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Buckeye Battleground

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Ohio, Campaigns, and Elections in the Twenty-First Century

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Preface

As political scientists living in the quintessential battleground state in American politics, we are frequently called on to comment on elections and politics in the Buckeye State. While there are many excellent sources for citizens and journalists on Ohio politics and history, we felt that a systematic analysis of voting patterns and public opinion was missing, especially an accessible analysis of individual, regional, and county voting patterns. In this analysis, we have strived to be as empirical as possible. At times, our focus on data analysis led us to confirm what many readers may already know about their state and what many citizens understand about the forces that drive election results in the United States generally. In other cases, however, our research led us to surprising findings that may provide readers with a better understanding of the diversity that makes the "Buckeye battleground" so competitive and such a good bellwether for the nation as a whole.

The research that produced this book represents an effort by the entire Bliss Institute at the University of Akron. In fact, we collected enough material to write two books. Some of this work was part of a national research project directed by the Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at Brigham Young University; another source of research was the Akron Buckeye polls, supported by the University of Akron. In addition, many of the students in the Bliss Institute's applied politics degree program work for national, state, and local campaigns while enrolled at the University of Akron. They provided us with tremendous insight into campaigns

and strategies and often were the genesis for the many ideas that were explored in our analysis.

Thus this book is the product of a collective effort. Some individuals deserve special thanks. Diana Kingsbury devoted most of 2008 and 2009 to piecing together the manuscript, tracking down data and sources, and ironing out wrinkles that had arisen over multiple accumulated drafts. Diana and Anne Hanson played an important similar role in data collection for the 2004, 2006, and 2008 elections. Our many research assistants provided enormous help, including Heidi Swindell, Zach Vierheller, Josh Peterson, Angela Ryan, Brent Lauer, Derek Feuerstein, and Will Miller. David Huskins prepared the maps that appear in the text, while Michelle Henry and Amanda Barna conducted the Akron Buckeye polls, in part through the Center for Marketing and Opinion Research. Daniel Coffey would like to thank the students enrolled in the Ohio Politics Seminar in the summers of 2008 and 2009 for their reactions and helpful feedback to early versions of the manuscript. We would like to thank Janet Lykes Bolois for reviewing and preparing the final version of the text.

Finally, we also want to thank the team at the University of Akron Press for having such unbelievable patience. We owe a debt of thanks to Tom Bacher, Amy Freels, Julie Gammon, Elton Glaser, and Carol Slatter. We also would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the support of our families, principally Mary Coffey, Lynn Green, Dawn Cohen, and Mary Brooks. Without their unwavering support and encouragement, *Buckeye Battleground* would not have been possible.

Chapter 1

Buckeye Battleground

As midnight approached on November 7, 2004, Americans held their breath: the outcome of the presidential election hung on a handful of states, the largest of which was Ohio. If the Buckeye State went for Republican George W. Bush, he would have a majority of the Electoral College, which would assure him a second term as president. But if Ohioans chose Democrat John F. Kerry, then a new occupant of the White House would be all but certain.

In the early hours of the next morning, Americans started to breathe again—some with sighs of relief and others with gasps of indignation—as it became likely that Ohio would go for Bush. The closeness of the vote delayed Kerry's concession for a few hours and spawned elaborate conspiracy theories about a "stolen" election. An eventual recount confirmed that Republicans had won Ohio by a very close margin, about 51 percent of the two-party vote, a figure that closely matched Bush's national popular vote percentage. This was a fitting end for the hard-fought 2004 campaign.

Four years later, Ohio was once again a crucial state, but with opposite results: Barack Obama won the state en route to his historic election as the first African American president. Unlike 2004, Ohio did not play a pivotal role in the Electoral College because Obama won more states than Bush had. However, Obama prevailed by a close margin as well, about 52 percent of the two-party vote, a

figure also close to Obama's share of the popular vote nationally. By winning Ohio, Obama made it virtually impossible for Republican John McCain to prevail in the Electoral College. As it had four years earlier, the state witnessed a hard-fought campaign.

The 2008 Democratic victory in Ohio extended beyond the presidency to three congressional races, building on the Democratic wins in 2006, when the party captured a U.S. Senate and a congressional seat, plus the governorship and all but one of the other statewide offices. In some respects, the "perfect storm" in 2006 was about state and local concerns, but in other respects it reflected the national factors that allowed the Democratic Party to take control of both houses of Congress after twelve years of Republican rule and also ended sixteen years of Republican control of state government.

The Democratic successes of 2006 and 2008 were short-lived. In 2010, the Republicans swept to victory in Ohio, electing a U.S. senator and picking up five congressional seats as well as capturing the governorship and all the other statewide offices. These results reflect in part the broader Republican "wave" associated with a weak economy and other national factors. While the durability of the 2010 results is far from clear, the 2012 presidential election is likely to be as hard fought as the 2004 and 2008 campaigns in the Buckeye State.

The election results from 2004 to 2010 were hardly novel, however, because the Buckeye State has long been at the center of national electoral politics. Ohio is perennially listed as a key *battleground* state, the target of intense campaign activities by presidential candidates, national party organizations, and their interest group allies.[1] From the 1840 campaign of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" to William McKinley's 1896 front porch campaign and Harry Truman's come-from-behind campaign in 1948, the Buckeye State routinely witnessed hard-fought elections throughout American history. Few candidates have reached the White House without prevailing in the Buckeye battleground.

One reason for this campaign attention is that Ohio is a highly *competitive* state at the ballot box, routinely producing closer races than other large states that dominate the Electoral College and membership of Congress. So Ohio was—and still is—a prize worth fighting for in national elections. Another reason is that Ohio is a good *bellwether* state, predicting the winning candidates and parties more often than other large states. When the nation is divided politically, so is Ohio, and when the nation is united, the Buckeye State follows suit.

Not surprisingly, these three characteristics are closely related and often hard to disentangle in any particular contest. After all, a state may attract campaign attention because it is competitive, but it may also be competitive because it attracts campaign attention. Here history is helpful: the Buckeye State's economic and social diversity typically predate the intense interest of particular campaigners. So there is good reason to believe that over the long term, the state's competitive and bellwether character made it a campaign battleground and not the other way around.

In fact, Ohio's role in national politics has changed over time. From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, Ohio played a central role in national elections, claiming eight presidents as "native sons," more than any other state. But by the twenty-first century, Ohio had become a key swing state in national campaigns, a fulcrum on which control of the federal government rested for both major political parties. This shift in role is rooted in economic and social changes that reduced the relative size of Ohio's population compared to the nation as a whole (a pattern continued with the 2010 census). Put bluntly, Ohio's "clout" in national elections has declined over the previous century, and if this trend continues long enough, the state's political significance will be reduced. However, these same economic and social changes have maintained Ohio's competitive and bellwether character compared to other large states, so that its diminished votes cannot be taken for granted by

either party. Thus there are good reasons to expect that the Buckeye battleground will continue to be significant in the near future.

This book is about contemporary elections in Ohio, focusing on recent presidential voting behavior and illustrating the key characteristics of the Buckeye battleground. A good place to begin is by putting Ohio's electoral politics in historical and geographic context. This task can be accomplished with a thumbnail sketch of the state's political history and then a brief review of political geography, comparing Ohio to other states and the nation as a whole in recent and past elections.

OHIO'S POLITICAL HISTORY

Ohio was admitted to the Union on February 19, 1803, as the seventeenth state and the first state carved out of the Northwest Territory. Its political history can be usefully divided into four fifty-year periods: the *foundation era, 1803–53*; the *Civil War era, 1853–1903*; the *industrial era, 1903–53*; and the *postindustrial era, 1953–2003*.[2] These categories imply a fifth *contemporary era* (beginning in 2003), which will be the primary focus of most of the rest of this book. Of course, it is far too early to determine the political characteristics of this new era, especially four decades into the future.

Although crude, the four historical periods cover major developments that influence Ohio elections in the contemporary era. Here a geological metaphor is useful, with each of the four previous eras representing a layer of political "sediment" on which subsequent developments rest. Much as layers of sediment eventually harden into layers of rock, time has solidified the earlier political developments in the state. The more distant political developments serve as the "bedrock" of Buckeye politics, having important but less direct influence on present-day elections. Meanwhile, the more recent developments are less solid but more directly relevant to contemporary and future elections.

The Foundation Era, 1803–53

The Democratic Party of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson dominated Ohio elections in the two decades after statehood in 1803, reflecting in part the diverse areas of settlement that were combined to form the new state of Ohio. These areas formed the basis for the state's distinctive political regions and their diverse politics. By the 1820s, organized party opposition had developed, first in the form of a faction within the Democratic Party and then in the form of the new Whig Party. The basic structure of American mass-based electioneering was developing at this time, and one consequence was two decades of close two-party competition in Ohio—the foundation of today's Buckeye battleground. The Whigs eventually gained a brief advantage in this competition. In 1840, the first of Ohio's native son presidents, William Henry Harrison, was also the first Whig elected to the White House. In addition, the Whigs won five Buckeye gubernatorial campaigns between 1836 and 1850. However, the debate over slavery soon destroyed the Whig Party, and its last Ohio campaign was in 1853.

These political shifts reflected the initial development of the state. After statehood, Ohio became the "gateway to the West" and its settlement accelerated. Water transport on the Ohio River and Lake Erie was critical to this development, and these waterways were connected by canals between 1817 and 1845. In addition, the National Road was completed across the middle part of Ohio by 1840. As a consequence, the Ohio population soared. In the 1810 census, Ohio had less than a quarter million people, ranking thirteenth among the states, but by the 1850 census it had nearly two million people and ranked third in the nation.

In 1850, nearly nine of every ten Ohioans lived in rural areas, and agriculture was the most important economic activity, supplemented by food processing and a few nascent industries. Cincinnati was the largest city in the state, serving as the principal entry point for migration via the Ohio River. Most of the original migrants were

from the British Isles, including English, Scots, Irish, and Welsh, but after 1820, other northern European groups arrived in large numbers, especially Germans. This ethnic diversity brought with it religious diversity, principally various kinds of Protestantism, a pattern reinforced by the Second Great Awakening, a series of religious revivals in the 1820s and 1830s.

The political sediments of the foundation era set the basic patterns of electoral competition in Ohio, including the state's five political regions and internal diversity, which are significant factors in the contemporary Buckeye battleground.

The Civil War Era, 1853–1903

Ohio was at the center of the debate over slavery that ultimately led to the Civil War. The Buckeye State hosted many stops on the Underground Railroad for fugitive slaves and produced prominent abolitionists, including John Brown. One important result of the slavery debate was the creation of the Ohio Republican Party in 1854. Drawing support from abolitionists and former Whigs, the first Republican governor of Ohio was elected in 1855, and in 1856, Ohio voted for the first Republican presidential candidate, John C. Fremont.

Ohioans then voted Republican in the next thirteen presidential elections in a row, beginning with Abraham Lincoln in 1860. During this period, five of the state's native sons served in the White House, all Republicans: Ulysses S. Grant (elected 1868 and 1872), Rutherford B. Hayes (1876), James A. Garfield (1880), Benjamin Harrison (1888, the son of William Henry Harrison), and William McKinley (1896 and 1900). In addition, the Grand Old Party won eighteen Ohio gubernatorial elections (and three more if the "Unionist Party" governors from 1861 to 1865 are counted with the GOP). Strong grassroots party organizations came to dominate campaigns in this era.

This Republican strength also reflected Ohio's heavy engagement in the war to preserve the Union. Many of the leading

Northern generals came from Ohio, including Generals Ulysses S. Grant, William Sherman, and William Sheridan. A total of 340,000 Ohioans served in the Union armies, suffering nearly 25,000 deaths from various causes. In the following generation, the Civil War was the touchstone of Ohio politics, typically to the benefit of Republicans and the detriment of Democrats.

These political patterns also reflect economic and social developments in the state. By the 1850s, "railway fever" was rampant in Ohio, and by 1860, the state had nearly three thousand miles of track, the most of any state. The Civil War encouraged industrialization and a rapid pace of technological innovation, exemplified by Thomas A. Edison and the Wright brothers. Ohio joined in the expansion of nearly all of the country's major industries and participated in the growth of large economic enterprises, typified by the career of Cleveland's John D. Rockefeller.

All these changes encouraged the development of Ohio's cities and the regions that they served. Initially, this growth occurred across the state, with many urban centers drawing migrants from the surrounding rural areas. The urban populace increased from about one-quarter of the state's population in 1870 to a little less than one-half by 1900. The rural-urban migration was accompanied by a high level of immigration from a wide range of European nations, including significant Catholic and Jewish populations. By 1900, Ohio's more than four million people were fast becoming representative of the nation as a whole.

The political sediments of the Civil War era include the development of the Republican Party and the state's many cities, important features of the contemporary Buckeye battleground.

The Industrial Era, 1903–53

At the time of Ohio's centennial in 1903, the Progressive movement was becoming an important force in Ohio and national politics. Its initial electoral impact came within the GOP, where President Theodore Roosevelt sought to regulate large business enterprises

under the rubric of "trust busting." This controversy culminated in the fractious 1912 election, when Roosevelt returned to the ballot on the Progressive Party (Bull Moose) ticket, splitting the Republican vote and helping to put Democrat Woodrow Wilson in the White House (Wilson won Ohio and reelection outright in 1916). Major political reforms were also introduced at this time, including the direct election of U.S. senators and primary elections for party nominations.

But to some observers in the Buckeye State, Wi1son's election might have seemed like a political fluke caused by Republican divisions. For one thing, an Ohio native son won the White House before (Republican William Howard Taft in 1908) and after (Republican Warren G. Harding in 1920). But profound political changes were on the way: in 1932 the Great Depression swept the Democrats into power under the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt was reelected in 1936, 1940, and 1944, and his successor, Harry Truman, was elected in 1948. Ohio was part of Roosevelt's New Deal Electoral College coalition in all these years except 1944 (when the Republican vice-presidential nominee was Ohio governor John Bricker). As a consequence of these changes, Ohio Democrats won seventeen gubernatorial contests in the industrial era. Ohio's party organizations expanded to accommodate new constituencies, among the most important of which was organized labor, especially the new industrial unions. Unions altered the political landscape in Ohio, bringing a new source of campaign resources and votes, largely for Democrats.

Major economic and social changes were behind the Democratic success in Ohio. The primary source was the growth of manufacturing, especially of vehicles and durable consumer goods produced in large plants owned by large corporations, and eventually strong labor unions. A correlate of the manufacturing surge was a rapid growth in the population. In the 1910 census, Ohio's population was approaching five million people, and in the 1950 census, it had almost eight million people. For the first time, in 1910, a majority

of Ohioans lived in cities, and by 1950, seven of every ten were city dwellers. Cleveland began this era as the largest Ohio city, and it would reach its high point around 1950 with over nine hundred thousand people, larger than Cincinnati and Columbus combined. Other industrial cities also experienced rapid growth, including Cincinnati, Toledo, Akron, Dayton, Youngstown, and Canton.

Some of this growth came from continued European immigration and movement of rural Ohioans to the cities. Gains also came from internal migration, especially the movement of southerners to work in the Ohio factories during the two world wars. The southern migrants expanded the presence of Evangelical Protestantism and enlarged the African American population in the state. By 1950, Ohio was becoming a microcosm of the nation as a whole.

The political sediments of the industrial era include the modern Democratic Party and Ohio's eight large industrial cities, also important features of the contemporary Buckeye battleground.

The Postindustrial Era, 1953–2003

In 1953, the first Republican president in almost a quarter century, Dwight D. Eisenhower, took the oath of office. Eisenhower had defeated Robert A. Taft (the son of President Taft and the last serious prospect for a GOP native son president from Ohio) for the nomination and then carried the Buckeye State. In this era, the Republicans recovered their modest advantage in the Buckeye battleground, winning eight presidential and nine gubernatorial elections.

Beginning in the 1950s, elections were increasingly characterized by "candidate-centered" campaigns—organized and led by the candidates themselves—rather than the party-centered campaigns of the past. This trend was encouraged by innovations in communication technology, such as television. One result was the dominance of larger-than-life politicians such as Republican James Rhodes, who served a record of four four-year terms as Ohio governor, and

Democrat Vernal Riffe, who served a record ten consecutive terms as speaker of the Ohio state legislature. Another result was that the Buckeye battleground became more complex.

The politics of this era reflects the decline of the manufacturing sector. Technological innovation and global competition undermined the factory system of the industrial era, with parts of the state joining the Rust Belt. During the postindustrial era, unlike the previous eras, the national centers of economic innovation, such as petrochemicals and computers, were largely located outside of Ohio. At the same time, new trends in immigration, including Latino immigration, largely bypassed Ohio, and the state began to experience net out-migration of population. As a consequence, Ohio's population grew at a much slower pace than the rest of the country. Although Ohio's population exceeded eleven million people in the 2000 census, it ranked seventh among the states compared to fifth in 1950.

After 1970, all of Ohio's major cities lost population except for the state capital, Columbus, which became the largest Ohio city with more than six hundred thousand people. The growth of the Columbus area illustrated a trend from urban to suburban residence and the creation of large metropolitan areas. Fueled by the private automobile, the industrial cities steadily lost population to their less densely populated hinterlands, ironically repopulating nearby rural areas with "suburbs" and far flung "exurbs." A significant component of this shift was the expansion of knowledge workers, highly educated providers of professional services (such as lawyers, computer programmers, scientists, teachers, and social workers), heavily concentrated in the public and nonprofit sectors. These changes brought new kinds of political conflict to Ohio politics, including disputes over cultural and moral values. However, these developments allowed Ohio to remain a fairly accurate microcosm of the country when it marked its bicentennial in 2003.

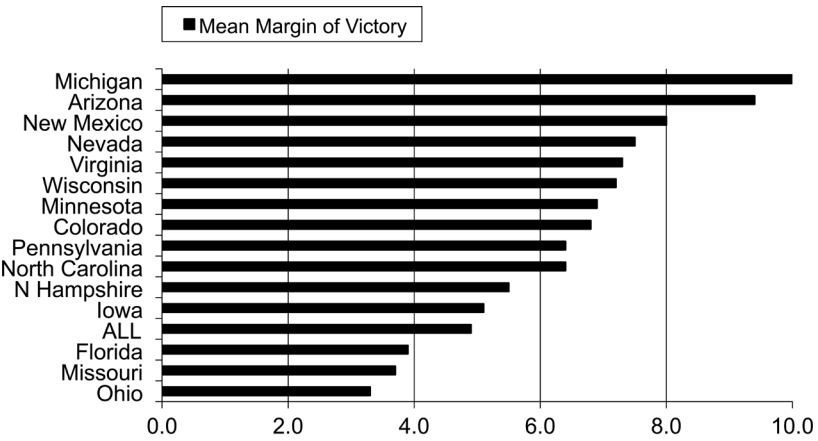
The political sediment of the postindustrial era is still relatively unsettled, with its trends leaving Ohio (and the nation) sharply

divided politically. Thus the contemporary era began with a new set of factors at work in the Buckeye battleground.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: COMPARING OHIO AND OTHER STATES

How does Ohio compare to other states in terms of voting behavior? In the contemporary era, Ohio is among the most competitive and best bellwether states. Figure 1.1 illustrates this pattern by reporting the fifteen most competitive states, measured by the mean margin of victory in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections (that is, the difference between the major party winner and loser). All these states showed an average margin of victory of 10 percentage points or less in the elections won by Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Barack Obama, with the states listed in declining order from the largest to smallest margin. Most analysts would agree that a victory of 10 percentage points or less constitutes a competitive election.

Figure 1.1. Presidential margin of victory, 2004 and 2008

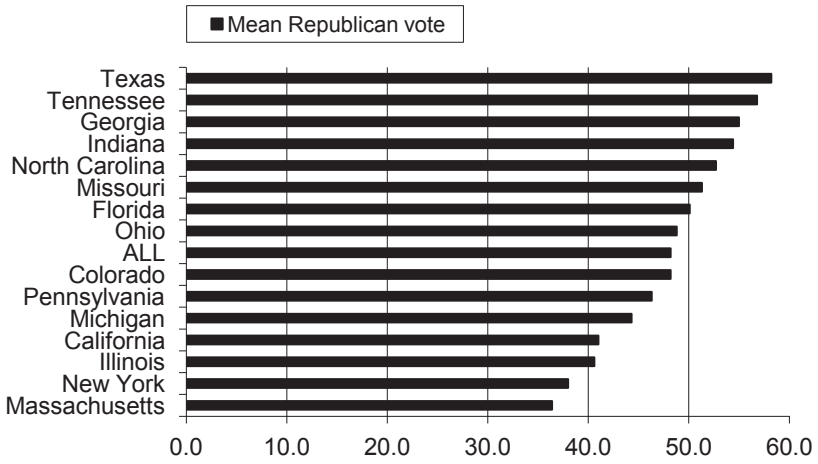


The first thing to note in figure 1.1 is the position of Ohio at the bottom of the list of states, with the average margin of victory being the smallest across these two close elections (3.3 percentage points). In fact, Ohio is lower than the average for the nation as a whole in these elections (4.9 percentage points). By this measure, the Buckeye State is one of the most competitive states in contemporary presidential elections and especially among large states (Ohio had 20 electoral votes in these elections). Other competitive states include Missouri (3.7 percentage points) and Florida (3.9 percentage points). Florida is also a large state (with 27 electoral votes), but note that the other large states in figure 1.1, such as Pennsylvania (21 electoral votes) and Michigan (17 electoral votes), were much less competitive. The remaining states on this list had markedly fewer electoral votes.

So the Buckeye battleground was highly competitive in the contemporary era, with only two large states, Florida and Pennsylvania, coming close. But what about the partisan results of these elections? Figure 1.2 reports the mean Republican presidential vote in 2004 and 2008 for fifteen states that cover the range of results, listed in declining order. The most Republican state was Texas (an average of 58.2 percent) and the least Republican state was Massachusetts (36.4 percent).

Ohio is found right in the middle of figure 1.2 (with an average of 48.8 percent Republican), almost identical to the national average (48.2 percent). The most accurate state in the elections was actually Colorado, matching the national figure exactly. But note that the Buckeye State is the closest to the national average among the large states—with New York (38 percent Republican and 31 electoral votes), Illinois (40.6 percent and 20 electoral votes), California (41.0 percent and 55 electoral votes), Michigan (44.3 percent and 17 electoral votes) and Pennsylvania (46.3 percent and 21 electoral votes) being less Republican, and Florida (50.1 percent Republican and 27 electoral votes) and Texas (58.2 percent

Figure 1.2. Republican presidential vote, 2004 and 2008

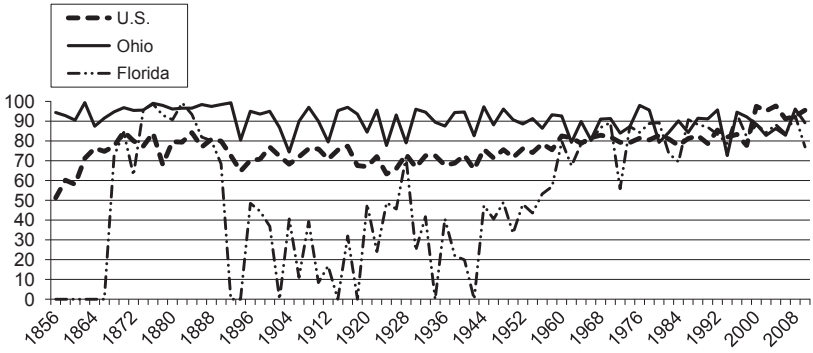


and 34 electoral votes) being more Republican than the nation as a whole.

So the Buckeye battleground was a good bellwether of presidential elections in the contemporary era, with only two other large states, Florida and Pennsylvania, coming close. Of course, no state is a perfect bellwether of elections all the time, given the many factors that influence actual presidential ballots.[3] In this regard, Ohio has its own political bias: the Buckeye State has leaned slightly Republican since the Civil War era, a point that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter (and which explains why the figures in this chapter report the Republican vote for various offices).

Taken together, the state patterns in figures 1.1 and 1.2 help explain why Ohio has been a battleground state in contemporary presidential elections. Of the three largest states, California and New York are reliably Democratic (along with most of the other New England and mid-Atlantic states), while Texas is reliably Republican (along with most of the other southern and plains states). This partisan division leaves a handful of states that are actually

Figure 1.3. Composite index of electoral competition, 1856–2010



competitive, and it makes sense for Republicans and Democrats alike to target such states for intense campaign activity. Ohio is at the top of such a list, along with Florida and Pennsylvania, because of its large size, high competitiveness, and even partisan division.

If Ohio is a highly competitive state in the contemporary era, what about the past? Figure 1.3 plots a composite score of electoral competitiveness of the nation as a whole (dashed line) and Ohio (solid line) for elections from 1856 to 2010; Florida also is included to provide a basis of comparison (dotted and dashed line). The index presented includes the two-party vote for president, congress member, senator, and governor. A score of 100 would be a perfectly competitive election and a score of 0 would be a completely uncompetitive one.[4]

Figure 1.3 shows that Ohio has been a highly competitive state for a long time, typically scoring well above the nation as a whole and falling below the national figure on only a handful of occasions. Note the striking difference between Ohio and Florida: until the 1960s, Florida elections were typically much less competitive than Ohio elections, only matching the Buckeye State in recent times.

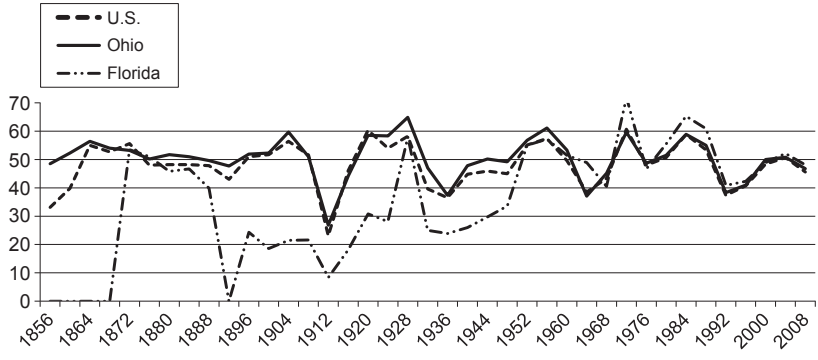
The average competitiveness index for Ohio over the entire period was 90.7 (out of 100), while the mean index was 76.6 for the

country as a whole and 53.9 for Florida. In the Civil War era, Ohio's average competitiveness score was 94.5, declining slightly in the industrial and postindustrial eras to 89.9 and 88.3, respectively, but still tending to exceed Florida and the nation as a whole. Interestingly, in the contemporary era the nation as a whole was a bit more competitive (94.2) than either Ohio (88.6) or Florida (85.3) due to offices below the presidency included in the index. (The state was also quite competitive in the foundation era, but incomplete election records make a direct comparison difficult.)[5] So competition is not a new characteristic of the Buckeye battleground. Indeed, the biggest change has been the steady increase in competitive elections elsewhere in the country (such as in Florida).

Has Ohio been a good bellwether state historically? This question can be addressed by looking at the votes for the major offices included in the competitiveness index (president, congress member, senator, and governor).[6] Figure 1.4 plots the percent of the total presidential vote cast for Republican candidates nationally (dashed line) and Ohio (solid line) from 1856 to 2008 (minor party ballots are included in the calculation). As before, Florida is included for purposes of comparison (dotted and dashed line).

This figure reveals the modest partisan bias of Ohio alluded to before: the Buckeye battleground has tended to tilt slightly toward

Figure 1.4. Republican percentage of Ohio and national presidential vote, 1856–2008



the Republicans over this period of history. For example, since 1856 the Buckeye State has on average voted 50.5 percent Republican in presidential elections compared to 48.0 percent for the nation as a whole, a modest advantage of 2.5 percentage points.[7] Overall, Florida has been much less Republican, at 35.6 percent.

However, this modest Republican advantage at the polls has declined over time: the average GOP presidential vote was 51.6 percent in the Civil War era (for a 3.8 percentage point advantage); 50.1 percent in the industrial era (a 2.7 percentage point advantage); and an even 50.0 percent in the postindustrial era (a 1.0 percentage point advantage). (The Ohio presidential vote was closely associated with the national vote in the foundation era as well.) Thus, Ohio became more evenly divided in the partisanship of its vote even as it lost population and electoral votes. Indeed, Florida had become more Republican than Ohio by the postindustrial era (52.5 percent).

From this perspective, George W. Bush's 50.8 percent in 2004 was a little lower than the performance of previous Republican presidential candidates in the Buckeye battleground but a bit above the average for the postindustrial era. Meanwhile, John McCain's 46.8 percent in 2008 was far below the historical performance of his party. However, both of these figures closely resemble the national vote in 2004 and 2008, respectively.

Taken as a whole, figure 1.4 reveals a striking similarity between the yearly patterns of the Ohio and national presidential vote. Indeed, the largest differential is in 1856, with the very first Republican presidential candidate. The GOP bias of the Buckeye battleground can be seen in the slightly higher GOP vote in good Republican years (such as 1904, 1928, 1956, and 1984) than the national vote—but also in good Democratic years (such as 1912, 1936, 1964, 1992, and 2008).

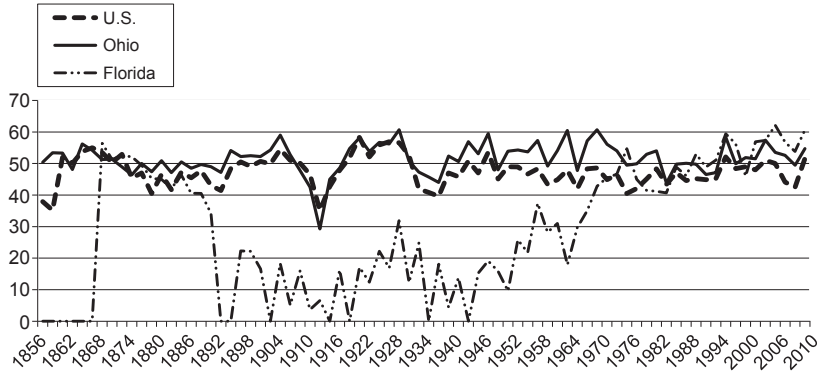
Despite these impressive patterns, Ohio has not always voted for the eventual winner of the Electoral College. In the foundation era, the state backed losing candidates four times (1824, 1836,

1844, and 1848), all in elections that involved the vicissitudes of the Whig Party or predecessor factions.[8] In this regard, Ohio performed only slightly better in the Civil War era, failing to back the national winner three times (1856, 1884, and 1892). The situation improved in the twentieth century, with the Buckeye State missing just once in the industrial (1944) and postindustrial (1960) eras. However, the state has been perfect in the contemporary era. Thus, Ohio has become a more accurate presidential bellwether over the course of its history.

However, Ohio's record is perfect when it comes to electing *Republican* presidents: no Republican has ever reached the White House without carrying the Buckeye State. In fact, in all five cases since 1856 when Ohio failed to vote for the presidential winner it was because of Republican victories in the state in the face of Democratic victories at the national level.

What about the vote for the U.S. House of Representatives? Figure 1.5 plots the Ohio and national Republican congressional vote from 1856 to 2006. In these elections, Ohioans voted 51.6 percent Republican compared to the national congressional vote of 47.5 percent. So the Buckeye State was a bit more Republican in congressional elections than in presidential contests (4.1 percentage

Figure 1.5. Republican percentage of Ohio and national congressional vote, 1856–2006



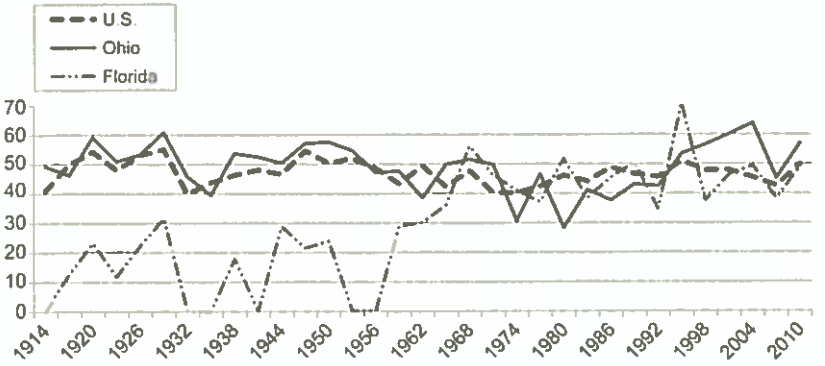
points compared to 2.5 percentage points in presidential elections). Overall, the Florida congressional vote was less associated with the national congressional vote than for the presidential vote. However, the Sunshine State came to resemble Ohio in this regard during the postindustrial and contemporary eras.

The small Republican advantage in the Ohio congressional vote increased from the Civil War era (50.8 percent) to the industrial era (51.3 percent) to the postindustrial era (52.4 percent). (Although the records of the House vote in the foundation era are incomplete, the Ohio congressional vote was also associated with the national congressional vote.) From this perspective, the GOP congressional vote of 54.7 percent in 2010 was above the historical norm, while the 49.5 percent in 2008 was below it. Note that the patterns in figure 1.5 resemble the patterns in figure 1.4 for the presidential vote.

Unlike the Electoral College, the Buckeye battleground is not a particularly good bellwether for party control of the House of Representatives. Overall, Ohio picked the party that won control of the House just two-thirds of the time since 1856, failing to do so in twenty-six contests. And Ohio has become less of a congressional bellwether over the course of its history: it missed three times in the Civil War era, seven times in the industrial era, and fifteen times in the postindustrial era. Of particular note is the period from 1954 to 1982 when the GOP held a majority of the Buckeye State congressional delegation while the Democrats controlled the Congress. One reason for these patterns is the gerrymandering of congressional districts. Such gerrymandering has been used to good effect by both major parties when they controlled Ohio state government. It helped the Republicans after the 1990 and 2000 censuses, and it will surely benefit the GOP again after the 2010 census.

Figure 1.6 plots the Republican ballots in U.S. Senate races. This series reflects the fact that senators were not elected by popular vote until 1912 and that 1914 was the first such election in Ohio. There was somewhat more variation in the Ohio senate vote when compared to the national senatorial vote. Republican senatorial

Figure 1.6. Republican percentage of Ohio and national senatorial vote, 1914–2010



candidates often did much better than the copartisans nationwide in good Republican years (such as in 1920, 1928, 1968, and 2004). But unlike the presidential and congressional vote, Republican senatorial candidates often perform below their copartisans in good Democratic years (such as 1916, 1934, 1974, and 1992). Thus the Buckeye battleground is less of a bellwether for the senatorial vote than for the presidential and congressional votes. The Florida senatorial vote is highly variable as well, matching the national Republican vote poorly overall. However, the Sunshine State moved in a Republican direction in the postindustrial and contemporary eras.

Overall, Republican senatorial candidates have averaged 49 percent of the vote in Ohio since 1914, a bit ahead of the 46.9 percent nationally. Buckeye State Republicans did better in the industrial era (52.1 percent) than in the postindustrial era (45.2 percent). In this regard, Senator Mike DeWine's losing 45 percent in 2006 was below the average for his Republican predecessors but about equal to his copartisans in the postindustrial era—and above the 2006 national Republican senatorial vote (when the Democrats took control of the U.S. Senate). However, Senator Rob Portman's 56.9 percent was higher than the historical figure for Ohio and the 2010 national Republican senatorial vote (when the GOP fell short of

taking control of the chamber). Prior to 1914, Ohio senators were appointed by the state legislature, and the pattern of their partisanship shows a similar instability in both the Civil War and foundation eras.

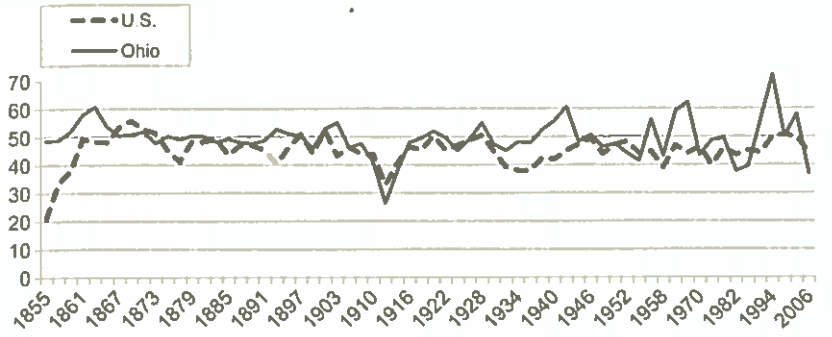
Not surprisingly, Ohio has not been a particularly good bellwether for party control of the Senate, voting with the party that took control of the U.S. Senate just 59 percent of the time—a far cry from the Buckeye record with regard to the presidency. This pattern may reflect the nature of the U.S. Senate, with one-third of its members elected every two years, and the vast differences among the states.

Because of the potential impact of state offices on federal elections, it is worth taking a look at the vote for Ohio governor. Figure 1.7 plots the Republican gubernatorial vote for Ohio and the nation from 1855 (when the first Republican ran for governor in the Buckeye State) to 2006.

From a national perspective, gubernatorial elections are far more complex phenomena than presidential elections. For one thing, governors are chosen at different intervals with varying term lengths, depending on the state. This factor has been especially notable in the Buckeye battleground. From 1855 to 1905, Ohioans elected their governors in "off-off" years—the odd-numbered years between the presidential and congressional elections. Between 1908 and 1956, Ohio governors were chosen in "even" years, during both presidential and congressional elections. And in 1958, the governor's term was lengthened from two to four years and fixed on nonpresidential years. Similar problems prevent including the Florida gubernatorial results. For the purposes of figure 1.7, the Ohio gubernatorial vote is compared to other gubernatorial elections in the same year.

Overall, Ohioans voted 49.4 percent Republican for governor, compared to 45.0 percent of the national electorate (4.4 percentage point GOP advantage). The Republicans did best in the Civil

Figure 1.7. Republican percentage of Ohio and national gubernatorial vote, 1855–2006



War era (50.7 percent) and less well in the industrial (47.4 percent) and postindustrial (47.6 percent) eras. Republican Ken Blackwell's 37.6 percent in 2006 was far below the performance of previous GOP candidates, while John Kasich's 49 percent was more typical.

The Ohio gubernatorial vote is not as closely associated with the national gubernatorial vote. In this regard, the gubernatorial vote resembles the U.S. Senate vote—a pattern that makes intuitive sense given that both offices are elected statewide and not always in presidential years. Not surprisingly, Ohio has been a poor bellwether in predicting the partisan control of the nation's state houses, matching the national result only about one-half of the time since 1855.

The party control of the Ohio governorship has changed across the eras. In the Civil War era, the GOP won 72 percent of gubernatorial elections (or 84 percent if the Civil War Unionist governors are counted as Republicans), but then just 33 percent in the industrial era. (The foundation era resembled the industrial era, with alternatives to Democratic candidates also winning about one-third of the time.) However, in the postindustrial era the GOP won 60 percent of the gubernatorial contests. In the contemporary era, both parties have won a gubernatorial contest.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

In sum, Ohio is (and has been) a perennial battleground state because it is (and has been) a highly competitive and bellwether state, especially when compared to other large states and particularly in presidential elections. The rest of this book will investigate what factors explain these patterns within the Buckeye State. Working primarily with the presidential vote and drawing on the scholarly literature, the discussion is centered on four factors: region, demography, political attitudes, and campaign contacts. Each of these factors contributes to a fuller understanding of the Buckeye battleground in the contemporary era.

