

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: DIRECT DEMOCRACY AND THE CULTURE WARS

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Proponents of direct democracy maintain that this institution can facilitate political participation in the United States. By providing citizens with a greater role in the legislation-making process, these supporters assert, the initiative and/or referendum may heighten the importance assigned to political action and engage those who do not consistently vote. Substantial empirical evidence supports this relationship, and the positive relationship between direct democracy and turnout is the most consistent finding in all of the literature on this institution.

I contend, however, that the existing literature is both theoretically and methodologically incomplete. Theoretically, scholars have yet to identify the exact causal mechanism that explains why any ballot measure might bring citizens to the polls, and this failure has led to the employment of multiple incomplete measurements of the

direct democracy process. I attempt to rectify this concern by positing two key requirements necessary for any proposition to influence the decision to vote. These criteria lead to the conclusion that we must look at the issue content of each individual ballot measure to identify its effect on participation.

Using moral issue propositions as an example of those that consistently possess the potential to raise voting rates, I illustrate the factors necessary for direct democracy to fulfill the expectations of its proponents. Across a number of contexts, I find substantial evidence for the ability of moral issue propositions to habitually engage citizens, mobilize them above normal turnout rates, and even increasing levels of political knowledge. In contrast, the average ballot measure rarely maintains this capacity, and even others that address salient and/or controversial issues (such as tax matters) exhibit difficulties in doing so more than episodically. These findings provide significant insights into the consequences of permitting the public to legislate via the ballot, how institutions shape the size and composition of the electorate, and what might be done to increase turnout in this country.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY AND THE CULTURE WARS

BY

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Introduction

“There’s one candidate out there in this election who does not need my help. The honorable Mary Jane van Spleefenberg, also known as California’s Proposition 19 to legalize marijuana. Now, if Prop 19 were a human, it would be the most popular candidate in California, polling higher than Jerry Brown, Barbara Boxer, Carly Fiorina, and Meg Whitman.” – Stephen Colbert, The Colbert Report (10/7/2010)

In addition to deciding whether the Democrats would retain control of Congress, thirty-six states provided voters in the 2010 midterm election with 160 opportunities to serve as citizen-legislators and enact government policy from the polls via the institution of direct democracy. Among these ballot measures was Proposition 19, which greeted Californians on Election Day. Dubbed the “highest-profile” ballot legislation in the country by the *BBC* (BBC 2010), the proposition sought to legalize the possession, cultivation, and transportation of marijuana for personal use in the state. Roughly a month before the election, support for its passage surpassed that of the major candidates for governor and U.S. Senator (a less than ringing endorsement of the individuals seeking elected office), meaning that their approval levels were all lower than that of a controversial policy upon which electors were asked to legislate. Ultimately the proposition failed, with its support dropping to only 46.5% of those who casted a vote on the matter.

Although unrepresentative of all measures on state ballots across the country, the attempt to legalize pot at the polls symbolizes the potential enticement of direct democracy to the electorate. Proposition 19 attained its high profile status despite relatively limited campaign spending by both supporters and opponents. The attempt to legalize marijuana maintained the lowest expenditure levels of the nine propositions in California, with six of these measures outspending it by at least a factor of five. Even

with this substantial imbalance in campaign resources, awareness of Proposition 19 exceeded by significant margins that of the other highly contentious ballot measures, such as the attempts to suspend the greenhouse gas emissions law (Proposition 23) and permit a majority vote to approve state budgets (Proposition 25). Just over a month before Election Day, eighty-four percent of voters had heard something regarding the efforts to legalize pot, compared to thirty-nine percent for Proposition 25 and thirty-seven percent for Proposition 23 (DiCamillo and Field 2010). This superior knowledge of Proposition 19 was matched by a level of importance attached to its outcome that met or exceeded that of other ballot measures, with fifty-two percent of Californians viewing the outcome as “very important” and eighty percent seeing it as at least “somewhat important” a couple of weeks before the election (Baldassare et al. 2010).

As its discussion on the *Colbert Report* demonstrates, however, interest in and awareness of the statewide measure extended beyond its legal reach (the borders of California) to the nation as a whole. The show epitomized the scope of national media coverage of the proposition, leaving a substantial majority of Americans aware of the effort to legalize pot. On the eve of the election, three-quarters of the nation’s population reported hearing at least a little about Proposition 19. This knowledge level was noticeably greater than that of many highly significant debates and events taking place in the political arena. Only sixty percent of the country, for example, had heard anything about the *Citizen’s United* Supreme Court ruling or its consequences that allow anonymous spending on political campaigns. Even fewer Americans were aware of any concerns regarding voter fraud or voter suppression (54%) or Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert’s “Rally to Restore Sanity” on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. (47%)

(Pew Research Center 2010). Given the substantial importance of these matters (the ramifications of unlimited campaign spending on the political system and the potential of voter fraud or suppression to decide the outcome of electoral contests), the heightened awareness and interest afforded to a state ballot measure is remarkable.

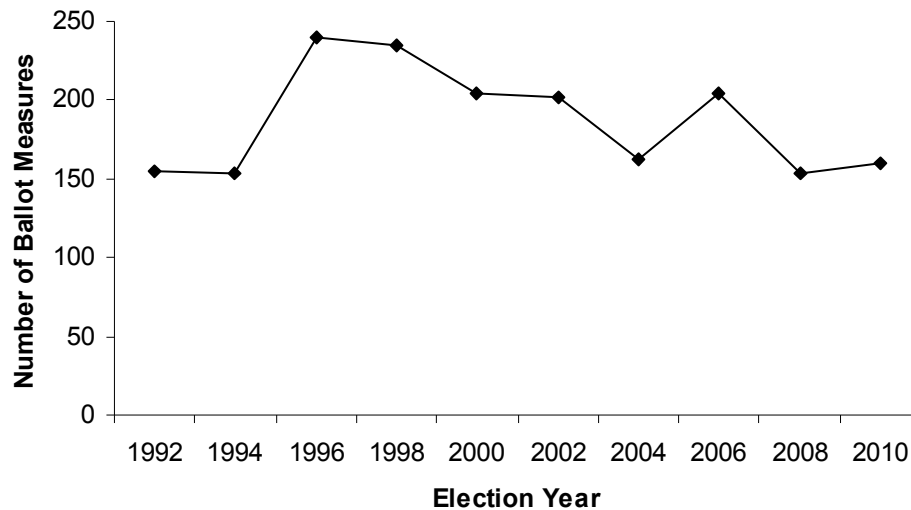
Direct democracy's potential influence on the decision to vote

The interest in and importance attached to Proposition 19 highlights the significant attention and excitement that ballot measures can garner. Citizens in states with direct democracy provisions face an astounding number of ballot propositions regarding a seemingly endless variety of issues and concerns when they enter the voting booth. Figure 0.1 presents the employment rate of direct democracy since the early 1990s, and although the amount of citizen-legislating abilities fluctuates noticeably, it consistently remains above one hundred and fifty measures. The count has frequently topped two hundred propositions, and reached a high of two hundred and forty in 1996. Such a substantial amount of decision-making responsibilities for electors on state policies provides an impressive reservoir of matters from which to engross and engage the citizenry.

This sizable number and diversity of ballot issues has stimulated significant academic interest in the potential effect of direct democracy on turnout. Proponents of the institution have long championed the initiative process, positing that it can motivate the citizenry to take part in electoral politics (Barber 1984; Pateman 1970). Such participation by citizens in the legislation-making process, supporters contend, can inspire and educate the masses, leading to higher levels of interest in politics and turnout (Smith and Tolbert 2004). Empirical evidence strongly supports this claim, and the

positive increase in voting rates associated with ballot initiatives is probably the most consistent finding in all of the direct democracy literature.

Figure 0.1 – Direct Democracy Employment in National Elections Across the United States, 1992-2010



Source: Initiative & Referendum Institute, National Conference of State Legislatures, and own analysis.

Propositions addressing moral issues (epitomized by Proposition 19), however, seem to spark particular interest. Such matters include abortion, the death penalty, euthanasia, stem cell research, drug legalization, same-sex marriage, homosexual rights, and obscenity. Although they appeared on the ballot as early as 1972 and increased their presence in the early 1990s, these propositions rose to prominence in 2004. The sixteen moral issue measures in fourteen states and, in particular, the eleven same-sex marriage bans, were cited as contributing to the reelection of President George Bush by mobilizing significant numbers of individuals in key battleground states (such as Ohio) for whom these matters holds substantial importance and who otherwise would not have voted in their absence. Since 2004, the count of these propositions has remained relatively constant and continued to entice the citizenry. An equal number of such measures made

it onto the ballot in the subsequent election, with voters in twelve states casting ballots on moral issue propositions. These included same-sex marriage bans in eight states, as well as the first defeat of this proposition matter in Arizona.¹ In 2008, eleven moral issue propositions appeared on state ballots, among which were same-sex marriage bans in Arizona, Florida, and California (though they did not contribute to the presidential election outcome as in 2004).² While this number more than halved in 2010 to five such measures (addressing drug legalization, medical marijuana, and abortion), those placed before voters still elicited disproportionate amounts of interest and excitement (as evidenced by California's Proposition 19).

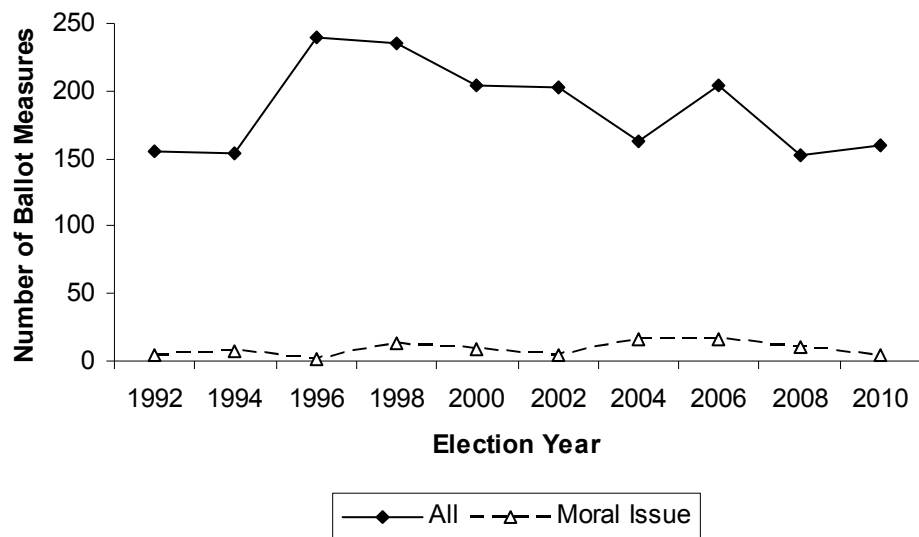
This interest in moral issue propositions prevails despite their comprising a relatively small percentage of the citizen-legislating action that takes place and restriction to a limited number of states in each election. Figure 0.2 illustrates this point, comparing the total number of ballot matters to those limited to moral areas. As is evident, every federal election since 1992 possessed a noticeably low amount of such measures. For example, roughly three percent of the 160 measures on the ballot in 2010 addressed this policy area. In 2008, only eleven of the 153 propositions on the ballots of thirty-six states dealt with moral matters. Sixteen citizen-legislating opportunities that address moral issues reached the ballot in twelve states in 2006 (tied for their largest number ever), yet they comprised less than eight percent of propositions that year. Even in 2004, when attempts to ban same-sex marriage via direct democracy may have influenced other electoral outcomes, less than ten percent of the propositions across the country

¹ Other moral issues on the ballot included abortion, the decriminalization of marijuana, the legalization of medical marijuana, stem cell research, and the death penalty.

² Additional moral issue propositions in 2008 addressed abortion, the decriminalization of marijuana, the legalization of medical marijuana, stem cell research, and euthanasia.

considered a moral matter. In fact, since they first materialized as proposed legislation on the ballot, moral issues have never constituted as much as ten percent of the total number of propositions voted on across the nation or appeared on more than fourteen state ballots in a single election.

Figure 0.2 – Direct Democracy and Moral Issue Ballot Measure Employment in National Elections Across the United States, 1992-2010



Source: Initiative & Referendum Institute, National Conference of State Legislatures, and own analysis.

Despite their limited numbers and dispersion across state ballots, moral issue propositions more than compensate with their controversial, compelling, salient, and polarizing nature. Given the many mundane matters that voters encounter on the ballot (county court costs, length of the legislative session, removal of obsolete state constitutional language, and size of the school board are only a few examples appearing on state ballots in 2008), these characteristics serve to distinguish moral issues from a significant number of other concerns placed on the ballot. They also, however, point to an existing tension in the literature regarding the ability of direct democracy to influence the decision to vote. Although the nature of moral issue propositions strongly suggests

that different ballot matters will have heterogeneous effects on the propensity to participate, scholars often fail to differentiate the impact of individual measures. Existing studies largely (though not exclusively) argue that the number of initiatives on the ballot serves as an accurate proxy for proposition salience, and simply rely on a count of such measures. In other words, as the opportunities to legislate from the polls increase, the interest afforded to propositions as a whole should increase as well, leading to a greater enhancement of turnout. Such a treatment implicitly assumes that the influence of each proposition is equal, a counterintuitive contention when we note the wide range of different policy matters that appear on the ballot.

We can illustrate this point by returning to the 2010 election in California. Although Proposition 19 (the attempt to legalize marijuana) was only one of nine initiatives on the ballot in the state, its issue content and coverage in the media means that it likely had a greater influence on the propensity to vote than a number of the other propositions (even though they dealt with important matters). For example, other issues on the ballot included changing the legislative vote requirement to pass the budget and creating an independent commission to draw legislative district boundaries. While the size of the majority necessary to approve the budget has substantial implications for the policies and levels of funding enacted by government, it is hard to conceive that an equal number of people who see little value in selecting government officials would get excited about the ability to permit pot usage and reform the voting procedures in the State Assembly. Likewise, can we really believe that those who do not find it worth their time and effort to vote for their members of Congress decided to participate based on the ability to help determine who creates the district boundaries of such officials? At the

very least, it fails the plausibility test that this opportunity motivated citizens to vote at a similar rate as Proposition 19.

Operationalizing direct democracy as a count of the number of initiatives, however, would make both (seemingly erroneous) assumptions. In doing so, we would either underestimate the impact of Proposition 19 on the propensity to vote or overestimate the effect of the other ballot measures. Clearly, simply counting the number of initiatives on the ballot appears insufficient to explain any influence of direct democracy on turnout. It is too blunt of a measurement, and it fails to incorporate existing knowledge regarding individual proposition characteristics into the determination of whether or not a ballot measure enhances turnout. As such, employing this measurement introduces a host of potential problems into any analysis and signals the necessity of a new mindset when investigating the impact of direct democracy on participation.

