Later in January, Obama easily defeated Clinton and Edwards in South Carolina, where Edwards had been born. He subsequently left the race, leaving Clinton and Obama as the last contenders for the Democratic nomination. Meanwhile, McCain defeated Romney, 37 percent to 32 percent, in the Republican primary. Huckabee followed with 11 percent, and Giuliani finished fourth with 9 percent. A week later, the Republicans held a primary in Michigan. Romney, a Michigan native whose father had once served as that state's Governor, defeated McCain by a 39 percent–30 percent margin. McCain also won the primary in Florida, where Giuliani had campaigned extensively but got few votes. Shortly after the Florida primary, Giuliani dropped out of the race and endorsed McCain.

Twenty states held primaries on "Super Tuesday" on February 5. McCain won several key Republican primaries and took a commanding lead in the delegate count. After Super Tuesday, McCain's nomination was a foregone conclusion. However, Huckabee remained in the race for a few more weeks until McCain had won enough delegates to formally clinch the nomination. Attention then shifted to the Democratic Party. Clinton and Obama divided the Super Tuesday states. Clinton won primaries in California, New Jersey, Massachusetts and her home state of New York, while Obama won in Missouri, Georgia, Connecticut and his home state of Illinois. Smaller states that also voted on Super Tuesday divided evenly between Clinton and Obama, and political commentators declared Super Tuesday a draw.

After Super Tuesday, Obama picked up momentum by winning primaries in Louisiana, Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Wisconsin throughout the month of February. Obama's success encouraged some superdelegates who had originally supported Clinton to reconsider their commitments. Clinton rebounded

with victories in Ohio and Texas on March 4, while Obama won Vermont and Rhode Island on the same day. By this time, Obama had a narrow but significant lead in the Democratic delegate count. Clinton won Pennsylvania in late April and narrowly won Indiana two weeks later, but Obama won a solid victory in North Carolina on the same day. By this time, a majority of the Democratic superdelegates had declared support for Obama, increasing his lead in the Democratic delegate count. Even though Clinton won late primaries in West Virginia, Kentucky, and South Dakota, Obama was too far ahead in the delegate count for Clinton to catch up. Obama sewed up the nomination on June 3 with a victory in Montana, and Clinton formally suspended her campaign the following day.

Analysis

Numerous studies have been devoted to cartographic and statistical analysis of mapped results of individual elections or electoral sequences. Over many years, this line of research has provided valuable insights into understanding the political economies and cultures of the United States and other countries. Of course, the shortcomings of electoral geography have long been recognized, including the possibility of the ecological fallacy, associated difficulties in assuming or determining motivations of voters on the basis of electoral data, and the assumption that explanatory variables represent meaningful surrogates for the characteristics of individual voters.

These difficulties associated with interpretation of geographically disaggregated election results may be even more problematic when applied to US primary elections, for several reasons. Part of the problem lies with the nature of the primary election process itself. As we have seen, the 2008 primary season lasted five months. Issues of concern to voters in early primaries receded by later primaries, and vice versa. Those candidates who did not do well in early primaries dropped out of the race, reducing the set of choices available to voters who happened to live in states holding later primaries. The Republican race was essentially over after Super Tuesday, after which it was clear that McCain would be the Republican nominee regardless of the outcomes of later primaries. Thus, few insights can be gained from analysis of the later Republican primaries because their outcomes had no effect on the overall race for the Republican presidential nomination.

Another problem associated particularly with primary elections is that the electorate participating in each primary represents only a subset of a place's total electorate. A voter can participate in the Democratic primary or the Republican primary, but not both. The demographic, ethnic, and economic characteristics of voters participating in each party's primary can vary considerably. For example, according to the 2000 US census about 11.5 percent of Missouri's population was African-American. Because a large majority of African-Americans in Missouri and other states are Democrats, according to exit polls African-Americans

represented nearly 20 percent of the Democratic Party's primary electorate in Missouri. However, less than 3 percent of the Republican voters of Missouri were African-Americans. Because the overwhelming majority of Missouri's Republican primary voters were Euro-Americans, using race as an explanatory variable to explain levels of support for Republican candidates is useless. Data from the US Census and other government sources describe the characteristics of a place's population but do not break these data down between Democratic and Republican primaries.

Recognizing these pitfalls, we nevertheless conducted county-level analysis of Republican and Democratic primary elections in various states. Statistical analyses, comparison of counties that were carried by different candidates, and state-level exit polls were used to shed light on geographic differences within and between states in primary election outcomes. Through detailed analysis of the Super Tuesday primary elections in Missouri and Oklahoma it was possible to make connections between the geographical make-up of the voters and their constituent selections. These states were chosen because both primaries were very closely contested between three leading Republican contenders – McCain, Huckabee, and Romney.