Chapter 2 takes a careful look at an important reason for Ohio's electoral tendencies, its regional diversity. The chapter will discuss why regionalism matters and describe the five major regions within contemporary Ohio. After this chapter has illustrated the impact of the "Five Ohios" on the vote, the subject of regionalism will be carried forward throughout the rest of the book.

Chapter 3 looks at the demographic diversity within Ohio, paying particular attention to measures of socioeconomic class (such as income and education), culture (such as race and religion), and life cycle (such as gender and age). Using census and survey data, the chapter will show the impact of demography on the presidential vote.

Chapter 4 turns to the political attitudes that arise from region and demography, including partisanship, political priorities, and issue positions. Using recent survey data, this chapter covers the political views of the state in recent presidential elections. This discussion will illuminate how Ohio's diversity is translated into choices at the ballot box.

Chapter 5 covers political campaigns and looks at evidence of how the major political parties and their candidates deploy resources across the state, seeking to contact and mobilize voters. This evidence reveals the extent to which election campaigns

target the regional, demographic, and attitudinal diversity of the Buckeye battleground as part of waging competitive campaigns.

Chapter 6 offers an overview of the relative importance of region, demography, political attitudes, and campaign contacts to the 2004 and 2008 presidential votes in the Buckeye State. These patterns demonstrate the relative impact of these examples of the state's diversity in defining Ohio politics. The chapter then concludes with a summary of the book's findings and reviews the prospects for the future of the Buckeye battleground.

Chapter 2

Region and the Vote: The Five Ohios

Senator Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign brought extraordinary resources to the Buckeye battleground, including the funds for a highly sophisticated grassroots organization. In some key respects, such as its use of the Internet, the Obama campaign was highly innovative, engaging in what one analyst called the "first true twenty-first century campaign."[1] The campaign created a special grassroots organization called the Campaign for Change and spent an unprecedented $25 million on direct voter contact in Ohio.[2]

In other respects, however, the Obama campaign was quite traditional, assimilating its activities and organization into the underlying structure of the Buckeye battleground by seeking votes in all of Ohio's diverse regions. A key figure in this strategy was Ted Strickland, who used this approach to win the Ohio governorship in 2006. Both Strickland and Obama realized that while mobilizing key Democratic strongholds was necessary to win the state, it was not sufficient, and that voters had to be courted in Republican areas as well. Strickland described the Obama strategy to reporters this way: "Is Sen. Obama going to win every county and every region? Probably not. . . . But in some heavily Republican counties we can go from 29 percent to perhaps 38 percent, and in some counties we can go from 38 percent to 44 percent. So I'm confident that the

strategy here is going to be effective. It's an attempt to reach every voter in every part of Ohio."[3]

In 2008, this combination of innovative and traditional approaches was indeed a winning strategy in the perennial battleground of presidential elections. But what makes Ohio *the* perennial battleground state in presidential elections? The simple answer is its great diversity. Ohio is often described as a microcosm of the nation, containing within its boundaries most of the politically relevant differences found in the country as a whole. While no state fully represents the vast variation found within the United States, Ohio is among the closest approximations, especially among the large states that are critical in the Electoral College. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Buckeye State has had this representative characteristic throughout most of American history.

A useful way to describe Ohio's internal diversity is by recognizing the regions *within* the state. On the one hand, Ohio's regions reflect the regional differences in the United States as a whole, including the "red" states of the South, "blue" states of the Northeast and West Coast, and the various "purple" states in between.[4] On the other hand, Ohio's regions pull together combinations of big cities, suburbs, and rural areas that share a common topography, history, and economic development. Thus, Ohio's regions are a practical means of capturing the state's demographic and political diversity. Indeed, politicians regularly use such regions as a shorthand guide for conducting their campaigns for the support of the state's diverse voters—as Obama did in 2008 and Strickland did in 2006. Although the details and goals differed, George W. Bush employed the same basic approach in 2004. Put another way, Ohio's regions substantially define the contours of the state's political landscape, and smart politicians craft their strategies to take these contours into account.

This chapter describes Ohio's diversity through the lens of its internal regions. It first compares the Buckeye State to the nation as a whole, including the major regions of the country, and then

compares the state's regions to Ohio as a whole, as well as to one another. For the latter purpose and as other observers have done, we group the state into five regions, dubbed the "Five Ohios," with each region loosely grouped around the major cities of Cleveland (Northeast), Toledo (Northwest), Columbus (Central), and Cincinnati (Southwest), plus largely rural Appalachia (Southeast).[5] We conclude the chapter by illustrating the impact of the state's regions on the vote in both federal and state elections. But before we turn to these tasks, it is worth briefly discussing why region is important in politics.

WHY REGION MATTERS POLITICALLY

As noted by former governor Strickland in the quote above, political campaigns often begin with targeted goals for particular areas. Most citizens are familiar with the importance of states in the Electoral College, and presidential campaigns tend to target specific voter-rich states that are also competitive. This is also true for other political campaigns; turnout and support vary by counties, cities, and towns. In fact, many campaigns often have targeted turnout levels down to the precinct level. In other words, while polls often are useful for measuring individual political support and provide important information about subgroups of voters, campaigns maximize the effectiveness of their limited resources by targeting voters in specific areas. High turnout and strong support in a campaign's "base" districts can win an election and hopefully, as Strickland noted, there are enough resources to chip away at the opponent's areas of strength. As we will discuss in chapter 5, in 2004, President Bush offset John Kerry's strong support in urban areas by employing an effective mobilization strategy aimed at Ohio's suburbs and exurbs. In 2010, Governor Strickland failed to win reelection when turnout in the urban northeast was lower than expected. Scholars have proposed two major perspectives on why region matters

in politics: the compositional and contextual explanations.[6] Both perspectives are valuable in explaining the Buckeye battleground.

The Compositional Perspective

The compositional perspective argues that regions matter because of the various kinds of people who live within their boundaries. The political distinctiveness of a region is thus largely the sum of its parts, with geography itself making only a modest independent contribution. Thus a state is "red" or a region within a state is "blue" because the demographic characteristics of its residents generate on balance Republican or Democratic votes. If this perspective were taken to its logical conclusion, then region would be nothing more than a proxy for the political impact of demography. As a result, the political impact of region would change as the demographic composition of the region changed.

Indeed, demographic factors help explain the differences between the regions in the United States as a whole, now and in the past.[7] For example, the "red" states of the South were on balance Republican in the postindustrial era because of cultural factors, especially religion and race, reinforced by economic growth and migration, which brought new class divisions into play. Specifically, the rise of civil rights issues in the 1960s and 1970s drove many white southerners away from the national Democratic Party, which took a liberal stance on pushing civil rights advances. The GOP, in contrast, attracted southern whites because the party opposed policies such as Affirmative Action. When social issues such as abortion and school prayer rose to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, the GOP's conservatism cemented the allegiance of conservative southerners.

However, in the industrial era, the South was "blue" because an older version of culture and class connected voters with the Democratic Party. Likewise, the "blue" states of the Northeast in the postindustrial era were on balance Democratic because of new

versions of class and culture, combined with the decline of the industrial economy and immigration. However, in the industrial era, class and cultural factors made the Northeast a Republican stronghold. All of these factors are at work in the Midwest, a region long characterized by many "purple" states with close two-party competition. These insights apply especially well to Ohio, which contains political cleavages from both the industrial and postindustrial eras and ranks near the median among all the states on most measures of demography and the political issues associated with them.[8]

The Contextual Perspective

The contextual perspective argues that regions matter because they are literally the places where people become politicized. The political distinctiveness of a region is more than the sum of its parts, with geography making a special contribution. Thus a state is "blue" or a region of a state is "red" because the interaction among the residents has produced a Democratic or Republican advantage at the ballot box. If this perspective were taken to its logical conclusion, then region would be a dominant factor in politics, structuring the impact of demography. While regional distinctiveness can change over time, it changes very slowly, even in the face of extensive demographic shifts.

Here the central insight is that "space and politics are interdependent factors," so that regional boundaries shape and constrain politics.[9] Crucial to this process is the development of a distinctive identity by residents of a region. The origins of such regional identities lie with the region's landforms, its original settlement, and its subsequent history and economic development. However, regional identities are built, reinforced, and even altered through the interpersonal communication among residents: "Studies of the contextual effects of the small geographical units like neighborhoods have given special attention to the hypothesis that peoples' attitudes are

influenced by the aggregated attitudes of those around them. Rationales include the possibilities that people respond to social norms or are influenced by social interactions."[10]

If nothing else, such interaction structures the links between demography and politics, but regional identity can create a unique ethos that influences these connections in an independent fashion. Some of this identity is reflected in special combinations of political attitudes but also in the political culture of the region—that is, the basic values about what matters in politics and how politics should be conducted.

Indeed, all of these phenomena help explain the independent impact of region on politics in the United States as a whole.[11] For example, the South's agrarian past, peculiar political institutions, and strong religious communities have combined with the legacy of the Civil War to create a distinctive ethos. As noted above, in the industrial era, this ethos helped make the region "blue," with the "solid South" favoring the Democratic Party. But in the postindustrial era, this same ethos has made the South more competitive politically with a strong "red" bias. The impact of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration gave the Northeast a distinctive ethos as well. In the industrial era, this ethos produced more competitive elections, with a "red" tinge, a pattern that shifted to solid "blue" in the postindustrial era. Here too, the Midwest had its own peculiar ethos develop out of the history of its great internal diversity, and this milieu produced a long history of highly competitive politics in Ohio.

Thus, both the compositional and contextual views of region have merit, and in the chapters that follow, we will illustrate the impact of both, first by examining the impact of demography across and within regions and second by illuminating the unique politics of Ohio's regions. We turn now to describing the Buckeye State's diversity and then illustrating the impact of such diversity on the vote.

OHIO AS A MICROCOSM OF THE NATION

Ohio is often described as a microcosm of the nation because it tends to match the country as a whole demographically, especially when compared to the other large states. Table 2.1 compares the nation as a whole (first column on the left) to Ohio (last column on the right) and also to the other regions of the country: the Northeast, Midwest (as a whole), South, and West.

Even a casual comparison of the far left and far right columns of table 2.1 reveals that Ohio resembles America as a whole in terms of many basic demographic characteristics. For example, Ohio has about the same percentage of young (under eighteen years of age) and old (sixty-five or older) citizens as the United States, and about the same proportion of the population are Evangelical Protestants. In other respects, there are modest differences between Ohio and the nation, including a slightly lower percentage of African Americans, a lower percentage of the population below the poverty level, a lower percentage with college degrees but a higher percentage with high school degrees, and a slightly higher percentage of nonfamily households. However, Ohio does differ from the nation in other respects, especially the larger percentage of the white population and the smaller percentage of the foreign-born population. These differences largely reflect the growth in the Hispanic population, which has stayed much smaller in Ohio than the rest of the country.

Of course, the U.S. figures in these regards reflect the characteristics of all the regions of the country combined, and Ohio often looks quite different from the other regions. For example, Ohio has a much larger white population than the West and a much lower African American population than the South. The Buckeye State has fewer households with incomes of $100,000 or more than the Northeast but fewer people in poverty than the South. One of the most striking patterns is religion, where Ohio has a much higher Evangelical Protestant population than the Northeast but also a

TABLE 2.1.

Demographics of Ohio and the nation

Category	Subcategory	U.S.	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Ohio
Race	White	75.1	75.8	83.1	73.4	70.0	85.0
	African American	12.9	13.3	10.6	18.1	4.7	12.1
Income	Household income more than $100,000	12.3	15.5	11.1	9.9	13.8	9.8
	Below poverty line	12.4	11.2	10.1	14.2	12.8	10.6
Occupation	Professional and managerial	33.6	37.1	32.0	31.7	34.7	31.0
	Construction and manufacturing	24.1	20.7	26.8	26.1	21.9	27.8
Education	College degree	24.4	27.9	22.8	21.9	26.1	21.1
	High school degree	80.4	81.8	83.2	77.4	80.9	83.0
Gender	Male	49.1	48.3	48.9	48.9	49.8	48.6
	Female	50.9	51.7	51.1	51.1	50.2	51.4
Age	Under 18	25.7	24.4	25.8	25.5	26.8	25.4
	Over 65	12.4	13.5	12.7	12.5	11.2	13.3
Marital status	Family households with married couple	51.7	50.6	53.1	53.1	53.1	52.2
	Nonfamily households	31.9	32.9	32.2	30.3	31.4	32.4
Ethnicity	Western European ancestry	54.5	60.2	65.2	45.4	53.6	57.0
	Foreign-born	11.1	13.1	5.6	8.5	17.4	3.0
Religion	Evangelical Protestants	26.3	13.4	26.1	36.7	20.2	26.3
	Catholic	23.8	36.3	24.3	16.0	25.4	20.9
Population density		79.6	346.2	130.8	108.9	33.6	277.3

Sources: 2000 U.S. census; 2007 Religious Landscape Survey.

much smaller proportion than the South; an opposite pattern holds for the Catholic population. Another illustration of this pattern is the population density of the state, with Ohio falling a bit above the density of the other regions and far above the figure for the nation as a whole. As one might expect, Ohio resembles the entire Midwest region in most respects, with population density an important exception.

THE FIVE OHIOS

Comparing Ohio to the nation and its major regions obscures an important feature of the state: its great internal differences. As we shall see, the regions of Ohio tend to resemble the regions of the country in demographic terms. Put another way, there is a sliver of each of the major regions of the country *within* the Buckeye State. Overall, Ohio is one of the most regionally complex states in the country. As observers and campaign strategists have long known, it is useful to think of the state as having five regions, which have been called the "Five Ohios." Each region represents a unique collection of big cities, suburbs, and rural areas; one or more media markets; and at least one major newspaper. Each region has a distinct political ethos and votes in a different fashion.[12]

While there is general consensus among observers about the existence of distinctive regions within Ohio, there is some disagreement about the number of regions and the specific boundaries of each. The definition used here is similar to that employed by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in its insightful analysis of the Five Ohios.[13] There are, however, some differences that make the regions correspond better to the social and political differences across regions in the contemporary era.[14] Following convention, the five regions are labeled as Northeast, Northwest, Central, Southeast, and Southwest Ohio; table 2.2 provides an overview of this definition of the Five Ohios, and figure 2.1 is a map of the boundaries of the counties

TABLE 2.2.

The Five Ohios

	Northeast	Northwest	Central	Southeast	Southwest
"Capital" city	Cleveland	Toledo	Columbus	Zanesville	Cincinnati
Population (2005, millions)	**3.9**	**1.3**	**2.3**	**1.2**	**2.8**
Number of counties	12	18	16	27	15
Main industry	Manufacturing, health care	Agriculture, manufacturing	State government, insurance	Mining, agriculture	Manufacturing, military
Population growth rate, 2000 to 2005 (%)	**–0.47**	**–0.43**	**4.54**	**0.28**	**1.02**

Source: U.S. census, *2005 Current Population Study* (http://www.census.gov/popest/counties/).

within each region (the appendix of this chapter has a full list of the counties in each region).

As figure 2.1 shows, Northeast, Northwest, Central, and Southwest Ohio form various kinds of rectangles in their respective "corners" of the state, loosely surrounding the dominant cities of each region. In contrast, Southeast Ohio covers a broad semicircle along the Ohio River. As table 2.2 reveals, Northeast Ohio (including Cleveland) is the most populous part of the state, followed by Southwest Ohio (including Cincinnati) and Central Ohio (including Columbus). In fact, the "three Cs"—Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati—play a dominant role in the economic, social, and political life of the Buckeye State. Northwest Ohio (including Toledo) and Southeast Ohio (including Zanesville) contain markedly fewer people and sometimes have been referred to as part of the "Other Ohio"—areas of the state lying outside the three Cs corridor.

Table 2.3 looks at the basic characteristics of the state as a whole and compares them to the Five Ohios, using the same information as table 2.1. The data show major differences across the five regions. For example, Southeast Ohio has the largest white population (95.9 percent) and Northeast Ohio has the smallest (81.4 percent). Professional/managerial occupations are more common in the three Cs regions and construction/manufacturing jobs are more common in the Other Ohio regions. Meanwhile, Northeast and Southeast Ohio tie for the largest proportion of older citizens, whereas Central Ohio has the fewest senior citizens. There are also important differences in religious affiliation, with Southeast Ohio containing the most Evangelical Protestants and Northeast Ohio having the least; an opposite pattern holds for the Catholic population. There is also large variation in population density across the regions.

A glance back at table 2.1 reveals some similarities between Ohio's regions and the regions of the country as a whole. For instance, Northeast Ohio resembles the country's Northeast region in

Figure 2.1. Map of the Five Ohios

relative terms when it comes to the African American population, population of European ethnicity, and the proportion of Catholics. In contrast, Southeast Ohio resembles the South in terms of poverty and the percentage of Evangelical Protestants. Central Ohio resembles the West in terms of professional/managerial occupations and college degrees. Meanwhile, Northwest and Southwest Ohio resemble the Midwest region as a whole. What follows is a brief description of each of the Five Ohios.

TABLE 2.3.

Demographics of the Five Ohios

Category	Subcategory	Ohio	Northeast	Northwest	Central	Southeast	Southwest
Race	White	85.0	81.4	88.3	84.9	95.9	83.8
	African American	12.1	14.8	7.6	10.8	2.4	13.0
Income	Household income more than $100,000	9.8	10.4	8.1	10.8	4.5	11.5
	Below poverty	10.6	10.5	9.9	10.0	14.6	9.8
Occupation	Professional and managerial	31.0	31.4	26.9	33.5	23.8	33.2
	Construction, manufacturing, and production	27.8	26.5	34.5	24.3	36.1	25.8
Education	College degree	21.1	21.9	17.3	24.9	11.3	23.5
	High school degree	83.0	83.3	84.0	84.6	77.7	83.1
Gender	Male	48.6	48.0	48.8	49.2	49.1	48.4
	Female	51.4	52.0	51.2	50.8	50.9	51.6
Age	Under 18	25.4	25.1	26.2	25.5	24.7	25.8
	Over 65	13.3	14.6	13.5	10.9	14.4	12.6
Marital status	Family households with married couple	52.2	50.7	53.8	51.1	56.8	52.2
	Nonfamily households	32.4	32.8	31.3	33.9	29.3	32.5
Ethnicity	Western European	63.8	59.0	69.4	65.1	67.6	66.1
	Foreign-born	3.0	3.9	2.0	3.8	0.9	2.5
Religion	Evangelical Protestant	26.3	18.3	24.9	30.2	42.0	26.4
	Catholic	23.8	28.6	26.3	15.1	11.6	21.4
Population density		277.3	678.5	179.3	271.9	92.6	418.6

Sources: 2000 U.S. census; 2005–7 Akron Buckeye polls.

Northeast Ohio

The most "northeastern" region of Ohio is geographically the northeastern part of the state, and for historical, cultural, and economic reasons, Northeast Ohio closely resembles the states of the mid-Atlantic region. One reason for this pattern is the large number of cities in the region, including Cleveland, Akron, Canton, and Youngstown. With approximately 3.8 million residents, this region resembles the large urban concentrations of the Eastern Seaboard.

In topographical terms, this region extends from Lake Erie into the part of the Allegheny plateau that was formerly glaciated. The core of this region is the Western Reserve—land reserved for Connecticut after the Revolution—which still gives the region a "Yankee" flavor. The Ohio and Erie Canal and industrialization eventually expanded this region south into some of the Congress Lands—land sold by Congress after the American Revolution to raise money to pay off debts accumulated during the war.

Northeast Ohio has the most ethnically diverse population in the state. However, despite its diversity, Ohio has only had three black members of Congress: Louis Stokes, the first African American to represent Ohio in the U.S. House; his successor Stephanie Tubbs Jones; and Jones's successor Marcia Fudge, who currently represents the Eleventh Congressional District, which is composed of the mostly minority eastern side of Cleveland and some of its inner-ring suburbs. Beachwood, a nearby suburb, has a large Jewish population. There are also numerous pockets of eastern Europeans and immigrants from other regions of the world that have settled around Cleveland. Unions remain a powerful force, and politics in the region have been tinged by racial and ethnic divisions. The distinction between urban, suburban, and rural areas remains strong in the region, with the suburbs and exurbs largely white and middle to upper class, while Cleveland and its inner-ring suburbs are more racially and economically diverse.

Northeast Ohio could be fairly described as part of the midwestern Rust Belt created by the erosion of the industrial-era manufacturing base—a trend that afflicts many Ohio cities.[15] The struggles of the region's economy have been particularly acute since the recession of 2001–2: while the country as a whole experienced a modest 1.3 percent increase in jobs in the recovery from that recession, Northeast Ohio experienced a loss of 5.9 percent.[16] Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, key declines occurred in the steel, automobile, and auto parts industries, all once mainstays of employment in the region. Cleveland currently has one of the highest poverty rates in the nation, and so while the mortgage crisis hit other booming areas due to overextended credit and speculation, the cause in Cleveland was largely due to predatory lending and an evaporating tax base. The effects are expected to continue for years.

However, there is some evidence of a growing postindustrial service and knowledge economy. The health care industry, driven in large part by the prestige of the ever-expanding Cleveland Clinic, is now a leading employer in the region, attracting doctors and a range of high-tech support jobs. Plans to make the region, along with Pittsburgh, a "health care corridor" and "tech belt" have received praise and some support from state leaders.[17]

For all these reasons, Northeast Ohio is the most liberal and Democratic region of the state in the contemporary era, a pattern inherited from the industrial and postindustrial eras.

Northwest Ohio

Northwest Ohio includes the Toledo metropolitan area and also small, inland manufacturing cities such as Lima and Findlay. Composed of approximately 1.3 million residents, the region is primarily agricultural, containing flat and rich farm lands that extend west and south to the Indiana border. Not surprisingly, this region resembles the nonmetropolitan Midwest both culturally and

economically. The region is balanced, however, between relatively densely populated urban areas (Erie and Lucas counties have 300 and 1,300 people per square mile) and rural areas (seven counties have density levels below 100 people per square mile).

Topographically, a large part of the region is covered with glacial till plains that produce fertile agricultural land, including the Firelands region east of Toledo along Lake Erie, land originally given to New England victims of British raids during the American Revolution. Most of the area, however, came from the Congress Lands and land Ohio extorted from Michigan as a price of the latter entering the Union as a state. This region is dominated by the waterways of Lake Erie and the Maumee River and includes the Black Swamp area north of the Maumee. This region was bound together by the Miami and Erie Canal in the early nineteenth century.

The economic character of the region has been described as follows:

> The foundation of Ohio's Farm Belt voters is as sturdy as the rumbling tractors that cultivate their fields, built on family, religion and education. . . . And this despite the second-highest rate of job loss in the state last year behind Northeast Ohio. . . . The people of Northwest Ohio—in Toledo and in Lima, Findlay, Fremont and Clyde—make autos and tires and glass and washing machines. But the region is defined by its farms and farm families.[18]

Despite the dominance of commercial agriculture, manufacturing also makes up a large portion of the region's economy, and to some extent, the outlook is slightly better for the automotive industry.[19] The postindustrial knowledge economy is not strongly evident in this region of Ohio.

Aside from the city of Toledo, Northwest Ohio is less ethnically and racially diverse than Northeast Ohio. Originally settled by Germans and northern Europeans, Northwest Ohio is characterized by high levels of religious affiliation, especially Lutherans and

Catholics. The dominance of the agricultural industry gives the region a conventional and conservative ethos. For example, Northwest Ohioans have tended to give more attention to cultural issues than other parts of Ohio—a fact that led one analyst to describe it as a "values-driven region" that puts "character first."[20]

For all these reasons, Northwest Ohio is mixed politically. It leans conservative and Republican, but its citizens have shown a willingness to vote Democratic under the right circumstances. Democratic cities and towns line Lake Erie while inland areas are agricultural, rural, and heavily Republican. In the contemporary era, this region has tended to be one of the swing areas in presidential and state elections.

Central Ohio

Central Ohio is a growing region, thanks largely to the Columbus metropolitan area. This growth is fueled in part by state government, Ohio State University, and service industries such as insurance. Consequently, this region is mostly characterized by the growth of a postindustrial knowledge economy. Columbus, with a population of over 700,000, is now the fifteenth largest city in the United States and almost double the size of the city of Cleveland proper; the region as a whole has approximately 2.3 million people. Due in large part to this rapid growth, the region has some similarity with the growing cities of the American West.

Central Ohio is entirely landlocked, far from the waterways that dominate the four other regions of the state. In fact, the state capital was originally placed in the center of the state so as to be equidistant from the other regions. The topography is in large part glacial till plains and rich agricultural land. So it was fitting that Ohio State University, one of the first land grant colleges, was established in this region. In terms of settlement, the core of this region was part of the Virginia Military District—land given to Virginia Revolutionary War soldiers—but it also includes parts of the Congress Lands.

Unlike the other regions, Central Ohio has a single dominant city. Columbus has long been known as "Cowtown": historically, the state capital was an urban island surrounded by a sea of farm land. In recent years, however, the city has worked hard to shed this image.[21] Columbus now has a solid urban core at the center of a sprawling metropolitan area. Given the population growth in the city, it is not surprising that the region's economy is performing well. Of all the Ohio cities, Columbus is the most "white collar," and this reputation has been enhanced in recent years. The economy of the region is among the few in the state that are growing; a report by the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services found that Columbus and Central Ohio far outstripped any other region of the state in terms of employment growth between 2000 and 2008.[22]

The suburbs and exurbs of Franklin County have grown substantially in the last two decades, and this growth has extended to surrounding counties, particularly Delaware County. Malls and major shopping centers such as Polaris have sprung up along the edges of Franklin County, but even more in Delaware County, one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation. As journalist Matt Bai wrote in a widely cited report on Delaware County's role in the 2004 election:

> Driving north from Columbus on Route 23, you pass rows of wilting two-story homes, a few scattered warehouses, a suburban green. You hit a brand-new stretch of wide asphalt that seems to be taking you nowhere at 50 miles per hour. Then, suddenly, it's Starbucks and Wal-Mart and modular houses flying up faster than the ground can be turned. Down Polaris Parkway, which was a little-used road a few years ago, there's now a giant mall, a Fidelity Investments outlet, Saks Fifth Avenue, the tinted windows of new office buildings. This is Delaware County, population 133,000 and exploding. Delaware is the fastest-growing county in Ohio and the 16th-fastest-growing in the country. It has expanded by 30 percent just since the last presidential election.[23]

Due to all this change, Central Ohio remains difficult to characterize politically in the contemporary era. The city of Columbus and its inner-ring suburbs have become increasingly Democratic, while the growing exurbs and outlying areas tend to be Republican.

Southeast Ohio

Southeast Ohio is the Appalachian part of Ohio, rural and economically depressed due to the decline of mining and other industries.[24] It is the least populated region of the state with approximately 1.2 million people, and only one county has a population density above 200 people per square mile (in Northeast Ohio, only one county has a population density below 200 people per square mile).

In topology, this region makes up the portion of the Allegheny plateau that was not glaciated, so it is both mountainous and dominated by the Ohio River and its tributaries. This region was among the first sections of the state settled by people moving out of Pennsylvania and Virginia. It was constructed from a series of land sales, including congressional lands, the Seven Ranges, and the Ohio Land Company. Transportation was a problem in this region and it was not a particularly rich agricultural area, so coal mining and other extractive industries became important economically. As was the case with most of Appalachia, the relationship with more industrial areas was imbalanced as economic development largely was limited to the building of infrastructure necessary for shipping and extraction.

Partly due to these historical factors, Southeast Ohio has developed a unique cultural identity. Many of the original descendants were Scotch Irish Highlanders hostile to outsiders and cynical about both governmental and corporate power. Low population density and widespread poverty have contributed to the culture of the region. In many ways, this region is very similar to West Virginia and the broader Appalachian region (it is part of the U.S. Appalachian Commission).[25] Unemployment rates are consistently above national and state averages, and the Ohio Department of Economic

Development has identified nearly every county in Ohio's Appalachian region as "distressed" and as designated "Priority Investment Areas." It lacks a single major city and has the lowest percentage of citizens with a college degree.[26]

It is also the least diverse region, with whites making up over 96 percent of the citizenry and relatively few Catholics or Jews. By some estimates, nearly 30 percent of the citizens are veterans.[27] Southeast Ohio is traditionally religious, with a strong Evangelical flavor.

Politically, Southeast Ohio is socially conservative, pro-gun, and skeptical of environmental regulations. However, it is also economically depressed and thus disposed toward liberal economic policy, often displaying a populist flair. For these reasons, it has been one of the swing regions within the state, with a penchant for voicing its displeasure with incumbent officeholders of both parties.

Southwest Ohio

Southwest Ohio was also one of the earliest areas of the state to be settled. It is known for the cities of Cincinnati, Dayton, and Springfield and includes their suburban and rural hinterlands, with an approximate population of 2.8 million. Topographically, this region is dominated by the Ohio River and its tributaries, the Scioto and the Miami. This region came in large part from the Virginia Military District but also from a series of private land purchases. Because of the Ohio River, Cincinnati was the first major city in Ohio, setting basic patterns for the state as it developed.

In fact, Cincinnati's airport is actually in Kentucky, and this speaks volumes about the region. The slight midwestern accent in the rest of the state is replaced with southern accents, and the region is much less diverse in ethnic terms than Northeast Ohio. Southwest Ohio is similar culturally and economically to the upper South, adding another element of diversity to the Buckeye State. In fact, Southwest Ohio tends to be conservative both culturally and economically. The Taft family, which spawned generations of Republican leaders, hails from this area.

In modern times, the region has had mixed economic success. Cincinnati is home to several major corporations, including Proctor and Gamble, Macy's, and GE Aviation. The presence of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, located outside of Dayton, is an economic engine and contributes to the area's conservatism.

The shifting nature of American social and economic life is partly reflected by the diverging paths of Cincinnati and Columbus. In the 1990s, Cincinnati led Ohio cities in population decline, no small accomplishment in a state losing both manufacturing jobs and people. There is a strong racial element to this shift that may end Cincinnati's historic reputation as one of the few large American cities that has tended to vote Republican. The city's white population declined by over forty thousand (22 percent) during the 1990s—one reason that Barack Obama was able to carry it in 2008.[28] Cincinnati's decline directly benefited the surrounding counties. While the region's population grew at an anemic 1 percent from 2000 to 2005, the three counties immediately surrounding it are among the top ten fastest growing in the state. The exurbs are models of the areas targeted by Karl Rove and Republicans in 2004. These exurbs are wealthier and less diverse. In fact, a Brookings Institution report found that the Cincinnati area had one of the nation's highest number of exurban counties for a major metropolitan area and that the exurbanites were "disproportionately white, middle-income, homeowners, and commuters."[29]

For all these reasons, Southwest Ohio is the most consistently conservative and Republican area of the state in the contemporary era, a point of continuity with previous eras.

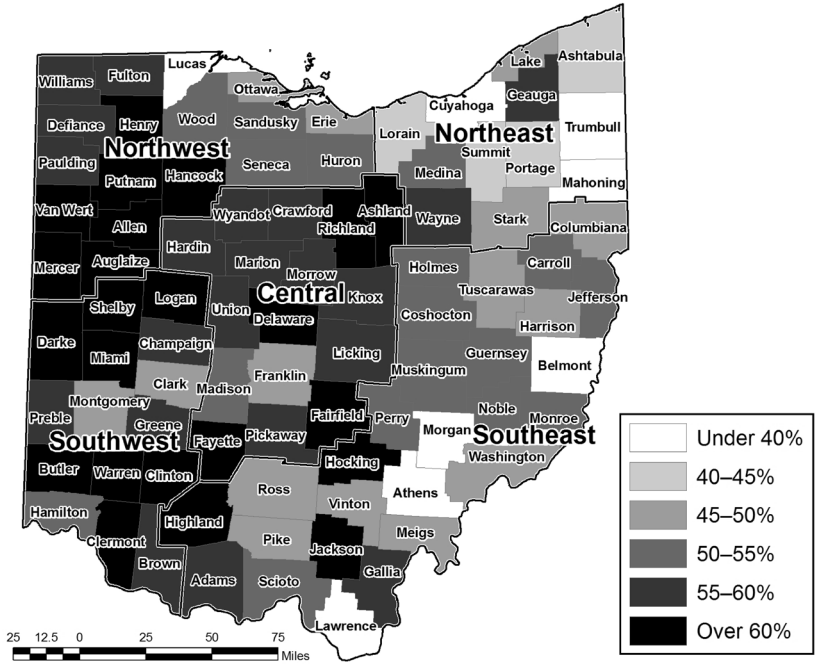
THE FIVE OHIOS AND THE VOTE

Can we see evidence of the Five Ohios in election results? A good way to begin answering this question is to look at the Five Ohios in presidential elections. The last three decades provide a unique view

of the range of county voting patterns that are possible. Figure 2.2 presents the overall average Republican vote from 1980 to 2008, a period that covers a little less than one-half of the postindustrial era as well as the initial elections of the contemporary era. Over this period, the Republicans won five of the presidential elections and the Democrats won three—a pattern that reflects the slight GOP bias of Ohio election results historically.

As figure 2.2 reveals, Northeast Ohio was the most Democratic of the Five Ohios, especially Cuyahoga, Trumbull, and Mahoning counties.[30] Overall, Republican presidential candidates won just 41 percent of the two-party vote in this region between 1980 and 2008. In contrast, Southwest Ohio is the most Republican of the five regions, especially the suburban counties around Hamilton County, but also the rural counties in the far north of the region.

Figure 2.2. Map of average Republican presidential vote, 1980–2008

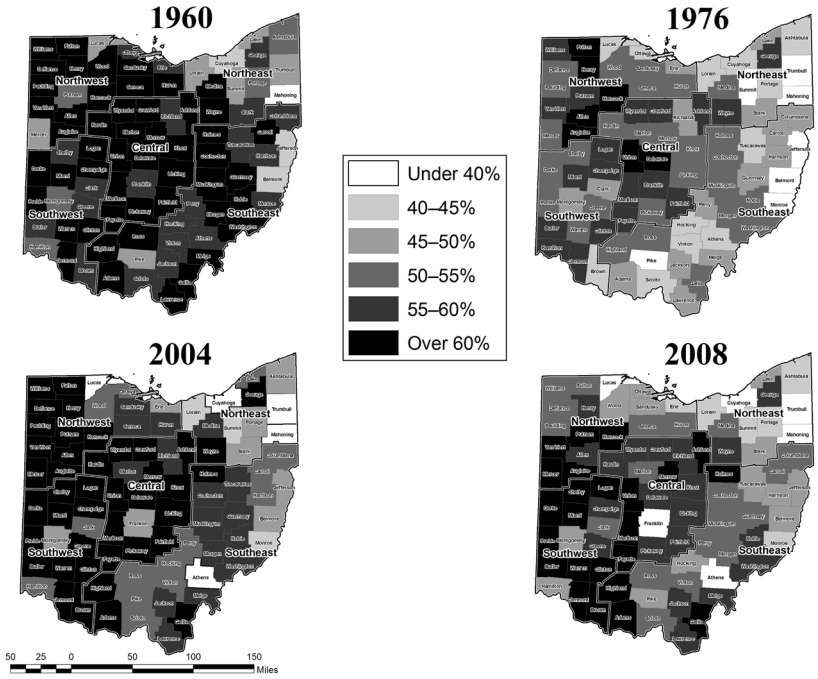


Overall, Republican presidential candidates won 56 percent of the two-party vote in this region between 1980 and 2008. At the same time, Central and Northwest Ohio tended to be Republican but less reliably so: GOP presidential candidates obtained 54 percent of the two-party vote in Central Ohio and 52 percent in Northwest Ohio over this twenty-eight-year period. In Central Ohio, Franklin County was among the most Democratic counties and in Northwest Ohio, it was Lucas County. Southeast Ohio was even more Democratic and contained a diverse set of counties, some very Democratic and some very Republican. Over this period, the region split the presidential vote fairly evenly, with GOP presidential candidates receiving 49 percent of the two-party vote.

These patterns stretch back into history, remaining recognizable in both good Republican and good Democratic election years. Figure 2.3 illustrates this point by presenting the Republican presidential vote for the 1960, 1976, 2004, and 2008 presidential elections. In 1960, Richard Nixon defeated John F. Kennedy in the Buckeye State. In this election, Northeast Ohio was the most Democratic region, and Southwest Ohio was the most Republican, followed closely by Central Ohio and the other regions. Overall, in the 1976 election, when Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald Ford in Ohio, the Buckeye State was substantially more Democratic than in 1960. However, note that Northeast Ohio was the best Democratic region, followed by Southeast Ohio, with Southwest and Central Ohio still the best Republican regions.

The same basic regional pattern held in 2004 when George W. Bush defeated John Kerry. Southwest and Central Ohio were still the best regions for the GOP, but note that the counties with big cities—Franklin, Montgomery, and Hamilton—were substantially Democratic. These urban Democratic gains were largely offset by increased Republican strength in Southeast and Northwest Ohio; Northeast Ohio remained the strongest Democratic region. In 2008, when Barack Obama defeated John McCain, the patterns looked substantially the same but with increased Democratic strength in

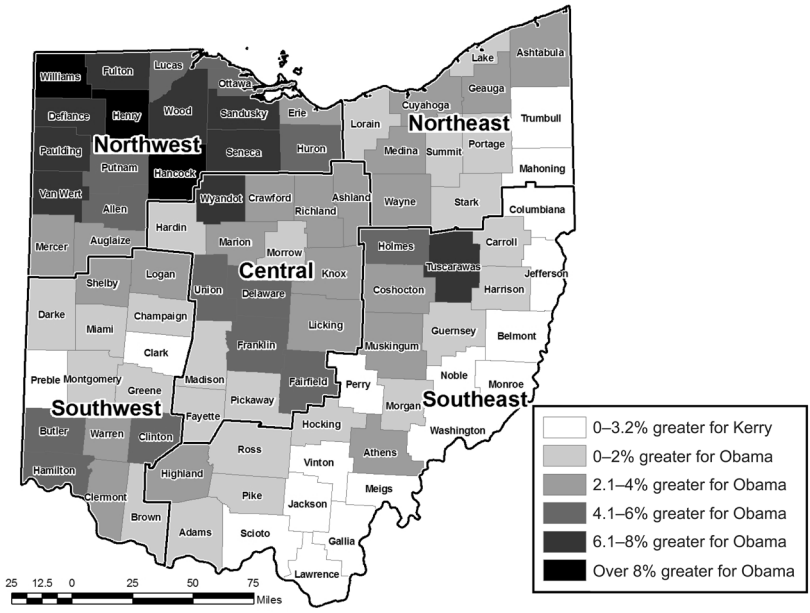
Figure 2.3. Map of Republican presidential vote, 1960, 1976, 2004, and 2008



various parts of the state. Obama did especially well in Northeast Ohio and improved in Southeast and Northwest Ohio; he also won both Franklin and Hamilton counties in the other two regions. Still, Southwest Ohio was McCain's best region in the state in 2008.