Toward a new framework

In this dissertation, I argue that, while theoretically appealing, the existing literature on ballot propositions and participation remains incomplete. Most importantly, scholars have yet to adequately identify the exact mechanism through which the direct democracy process brings individuals to the polls. This failure leads to the employment of various imperfect measurements of the process, a practice that reflects the inability to come to a consensus on a proper indicator of the institution. Such debate raises significant concerns, as strong theoretical reasons exist to suspect that the consistent relationship established in the literature between direct democracy and turnout largely derives from the flawed measurement of the process, rather than its actual prevalence in

the real world. The chapters that follow are designed to address these shortcomings and call into question, at least to a certain degree, what we really know about the mobilizing influence of direct democracy.

For a proposition to be the causal reason behind a individual's decision to vote, they must both (1) be aware of its existence and (2) consider it important enough that they modify their intention to abstain and instead decide to show up to the polls. A ballot measure cannot influence the decision to participate if the elector lacks knowledge of its placement on the ballot, and even with this information the proposition issue must be of such importance that it convinces the citizen to abandon their initial plan of staying home on Election Day. Because no existing measurement of direct democracy accounts for both of these requirements, I formulate a new indicator that attempts to more accurately capture the mobilizing capabilities of this institution. In doing so, I contend that, for both theoretical and empirical reasons, we should concern ourselves with the issue content of each individual ballot measure. While this focus serves more as a framework for thinking about the relationship than rigid empirical guidelines, it allows us, based on previous research, to anticipate which propositions likely rank among the most well known and most important to those who might otherwise not participate.

The nature of moral issue propositions makes them particularly well suited to mobilize citizens, as they consistently meet the two requirements necessary to do so. In comparison to other propositions, those dealing with moral concerns are especially well known. Additionally, their connection to core values, relation to morality politics, and ability to tap into existing social cleavages translates into an extreme importance to at least some segments of the population. While meeting these two requirements means that

moral issue propositions possess the potential to increase turnout, turning this potential into actual voters at the polls is aided by the substantial mobilization efforts by political and (especially) social organizations on both sides of the issues.

Perhaps more importantly, these ballot measures particularly appeal to peripheral voters, or those who can be mobilized above normal participation rates. It is highly plausible that many seemingly controversial and contentious ballot matters, which are both well known and of substantial importance to at least a certain segment of the population (i.e. they meet the two requirements necessary to increase turnout), are of interest mainly to core voters. If this is the case, then it becomes very difficult for such propositions to be the causal reason behind the decision to vote, as those to whom they are of considerable importance will likely vote regardless of what (if any) ability to legislate on specific issues greets them at the polls. In contrast, because moral issue measures act to entice peripheral voters, it is possible for such propositions to serve as the catalyst behind a substantial number of individuals deciding to turn out on Election Day.

Propositions addressing moral issues, of course, are not the only ballot measure concerns that possess the ability to bring citizens to the polls. While the proposed framework makes immediately apparent the fact that some ballot issues meet the requirements to a greater degree than others, any number of other ballot concerns can be expected to potentially increase turnout given the proper circumstances. Although I attempt to differentiate moral matters from other salient or contentious issues on the ballot, I remain cognizant that these characteristics apply to some other ballot concerns as well. I focus on moral ballot matters in this study because they consistently fit my theoretical criteria such that they provide an excellent set of cases for this project. As

such, these propositions shall serve as a vehicle through which to comprehend the necessary mobilization characteristics of ballot measures and identify those that habitually possess the potential to increase participation. This undertaking casts considerable light on the exact manner in which propositions can bring individuals to the polls, and significantly enhances our knowledge of the relationship between direct democracy and turnout. As the placement of large numbers of propositions (that address both moral and other issues) on state ballots across the country appears likely to continue in the foreseeable future, such an investigation is both timely and increasingly relevant.

Outline of the project

In the next chapter, I develop a theoretical framework that explains why moral issue ballot measures consistently possess the potential to raise turnout rates. Although I show that these propositions meet the two requirements of awareness and importance necessary to bring citizens to the polls, this alone does not sufficiently identify their ability to do so. Such a capacity is aided by the mobilization effects of political and (especially) social organizations, whose success can largely be explained by understanding the decision to vote on these propositions as an expression of one's values. I then apply these new insights to the existing literature on direct democracy and turnout, employing it as a lens through which to inform our theoretical expectations regarding this relationship. I end the chapter with a comparison of this new framework to existing measurements of the direct democracy process and attempt to justify its improved nature.

Chapter two extends this theoretical discussion by differentiating moral issue propositions from many other highly contentious ballot matters. Beyond meeting the two requirements necessary to increase turnout, the success of a proposition in bringing

citizens to the polls depends on to whom it particularly appeals. Many highly salient and/or controversial matters may be of heightened interest primarily to core voters, which substantially hinders their ability to raise participation rates (as those highly invested in them will likely vote regardless of what (if any) policies appear on the ballot). In contrast, strong theoretical evidence exists to suspect that moral issue measures especially entice peripheral voters, who can be mobilized above normal turnout rates. Using tax issue propositions as an example of the former type on ballot matters, I test this contention through a nationwide, large sample survey experiment. Randomly assigning ballot issues to respondents in the context of a hypothetical special election, I find that moral issue propositions are in fact of heightened interest and importance to peripheral voters in comparison to the average measure, while the same cannot be said of other contentious ballot issues (such as tax matters).

In chapter three, I test the ability of statewide propositions addressing moral and tax matters, as well as the average ballot measure, to increase the likelihood of participation in all federal elections from 1992 to 2008. In doing so, I examine the most commonly employed measurement of the direct democracy process: a count of the number of initiatives on the ballot. I argue that this focus on initiatives ignores a large number of ballot measures, such as referenda, the exclusion of which the theoretical underpinnings of the measurement do not justify. Seeing as referenda also provide the ability for citizens to legislate from the ballot, and that the average individual likely does not know the difference between the two, there is no reason to suspect that only initiatives increase turnout. I find that the total number of measures on the ballot only rarely positively impacts turnout, with any actual effect relatively small. Similarly, as

anticipated given their lack of strong appeal to peripheral voters (demonstrated in chapter two), tax propositions exert little influence on the decision to vote. In contrast, the number of moral issues on the ballot significantly increases the likelihood of participation in all midterm and some presidential elections over the period under investigation. The substantively significant magnitudes of these effects provide compelling evidence of the allure of moral ballot matters to those who can swell the voting ranks on Election Day.

Given the inabilities of tax propositions and the average ballot measure to especially appeal to peripheral voters or meaningfully influence turnout more than episodically, I shift the focus solely to moral ballot issues in the next chapter. Chapter four investigates the effect of these propositions in a largely neglected area: the local level. Numerous localities place proposed legislation on the ballot regarding moral issues, but such measures lack sufficient investigation in the scholarly literature. While these propositions do not receive comparable media attention to their statewide counterparts, it is plausible that, even in the absence of this sustained focus, they maintain the ability to boost participation. I test this hypothesis across a variety of electoral contexts, using voter history files from the states in question with carefully selected control groups and exact matching as a robustness check. Looking at elections over the past decade, I find evidence that largely confirms the mobilization ability of such ballot measures, particularly in elections with no state or federal candidates on the ballot. The sizes of these effects largely mirror those of statewide propositions found in chapter three and further highlight the consistent potential of moral matter measures to raise participation rates.

I turn to determining those who moral issue ballot measures bring out at higher rates in chapter five. Although significant debate exists regarding the identity of these individuals, actual empirical evidence is limited and inconclusive. Beyond the peripheral voter label, I seek to establish which (if any) socioeconomic and religious groups that traditionally participate at lower rates are disproportionately mobilized by moral issue propositions. To do so, I employ a nationwide analysis similar to that from chapter three and make use of the advantages provided by multilevel modeling. This statistical technique permits the usage of cross-level interactions to determine how group membership conditions the effect of moral issue propositions on turnout. Focusing on those with lower levels of education and income, as well as evangelical, Protestant whites and blacks, I find some evidence to suggest that individuals at the bottom rungs of the socioeconomic ladder disproportionately account for the increase in turnout (at least along income lines), though the differences appear minor. While moral issue propositions thus appear capable of playing some role in reducing the inequalities in participation that currently prevail, their role in doing so seems minimal.

Chapter six moves away somewhat from a voting orientation to look at another potential secondary effect of propositions: political knowledge. Proponents of direct democracy anticipate that another consequence of its employment is an increase in political knowledge, or the ability to cast better informed votes. Scholars, however, have struggled to find evidence for this claim. I argue that this failure derives from the flawed count measurement of the direct democracy process that these scholars employ, as well as the usage of knowledge scales that consist of factual political questions with little connection to campaigns. Examining the 2006 and 2008 elections with a knowledge

scale constructed from voting-relevant questions, I confirm previous conclusions of the absence of a relationship between a count of the measures on the ballot and political knowledge. I do, however, find that the number of moral issue propositions exerts a positive impact of citizen learning, suggesting that the influence of these ballot measures extends beyond bringing citizens to the polls.

The conclusion, chapter seven, discusses how the dissertation shifts our focus and expands our knowledge of the consequences of using the direct democracy process. I then address the potential implications of this research relating to the wisdom of maintaining the citizen-legislating process. I discuss why the results should not be understood as an indictment of direct democracy per se, and that the absence of an overarching positive effect on turnout does not necessarily negate the beneficial nature of direct democracy adoption and employment. At the same time, however, I take great pains to note that the results should not be construed as a call to place greater numbers of moral matters on the ballot in an attempt to increase participation in the country, especially given the tendency of citizens to restrict civil rights via the ballot. Finally, I identify existing avenues upon which future research can expand the theory and analyses presented here.

1 - Why moral issue propositions bring voters to the polls

As discussed in the introduction, many have identified the mobilizing effect of moral issue ballot measures. The explanations for this ability, however, as well as the mechanisms through which this process works, remain ambiguous. This failure to adequately clarify the factors behind the relationship limits our insight into the ultimate potential effect of such propositions on turnout. In this chapter, I develop a theoretical argument detailing why moral issues consistently possess the ability to increase turnout when they make it onto the ballot. While they are not the only ballot matters that can bring citizens to the polls, a number of factors combine to give moral issue propositions a significant advantage over many other issues. Specifically, such ballot measures consistently meet the two requirements of awareness and importance necessary for any proposition to have the potential to raise participation rates. In addition, moral issue propositions frequently benefit from mobilization drives by those on both sides of the issue, whose success is substantially aided by the applicability of the expressive choice framework to the decision to vote. The presence or absence of these factors should shape how we think about the possible existence of the relationship between direct democracy and turnout. Once we understand why moral issue ballot measures enhance turnout, we can better comprehend why many others cannot do so.

Moral issue propositions and turnout

Despite the inadequate development, strong reasons exist, both theoretical and empirical, to expect that moral issue propositions consistently possess the potential to lead the citizenry to the polls. I define moral issue ballot measures as those that address abortion, the death penalty, euthanasia, stem cell research, drug legalization, same-sex

marriage, homosexual rights, or obscenity. These issues are all similar in that they relate to morality politics, which involves policies that either attempt to regulate social norms or generate a strong moral response from citizens (Mooney and Lee 1995) because they invoke general notions of right and wrong (Haider-Markel and Kaufman 2006). Policies in these areas serve to validate a particular set of moral values (Mooney 2001), and attitudes regarding these issues are often based on core values deeply rooted within an individual's system of beliefs (Tatalovich et al. 1994). These attitudes are grounded in the values of primary identity, especially religion, which, for many people, serves as the basis for their most fundamental values (Button et al. 1997; Tatalovich and Daynes 1998).

The applicability of a question of first principle ties these issues together under the heading of morality policy. In debates regarding this principle, at least one of the advocating coalitions portray the matter as one of morality and invoke moral arguments on behalf of their issue advocacy (Haider-Markel and Meier 1996). For example, abortion and stem cell research both ask the question of when life begins (Mooney 2001). Similarly, policies that censor obscenity address concerns about the restriction of civil liberties (Smith 2001). Questions regarding when a life can be ended extend to both the death penalty and euthanasia, as they deal with whether or not the state or an individual has the right to do so (Mooney and Lee 2000). Both homosexual rights and same-sex marriage invoke debate about whether homosexuality should be considered on moral and legal par with heterosexuality (Mooney 2001). Finally, drug legalization taps directly into whether its use and abuse does or does not reflect moral failings (Meier 1994). As

such, debate on these policy areas cannot easily be resolved, by argument or even via compromise, because for many they are zero-sum issues.

This definition omits a number of issues often grouped together with these under the heading of social issues, including those that address race related policies, other crime issues, and illegal immigration. Such an association is understandable, given the tendency of those with differing opinions on these issues to find themselves pitted against each other on moral issues as well. I exclude these issues from this analysis, however, because of the differing values and attitudes driving opinion on them. While such issues may share some of the same attributes of moral issues, they are not uniform across the two groups, and important differences prevail on these matters.

Numerous theories have been posited as to what drives opinion on race related, crime, and immigration issues; individualist perspectives that understand such policies as unjustly enshrining preferential treatment (Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Sniderman, Crosby, and Howell 2000); classical or symbolic racial prejudice (Bobo 2000; Gilens 1999; Huddy and Sears 1995; Lee et al. 2001; Sidanius et al. 1996); and economic and legal obedience concerns (Huddy and Sears 1995; Lee et al. 2001) have all been cited as possible explanations. While settling this debate is beyond the scope of this project, such issues do not tap into morality politics and/or attitudes on these issues are not derived from religion.³ As will become clearer below, the failure of these issues to tap into existing religious beliefs and identities significantly differentiates them from moral issues. As such, while racial, crime, and immigrant issues are often highly charged and

³ One might question the inclusion of all drug legalization issues (decriminalization and the legalization of medical marijuana). Drug use policy is a key tenant of morality politics (Mooney and Lee 1995), and medical marijuana appears to relate to morality politics and tap into attitudes grounded in religious values as well. The existing literature has yet to differentiate between the two, and doing so is beyond the scope of the present study. As such, all marijuana issues are treated as moral issues.

may, as ballot measures, be able to increase interest or turnout, they do not do so in the same manner as moral issues, and may not have the same consistent effect on turnout.