Although Missouri and Oklahoma share a boundary, Missouri has long been a bellwether. Its electoral votes have gone to the national winner of every presidential election since 1904, with the exceptions of 1956 and 2008, in which McCain won Missouri's electoral votes by a margin of less than 4,000 popular votes. Missouri's demography closely parallels that of the US as a whole. Missouri is 11.5 percent African-American. Its per capita income in 1999 was \$19,936; 13.3 percent of its residents were over 65, and 13.0 percent were living in poverty in 2000. These figures for the US as a whole were \$21,387, 12.4 percent, and 12.7 percent respectively. Missouri's population density of 81.2 persons per square mile is similar to the 79.6 persons per square mile across the United States. Thus, the demography and economic status of Missouri closely parallel that of the US as a whole. Oklahoma, on the other hand, is a strongly "red" state that has supported the Republican nominee for President in every election since 1952, with the exception of 1964. Relative to Missouri, Oklahoma is more rural, has fewer minorities, and has a lower per capita income.

Although McCain won both states' Republican primaries narrowly, in both cases Huckabee won a majority of counties. Huckabee won a plurality in 72 counties in Missouri, with 30 for McCain and 13 for Romney (Figure 10.1). Counties carried by all three candidates in Missouri were geographically concentrated. Nine of Romney's 13 counties were located in the Kansas City metropolitan area. McCain was strongest in more rural counties around Kansas City, and in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Huckabee swept the southern portion of Missouri (which borders his home state of Arkansas) and in northeastern Missouri, a region sometimes known as "Little Dixie" because of the Southern origins of many of the region's early settlers (Hurt 1992).

Counties carried by the three candidates in Missouri show very different characteristics. The counties carried by Romney tended to grow more rapidly and contain younger, better-educated, and higher-income voters. The median per-capita income of Romney's counties was \$19,844 as compared to \$16,197 for McCain and \$14,885 for Huckabee. The median percentage of college graduates was 23.4 percent for Romney counties as compared to 12.1 percent for McCain counties and 10.8 percent for Huckabee counties. The median population density was 175.7 persons per square mile in Romney counties compared to 29.5 for McCain counties and 29.0 for Huckabee counties. Thus, Romney did better in urbanized as opposed to rural areas. These data suggest that Romney's appeal in Missouri was greatest among younger, more upscale, and better-educated Republicans. This is corroborated by positive correlations between county percentages for Romney with per capita income ($r=0.68$) and percentage of residents holding college degrees ($r=0.57$). Levels of support for Bush in 2004 were similar among all three groups of counties; the median Bush percentage in 2004 was 64 percent for Huckabee counties, 62 percent for McCain counties, and 59 percent for Romney counties.

In Oklahoma, Huckabee outpolled McCain in 39 of the state's 77 counties, with McCain winning the remaining 38 (Figure 10.2). Romney, who came in third, won no counties in Oklahoma. Huckabee was strongest in the poorer southern and eastern portion of the state, while McCain did best in the wealthier urban areas and in the rural western part of the state. As in Missouri, McCain's counties tended to have higher incomes and levels of education. McCain also did better among elderly Republican voters, as demonstrated in exit polls. However, the counties carried by McCain were more strongly pro-Bush in 2004, in contrast to Missouri where Huckabee's support was correlated positively with support for Bush.

On the Democratic side, the closest Super Tuesday primary was in Missouri, which Obama carried by a margin of only 11,000 out of more than 800,000 votes cast. Interestingly, Obama won his majority in Missouri despite carrying only five of the state's 114 counties along with the independent city of St. Louis. The five counties carried by Obama included St. Louis County, which includes many of the inner suburbs of St. Louis; Jackson County (Kansas City); Boone County (Columbia and the University of Missouri); Cole County (the state capital of Jefferson City), and Nodaway County (Maryville and Northwest Missouri State University). Obama's margins in the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, and Jackson County – the three most populous local jurisdictions in the state – overcame Clinton's majority elsewhere.

The Obama counties contain substantial populations of African-Americans, students, and professionals who made up the core of Obama's support. The City of St Louis, which Obama won by a 71–29 margin, is 50.5 percent African-American, and St Louis and Jackson Counties are both over 20 percent African-American. St Louis County is Missouri's highest-income county, with a per capita income of \$27,595. Statewide, the county-level correlation between the