The changes in regional voting patterns between 2004 and 2008 are instructive and are presented in figure 2.4, which shows the change in the Democratic vote between the two elections. Overall, Obama gained 5 percent in Northwest Ohio, 4 percent in Central Ohio, 3 percent in Southwest Ohio, and 1 percent each in Southeast and Northeast Ohio. These patterns show the wisdom of the Obama campaign's attention to Republican areas as well as the core Democratic areas. Key differences were the Democratic gains in the

Figure 2.4. Map of Kerry versus Obama vote percentage



rural counties of Northwest and Central Ohio and also the winning of Hamilton County deep in the Republican Southwest. These gains helped overcome some declines between 2004 and 2008, especially in the semicircle of counties along the Pennsylvania border and the Ohio River, ranging from Trumbull County in the north to Scioto County in the south-central part of the state.

These same basic regional patterns remain for U.S. Senate elections. As with presidential contests, individual elections can alter the patterns, but even in electoral landslides, the relative positioning of the regions holds up. In 2006, Republican U.S. senator Mike DeWine received the most support in the GOP's historical base (and his home region) in Southwest Ohio, winning 53 percent, and was competitive in the swing region of Central Ohio, winning 47 percent. But in Northwest and Southeast Ohio, DeWine managed only 43 percent against Democrat Sherrod Brown and won only

about one in three votes in the Democratic base of Northeast Ohio (Brown's home region). But the most important pattern in figure 2.5 is the consistency of the vote by region in 1994 (when DeWine was first elected to the Senate) and 2000 (when he was reelected) compared to 2006 (when DeWine lost). In three very different elections, the *relative* support across the regions barely changes at all despite considerable variation in DeWine's performance at the polls.

Finally, these patterns hold for statewide elections as well. Figure 2.6 shows the Republican votes for statewide candidates from 1982 to 2006 (which includes races for governor, attorney general, treasurer, secretary of state, and auditor). Note the striking similarity between the regional patterns for the presidential and statewide officeholders in figures 2.2 and 2.6. Overall, Republican statewide candidates collectively won an average of 42.2 percent of the statewide vote in Northeast Ohio, 52.7 percent in Central Ohio, 51.8 percent in Northwest Ohio, 47.9 percent in Southeast Ohio, and 55.7 percent in Southwest Ohio.

In sum, the Five Ohios show a remarkable consistency in voting behavior during the postindustrial era, especially for presidential

Figure 2.5. DeWine regional performance, 1994–2006

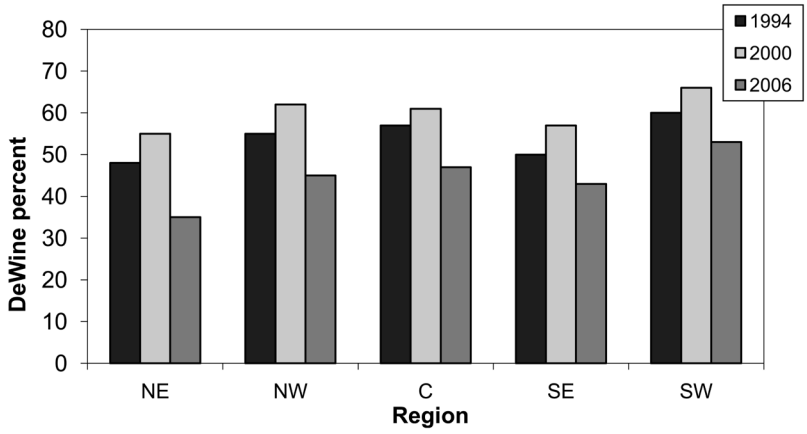
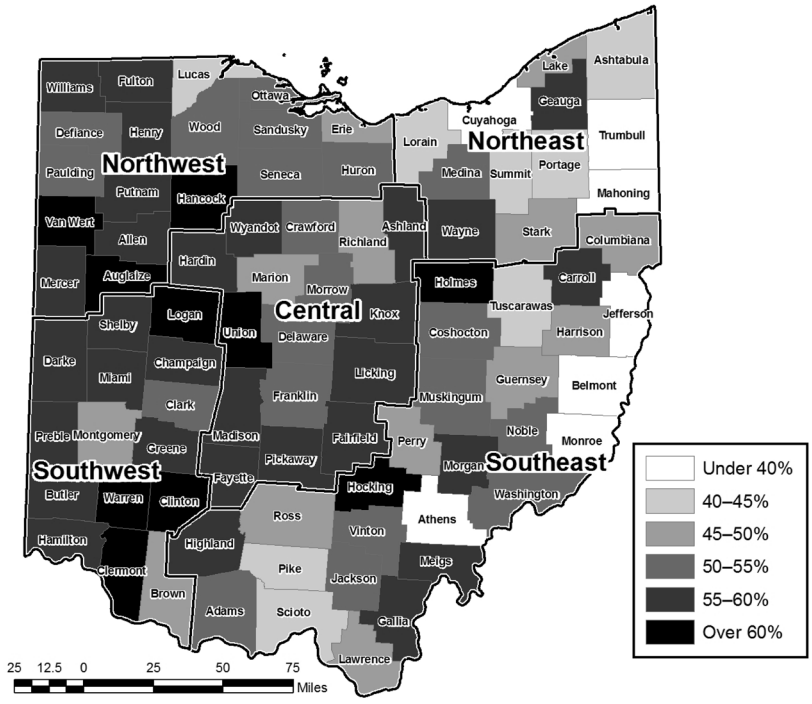


Figure 2.6. Map of Republican statewide vote percentage, 1982–2006



elections but for other offices as well. If nothing else, these patterns reveal the usefulness of these five regions in understanding the Buckeye battleground. But even a quick glance at the maps indicates that none of these regions are monolithic, with some county-level variation within them. So it is worth taking a brief look at intraregional diversity in the vote.

INTRAREGIONAL DIVERSITY

In examining regional political differences, counties are the favorite unit of analysis because they are relatively small, data are easily accessible, and most citizens identify as much with their county as

with their own state. Thus, it is worth looking at the county-level vote in more detail.

Northeast Ohio

On one end of the political scale is Northeast Ohio. In presidential elections since 1980, of the twelve counties in Northeast Ohio, seven were Democratic (average vote for Democratic candidates exceeds average Republican vote in all elections since 1980), the highest number of Democratic counties in any region in the state. Only three counties (Geauga, Medina, and Wayne) have voted Republican in every election since 1980. Since 1980, no county in the region has become more Republican, but three (Ashtabula, Lorain, and Stark) have become more Democratic since Clinton's election in 1992. In 1980, Reagan won eight of the twelve counties in Northeast Ohio, whereas in 2004, Bush won only four, and in 2008, McCain won only three.

Southwest Ohio

On the other end of the scale is Southwest Ohio. Since 1980, thirteen of the fifteen counties have voted for every Republican presidential candidate. Only Montgomery (Dayton), Clark (Springfield), and Hamilton (Cincinnati) have ever voted for a Democratic candidate. Bush narrowly carried Clark in 2004, while Montgomery has become a reliably Democratic county over time. Hamilton County also exhibited some movement to the Democratic column and voters gave a solid majority to Obama in 2008. With these exceptions, however, Southwest Ohio has been strongly Republican.

Northwest Ohio

Northwest Ohio demonstrates more variability. The region has generally been Republican, but with pockets of Democratic strength. In

this region, fifteen of the eighteen counties gave a majority to Republican presidential candidates since 1980. Only Erie and Lucas (Toledo) were reliably Democratic over this period. Bill Clinton was able to win several counties in the region in the 1990s, but in 2004, counties such as Ottawa and Sandusky had returned to their Republican voting patterns by going for Bush. In 2008, Obama won Erie and Lucas and also picked up Ottawa, Sandusky, and Wood.

Central Ohio

Overall, Central Ohio is one of the most Republican regions of the state at the county level. Of the sixteen counties in this region, Franklin (Columbus) stands alone as a Democratic oasis, having been the only county in the region to have voted for *any* Democratic presidential candidate since 1980. However, almost 60 percent of the region's population lives in Franklin County, providing more than one-half of all the region's votes in presidential elections since 1980. Franklin County has been trending away from the Republicans: in 1988, George H. W. Bush won almost 60 percent of the vote in his victory over Michael Dukakis, but in 2004, George W. Bush managed to win only 45 percent of the vote against John Kerry. In 2008, Obama routed McCain in Franklin County, winning 60 percent of the vote; however, in fourteen of the other fifteen counties, McCain won a majority of the vote.

Southeast Ohio

Southeast Ohio is the most diverse region in terms of the county-level vote. Of the twenty-seven counties in the region, thirteen on balance voted Republican since 1980, four on balance voted Democratic, and ten were nearly evenly divided. But there has been considerable variation by election, with a Republican shift in good Republican years, such as 1984, and the Democratic shift in good Democratic years, such as in 1996. In 2008, Obama's lost vote

share compared to Kerry's in twelve of the counties, but eighteen counties were decided by less than 10 percentage points.

These interregional patterns are illustrated in figures 2.7 and 2.8, which are dot plots showing the distribution of county voting patterns in each region, ranging from Southwest Ohio (the most Republican region) to Northeast Ohio (the most Democratic region). Each entry is marked with an *R* or a *D* to show the partisan balance of the county; the size of the letter denotes the relative size of the county, with, for instance, a large *D* denoting a more populous county and a small *D* denoting a county with a small population.

Figure 2.7. County Republican support in federal elections, 1980–2008

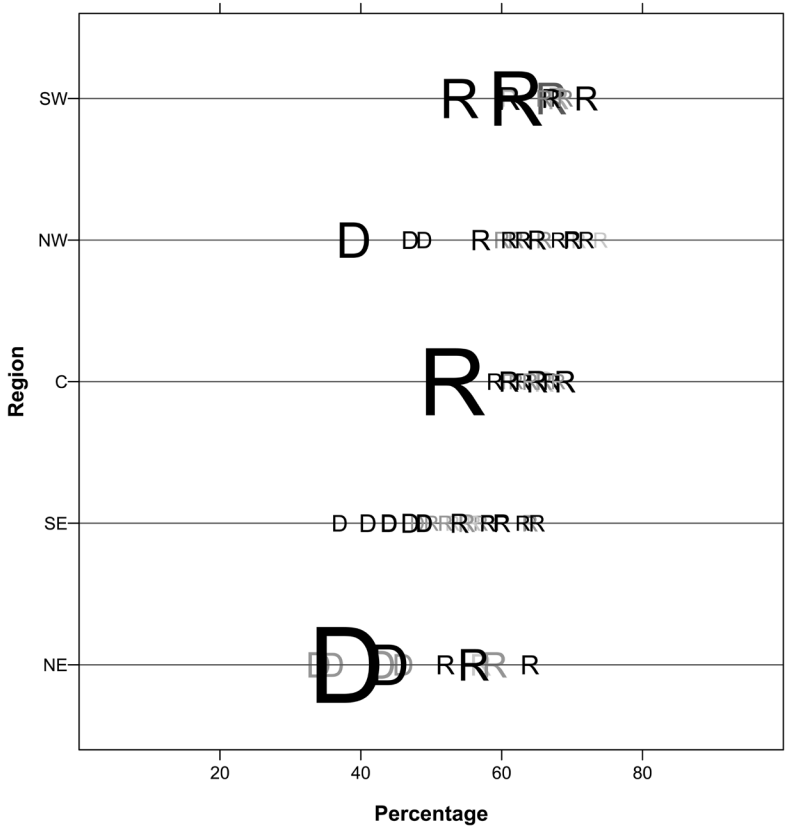


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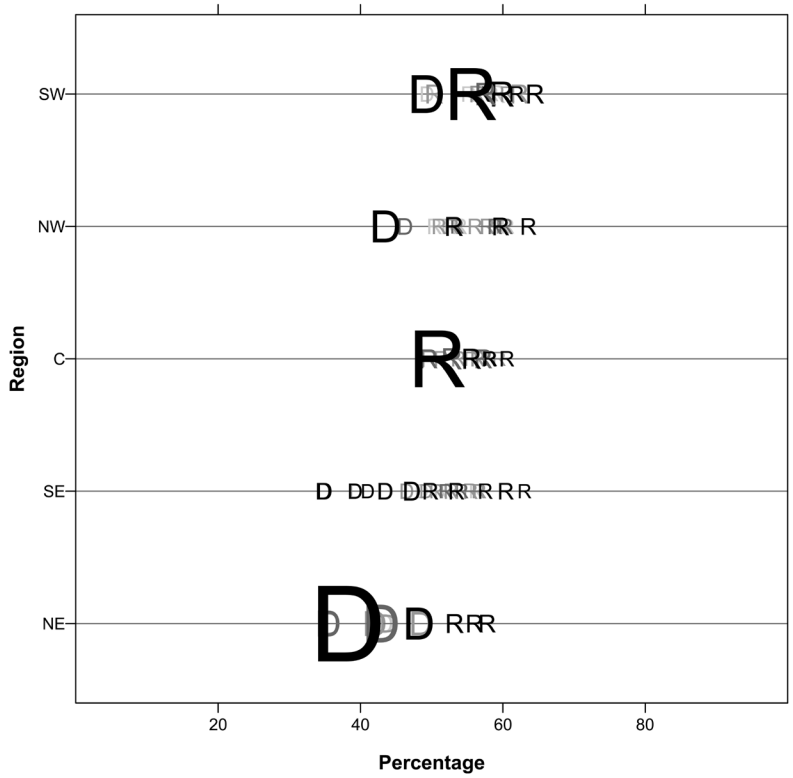
Figure 2.8. County Republican support in statewide elections, 1982–2006



Any shading differences in this graph are for illustration purposes only.

These plots show the different tendencies of each region both in terms of overall partisanship as well as internal diversity and the relative importance of the counties to the overall vote.

Figure 2.7 shows the combined average Republican vote of presidential, senatorial, and congressional elections by county from 1980 to 2008, and figure 2.8 shows analogous patterns for state offices over the same period (state data are from 1982 to 2006). These plots summarize the patterns we have described so far.

Beginning with Southwest Ohio (at the top of figures 2.7 and 2.8), the counties are clustered toward the right (Republican) side

of the plot—with both the large and small counties voting Republican over this period. The largest counties are Hamilton and Montgomery, and note that these large counties tend toward the center of the plot, indicating the fact that these large urban counties are more competitive and, as noted above, have become more so in recent times.

Something of an opposite pattern occurred in Northeast Ohio (at the bottom of figures 2.7 and 2.8), with a clustering of the counties toward the left (Democratic) side of the plot. Note the presence of the large counties on the Democratic side, especially Cuyahoga County, but also Mahoning, Summit, and Trumbull. But there were also Republican counties in the region—smaller suburban and rural counties clustered toward the right side of the plot.

In these plots, Central Ohio shows the least variability in county voting patterns of any region in the state, with the counties clustered to the right. But note the single large county—Franklin—that is located right in the middle of the plot, hovering around 50 percent of the GOP vote. As noted above, Franklin County has become increasingly Democratic over this period in federal and state elections. In this regard, Central Ohio looks more like the Southwest than the Northeast.

In partial contrast, Northwest Ohio resembles the Northeast. Several large counties are found on the left (Democratic) side of the plot, including Lucas County. But the remainder of the counties—mostly small suburban and rural counties—clustered toward the right (Republican side) on the plot. The most intriguing pattern is in Southeast Ohio. When elections for a variety of offices are included (as opposed to just the presidential vote), eight counties gave a majority of their ballots to Democratic candidates—a larger number of Democratic counties than in Northeast Ohio. But note that these Democratic counties tend to be small and rural, much like the counties that cluster toward the right side of the plot. These patterns underlie the tendencies of the Northwest and Southeast to be swing regions in federal and state elections.

CONCLUSION

When the 2008 Obama campaign chose to pursue votes in Republican strongholds of Ohio, it was acknowledging the traditional political regions within the state. This recognition reveals, in turn, Ohio's great political diversity, a principal reason why Ohio is a perennial battleground. We have shown that although Ohio is something of a microcosm of the nation as a whole, this status arises from its internal regional diversity. The Five Ohios capture this diversity fairly accurately and are associated with the vote with a high degree of consistency. In essence, the elements of the Buckeye battleground resemble many of the regions in the country as a whole.

Recognition of the Five Ohios helps explain why Ohio is a bellwether, cyclical, and competitive state, especially in presidential elections. But the Five Ohios raise other questions noted earlier in the chapter: Why are these regions distinctive at the ballot box? Is it because of the composition of the regions, or is it because of the context the regions provide for electoral politics? In the next chapter, we will illuminate both the compositional and contextual explanations for the political impact of region and, as part of the discussion, examine the impact of Ohio's diverse demography on the vote.

APPENDIX: THE COUNTY COMPOSITION OF THE FIVE OHIOS

	Northeast	Northwest	Central	Southeast	Southwest
Counties	Ashtabula	Allen	Ashland	Adams	Brown
	Cuyahoga	Auglaize	Crawford	Athens	Butler
	Geauga	Defiance	Delaware	Belmont	Champaign
	Lake	Erie	Fairfield	Carroll	Clark
	Lorain	Fulton	Fayette	Columbiana	Clermont
	Mahoning	Hancock	Franklin	Coshocton	Clinton
	Medina	Henry	Hardin	Gallia	Darke
	Portage	Huron	Knox	Guernsey	Greene
	Stark	Lucas	Licking	Harrison	Hamilton
	Summit	Mercer	Madison	Highland	Logan
	Trumbull	Ottawa	Marion	Hocking	Miami
	Wayne	Paulding	Morrow	Holmes	Montgomery
		Putnam	Pickaway	Jackson	Preble
		Sandusky	Richland	Jefferson	Shelby
		Seneca	Union	Lawrence	Warren
		Van Wert	Wyandot	Meigs	
		Williams		Morgan	
		Wood		Monroe	
				Muskingum	
				Noble	
				Perry	
				Pike	
				Ross	
				Scioto	
				Tuscarawas	
				Vinton	
				Washington	

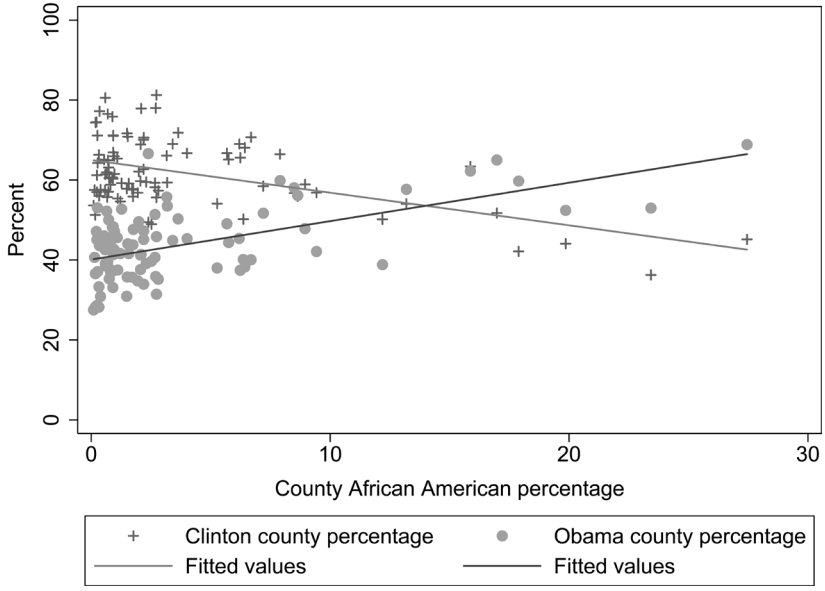
Chapter 3

The Political Impact of Demography

On March 4, 2008, Senator Hillary Clinton won a resounding victory in the Ohio presidential primary, defeating Senator Barack Obama 53 to 44 percent and winning 83 of the 88 counties. Of Obama's five counties, all had African American populations above the state average. Pundits immediately declared that Obama lost because Clinton appealed to the white working class and rural Democrats the party had been losing to the Republicans for many years.[1] These patterns reinforced widespread concerns that many white voters would not support an African American candidate for president. Figure 3.1 illustrates these patterns for the 2008 Ohio primary.

However, just eight months later, Obama won a narrow victory in Ohio, securing 51 percent of the vote and a total of twenty-two counties—including some counties that had supported Clinton in the primary. African Americans were strong supporters of Obama in the 2008 general election, as they had been in the primary,[2] but clearly something had changed with white voters. While only 34 percent of white voters in the primary (and only 27 percent of self-identified Democrats) voted for Obama, 46 percent of whites voted for Obama in the general election. Since exit polls estimated that whites made up 86 percent of the Ohio electorate in the general election, this was a significant improvement. By the next morning,

Figure 3.1. Primary candidate support and county racial makeup, 2008



pundits delved into the election returns and the exit poll results to determine the sources of the Obama victory. On this point there were many different explanations.

For example, Ruy Teixeira and William Frey of the Brookings Institution argued it was white working-class voters that delivered a win to Obama along with Democratic shifts of suburban whites.[3] Clinton pollster Mark Penn noted that the key to the Obama victory was his performance among one of the fastest-growing subgroups in the electorate—the upper-middle class.[4] Other explanations included the mobilization of young voters by the Obama campaign and the support of college-educated voters.[5] Columnist E. J. Dionne seemed to sum up these various claims, arguing, "It is the majority of a dynamic country increasingly at ease with its diversity."[6]

What all these views of Obama's victory had in common was a focus on the impact of demographic groups on the vote. In this chapter, we will review the demographic diversity of Ohio to better understand the Buckeye battleground. In this regard, we focus in part on the compositional view of the political impact of region (as discussed in chapter 2): Do group differences across the state explain regional patterns of voting? Demographic analysis can illuminate voting patterns regardless of who is on the ballot or the circumstances of the campaign. However, we also consider the contextual explanation for the political impact of region by examining the effects of demography on the vote across the Five Ohios.

DEMOGRAPHY AND WHY IT MATTERS POLITICALLY

For many pundits and scholars, demography is often equated with political destiny, as changes in the voting patterns among key demographic groups are extrapolated forward to predict future winners and losers. Many of the explanations make intuitive sense and some have strong empirical support as well. However, many analysts oversimplify the impact of demography by insisting that there is a single explanation for the outcome of an election involving millions of voters that can be broken down into numerous demographic subgroups. We attempt to avoid this oversimplification by examining all of the most common demographic variables and their relationship to the vote in Ohio.

To some extent, the sociological or group explanation is based on a self-interested model of politics.[7] Taken to an extreme, stated ideological or partisan views really just amount to a post hoc rationalization of group interest. Politics largely is the struggle of groups to obtain political power, social prestige, and, in the end, economic standing. Of course, citizens belonging to various social groups may not see their interests as opposed to others and may not even be

consciously aware of the political orientation of their supposed group. In the aggregate, however, the political behavior of thousands or even millions of individuals sharing a group identity, the explanation goes, is due to competition over social, economic, and political resources.

Numerous social groups exist but only some become politicized such that social identities become political identities. For example, Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan's seminal analysis of political parties finds that party conflict in Europe has deep historical roots,[8] developing out of the long march toward industrialization as well as clashes over cultural identity. Their "freezing hypothesis" noted that most of the groups that divided along party lines in the 1960s were fairly close to the same divisions of the groups aligned with European parties of the 1920s. The British Labour Party, for example, arose in the early twentieth century to represent the interests of the working class as industrialization resulted in substantial inequalities even as the franchise had been extended to workers in the middle of the nineteenth century. The existing Liberal Party at the time tended to represent the established middle class, while the Conservatives mostly represented the British aristocracy. The Labour Party arose as newly enfranchised trade union workers became more conscious of their rights and interests and organized politically.

While the historical or cultural causes that generate politicized group identities perhaps defy simple generalization, once traits become politically relevant, political discussions, social interactions, and political campaigns reinforce their political meanings. As John Petrocik notes, social identities are a "central feature of human personality" and political parties arise as the organized manifestation of group competition.[9]

Understanding how different groups vote is a critical part of understanding not only election outcomes but also the ideas and issues that define political life (a topic we will engage in chapter 4). In the United States, there has been extensive research on the

relationship between social group identities and partisan support.[10] In general, research indicates that group voting behavior, while not as powerful a predictor as in Europe, does provide a strong indication of how U.S. citizens will align along partisan lines. The extensive research on the relationship between social group identities and voting behavior has found that demography is a powerful predictor of whether citizens vote Democratic or Republican.[11] The two-party system in the United States exists because of the decentralized structure of the parties but also because group conflict has tended to be subsumed by more general battles over governmental power and over principles that tend to cut across social lines.[12]

Scholars have identified three basic clusters of demographic factors that are associated with distinctive identities in contemporary American politics.[13] The first cluster of demographic factors includes income, education, and occupation, often loosely labeled as measures of socioeconomic "class." These factors matter politically because they reflect differences in economic interests and material well-being. Population density (such as urban/rural differences) and population change (such as growth and decline in total population) are often treated along with measures of class because of the connection of these characteristics to the performance of the economy. The second demographic cluster includes religion, ethnicity, and race, often loosely labeled as measures of "culture." These factors matter politically because they reflect basic differences in values. The third cluster includes age, gender, and family status, often loosely labeled as "life cycle" factors. These factors matter because they reflect basic differences in personal experience.

Such deep-seated patterns may also help explain regional differences in Ohio and the persistence of such differences over time and across types of elections, as we saw in the previous chapter. By focusing on demographic characteristics, we can, to a great extent, explain why Ohioans vote the way they do and the different bases of support for each party. These patterns also help to explain why Ohio is the perennial battleground state in presidential elections.

DEMOGRAPHY AND THE VOTE IN OHIO

In the analysis that follows, we will use both survey and U.S. census data to explore the effects of demographics on Ohio's voting patterns. Individual-level survey data on demography have the advantage of allowing for a direct link to the vote but are typically less comprehensive and extensive than census data. In contrast, the county-level census data provide a wealth of demographic information—far more than could ever be collected in a survey. Since the links between such data and how individuals behave on Election Day are not always evident, we must often rely on inferences about how demography translates into support at the polls. What follows is a review of the impact of measures of class, culture, and life cycle on voting behavior in the Buckeye State that focuses on both the compositional and contextual theories of the impact of region on the vote.

Measures of Class

Historically, class differences in Ohio politics could be seen in a battle between white-collar and blue-collar workers. In the industrial era, economic development allowed the state to transition from a largely rural to an industrial economy. Ohio saw those advancements in a variety of locations: glass in Toledo, tires in Akron, steel in Cleveland and Youngstown, and consumer products in Cincinnati. All these communities grew rapidly with migration from farmlands and the South as well as continued immigration from abroad. While Ohio was quickly urbanizing, the booming farm economy brought additional wealth to Ohio. All these trends created tensions between rural and urban communities.[14]

In the postindustrial era, the state's economic success produced a large suburban middle class. The white-collar wealthy and middle-class managers formed an important base for Republicans, and blue-collar working-class labor was the backbone of the Democratic

coalition. In rural Ohio, commercial farmers tended to be allied with the Republicans. However, in both suburban and rural areas, less wealthy individuals were more variable in their politics, willing to vote Democratic under the right circumstances. These tensions have been exacerbated in recent times by population decline, including the increase in poverty in some parts of the Buckeye State.[15]

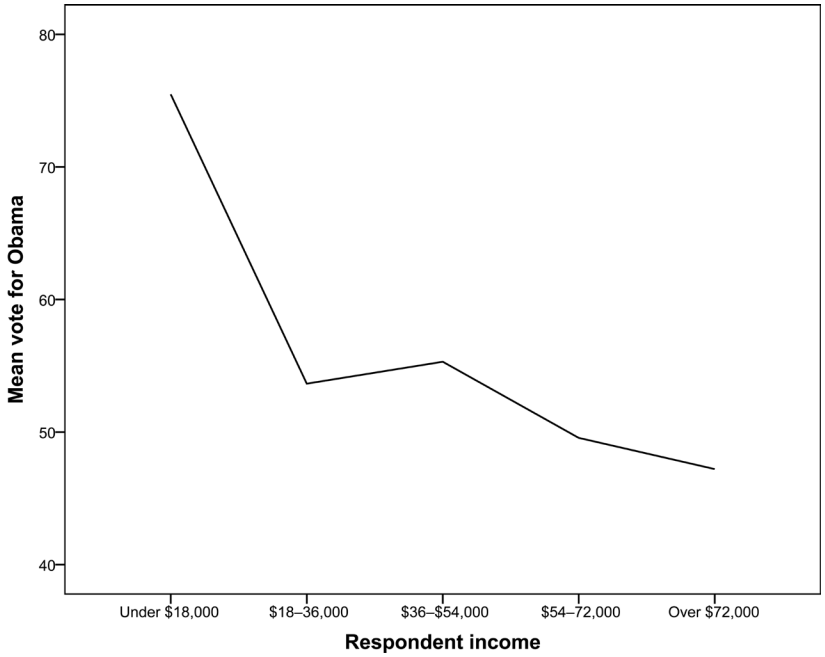
In the contemporary era, class still matters in Ohio politics, with wealthy people associated with greater Republican voting at the county and individual level. As figure 3.2 indicates, the relationship is sharp and clear at the individual level: the Obama vote drops sharply from lower- to upper-income voters.

Some regional differences structure the relationship between income and the vote. Frey and Teixeira, in an analysis of Ohio prior to the 2008 election, noted how class effects differed across Ohio in the 2004 presidential election:

> [John] Kerry's success among white working class voters varied dramatically by region of Ohio. Kerry actually carried white working class voters in Cuyahoga County by 17 points and only lost them by 2 points in the exit poll's Northeast region (roughly equivalent to our Northeast and Cleveland suburbs regions combined) and 3 points in the exit poll's Northwest region (similar to our region of the same name). But he lost these voters in the rest of Ohio by around 25 points. [In 2006, Sherrod] Brown did much better than Kerry among white working class voters throughout Ohio, especially in the Northeast, where he carried them by 30 points.[16]

Survey data can provide some confirmation of this pattern in 2008 by looking at income across regions without taking any other demographic factors into account. Table 3.1 shows the strongest income effects in Northeast and Central Ohio, with lower levels in the other regions. This evidence shows some support for the compositional explanation for the political impact of region but also reveals some support for the contextual explanation. After all, if

Figure 3.2. Percent of vote for Obama and median income



region did not matter, we would see uniform patterns between income and the vote across all the regions of the state. Instead, the relationship between income and the Obama vote depends in part on where a voter lives.

A different way to see this pattern is in figure 3.3, a panel figure of county-level median income and the vote by regions. Across the Five Ohios, the association between income and the vote is basically the same, with less affluent counties voting more Democratic and more affluent counties voting more Republican (note the downward sloping line in each panel). But the nature of the relationship varies by region (note the variation in the slope of the line). In Northeast Ohio, the pattern is fairly sharp, with the more affluent counties, such as Medina County, at the opposite end of relatively poorer counties, such as Cuyahoga County. In other regions, such as Central Ohio, the relationship between county income and the

TABLE 3.1.

Income by region and 2008 Obama vote

Region	Over 50,000	Under 50,000	Net Obama
Northeast	53.9	67.2	13.3
Northwest	48.5	55.3	6.8
Central	50.6	66.2	15.6
Southeastern	43.9	45.6	1.7
Southwestern	38.6	47.4	8.8

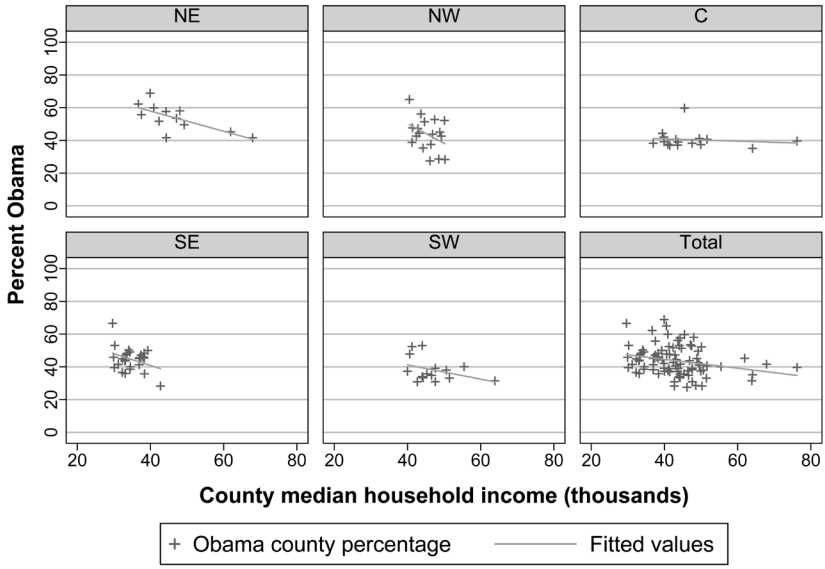
Source: 2008 Akron Buckeye poll.
Note: Table shows difference in Obama vote between those making more than $50,000 and those making less than $50,000.

vote is much weaker. As such, the results show that income matters to the vote, but the nature of the relationship is also influenced by region. It is worth noting that for Ohio as a whole (at the bottom right panel of figure 3.3), income shows a moderately strong relationship to the vote in 2008.

Education is another factor closely linked to class, but the effect is different than for income. In the postindustrial era, educational attainment has become linked to partisan voting trends in complex ways: while education is a class marker, it is not as tightly correlated with the vote as is income.[17] Higher educational attainment is linked to higher levels of Democratic voting, but so is lower educational attainment. Put another way, Republican voting is highest among citizens with middle levels of education.

Education might reflect differences in voters' values and priorities. Historically, a college education was reserved for the upper-middle class and a high school degree more or less marked a blue-collar occupation. It is possible that education now straddles the line between culture and class. Many pundits have argued that

Figure 3.3. County median income and the vote by region

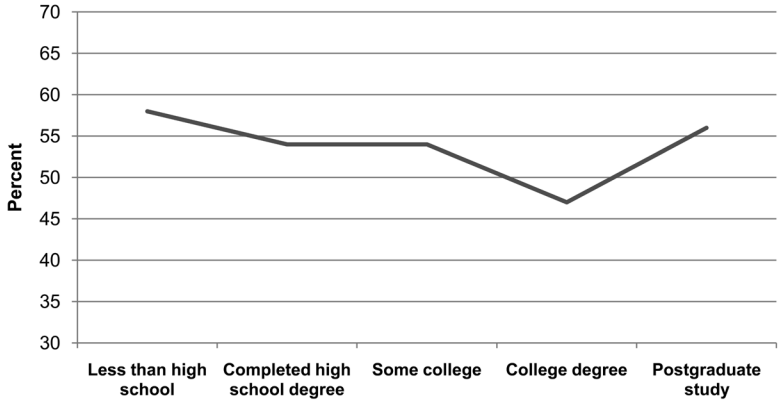


Republican positions on issues such as abortion and stem cell research have alienated voters with college degrees because they tend to emphasize progressive values, particularly where social issues and science are involved.[18] Alternatively, Republicans perform best among college graduates without an advanced degree because they tend to occupy managerial or executive positions.[19]

Survey data from the 2008 presidential election in Ohio shows that educational attainment is linked to greater support for Obama in just this fashion. As figure 3.4 demonstrates, Obama did best among the least educated; more poorly among those with more education, reaching a low point with college graduates; and better among those with postgraduate education.

In addition, the effects of education are inconsistent across regions, as is shown in the panels of figure 3.5. In every region except for the Northeast, the relationship between level of education and the Obama vote is positive—that is, the higher the proportion of

Figure 3.4. Education level and the Obama vote

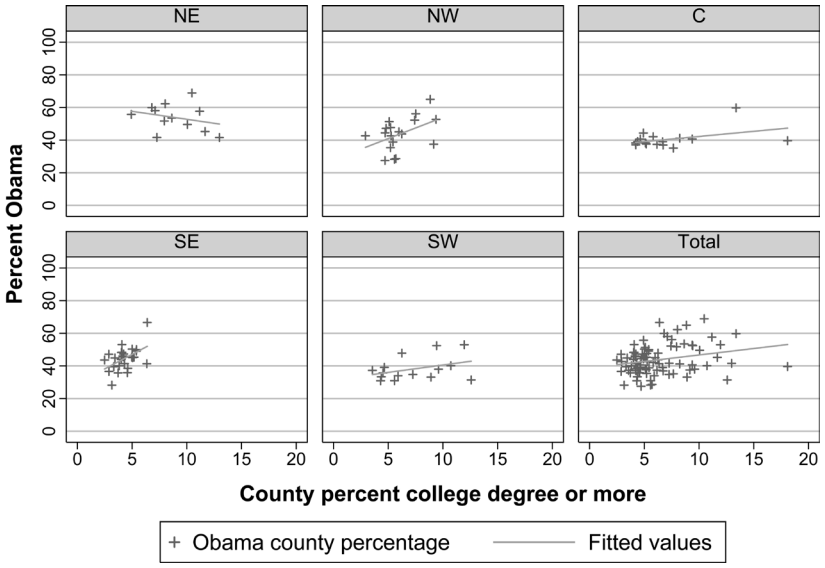


the population with college degrees, the higher the Obama vote. In Southeast and Northwest Ohio, the impact is quite strong. But in Northeast Ohio, the relationship is negative, with less education associated with a larger Obama vote. It could be that the well-educated also live in areas with lower median income and that this association hides some of the compositional effects. Education's complex relationship to the vote may also muddle the effect on the vote at the county level. However, the panel graph reveals the different effects of education on the vote by region. Note that for Ohio as a whole, there is a modestly positive relationship between higher levels of education and the vote in 2008.

Population Density and Population Growth

One of the most important divisions in Ohio and the nation is between rural and urban areas, based in part on population density. In fact, some analysts believe this is the heart of the "red state/blue state" division, as red states are more rural and blue states have larger urban populations. Moreover, the pattern of life in a rural or urban setting exerts an independent effect on individuals' social

Figure 3.5. Education level and Obama support by region



and political views.[20] The political division between rural and urban is hardly new, but the extent of the divide in candidate and party support varies over time.

As in many midwestern states, much of Ohio's political divisions can be traced to a fairly equal balance between urban and rural populations. Table 3.2 reports the ten most "Republican" and the ten most "Democratic" counties in terms of the aggregate proportion of votes cast for each party's presidential candidates from 1980 to 2008 (in parentheses); the final row of the table reports the percentage of the state's population found in these lists of top ten counties.

In general, Republicans dominate low-population rural counties while Democrats tend to win highly populated urban counties by slightly narrower margins. These top ten Republican counties contributed just over 6 percent to the Republican vote totals from 1980 to 2008 statewide. In contrast, the top ten Democratic counties

TABLE 3.2.