This effect, as well as the significance of moral issues to at least a certain segment of the population, can be highlighted from a preliminary perspective by examining ballot roll-off for individual propositions based on their issue content. It is certainly fair to assert that leading a citizen to cast a vote on the ballot measure may not symbolize the entire effect of an individual proposition. It is, however, difficult to argue the importance of a ballot measure or issue group of ballot measures in influencing the decision to vote if citizens are unwilling to so much as take the time to vote on them. In other words, if a voter ignores a proposition in the voting booth, then it cannot plausibly be the causal factor leading the individual to the polls.

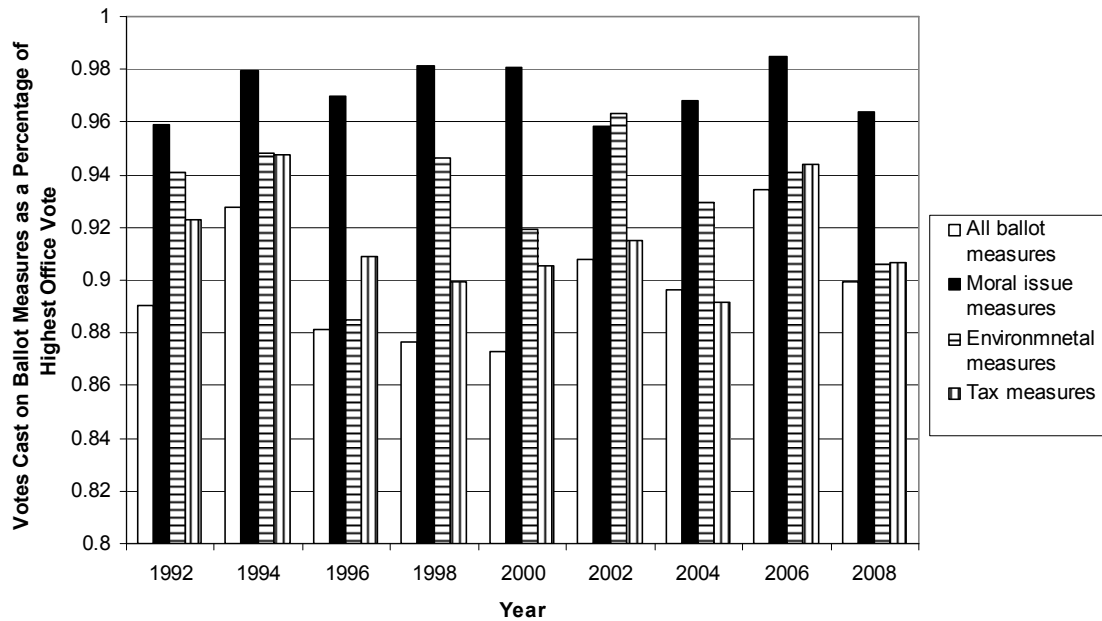
For many citizens, voting is akin to an SAT test, in which they skip and refuse to answer questions (i.e. abstain from casting a ballot) for which they lack sufficient information (Wattenberg et al. 2000). As such, if little difference exists between moral and other ballot issues, then we should anticipate relatively constant roll-off across proposition content areas, at least within the same election. This would signify that voters have no less ability to or interest in voicing their opinion on the matter in the voting booth. In contrast, if some factor(s) distinguish moral issues from other areas that appear on the ballot, then such propositions should exhibit lower rates of roll-off. Illustrated by a higher proportion of votes cast for the proposition in comparison to those received by the top vote generating office, the decreased level of contest skipping would point to a greater ability and/or interest in taking a stance on moral issues.

Figure 1.1 presents the average number of citizens voting on a ballot measure, based on its issue content, as a percentage of the total number of votes cast for the highest federal office on the state ballot for all national elections since 1992. I do this for three common issue areas, moral, environmental, and tax, as well as for all ballot measures combined. As is immediately evident, significant variation exists in voting across different issue content, both within elections and over time. With the exception of 2002, however, propositions addressing moral issues are consistently those that receive the largest percentage of votes, by a magnitude of between 1.8 and 6.1 percentage points (1992 and 2000, respectively).⁴ Furthermore, at least 95.8% of the number of votes cast for the highest office on the ballot were cast for moral issue propositions in every election, compared to 89.2% for tax, 88.5% for environmental, and 87.3% for all ballot measures. Thus, we can see from a simple observation of ballot roll-off that there is something about moral issue propositions that lead citizens to consistently vote on them more often than at least some other, but perhaps less controversial or compelling, ballot measures.⁵

⁴ In 2002, environmental issue measures received, on average, a slightly larger percentage of votes than moral issue measures (almost half a percentage point more). This appears to be an outlier year for environmental issues (their next highest total, 1994, is roughly one and a half percentage points less), and it may be a product of the relatively few number of environmental issues on state ballots that year (six). In addition, it highlights the ability of other issues, given the right circumstances, to grab voters' attention.

⁵ One might expect that, if moral issue ballot measures are the causal mechanism behind the decision to vote, then the total number of votes cast for the proposition should surpass that for all other contests on the ballot (i.e. higher than one hundred percent). While this holds true for some moral issue ballot measures (Measure 9 in Oregon in 1992; Measures 13 and 16 in Oregon in 1994; Measures 2 and 8 in Alaska, Measure 54 in Oregon, and Initiative 692 in Washington in 1998), this need not necessarily be the case for two reasons. First, because we expect these propositions to appeal to only a segment of the population, we would not necessarily anticipate that all voters will take the time to vote on them. Second, it is likely that, once it gets them to the polls, those who are mobilized by the moral issue proposition will go ahead and cast votes for at least the most high profile contests on the ballot. These two reasons explain why, even if they are not the election on the ballot receiving the most votes, it remains plausible for moral issue propositions to increase turnout on their own.

Figure 1.1 – Roll-Off of Ballot Measures by Issue Content in National Elections, 1992-2008



Note: Bars represent the average of the number of votes cast on ballot measures as a percentage of the office on the ballot receiving the highest number of total votes. Alabama 2008 constitutional amendments two through six excluded due to county nature of issue content and substantially higher roll-off in comparison to other measures on the ballot.

It is certainly not my contention that those addressing moral issues are the only propositions that can garner an individual’s interest. By aggregating the vote totals for all ballot measures dealing with a specific issue, the data presented in Figure 1.1 may act to conceal specific ballot measures capable of garnering vote totals comparable to those involving moral issues and grabbing the attention of citizens to an equal degree. The range of controversial, divisive, and compelling issues that find their way onto state ballots, such as term limits, affirmative action, gun control, and illegal immigration (to name a few), suggests that a multitude of propositions have the potential to stimulate turnout. Given the prevalence of such issues, it is simply implausible to claim that only one type of ballot measure issue has the ability to mobilize citizens (to the exclusion of others), and that the issues mentioned above cannot match the ability of moral issue

propositions to do so. It is equally implausible to claim that no circumstances exist in which particular issues, even those that at first glance appear mundane, can become considered by citizens to be of extreme importance. In short, it is possible that a wide array of issues possess the potential to have the hypothesized effect on turnout. As I discuss below, however, none likely do so as consistently as those addressing moral issues.

Fulfilling the two requirements necessary to increase turnout

Figure 1.1 suggests that moral issue ballot measures differ in some significant manner from other ballot issues. These propositions require a special investigation because they, along with a number of other ballot matters, fulfill the two requirements necessary to raise turnout levels. The first is awareness, as defined by Zaller (1992), which includes knowledge of the ballot measure's existence and some understanding of the issue. Simply put, a measure cannot be the catalyst behind an individual's decision to vote if he or she lacks awareness of its existence on the ballot. This knowledge, however, is insufficient, as individuals may know of an issue on the ballot but not comprehend the proposition. This lack of understanding is not inconsequential, as it may lead people to decide against seeking out information that could potentially signal the importance of voting on it. As Nicholson (2003, 403) observes: "Absent a basic awareness, ballot propositions can do little to promote a democratic citizenship." We should thus expect any effects of the direct democracy process to be initially contingent upon the individual's level of awareness of the ballot measure (Dyck and Lascher 2009).

Second, voters must care about the issue. The citizen must have a strong opinion on the ballot measure, and that opinion must be important enough to them that they,

having planned to sit out this election absent the ballot measure, decide simply based on its presence to show up to the polls on Election Day. To the extent that ballot propositions increase turnout over what it would otherwise be, the incremental voters produced by direct democracy are individuals who, at least for the election in question, do not see it in their interest to go out and vote for the president, or their senator or representative, let alone important state officials. So, if we contend that a ballot proposition is the impetus behind their decision to vote, then the opportunity to vote on this ballot measure, in and of itself, must be so important to them that it outweighs, in their own minds, their lack of motivation to vote for officeholders. As such, the necessity that the proposition must be of extreme importance to the potential voter appears readily evident.

Moral issue propositions clearly meet the first requirement. In comparison to other ballot measures, those that address moral issues are particularly well known to citizens. In his investigation of California ballot propositions from 1956 to 2000, Nicholson (2003) finds eighty percent or more of respondents familiar with initiatives that dealt with moral issues such as the death penalty and homosexuality. Individuals, he concludes, are more likely to be aware of initiatives addressing morality (by thirteen percentage points) or civil liberties and rights issues (by eighteen percentage points) than other initiatives. Furthermore, moral issues consistently rank among the most cited by respondents when asked open-ended questions about the issues on the ballot, such as in multiple 2004, 2006, and 2010 national surveys (Donovan et al. 2008; Pew Research Center 2006a, 2006b).

Additionally, many moral issues are akin to Carmines and Stimson's (1980) concept of "easy" issues, in that they trigger a "gut response" from the individual and do not require a heightened level of sophistication, interest, or political awareness. Issues such as abortion (Abramowitz 1995) and euthanasia (Joslyn and Haider-Markel 2002), among other issues, can be considered "easy" because they are often framed as morality based alternatives, such as the simplification of a complex issue like abortion into a simple choice of pro-life versus pro-choice (Layman 2001). In contrast, the complexity of a number of issues that one might suspect capable of driving individuals to the polls (such as tax issues) hinders the ability to make easy decisions on them. This simplification facilitates the development of citizen opinion on these issues and better permits individuals to evaluate the importance to attach to these issues.

With regards to the second requirement, moral issue propositions are of sufficient importance to at least a segment of the population to bring these individuals to the polls.⁶ The significant strength of the opinions held by individuals on moral issues derives from emotional attachments and moral values. As they broach core values that reflect deeply held, highly stable beliefs (Carmines and Stimson 1980; Carsey and Layman 2006; Legee et al. 2002), moral issues tend to produce a highly emotional response from citizens (Layman 2001). In doing so, they are often seen as more meaningful to citizens than other more complex issues that are less inherently interesting or more difficult to frame as easy issues (Mooney 2001). This technical simplicity may facilitate participation

⁶ It is important to stress that I am referring to moral issue ballot measures, as opposed to moral issues in general, and that their heightened importance is limited to only a segment of the population. In general, moral issues in the context of a campaign issue (as opposed to a ballot measure) are not particularly salient. For example, looking at open-ended answers to the NES question of the "single most important problem," the number who since 1972 have selected moral issues is dwarfed by those who select economic or social welfare issues (Layman 2001 and own analysis).

(Mooney and Lee 1995), as the average citizen requires little knowledge or information to be able to either assert their opinion or participate in the decision-making process (Mooney 1999). To at least a certain degree, everyone may be considered an expert on morality (Haider-Markel and Meier 1996), meaning that even nonpolitical people can have opinions on them. The relationship of these issues to core values allows for a wide range of citizens to participate (Gormley 1986; Mooney & Lee 1995) by emboldening them to make their voices heard on these issues (Mooney and Lee 1995) and show up at the polls (Mooney 1999). While there may be highly technical points to the debate, they are largely trumped by the basic questions of values raised by these issues (Berns 1979).

The fact that moral issue ballot measures tap into existing social cleavages and opposing bases of moral authority heighten the importance of these strong opinions (though they are not the only issues to do so), and means that they possess the ability to arouse the passions of those in both the traditionalist and modernist camps (Hunter 1991; Layman and Carsey 2002; Layman and Green 2005). The ability of these issues to do so is grounded in differing moral visions, meaning that these cleavages often run much deeper than simply the division between liberal and conservative or Republican and Democrat. In other words, fissures in American society on these issues represent more than just differences of opinion; they define a divide that, at least to a certain extent, cannot be reconciled. At least some scholars even identify divisions on moral issues as more deeply seated than almost any other cleavage in American society, now or throughout history (Hunter 1991).

The fact that many citizens see their basic values as being threatened may provide a greater incentive for them to become involved (Mooney 2001). A majority of

Americans, for example, consistently report that they view same-sex marriage as either undermining the traditional American family or clashing with their existing religious beliefs (Brewer and Wilcox 2005; Lupia et al. 2010). For many white evangelicals and social traditionalists, such issues may heighten fears of their basic values being attacked, a sense of cultural embattlement, or feelings of religious threat by highlighting what they view as the existing tension between themselves and a society that is antithetical to their beliefs and values (or, more generally, as a secular threat) (Campbell 2006; Legee et al. 2002). Of course, such issues have the capacity to provoke resistance from those on both sides of the issue (Layman 2001). Many may view the Christian right as a negative reference group, and those who perceive the Christian right's views on moral issues as intolerant or extreme may come out to cast votes based on their dislike for this group or their stance on these issues (Bolce and De Maio 1999a, 1999b).

The contention that moral issues attain this level of importance for to some segments of the population is firmly established in the literature. While initial claims about the importance of moral values in deciding the outcome of the 2004 presidential election may have been overstated, there some truth exists to these claims, at least for certain sectors of the public (Hillygus and Shields 2005; Lewis 2005). White evangelicals, for example, selected "moral issues" as the most important issue affecting their vote by a substantial margin, even after restricting this analysis to those who referred to moral issues as defined earlier in this chapter (Keeter 2007). The ability of such issues to be among the most important voting concerns for some segments of the electorate, even trumping traditional key issues, such as the economy, was identified as occurring as early as the 1992 election (Abramowitz 1995; Arnold and Weisberg 1996).

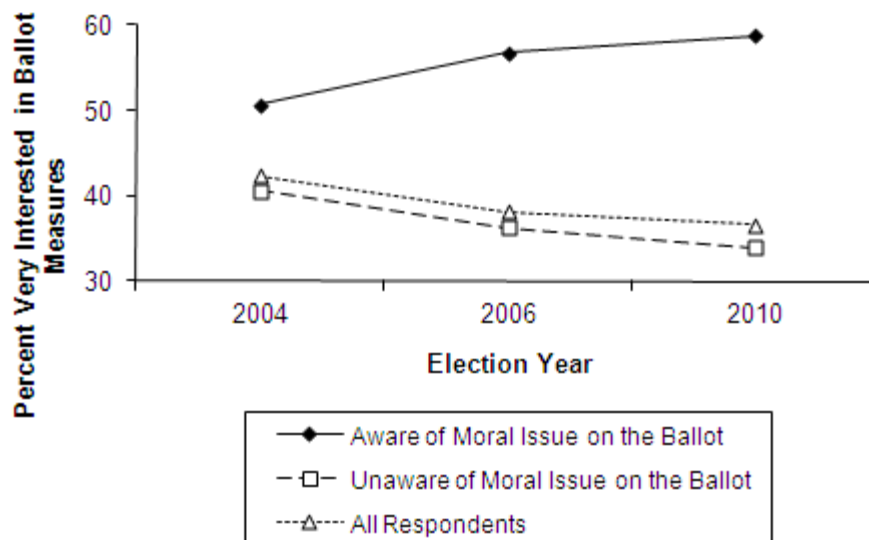
Even as recently as the 2006 midterm elections, exit polls revealed that, for the most religious, a significantly higher percentage ranked value issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage, as extremely important to their vote selection for House member in comparison to the economy, terrorism, and the war in Iraq (National Election Pool 2006).

Although these traits of moral issue propositions suggest that they should be of increased significance to at least a segment of the population, actual evidence of the importance of ballot measures in comparison to one another is relatively rare. While the roll-off data presented in Figure 1.1 suggests that moral issues have a heightened importance, relying solely on this evidence creates a possible tautological problem, in which I gauge importance by how many people vote on a proposition, while also arguing that the intensity of the importance of the issue determines how many people vote on the proposition. As this is certainly not my intention, other supporting evidence must be identified to supplement the roll-off analysis.

Survey data reported in Figure 1.2 supports the contention that moral issues are of particular importance to potential voters. In two Pew surveys carried out prior to the 2004 election, those who could recall that a moral issue was on the ballot (same-sex marriage or stem cell research) were more likely to claim to be “very interested” in the measures on the ballot than the population as a whole (by over eight percentage points) or those unaware of a moral issue on the ballot (by over ten percentage points) (Pew Research Center 2004b, 2004c). Likewise, respondents to two Pew surveys conducted in advance of the 2006 election that knew of a moral issue on the ballot (same-sex marriage) were more likely to be “very interested” in the propositions on the ballot than the entire population (by over eighteen percentage points) or those who could not recall any moral

issues on the ballot (by over twenty percentage points) (Pew Research Center 2006a, 2006b). Finally, 2010 survey data collected by the Cooperative Congressional Election Study demonstrate that those aware of the presence of a moral issue proposition on their ballot reported a rate of being very interested in the measures on their ballot that surpassed that of the entire population and those unaware of a moral issue on the ballot by twenty-two and twenty-five percentage points, respectively.

Figure 1.2 – Relationship between Awareness and Interest in Ballot Measures



Note: Percentages calculated by first asking respondents, “From what you have heard or read, will voters in your state this November be voting on any ballot initiatives, referendums, or state constitutional amendments, or not?” Yes respondents are then asked, “Can you think of any particular issues on the ballot that are up for a vote in your state?” in an open-ended format (all “no” respondents dropped from analysis). Respondents are then asked, “How interested are you in the ballot issues in your state this year?” Options provided are very interested, fairly interested, not too interested, and not at all interested. Question wording is constant across all surveys. 2004 results derived from a merge of respondents to the October 15-19 and November 5-8 Pew Research Center for the People and the Press surveys. 2006 results derived from a merge of respondents to the September 21-October 4 and October 17-22 Pew Research Center for the People and the Press surveys. 2010 results come from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

The significant importance of strongly held opinions of these issues, along with the fact that they consistently rank among the most well known ballot measures, demonstrates that moral issue measures easily meet the requirements necessary to increase turnout. This is not to say, however, that moral issue propositions are unique in

this regard. A number of other issues may share at least some of the same characteristics that heighten the importance of moral issue propositions to a segment of the population, producing a similar effect on turnout. Depending on the electoral context, a number of social, economic, environmental, tax, or other policy issues could plausibly meet these requirements and hence possess the potential to increase participation. While meeting the conditions necessary to bring more citizens to the polls differentiates moral issue propositions from the average ballot measure, the plausible adherence of a number of other issues to these criteria means that these characteristics do not make them unique. In the next chapter, I detail the factors of moral issue propositions that make them among the few ballot issues that can consistently bring large numbers of citizens to the polls and explain why many other seemingly salient matters (such as those dealing with tax issues) fail to do so. At this point, however, I am simply demonstrating that moral issue propositions meet the minimal requirements for increasing turnout, while suggesting that many (though not all) other ballot issues fail to meet this criteria.

The importance of mobilization

Simply meeting these requirements, however, does not completely explain the increase in participation levels attributed to moral issue ballot measures. This is because turnout “cannot be explained entirely by the orientations and endowments of individual citizens” (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 11). That is, in this situation, awareness and importance. Turnout is also, in part, a product of mobilization efforts, which increase turnout through two processes. First, mobilization acts to facilitate participation in the political process by providing the information and resources necessary to vote, which may in turn raise awareness of the proposition. Second, it provides for the creation of

selective social incentives that induce political involvement by tapping into existing social networks and getting people to vote because they are asked by people they know and respect (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). In doing so, contacting efforts may potentially increase the salience attached to certain propositions, at least to a certain degree. As such, these endeavors may significantly enhance political engagement.

In the context of moral issue proposition campaigns, mobilization plays a crucial role in complementing and enhancing the ability of these ballot measures to bring citizens to the polls on Election Day. While ballot measures addressing moral issues possess the necessary qualities to increase participation, they are also often accompanied by political and social organizations on at least one side of the issue that can play a vital role in mobilizing individual voters to the polls for these elections. Politicians, for example, have long understood that one of the easiest ways to mobilize citizens is when they believe that an issue addresses basic preferences over culture (Leege et al. 2002; Oestreicher 1988). We should expect this to be even more so when the subject of the election is this issue itself, as opposed to being simply one of many issues regarding the election of an official for public office. Similarly, many moral issues have been employed as wedge issues to not only fire up the partisan base, but to appeal to and target potentially persuadable voters as well (Hillygus and Shields 2008). These facts allow for parties and politicians to exploit the issue differences to mobilize certain segments of the population while attempting to demobilize other sections (Leege et al. 2002).

In addition, ballot initiative campaigns over controversial measures, such as those addressing moral issues, are rarely presented in dispassionate or unemotional terms, and instead are often emotionally rich and provoke diverse responses (Tolbert 2005). Moral

issue ballot measures consistently generate organized interests on both sides of the issue that can contact potential voters (Bowler et al. 1998), regardless of who places the issue on the ballot (Donovan et al. 1998). Increased mobilization attempts by those on both sides of the issue have been documented with regards to abortion initiatives (Roh and Haider-Markel 2003), and given the importance of other issues to individuals, such as same-sex marriage (Barclay and Fisher 2003), these attempts likely extend to other moral issues as well.

Of course, mobilizing efforts by social and political organizations are not limited to moral issue ballot measures, and a number of other issues on the ballot can and do benefit from extensive mobilization efforts. What differentiates moral issues from other issues that might appear on the ballot is the manner in which they tap into church-based political organization and mobilization, allowing for the diffusion of contacting efforts to those who might not normally receive it. In general, party contact and mobilization attempts are largely limited to those more likely to vote, meaning that those who participate at a depressed rate necessarily receive less targeting by organized contact efforts (Gershtenson 2003; Goldstein and Ridout 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). This pattern of mobilization acts to reinforce the existing divisions in participation rates across segments of society, as those in the most need of the resources provided by contact drives usually rank among the least likely to receive them.

Moral issue proposition campaigns, however, can at least partially overcome these inequalities through the active role that churches play in getting their members to vote on such issue propositions. Due to their nature, moral issues lend themselves to increasing

turnout by tapping into the organizational structure of the church that exists to spur mobilization in a manner that cannot be matched by other issues. While a number of other social and political organizations can effectively campaign for or against moral issue ballot measures, churches are uniquely positioned to effectively do so because they exist as permanent institutions in the community. This stability facilitates the development of extensive social networks, which can then be employed to implore congregants to get involved, disseminate mobilization and contact efforts, and solicit participation on Election Day (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). As opposed to organizations specifically designed for campaign work, churches serve as year round information dispersing and mobilizing institutions. Because of this, they can more effectively take advantage of the social networks they helped create to mobilize their members.

This relationship is crucial because of the capabilities of churches to mobilize individuals to participate in politics. Churches serve as significant sources of political stimuli through sermons mentioning a political topic, other pastoral messages, informal political discussion that emerges at a meeting, adult education classes, and church publications (Verba et al. 1995; Wald et al. 1988). Moral issues list among the most frequently discussed from the pulpit (Guth et al. 2000), and they serve as a locus for either requests for involvement or to mediate such solicitations (Verba et al. 1995), with significant appeals by members in the church authority taking place (Kohut et al. 2000; Verba et al. 1995). Because of the voluntary nature of church membership and the high esteem in which churches are held, any political message transmitted by an individual in church authority will likely be perceived as significantly credible (Wald et al. 1988).

Organizational resources and mobilization efforts are paramount to bringing citizens to the polls to vote on moral issues, and churches are particularly adept at doing these things, mobilizing individuals into politics better than just about any other type of organization. Church-based contacting, recruitment, and mobilization efforts largely succeed in raising the turnout levels of their regular attendees (Djupe and Grant 2001; Guth et al. 2000; Shields 2009). Requests for political activity and exposure to political messages are largely constant across denominations (Verba et al. 1995), and regular church attendance leads to greater political participation, regardless of denomination (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). For example, while not specifying which proposition they dealt with, nineteen percent of post-election survey respondents who attended church at least once or twice a month found information regarding ballot measures available at their place of worship in 2004 (Pew Research Center 2004a). Such factors crucially help to explain the reach of such propositions, as over half the population (according to the 2008 American National Election Study) attends religious services either every week or almost every week.

Strict churches as an illustrative example

Efforts to bring religious congregants to the polls may be particularly successful across “strict churches”, which include, among others, evangelical churches, black Protestant churches, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Strict churches are identified as those who proclaim an exclusive truth; require adherence to a distinctive morality, faith, and lifestyle; and condemn deviance (Kelley 1986). The strictness of these churches acts to overcome the problem of free riding. Because members of the group receive the benefits it provides regardless of their own contribution, they have a

strong incentive to minimize their own efforts and “free ride” off those of others (Olson 1965). By prohibiting or penalizing the participation in alternative activities (as opposed to subsidizing participation), these churches weed out less committed members (whose participation would likely be low) while also raising average levels of group participation and utility by increasing the costs of other, competing activities. This increase in the price of alternative activities lowers their demand and increases the demand for substitutes that can be filled by activities offered by the church, providing the institution with the means in which to enhance its role in the member’s life (Fink and Stark 2006; Iannaccone 1994). In short, the stricter the church, the stronger the church becomes (Kelley 1986).

The strict requirements maintained by these churches serve to strengthen the institution by raising overall levels of commitment, increasing the average rates of participation of their congregants, forming tight social networks, and enhancing the overall benefits of membership (Finke and Stark 2006; Iannaccone 1994). This ability makes strict churches especially capable of controlling and directing the behavior of their members, which can be called upon to politically mobilize congregants when church leaders feel the need to do so. The extent to which religion dominates the lives and orientations of strict church congregants means that these institutions can promote conformity on attitudes toward some issues. Political pronouncements from the church are interpreted by these members as an extension of divine mandates and thus accorded significant respect (Wald et al. 1990). As such, we would expect mobilization efforts by strict churches, which hold particular sway over their members’ actions, to be particularly successful in bringing their congregants to the polls.

The Mormon Church provides a clear demonstration of the potential influence that strict churches exert on the participation rates of their members. Mormons tend to follow their religious leaders on political questions, especially when church leaders endorse a position on the issue and internal agreement prevails among its leaders. The Mormon Church is characterized by public unanimity on most (if not all) of the issues on which its leaders speak, including matters with a political dimension, such as opposition to same-sex marriage. The fact that the leadership of the Church rarely speaks out on political issues, and only does so on an issue that they feel directly relates to their values (choosing to do so mainly on moral, as opposed to political, issues), likely enhances the salience of their opinions and the effectiveness of these solicitations (Campbell and Monson 2003). Because Latter-day Saints Church members are among the most socially conservative individuals in the electorate (Campbell and Monson 2002), messages pertaining to moral issues likely particularly appeal to them.

This adherence to leader proclamations includes positions on contentious ballot proposition campaigns (Campbell and Monson 2003). For example, when Proposition 22 was placed on the ballot in March 2000 in California to ban same-sex marriage, Mormon Church leaders urged their members to not only vote in favor of the ballot measure, but to actively involve themselves in the campaign as well (Coile 1999; Salladay 1999). The Church itself mobilized support for the proposition through its local congregations. Letters from church leaders were read to members during meetings asking for their time and financial support, and congregants were selected to serve as coordinators for the proposition passage effort. The day following its passage, the president of the Mormon Church, Gordon Hinckley, noted that while the church did not directly engage in politics,

“we do become involved if there is a moral issue or something that comes on the legislative calendar which directly affects the church. We tell our people who are citizens of this land and other lands that they as individuals have a civic responsibility to exercise the franchise that is theirs, so they become very active...” (cited in Schrag 2006). Similar actions have been undertaken throughout the past decade by the Mormon Church, with it and/or its members advocating the adoption of ballot initiatives banning same-sex marriage in Alaska, Hawaii, Nebraska, and Nevada (Campbell and Monson 2003).

No ballot measure campaign better illustrates the ability of the Mormon Church leadership to mobilize its constituents on moral issue measures than that of Proposition 8, the initiative placed on the ballot in California in 2008 to ban same-sex marriage in the state. Both members of the Church, as well as the Church itself, played an extraordinary role in its passage, providing crucial donations, institutional support, and dedicated volunteers. Mormon leadership issued a decree that was read to all congregations that stressed the importance of maintaining the traditional family structure and called on them to get involved with the campaign (McKinley and Johnson 2008). Members responded overwhelmingly; while the Church itself contributed around \$190,000 in assistance to the campaign, congregants themselves appear to have donated roughly half of the nearly \$40 million ultimately raised on behalf of the proposition (McKinley and Johnson 2008; Wildermuth 2009). Furthermore, a strategist on the supporting side of the campaign estimated that eighty to ninety percent of the early volunteers that took part in door-to-door canvassing in election precincts were Mormons (McKinley and Johnson 2008). These contributions were likely vital to securing passage of the ballot measure (the

proposition received fifty-two percent of the vote) and leading over 98.8% of those who cast a vote for president taking a stance on this proposition as well (over three and six percentage points more than the next highest vote-receiving ballot measure and the average vote count for all propositions on the ballot in California, respectively).