Ohio county presidential voting, 1980–2008

Rank	GOP	Democrats
1	Putnam (69.12)	Cuyahoga (59.58)
2	Holmes (67.32)	Mahoning (58.79)
3	Warren (67.22)	Trumbull (56.75)
4	Auglaize (66.68)	Athens (55.57)
5	Hancock (65.68)	Lucas (54.85)
6	Union (65.56)	Belmont (54.76)
7	Clermont (64.84)	Monroe (54.32)
8	Mercer (63.79)	Jefferson (54.06)
9	Van Wert (63.76)	Summit (51.86)
10	Allen (63.41)	Lorain (50.67)
Percent of Ohio population	**6.16**	**31.02**

Source: Ohio Secretary of State.

contributed 31 percent of the Democratic presidential vote over this period. Thus, Democrats compete statewide because their areas of strength are in heavily populated urban areas. But the heavily populated counties matter a great deal to the GOP: the top ten Democratic counties actually provided the Republicans with more than one-quarter of the total votes cast for Republican presidential candidates between 1980 and 2008.

Popular accounts of the 2004 election suggested that Bush won by appealing to voters in the fast-growing exurbs in Ohio and nationwide. There is some evidence that the demographics backing each party are becoming more geographically distinct in Ohio. These patterns of population change at the county level are often taken as a measure of economic growth and decline. Indeed,

analysts have seen important clues about each party's future prospects in county-level population change. As Ronald Brownstein and Richard Rainey of the *Los Angeles Times* noted in an analysis of the 2004 election results, George W. Bush carried ninety-seven of the one hundred fastest-growing counties, winning 63 percent of the total votes in these counties.[21]

Analysts frequently noted that this signaled a significant change in the political terrain, as voters in these areas tend to be white, wealthy, well-educated, and religious, as shown in table 3.3. The rapid growth rates combined with a geographic isolation that seemed to finally provide Republicans with a counterpart to the Democratic advantage in the cities. It was tempting to speculate that culturally, the bases of each party were drifting into different political universes.

The despair of many Democratic officials was that the party was losing a battle for new population centers that would hold the key to winning state and national elections. In 2004, Matt Bai wrote an extended article on the GOP's "multilevel marketing" grassroots

TABLE 3.3.

Characteristics of Ohio's fastest-growing counties

	Top ten fastest-growing	Rest of Ohio
Evangelical	27.8	25.0
White	96.2	84.0
Bachelor's degree or higher	23.4	20.9
Poverty	6.1	10.7
Households with income over $100,000	14.7	9.4

Source: 2000 U.S. census (http://censtats.census.gov/usa/usa.shtml).

effort to turn out Bush supporters in the one hundred fastest-growing counties in the United States. As Bai puts it:

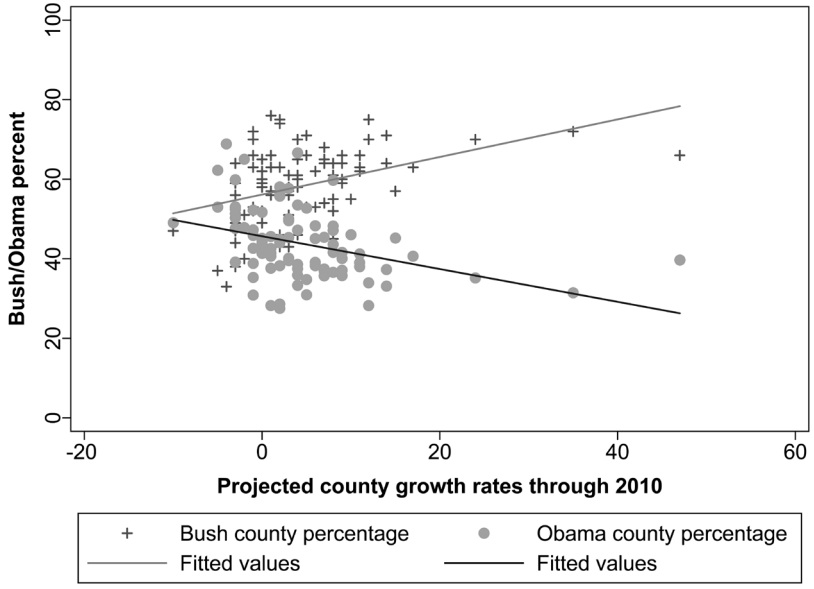
> But Republicans believe they can control a new, more promising demographic: the fast-growing, conservative communities just beyond the suburban sprawl, where tony malls are rising almost monthly out of fields and farmland. For Republicans, this means a whole new market of potential entrepreneurs to enlist and mobilize. If Bush can harness the power of the exurbs, he can create a kind of organization the country has not yet witnessed—a political machine for the new economy.[22]

As figure 3.6 reveals, county growth rates are in fact positively correlated with Republican voting in both the 2004 and 2008 elections. Put another way, the GOP did best in areas of economic strength, whereas the Democrats did best in areas of economic weakness, as measured by population growth.

We should be cautious about making too much of these patterns, however. They may represent long-term changes in the political makeup of Ohio, and it is plausible that they tap into cultural differences between each party's base. Such changes may be temporary, however. Across Ohio, industrial urban cores are losing population to the surrounding suburbs and exurbs, and it is unlikely that these patterns will provide such lopsided margins for the GOP for long.

Moreover, as Ruy Teixeira points out, Bush increased his vote by 4 percent in the fastest-growing counties between 2000 and 2004 but also by 2 percent in counties that were not as fast growing.[23] Obama largely held steady, but given his improved performance statewide, the data suggest that Republicans may have maximized their vote margins in these areas in 2004. McCain won only 61 percent in the ten counties with the fastest growth rates through 2010, earning only about fifteen hundred more votes than Bush, while Obama gained over thirty-seven thousand votes in these same counties. As we will show in later chapters, the growing exurbs are important,

Figure 3.6. Bush and Obama vote and county growth rate



but perhaps rather than being dominated by Republicans, they are a new battleground in a changing political environment.

Democrats are also aware of the importance of these growing areas, and a key part of the Obama strategy in Ohio was to trim the GOP margins in these areas. Obama was able to improve Democratic fortunes in all but one of these same counties in 2008. Moreover, while the GOP still holds huge advantages in the exurban areas, urban counties are becoming more Democratic (Franklin and Hamilton, for example), and the key swing areas remain suburbs that are not so geographically or demographically isolated. Indeed, NBC analyst Chuck Todd concluded that in 2008, the GOP essentially "lost" the suburbs in Ohio and other battleground states.[24] So while there are important cultural divisions within the state that are aligned into different geographic areas, party coalitions overlap considerably statewide.

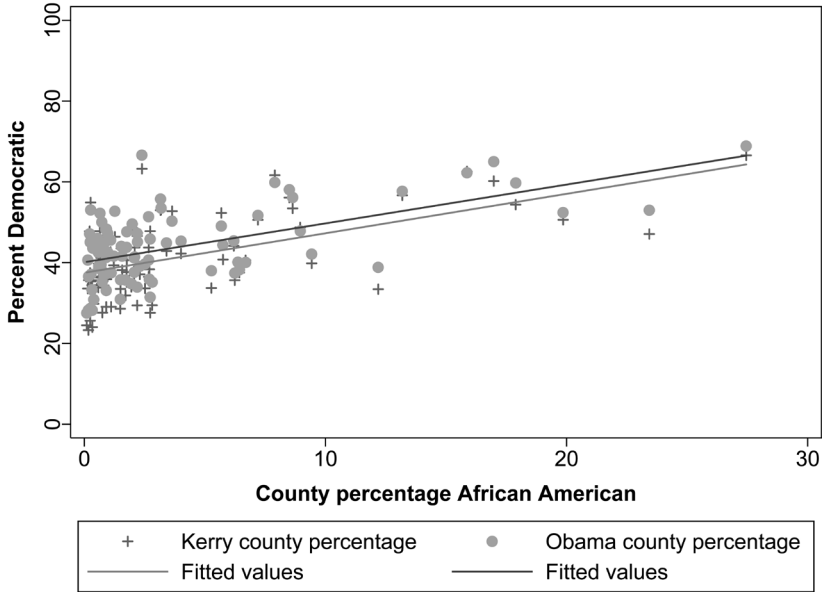
Measures of Culture

As with class, cultural differences in Ohio are a mixture of new and old. Race is perhaps the most important cultural trait in terms of understanding politics in Ohio and the United States, and it has been so for much of American history. Race became particularly salient in elections in the postindustrial era when the civil rights movement gave African Americans more access to the political process. The effects of race were quite similar to ethnicity, and ethnic politics was a staple of Ohio and American politics across many eras, with the twin processes of immigration and assimilation determining which particular ethnic group was relevant to electoral politics. Race and ethnicity are also both closely linked to religion, so that cultural conflict has often had a faith-based character to it. Indeed, one only has to think of black Protestant churches, ethnic Catholic parishes, and white Evangelical Christian congregations to be reminded of the role of cultural factors in Ohio elections. These types of cultural groups remain important to the vote in the contemporary era.

In Ohio, racial differences were evident in county voting patterns, as shown in figure 3.7, which depicts the differential effect of the racial makeup of Ohio counties and voting in the 2004 and 2008 elections. The relationship is clear and consistent: counties with larger African American populations backed Obama heavily and demonstrated a similar pattern of support for John Kerry. It is worth noting, however, that white voters did not vote Republican at anywhere near the rate that African Americans voted Democratic.

Ohio's five regions vary substantially by racial makeup. Figure 3.8 is a box plot that shows the variance in county racial makeup.[25] Here Northeast Ohio had the most racial diversity, and this pattern was not limited to Cuyahoga County, although it was a clear outlier. Southeast Ohio demonstrated an opposite pattern, with little racial diversity and few county outliers. The other regions had more moderate levels of racial diversity. In general, urban counties are racially

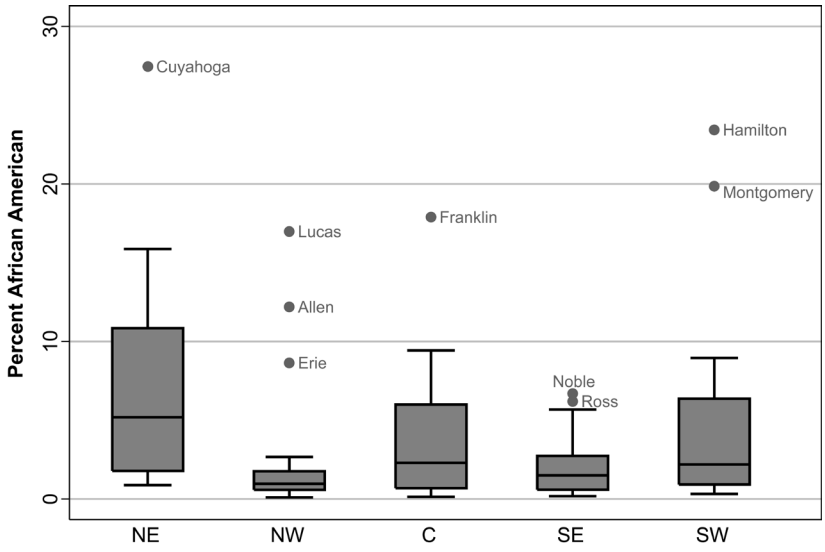
Figure 3.7. Racial differences in county voting patterns, 2004 and 2008



diverse while rural counties are not, and the Five Ohios differ in terms of the depth of racial diversity across counties.

However, the association of race and voting is to some extent conditioned by region and not simply accounted for by the urban/rural nature of the counties. This pattern can be seen in the panels of figure 3.9. Northeast and Southwest Ohio are polar opposites in terms of partisan support, and yet each has a similar degree of racial diversity. For example, Southwest Ohio follows a pattern in many southern states in which race and income are strongly correlated with partisan voting patterns.[26] While only 70 percent of citizens in Hamilton County are white, it is surrounded by Butler County (88 percent white), Warren County (93 percent white), and Clermont County (97 percent white), and these are the fastest-growing counties in the state. As a result, despite Obama's victory in Hamilton County, his worst performance in the state was in this region, with

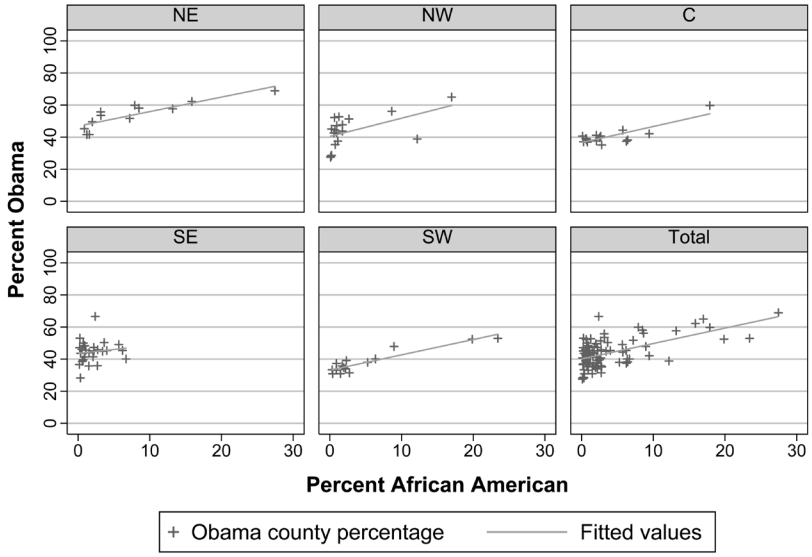
Figure 3.8. Variance in county racial makeup



the least diverse counties having much lower levels of support for Obama than the least diverse counties in Northwest or Northeast Ohio. In Central Ohio, with the exception of Franklin County, the effect of race on voting was small. In Southeast Ohio, the support for Obama varies significantly without much variance in racial makeup.[27] Thus, race mattered in much of Ohio, but these effects occur in the context of region.

In recent years, religion has rivaled race as a major dividing line between the political parties, with white Evangelical Protestants and regular worship attendees becoming a key Republican voting bloc. This pattern is relatively new, arising during the postindustrial era and largely replacing older faith-based patterns in the vote such as divisions between Protestants and Catholics. Disputes over "moral values," such as school prayer, abortion, and the separation of church and state questions were the driving force behind this new faith-based alignment. This alignment was clearly on display in

Figure 3.9. Racial voting in the Five Ohios

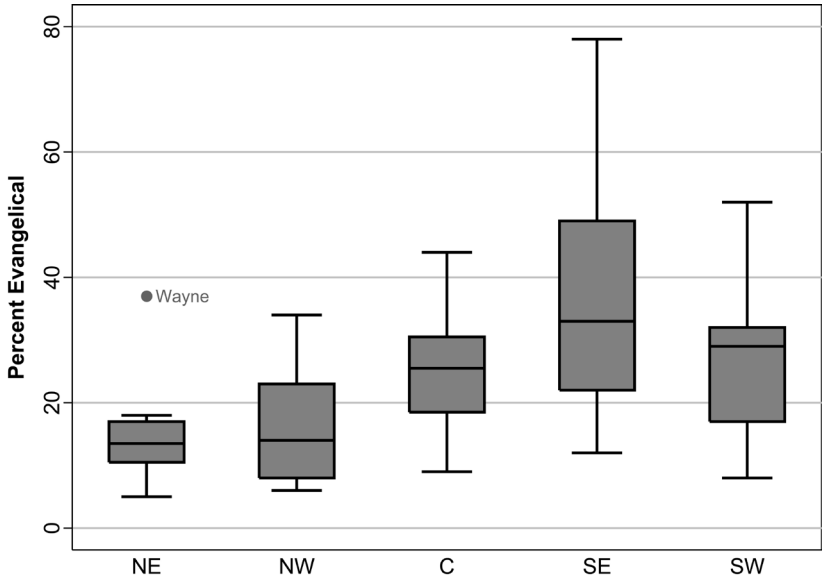


the 2004 election when an amendment to the Ohio Constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage was on the general election ballot and passed with a large percentage of the vote.[28]

Figure 3.10 is a box plot that describes the distribution of Evangelical Protestants by region. Here there is considerable variation. For example, Southeast Ohio has the highest proportion of Evangelicals, while Northeast Ohio has the lowest across all counties. Southwest Ohio also has a large proportion of Evangelicals as well (one in four).[29] Central Ohio is similar, with some counties having high proportions of Evangelicals while others have considerably lower. Northwest Ohio has a greater Evangelical population than Northeast Ohio, but fewer counties are densely populated by this group.

We can see the effects of religion clearly in the patterns at the individual level, using information on membership in religious traditions, shown in table 3.4. The patterns for the 2004 and 2008

Figure 3.10. Evangelical Protestant distribution by region



presidential elections are fairly consistent. White Evangelical Protestants were part of the Republican base in both elections, followed by white mainline Protestants; both groups of white Protestants were actually more Republican in 2008 than in 2004. White Catholics were evenly divided in 2008 and leaned slightly Republican in 2004, a pattern that fits the common image of Catholics as swing voters.[30] The composite group of other Christians showed an even more dramatic swing between 2004 and 2008 and on balance voted for Obama. Meanwhile, non-Christians, the unaffiliated, and especially black Protestants were solidly Democratic in both contests, moving in a Democratic direction in 2008.

In the contemporary era, worship attendance also had an impact on elections in Ohio. Figure 3.11 shows the relationship between the frequency of worship attendance and the presidential vote in 2004 and 2008. In 2004, there was a 40 percentage point gap between frequent and infrequent church attendees in support

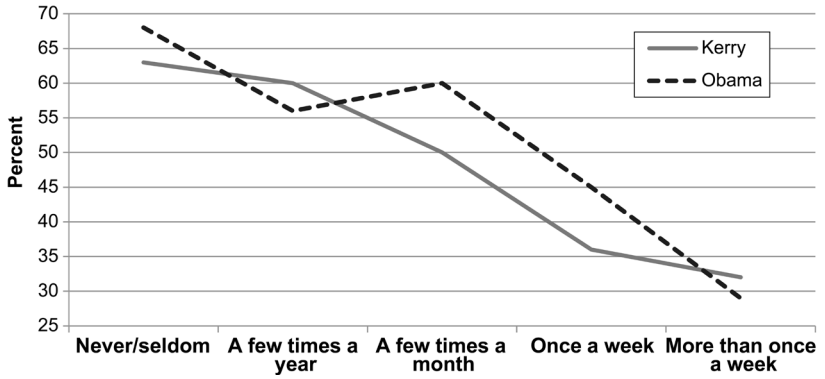
TABLE 3.4.

Republican advantage among religious groups

Religion	McCain-Obama	Bush-Kerry
Evangelical Protestants	+36.0	+30.2
Mainline Protestants	+8.4	+4.8
Catholics	0.0	+5.8
Other Christians	–25.0	+3.2
Non-Christian and unaffiliated	–42.4	–34.0
Black Protestants	–100.0	–60.8

Sources: 2004 exit poll; 2008 Akron Buckeye poll.

Figure 3.11. Church attendance and voting, 2004 and 2008



for Bush and Kerry. The gap was of similar size in 2008 between McCain and Obama, despite the fact that the campaign focused more on economic issues. In fact, worship attendance was particularly important in understanding the voting behavior of religious groups that were divided between the major parties, such as Catholics and mainline Protestants.

As with race, there were differences by region. Figure 3.12 shows the relationship between the county-level Obama vote and the proportion of the population that belong to Evangelical Protestant denominations.[31] Note that in all of the Five Ohios, there is a negative relationship between the Obama vote and the proportion of Evangelicals, but as before, the nature of that relationship varies by region, from a steep relationship in Northeast Ohio to a nearly flat relationship in Northwest Ohio. For the state as a whole, there is a modestly negative relationship.

The compositional explanation would also predict that party performance is related to the degree of overlap between demographic groups of each party. Figure 3.13 shows that at the county level, there was relatively little overlap between the locations of these cultural groups. Obama won counties with high degrees of racial diversity, while McCain won counties that had large populations of Evangelical Protestants. Race and religion both help account for party performance across the Five Ohios, but neither is

Figure 3.12. Obama Evangelical vote by county

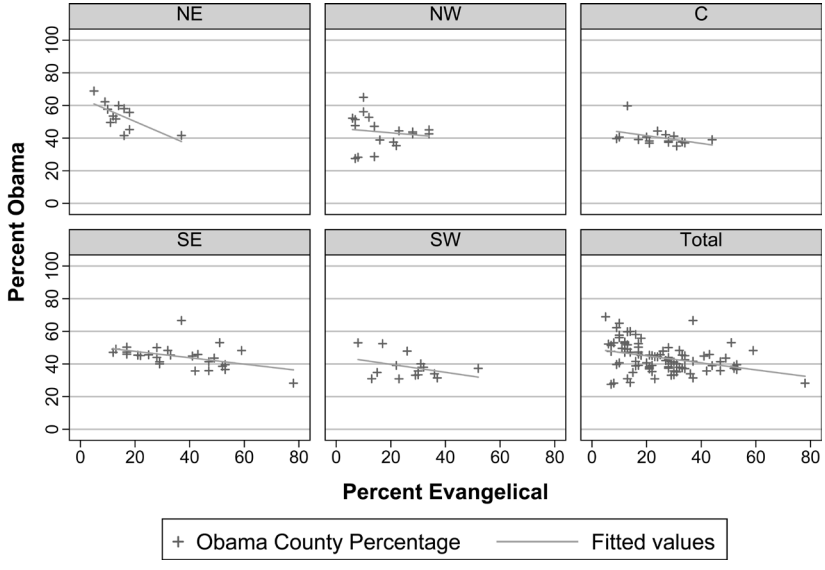
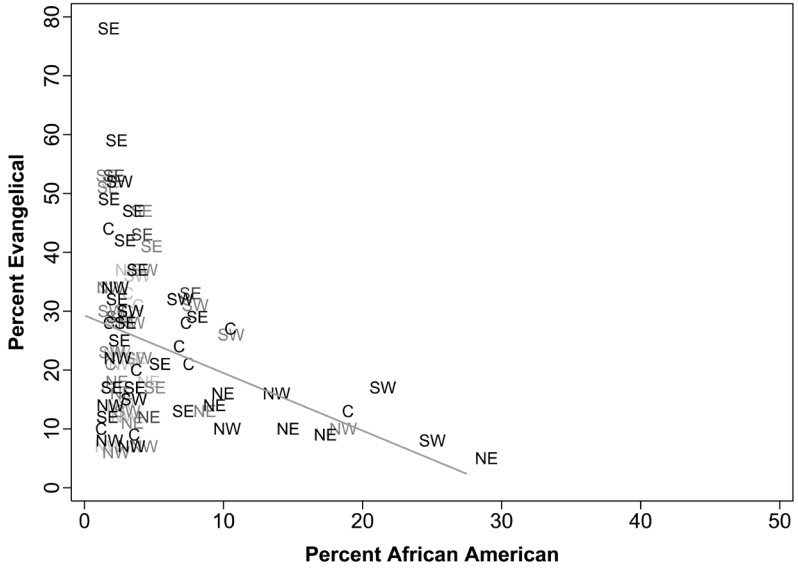


Figure 3.13. Evangelical and racial makeup by county



Any shading differences in this graph are for illustration purposes only.

a universal explanation for why voters across the regions support each candidate.

Measures of Life Cycle

Politics is also affected by life-cycle characteristics, so called because they are closely linked with biological factors such as birth and aging. These demographic features have a variety of impacts on the vote and are arguably the most distant because of their fixed character. Important life-cycle measures are gender, family status, and age.

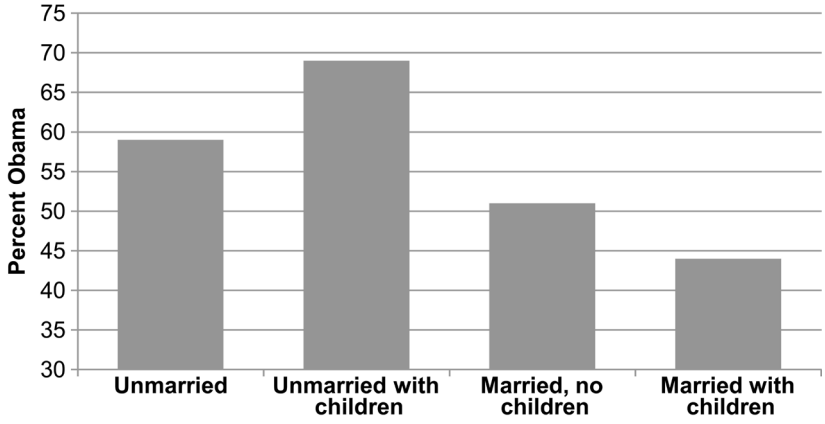
The "gender gap" has received a great deal of attention in recent years, and it refers to the greater likelihood of women voting for Democratic candidates than men. There are several theories on why the gender gap exists. Issues tend to be the primary factors that have caused this to occur, as abortion, health care, and

education have typically been identified by women as more salient issues, and these issues have been championed by the Democratic Party. The gap is not constant, however, and varies by the issue environment. The "soccer moms" that voted for President Clinton in 1996 appeared to become "national-security moms" in 2004. That is, a change in an issue focus on education and health care led to a greater gap between men and women, while the focus on terrorism and national security reduced this gap in 2004. So, the political relevance of the gender gap varies by context.

In Ohio, there was little evidence of a gender gap in 2008. Post-election polls show that 53 percent of women voted for Obama compared to 51 percent of men. This compares to nationwide exit poll estimates, which found that 56 percent of women voted for Obama compared to 49 percent of men. The gap is somewhat affected by region. The gender gap was 6 points in Northeast Ohio, 5 points in Northwest Ohio, and 8 points in Southeast Ohio. Interestingly, the gap was reversed in Central and Southwest Ohio. In fact, in Central Ohio, no gap existed as men were just as likely to vote for Obama (57 percent) as women (56 percent), and in Southwest Ohio, there was an 8-point reverse gender gap between men (47 percent) and women (39 percent). In fact, this produces a gap of 20 points between women in the Southwest and Northeast, so clearly there is some regional influence that plays a role in terms of how gender relates to voting.[32]

Other life situations besides gender affect the vote. Marriage, for example, is nearly as powerful as gender in influencing vote choice, as shown in figure 3.14. In Ohio, 60 percent of unmarried men and 61 percent of unmarried women voted for Obama compared to 48 percent of married individuals, male or female. Having children also plays a role, but it is conditioned by marriage. Only 44 percent of married individuals with children voted for Obama compared to 69 percent of unmarried individuals with children. In contrast, 59 percent of unmarried individuals without children voted for Obama compared to 51 percent of married individuals without children.

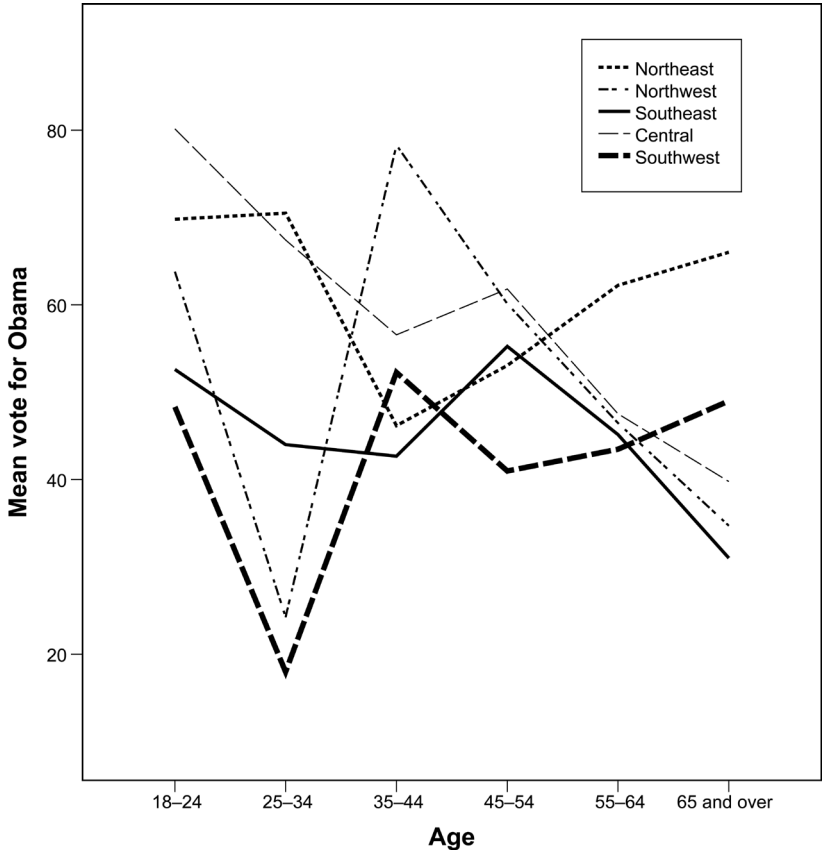
Figure 3.14. The marriage gap in the 2008 election



Age is another life cycle factor that helps structure individual attitudes. While there is some evidence that individuals tend to become more conservative as they age, the effect of age is largely through a cohort or generational effect that, in turn, is largely the result of socialization. Those coming of age in the Great Depression, for example, were more likely to be Democrats, being raised in an era of Democratic Party ascendency and Franklin D. Roosevelt's widespread popularity. Baby boomers were the most likely to be independents, coming of age in an era of scandals, protests, and skepticism toward established institutions such as political parties. Generation X was slightly more Republican, coming of political age in the Reagan era when the liberalism of the New Deal and Great Society were in disrepute.

Generational or cohort effects are more powerful in Ohio politics, as can be seen in figure 3.15. Young voters, those eighteen to twenty-four (or generation Y), were Obama's biggest supporters. Sixty-three percent of the generation Y cohort in Ohio voted for Obama, while almost all other age groups were evenly divided with a slight Obama advantage (between 48 and 52 percent for Obama in each remaining age cohort). This pattern was somewhat different than the national pattern. While generation Y voters were

Figure 3.15. Presidential voting by age and region, 2008



also Obama's biggest supporters in the country as a whole, with 66 percent voting for Obama, Obama and McCain split those between thirty and sixty-four, while McCain won those sixty-five and older (53 percent to 47 percent).

Regionally, the effects are somewhat different, as can be seen in figure 3.15. In three regions (Northwest, Southeast, and Central), the oldest voters were the most likely to vote for McCain, while in two regions (Northeast and Southwest) the oldest voters were more likely to vote for Obama. In all regions, however, the youngest voters were the most Democratic, which suggests that Democrats

in Ohio may have a bright future if the voting was not just for Obama. At the national level, this age group has been found to be not just pro-Democratic but also very liberal, both socially and economically.[33]

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we explored the impact of demography on the vote and found that there are strong relationships between measures of class, culture, and life-cycle factors and the presidential vote in the Buckeye State. These patterns represent strong social identities that create constituencies for each of the major political parties and their candidates. We have also explored the compositional explanation for why region matters in politics, finding strong evidence that regional diversity arises in part from the demographic characteristics of the residents of a region. These findings suggest that the voting differences across the Five Ohios arise from demography. Put another way, Ohio is a battleground state because of the political impact of its diverse demography. Unlike other states, in Ohio the population of each party's constituency is well balanced at the state level.

But just as importantly, we found limitations to the compositional explanation and support for the contextual explanation of why regions matter politically. For example, Obama outperformed Kerry due to a broad, if uneven, shift across nearly all groups in Ohio. We frequently found evidence that the relationship between demography and the vote varied by region. For example, Obama won a majority of white voters statewide but lost among whites by 11 percentage points in Appalachia and nearly 30 points in the southwest. These findings reveal that at the aggregate level, party coalitions contain some overlapping social groups. Ohio is a swing state in part because many of the demographic groups making up the state do not give lopsided margins to either party. Moreover, while

Southwest and Northeast Ohio appear quite different, the other three regions are more competitive despite clear-cut demographic differences. Context helps explain what composition cannot, so both perspectives are complementary rather than contradictory.

In the next chapter, we will consider the impact of political attitudes, issue priorities, and positions that arise from demography and region and which help account for the Buckeye battleground.

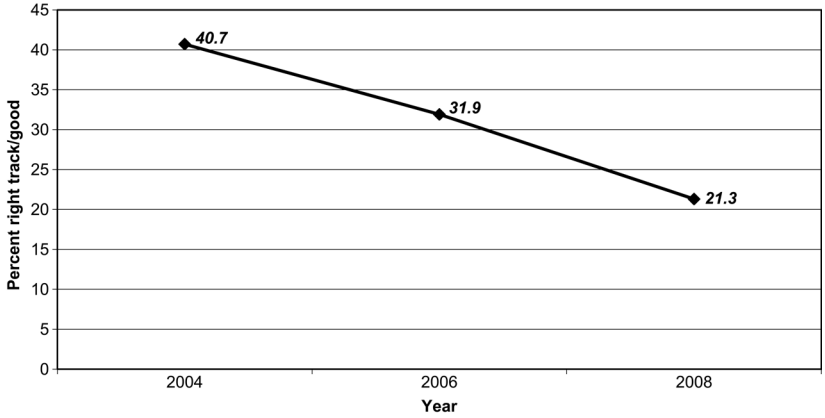
Chapter 4

Attitudes and Political Choice

Although the 2004 election was very close in the Buckeye State, Republicans had good reason to be optimistic about the meaning of the results. President Bush had prevailed in a tough campaign that focused on numerous controversial issues, from the Iraq War to the performance of the economy, and a majority of Ohioans felt that the nation was on the "right track" overall. This assessment suggested basic approval for the Republicans' stewardship of the federal government, which in turn created hopefulness about the political future. Indeed, the president's chief political advisor, Karl Rove, argued that an enduring Republican majority was possible, including in the Buckeye State. Altogether, electoral prospects seemed to bode well for Republican electoral fortunes in 2006 and 2008.

However, things turned out quite differently for the Republicans, Ohio, and the nation. Chief among the reasons for these circumstances were changes in the views of the public on numerous issues. For one thing, the Iraq War became increasingly unpopular, and the conduct of the war raised basic questions about the competence of the Bush administration. Meanwhile, scandals had engulfed Republican officeholders in Ohio and elsewhere, raising the issue of corruption along with incompetence.[1] And hardly least, the economy deteriorated, eventually falling into a recession. As figure

Figure 4.1. Perceptions of Ohio economy, 2004–8



4.1 shows, while in 2004 only 40 percent of Ohioans felt the state economy was in good condition, by 2006 this figure had dipped to 32 percent, and by 2008 it had fallen still further to about 21 percent. This bad news caused President Bush's popularity to plummet and eventually extended to the most basic public attitudes, with the number of self-identified Republicans declining sharply. Partly as a consequence, the Democrats won key Ohio state and federal offices in 2006 and then in 2008 carried the Buckeye State for President Obama and picked up three congressional seats.[2] Much had changed in a short four-year period.

This chapter looks at the impact of political attitudes in the Buckeye battleground, beginning with the most basic and stable of political attitudes, partisanship, then turning to ideology, issue positions, and priorities, and how such attitudes pertained to candidates. Such political attitudes link the great demographic and regional diversity of Ohio to the ballot box and also make elections more understandable to the public and politicians alike. Not surprisingly, public opinion in the Buckeye State is often quite complex. A good place to begin this investigation is with a brief discussion of why attitudes matter in elections.

WHY ATTITUDES MATTER IN ELECTIONS

At root, an election is a choice. At the individual level, citizens choose between candidates and parties, and the summing of all such individual decisions at the ballot box produces a collective choice and a winner in the election. In this sense, most American elections represent a fairly simple choice between two viable candidates who are seeking votes at the same time, and presidential elections are among the best examples. This relatively simple choice has two essential parts: the preferences by which the citizen can choose between candidates and the characteristics of the candidates about which a choice might be made. In its most basic form, citizens apply their relevant preferences to the characteristics of the candidates and choose the candidate that matches best.[3]

Of course, in the real world, this process can be quite complicated. Citizens often have numerous preferences to choose from, arising from their class, cultural, or life-cycle status, and/or from the region in which they live. Circumstances that might be relevant to these preferences, such as the state of the economy or controversies of the moment, can be complex and subject to sudden change. Likewise, candidates have a wide range of backgrounds and experiences that can be a basis for choice, and they typically seek votes by advocating a wide variety of policies. Some such policies are longstanding questions about which most people have some knowledge, but others may be new issues about which little is known. And candidates do not operate in a vacuum: most are members of a major political party and are associated with the images and positions of the parties—for better or for worse.

Political attitudes are a useful way to capture citizen preferences and candidates' characteristics as well as changes in such things. From the perspective of elections, scholars have identified three basic kinds of attitudes that are important to the vote decision: general political attitudes (such as partisanship and ideology); more

specific attitudes on particular economic, social, or foreign policy issues; and time-sensitive issue priorities.

The most basic general political attitude is *partisanship*, the self-identification with the Democratic or Republican Party. Partisanship arises in part from the dominance of the two-party system in the United States, such that nearly all candidate choices are between a Republican and a Democrat and have been for more than a century. Apart from the structure of the party system, partisanship can have many sources. To some extent, partisanship is inherited, arising from the way citizens are socialized as children, a process that can continue into adulthood. Likewise, partisanship can be a reflection of the social groups allied with the major parties or assessment of the performance of party politicians in office. Partisanship can also reflect positions on particular issues or combinations of ideology and issues. From all of these perspectives, however, partisanship is a useful shortcut for citizens when making choices at the ballot box. Indeed, partisanship is typically the most powerful political attitude when it comes to understanding the vote, tying together the effects of other attitudes, demography, and region. In fact, although many Americans proclaim political independence, in reality, the overwhelming majority of the public identifies with one of the parties, and this self-identity is highly stable across a person's lifetime. Furthermore, it has become especially important in recent times due to increased political polarization of the public.[4] In fact, split-ticket voting has declined substantially and voters appear to be more polarized along partisan lines today than they were a generation or two generations ago.[5] Similarly, in the last two decades there has been a decline in the proportion of independents.

Other attitudes are less powerful than partisanship but often quite important to the vote—especially when they are linked to partisanship and candidates. *Ideology* is another general political attitude that summarizes citizens' views on the scope of government activity, with "liberals" preferring particular kinds of government activity, "conservatives" preferring others, and "moderates" falling

in between. The nature of ideology often depends on the type of issues under consideration. Such issue positions are typically about more specific topics, such as particular government activities regarding economic, social, or foreign policy matters. Similarly, issue priorities tend to arise in a specific time frame, reflecting the state of the nation and the political process. In short, ideology, issue positions, and priorities arise in large part from citizens' interests, values, and experiences.[6]

All these attitudes connect citizens' preferences and circumstances to the political process, allowing citizens to make sense of the electoral choices before them and to choose accordingly. It is worth noting, however, that many citizens do not have especially sophisticated political attitudes. Many people lack the high levels of information and knowledge necessary to have such views, and others are either incapable or not interested enough in public affairs to develop them. Indeed, the public are notoriously inconsistent and changeable in their political attitudes and appear to prefer using information shortcuts in choosing between candidates. Voters, as some have noted, are cognitive misers and rely heavily on their predispositions. But none of these features of the public mean that political attitudes are unimportant when it comes to understanding voting behavior—they simply add yet another layer of complexity to attitudes and their impact on the vote.[7]

After having reviewed the impact of region and demography, we can now add attitudes, including partisanship, ideology, issue position, and priorities, to the list of explanations of how Ohioans vote. These patterns can also help explain why Ohio is the perennial battleground state in presidential elections.