Mobilization from the other side

Of course, we should not expect mobilization to only come from one side. While churches, along with other institutions, play a vital role in energizing individuals supporting the conservative side of moral issues, scholars have noted that such mobilization campaigns are susceptible to counter-mobilization attempts (Haider-Markel and Meier 1996; Wilcox and Larson 2006). Antigay ballot measures, for instance, have generated the creation of statewide interest groups to fight the propositions (Bull and Gallagher 1996), and existing homosexual rights groups will often rally to defeat the proposed measures (Haider-Markel 2000). More generally, those who take the more liberal side of these issues can be expected to maximize mobilization of their supporters in favor of their stance (Button et al 2000; Haider-Markel 2000). Although the mobilization by organizations on this side of the issue cannot match the ability of churches to bring peripheral voters to the polls, their role in contributing to the overall rise in turnout cannot be discounted.

Moral issue propositions through the lens of expressive choice

These mobilization efforts are largely successful because the significance of moral issue ballot measures to many on both sides of the issue can be explained within the framework of expressive choice, which posits that there is some consumption benefit to voting (Achen 2006; Brennan and Buchanan 1984; Brennan and Lomasky 1993;

Schuessler 2000). This framework has not been applied before to direct democracy in general, or moral issue propositions in particular, but it helps to explain why such issues consistently stimulate turnout. Moral issue ballot measures have the ability to bring citizens to the polls because of their desire to express a preference on the proposed policy, as such an expression acts to affirm who they are, or what they consider to be their identity. This desire at least in part factors into their decision of whether or not to show up to vote, and to a certain degree the voter's statement by showing up at the polls and voting for or against the issue makes them pro-life (pro-choice) or anti-same-sex marriage (pro-same-sex marriage). The ability to vote on the moral issue provides a means for one to "establish, reaffirm, demonstrate, and express" (Schuessler 2000, 15) their support for one side or the other, both to the world and to themselves, and their participation allows them to attach themselves to and claim credit for the outcome.

Voting on moral issues is an expression of values. The actual outcome of the ballot proposition (the law the vote either repeals or enacts) rarely directly or concretely impacts the lives of more than a small proportion of the population. Someone against abortion, for example, is not affected by whether or not other women can legally have such a procedure. Likewise, whether or not gays and lesbians can legally marry does not challenge the strength of one's heterosexual marriage. As opposed to expecting to draw some direct benefit from the outcome, a desire to express their value preferences on the moral issue(s) instead spurs some people to show up to the polls. This is especially true of those on the conservative side, who do not draw on the direct costs and benefits of moral issues that homosexual couples, or young women with unwanted pregnancies, or individuals with a history of Alzheimer's in their family who hope that stem cell research

can produce a cure, do. As such, there must be something else besides a direct interest in the concrete benefits of their side winning that drives such people to show up on Election Day.

This framework helps to explain why, even in the absence of mobilization drives, many of these issues inspire significant activism and participation beyond simply voting on the ballot measures (such as contacting officials, participating in protests, and doing campaign work or making financial contributions). Having an extreme view on abortion, for example, while only held by a small minority of the population, increases the political activity of those on both sides of the issue (Verba et al. 1995). These points are consistent with the contention that moral issue attitudes represent more than policy stances and instead signify a part of an individual's identity.

The end concern of the participation is not to ultimately affect the outcome, but rather to attach one's self to this outcome. These individuals certainly care passionately about the outcome of the ballot measure, and they obviously want their side to prevail; however, the vote can be interpreted not so much as an attempt to influence the result, but instead as an attachment to the outcome in order to express themselves. By merely paying the participation costs, an individual can purchase the status of outcome-producer. Thus, within the expressive context of attachment, participation is not a form of investment, but rather a form of consumption. That is, the cost of participation is relatively low in comparison to the value of this participation. While an extremely close vote may theoretically serve to bring at least some people to the polls, those who we would expect to be mobilized by moral issues simply do not perform the calculus involved in determining the closeness of the race (and thus their potential impact on the

outcome). This helps to explain why the turnout of groups highly attached to moral issues can be maximized when these issues are on the ballot, even when they have little chance of being passed (Witt and McCroble 1997) or when the outcome is already certain (Donovan et al. 2008; McDonald 2004). Ultimately, the desire to participate as a form of self-expression makes moral issue ballot measures consistently able to increase turnout.

What does this mean for the effect of direct democracy in general on turnout?

The preceding discussion of the relationship between moral issue propositions and turnout can tell us a great deal about the general association between direct democracy and turnout. As stated in the introduction, the positive effect on participation attributed to this institution is perhaps the best established finding in the scholarly work on direct democracy. The explanation for why this relationship exists, however, has yet to be fully developed. The ability to do so has no doubt been hindered by the inability to agree on a proper measurement of the institution, which has clouded our theoretical expectations. While moral issues are not the only ballot issues that can be expected to increase turnout, the account provided above does allow us to better frame our expectations regarding when we should expect propositions to bring citizens to the polls. This framework enhances our ability to more thoroughly evaluate the existing literature on direct democracy and turnout, which, as should become evident, suffers from multiple shortcomings.

Direct democracy and turnout

Direct democracy (in the form of ballot initiatives and referenda) is a product of the Progressive Era. In their efforts to tilt the balance of power away from political machines, reformers of this period advocated the adoption and employment of the

initiative process as an alternative manner to enact a wide variety of public policies, keep the legislature in check, and even provide a means to gauge citizen preferences. Additionally, while not the primary intention (if at all) of these reformers, proponents of the initiative process at the time argued that it could also have an “educative effect.” Supporters during this period understood that, ideally, democracy required a politically engaged and knowledgeable citizenry. As they surveyed the American landscape, however, they viewed a poorly informed electorate that would have difficulty in effectively participating in the political process. By employing institutions of direct democracy, such as initiatives, proponents believed a sense of civic duty and participatory responsibility among the population would be instilled, having a positive educative value understood by many as more important than its ability to serve as a legislative tool. Supporters hoped that increased turnout and higher levels of all forms of political participation would be byproducts of providing this opportunity to the public (Smith and Tolbert 2004).

This possible increase in turnout, if recognized at all by reformers actually implementing the policies, was not intended to raise the participation rates of the citizenry as a whole. The legislation pushed and enacted during the Progressive Era paled somewhat in comparison to the rhetoric. Business domination of elections, while not complete, continued to make inroads during this period, as reformers looked to curtail the representation of the lower class and minorities. In their desire to shift power from political machines to middle class whites and business interests, municipal reformers took actions to limit the size and scope of the electorate. Many reformers of this Era aligned with nativists, and together they proposed and helped implement a number of means that

tightened the controls on voting, such as voter registration, literacy tests, poll taxes, and extended residency requirements for voting. These “reforms” had the effect of disproportionately restricting the ability of racial minorities, immigrants, working and lower class voters in the cities, and poor whites in the South, to vote (Bridges 1997; Piven and Cloward 2000). As such, turnout in the country declined significantly, from seventy-nine percent in 1896 to forty-nine percent in 1920. While debate surrounds the magnitude of this drop in participation (some contend that at least a significant percentage of this drop reflects increased measures that hindered voter fraud, such as keeping dead people from voting, living people from voting more than once, or political machines from overtly stuffing the ballot box), it is undeniable that these efforts had the intended effect of decreasing the participation rates of certain segments of the population (Piven and Cloward 2000).

Despite the actual intentions of reformers, the ability of direct democracy to raise turnout has long been maintained by proponents of the process. Normative theorists posit that this institution can motivate citizens to participate in the electoral process (Barber 1984; Pateman 1970). By employing forms of direct democracy, such as initiatives, proponents of the process believe that the ability to legislate from the ballot box can both inspire and educate the citizen, with a byproduct of this opportunity being an increased likelihood of the individual participating on Election Day (Smith and Tolbert 2004). This potential mobilization effect is important given that initiative use during the 1990s reached its highest level ever in the twenty-four states that permit them (Tolbert and Smith 2005), with its use since holding steady (Smith and Tolbert 2007; Tolbert and Smith 2005).

The focus on the ability of direct democracy to raise voting rates derives, at least in part, from the current state of political participation in the United States. Given the low turnout in this country in comparison to similar western democracies, normative reasons exist to investigate institutions that facilitate an increase in turnout. If a higher participation rate is desirable, and if a process can be identified to help increase this rate, then its universal adoption certainly becomes, at the very least, highly appealing, and arguably should be seriously considered (Piven and Cloward 2000). Furthermore, an is at least implicit assumption in the literature maintains that those mobilized by the direct democracy process come from groups that typically vote at lower rates, a contention supported by empirical evidence (Donovan et al. 2009; Tolbert et al. 2009; but see Dyck and Seabrook 2010). Thus, not only do proponents of direct democracy posit that the institution increases turnout, but they also maintain that it helps to reduce the significant inequalities in participation that currently exist as well.

In investigating the hypothesized relationship between direct democracy and turnout, the literature differentiates between presidential and midterm elections. Presidential elections can be described as highly salient events, in which the resources necessary to motivate citizens to turn out, such as information and partisan or nonpartisan mobilization, are readily available (Tolbert et al. 2003). While empirical analysis suggests the limitation of these resources largely to battleground states (Gimpel et. al 2007), it is plausible to suspect that any impact on participation that direct democracy might have would be overshadowed by the universal salience of presidential elections. For midterm elections, voter interests likely focus on state-level issues (Smith 2001), and mobilization resources are less abundant, meaning that peripheral voters more heavily

rely upon information and mobilization from initiative campaigns (Bowler and Donovan 1998; Tolbert et al. 2003).

The empirical evidence largely supports these contentions. Many scholars find that larger numbers of initiatives on the ballot are associated with higher turnout for at least some presidential elections (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert and Smith 2005; Tolbert et al. 2001, 2003, 2009), though Schlozman and Yohai (2008) find no evidence for this relationship. This same count measurement is associated with an increase in participation for all or almost all midterm elections (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert and Smith 2005; Tolbert et al. 2001, 2003, 2009).

The only other measurement of direct democracy associated with an increase in turnout in both types of elections is per capita spending on initiative campaigns (Tolbert et al. 2009). A positive effect on participation in midterm elections, however, can be attributed to the presence of the initiative process (Tolbert et al. 2001), the number of initiatives on the ballot over the past twenty years (Schlozman and Yohai 2008), the cumulative number ever to appear on a state's ballot (Schlozman and Yohai 2008), and salient initiatives (Lacey 2005; Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith 2001).

More recently, however, some scholars have found significantly less support for this contention by addressing the nonrandom assignment of the initiative process across states. Keele (2009), using a matching technique to address the endogeneity problem in determining the effect of direct democracy on turnout, finds limited support for the mobilization effect of initiatives in either type of election. Using field experiments, Barabas et al. (2007) and Deschamps and Nickerson (2009) also identify little or no evidence for the ability of propositions to increase participation. While these analyses

largely stand alone in their refutation of the existing consensus on the ability of initiatives to enhance turnout, they provide important theoretical insight into how we should think about the relationship in question.

An incomplete theory

As evidenced by the varying measurements of the direct democracy process employed by scholars, the precise mechanism that is supposed to increase turnout remain unclear. Essentially, two broad possibilities exist: the initiative process itself, or some aspect of the initiatives that appear on the ballot (such as their number, issue content, campaign spending, or media coverage), acts to mobilize the public. If the mere presence of the process spurs participation, then we must account for its nonrandom assignment across states. March and Olson (1984) note the serious endogeneity concerns that arise when determining the relationship between institutional factors and their effects, a point highlighted by Hanmer (2009) in the context of registration laws and turnout. More plainly, the concern suggests that there may be something fundamentally different between states that adopted the initiative process and those that did not (such as a political culture that places more emphasis on voter participation), meaning that, even in the absence of the initiative process, those that adopted it would still have higher turnout rates. The fact that the adoption of the initiative process by states was strongly influenced by differing political considerations, such as interparty legislative competition, party organizational strength, the role of third parties, and racial and ethnic heterogeneity, lends credence to this contention (Lawrence et al. 2009; Smith and Fridkin 2008). Because of this concern, scholars largely abandoned the notion that the process itself serves as the mechanism, a fact confirmed by Keele (2009) who, using a synthetic case

control analysis, finds little evidence that the introduction of the initiative process boosts a state's turnout.

In contrast, if something about the initiatives on the ballot increases the likelihood of voting, then we acknowledge the importance of individual ballot measures. Remember, for a proposition to have the expected effect, it must, at a minimum, meet the two requirements of awareness and importance. In this light, it becomes immediately apparent that not all initiatives are equal and that the nature of a ballot measure conditions its ability to mobilize individuals. Some ballot measures, for example, will more successfully clear the awareness hurdle, due to more compelling or controversial issue content (Cronin 1989; Nicholson 2003), higher campaign spending (Bowler and Donovan 1998; Nicholson 2003), more intense campaigns, or greater media attention (Nicholson 2003; Pelika 2008). Likewise, due to the specific nature of individual ballot measures, some will be of more importance to the potential voter than others.⁷ Because all initiatives cannot be considered equal, we should not expect each one to influence turnout in the same manner. None of the current measurements of direct democracy specifically address both of these requirements.

This means that the measurement of direct democracy most often employed in the literature, the total number of initiatives on the ballot, should not be viewed as a robust indicator for increased turnout. By considering all ballot measures as equal, a count of the propositions on the ballot, which is designed to differentiate between states that make

⁷ Awareness, however, does not necessarily directly increase importance, and those factors which influence awareness may or may not affect an individual's perception of importance, meaning that some ballot measures can be extremely well known and understood but still not increase turnout. The relationship between the two will be further addressed below. The key here is to understand that each individual proposition will fulfill the two requirements to differing degrees, and that we should recognize the heterogeneous effect of each ballot measure.

heavy use of the initiative process and those that allow for it but do not often employ it, likely overestimates both the awareness and importance of some ballot measures to the potential voter. For example, it is highly plausible that five ballot measures about obscure bond bills would not have as great of an effect as one attempting to ban same-sex marriage (Keele 2009). Employing a count of the propositions, however, would lead us to conclude that the five bond bill propositions would have a substantially greater impact than that of the proposed ban on same-sex marriage. Because we should expect heterogeneous effects from different kinds of ballot initiatives, employing a simple count contradicts our expectations (Keele 2009), and it is unclear why we would expect that simply increasing the number of initiatives on the ballot, regardless of awareness or importance, would make individuals more likely to vote. In short, we should be interested not in how many total measures reside on the ballot, but rather which of these propositions meet the two requirements for stimulating turnout discussed above.

Acknowledging this heterogeneity, some scholars look at total campaign expenditures on ballot initiative campaigns, arguing that increased spending should positively affect turnout (Tolbert et al. 2009). While sensible, the relationship is not so straightforward. Some of the most controversial and salient ballot measures may not always be the beneficiaries of higher campaign spending (Tolbert et al. 2009), while campaigns for ballot measures dealing with issues such as gambling or industry regulation, which may not matter as much to citizens, can be characterized by extreme levels of spending (Donovan et al. 1998). Increased spending may heighten awareness about a proposition by lowering information costs, increasing mobilization efforts, or garnering more media coverage. Heavy spending likely increases the probability of

groups and elites taking a position on the proposition, leading to more attention to the supporters and opponents of the proposition (a claim for which Bowler and Donovan (1998), looking at California initiatives from 1984 to 1990, find marginal support). Whether this increase in spending can not only convince citizens of the importance of the ballot measure, but make it important enough to the citizen that they come out and vote on it, is questionable, and raises concerns about employing campaign spending as a measurement of quantity of direct democracy.

In another attempt to account for the heterogeneous effects of ballot propositions, Smith (2001), whose measurement has been subsequently used by others (Lacey 2005; Schlozman and Yohai 2008), looks at newspaper coverage of initiatives, measuring salience as the amount of front-page coverage that ballot measures receive the day after the vote.⁸ While this measurement likely captures at least part of what we would deem as salience (or at least message intensity), the problem is that it derives from an analysis done after the election. Its employment undoubtedly helps us to understand what kinds of initiatives did motivate citizens to vote; it does not, however, allow us to understand what initiatives will (or do) facilitate turnout. This concern is not exclusive to the research question here, as political scientists often must perform their coding after the fact. When possible, however, we should seek to develop theories that allow us to know which ballot measures will get front-page newspaper coverage, or which ballot measures will increase the likelihood of citizens turning out *a priori*.

A new framework

⁸ Some scholars have objected to this measure (Tolbert et al. 2001), questioning whether front-page newspaper coverage is a measure of salience or of the opinions of editors who decide what to place on the front page. Lacey (2005) counters this point, arguing that market constraints on editors (i.e. the requirement that newspapers run stories that reflect their market's interests if they wish to stay in business) add validity to this measure of salience.

In essence, we need to create a measurement that reflects the exact process by which we theorize that propositions increase turnout. We must be able to adequately determine which ballot measures fulfill both of the requirements discussed above, and doing so necessitates a focus on the issue content of propositions. In doing so, we can anticipate, based on previous research, which ballot measures are likely to be more well known and understood by individuals, and which likely exhibit higher levels of importance, and thus interest, to citizens. Such a distinction allows us to consider the obvious heterogeneous effects of different propositions. Some issues, for example, facilitate awareness better than others, either on their own or because they provide for candidates, campaigns, or interest groups to publicize them. Likewise, some issues are simply of more importance than others to the general public, or some subsection of the general public, and can be expected to be much more successful in getting citizens to the polls on Election Day. Armed with this knowledge, scholars can more persuasively discuss the impact that direct democracy may have on turnout without worrying about whether their measurements adequately capture the theoretical reasoning behind the hypothesized effect. While such a measurement requires a much more intimate knowledge of each individual ballot measure, it is the only one that allows us to adequately identify which propositions fulfill both of these requirements and, as such, possess the potential to increase turnout.

Admittedly, focusing on the issue content of each individual ballot measure is not as parsimonious as many of the previous measurements of direct democracy. While I argue that it provides a stronger theoretical explanation for the mobilization effect of ballot measures, the measurement faces larger empirical concerns. For one, some may

consider it to be rather subjective. Some ambiguity clearly exists regarding what “important” means in terms of an empirical application; what, for example, would serve as an empirical measurement of “importance”? We face a possible tautological problem, in which any proposition that potentially impacts turnout can be considered to be “important” to the public or some section of the public. Certainly, many different issues, given the right circumstances, could possibly become important enough for at least some segment of the population to increase overall turnout levels. While the argument above may be accepted, some could claim that my suggested measurement is equally problematic, and that ultimately the concerns associated with looking at the issue content of individual ballot measures render any empirical analysis on this basis untenable.

My contention is that these criteria for looking at ballot measures should serve as a framework through which scholars think about the potential ability of propositions to increase turnout. While awareness can arguably be properly measured, at least to a certain degree, an objective measurement of importance indeed proves difficult to develop. I do not attempt to operationalize a measurement of importance, as doing so is beyond the scope of this project. Instead, I argue that this focus on issue content leads to the observation that propositions pertaining to certain sets of issues, to the exclusion of others, will more reliably fulfill the requirements of awareness and importance. While such an argument lacks the empirical cleanliness of counting the number of initiatives on the ballot, per capita spending, or newspaper articles, it is theoretically richer than these approaches. Applying this framework necessarily requires a more in-depth understanding of each proposition and the context of its campaign. This, however, is not necessarily a bad demand to place on the researcher, as this requirement can only

enhance our comprehension of the relationship in question. By forcing scholars to more fully and adequately develop their expectations, we can hope to more fully understand the exact relationship between direct democracy and turnout. I elaborate upon and provide empirical evidence for this contention in the rest of the project.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided a theoretical explanation for why we should expect moral issue propositions to consistently bring more citizens to the polls. While such ballot measures meet the two requirements necessary to increase turnout (awareness and importance), this fact alone does not separate them from many other contentious issues. The religious nature of these issues proves crucial in doing so, as it permits social and religious institutions, such as churches, to help individuals overcome key barriers to voting and participate on these propositions. The fact that the ultimate decision of whether or not to vote on moral issue ballot measures can be understood through the framework of expressive choice serves to further differentiate them from other issues that appear on the ballot. The combination of these factors allows propositions addressing moral issues, on their own (that is, to the exclusion of other offices or measures on the ballot), to raise turnout rates by convincing citizens to show up on Election Day who, at least for this election, would have failed to do so.

Again, I do not contend that moral issues are the only proposition issues that can stimulate turnout, but rather that they exemplify the types of issues that we should expect to do so and consistently maintain the potential to do so. More broadly, the necessity of looking at the issue content of individual ballot measures (previously ignored) and the inadequacy of previous measurements of direct democracy call into question what we

really know about the ability of propositions to stimulate turnout: its prevalence, the circumstances in which it occurs, and whether it even exists. While it would be unfair to characterize previous findings as invalid because of their employment of flawed variable measurements, their incompleteness does open up the possibility that we know significantly less about the ability of direct democracy to mobilize potential voters, as well as why such ballot measures have this effect, than previous thought.

Before turning to the investigation of the effect of moral issue ballot measures and direct democracy in general on turnout (the subject of chapter three), I detail in the following chapter the factors that differentiate moral issue propositions from the vast majority of other seemingly highly salient and controversial ballot matters. As explained above, simply meeting the two requirements of awareness and importance does not make moral issue ballot measures unique. In addition, while substantial, the role of mobilization by political and especially social organizations (such as the church), as well as the applicability of the expressive choice framework, tell only a part of the story. In the end, if any proposition is to bring large numbers of citizens to the polls, then it must particularly appeal to those who can be mobilized in the first place. This ability sets moral issue matters apart from most other ballot issues, a fact I empirically demonstrate in the next chapter.

2- Differentiating Moral from Other Ballot Issues

The previous chapter provides persuasive evidence that propositions addressing moral issues consistently meet the two requirements necessary to increase turnout. As they are both extremely well known and of substantial importance to at least certain segments of society, these ballot measures appear to possess the potential to habitually bring citizens to the polls. Of course, the same can be said of a number of ballot issue areas, as a wide range of policy matters likely fulfill the two requirements of awareness and importance. While I do not contend that moral issues are the only ones capable of raising participation rates when they make it onto the ballot, this fact questions the justification for a disproportionate focus on moral issue propositions. If such matters simply represent a small subsection of those capable of increasing turnout, then the importance of an in-depth analysis seems somewhat diminished.

In this chapter, I detail the factors that differentiate moral matters from other potentially salient ballot measure issues in terms of their capability to significantly increase turnout at the polls. This ability relates to whom moral issue ballot measures particularly appeal. I contend that they are of special interest to peripheral voters, or those who can be mobilized in substantial numbers by direct democracy, as their participation depends heavily on the context and contests of each election. In contrast, a number of other apparently salient ballot matters likely appeal mainly to core voters. Such individuals cannot be mobilized above normal participation rates by such propositions, as their voting habits suggest that they will turn out to vote regardless of what (if any) measures make it onto the ballot. This distinction is crucial to identifying the hypothesized effect of direct democracy, and the failure of the existing literature to do

so obscures our knowledge of which propositions can and do influence the propensity to vote.

To illustrate this point, I compare the characteristics of moral issue propositions to those that address tax matters, which likewise appear to fulfill the two requirements necessary to increase turnout. Their relation to a broader set of issues (falling under the heading of the economy) consistently cited as among the most influential in voting decisions, combined with the substantial campaigns that often accompany them, suggests that tax issue propositions represent a prime example of another ballot issue that should be able to mobilize citizens. As I demonstrate, however, such issues lack the strong appeal of moral issues to peripheral voters. Instead, they are of substantial importance predominantly to core voters, whose mobilization does not enhance overall levels of turnout because they regularly vote. Using a survey experiment in the context of a special election on randomly assigned ballot measure issues, I provide empirical evidence for this assertion. Crucially, I show that ignoring this distinction would lead to the erroneous conclusion that tax ballot matters consistently raise participation rates. The analysis highlights the need of scholars investigating the relationship between direct democracy and turnout to think about which ballot measure concerns particularly speak to those whose turnout levels can be affected the most, and illustrates that those addressing moral matters serve as a prime example of such issues.

The appealing case for tax ballot measures

At initial glance, tax issue propositions appear similarly situated as those addressing moral matters to bring large amounts of citizens to the polls. This is because such ballot measures clearly meet the two requirements necessary to potentially increase

participation. With regards to awareness, propositions addressing tax issues consistently find themselves among those most frequently recalled by citizens. Survey data on proposition knowledge are sparse, but questionnaires conducted at two different time points before both the 2004 and 2006 elections (administered by the Pew Research Center), as well as prior to the 2010 election (carried out by the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)), did ask respondents about their awareness of any issues on their state's ballot. In each survey, tax matters ranked as one of the top three concerns recalled by respondents. Unfortunately, the question wording is sufficiently ambiguous that some respondents failed to differentiate between statewide and local propositions, ruling out precise comparisons of awareness across issue content areas. For example, individuals from twelve states that did not have any statewide tax measures reported being aware of a tax proposition on their ballot in 2010.⁹ Despite this inability, however, the sheer number of voters aware of tax ballot matters points to heightened awareness of this type of proposition.

In terms of importance, tax issues and larger matters of the economy appear to consistently play pivotal roles in elections. This is particularly true in influencing elector's vote choices, as scholars have long noted the extreme relevance of economic factors in these decisions, such as the state of the economy. This understanding dates back to at least the early 1970s, with Kramer's (1971) determination of the significance of economic conditions on congressional vote outcomes. Matters related to the economy consistently rank at the top of the list of open-ended responses to questions about the single most important problem in the country, as they have done for NES surveys since 1972 (Layman 2001 and own analysis). Despite the debate about which economic factors

⁹ Alternatively, respondents may have recalled a tax proposition from a previous election or another state.

electors consider, or whether these individuals employ retrospective or prospective evaluations, individual-level models of vote choice regularly find substantial evidence that those at the polls do partake in economic voting (e.g. Bartels 2008; Clarke and Stewart 1994; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; MacKuen et al. 1992; Nadeau and Lewis Beck 2001; Rudolph and Grant 2002; see Niemi et al. 2011 chapter nine for further citations and discussion).

A comparison to moral issues further highlights the significance of economic and tax matters to voters. Economic issues trump cultural and moral issues in terms of the decisions citizens make at the polls (Bartels 2008), as such matters are consistently ranked as the most important issue for the country (see previous paragraph) at a rate that absolutely dwarfs that of moral issues. In addition, economic attitudes serve as stronger predictors of voting behavior when matched head-to-head against those addressing cultural issues (Ansolabehere et al. 2006; Bartels 2008). These opinions appear to be in the forefront of citizens' minds, as they cite them at a higher rate (as opposed to moral matters) when asked about their likes or dislikes regarding political parties and their presidential candidates (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Finally, presidential campaigns appear to recognize the reliance of voters on economic issues in selecting the candidate to support, as their television advertisements and direct mailing mention economic concerns more frequently than moral ones (Geer 2006; Hillygus and Shields 2008).

I should note that all of this literature corresponds only to vote choice, and does not necessarily speak to any influence on the decision to turn out in the first place. It seems sensible, however, that individuals factor these issues into the calculus behind choosing whether or not to participate. Verba et al's (1995) seminal work supports this

contention, as over half of their respondents who reported an issue as spurring political activity referenced economic issues or taxes, with taxes cited as the number one reason for voting. Although no existing study specifically looks at the impact of tax issue propositions on the decision to visit the polls, we can use this other literature to inform our expectations. On the surface, one should anticipate tax propositions to play an important role in determining whether an individual will turn out.