PARTISANSHIP

A good place to begin is with self-identified partisanship in the Buckeye State. Figure 4.2 shows survey data on partisanship in

Ohio from 2004 to 2008. As the chart indicates, the Republicans had an advantage in Ohio in 2004, but this advantage had largely slipped away by 2006 and became a sizeable disadvantage in 2008. This swing in partisanship was approximately 8 percent of the electorate away from the GOP over a four-year period. Given the powerful effect of partisanship on the vote, this shift had a large impact at the ballot box, tilting the Buckeye battleground in a strongly Democratic direction and thus providing a more favorable environment for the Obama campaign in 2008 than for the Kerry campaign in 2004. Although partisanship is usually considered a basic and fairly stable political attitude, changes of this kind are fairly common in Ohio, closely matching shifts in national partisanship. Indeed, studies from the Gallup poll document a major shift toward the GOP in the 1990s and 2000s and then toward the Democrats beginning in 2005; earlier evidence shows a Democratic advantage in the 1970s and 1980s. As a sign of the 2010 November election results, polls in early 2010 indicated that Ohio partisanship had begun to shift back toward the GOP.[8]

What impact did partisanship have on the vote? Table 4.1 reports the Democratic and Republican vote by partisanship in 2004, 2006, and 2008. Ohioans, similar to most Americans, demonstrated the

Figure 4.2. Partisanship in Ohio, 2004–8

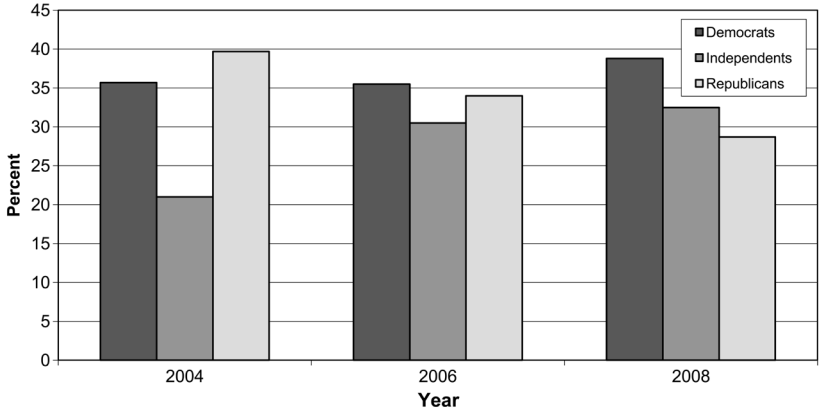


TABLE 4.1.

Republican vote in statewide elections, 2004–8

Year	Race	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Total
2004	Presidential	94 (40)	40 (25)	10 (35)	51
2006	Senate	86 (37)	35 (23)	9 (41)	44
	Governor	77 (37)	26 (23)	6 (40)	37
2008	Presidential	92 (31)	44 (30)	10 (39)	47

Sources: 2004 data are from the 204 National Election Pool; 2006 and 2008 data obtained from CNN. Analysis was done by the authors.
Note: Cells are percentage of voters in each partisan category voting for the Republican candidate. Percent of voters in each category is in parentheses. Total column is the actual election percentage for the Republican candidate.

same fidelity to their parties in very different election contexts. For example in 2004, 40 percent of Ohio voters identified as Republicans of one kind or another (in parentheses in the table), and 94 percent of these Republicans voted for the Republican presidential candidate. In contrast, just 10 percent of the 35 percent of Ohio voters who identified themselves as Democrats of one kind or another voted for the GOP presidential candidate. As one might expect, independents fell in between the self-identified partisans.

While partisanship is a powerful force, there are two factors that can change from election to election. First, there can be important differences in turnout. Note that in 2006, there were fewer self-identified Republican voters (and more Democratic voters) and that the GOP candidates fared less well with these voters than in 2004. By 2008, the number of self-identified Republicans had declined still further, although the percentage voting for the GOP presidential candidate had recovered somewhat. What is often referred to as an "enthusiasm gap" can have profound effects on election outcomes.

Second, while individual partisan identity tends to be highly stable, meaningful shifts do occur over the short run in the aggregate. This can be demonstrated by comparing Ohio party identification to other states between 2004 and 2008. Figure 4.3 shows how Ohio compared to other states in terms of party affiliation in 2004. In that year, the Buckeye State was nearly evenly divided between the major parties, with a slight Republican advantage—a pattern that fit with the modest advantage Republicans had enjoyed in the Buckeye State historically, as noted in chapter 1.

However, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, there had been a large and significant shift in partisanship in the Buckeye State by 2008. As shown in figure 4.4, Ohio had become decidedly Democratic, following the overall shift of the entire country in a Democratic direction. Ohio was also no longer close to the national median, as the partisan shift was relatively greater in Ohio than in other states. This pattern also fits with the bellwether and cyclical nature of the Buckeye State over time, as also noted in chapter 1.

IDEOLOGY

Ohio tends to be a moderate state, but one that leans slightly conservatively on many issues. In general, this provides favorable terrain for messages from Republican presidential candidates, but changes from election to election can tip the balance among voter considerations. Self-identified ideology was the most stable of these political attitudes between 2004 and 2008, as reported in figure 4.5. Here the exit polls show a slight shift to the left among Ohio voters after 2004, with a slight increase in self-identified liberals by 2008. At the same time, there was also a slight shift to the right, with the number of self-identified conservatives increasing as well. As a consequence, the number of self-identified moderate voters declined over these elections, falling from more than one-half of the electorate to about two-fifths. Thus, these initial elections in

Figure 4.3. Partisanship by state, 2004

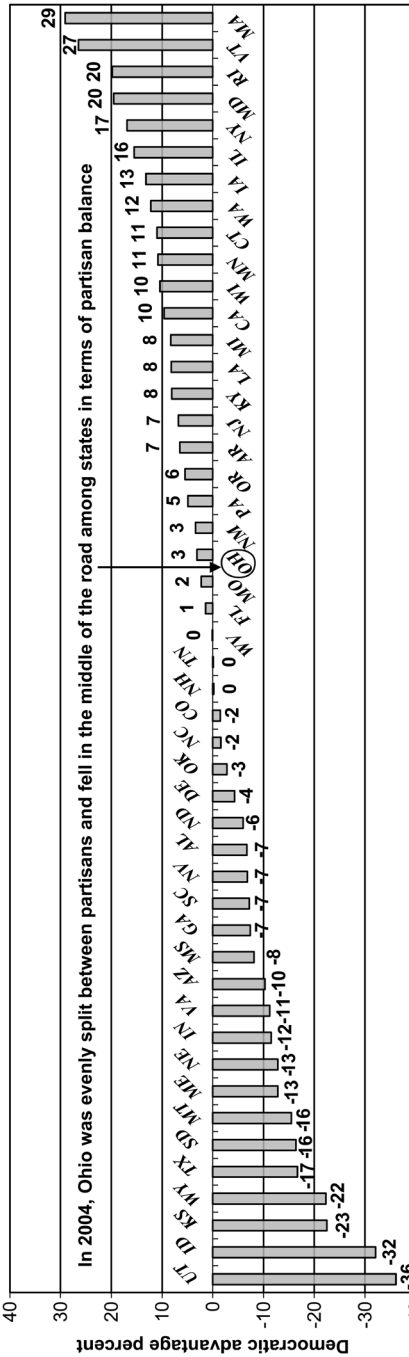


Figure 4.4. Partisanship by state, 2008

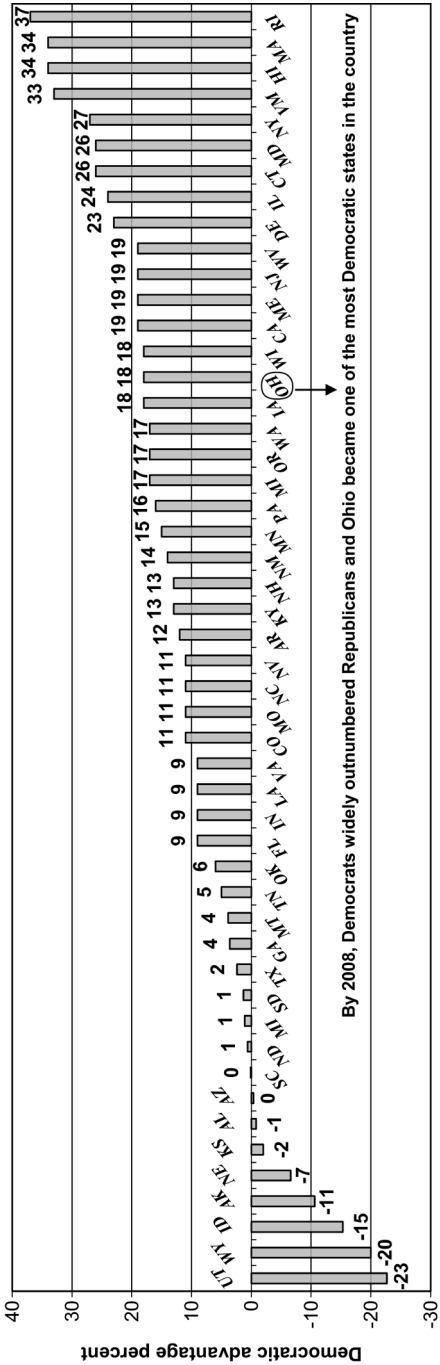
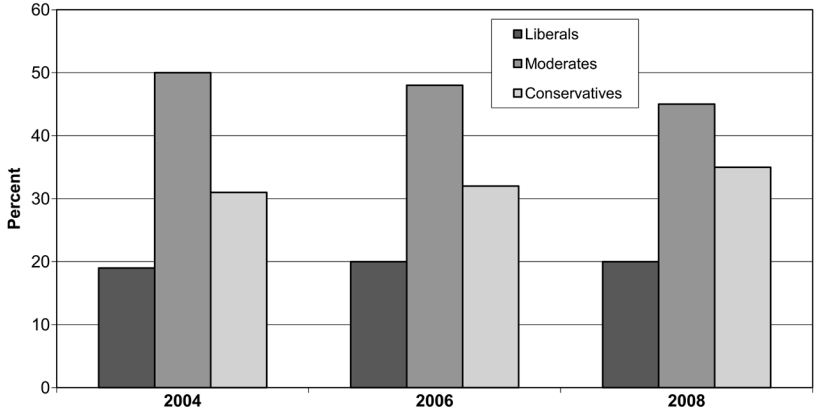


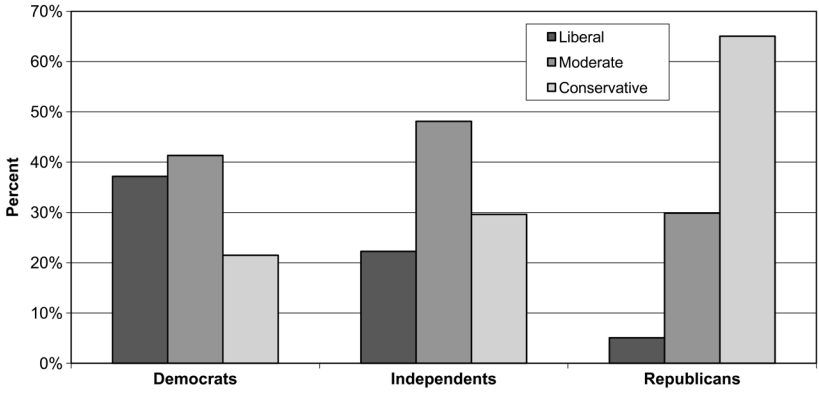
Figure 4.5. Ohio ideology, 2004–8



the contemporary era showed a pattern of political polarization, reflecting a national trend, with fewer voters found toward the center of the political spectrum. In sum, Ohioans became less Republican over this period, but they also became less moderate.

As one might imagine, there was a strong link between ideology and partisanship, as shown in figure 4.6, for the 2008 election. Among Democrats, liberals outnumbered conservatives, but the largest proportion of Democrats were moderates, with a minority of conservatives. Meanwhile, almost a majority of independents labeled themselves as "moderate," with smaller contingents

Figure 4.6. Ideology and partisanship, 2008



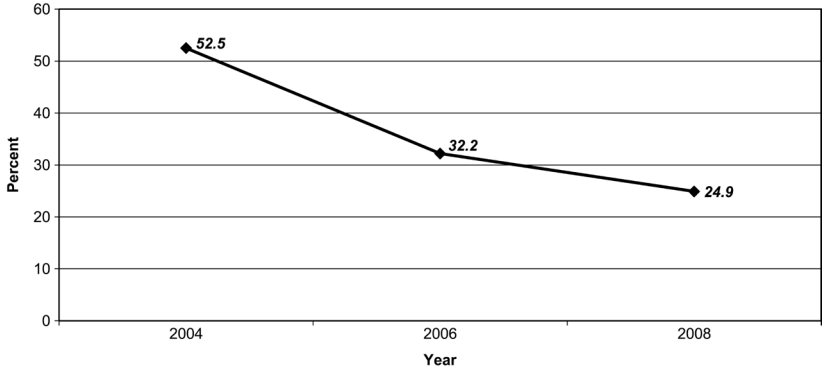
of conservatives and liberals. And a large majority of Republicans identified as "conservative," with fewer saying they were "moderate" and only a small number claiming to be "liberal." This figure illustrates even more graphically the political polarization of Buckeye voters, especially among Democrats and Republicans, with independents more evenly divided in ideological terms. One reason that Obama prevailed in 2008 (and Bush won in 2004) was a high degree of success among independent voters of all ideological stripes. These patterns point back to the power of partisanship in influencing the vote.

Ohioans' ideology, then, reveals why the state is so competitive but does not fully account for why Republican fortunes suffered in the initial three elections of the contemporary era. At this point, it makes sense to take a step back to how we began the chapter and focus on how citizens make decisions about voting. Almost all individuals possess some political attitudes. Few people enter any election totally open-minded. As we noted, partisans stick with their party's nominee through thick and thin about nine times out of ten.

Yet, most voters require a certain degree of preexisting information to place new information (news stories, campaign ads, etc.) in a context that allows them to connect their own underlying predispositions to an opinion about a candidate or issue. This is what campaigns do; they activate latent attitudes and then later in the campaign, polls frequently reveal that previously undecided voters "come home" and support the party nominee. Voters, however, particularly the notorious swing voters (often independents), may be more favorable to one candidate's message than another's. This is where issues and the economy have their greatest impact on election outcomes.

So, in Ohio from 2004 to 2008, voters' assessment of the performance of Republican officeholders and the issues tied to the assessment of such performance changed. One especially good example is presidential job approval as illustrated by figure 4.7, which tracks President Bush's ratings among Ohioans in 2004, 2006, and 2008. This figure shows a dramatic decline in Bush's ratings, which fell

Figure 4.7. Ohioans' presidential approval, 2004–8



from more than one-half to less than one-quarter in four years. Note that this pattern shows the same pattern as "right track" numbers about the economy in figure 4.1 and resembles the decline in Republican partisanship in figure 4.4. Presidential popularity reflects many things, including views on key issues.

ISSUES

By 2008, then, Ohioans were much less satisfied with the GOP, and their views about key issues and the economy illustrate why. Sometimes, cause and effect are confused; party precedes issue preferences in the decision-making process for voters, and most voters are predisposed to liking a candidate or perceiving him or her as stronger on the issues most salient to them.

Again, however, in the aggregate, changing issue concerns can be quite consequential. Table 4.2 reports survey results on a range of such issues in 2008. The top two entries in the table are economic issues. The first is a standard question about whether the economy was on the "right" or "wrong track." Some three-quarters of Ohioans said the national economy was on the "wrong track" and just one-quarter felt it was on the "right track." In the context of

TABLE 4.2.

Ohioans' issue perceptions

Issue	Pro-Democratic	Pro-Republican
Economic		
Ohio economy on the right or wrong track	75.6	24.4
Large government/more services or smaller government/fewer services	42.8	57.2
Social		
Ohio morality on the right or wrong track	54.7	45.3
Abortion legal or illegal	52.3	47.7
Foreign policy		
Iraq War right or wrong decision	55.9	44.1
Keep troops in Iraq or bring them home	49.3	50.3

Source: 2008 Akron Buckeye poll.

the 2008 election, the "wrong track" figure favored the Democrats, the party of "change," and hurt the Republicans, the party in power in Washington. However, the second economic question tempers this pattern somewhat. When asked whether they preferred a larger government (with more services) or a smaller government (with fewer services), more than one-half of Ohioans favored smaller government, a position that on balance favored the Republicans and not the Democrats. Reagan's simple question, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" and Clinton's "It's the economy, stupid" were campaign slogans designed with the full knowledge that voters care greatly about how the economy is doing. Such concerns can even override the partisan or ideological leanings of

many swing citizens if the economy is doing especially poorly or especially well. In sum, Ohioans thought the economy was in bad shape in 2008 and wanted to see it improve, but at the same time many did not necessarily want a larger national government. Back in 2004, assessments of the economy were more favorable to the GOP, and that may have been reinforced by a similar skepticism of large government.

The next two entries in table 4.2 are social issues. The first of these asked whether Ohio was on the "right" or "wrong track" in terms of the moral climate of the state. Here, a slim majority of the public thought the state was on the "wrong track" and slightly fewer thought it was on the "right track." In the context of 2008, these "wrong track" figures also benefitted the Democrats and may reflect a residue of the scandals in state government in 2006. But unlike the economic items, the second social issue listed here reinforces the pattern. When asked about the legality of abortion, a slim majority of Ohioans took a pro-choice position and slightly fewer took a pro-life position, numbers that on balance favored Democrats over the GOP. These data suggest that the Buckeye State was fairly evenly divided on social issues in 2008, but with a slight tilt in the Democratic direction. That is in contrast to 2004 when social issues in general tilted the electorate toward the GOP. This could be seen in the overwhelming support for a ballot measure amending the state constitution to ban same-sex marriage.

The final set of issues reported in table 4.2 pertains to foreign policy issues, specifically questions related to the Iraq War. The first question asked if, on balance, the Iraq War was the "right" or "wrong" decision. In 2008, a majority of Ohioans thought the war was the "wrong" decision and a large minority thought it was the "right" decision—positions that on balance favored the Democrats and hurt the Republicans, respectively. But note that the Buckeye State was almost evenly divided on the next question, whether to keep troops in Iraq until the situation stabilized or to bring the troops home at once. Here, a very slight majority favored keeping

troops in Iraq, a position that favored the GOP rather than the Democrats (but only by a small amount). Thus, as with social issues, Ohioans were also divided on the central foreign policy issue of the day in 2008, but in an even more equivocal fashion. The Iraq War was also divisive in 2004 but favored the Republicans to a greater extent than in 2008.

How did these issues relate to partisanship in 2008? Table 4.3 reports views on these six issues among Democrats, independents, and Republicans in 2008. Overall, Democrats tended to hold more liberal positions and Republicans more conservative positions on all of these issues. Some of the differences were large and striking, such as on abortion and the Iraq War, while others were smaller,

TABLE 4.3.

Selected issue positions by party

Issue	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Economic			
Ohio economy on wrong track	74.4	82.3	64.5
Larger government/more services	57.4	47.2	28.5
Social			
Moral climate of Ohio on wrong track	53.1	56.9	55.8
Abortion (percent legal in all or most cases)	65.2	54.4	31.4
Foreign policy			
Iraq War wrong decision	78.9	62.9	17.5
Want troops out of Iraq	74.7	49.4	17.7

Source: 2008 Akron Buckeye poll.
Note: Table shows percent liberal or pro-Democratic position.

such as views about the size of government and the moral climate in the state. And note that a majority of the Republicans thought the economy was on the "wrong track" in 2008, only 10 percentage points less than the Democrats. Not surprisingly, independents tended to hold more moderate positions on all these issues but typically leaned toward the positions that favored the Democrats in 2008.

Overall, how does Ohio compare to the rest of the country in terms of issue positions? While strictly comparable survey data are not available, the weight of the evidence suggests that public opinion in Ohio closely reflects public opinion nationwide. Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver's landmark studies of public opinion in the 1980s found that Ohio was a left-of-center state, with a slightly liberal legislature and moderate party elites. Subsequent studies have modified their findings slightly to account for the rightward shift of the state in the 1990s but generally confirm the relative stability of public opinion over time.[9] Using more recent data, results show that Ohio is a good reflection of national public opinion and are confirmed by a longitudinal and cross-sectional study of General Social Survey data by Paul Brace and colleagues in 2002.[10]

ISSUE PRIORITIES

In most elections, any single issue is most important to one in ten or perhaps one in five voters. Rather, a cluster of issues usually compete for attention. Polls do, however, provide insight into why the electorate tends to break toward one candidate or one party. Table 4.4 looks at reported issue priorities of Ohio voters in 2004 and 2008. These data come from the national exit polls, and although the questions were worded differently in both elections, the patterns are nonetheless instructive. In 2004, Buckeye State voters had a

TABLE 4.4.

Most important issue, 2004 and 2008

2004		2008	
Issue	**Percent**	**Issue**	**Percent**
Economy	24	Economy	61
Moral values	23	Iraq	11
Terrorism	17	Health care	10
Iraq	13	Terrorism	8
Taxes	6	Energy policy	7
Education	5		
Health care	5		

Source: 2004 data are from the 2004 National Election Pool; 2008 data obtained from CNN. Analysis was done by the authors.

diverse issue agenda, with the top priority—the economy—garnering support of just one-quarter of the voters, with other issues being nearly as important, including moral values and terrorism.

In 2008, by way of contrast, the issue agenda was less diverse, with a large majority of Ohio voters naming the economy as their top priority, more than twice as many as in 2004. Some of this difference may reflect the fact that the exit polls did not offer respondents as many options in 2008 as in 2004, but it is not surprising that in the context of an emerging global financial crisis, voters were quite anxious about the economy and this pushed other concerns out of the decision calculus for most voters. In this regard, it is worth noting that terrorism was much less of a priority in 2008 than 2004, and that concern over health care increased between the two elections. Although "moral values" was not included in the 2008 question, other survey evidence suggests that social issues were far less important in 2008 than in 2004.

How were these priorities connected to partisanship? Table 4.5 reports the net partisan advantage for Democrats, independents, and Republicans on issue priorities in 2008. On the question of which party "is better" on a variety of issues, Democrats were generally preferred, but the margin of the preference varied by issue. But as one might expect, self-identified Democrats and Republicans tended to prefer their own party, with independents leaning toward the Democrats. For example, on the economy, the Democrats enjoyed more than a 33 percentage point advantage among all Ohioans. Among self-identified Democrats, however, the net difference was 84 percent and still a sizeable 43 percentage point advantage among self-identified independents. Among Ohio's Republicans, however, the GOP held a 47 percentage point lead.

Overall, a smaller Democratic advantage held for other domestic issues, social issues, and foreign policy, but still with large differences in the perception of which party was better among the self-identified partisans. For example, Ohioans were almost evenly divided on which party was better on the Iraq War (a 1.8 percentage point Democratic advantage), but self-identified Democrats preferred their own party by some 51 percentage points, while self-identified Republicans preferred their party by some 70 percentage points. Here, the independents reported a slim 6 percentage point preference for the Democrats.

The final item in table 4.5 offers a summary measure of priorities, asking survey respondents whether they would like to see continued Republican control of the White House or a change to Democratic control. On balance, Buckeye State voters preferred a change to the Democrats, and this included nine out of ten self-identified Democrats and more than two-fifths of independents—but eight out of ten Republicans preferred their party to remain in the White House.

Thus, a major difference between the outcomes of the 2004 and 2008 elections was a change in issue priorities. As figure 4.8 shows, Bush voters were most likely to be concerned about moral values

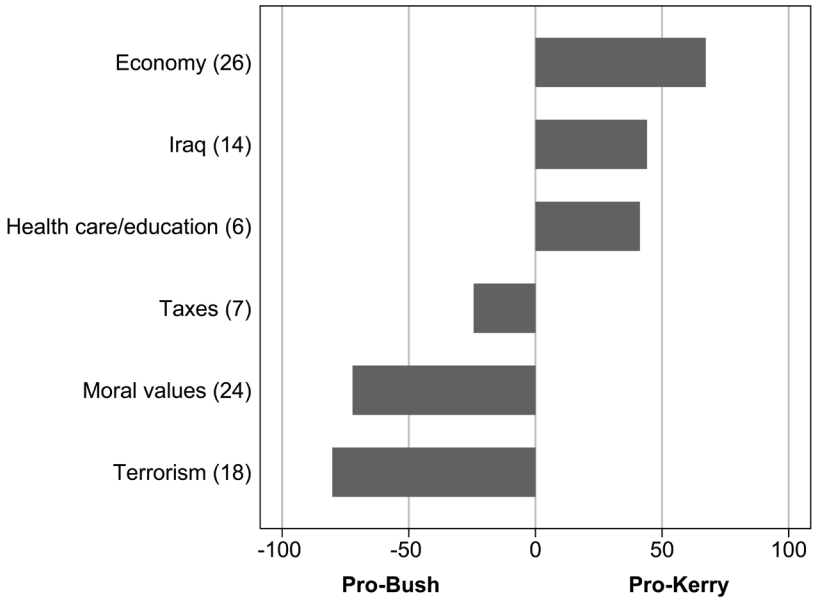
TABLE 4.5.

Priorities and assessments of the major parties

	% Democratic – % Republican			
	All	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Overall, which political party is better on economic issues, such as the jobs and prices?	+33.8	+83.6	+43.1	–47.3
Which political party is better on domestic issues, such as public services and taxes?	+20.2	+68.2	+26.5	–53.7
Which party is better on social issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage?	+3.8	+39.3	+11.5	–53.9
Which party is better on foreign policy issues, such as the Iraq War and terrorism?	+1.8	+51.4	+6.0	–70.4
The Republicans have controlled the White House for eight years. This year, would you like to see the Republicans stay in control of the White House or would you like to see the Democrats take control of the White House?	+28.2	+91.8	+44.0	–81.2

Source: 2008 Akron Buckeye poll.

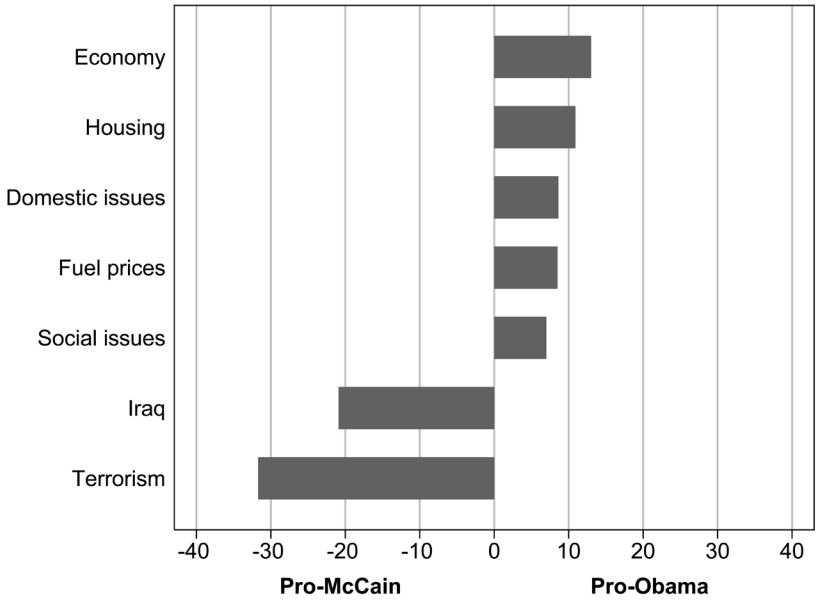
Figure 4.8. 2004 candidate preference by issue



and terrorism, whereas Kerry voters were motivated by concerns over the economy and the Iraq War. Overall, Bush did better with voters who gave priority to moral values and terrorism than Kerry did with voters who gave priority to the economy and the Iraq War. A glance back to table 4.4 reveals a fairly even division of priorities across these sets of issues, which helped Bush secure a narrow victory.

A somewhat different pattern appeared in 2008, as reported in figure 4.9. Although the priority question was asked differently in this election year, results show some important changes. Like Bush in 2004, McCain enjoyed a net advantage among Ohio voters who gave priority to terrorism and also had an advantage on the Iraq War (a change from 2004). And like Kerry in 2004, Obama enjoyed a net advantage on the economy and a range of domestic issues. One change from 2004 was Obama taking the advantage on social issues versus the Bush advantage on moral values in 2004.

Figure 4.9. 2008 candidate preference by issue



In 2008, the Republican nominee enjoyed greater support among voters with priorities favorable to the GOP, while the Democratic nominee enjoyed lesser support among voters with priorities favorable to his party. However, the key difference was the magnitude of these priorities: as a glance back at table 4.4 reveals, some three-fifths of the Ohio electorate gave priority to the economy in 2008 compared to one-quarter in 2004. This dramatic shift in priorities helped Obama win a narrow victory.

POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND THE FIVE OHIOS

Perhaps not surprisingly, there are attitudinal differences across Ohio's diverse regions. Table 4.6 (partisanship) and figure 4.10 (ideology) illustrate this pattern: Northeast Ohio is populated by more Democrats and liberals, while Southwest Ohio has the largest

TABLE 4.6.

Partisanship and Ohio regions

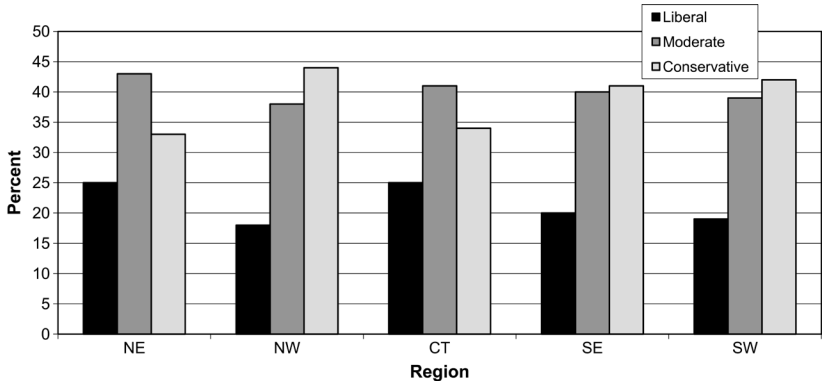
Region	Year	Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Net Democratic Advantage
Northeast	2004	45	23	32	+13
	2008	55	15	30	+25
Northwest	2004	34	25	41	–7
	2008	44	16	40	+4
Central	2004	31	30	39	–8
	2008	44	18	38	+6
Southeast	2004	32	21	46	–14
	2008	42	24	34	+8
Southwest	2004	29	24	47	–18
	2008	37	20	43	–6

Sources: 2004 national exit poll; 2008 Akron Buckeye poll.

proportions of Republicans and conservatives. The other regions are much more evenly divided in terms of partisanship, but not ideology. Northwest Ohio has a large proportion of conservative voters, with Southeast Ohio not far behind. Central Ohio shows a population that is more liberal, in fact, nearly as liberal as Northeast Ohio. Thus in Northeast and Southwest Ohio, voters are clearly more aligned in terms of partisanship and ideology. But in other parts of the state, partisanship and ideology are out of alignment, especially in Central Ohio. This disparity may reflect the salience of different types of issues in different regions of the state.

Table 4.6 shows that changes in partisanship help account for the differences in regional party performance in 2004 and 2008. In three regions, the GOP went from a net advantage in identifiers to a net disadvantage. This change was most evident in Southeast

Figure 4.10. Ideology and Ohio regions



Ohio, which saw a 22 percentage point swing in net partisanship, from a 14 percentage point Republican advantage to an 8 percentage point Democratic advantage. However, it should be noted that each region saw broad shifts toward the Democratic Party. Two other points are also worthy of comment. First, with the exception of Southeast Ohio, the relative positions of the regions were largely unchanged despite the move away from the GOP in 2008. Second, the change appears to be mostly independents moving into the Democratic column, as Republican identifiers do not appear to change very much, with the exception of those in Southeast Ohio.

Assessment of the economy also varied by region in 2004, but by 2008 much of the regional variation had disappeared. As shown in table 4.7, these patterns reflect both region-specific patterns as well as fluctuations in the national economy. In 2004, Northeast Ohio had the most negative perception of the economy, with two-thirds of the respondents rating the economy poorly. In this regard, the Northeast was followed closely by the Southeast and Northwest. These areas of the Buckeye State have suffered economic problems for some time. In contrast, Central and Southwest Ohio had much less negative ratings, a pattern that may reflect the better economic performance these regions enjoyed in the previous decade.

TABLE 4.7.

Economic ratings by region, 2004–8

Region	2004	2006	2008
Northeast	67	78	80
Northwest	61	67	78
Central	51	63	69
Southeast	64	65	77
Southwest	49	62	73

Sources: 2004 national exit polls; 2006 and 2008 Akron Buckeye polls.
Note: Question wording different in 2004; cell entries are percentage stating the economy is in poor shape or economy is on the wrong track.

However, the negative perceptions of the economy expanded in 2006 and 2008, so that very large majorities in all five regions gave the economy poor marks, and the rating of the regions grew closer together. Northeast Ohio maintained the highest negative ratings compared to the other regions, especially compared to Central and Southwest Ohio, regions that always had lower figures in this regard.

These regional differences in economic attitudes are further illustrated in table 4.8. This table compares the regions on two economic issues: the results of a 2006 statewide ballot initiative to raise the minimum wage and 2008 survey results about the size of government.

Support for raising the minimum wage at the ballot box was broad but not overwhelmingly strong. Northeast and Southeast Ohio were the most supportive of raising the minimum wage, with nearly six in ten voters in these regions supporting the increase. Interestingly, Central Ohio nearly matched both of these regions in support, while Northwest Ohio and Southwest Ohio were less supportive (although still supportive overall). Regional differences also

TABLE 4.8.

Economic issues and the Five Ohios

Region	Percent favoring minimum wage increase (2006)	Percent "larger government/more services"
Northeast	58.9	45.6
Northwest	52.4	39.8
Central	57.8	48.0
Southeast	58.3	50.3
Southwest	54.1	45.9

Sources: Ohio Secretary of State; 2008 Akron Buckeye poll.
Note: The minimum wage data are aggregated county election results. The 2008 survey question was a four-point scale with "1" indicating "much smaller government with many fewer services" and "4" indicating "much larger government with many more services."

appear in attitudes about the size of government. Here, Southeast Ohio was the region most likely to support larger government and more services, while Northwest Ohio was the least likely to hold this view—far less in fact than Central and Southwest Ohio. And most interesting is the fact that Northeast Ohio resembled Southwest Ohio on this measure.

Table 4.9 offers a similar illustration on social issues by region. This table includes results by region for Issue 1, a 2004 ballot initiative that banned same-sex marriage, and also a 2008 survey measure of abortion attitudes.

Issue 1 is frequently cited as having helped President Bush to win the Buckeye State, although there is no clear consensus as to whether the issue was decisive.[11] Across regions, the variance in the vote for Issue 1 closely matched the vote for President Bush, both at the county and individual level. Southeast Ohio, though economically liberal, overwhelmingly supported Issue 1 as did Northwest and Southwest Ohio. Northeast and Central Ohio also backed

TABLE 4.9.

Social issues and the Five Ohios

Region	Percent favoring Issue 1 (2004)	Percent "[abortion] illegal in most cases"
Northeast	58.1	41.4
Northwest	65.4	56.0
Central	60.1	39.3
Southeast	70.5	58.7
Southwest	62.5	54.4

Sources: Ohio Secretary of State; 2008 Akron Buckeye poll.
Note: Issue 1 data are aggregated county election results. The 2008 survey question was a 4-point scale with "1" indicating "legal in most cases" and "4" indicating "illegal in most cases."

the ban by large margins, but at relatively lower levels. Regional differences also appear on abortion attitudes. Here Northeast Ohio was considerably more liberal than any other region, while Central Ohio was more moderate. The other regions are all more conservative on this issue.

What about differences in issue priorities across the Five Ohios? Table 4.10 reports the regional issue priorities and the 2004 Bush vote. Note that voters in Northeast Ohio were more concerned with the Iraq War and the economy, whereas Southwest Ohio voters were most concerned about terrorism and moral values. This dichotomy is consistent with each region's ideological leanings and issue positions. But the important question is whether voters were concerned with particular issues that favored one candidate or the other and whether region affected the impact of these issue priorities. For example, while the economy was a Democratic issue in 2004, Bush managed to win one in four voters in Central Ohio who gave the economy priority compared to only 9 percent in Southeast

TABLE 4.10.

Regional differences in issue attitudes, 2004

	Economy		Moral values		Iraq		Terrorism	
Region	**Imp**	**Bush**	**Imp**	**Bush**	**Imp**	**Bush**	**Imp**	**Bush**
Northeast	27.3	10.9	21.9	80.0	16.1	22.8	15.9	81.3
Northwest	28.9	17.5	28.4	90.3	15.6	29.4	15.1	90.9
Central	25.6	24.1	25.6	86.7	11.4	29.7	14.5	89.4
Southeast	25.6	9.1	23.3	97.5	13.4	21.7	22.7	94.9
Southwest	21.1	22.2	24.0	87.0	12.3	40.4	24.5	95.7

Source: 2004 national exit polls.
Note: Cell entries are percentage selecting issue that is most important and the percentage of those who reported voting for Bush.

Ohio and 11 percent in Northeast Ohio. Bush won only eight in ten voters who cared most about terrorism and Iraq in Northeast Ohio, but over nine in ten of such voters in all other regions except Central Ohio.

The mix of issues that carried Bush to victory in four of the five regions in the state varied, but table 4.10 strongly indicates that some mixture of terrorism and moral issues overrode voter concerns about the economy and the Iraq War. Importantly, while the Iraq War and the economy favored Kerry, Bush won two important regions in the state, Southeast and Southwest Ohio, with overwhelming support from voters who said they cared most about terrorism or moral values. In fact, Bush won 97 percent of southern Ohioans who were most concerned about moral values and 95 percent of those most concerned about terrorism. In Northwest Ohio, Republican disadvantages were more than overcome: while nearly one in three voters were concerned about the economy, Bush won only 18 percent of such voters; he won 90 percent of an equal number of

moral values voters. Meanwhile, Bush lost over seven in ten of the 16 percent of voters concerned about Iraq and he won 91 percent of the 15 percent concerned about terrorism.

As we saw earlier, the issue agenda had shifted dramatically by 2008, with the economy becoming the dominant issue in the Buckeye State and across all its regions. Still, there were regional variations in the vote based on issue priorities. Table 4.11 reports the net candidate advantage in 2008 on a series of issues by region (a positive number represents an advantage for Obama, while a negative number means an advantage to McCain). On economic issues, Obama enjoyed a large advantage in Northeast, Northwest, and Central Ohio, but a slight disadvantage in Southeast and Southwest Ohio. On social issues, Obama did best in Northeast and Central Ohio, but McCain enjoyed an advantage elsewhere, especially in Southeast and Southwest Ohio. Foreign policy priorities operated to the Republican advantage across the regions, with McCain enjoying an edge on the Iraq War and terrorism, but this advantage was most pronounced in Southeast and Southwest Ohio.

TABLE 4.11.

Net Obama advantage

	Northeast	Northwest	Central	Southeast	Southwest
Economy	24	19	22	–2	–5
Domestic	20	–6	27	–2	–7
Energy	19	7	27	–14	–8
Housing	16	20	18	–2	–6
Social issues	22	–9	37	–16	–17
Iraq	–14	–17	–11	–40	–30
Terrorism	–28	–37	–16	–50	–37

Source: 2008 Akron Buckeye poll.
Note: Cell entries show net proportion stating Obama is better on the issue.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have explored the impact of attitudes on the vote and found strong relationships between such attitudes and the vote in the initial election of the contemporary era. In keeping with the scholarly literature, we found that self-identified partisanship was one of the strongest predictors of the vote in all these elections and, furthermore, that changes in partisanship between 2004 and 2008 help account for the shift in the Buckeye State from the Republican to Democratic column. In addition, we found that self-identified ideology was closely connected to partisanship, with liberals tending to be Democrats and conservatives tending to be Republicans. However, the changes in partisanship from 2004 to 2008 appear to be less driven by shifts in ideology than by disappointment with Republican officeholders, including President Bush. In this regard, we found important shifts in the assessments of the economy and the priority given to the economy by Ohio voters over this period. Despite a strong desire for improvement in economic conditions, Ohioans remained more conservative about the size of government. Ohioans were more divided on social and foreign policy issues. Finally, we found that there were important differences in all of these attitudes across the Five Ohios.

All these patterns point to the importance of political attitudes in structuring the vote. The impact of such attitudes reflects in part the preferences of Ohio voters on a wide range of questions, from general views of the political system, such as partisanship and ideology, to more specific issue positions and priorities. These attitudes connect the demographic and regional diversity of the Buckeye State to the electoral choices available to voters and the choices they make at the ballot box. In addition, the effect of attitudes makes elections understandable to voters, candidates, and observers alike. It is worth noting that the regional diversity in Ohio appears in a wide range of attitudes, reflecting both the demography of the regions (and the compositional view of region) and the political

culture of the regions (and the contextual view of region). Overall, the impact of attitudes on the vote reflects both continuity and change in elections, illustrating both the underlying stability of the Ohio battleground and the bellwether and cyclical nature of the state.

In the next chapter, we will consider the impact of campaigns and campaign contact on the vote in Ohio, activities that are highly visible evidence of the Buckeye battleground.

Chapter 5

Campaigns and Voting in the Battleground

By any measure, the Ohio presidential campaigns of the contemporary era (2004 and 2008) were extraordinary events. Raw numbers just begin to tell the story. In 2004, at least $102 million was spent in Ohio by the presidential campaigns, major parties, and their allies. These funds were roughly equally divided between the Bush ($48 million) and Kerry ($54 million) campaigns. The figures were impressive in 2008 as well, when at least $66 million was spent in Ohio by the presidential campaigns, major parties, and their allies. But in 2008, the resources were less evenly distributed: the Obama campaign and its Democratic allies ($40 million) had a large edge over the McCain campaign and its Republican allies ($26 million) on the Buckeye battleground.[1]

The resource imbalance in 2008 had little to do with Ohio specifically, arising instead from Barack Obama's extraordinary fundraising and his decision to forego public financing in the general election campaign. In contrast, John McCain chose to follow the more traditional pattern of accepting public funds and associated limits on his own fundraising.[2] However, the Buckeye battleground was one of the states where these financial decisions mattered. Looked at another way, Republican organizations spent approximately seventeen dollars for every vote Bush received in 2004, whereas Democratic organizations spent roughly fourteen dollars for every vote Obama obtained in 2008. And these figures do not

count the spending by interest group allies or the time of the thousands of volunteers that labored in these campaigns.

By themselves, these extraordinary campaign efforts are enough to establish Ohio's reputation as one of the premiere battleground states in the contemporary era, although as we saw in chapter 1, the state has a long history of competitive elections. An obvious question is, why would the major party candidates lavish these kinds of resources on the Buckeye State? Thus far we have provided some answers to this question. Ohio's great diversity, in terms of its regions, demography, and attitudes, makes the state a good place to seek votes, and in a presidential election, these votes can help win the Electoral College. These same factors are relevant to winning control of Congress and Ohio state government. But if intense campaigning reflects the great diversity and relative importance of the Buckeye State, another question comes to mind: What impact did the campaigns themselves have on the vote?

In this chapter, we illustrate how recent Ohio presidential campaigns have linked citizens' political predispositions to actual votes for candidates, paying special attention to the 2008 presidential campaign. We will demonstrate that campaign contacts of various kinds have an impact on election results. A key reason for Bush's victory in 2004 and Obama's victory in 2008 is that each campaign effectively marshaled campaign resources and successfully activated voters. This information reveals how Ohio is a perennial battleground state in presidential politics. But first, a brief discussion of how campaigns operate is in order.

HOW CAMPAIGNS MATTER TO THE VOTE

Election campaigns are fundamentally about activating voters—that is, convincing citizens to actually go to the polls and vote for a particular candidate. Such activation is necessary because, left to their own devices, many voters will not cast a ballot, and just as

importantly, they will not necessarily cast a ballot in a particular way. Put in other terms, the geographic, demographic, and attitudinal factors that predispose citizens to vote are not always self-executing. Campaign contacts facilitate such execution by linking voter predispositions to a particular candidate and then motivating citizens to act on such a linkage. This is why campaigns are often crucial to election results.

The powerful effects of geography, demography, and attitudes in predisposing voting behavior create two basic kinds of potential voters from the perspective of a campaign. First, each of the major party candidates can identify *base voters*—citizens strongly predisposed toward the candidate and their party. Second, each candidate can also identify *swing voters*—that is, citizens not strongly predisposed to vote toward either candidate or party. Base and swing voters, in turn, produce two basic approaches that campaigns can take to activating voters: *mobilization* and *persuasion*. In the simplest terms, mobilization is about getting voters to cast a ballot and is most relevant to activating base voters who are strongly predisposed to vote a particular way. Persuasion is about getting voters to cast their ballot in a particular way when they go to the polls and is most relevant to activating swing voters. Typically, mobilization is given priority by campaigns because it is usually easier to secure the ballots of base voters due to their strong predispositions. By the same token, persuasion often has less priority than mobilization because it is usually more difficult to secure the ballots of swing voters given their weak predispositions. In competitive contests, both mobilization and persuasion are important.

A party's base voters can be quite diverse, so the task of mobilization is no simple matter. There are many factors that might predispose voters toward a particular preference; these factors may not have equal strength and may not fit together consistently. Swing voters are even more diverse, including individuals whose characteristics and circumstances do not predispose them one way or another—or whose situation pulls them both ways simultaneously.

Such "cross-pressured" voters present a more complex target, since they can be persuaded to support a candidate in numerous ways. One result of diverse base and swing voters is the need for many different campaign techniques and messages to mobilize and persuade. Thus the operations of a campaign can be just as complex as the citizenry whose ballots it seeks.

From a campaign's perspective, a key challenge is targeting base and swing voters for effective contact, realizing that different techniques have desirable characteristics in terms of mobilization and/or persuasion. For example, television and radio allow for targeting broad groups of citizens defined mostly by geography and to a lesser extent by demography. In contrast, other voter contact techniques allow for narrower targeting based on demography and attitudes. Direct mail puts messages in the hands of selected voters in the privacy of their homes. Telephone calls have similar characteristics, but with a greater sense of immediacy. Direct contact, such as knocking on doors or speaking to family, friends, and other associates, stresses face-to-face connection and often draws on shared social networks. Internet resources have similar features but allow campaigns to reach across time and space in a highly selective fashion. Despite this complexity, scholars have found that campaign contact matters greatly in encouraging voter activation.[3]

It is important to note that campaign effects include both candidates and voters. On the one hand, campaigns do their best to win votes by projecting a positive image of the candidate and persuasive theme for the campaign. On the other hand, voter responses to such images and themes depend on a number of conditions, including the general information environment of the campaign. Typically, this information environment includes the impact of the news media. Campaigns typically have very little control over the information environment of a campaign. The direct messages from campaigns are often absorbed by voters in an osmosis-like process.

The public, pundits, and even candidates often criticize campaigns, saying they lack depth and substance, are too negative, and

rely too much on emotional appeals. Despite these features, voters learn a great deal from campaigns about the choices they will have in November. Recent research indicates that exposure to campaign commercials or other campaign information increases voter knowledge about candidates and issues.[4] It is important to note, however, that how signals are sent out by the campaign and how they are interpreted by the public depend on the many factors we have discussed in previous chapters. Indeed, geography, demography, and attitudes mediate how voters respond to campaign messages.

One final factor in explaining campaign effects is voter knowledge and attentiveness. The ability to translate a political disposition into an actual vote depends, in part, on the amount of preexisting information a citizen has. Citizens who follow politics most closely are the most likely to consistently vote along party lines, distinguish between candidates ideologically, and be most attentive to campaign messages. John Zaller's research, for example, finds that voters are able to convert the messages of candidates and campaigns into individual preferences under the right conditions. The most engaged voters are most likely to perceive campaign messages, but they are also the least likely to accept a message inconsistent with their own preexisting attitudes. This pattern arises in part because those who are most attentive often also have the easiest time using information they already have about politics to make choices at the polls.[5] These patterns have been consistently confirmed in numerous contexts.[6]

For these reasons, campaign effects have often been found to be minimal, but they are certainly not negligible. This pattern occurs in part because campaigns are selective about which voters they contact and because media information not controlled by the campaigns also influences individual voters. Generally speaking, campaign messages are most influential when a person has weak political predispositions—such as with swing voters.[7] Indeed, campaign effects can be particularly great when there is an imbalance between the campaign resources of each candidate and a situation

where swing voters should be the most persuaded by the balance of such messages.[8]

A useful way to understand political campaigns is to review the strategies of specific campaigns and the techniques they deployed. This information will add to what we have learned about region, demography, and attitudes in the Buckeye State. In this regard, it is worth describing the 2004 and 2008 presidential campaigns in Ohio in some detail.

THE 2004 OHIO CAMPAIGN

The 2000 election loomed very large in the minds of campaign strategists for both George W. Bush and John Kerry in 2004. The disputed election in Florida was the central focus of both campaigns in 2004 and led to greater attention to grassroots mobilization. Although the 2000 Ohio election results were not controversial, both campaigns saw close parallels with the Florida campaign. In fact, the Bush campaign was surprised by how close the Buckeye State was in 2000, as Al Gore abandoned the state in the last weeks of the campaign. Karl Rove and other Republican strategists determined that the reason the state was so close was that there had been low turnout among voters who leaned Republican and resolved to remedy the situation in 2004. Democratic leaders drew an analogous conclusion: grassroots mobilization had made Ohio close in 2000 and these efforts needed to be redoubled in 2004.[9]

The Bush Campaign

As a result of the lessons of 2000, the Republican Party changed its view toward Get Out the Vote (GOTV) operations and worked to build one of the most massive grassroots networks in modern campaign history. This operation was first piloted in Ohio in 2002; the "72-Hour" campaign was tested by volunteers who were mobilized

to call friends, family members, and other acquaintances to vote for Republican candidates. The GOP had tested volunteer calls against professionals and found that the volunteers performed above expectations. Overall, the 2002 midterm elections resulted in seat gains in national and state elections, confirming the GOP's belief that this strategy was effective.

In 2004, Ohio again played a key role in the full development of the Bush reelection effort. The Bush team built a volunteer network that extended down to nearly every precinct in the state, not just limited to exurban areas. In Ohio, the 2004 Bush campaign had 150 field staff, 12,000 party officials, and 85,000 volunteers working in the campaign. One of the innovations of the Bush targeting strategy was heavily involving volunteers in voter registration drives, rewarding those volunteers and precincts that hit carefully calculated goals for new registrants. Over a million volunteers nationwide contacted voters and provided day-to-day updates "upstream" to precinct captains, county chairs, state and regional managers, right up to the White House, which directly supervised these efforts. The network was frequently compared to that built by Amway in that the pyramid allowed new entrants to recruit volunteers and quickly rise up the campaign ladder.[10]

In fact, Matt Bai of the *New York Times* wrote a widely cited article about the Delaware County (near Columbus in Central Ohio) effort as emblematic of the innovations made by the campaign. While the Bush campaign rigorously controlled the messages and recruiting goals, they also rewarded volunteers with a range of perks, from signed posters from the president to invitations to campaign rallies where Bush was attending. The result was an intense door-to-door, volunteer-driven effort that may have matched the strong grassroots efforts of the old urban party machine. In fact, President Bush had won forty-four of Ohio's eighty-eight counties with more than 60 percent of the vote, and this was due in large part to a highly effective grassroots mobilization operation in rural and exurban areas, allowing him to squeak by with 50.7 percent

of the vote. Most likely, it was this effort that provided the crucial edge for Bush in winning Ohio in 2004.[11]

The Bush campaign also engaged in innovative microtargeting. Much emphasis was placed on the effort in Ohio's fast growing exurbs but also reached out to all regions of the state and to numerous segments of society. The Bush team made a concerted effort to target independents, gun owners, and Christian magazine subscribers using a combination of complex database analyses. As a consequence, the Bush campaign actually spent as much time contacting people in heavily Democratic precincts as in Republican ones. Microtargeting meant the GOP had developed highly detailed knowledge about voters' behaviors and demographics and was able to identify specific groups such as Russian Jews living outside of Cleveland or even individual households in Democratic neighborhoods that contained Republican voters.[12] The Bush campaign recognized that in a close contest, winning the votes of small groups of voters could eventually add up to thousands of votes and victory in Ohio.

The Kerry Campaign

The Democrats had an innovation of their own: a new and extensive GOTV effort by Democratic allies, including labor, and two new organizations representing progressive causes, America Votes and America Coming Together. By law, these organizations were required to operate independently of the Kerry campaign and the Democratic Party. The principal reason for this independence was the way these new organizations were funded: they relied on soft-money, large donations that had been made illegal for parties and candidates to accept by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002. Thus, use of these resources could not be effectively coordinated with the Kerry campaign or the Democratic Party's coordinated campaign.[13]

Such outside groups, along with the Kerry campaign, understood that winning the presidency would be nearly impossible without

winning Ohio. Kerry won the votes of 2.7 million voters in Ohio, a gain of 550,000 over Gore in 2000. Bush, however, won 2.9 million votes, a gain of over 500,000 votes compared to 2000, keeping pace with the Democratic campaign GOTV efforts. Somewhat unnoticed is the fact that Bush actually increased his share of the vote in every one of the Five Ohios, indicating the depth of the Republican GOTV network.

The results are consistent with journalistic and insiders' accounts of each party's efforts. Perhaps she overstated the case, but Lizabeth Cohen did point out an important truth when she wrote in the *American Prospect* shortly after the election that while Republicans worked hard on person-to-person contact, Democrats "had New Yorkers calling Iowans long-distance urging them to vote."[14] As Bush pollster Matthew Dowd stated in the *National Review*, "We knew if we turned out our base, we could split independent voters or lose them slightly, and still win."[15] Personal contact and strong core volunteers were key components of the Bush effort. According to Ken Mehlman, the Republican National Committee chair, the Bush camp identified 20 million voters it believed could be mobilized who either voted against Bush in 2000 or who stayed home: people who had recently moved, Republicans who turned out inconsistently, and independents who could be swayed by issues such as national security or moral values.

THE 2008 CAMPAIGN

Both the Obama and McCain campaigns learned lessons from the close 2004 campaign in Ohio. For the Democrats, a key lesson was that extensive resources were necessary but not sufficient for victory in Ohio and that much greater coordination between the presidential campaign, party organizations, and interest group allies was needed. In this regard, it was determined that the official presidential campaign organization should take the lead in running the

presidential campaign, and other organizations should support the campaign rather than have an independent role. The Republicans learned a similar lesson: a strong, integrated campaign, from the precincts to the presidential campaign organization, was essential for winning Ohio. As in 2004, the presidential candidate needed to be at the center of a network of party committees and interest group allies.

The Obama Campaign

Beginning in the presidential primaries, the Obama campaign sought to build an extensive grassroots organization nationwide and in Ohio. This approach was tested during the long primary campaign and was implemented with great skill in the general election campaign. Like the 2004 Bush campaign, an extensive volunteer network was at the center of the Obama campaign, but the volunteers were centrally managed and their efforts closely coordinated with one another. An important innovation was the use of online media, especially social networking. Obama's website, myBarackObama.com (built to match the features of many social networking websites), also served to utilize the efforts of thousands of volunteers by collecting information from them and also by providing them with opportunities to register and mobilize voters. Such information allowed the campaign to effectively manage this large volunteer effort. The campaign built its operation and mobilized resources in areas typically not targeted by Democratic candidates and arguably not needed to win the election.

In Ohio, the Obama campaign had significant help from a revitalized Democratic statewide organization. Working with the Ohio Democratic Party, the campaign established Campaign for Change, a special organization dedicated to coordinating and executing grassroots contact. Party assistance was especially important at the local and county level where, under the direction of state party chair Chris Redfern, state Democrats had made significant efforts

to rebuild these local party organizations that had largely atrophied over the previous decade and a half.[16] This pattern was particularly true in exurban and rural areas that the Democrats had rediscovered in the 2006 election. These efforts were made possible in part by the extraordinary financial resources the Obama campaign was able to raise through legal campaign contributions, many in small amounts. This fundraising was aided by Obama's decision to forego public financing in the general election campaign. And more important, the campaign was free to deploy and coordinate these resources without the legal restraints of the campaign finance laws.

Overall, the Campaign for Change organization had seventy-one field offices, three hundred paid staffers, and over twelve hundred neighborhood teams of volunteers going door to door to engage voters in conversations. The campaign also made a concerted effort to install staffers and recruit volunteers in all eighty-eight counties. Many of these volunteers gave ten to forty hours of work a week and many were recruited via the Obama campaign's website. In addition, a program of "Obama Fellows" was established in which interns were trained and then sent to live in particular areas to work as field organizers. The Obama campaign, while making use of volunteers, also tightly coordinated the targeting and mobilization efforts. The campaign routinely checked on state campaign organizations to make sure they were meeting their voter contact targets. Field organizers were well trained and given some discretion by the campaign as to how to tailor efforts for specific areas.[17]

The Obama campaign did not neglect broadcast advertising, which completed the efforts of the Campaign for Change. It employed microtargeting to good effect but because of its extensive financial resources was able to spend freely in all the media markets in Ohio. All told, the Obama campaign ran twenty-eight television ads and fourteen unique radio ads in 2008 in Ohio, while the Democratic Party and interest group allies provided another fifteen television ads and eight unique radio ads.[18]

The McCain Campaign

The McCain campaign had considerable trouble replicating the 2004 Bush campaign in Ohio. Despite securing the presidential nomination early, McCain had difficulty deploying an effective general election campaign. Similar to previous years, the Ohio Republican Party emphasized its extensive grassroots organization. However, the presidential campaign brought fewer resources than in 2004: McCain had approximately 45 local offices and 60 paid staffers in Ohio, much less than the 110 offices and 150 paid staffers that Bush had. Once again, the party relied on a "72-Hour Task Force" directed at turning out the vote on Election Day—a plan that morphed into a "96-Hour" effort due to early voting.

Various problems beset the McCain camp. Like Kerry in 2004, McCain did not open a state campaign headquarters until June, and this was often staffed by non-Ohioans. Lacking an extensive network of volunteers, the campaign emphasized its use of "voice-over-Internet technology" (nonpersonal) to contact voters, using up to two hundred pieces of information about individual voters. In this sense, the technology allowed the staffers to instantly update the GOP's famed "Voter Vault" database and then in turn make calls about issues specifically identified as important to the individual voters. But this kind of contact was quite different from the kind of contact the Bush campaign had relied on in 2004—namely, personal contact from friends, coworkers, neighbors, and churchgoers. Indeed, personal contact is far more effective than telephone calls from strangers even if issues have been pre-identified correctly. Also, Christian conservative organizations were dissatisfied with McCain and thus did not provide the same level of support they had provided Bush. In fact, without Sarah Palin on the ticket, McCain would have received much less backing from Christian conservatives.[19]

Indeed, the McCain campaign found itself caught between the need to rally a disaffected Republican base while persuading

independents unhappy with the status quo. Here, the campaign operated at a disadvantage in terms of media spending as well. Partly because McCain had accepted public financing for the general election, he had far less money to spend than Obama. Some of this gap was made up by the Republican National Committee, which engaged in independent expenditures on behalf of McCain. However, this created a lack of coordination in the GOP camp—rather like what had happened to Kerry in 2004. Still, the McCain media campaign was not inconsequential, involving nineteen unique television and three radio ads; the Republican Party provided another twenty-five television ads and three radio ads, and allied interest groups ran thirty-six television ads and three radio ads.[20]

MEDIA ADVERTISING AND CONTACT

Despite the emphasis on grassroots in these elections, one of the primary ways in which voters are contacted is through the airwaves and on television. In both 2004 and 2008, Ohio ranked among the top states in terms of spots run by each of the campaigns, indicating clearly the importance of the state in winning the presidency. Table 5.1 illustrates these patterns.

At one point in the summer of 2004, for example, four Ohio media markets ranked in the top ten nationally in terms of the spots purchased (Toledo was number one; Dayton, two; Columbus, four; and Cleveland, five).[21] Data on campaign ads run by the two campaigns from mid-September to early October reveal that in this crucial stage of the campaign, two Ohio cities placed in the top ten for commercials run by the two campaigns. Moreover, among the top forty were Dayton, Cincinnati, Charleston, West Virginia (whose market reaches into Southeast Ohio), Youngstown, and Wheeling, West Virginia.

Similar data for 2008 had Ohio ranked first with the most television spots in the 2008 presidential campaign, with over 100,000

TABLE 5.1.

Top media markets (by number of ads) in 2004 and 2008

	Spring/Summer		Fall	
	March to June 2004	June to July 2008	September 24 to October 7, 2004	September 28 to October 4, 2008
1	**Toledo, OH**	Philadelphia, PA	Miami, FL	Las Vegas, NV
2	**Dayton, OH**	Detroit, MI	Albuquerque, NM	Denver, CO
3	Kansas City, MO	**Cleveland, OH**	Reno, NV	Milwaukee, WI
4	**Columbus, OH**	Grand Rapids, MI	Tampa, FL	Green Bay, WI
5	**Cleveland, OH**	**Cincinnati, OH**	Green Bay, WI	Tampa, FL
6	St. Louis, MO	Harrisburg, PA	**Cleveland, OH**	**Cleveland, OH**
7	Portland, OR	La Crosse, WI	**Toledo, OH**	Orlando, FL
8	Erie, PA	Milwaukee, WI	**Columbus, OH**	Grand Rapids, MI
9	Las Vegas, NV	Las Vegas, NV	Grand Rapids, MI	Detroit, MI
10	Detroit, MI	Denver, CO	Harrisburg, PA	Philadelphia, PA

Source: Nielsen Monitor-Plus and the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project.
Note: The data from 2004 measure total airings from candidates from March to June. This is the best comparison (in terms of relative geographic importance) since the Democratic primary season extended until June in 2008 but ended in March in 2004.

airings. The next-closest state was Pennsylvania, with 84,000. Overall, Ohio ranked third in terms of overall media spending.[22] The state was an early target of both presidential campaigns. Over the summer of 2008, three Ohio cities ranked in the top twenty in terms of television advertising in the nation, and at one point, Cleveland was the number one market in the nation. During that time, Ohio had 17,000 spots by the candidates (10,135 for McCain and 7,145 for Obama), more than any other state.[23] But in the period after the national conventions (in the last full week of September), Ohio had fallen to fourth, being supplanted by Florida, Pennsylvania, and Virginia with only three Ohio cities ranked in the top twenty in terms of candidate and committee airings.[24] During the final phase of the campaign, nationally Obama for America opened up a two-to-one advantage over McCain for President—the largest disparity in television ads ever measured going back to 1952.[25]

Overall, spending was intense in Ohio in both election years. In 2004, one source estimated a total of $87.2 million spent in Ohio for television ads. The Bush-Cheney and GOP committees spent less than the Kerry-Edwards and Democratic committees ($31.6 to $36.7 million), not counting the spending of allied organizations, which increased the Democratic advantage ($39.4 to $60.9 million). In 2008, a grand total of $34.3 million in television spending was estimated for Ohio, with $15.2 million in television spending by Obama for America and $10.4 million by McCain for President, plus $4.7 million from the Republican Party. The Democratic media campaign was more unified in 2008 than in 2004, with more than 90 percent of spending coming from the Obama campaign itself. In contrast, the Republican effort was more fragmented, with the McCain campaign providing less than three-fifths of the media spending. So although the aggregate amounts of media spending were roughly equal for each party, Obama for America had a $5 million advantage over McCain for President in Ohio. Interestingly, the 2008 media figures are markedly lower than in 2004 for both par-

ties, a fact that reflects in part the larger number of competitive states in the 2008 election.[26]

Survey evidence from 2008 illustrates the impact of such advertising. As seen in figure 5.1, Obama enjoyed a large advantage in terms of overall media exposure. In July 2008, more than one-half of Ohioans had heard "a great deal" about the campaigns, which would rise to four-fifths by September, consistent with the state's importance for each candidate. The media exposure favored Obama by a whopping margin of 76–10 in July. While McCain reduced the gap significantly by September, fewer citizens reported more contact with the McCain campaign, a mark of the advantages Obama had in terms of winning the state.

Obama won the election by a small margin, a win by no means commensurate with his lead in terms of overall contact. However, Ohio was swamped with information about both candidates, and Ohioans consistently reported seeing more about Obama. A key feature may have been television news, which nearly all survey respondents reported seeing (figure 5.2). Obama had an advantage in television news but also in all other kinds of information media as well, including newspaper, radio, and the Internet. The cumulative effects of these advantages worked to Obama's advantage.

Figure 5.1. Media exposure by candidate

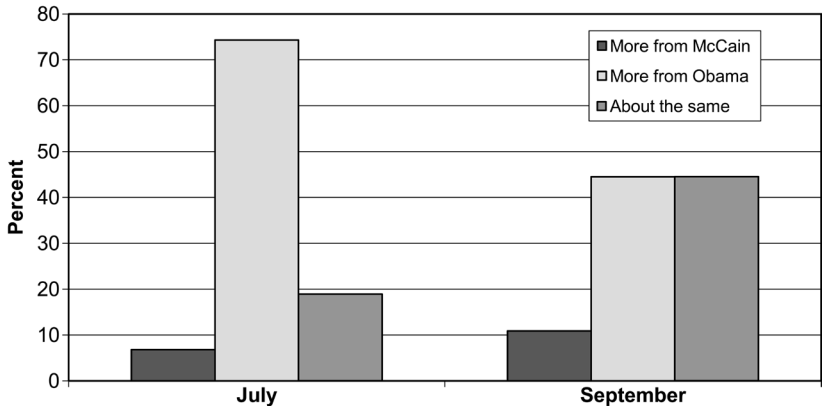
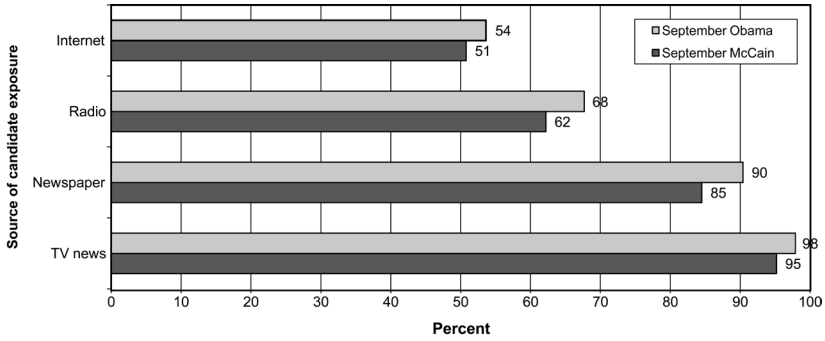


Figure 5.2. Media exposure of candidate by form



Interestingly, reported sources of media contacts varied by partisanship in 2008. Republicans were more likely to have heard about McCain on the radio (73 percent) than Democrats about Obama (67 percent), and Republicans were more likely to have heard about both candidates on the Internet (58 percent of Republicans had heard about McCain on the Internet to 48 percent of Democrats, and 58 percent of Republicans had heard about Obama compared to 52 percent of Democrats). Democrats were more likely to have heard about both candidates on the radio and television than Republicans; nearly all (96 percent) of Democrats and Republicans had seen information about McCain on television but slightly more (89 percent) Democrats had read about McCain in the newspaper than Republicans (83 percent). There was less of a difference for Obama; 99 percent of Democrats and 98 percent of Republicans had seen information about Obama on television, and 93 percent of Democrats and 92 percent of Republicans had seen information about Obama in the newspapers. Put simply, partisans got the messages from both candidates.

Independents, in contrast, may be more persuadable, but even if this is true, they are not as likely to get the messages that would be persuasive. For example, overall, independents were much less likely to have received information about the candidates in the media, trailing partisans by 10 to 20 percentage points in each form

of media. Democratic voters said they found media coverage more helpful than did Republicans or independents; 37 percent of Democrats rated media coverage "very helpful" compared to 26 percent of independents and 29 percent of Republicans.

What did voters learn about the candidates from this media contact? One way to gauge this effect is to ask voters how much they knew about the presidential candidates (figure 5.3). While voters heard a lot about Obama, they did not seem to know much about him in either the summer or fall of 2008, and not significantly more than McCain. For example, in July only 23 percent of Ohio voters felt they knew "a lot" about Obama compared to 21 percent for McCain. By September, voters reported knowing more about both candidates, but McCain actually led slightly in this measure. This evidence may explain partially why Obama's huge leads in overall exposure did not translate into a wide vote margin in November.

Information about the candidates does appear to have been meaningful for many Ohio voters. High levels of exposure seemed to improve citizens' ability to place the presidential candidates on issues. Figure 5.4 shows that the more voters saw about the candidates in the media, the better they were able to correctly place Obama to the left of McCain in terms of overall ideology. On a scale from 1 to 10, voters with the most contact saw the greatest ideological distance between the candidates, a distance that increased between July and October. For those who were exposed to only moderate amounts of information, the gap was smaller and

Figure 5.3. Candidate familiarity

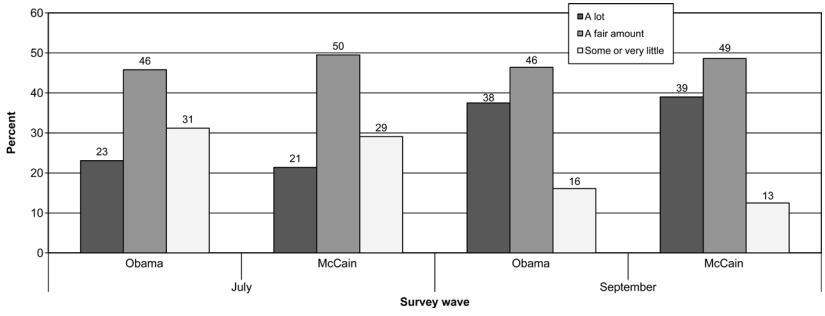
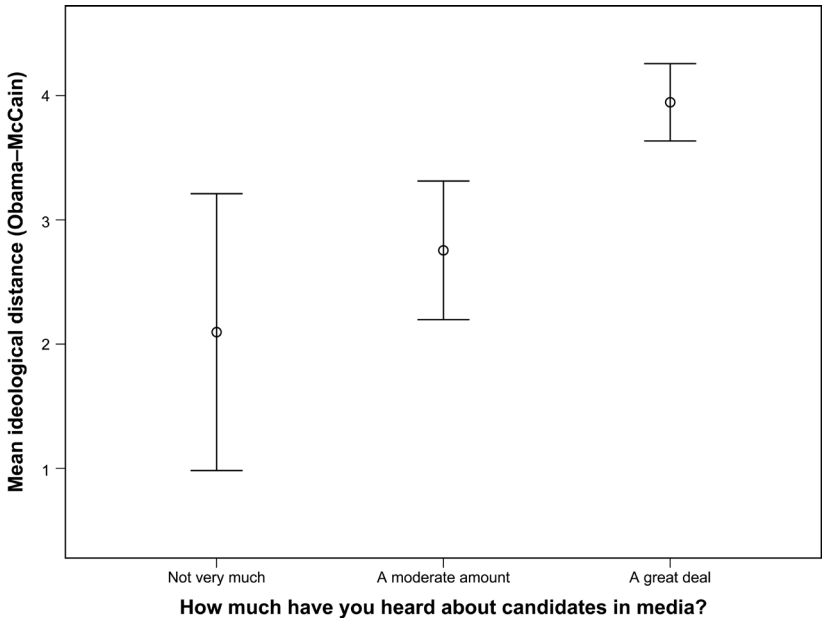


Figure 5.4. Ideological placement and media exposure, September 2008



did not grow at all between the summer and fall. Those with the least exposure gained some information but perceived the smallest distance between the candidates.

DIRECT VOTER CONTACT

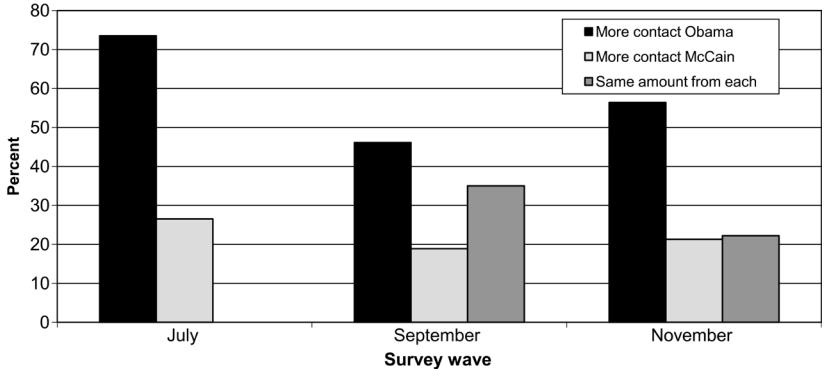
What about the impact of direct voter contact, including contact via grassroots activism? A few things stand out in our 2008 panel study. Nearly all Ohio voters had some contact with either the McCain or Obama campaign or affiliated interest groups. In July 2008, 39 percent of survey respondents reported "a great deal" of contact with either campaign. By September, 64 percent reported "a great deal" of contact. Our postelection poll found that nearly eight in

ten Ohioans reported "a great deal" of contact, and only 6 percent reported "not very much" contact with the campaigns.

Over the course of the campaign, Ohio voters consistently reported more contact from the Obama campaign than the McCain campaign, as shown in figure 5.5. In July, Obama enjoyed a 3–1 advantage in reported contact. By September, McCain had narrowed the advantage slightly, but 46 percent of voters still reported more contact from the Obama campaign. In the postelection poll, Obama enjoyed a 2–1 advantage in reported contact, 56 percent to 21 percent, with one-fifth of voters reporting the same contact from each.

Our panel data also indicate that Obama's campaign kept up with contacting voters from the summer through the fall. For example, among voters reporting more contact with McCain in July, only 22 percent reported more contact from the McCain campaign in September, while roughly half (46 percent) reported equal contact from both campaigns and a third actually reported more contact from the Obama campaign. In contrast, 53 percent of those poll respondents who reported more contact with the Obama campaign in July would again report more contact with the Obama campaign in September, while just under a third (28 percent) would report even contact, while less than one in five (19 percent) would report more contact from the McCain campaign.

Figure 5.5. Reported campaign contact

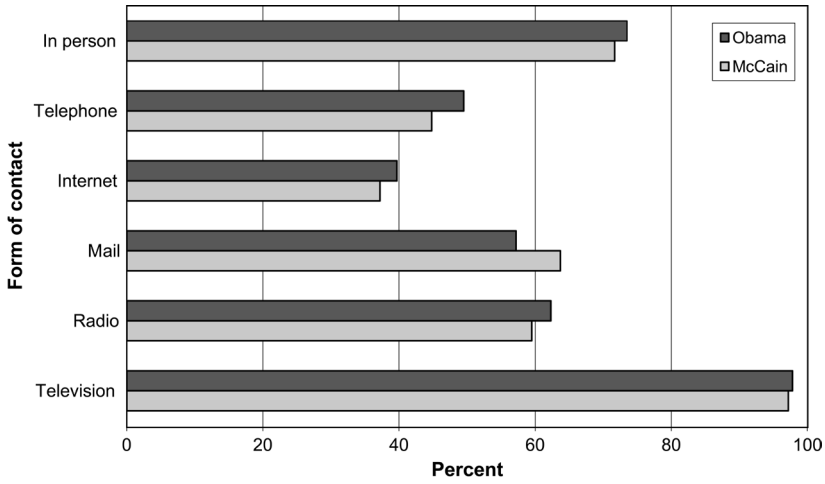


The postelection poll shows the steady contacting paid off for Obama. Over one-third of voters would report increased contact with the McCain campaign between the summer and fall, but McCain would only split these voters evenly (winning 49.6 percent). In contrast, only 18 percent of voters reported an increase in contact with the Obama campaign, and he won only 41 percent of these new targets. What this means is that the Obama camp started with a large advantage and then held on to these voters. Among the 41 percent of voters that reported consistently more contact with the Obama camp, 60 percent would vote for him. Only 6 percent of our panel reported more contact with the McCain camp all the way through the summer and fall, although McCain won the same 60 percent of this group.

The fall and postelection results show the same pattern. One in five voters would report increased contact with the McCain campaign relative to the Obama campaign between September and November, but McCain would win only 39 percent of these voters. In contrast, 25 percent would report increased contact with the Obama campaign relative to the McCain campaign, and he would win about 43 percent of these new contacts. In other words, in the late stages of the campaign, Obama increased the share of the Ohio electorate that he had a contact advantage with and won a greater margin of the new contacts compared to McCain. Obama then won 70 percent of panel respondents who reported even contact with both campaigns through the fall. So, while McCain demonstrated signs of evening up the contest in September, Obama's campaign closed the victory by mobilizing its forces effectively down the stretch.[27]

Survey data also included measures of how voters were contacted, including television, mail, Internet, telephone, and in person (see figure 5.6). We see that the campaigns behaved in similar ways in terms of how voters were contacted. Overall, voters reported more contact from McCain by mail, while the Obama campaign appeared to have had a slight advantage in all other forms of contact, most notably by telephone and Internet. In addition, nearly all Ohio voters reported some contact by television. Interestingly,

Figure 5.6. Contact by form

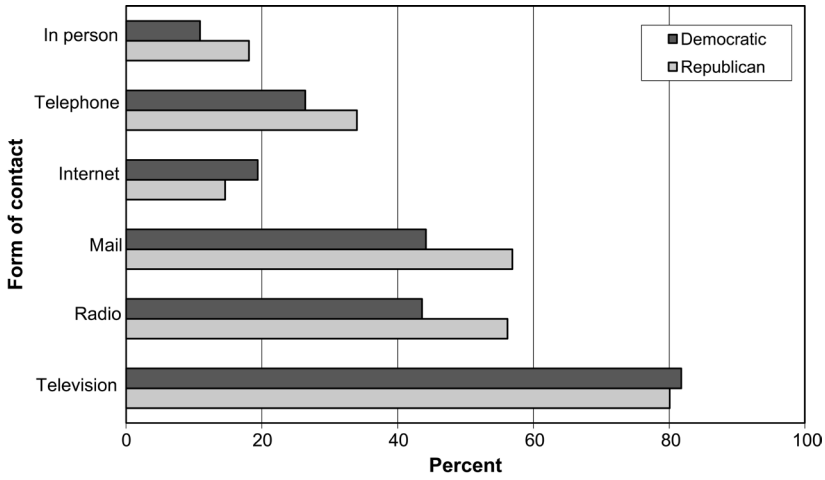


voters reported in-person contact more than any other method of contact except television.[28] Relatively fewer citizens were contacted through the Internet, with only about one in four respondents contacted that way by the Obama campaign and one in three by the McCain campaign.