Despite the dearth of information on ballot measure importance, we can turn to the national data cited above with regards to awareness to identify the substantial interest assigned to tax propositions. The surveys, administered at multiple points in both 2004 and 2006, as well as prior to the 2010 election, tapped into citizen awareness of ballot legislation. After asking about knowledge of propositions on their state's ballot, the instruments then assessed the level of interest in such measures for those who recalled at least a single ballot issue. Although the intensity of one's interest may not exactly reflect the degree to which they consider the ballot matter important, it can serve as a suitable proxy in this instance to help gauge variation across different ballot concerns. While the nature of the data prohibits a comparison of awareness between different issue areas, we can use these responses to examine levels of interest. In this instance, the proposition scope (statewide or local) is irrelevant for such an analysis, as responses still gauge the level of excitement in the issues on the ballot.¹⁰

To demonstrate the significant level of interest afforded to tax propositions, I compare attitudes on these measures to those that address moral matters, as well as the average proposition. I define tax ballot issues as any measure that deals with tax policy,

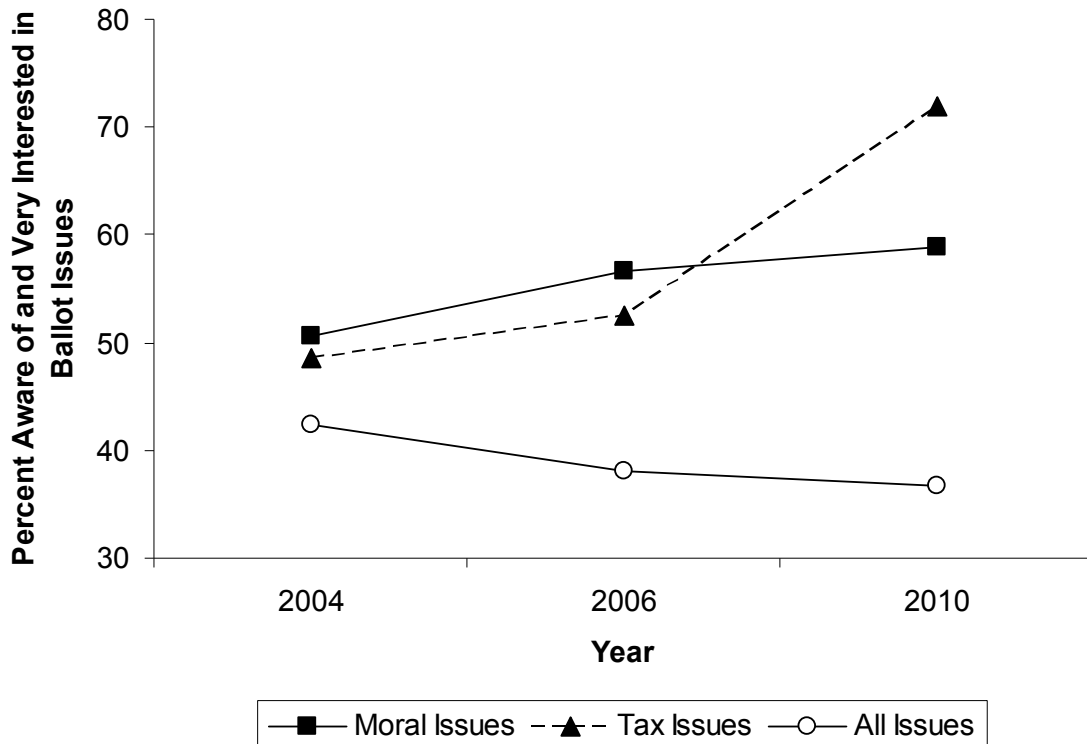
¹⁰ I should note that the question asks about one's general interest in ballot measures, so I cannot definitively determine which measure weighs more heavily on the respondent's mind if they list multiple propositions.

given the distributional nature of all such propositions and their tendency to have higher turnout than other matters (Matsusaka 1993b). This classification encompasses a wide range of taxation matters, and some might argue that I should limit the analysis to only those that directly affect the citizen's pocketbook (such as income, property, and sales). Unfortunately, the Pew surveys only provide coded responses that include all tax matters as tax issues (in contrast to the raw open-ended responses that exist for the CCES survey), so I cannot make this distinction. The 2010 CCES, however, suggests that citizens fail to make substantial differentiations in the amount of interest they attach to the two different categories of tax measures. Employing the more narrow definition changes the reported interest by less than two percentage points, which likely means that the inability to separate the two in the Pew surveys does not substantially impact the results.

If citizens attach heightened importance to tax propositions, then their levels of interest should roughly match those of moral ballot issues and substantially exceed those of the average proposition. This is exactly what we see. Figure 2.1 compares the percentage of all respondents very interested in the measures on their ballot with the corresponding percentages of those who recalled either a tax or moral ballot issue. In each of the three years, a substantially higher percentage of individuals who recalled one of the two issue areas expressed being very interested in the propositions on their ballot than the sample as a whole, ranging from six to thirty-five percentage points for tax and eight to twenty-two percentage points for moral. For all three elections, tax measures are close to or exceed the level of excitement afforded to moral issue matters. As such, if I contend that moral ballot issues attain sufficient importance for some individuals to bring

them to the polls, then it appears that I must consider tax propositions as capable of exerting a similar effect.

Figure 2.1 – Relationship between Awareness and Interest in Ballot Measures



Source: Pew Research Center (October 15-19 & November 5-8, 2004; September 21-October 4 & October 17-22, 2006) and Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2010).

Note: Percentages calculated by first asking respondents, “From what you have heard or read, will voters in your state this November be voting on any ballot initiatives, referendums, or state constitutional amendments, or not?” Respondents who answer yes (all “no” respondents are dropped from the analysis) are then asked, “Can you think of any particular issues on the ballot that are up for a vote in your state?” in an open-ended format. After permitting them to list as many issues as they could recall, respondents are asked, “How interested are you in the ballot issues in your state this year?” Options provided are very interested, fairly interested, not too interested, and not at all interested.

The significance of peripheral voters

Given the heightened interest in tax and moral ballot issues in comparison to the average proposition, we might suspect that both maintain the ability to bring citizens to the polls. We must note, however, that these attitudes correspond to the entire population, meaning that this aggregate measure fails to differentiate opinions between

those who can and cannot be mobilized above normal participation rates. To avoid such an error, it is vital to identify to whom each proposition particularly appeals. For example, if the individuals most heavily invested in the proposition rank among those most likely to consistently vote, then it can do little to increase turnout. For a ballot measure to be the causal reason behind the decision to vote, the citizen must have planned to abstain in its absence, with the proposition alone convincing them to show up on Election Day. It is plausible that many especially contentious or salient ballot issues appeal mainly to core voters, in which case they exert only a limited influence on the decision to cast a ballot (as these citizens will likely do so regardless of their presence).

To consistently increase turnout, the ballot measure must be of particular interest to peripheral voters (Campbell 1966). For these individuals, showing up to the polls is largely contingent upon the existence of important stimuli or highly differentiated alternatives at the voting booth. On average, this population tends to be poorer, less educated, and possess less political information, awareness, and interest (Berinsky 2005; Hill and Leighley 1994, 1996; Leighley and Nagler 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba et al. 1995), as well as more likely to lack enduring partisan attachments (Campbell 1966). Peripheral voters differ in their participation from core voters, who consistently turn out and, as such, cannot be incrementally mobilized by ballot measures alone because they will probably vote regardless of what propositions (if any) greet them. At the same time, these citizens remain a part of the electorate that can be activated, which allows us to avoid those who may care substantially about some issue but will still fail to vote no matter the ballot issues present.

Although the literature largely ignores this distinction, some research suggests that direct democracy (via the average proposition) can bring peripheral voters to the polls. These existing studies do not incorporate any information regarding voting history into the determination of peripheral voter status, largely because surveys do not usually collect it. Instead, they rely on the demographic and partisan characteristics described above as proxies, with some success in finding evidence for the relationship. Initiatives, for example, appear to disproportionately mobilize the lower educated in at least some elections (Tolbert et al. 2009). Similarly, Independents may be more likely than partisans to be aware of and interested in propositions in midterm elections (Donovan et al. 2009), with ballot measures in general stimulating excitement among nonpartisans (though no such relationship exists for those with lower levels of education or income). Dyck and Seabrook (2010) contest this conclusion, however, and find that high salience proposition campaigns mobilize partisans at a greater rate than Independents, with increases in turnout evenly distributed in low salience elections.

These studies largely suggest that direct democracy can mobilize peripheral voters, but their analyses suffer from two significant limitations. First, the investigations rely on demographic proxies for peripheral voters and ignore any consideration of prior voting history. This strategy is understandable, given that surveys frequently do not collect information on past political participation. The failure to more accurately determine peripheral voter status via their voting habits, however, may mean that we are unable to observe the true relationship with this inexact measurement. Second, those studies that find peripheral voters especially intrigued by direct democracy measure this institution by counting the number of propositions on the ballot, which implicitly

assumes the effect of all ballot measures as equal. As discussed in the previous chapter, this treatment is problematic, as it likely masks the anticipated heterogeneous influence of each proposition and obscures the fact that certain issue areas may drive the results (with others having little or no effect). In other words, the measurement probably overestimates the impact of certain issue areas while underestimating that of others.

These two concerns raise substantial questions about the estimated impact of direct democracy on peripheral voters. To be clear, I do not contend that this institution can never increase their participation, or that the limitations provide cause to simply reject the findings of previous studies. Instead, I suspect that the influence is not nearly as prevalent as existing research suggests (i.e. every measure can equally do so). My dispute with this literature signals the importance of focusing on the issue content, with the identification of which ballot issues especially appeal to peripheral voters remaining a crucial but unanswered question.

Proposition issues and peripheral voters

A number of factors facilitate a particular appeal of moral issue propositions to peripheral voters. In contrast, those that deal with other seemingly highly contentious or salient issues may be of interest largely to core voters, and thus lack the potential to incrementally mobilize large numbers of citizens. This appears to be the case with tax issues, which lack two key characteristics of moral issue propositions that especially aid in getting peripheral voters to the polls: their easiness and ability to successfully turn out large numbers of these individuals.

Easiness of the issues

As discussed in the previous chapter, many moral matters can be considered easy issues (Carmines and Stimson 1980) due to their frequent framing as morality-based alternatives (Layman 2001). The fact that they broach core values reflecting deeply held, highly stable beliefs (Carmines and Stimson 1980; Carsey and Layman 2006) means that these issues tend to produce a strong emotional response from citizens (Layman 2001) and are often viewed as more meaningful than other seemingly complex, less inherently interesting matters (Mooney 2001). Their technical simplicity may facilitate interest and participation (Mooney and Lee 1995), as the average citizen requires little knowledge or information to develop or assert their opinion on these issues, as well as take part in the decision-making process (Mooney 1999). To a certain degree, everyone is an expert on morality (Haider-Markel and Meier 1996), and this expertise permits even casual voters to develop opinions on these matters and better evaluate the importance to attach to them.

The apparent complexity of many tax ballot matters, however, may hinder the ability of peripheral voters to make easy decisions. Policies related to economic growth have long been understood as a “hard” issue area (Bailey et al. 2003), and tax issue propositions fulfill all three key distinctions between easy and hard issues made by Carmines and Stimson (1980). First, for most people tax concerns on the ballot are technical rather than symbolic. This technical nature and abstractness (Luskin et al. 1989) means that the lack of ambiguity attached to moral issues does not exist for many tax matters. Louisiana’s 2010 Constitutional Amendment No. 7 illustrates this point. The language on the ballot reads as follows:

To provide relative to the bidding process for ad valorem property tax sales by authorizing a bidder at a tax sale to bid down the existing five percent penalty in increments of one-tenth of one percent; to require the payment of penalties by a bidder at ad valorem property tax sales; to require the payment

of interest, penalties, and costs by a taxpayer who is delinquent on the payment of taxes on movables.

Of a similarly heightened technical complexity, South Carolina's 2004 Constitutional Amendment #2 asks:

Must Section 1, Article X of the Constitution of this State relating to the classification of property and applicable assessment ratios for purposes of property tax be amended so as to delete the specific limit of ten shareholders as the most shareholders a corporation may have for it to be eligible for a four percent assessment ratio on its agricultural real property and provide that the General Assembly shall provide by law the maximum number of shareholders a corporation may have to be eligible for the four percent assessment ratio?

It is difficult to imagine that the average citizen comprehends the legislation proposed by either of these two propositions, as they both address exceedingly complex matters regarding minute, technical tax policy details. For peripheral voters, there is no clear division between the consequences of a "yes" or "no" vote, and certainly no easiness in the selection process comparable to the simplification into morality-based alternatives that often applies to moral issue ballot measures. This lack of simplification decreases the allure of participation to this group on the matter, hindering the ability of tax issue propositions to get them to the polls.

Second, tax issue propositions frequently deal with the means for reaching some specific outcome rather than the goal itself. Such measures often cannot be viewed as a simply higher versus lower tax dichotomy; instead, they may explicitly deal with specific trade-offs that address how to enact some policy. As many people frequently both favor lower taxes but also enjoy the benefits purchased with this revenue, these conflicting preferences potentially complicate any voting decision. Ballot measures frequently posit a concrete (dis)advantage against a change in some tax policy, a fact demonstrated by

four 2008 propositions. Colorado's Amendment 51, for example, proposed an increase in the sales tax to fund services for persons with developmental disabilities. A constitutional amendment in Florida also provided voters with such a delineated decision, as it sought to authorize counties to levy a local sales tax whose revenue would be devoted to community college funding. Similarly, a Montana legislative referendum aimed to retain an existing levy on property taxes that generated revenue for the state's university system. Finally, Minnesota's constitutional amendment would have increased the sales tax rates to help protect drinking water sources, restore wetlands and wildlife habitat, and support parks. All four propositions attempted to introduce tax increases (undesired by many), but also proposed to use the new revenue to fund programs with which most people likely agree. This tension between these two sides muddles the ability of peripheral voters to make easy decisions on them.

Third, tax ballot measures often deal with matters that have not been on the political agenda for a long time. Frequently, these propositions do not present a simple decision of tax raises versus cuts, but instead require the funding or cutting of policies that the passage of tax issue propositions would affect. For example, voters in Alabama were asked whether or not to permit Prichard City to establish a Foreign Trade Investment Zone (Proposed Statewide Amendment No. 1) when they showed up to the polls for the 2010 midterm election. Additionally, a substantial amount of propositions request tax exemptions for a laundry list of items or under a number of circumstances that are foreign (or at least uncommon) to potential voters. Such ballot measures posit, for example, whether the state should extend property, use, or sales tax exemptions to used vehicles (Nevada's 2004 Question No. 8), goods shipped into the state that do not remain

there for more than ninety days (Oklahoma's 2006 Question No. 734), cell phone services (South Dakota's 2006 Initiated Measure No. 8), and business inventory (Georgia's 2010 Referendum A). These matters represent a wide selection of tax ballot issues absent from the political agenda, leaving citizens with little guidance and thus complicating the ability to make decisions on them.

Although the previously cited literature might suggest that peripheral voters can differentiate between the two sides of tax ballot matters, these investigations apply directly to vote choice. Importantly, this is not necessarily the same as the actual decision to vote. Along with the ability to draw upon a wealth of their own personal experiences and knowledge, a number of heuristics exist to make some sort of determination of the health of the economy or its future prospects. In contrast, the average citizen particularly struggles in their attempt to weigh specific tax policy against the trade-offs required to implement it (Wattenberg 2004). The fewer shortcuts with regards to individual ballot measures available to peripheral voters only increases the difficulty of determining a side to support, making it unlikely that a measure about which they are uncertain serves as the catalyst behind the decision to participate.