By comparison, a 2004 survey indicated that Republicans led in most forms of contact (see figure 5.7). While the contacts were measured differently than in the 2008 survey, the net advantage reveals the Bush campaign had a healthy lead in most forms of direct contact (mail, in person, and telephone). The Democrats held only a slight advantage in contact via television and the Internet. Given the closeness of these elections, campaign contact likely affected the outcomes in 2004 and 2008.

Campaigns make an effort to contact voters they believe they have a high probability of influencing. We see evidence of this targeting in several ways. For example, figure 5.8 shows the difference between the "net total contact" (total contacts by the Obama campaign minus the total contacts by the McCain campaign) and the partisanship of the voters. "Strong Democrats" reported more net contacts from Obama, while "strong Republicans" reported

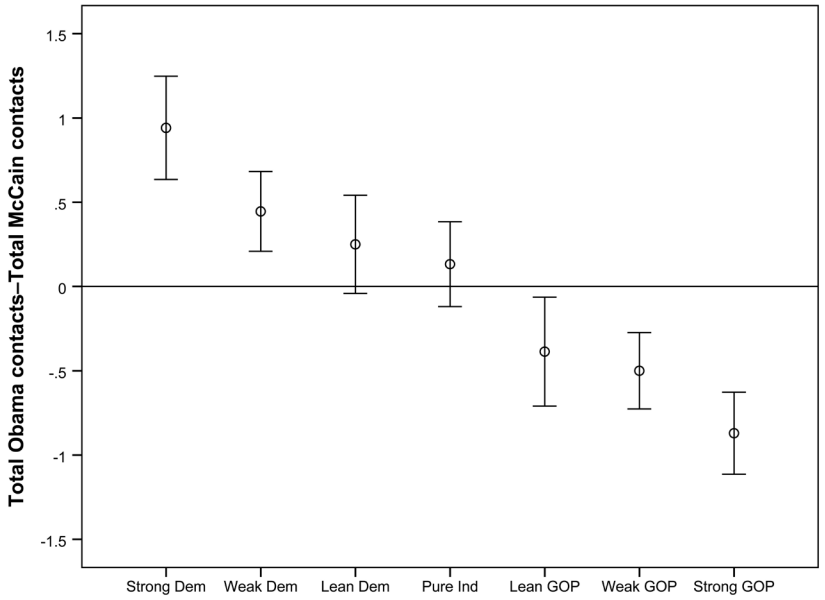
Figure 5.7. Reported contact by form, 2004



more net contacts from the McCain campaign, with independents showing a modest Obama advantage. There is some evidence of a "base strategy" for each campaign, but more so for Republicans. And there is some evidence the Obama campaign reached out and attempted to persuade more voters than the McCain campaign. Strong Democrats reported over 4 types of contact with the Obama campaign, whereas all other partisans reported about 3.5 types of contact except strong Republicans, who reported only 3 types of contact with the Obama campaign. In contrast, nearly all self-identified Republicans (including Republican leaners) reported about 4 types of contact with the McCain campaign, but Democrats and pure independents reported about 3 types of contact. This pattern points to the powerful effects of partisanship on campaign contact, and presumably the vote, as discussed in chapter 4.

Evidence also shows that each campaign sought to reach out to likely voters. Figure 5.9 illustrates how contact by political campaigns is related to citizens' intention to vote. Sixty-seven percent of those who placed themselves at the highest point in terms of their intention to vote (a 10 on a scale of 1 to 10) reported a "great

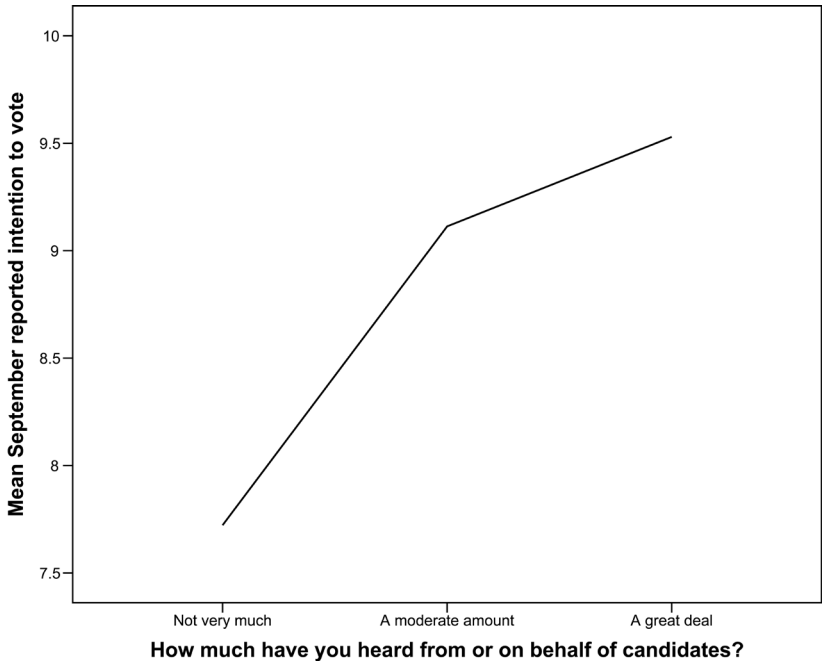
Figure 5.8. Campaign contacts and party identification



deal" of contact with the campaigns. In contrast, for those who placed themselves at any point less than 10, only 42 percent reported a "great deal" of contact with the campaigns. Of course, contact also increases the engagement of citizens, but campaigns often divide up the citizenry before the election season really begins and generally prune their contact lists as Election Day approaches to focus their contacts on the most reliable voters.[29]

In addition, one survey asked respondents which candidate they supported in the 2008 March Democratic primary and compared this information with reported general election contact by both campaigns in the postelection survey. Clinton primary voters were heavily contacted, with 88 percent of Clinton voters reporting a "great deal" of contact compared to 78 percent of Obama primary voters. McCain appears to have targeted Clinton voters as well. For all Democratic primary voters who reported more contact with

Figure 5.9. Campaign contact and intention to vote



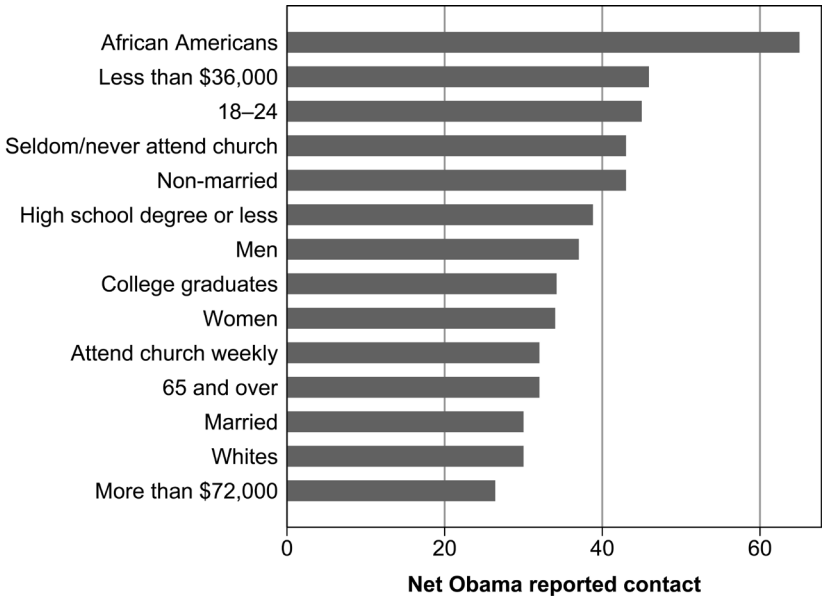
the McCain campaign than the Obama campaign, 60 percent had voted for Clinton. Of those who reported the same amount of contact from each campaign, 64 percent had been Clinton Ohio primary voters.

What about contact among key demographic groups? Evidence on this point is found in figure 5.10. The information environment favored Obama, and in addition, the patterns we find in our surveys might be less a reflection of direct contact with the Obama campaign than overall attention to Obama during the election. When examining relative differences across social groups, we do see differences in candidate targeting. On average, demographic groups that historically leaned toward the Democratic Party reported more contact with the Obama campaign than social groups that have leaned Republican. For example, 73 percent of African Americans reported

more contact with the Obama campaign. Likewise, younger people, unmarried individuals, those making less than $50,000 a year, and non-Christians reported much more contact with the Obama campaign. In contrast, white Evangelicals, respondents making more than $54,000 a year, Protestants, Catholics, married individuals, and whites overall tended to report the most contact with the McCain campaign in a relative sense. These patterns all make sense in light of our review of demographic party support in chapter 3. Thus, it appears that the candidates and their campaigns put more effort into contacting individuals who were members of groups that historically supported the party of each candidate.

There is also evidence that each of the campaigns targeted voters according to their issue positions. Recently, Sunshine Hillygus and Todd Shields have shown that many voters are cross-pressured on issues; that is, citizens often hold issue attitudes that are out of step with their party's issue positions.[30] Such voters are susceptible

Figure 5.10. Demographics and contact



to campaign appeals from the opposition as long as such appeals are narrowly focused and the issues are salient to the voter. In fact, their research demonstrates that campaigns do reach out to such voters in hopes of securing their support. This pattern is similar to microtargeting in that it often requires that parties and candidates identify very narrow slices of the electorate to target. Gun-owning Democrats or pro-choice Republicans are examples of such cross-pressured voters.

As noted in chapter 4, Ohioans were divided on two key issues in 2008: abortion and the Iraq War. Table 5.2 shows the relative level of contact from both presidential campaigns across combinations of these issue positions and partisanship. These combinations reveal different kinds of cross-pressured voters. For example, on abortion, pro-choice Republicans and independents were more likely to report more contact from the Obama campaign than the McCain campaign compared to pro-life independents and Republicans. The opposite pattern was true for pro-life independents and Republicans. Independents were the most likely to report the same contact with each campaign. Pro-life Democrats reported the highest levels of contact with the Obama campaign next to pro-choice Republicans. This indicates that the Obama campaign targeted pro-choice independents—swing voters who were sympathetic to their party's positions.

A different pattern emerges with regard to the Iraq War. Here, Republican respondents who felt troops should be brought home reported relatively more contact with the McCain campaign, while "stay the course" independents reported more relative contact with the Obama campaign. Both types of independents reported "some contact" from each at relatively high rates compared to partisans, while independents who wanted the troops brought home reported relatively higher levels of contact with the Obama campaign. Democrats reported contact in line with their position on the war: those wanting the troops to be brought home had more contact with the Obama campaign while those who wanted to stay the course

TABLE 5.2.

Contact by abortion and Iraq War attitudes

Issue	Party	Position	McCain more contact	Obama more contact	Same from each	Total
Abortion	Republicans	Pro-life	28.0	53.1	18.9	100.0
		Pro-choice	18.8	67.3	13.9	100.0
	Independents	Pro-life	24.7	40.2	35.1	100.0
		Pro-choice	21.4	54.8	23.8	100.0
	Democrats	Pro-life	15.1	63.0	21.9	100.0
		Pro-choice	19.2	57.9	22.9	100.0
Iraq	Republicans	Bring troops home	31.7	57.1	11.2	100.0
		Stay course	23.7	58.2	18.1	100.0
	Independents	Bring troops home	20.5	51.3	28.2	100.0
		Stay course	26.9	44.1	29.0	100.0
	Democrats	Bring troops home	16.8	61.0	22.2	100.0
		Stay course	18.3	54.9	26.8	100.0

Source: 2008 Akron Buckeye poll (postelection).
Note: Abortion and Iraq War issue positions were asked in March survey; contact questions were asked of respondents in the postelection survey.

reported slightly more contact from the McCain campaign or equal contact with the campaigns.

Overall, then, there is evidence that parties and candidates made some efforts to reach voters across party lines. Cross-pressuring campaign tactics are more evident on the issue of abortion while a base strategy appears more consistent in the contacting patterns for respondent attitudes toward the Iraq War. This provides evidence that the parties were engaged in intense combat to maximize their

vote totals and this often meant reaching out to voters who normally are inclined to vote for the opposition.

Additional research on the campaigns in Ohio reveals that the campaigns and their allies were highly attentive to potential defections within their ranks. The Change to Win campaign, a partnership of seven unions, focused heavily on issues such as jobs and health care. The Working America program by the AFL-CIO sent direct mail to socially conservative union members, and other direct mail pieces sent by the AFL-CIO and SEIU attacked McCain's economic and worker-related platforms. The Ohio Republican Party tried several messages. In their direct mail, they attacked Obama's ties to various individuals linked to corruption, tried to frame his statements on pulling out of Iraq as "abandoning America's troops," and mentioned his support for driver's licenses for illegal aliens. Other mailings attacked Obama's economic plan, arguing that the Democrats would drive up government spending and produce greater deficits.

Finally, we see clear evidence of candidate strategies in the post-election survey. For example, McCain voters reported an average of 4.3 types of contact with the McCain campaign, compared to 3.4 types of contact for those who did not vote for McCain. Including other Republican ally contacts, the average was 5.6 for McCain voters and 4.1 for non-McCain voters. Obama contacts follow a similar pattern. That is, those respondents who voted for Obama reported 4.1 types of contact, while those who did not vote for Obama reported an average of only 3.6 forms of contact. Including ally contacts, Obama voters reported an average of 5.4 types of contact while those not voting for Obama reported only 4.6.

Candidate contact, however, does not fully explain the election outcome. For example, Obama won 51 percent of voters who reported more contact with McCain, and he also won 51 percent of those reporting more contact with Obama. In contrast, Obama won 58 percent of those reporting the same amount of contact from each campaign. These patterns present an interesting puzzle. Given

that the information environment of the campaign clearly favored Obama, it is not surprising that well over one-half of Ohio voters in our survey reported more contact with the Obama campaign. But this advantage clearly did not translate into a similar proportion of the vote.

Some other factors help to explain this puzzle. Partisanship is one factor: 94 percent of Republicans who reported more overall contact with the Obama campaign voted for McCain, while 54 percent of independents who reported more contact with the Obama campaign also voted for McCain. Part of Obama's victory is in part due to the fact that 46 percent of Ohio voters in 2008 were self-reported Democrats, which gave Obama a built-in advantage as he won almost 90 percent of the votes of Ohio Democrats. Obama's advantage in campaign contacts did not appear to persuade nearly as many independents or Republicans.

Issue positions also provide clear patterns. The more a voter had views in common with McCain, the more likely he was to be contacted by McCain's campaign or an affiliate. The more a voter had in common with Obama, the more likely he was to be contacted by Obama's campaign or liberal allied organizations. For example, conservatives reported relatively lower levels of contact with the Obama campaign (58 percent had more contact from the Obama campaign) than liberals (63 percent), while moderates reported the lowest level (53 percent).

Another factor was the contacting activity by interest groups allied with both campaigns. The levels of interest group contact and net results are reported in figures 5.11 and 5.12, respectively. In this case, those who reported contact from conservative organizations were strong backers of McCain while those who reported contact with liberal political organizations were strong backers of Obama. The same pattern can be seen for 2004 in figure 5.12. In 2004, however, the Republican "payoff" from contact was far larger. For example, those that reported they were contacted by a church or religious organization produced a net Republican vote of nearly

Figure 5.11. Campaign contact by interest groups, 2004 and 2008

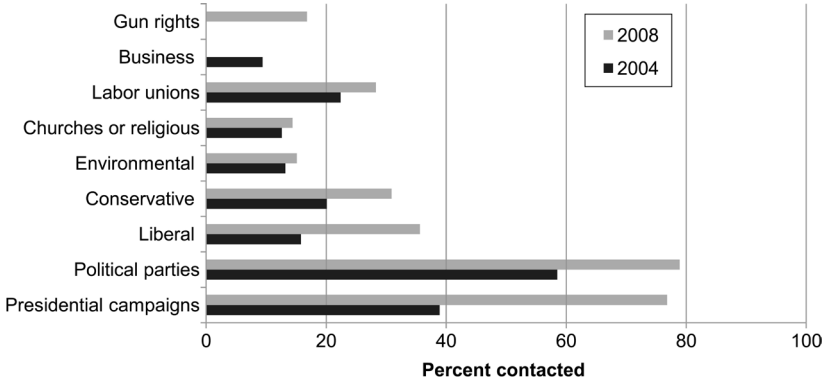
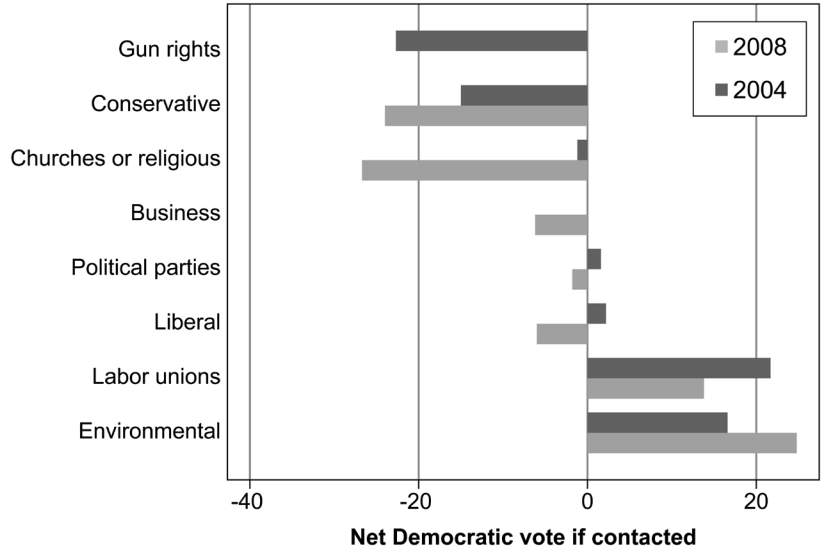


Figure 5.12. Contact by campaign affiliate and respondent vote choice



20 additional points and those that reported being contacted by a conservative group accounted for 10 additional percentage points in net Republican contact. Alternatively, Obama won a larger share of votes of those reporting contact from parties, liberal groups, and labor unions than Kerry did, although he performed worse than

Kerry among those reporting more contact with environmental groups.

CAMPAIGNING BY REGIONS

Campaigns also engaged in strategic behavior in their efforts to mobilize voters across the Five Ohios. However, aggregate levels of contact by region appear to largely be a function of population, with the more populous regions receiving the higher level of effort. A good example of this pattern is media spending by the campaigns across the Five Ohios, reported in table 5.3.

In 2008, Obama spent more in each region, except Southeast Ohio, reflecting his advantage in resources. This disparity was most evident in the heavily populated and Democratic Northeast Ohio, where McCain was outspent by nearly $3 million, but extends even to Republican Southwest Ohio where Obama's edge was about $2 million. For both candidates, however, media expenditures followed the level of population with approximately the same percentage of

TABLE 5.3.

Campaign spending by region

	McCain	Obama
Northeast	$5,824,216	$8,778,882
Northwest	$1,386,751	$1,975,715
Central	$3,092,726	$4,440,080
Southeast	$589,560	$352,795
Southwest	$4,058,135	$6,041631
Total	$14,361,828	$21,236,308

Source: Andrei Scheinkman, Xaquîn G. V., Alan McLean, and Stephan Weitberg, "The Ad Wars," *New York Times*, 2008, http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/ president/advertising/index.html.

both the Democratic and Republican funds spent in each region. For example, both sides spent about 40 percent of their funds in Northeast Ohio, which has about 40 percent of Ohio's population. Because Obama was better funded, he was able to spend more than McCain in areas where potential voters were located.

Another way to see the impact of region is by tracking the location of major candidate visits. As figures 5.13 and 5.14 indicate, Democratic visits outpaced Republican visits in both 2004 and 2008. In 2004, Ohio was the most visited state by the major campaigns. Overall, between June and November 2004, Bush visited Ohio nineteen times, Vice President Cheney visited fourteen times, and First Lady Laura Bush made five separate visits. John Kerry visited twenty-seven times and John Edwards made seventeen trips.

Figure 5.13. Map of candidate visits, 2004

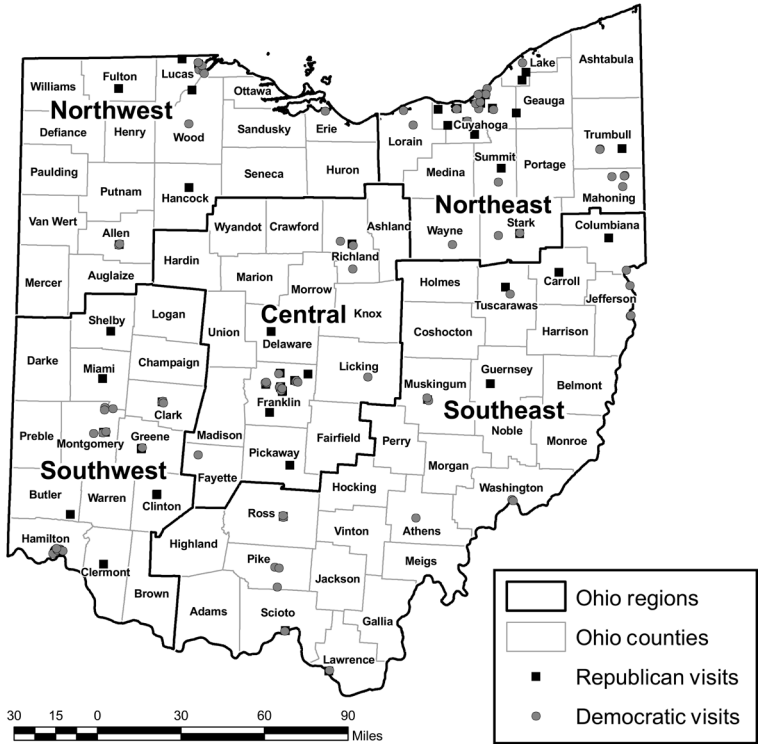
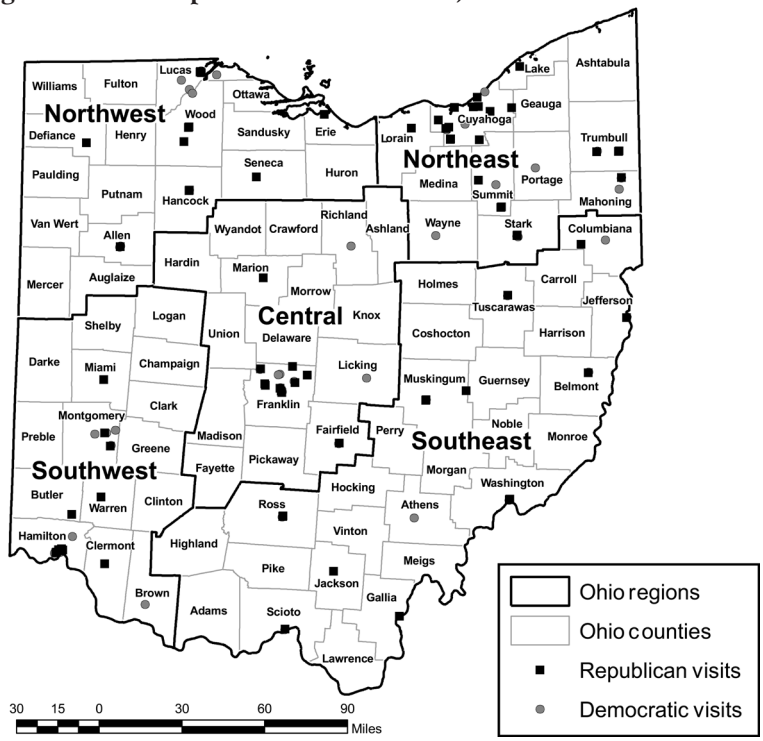


Figure 5.14. Map of candidate visits, 2008



The candidates' spouses also made a number of visits: Elizabeth Edwards made ten separate stops and Theresa Heinz-Kerry made three visits.[31]

These visits covered nearly every type of event, including mass rallies and town hall meetings. Bush rallies were generally limited to supporters while Kerry events were more open. Democrats visited more often and were actually more active in the state during October 2004, but by the end of the campaign, both candidates staged major appearances in Ohio. Kerry held a huge rally with Bruce Springsteen in downtown Cleveland on the evening before the election. Bush actually flew to Ohio on Election Day with a surprise visit to campaign staffers in Columbus in the final hours before the polls closed.

The candidates spent the bulk of their time in the Northeast and Southwest, not surprisingly, since they are the two main population centers. In fact, candidate visits were evenly matched in voter-rich Southwest and Northeast Ohio, the political polar ends of the state. The growing central region of the state saw fewer visits from the top of the GOP ticket than the top of the Democratic ticket (although the Republican spouses visited more frequently than the Democratic spouses so that the total number of visits by each campaign to Central Ohio was the same). The main differences were that Republicans visited the Northwest more often than the Democrats, who in turn spent more time in the Southeast.

In 2008, the major presidential candidates and their surrogates again lavished attention on the Buckeye State. However, in that year with a larger number of competitive states, Ohio had to share the candidates' time with other states. Barack Obama held seventeen separate campaign events in Ohio between June and Election Day 2008, Joe Biden visited eleven separate times, and Michelle Obama had four distinct stops. McCain, for his part, had twenty-nine separate visits and Palin had fourteen.[32] Palin visited Ohio more than any other state, hoping to attract disaffected Hillary voters in the state where Clinton had a strong primary victory. The greater number of Palin and McCain visits is indicative of the importance of the state for the GOP ticket but also perhaps of the fact that the GOP faced a narrower range of states in which the ticket was competitive.

As in 2004, both campaigns also enlisted high-profile support. In September, for example, Hillary Clinton visited Ohio on Obama's behalf in a highly publicized event.[33] Obama held a three-city swing in Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati on the Sunday before the election, appearing with Bruce Springsteen in Cleveland.[34] McCain events often featured speakers like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Ohioan Joe Wurzelbacher ("Joe the Plumber").[35] An October 22 McCain-Palin rally in Green featured country music stars Lee Greenwood and Gretchen Wilson.[36] Among the numerous Obama

surrogates were Cleveland Cavaliers all-star forward and Akron native Lebron James. On the other side, Cleveland Browns (and former Notre Dame) quarterback Brady Quinn, a Dublin native, appeared with McCain.[37]

In terms of the regional distribution of total visits arranged by both campaigns, Northeast Ohio again dominated the candidates' attention. Obama's visits were relatively spread out, with visits to each region, the most to the Southwest but also four each to Northeast and Central Ohio. Biden, perhaps appealing to the traditional ethnic Catholic wing of the Democratic Party, spent most of his time in Northeast Ohio but also visited the other regions at least three times, except for Southwest Ohio. McCain made almost double the number of visits to Northeast Ohio and in fact, just five days before the general election, McCain took a day-long bus tour across the northern edge of the state. He also made several visits to Southeast and Southwest Ohio, indicating the need to win swing voters in Southeast Ohio and to turn out his base in Southwest Ohio. Palin mainly visited the population centers of Northeast and Southwest Ohio, with her visits mostly in suburban and outlying areas.

Campaign field offices also are instructive about where the candidates placed attention on winning votes, as shown in figure 5.15. Overall, Obama had nearly double the number of field offices compared to McCain, but there were also some important differences in the regional distribution of the offices. Not surprisingly, the bulk of the Obama field offices were located in Northeast Ohio, where Obama had over twice as many as McCain. On the flip side, McCain nearly matched the number of field offices in Southwest Ohio. Obama also had a decided advantage in Northwest Ohio (an over 2–1 ratio), which may account for the significant gains he made in that region of the state in terms of vote share compared to John Kerry's performance. No comparable list of Bush and Kerry field offices was made public in 2004, but the number of field offices was greater for Bush (110 to 50) and they appear to have been distributed in a fashion similar to 2008.

Figure 5.15. Map of candidate field offices, 2008

Survey data also confirm some disparity in regional contact in 2008, as shown in table 5.4. The data indicate that citizens were contacted extensively in each region of the state, with no less than 70 percent of citizens in each region reporting a "great deal" of contact with each of the campaigns. The population centers again saw the most attention, with Northwest and Southeast Ohio reporting less contact.

In terms of both overall contact and the reported number of contacts, Obama's efforts clearly exceeded McCain's. Over one-half of all Ohio voters reported more contact from the Obama campaign in the postelection poll, while only one in five reported more contact with the McCain campaign. As discussed above, parties targeted and microtargeted, but data suggest a broad sweep from the

TABLE 5.4.

Differences in regional contact by campaign

	Northeast	Northwest	Central	Southeast	Southwest	Total
"Contacted a great deal"	78.3	71.3	80.6	68.8	77.7	76.7
More from Obama	56.2	53.0	53.3	57.1	60.4	56.5
More from McCain	19.3	18.8	28.6	25.2	18.8	21.4
Net Obama	*36.9*	*34.2*	*24.7*	*31.9*	*41.6*	*35.1*

Source: 2008 Akron Buckeye poll (postelection).

Obama campaign with narrower voter outreach efforts from the McCain campaign.

Moreover, regional disparities are also apparent. McCain's advantage was mostly limited to Central Ohio, where respondents reported the most contact with the McCain campaign relative to the Obama campaign (21 percent in September and 29 percent in November). The two campaigns were actually somewhat evenly matched in Northeast and Northwest Ohio, with one-quarter of all respondents in these two regions reporting "about the same" level of contact between the two campaigns.

In terms of overall reported contact, McCain trailed Bush's efforts in 2004. Table 5.5 shows the reported number of types of contacts with the main presidential campaign as well as their surrogates, including, on the Republican side, church groups, business groups, gun-rights groups, and other conservative groups, and on the Democratic side, labor unions, environmental groups, and other liberal groups. While the total number of contacts is different for each election, the mean number of contacts shows an evenly balanced effort in 2004 but wider differences in 2008. For example,

TABLE 5.5.

Mean number of campaign contacts by region

	Northeast	Northwest	Central	Southeast	Southwest	Total
2008						
Obama contacts	5.1	4.8	5	5	4.5	4.9
McCain contacts	4.5	5	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.7
Net Obama	*0.6*	*–0.2*	*0.2*	*0.3*	*–0.2*	*0.2*
2004						
Kerry contacts	4.4	4.1	4.3	4	4.7	4.4
Bush contacts	4.1	4.4	4.5	3.9	4.8	4.4
Net Kerry	*0.3*	*–0.3*	*–0.2*	*0.1*	*–0.1*	*0.0*

Note: Cell entries represent mean number of reported campaign contacts for respondents by each campaign. Contacts included whether the person was contacted by the major campaigns by television, radio, mail, phone, Internet, or in person, and if they were contacted by one of three liberal or conservative affiliated interest groups in 2004 and five in 2008. As a result, an individual could report up to nine total contacts for each party in 2004 and eleven in 2008.

in 2004, Republican or conservative allies led in contacts in three of the five regions, while in 2008, Democratic or liberal groups led in contacts (and by wider margins) in three of the five regions.

Obama's victory was partly due to his tremendous advantage in resources to contact voters: financial, institutional (the revitalized Ohio Democratic Party), and volunteer resources (including the innovative use of online organization). This allowed the campaign to operate in all regions of the state. However, there is evidence of special targeting of Republican-leaning counties by the Obama campaign, part of the eighty-eight-county strategy pursued by the Democrats in 2006 and 2008. For example, a major part of the effort was

to systematically chip away at the Bush margins from 2004. Bush won twenty-three counties with more than 65 percent of the vote in 2004. Slight increases in the Obama share, such as the target of 35 percent in Warren County, where Bush had won 72 percent, were crucial to the outcome. In this case, Obama won 32 percent of the vote in Warren County, or 7,354 more votes. Another example of the Obama campaign working traditionally Republican areas is, as state Democratic officials noted, Obama had more paid staffers in Republican-dominated Butler County (in Southwest Ohio) than Kerry had in Franklin County in 2004 (the dominant Democratic county in Central Ohio).[38] A third example is seen in the election results in the fastest-growing counties: Bush won 67 percent of the vote in the ten fastest-growing counties; however, in those same counties, McCain won only 61 percent.

At the same time, Obama faced challenges at the regional level. Obama lost votes in twenty counties compared to Kerry in 2004, fifteen of which were located in the state's southeastern region. These were the same counties where Hillary Clinton won 64 percent in the 2008 Democratic primary. Interestingly, Obama's greatest gains over Kerry were concentrated in the industrial northwest, near the Indiana border, home to the five counties with the biggest percent gains over 2004.

CONCLUSION

Campaign contact is an important way in which voters become informed about elections. Campaign activities provide voters with critical information that links their own predispositions with the choice of a candidate. Campaigns are necessary to activate many voters, both in persuading voters which candidates to support and in mobilizing voters to actually cast a ballot.

Given Ohio's diversity in regions, demography, and attitudes, it makes sense for campaigns to focus their resources and efforts on

activating voters in the Buckeye State. So the extraordinary presidential campaigns of 2004 and 2008 were no accident, reflecting the diversity of the Buckeye State and certainly in keeping with its political history. The high level of spending, extensive contacting, and large networks of volunteers further reinforced Ohio's reputation for being a perennial battleground state in presidential politics.

The foregoing evidence suggests that these presidential campaigns actually made a difference in the election results, helping to produce a slim majority of the votes cast. Indeed, the winners, Bush in 2004 and Obama in 2008, more effectively marshaled campaign resources and contacted and activated voters on their behalf. In 2004, the Republicans and Democrats were more evenly divided in resources and contacts, but the GOP had a more integrated and coherent campaign. In 2008, the Democrats had advantages in both areas, having far more resources as well as a more integrated and coherent campaign. Much of the evidence presented reveals that these extraordinary campaign efforts helped Bush and Obama win by informing, persuading, and mobilizing more voters. But this evidence also reveals the limits to campaign contact: in the end, campaign effects reflect the underlying predispositions of voters, rooted in region, demography, and attitudes. Looked at from this perspective, the efficient Bush campaign in 2004 and the large-scale Obama campaign in 2008 had to operate within the great diverse environment that is the Buckeye State. In the next and final chapter, we will summarize our findings on region, demography, and attitudes and assess how all these factors fit together to help account for the Buckeye battleground.

Chapter 6

A Look to the Future of the Buckeye Battleground

On January 5, 2011, Representative John Boehner, a member of the U.S. House since 1991, was sworn in as Speaker. The second of twelve children and a lifetime native of Southwest Ohio, Boehner is only the third Ohioan to serve in the Speaker's post and the first since Nicholas Longworth in 1931. If 2006 was a grand celebration for Ohio Democrats, 2010 was a grand celebration for the GOP. In Ohio, the congressional delegation went from a 10–8 Democratic edge to a 13–5 Republican majority. All Ohio congressional seats that were taken by Democrats from Republicans in 2006 and 2008 returned to the GOP in 2010. Republicans easily kept the U.S. Senate seat of the retiring George Voinovich, swept every statewide elected office, and took back control of the Ohio House of Representatives. Once again, Ohio was at the forefront of national politics.

The purpose of this book is to show why Ohio is a perennial battleground state in national elections, and it is worth briefly summarizing the results. In chapter 1, we noted that the Buckeye State has long held a central place in American electoral politics, a point that was illustrated by a brief sketch of four historical eras leading up to the present, or contemporary era. A review of Ohio voting behavior over time revealed that Ohio has been a highly competitive and bellwether state in national elections. These characteristics are

especially true for presidential elections but also apply to a lesser extent to congressional and state elections. These characteristics help explain why generations of politicians and political organizations have made a point of campaigning intensively in Ohio.

These historical regularities raised a deeper question: Why is Ohio a competitive and bellwether state? The simple answer is the great diversity of the Buckeye State. As illustrated in chapter 2, Ohio is a microcosm of the nation in social and political terms, especially among the large states that matter most in the Electoral College. Ohio also has a great deal of internal regional diversity. The state's diverse regions are usefully summarized by the Five Ohios, which divide the state into Northeast, Northwest, Central, Southeast, and Southwest Ohio. These regions are strongly associated with voting behavior not only in the contemporary era but also in previous eras. Although these patterns are often strongest with the presidential vote, they tend to hold for state elections as well.

Recognition of the Five Ohios helps explain why Ohio is a battleground state but also raises yet another question: Why are these regions distinctive at the ballot box? Here, we noted two perspectives on the political distinctiveness of regions: the compositional view (that regional distinctions arise from the characteristics of the people who live in them) and the contextual view (that regional distinctions arise from the interaction of people in a particular place over time). Subsequent chapters included region as a focus of analysis and considered both the compositional and contextual effects.

Chapter 3 explored the impact of demography, the basic social characteristics of citizens, on voting in Ohio. Here we found strong relationships between measures of class, culture, and life cycle and the presidential vote. These patterns revealed strong social identities that benefit each of the major political parties and their candidates. Thus the voting differences across the Five Ohios arise in part from the demography of the regions. These findings provide considerable support for the compositional perspective. However, we also found support for the contextual perspective when we

looked at the impact of demography on the vote across the Five Ohios. We found that the impact of demography was not uniform across the five regions. So the Buckeye State's diverse regions arise in part from demography and in part from geography, and they help explain why the state is a perennial battleground.

Chapter 4 explored the impact of political attitudes—the opinions that connect demography and region to political choices—on voting in the Buckeye State. Here, we demonstrated a strong relationship between key attitudes and the presidential vote in the initial elections of the contemporary era. In keeping with the scholarly literature, we found that self-identified partisanship was the strongest predictor of the vote in all these elections and, furthermore, that changes in partisanship between 2004 and 2008 help account for the shift in the Buckeye State from the Republican to the Democratic column. We also found that self-identified ideology, issues, and issue priorities all had an effect on the vote. Finally, we found that there were important differences in all these political attitudes across the Five Ohios. These patterns provided evidence for both the compositional and contextual view of regional political differences. Hence, political attitudes also help explain the Buckeye battleground.

Chapter 5 examined campaign activity and contact with voters, the most visible evidence that Ohio is a battleground state. Indeed, in the contemporary era, the major presidential campaigns lavished resources and time on winning the Buckeye State. Campaign contact helps activate voters, including mobilizing them to cast a ballot as well as persuading them to vote for a particular candidate. In this regard, campaign contact helps link region, demography, and political attitudes to citizens' choices at the ballot box. Evidence presented reveals that campaign activities had an impact on the election results in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections.

In sum, Ohio is a perennial battleground state because of its history, plus its regional, demographic, and political diversity. These factors prompt intense campaigning by a wider range of politicians

and political organization—activities that, in turn, impact election results.

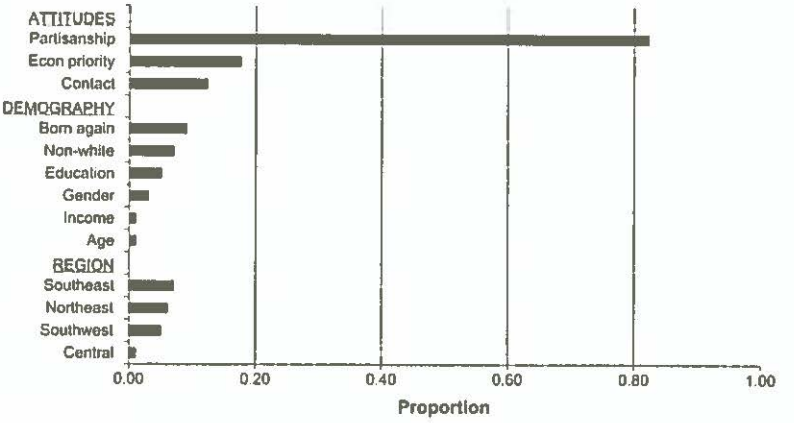
FITTING THE FACTORS TOGETHER

Our findings in the previous chapters raise a final question: How do these factors fit together in accounting for recent election results? What follows is a simple illustration of the relative impact of these factors on voting in the presidential elections of the contemporary era. We attempt to answer this question by analyzing survey data that contained a measure of *region* (the Five Ohios); *demography*, including measures of class (income and education); *culture* (white born-again Christian and non-white voters) and *life cycle* (age and gender); *attitudes* (self-identified partisanship and economic priorities); and *net campaign contact*. The following graphs report the relative and independent impact of each of these variables on the presidential vote once the effect of all other variables are taken into account statistically.[1]

Figure 6.1 reports the relative importance of these variables on the 2008 presidential vote in Ohio. In this analysis, partisanship had the largest impact on the vote, far above any of the other variables. This finding fits well with the literature on voting behavior, as mentioned in chapter 4. Certainly, it makes intuitive sense that identification with the Democratic or Republican parties would be strongly linked to choices between a Democratic and Republican candidate.

Economic priorities and net campaign contact both had an independent impact on the vote even when the effects of partisanship are taken into account. Many of the demographic variables also showed an independent impact on the vote, although at a smaller level than the more directly political variables. Religious affiliation, race, level of education, and gender were traits that still mattered once other factors were taken into account.[2] Region mattered

Figure 6.1. Sources of the 2008 presidential vote in Ohio: Relative impact



independently as well: residence in the Southeast, Northeast, and Southwest regions also had an independent impact on the vote when compared to Northwest Ohio.[3] (In this statistical analysis, Northwest Ohio was used as a baseline category and does not appear in the figure; it is included in the model.)

The data suggest that political attitudes were the most powerful set of variables, followed by campaign contact, demography, and region in accounting for the presidential vote. In part, this ordering reflects the proximity of the variables to the vote itself. As noted earlier, partisanship is easily linked to the party labels of the candidates, while economic priorities and campaign contact can be readily linked to the candidates. In contrast, demography and region are more distant from the vote, reflecting the basic personal experiences and values that have to be politicized to be relevant to the vote. From this perspective, it is likely that many of these variables have important indirect effects on the vote. For example, income may operate through partisanship (with the less affluent being Democrats and the more affluent Republicans) but also through economic priorities (with the less affluent more concerned with the economy than the affluent) and campaign contact (with

Democrats targeting the less affluent and the Republicans the more affluent).

Figure 6.2 provides an estimate of the indirect effects of all these factors on the 2008 presidential vote, presenting them alongside the direct effects reported in figure 6.1.[4] Note that the relative impact of all the factors increases, represented by the extension of the bars in the figure (the white portions). The indirect effect of partisanship on the vote is modest because the direct effect is so large and because partisanship has a relatively small effect through the other variables. However, the total impact of economic priorities and campaign contact nearly doubles in size when the indirect effect is included, principally because these variables operate through partisanship to influence the vote. The total impact of all the demographic and regional variables increases as well when the indirect effects are added in; these results also largely reflect operation of all these factors through partisanship and the other political measures. These patterns suggest another reason partisanship has such a powerful impact on the vote: it encompasses the effects on many other factors. Still, even when the indirect effects of the factors are included, attitudes remain the most powerful effect on the vote, followed by campaign contact, demography, and region.

The same overall pattern held for the 2004 election, as shown in figures 6.3 and 6.4. Partisanship and economic priorities were also the most important factors in 2004, but demography and region had a larger impact than campaign contact. In addition, demography and region also had larger indirect effects in 2004 than 2008. These differences could well reflect differences in the 2004 and 2008 campaigns, but they could also reflect differences in the surveys conducted four years apart, with somewhat different measures and samples. Still, the similarity in the patterns is striking. Indeed, these patterns suggest that region and demography were highly politicized in elections during the contemporary era, so that the underlying diversity of the state was reflected in the Buckeye battleground.

Figure 6.2. Sources of the 2008 presidential vote in Ohio: Direct and indirect impacts

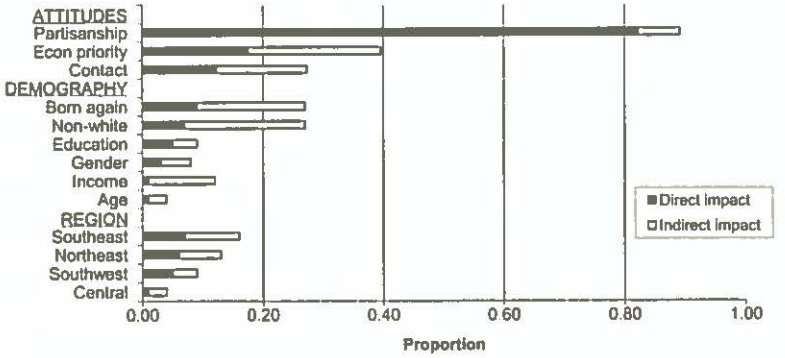


Figure 6.3. Sources of the 2004 presidential vote in Ohio: Relative impact

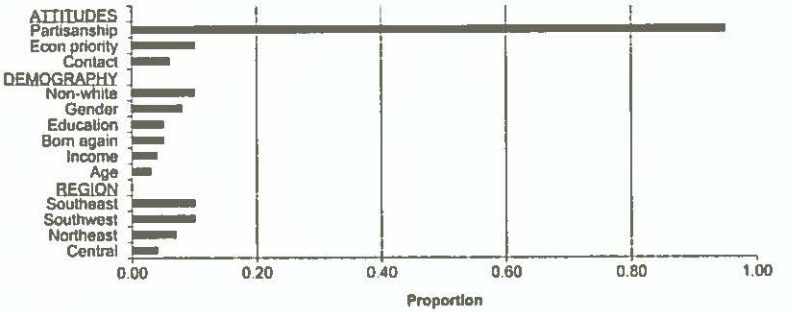
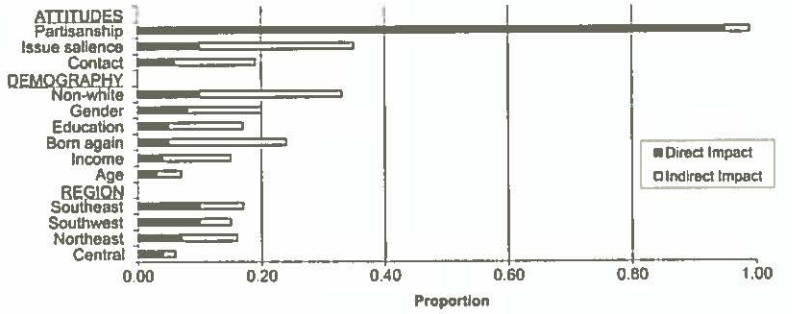


Figure 6.4. Sources of the 2004 presidential vote in Ohio: Direct and indirect impacts



OHIO POLITICS IN THE CONTEMPORARY ERA

What will Ohio politics look like in the contemporary era, beyond the initial elections in 2004, 2006, and 2008? In the immediate short term, the 2010 Republican sweep of statewide offices and resumption of unified control of Ohio government has large consequences regarding redistricting at the state and national level. As a result of the 2010 census, Ohio lost two congressional seats, which will reduce the House delegation to sixteen members following the 2012 election.[5] Since the GOP controls the congressional redistricting process and because the Republican majorities in the Ohio General Assembly are so large, the GOP will have a free hand in redrawing the district lines. At the state level, the GOP will control the redrawing of district lines for the Ohio General Assembly since the party controls four of the five seats on the state Apportionment Board.[6]

As with the 2006 election, it is tempting to view the 2010 election as a sign that a new era has begun in the nation and the state. However, in the case of Ohio, the 2010 election may represent simply a "return to normalcy," as President Warren Harding, one Ohio native son, said in 1920, during the industrial era. After all, Ohio is a competitive and bellwether state (and leans slightly Republican).

In 2012, the fortunes of President Obama will reside in the performance of the economy and its impact in Ohio. Just before the 2008 election, the Ohio unemployment rate hit 7.4 percent, the highest it had been in sixteen years, and this helped the party out of power—the Democrats—prevail. Two years later, the White House understood the stakes of the 2010 governor's race in Ohio, with Obama and his surrogates frequently visiting the Buckeye State to buoy Governor Strickland's fortunes.[7] Yet, with the unemployment rate stuck near 10 percent, Democrats in Ohio were punished for failing to turn around the economy, and the party of power—now the Republicans—prevailed.[8] At this writing, it is unclear what the

economic situation will be in the fall of 2012. But come what may, a hard-fought presidential contest in Ohio is likely once again.

It is, then, difficult to predict with any certainty the course of national politics, let alone the politics of a single state. Moreover, a glance back at chapter 1 reveals that the industrial and postindustrial eras had varied politics with some very close elections, but also elections that were won by much larger margins. Thus, an easy prediction would be that the same range of electoral outcomes will occur over the next fifty years, even though the era began with unusually close presidential contests. Such a prediction would certainly be in keeping with the competitive and bellwether nature of Buckeye politics over the previous two hundred years. Three additional factors could reinforce such a judgment: the potential effects of diversity, decline, and redevelopment.

As we have noted, a key to Ohio's politics is the great diversity of the state. At this juncture, it seems unlikely that the Buckeye State will become any less diverse as the contemporary era advances. For one thing, Ohio's legacy of diversity from the past is likely to change slowly, if at all, with a continuation of a wide variety of people among its citizenry. In addition, many national trends that have been most prominent in other parts of the country, such as the growth of the Hispanic population, have begun to appear in Ohio, and these trends may advance rapidly over the next several decades. And as we saw in the postindustrial era, the growth of knowledge workers and exurbs has also appeared in the Buckeye State and shows no signs of diminishing. Indeed, the growing parts of the state are likely to increase in diversity, perhaps in new and unexpected ways.

The continued diversity of Ohio may be encouraged by economic and population decline. This pattern may occur if such decline continues to be concentrated in the old industrial cities of the state, a process that has been under way for much of the postindustrial era. It is quite possible that further decline in manufacturing and the

loss of the traditional blue-collar populations will increase the political diversity of the state, especially if it were to occur simultaneously with an increase in knowledge workers and suburbanization. If so, then further decline is unlikely to change the fundamental nature of Buckeye politics, including its competitive and bellwether features. However, decline in population will reduce Ohio's clout in the Electoral College and in Congress, making the state a less valuable prize in national politics. The combination of diversity and decline may produce a smaller Buckeye battleground in the contemporary era.

It is possible, however, that economic and population decline could lead to less diversity in Ohio, especially if the decline were spread evenly across the regions of the state, or if such declines were not matched by growth and economic innovation in other regions. For example, only Central Ohio has seen real population growth in recent decades, which has been offset by declines or slow growth in other regions. Moreover, if Ohio does not participate in the postmanufacturing economy, it may miss important new sources of diversity. One example may be in the area of in-migration: internal and external migrants tend to follow economic growth and a stagnant economy may discourage migrants of all sorts, including the new immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The net result of all such developments could be that Ohio would be less of a microcosm of the nation. In political terms, this could make the state less competitive in national elections and less of a bellwether state. It is unclear which of the major political parties might benefit—or suffer—from such developments, but Ohio would no longer play as central a role in national politics.

The further decline of the economy is not the only possible future. Another is the redevelopment of Ohio. Indeed, the first two centuries of the state's history saw several dramatic examples of new departures in economic development. Such a change could happen again, expanding the economy and eventually the population of Ohio. Certainly there is no shortage of efforts by public

and private officials to rekindle entrepreneurship in the state. And some of the features that first made Ohio successful, such as location, water, and a diverse population, may become competitive advantages in the next cycles of economic innovation. If such a redevelopment were to occur, it would only add to the state's diversity and thus likely preserve or even enhance its competitive and bellwether features. Under such a scenario, a larger and more vital Buckeye battleground would characterize the contemporary era.

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. For accounts of the intense campaigning in Ohio, see the following: for 2004, Stephen T. Mockabee et al., "The Battle for Ohio: The 2004 Presidential Campaign," in *Dancing without Partners,* ed. David B. Magleby, J. Quin Monson, and Kelly D. Patterson (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 135–62; for 2006, Stephen Brooks et al., "The Battle for Ohio 2006: The Democrats Strike Back," in *The Battle for Congress: Iraq, Scandals, and Campaign Finance in the 2006 Election*, ed. David B. Magleby and Kelly D. Patterson (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Press, 2007), 167–92; and for 2008, Daniel Coffey et al., "The Battle for Ohio in 2008: The Politics of Pragmatism," in *The Change Election: Money, Mobilization, and Persuasion in the 2008 Federal Elections,* ed. David B. Magleby (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010), 181–223.
2. This section heavily relies on George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People,* 3rd ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003).
3. For example, in 2000 the state closest to the national Republican presidential vote was New Mexico.
4. The index is calculated in two steps. First, the absolute value of the difference between the winning and losing party in the two-party vote is subtracted from 100. For example, 51 to 49 percent election results would produce a difference of 2, which when subtracted from 100 equals 98. Such calculations were made for the presidential, congressional, senatorial, and gubernatorial vote. In

the second step, these figures were averaged for each election, using just the election held in the relevant year. These data come from Jerrold G. Rusk, *A Statistical History of the American Electorate* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2001), 516–17. The 2000–2010 figures were calculated by the authors. This index was developed by Paul David, *Party Strength in the United States, 1872–1970* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1972).

5. Another problem is the change in the major political parties, with the Republicans replacing the Whigs of the foundation era. For purposes of clear presentation, the historical figures do not include the foundation era.
6. The rest of this chapter heavily relies on Michael F. Curtin, *Ohio Politics Almanac,* 2nd ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006). Much of the voting data were taken from Rusk, *A Statistical History*. Statistics from 2000 and later were collected by the authors from official sources.
7. For a similar analysis of the history of Ohio balloting that focuses on the Democratic vote, see Alexander P. Lamis, "Ohio Politics in the Twenty-First Century," in *Ohio Politics,* rev. ed., ed. Alexander P. Lamis and Brian Usher (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2007), 500–539.
8. Ohio voted for Henry Clay in 1824 and 1844, and in 1836 it voted for native son William Henry Harrison in his first bid for the White House. In 1848, a split among Ohio Whigs gave the state to Democrat Lewis Cass even though Whig Zachary Taylor won nationally.

CHAPTER 2

1. Ronald Brownstein, "The First 21st-Century Campaign," *National Journal,* April 19, 2008, http://www.nationaljournal.com/njmagazine/cs_20080416_3324.php.
2. Coffey et al., "Battle for Ohio in 2008," 181–223.

3. Associated Press, "Obama Plans to Target Republican Strongholds," *Youngstown Vindicator,* August 13, 2008, http://www.vindy.com/news/2008/aug/13/obama-plans-to-target-republican-strongholds/.
4. Kevin J. McMahon et al., *Winning the White House, 2008* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
5. E.g., see Timothy Noah, "Ohio: Re-Elect Bush and You Might Get Jerry Springer, Too," *Slate,* July 19, 2004, http://slate.msn.com/id/2103984/.
6. James G. Gimpel and Jason E. Schuknecht, *Patchwork Nation: Sectionalism and Political Change in American Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).
7. Robert S. Erikson, John P. McIver, and Gerald C. Wright, "State Political Culture and Public Opinion," *American Political Science Review* 81 (1987): 807.
8. Paul Brace et al., "Public Opinion in the American States: New Perspectives Using National Data," *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (2002): 173–89.
9. David Newman, "Comments on Daniel Elazar, Political Geography and Political Science," *Political Geography* 18 (1999): 906.
10. Erikson, McIver, and Wright, "State Political Culture," 807.
11. Ibid., 797–813.
12. E.g., see John C. Green, "Ohio: The Heart of It All," *Forum* 2, no. 3 (2004), http://www.bepress.com/forum/vol2/iss3/art3.
13. Robert L. Smith and Dave Davis, "Differences Create Invisible Borders," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* July 4, 2004.
14. Our deviations are as follows: We have included Wayne County in Northeast Ohio because it is fast becoming part of the Akron-Canton area and is in the greater Cleveland media market. In Northwest Ohio, there is considerable dispute over the exact boundaries of the region. We took a minimalist approach by including counties dominated by small industrial cities and commercial farming. As such, we included the Firelands region near Lake Erie. We also excluded some of the interior counties, whose

orientation has been toward the interior of the state, putting them in the Central Ohio region. In Southwest Ohio, we included two Appalachian counties (Clermont and Brown) because they have largely become part of the greater Cincinnati metro area (although they are technically Appalachian), and we also included Shelby County, which borders Northwest and Southwest Ohio. Finally, we have somewhat of a generous definition of Central Ohio. We include "northern tier" rural counties that have had an orientation toward the interior of the state: Ashland, Richland, Crawford, Wyandot, and Logan.

15. A Brookings Institution report identified eight Ohio cities as struggling: Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, Mansfield, Springfield, Warren, and Youngstown. Lima was also included when the population threshold was lowered. For the full report, see Jennifer S. Vey, *Restoring Prosperity: The State Role in Revitalizing America's Older Industrial Cities* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2007), http://www3.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20070520_oicOH.pdf.
16. Ziona Austrian, *Northeast Ohio Employment and Wage Trends: Economic Brief* (Cleveland, OH: Center for Economic Development CSU Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, 2006).
17. E.g., see Chuck Soder, "Biotech Groups to Promote Cleveland-Pittsburgh Corridor," *Crain's Cleveland Business*, April 17, 2007, http://www.crainscleveland.com/article/20070417/FREE/70417009; Tom Breckenridge, "Ohio Awarding 'Hub' Status to Cleveland's Health-Tech Corridor," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* June 3, 2010, http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2010/06/ohio_awarding_hub_status_to_clevelands_health-tech_corridor.html.
18. Bill Lubinger, "The Farm Belt," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 25, 2004, http://www.cleveland.com/fiveohios/plaindealer/index.ssf?/fiveohios/more/109076010941440.html.
19. Damon Lavrinc, "GM Bringing New Six-Speed Tranny to Market in 2010," *Autoblog,* May 22, 2007, http://www.autoblog.com/2007/05/22/gm-bringing-new-six-speed-tranny-to-market-in-2010/.

20. Bill Lubinger, "Values-Driven Region Puts Character First," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* July 21, 2004, H2.
21. Laura Walcher, "Columbus? Hip and Happening? Yes, It's True: Ohio Capital Sheds Image as a Podunk Town," *San Diego Union-Tribune,* May 21, 2006.
22. Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, *2009 Economic Analysis: Responding to Recession, Preparing for Recovery*, http://www.doleta.gov/Programs/2008ReportsAndPlans/Economic_Analysis_Reports/OH.pdf.
23. Matt Bai, "The Multilevel Marketing of the President," *New York Times Magazine,* April 25, 2004, 43.
24. In fact, the Ohio Governor's Office of Appalachia represents twenty-nine counties extending along the southern tier of the state to what is considered Southwest Ohio in this analysis.
25. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, "The Five Ohios," 2004,http://www.cleveland.com/fiveohios/wide/index.ssf?/fiveohios/charts/0704b.html.
26. Ibid.
27. U.S. Census American Fact Finder, http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en.
28. Ken Alltucker et al., "Cincinnati's Decline Leads Ohio Cities: Census Shows Suburbs Booming," *Cincinnati Enquirer,* March 17, 2001.
29. Alan Berube et al., *Finding Exurbia: America's Fast-Growing Communities at the Metropolitan Fringe* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006). In fact, the report identified Ohio as having the third-largest exurban population in the nation.
30. In figure 2.2, as well as the ones that follow, lighter-colored counties are more Democratic and darker-colored counties are more Republican.

CHAPTER 3

1. E.g., one observer referred to these white working-class voters that Clinton won as "lunch-bucket voters." Gary Langer, "Exit Poll:

Critical Clinton Wins," *ABC News,* March 4, 2008, http://abcnews.go.com/print?id=4386210.

2. Andrew Gelman, "Did Race Win the Election for Obama?" *Statistical Modeling, Causal Inference, and Social Science* (blog), January 7, 2009, http://www.stat.columbia.edu/~cook/movabletype/archives/2009/01/did-race-win-th.html; Stephen Ansolabehere and Charles Stewart III, "Amazing Race: How Post-Racial Was Obama's Victory?" *Boston Review,* January/February 2009. It should be noted that support of Obama by 97 percent of African Americans is truly remarkable, not only in the United States, but the near unanimity is rare for almost any subgroup and almost unheard of in Western democracies.
3. William H. Frey and Ruy Teixeira, *A Demographic Breakthrough for Democrats: Demographics, Cities, Regions and States, Housing, U.S. Politics* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/1107_political_demographics_frey_teixeira.aspx; see also William H. Frey and Ruy Teixeira, *The Political Geography of Ohio, Michigan, and Missouri: Battlegrounds in the Heartland* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).
4. Mark Penn, "Most Affluent Voters Key to Obama Sweep," *Politico,* November 11, 2008, http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1108/15471.html.
5. The Cook Political Report stated that "in the past decade, the most significant predictor of a county's shift in partisan preference . . . is level of educational attainment"; Ronald Brownstein, "Demography and Destiny: Population Trends Boosting the Democrats Show No Sign of Slowing," *National Journal,* October 10, 2009, http://www.nationaljournal.com/njmagazine/nj_20090107_6607.php.
6. E. J. Dionne Jr., "Yes, We Did: Yesterday, America Chose to Practice What It Has Long Preached to the Rest of the World," *New Republic,* November 5, 2008, http://www.tnr.com/article/politics/yes-we-did; see also Chuck Todd and Sheldon Gawiser, *How*

Barack Obama Won: A State-by-State Guide to the Historic 2008 Presidential Election (New York: Vintage, 2009).

7. Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Free Press, 1913).
8. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction," in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspective*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (New York: Free Press, 1967), 1–64.
9. John R. Petrocik, "Party Coalitions in the American Public: Morality Politics, Issue Agendas, and the 2004 Election," in *The State of the Parties,* 5th ed., ed. John C. Green and Daniel J. Coffey (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 280.
10. Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee, *Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); Petrocik, "Party Coalitions"; Robert A. Jackson and Thomas M. Carsey, "Group Components of U.S. Presidential Voting Across the States," *Political Behavior* 21 (1999): 123–51; Robert Axelrod, "Presidential Election Coalitions in 1984," *American Political Science Review* 80 (1986): 281–84; Edward G. Carmines and Harold Stanley, "The Transformation of the New Deal Party System: Social Groups, Political Ideology, and Changing Partisanship among Northern Whites, 1972–88," *Political Behavior* 14 (1992): 213–37; Robert D. Brown, "Party Cleavages and Welfare Effort in the American States," *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995): 23–33; Jeffrey M. Stonecash, Mark D. Brewer, and Mack D. Mariani, *Diverging Parties: Social Change, Realignment and Party Polarization* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).
11. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, *Voting;* Petrocik, "Party Coalitions"; Brown, "Party Cleavages," 23–33; Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani, *Diverging Parties.*
12. In fact, some scholars have argued that the founders of the American party system that originated in the 1830s, such as Martin Van Buren, hoped that parties would depress potent sectional,

ethnic, and religious differences. James Ceaser, *Presidential Selection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); see also John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1836–1996* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

13. Laura R. Olson and John C. Green, eds., *Beyond Red State, Blue State: Electoral Gaps in the Twenty-First Century American Electorate* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008).
14. For a more detailed description of Ohio during these decades, see George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1989).
15. Ohio Department of Development, *Ohio County Indicators, July 2010*, http://www.development.ohio.gov/research/files/s101.pdf.
16. Frey and Teixeira, *Political Geography*, 16.
17. For example, Alan I. Abramowitz finds that education appears to increase the salience of ideological attitudes in voting for individuals. Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization and American Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, in *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), argue that educational effects are a function of occupation; creative or professional degrees lead to more Democratic voting, while business-related managerial degrees are associated with Republican voting.
18. This is the thesis of Al Gore's book *The Assault on Reason* (New York: Penguin, 2007). See also Chris Mooney's *The Republican War on Science* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).
19. Judis and Teixeira, *Emerging Democratic Majority.*
20. Thad Williamson, "Sprawl, Spatial Location, and Politics: How Ideological Identification Tracks the Built Environment," *American Politics Review* 38 (2008): 903–33; Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).
21. Ronald Brownstein and Richard Rainey, "GOP Plants Flag on New Voting Frontier," *Los Angeles Times,* November 22, 2004, A1.
22. Bai, "Multilevel Marketing."

23. Ruy Teixeira, "How Important Were the Fast-Growing Counties to Bush's Victory?" *Democratic Strategist*, November 23, 2004, http://www.thedemocraticstrategist.org/donkeyrising/2004/11/how_important_were_the_fastgro.html.
24. Todd and Gawiser, *How Barack Obama Won.*
25. The box represents the interquartile range, or where the middle 50 percent of observations lie, and the solid black line represents the median for the counties in each region.
26. Adam Nossiter, "For South, a Waning Hold on National Politics," *New York Times,* November 10, 2008.
27. The correlation of race and the Obama vote by region is Northeast, .85; Northwest, .55; Central, .865; Southeast, .124; and Southwest, .91. For all of Ohio, the correlation is .567.
28. John C. Green, "Ohio: The Bible and the Buckeye State," in *The Values Campaign? The Christian Right and the 2004 Elections,* ed. John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 79–97.
29. There are at least two different ways to analyze differences between regions. One way is to look at the overall averages. Since this provides a small degree of variation (the overall sample is five), we can also analyze county to county differences, which provides more variation and is less skewed. The danger is that when we write of Northeast Ohio, we might really just be referring to averages that reflect the weight of Cuyahoga and Summit counties. While we do not present more sophisticated statistical tests here, most of the conclusions discussed here are consistent with more advanced techniques that were performed.
30. It is interesting to note that Barack Obama performed better among Ohio Catholics in 2008 than John Kerry did in 2004. In fact, had Kerry, a Catholic himself, carried Ohio Catholics, he would have won Ohio and thus the presidency.
31. These county-level data came from Dale E. Jones et al., *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States, 2000: An Enumeration by Region, State and County Based on Data Reported for*

149 Religious Bodies (Fairfield, OH: Glenmary Research Center, 2002).

32. It should be noted that the margin of error for regional subgroups is somewhat large, so the observed gender differences across regions should be interpreted with some caution.
33. Pew Research Reports, *Democrats Post Gains in Affiliation Across Age Cohorts*, Pew Research Center, October 31, 2008, http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1018/democrats-post-gains-in-affiliation-across-age-cohorts.

CHAPTER 4

1. Brooks et al., "Battle for Ohio 2006."
2. Coffey et al., "Battle for Ohio in 2008."
3. See, for example, Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957); William Riker and Peter Ordeshook, "A Theory of the Calculus of Voting," *American Political Science Review* 62 (1968): 25–42.
4. Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identity of Voters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Thomas Carsey and Geoffrey Layman, "Party Polarization and 'Conflict Extension' in the American Electorate," *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (2002): 786–802; Alan I. Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders, "Is Polarization a Myth?" *Journal of Politics* 70 (2008): 542–55; Marc J. Hetherington, "Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization," *American Political Science Review* 95 (2001): 619–32.
5. Researchers in the 1970s found some evidence that ideological constraint increased in the mass public; however, this was challenged. See John L. Sullivan, James E. Piereson, and George E. Marcus, "Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and Some New Findings," *American Journal of Political Science* 22 (1978): 233–49, who found that increase in the

level of constraint was a result of change in survey instrument. Over time, however, it does appear that the ideological constraint across issues has increased. See Abramowitz and Saunders, "Is Polarization a Myth?" 542–55.

6. Alan I. Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," *Journal of Politics* 60 (1998): 634–52; John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
7. Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in *Ideology and Discontent,* ed. David Apter (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1964), 206–61.
8. Jeffrey M. Jones, "Democrats' 2008 Advantage in Party ID Largest Since '83," Gallup, January 29, 2009, http://www.gallup.com/poll/113947/Democrats-2008-Advantage-Party-Largest.aspx; Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver, *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
9. *State Politics and Policy Quarterly,* the leading political science journal on state politics, recently devoted an entire issue to Erikson, Wright, and McIver's work. See *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (2007). See also William D. Berry et al., "Measuring Citizen and Government Ideology in the American States, 1960–93," *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (1998): 327–48.
10. Brace et al., "Public Opinion," 173–89.
11. See, for example, among others, Debra Rosenberg and Karen Breslau, "Winning the 'Values' Vote," *Newsweek,* November 15, 2004, 23; Dan Gilgoff and Bret Schulte, "The Morals and Values Crowd," *U.S. News & World Report,* November 15, 2004, 42; Daniel A. Smith, Matthew DeSantis, and Jason Kassel, "Same-Sex Marriage Ballot Measures and the 2004 Presidential Election," *State and Local Government Review* 38, no. 2 (2006): 78–91; J. Quin Monson and David E. Campbell, "The Religion Card: Gay Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72 (2008): 399–419. Even if the issue was removed, the dynamic of

the election would be so different that any number of other factors might have changed the outcome. Therefore, the effect of the ballot measure can only be considered as indeterminate.

CHAPTER 5

1. See Mockabee et al., "Battle for Ohio," 135–62; and Coffey et al., "Battle for Ohio in 2008," 181–223.
2. Anthony Corrado and Molly Corbett, "Rewriting the Playbook on Presidential Campaign Financing," in *Campaigning for President 2008: Strategy and Tactics, New Voices and New Techniques,* ed. Dennis W. Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2009), 126–46.
3. Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1993); Steven E. Finkel, "Reexamining the 'Minimal Effects' Model in Recent Presidential Campaigns," *Journal of Politics* 55 (1993): 1–21; Kenneth M. Goldstein and Travis N. Ridout, "The Politics of Participation: Mobilization and Turnout over Time," *Political Behavior* 24 (2002): 3–29; Thomas M. Holbrook and Scott D. McClurg, "The Mobilization of Core Supporters: Campaigns, Turnout, and Electoral Composition in United States Presidential Elections," *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (2005): 689–703.
4. Michael M. Franz et al., *Campaign Advertising and American Democracy* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2007).
5. Larry Bartels, "Messages Received: The Political Impact of Mass Exposure," *American Political Science Review* 87 (1993): 267–85.
6. See, for example, Thomas M. Holbrook, "Political Learning from Presidential Debates," *Political Behavior* 21 (1999): 67–89; Gregory A. Huber and Kevin Arceneaux, "Identifying the Persuasive Effects of Presidential Advertising," *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (2007): 957–77; Kathleen M. McGraw, "Contributions of the Cognitive Approach to Political Psychology," *Political Psychology* 21 (2000): 805–32.

7. Finkel, "Reexamining the 'Minimal Effects,'" 1–21.
8. Diana Mutz found a significant gain in information about issue controversies, no matter which version of the political program the viewer was exposed to. Diana C. Mutz, "Effects of 'In-Your-Face' Television Discourse on Perceptions of a Legitimate Opposition," *American Political Science Review* 101 (2007): 628.
9. Bai, "Multilevel Marketing."
10. Richard Lowry, "Bush's Well-Mapped Road to Victory," *National Review*, November 29, 2004; Peter Ubertaccio, "Machine Politics for the Twenty-First Century? Multilevel Marketing and Party Organizations," in Green and Coffey, *State of the Parties*, 173–86.
11. Bai, "Multilevel Marketing."
12. Tom Hamburger and Peter Wallsten, *One Party County: The Republican Plan for Dominance in the 21st Century* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2006).
13. Melanie J. Blumberg et al., "The (Un)coordinated Campaign: The Battle for Mahoning County, Ohio," in Green and Coffey, *State of the Parties,* 187–98.
14. Lizabeth Cohen, "Voting Alone: In Red-State America, Politics Is Much More Deeply Integrated into Other Aspects of People's Daily Lives," *American Prospect,* December 2004, 25.
15. Lowry, "Bush's Well-Mapped Road."
16. Mark Naymik, "Democratic Boss Is Life of the Party: Ohio's Hard-Charging Redfern Stands to Play Key Role in '08," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 11, 2007, A1.
17. Coffey et al., "Battle for Ohio in 2008."
18. David B. Magleby, ed., *The Change Election: Money, Mobilization, and Persuasion in the 2008 Federal Elections* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010).
19. Coffey et al., "Battle for Ohio in 2008."
20. Magleby, *Change Election.*
21. However, by October, only Cleveland (six), Toledo (seven), and Columbus (eight) were still in the top ten. These data come from Nielsen Monitor-Plus and the University of Wisconsin

Advertising Project studies released in March, July, August, and October 2004. For good descriptions of the Ohio air wars, see Paul Farhi, "Toledo Tube War: 14,273 Ads and Counting," *Washington Post,* October 11, 2004, A1; and Jim Rutenberg, "Ads of Both Campaigns Zero In on a Typical City," *New York Times,* June 9, 2004, A17.

22. TNS Media Intelligence/CMAG with Analysis by the Wisconsin Advertising Project, "Over $15 Million Spent in Presidential Television Advertising Since Conclusion of Conventions," September 17, 2008, http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu/wiscads_release_091708.pdf.
23. Tom Feran, "Cleveland Is No. 1 Target for Campaign Ads," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* August 26, 2008, A1.
24. TNS Media Intelligence/CMAG with Analysis by the Wisconsin Advertising Project, "Pres. TV Advertising Spending Continues to Grow; Over $28 Million Spent from September 28–October 4," October 8, 2008, http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu/wiscads_release_100808.pdf.
25. Tom Feran, "Candidates Battle for Television Ads; Cash Advantage Helps Obama Push McCain Off Air," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 27, 2008, A1.
26. Coffey et al., "Battle for Ohio in 2008"; Mockabee et al., "Battle for Ohio," 135–62.
27. In the panel, Obama actually won 53 percent of voters reporting more contact with the McCain campaign throughout the fall (although this may be due to sampling error as there are only thirty-four respondents in this category), whereas he won 56 percent of those who reported more contact with his campaign in September and November. The important point here is that there were more respondents with consistent contact with Obama (33 percent) than with McCain (8 percent) at both time points.
28. Note the disparity between personal contact, where the Obama campaign excelled, and telephone contact stressed by the McCain campaign.

29. Groundbreaking research by Donald Green and his colleagues, using field experiments, has demonstrated that campaign contacts cause people to vote. Campaign messages and contacts have a demonstrable, independent causal effect, and it is not just engaged or informed voters who selectively remember being contacted who then also vote. On the other hand, outside of the context of the field experiments, campaigns generally restrict their resources such that they target the most likely voters. See Donald P. Green and Alan S. Gerber, *Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout,* 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).
30. Sunshine Hillygus and Todd Shields, *The Persuadable Voter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
31. Eric M. Appleman, "The Campaign in Ohio," *Democracy in Action*, 2005, http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2004/states/compareoh.html. Tracking visits is actually not as straightforward as it might first appear. The numbers given in the text reflect the number of separate days the candidates and their spouses were in the state from June to Election Day 2004. If a candidate visited two distinct geographic areas (for example, Cleveland and Toledo, but not Lorain and Cleveland), they were coded as separate visits. If both the candidate and vice-presidential nominee or their spouses were at the same event, it was coded as a single visit by the presidential candidate.
32. Using the same methodology as for the 2004 data. Eric M. Appleman, "Ohio," *Democracy in Action*, 2009, http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2008/states/ohdet08.html. According to the *Washington Post*, Obama had forty-seven separate campaign events between January 2007 and Election Day, ranking third among his states, while McCain had forty-six. For Obama, Ohio ranked third behind New Hampshire and Iowa, while Ohio ranked fifth among his most visited states, behind Iowa, California, Florida, and New Hampshire. See *Washington Post*, "Campaign Tracker," http://projects.washingtonpost.com/2008-presidential-candidates/tracker/candidates/john-mccain/states/.

33. Joe Guillen and Jesse Tinsley, "On Campaign's Final Day, Region Hears Both No. 2s," *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* October 12, 2008, A1.
34. Michael Finnegan, "Upbeat—but Still Cautious; Obama Has a Bounce in His Step at a Rally in Cleveland; Gets a Musical Lift from Bruce Springsteen," *Los Angeles Times,* November 3, 2008, A12.
35. Maeve Reston, "Bringing In the Political Muscle; Gov. Schwarzenegger, Wildly Popular in Ohio, Predicts a Comeback for McCain and Doubts Obama's Readiness," *Los Angeles Times,* November 1, 2008, A10; Elisabeth Bumiller, "In Ohio, McCain Is Everywhere Even if Joe the Plumber Isn't," *New York Times,* October 31, 2008, A19.
36. Jim Carney, "McCain Supporters Out in Force at Green High," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 22, 2008. http://www.ohio.com/news/top_stories/32487354.html.
37. Marla Ridenour, "Browns' Crennel Advises Players to Not Let Presidential Politics Affect Team Focus," *Akron Beacon Journal,* October 11, 2008.
38. Joe Hallett and Mark Niquette, "Presidential Campaigns Getting in Voters' Heads: Turnout Efforts Relying on Personal Data, Not Old-Fashioned Instincts," *Columbus Dispatch,* October 19, 2008, A1.

CHAPTER 6

1. For illustrative purposes, the numbers in figures 6.1 and 6.3 were produced in a two-step process. First, all these measures were used to estimate the probability that each respondent voted Republican for president using binary logistic regression. Second, the relative impact of the variables on this probability was then estimated using ordinary least squares regression analysis. The absolute value of the beta weights for each variable are presented in the figures because of the ease of interpreting the figures.

2. Income and age mattered less and were not statistically significant in this analysis.
3. The impact of Central Ohio was not statistically significant in this analysis.
4. These indirect effects were calculated using a simple path model that assumed that region and demography were the more distant variables from the vote, with the political variables serving as intermediary variables. The impact of all possible paths through the political variables is included.
5. Sabrina Eaton, "Ohio Will Lose Two Congressional Seats, Census Bureau Says," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 21, 2010, http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2010/12/ohio_to_lose_congressional_sea.html.
6. The Apportionment Board is made up of the governor, auditor of state, secretary of state, and two other members representing both major parties.
7. Mark Niquette, "Obama, Biden Make Pitch for Strickland in Cleveland," *Columbus Dispatch*, October 31, 2010, http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2010/10/31/obama-biden-make-final-pitch-for-strickland.html.
8. *New York Times*/CBS News, *Ohio Poll*, September 23–27, 2010, http:// s3.amazonaws.com/nytdocs/docs/487/487.pdf.

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