Voting on Propositions 13 in California in 1978 and 2½ in Massachusetts in 1980, both of which sought to lower property taxes, illustrate this point. Survey data suggest that voters in neither state desired the reduction in local services likely to follow the drop in government revenue, but both ballot measures passed overwhelmingly (O'Sullivan et al. 1995). Californians, for example, expressed no strong desire for fewer services or smaller government, and at least one poll actually found the electorate in favor of raising expenditures devoted to these costs (Smith 1998). In fact, residents appeared to want to

maintain government services while also lowering taxes, or, as Sears and Citrin (1982) note, they wanted “something for nothing”. Additionally, Brody (1979) discovers no consistent relationship between a county’s level of support for Proposition 13 and its residents’ capacity to pay taxes, with the growth in per capita county taxes between 1970 and 1977 negatively associated with support for the ballot measure. Such findings led him to conclude that it was “not clear what voters were voting for or against when they supported it” (qtd in Smith 1998, 61).

We can return to the ballot roll-off information presented in Figure 1 of chapter one to demonstrate the complexity of tax measures. Remember that roll-off represents the proportion of votes cast for an individual proposition in comparison to that for the top vote receiving contest. Roll-off on tax measures is, at a minimum, almost eleven percentage points in each national election since 1992, compared to roughly four percentage points for moral issue measures. Similarly, tax propositions on the ballot in California from 1912 to 1990 exhibit greater roll-off than many other ballot issues, including moral, social, environmental, and education spending (Matsusaka 1993b). As electors often abstain in contests where they lack sufficient information (Wattenberg et al. 2000), a sensible interpretation of the roll-off is that citizens refuse to cast a ballot when the issue reaches sufficient complexity that they cannot determine which side to support. This high level of roll-off associated with tax measures reflects a level of complexity that works against the mobilization of peripheral voters.

Utility of mobilization

As detailed in chapter one, solicitations for participation greatly aid in translating the potential to increase turnout into actual people at the polls. Party contact and

mobilization attempts generally target individuals more likely to vote, meaning that those who participate at a depressed rate necessarily receive fewer requests from organized contacting efforts (Gershtenson 2003; Goldstein and Ridout 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Even when these citizens reside in battleground states where they may be contacted at a higher rate (Gimpel et al. 2007), the nature of political campaigns tends to exacerbate the existing inequalities in turnout (Berinsky 2005). These patterns of mobilization dictate that the population most in need of its benefits rank among the least likely to receive them.

Moral issue propositions, however, differentiate themselves from other ballot matters by the manner in which they uniquely tap into church-based organization and mobilization. This ability permits solicitations for political action to reach those who might not belong to networks that traditionally turn out citizens. Church-based contacting, recruitment, and targeting efforts frequently raise participation levels (Djupe and Grant 2001; Guth et al. 2000; Shields 2009) in a manner that simply cannot be matched by most other organizations. Furthermore, this mobilization by religious institutions does more than any other type of political or social organization to reduce inequalities in participation. As such, churches at least partially compensate for the relative weakness of institutions that ordinarily contact disadvantaged citizens, and do more to close the gaps in civic engagement and political participation than many other institutions (Verba et al. 1995).

In contrast, while substantial organizational capacities may exist (or emerge) on both sides of tax issue propositions to mobilize the electorate, such contacting efforts maintain a much more limited reach to peripheral voters. The groups best situated to

contact on behalf of these issues are inherently political in nature, meaning that regardless of their professionalization level, their major (if not sole) purpose of existence is to influence policy. Although the same can be said of many organizations working on moral ballot issues, churches serve as a unique, historically non-political institution through which to reach individuals regarding these propositions. No similar institution exists to solicit participation from the electorate on tax matters, a fact that necessarily affects the scope and ultimate impact of tax-related mobilization drives.

We can illustrate the importance of this fact by identifying those individuals on which tax matter organizations likely expend the bulk of their contacting resources. These include two distinct groups: (1) organization members and (2) those for whom not only will these efforts prove fruitful, but will vote for the desired outcome as well. Mobilization of the first group relies heavily on the organization's history and longevity (Smith (2004) details such distinctions in a different context). For example, ad-hoc groups that coalesce simply to push a specific tax proposition or set of propositions, only to dissipate following the election, often maintain little membership upon which to draw. In contrast, veteran or up-and-coming organizations, especially those with dues paying members, likely possess substantial numbers of people from which to solicit participation.

The latter, however, do not appear to be the norm. Many of the initial characterizations of Proposition 13 treated the movement behind it as grassroots and populist in nature (e.g. Kuttner 1979; Schwadron and Richter 1984), with this depiction coloring subsequent understandings of "tax revolts" from the ballot. Despite the initial claims of populism, Smith (1998) finds in his study of three crucial property tax ballot

measures (California's Proposition 13, Proposition 2½ in Massachusetts, and Colorado's Amendment 1) that many of these movements were neither populist nor movements, but can instead more accurately be described as faux populist moments. Only with California's tax matter did rank and file membership play any meaningful role in the campaign, and even then vested commercial property interests were the real key to the proposition's success. In short, such measures often lack the active participation and mobilization of the mass public (Smith 1998).

Even if tax-related organizations maintain a large membership, however, their targeting efforts may not translate into significantly larger numbers of individuals at the polls. In comparison to church membership, association with a tax-based group is an inherently political activity that suggests a heightened level of excitement in politics and desire to lobby government. This greater level of political interest resembles that of a core voter, and likely signals a higher initial predisposition to participate regardless of the issues on the ballot. If someone takes the time (and pays the money) to join an inherently political organization geared toward addressing what they understand as flawed tax policies, then we would expect them to attempt to rectify these faults through other strategies as well. Membership in these groups also translates into a greater probability of mobilization beyond the tax organization's efforts (Gershtenson 2003; Goldstein and Ridout 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), which depresses any potential influence the tax association can exert on the decision to vote.

Although tax-based organizations solicit participation from a wider population than their membership (just like other groups), as strategic actors they seek to maximize the effectiveness of these contact efforts (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba et al.

1995). This means targeting not only those for whom mobilization can succeed, but who also support their desired policy and already share the same interests and concerns (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). In doing so, these organizations focus on those in possession of the resources necessary to participate (Verba et al. 1995). Given the complexity of tax ballot measures, these include heightened levels of education, interest, and knowledge to make sense of, understand, and clearly support their preferred position.

The problem for tax ballot matters (in terms of increasing turnout) is that all of the characteristics necessary to deal with their complexity are more likely to be possessed by core rather than peripheral voters, who already maintain a higher propensity to vote and receive requests for participation. Proposition 13 particularly appealed to such voters, with older, white, and more prosperous individuals possessing a higher inclination to support the ballot measure than citizens who frequently turn out at a lower rate (Sears and Citrin 1982; Smith 1998). Similarly, older, white males from higher socioeconomic statuses (both income and education) were more likely to be active in the Proposition 13 and other tax-revolt ballot measure campaigns, both in terms of voting and other forms of participation (Sears and Citrin 1982). The fact that the individuals most active in and supportive of tax ballot measure campaigns also rank among the most likely to turn out in the first place necessarily minimizes the ability of tax-based organizations to consistently enhance turnout rates.

Hypotheses

Although a number of controversial and salient ballot issues may appeal to the general population, powerful evidence points to moral measures as particularly well suited to bring peripheral voters to the polls. While I do not contend that propositions

addressing such issues are the only ones capable of increasing turnout, the limitation of heightened interest and importance of many common salient ballot matters predominately to core voters hinders their ability to consistently raise participation rates. Given the factors described above, it simply appears implausible to expect propositions addressing tax concerns, an example of such issues, to match the capability of moral ballot matters. More formally:

H1: Moral issue propositions are of substantially greater interest and importance to peripheral voters than the average proposition.

H2: Tax issue propositions are not of substantially greater interest and importance to peripheral voters than the average proposition.

Testing the relationship through a survey experiment

Ideally, one would want to directly investigate the impact of moral and tax issue propositions on peripheral voters' propensities to vote. Data limitations, however, prohibit such an analysis. We need a citizen's voting history to perform such an investigation, but surveys rarely ask about prior participation habits (besides the most recent election). Even the few that inquire about the last two elections provide insufficient information, as they lead to perfect prediction for at least some cells.¹¹ In chapter five, I examine the ability of moral ballot issues to disproportionately mobilize certain demographic and social groups who turn out at lower levels and whose characteristics comport with those of peripheral voters. In light of the concern that

¹¹ For example, a 2010 survey that asks about voting in 2008 and 2010 permits the identification of those voting in both elections as core voters and those who only vote in 2008 as peripheral voters. This, however, leads to perfect prediction, as everyone in the peripheral voter category has a zero for participation in 2010. Combining those who do not vote in either election with peripheral voters considers the effect across these two groups that clearly differ from each other in important ways as the same, which may mask an impact on only one of these sets of individuals. We cannot use this information to look at 2008, as everyone has a value of one for voting in 2008.

employing these proxies fails to precisely measure peripheral voter status, I foreshadow this chapter only to note that I do perform such an analysis, but that it can only provide supportive (not conclusive) evidence for the hypothesized relationship. Instead, I focus here on attitudes of importance and interest toward ballot matter issues. While differences certainly exist between reported attitudes and actions undertaken (i.e. the decision to vote), this test is actually a conservative one, given the easiness of reporting interest in a proposition in comparison to actually deciding to vote based on its presence on the ballot.

To test these hypotheses, I conducted a survey experiment through the CCES in which I randomly assigned a specific ballot measure to individuals. The CCES employs a matched random sample, representative of the nation, which ensures sufficient respondents from each individual state and is conducted via the internet. This experimental design permits the avoidance of endogeneity concerns that may arise from observational studies related to the nonrandom distribution of propositions across state ballots. Due to this assignment, concerns exist that the observed relationships between direct democracy (in general) or specific ballot issues (such as moral issues) and turnout may be spurious and instead explained by some other factor specific to the ballot measure state. Similarly, this distribution complicates any analysis dealing solely with survey data. For example, the results reported in Figure 1 addressing interest in ballot issues rely first on the presence of the proposition on the respondent's ballot. An alternative explanation other than chance, however, may exist for its placement on the ballot in that state. This possibility could signal a higher baseline of interest in the state (or another factor) that inflates the significance accorded to the ballot issue in question (in

comparison to the national interest as a whole). The research design I employ here avoids such concerns.

Although any experiment introduces a level of artificiality into the analysis that raises questions about external validity, I attempt to minimize these concerns by conducting the investigation in the aftermath of the 2010 midterm contests and in the framework of a special election. Doing so guards against the assignment to an individual of an issue that they know will not be on their ballot, which may potentially bias their response and significantly challenge the study's validity. Additionally, as all states except Delaware employ direct democracy in at least some context,¹² the special election is a plausible occurrence for any respondent to face. Finally, I conducted the experiment within a larger survey that contained no other mention of direct democracy or ballot measure issues, removing fears about any potential priming effects of the survey instrument.

I informed each respondent that a special election may take place in their state in the spring to vote on the randomly assigned ballot measure. After providing this information, individuals were asked a series of questions to gauge their interest in and the importance attached to the hypothetical proposition, based on a four category likert answer scale (very, fairly, not too much, not at all). Each question touches on one of three broad themes that provide substantial insight into the potential of each ballot measure to mobilize citizens. Two of the attitudes, the importance of being able to vote on the issue and extent to which they personally care about the outcome of the vote, tap directly into levels of expressed interest in the ballot matter. A third question, which asks

¹² Delaware does not permit either the initiative or referendum process, and it is the only state in the nation that does not mandate popular approval of constitutional amendments ratified by the legislature.

about their level of confidence in vote choice, strikes at the easiness of the issue to the individual, a key component of peripheral voter appeal. Finally, the fourth indicator specifically asks about the likelihood of participation in the election, which proxies for the potential mobilization ability of the proposition area. These attitudes cover a broad range of feelings toward the measures and reflect a representative picture of the relative importance and interest assigned to these issues.¹³

I collapsed all four answers into dichotomous variables, coded one if the respondent answers “very” and zero if they select any of the other three options (fairly, not too, or not at all). I then created a factor score from these four questions to serve as my dependent variable. A principal components factor analysis of these units suggests that they all measure an underlying interest in and attachment to ballot measure issues. The four questions load well onto a single factor, produce only one factor with an eigenvalue greater than one (2.62), and explain sixty-six percent of the total variance in the four indicators. The factor loadings of the four indicators range from 0.72 to 0.86. Thus, the combination of these four questions captures a common underlying dimension that permits us to identify and gauge the appeal of ballot issues to peripheral voters.

The assigned ballot matters consist of three treatments and one control. The control proposition asks whether voter approval should be required before state agencies can issue bonds. Bond measures are a constant fixture on state ballots across the country in any election, but they usually elicit little controversy or interest. Just under twenty-five percent of respondents to the 2010 CCES survey who could recall a bond issue on

¹³ See Appendix A for exact prompts, questions, and treatment wordings. Because the survey is conducted over the internet, I cannot guarantee that respondents did not check to see whether any such election may potentially take place (which could bias their responses). No reason exists, however, to suspect that this possibility interacts with the treatment (i.e. those who received the moral issue measure should be no more likely to check than those receiving the other issue treatments).

the ballot, for example, claimed to be very interested in their state's propositions. This level of excitement falls considerably lower than the average across all measures of almost thirty-seven percent.¹⁴ In the presence of such little concern, this fictional proposition likely possesses a minimal chance to mobilize citizens. As such, if the treatment issue areas prove incapable of differentiating themselves from this control on the interest and importance indicators, then it seems implausible to anticipate an ability to bring any real number of peripheral voters to the polls.

In selecting ballot measure treatments, I chose a representative moral and tax matter, as well as a social issue for comparison.¹⁵ The issues include same-sex marriage (moral), property taxes (tax), and sentencing for nonviolent offenders (social). Attempts to ban same-sex marriage are among the most salient of moral issue propositions and prove capable in at least some instances of priming candidate evaluations and/or mobilizing citizens (Campbell and Monson 2008; Donovan et al. 2008; McDonald 2004). Property taxes serve as an example of taxation matters that directly impact the individual's pocketbook (which may be of more importance than tax policies that fail to do so) and have sparked highly contentious debates as far back as 1978 (with Proposition

¹⁴ The Pew survey coding scheme prohibits the computation of this figure for 2004 and 2006. While the data do identify bond measures, they are combined with either other school/education related issues or local development, issue areas of likely greater concern than bond measures. This means that any calculation of these percentages would greatly inflate the actual interest assigned to bond propositions.

¹⁵ Although not reported in Figure 1, social matters rank among those most frequently mentioned by and of the most interest to the entire sample. The percentage of those aware of such a measure that expressed being "very" interested in the measures on their ballot was 50.1 in 2004, 40.0 in 2006, and 62.9 in 2010, which surpassed similar attitudes toward the average proposition by 7.7, 1.9, and 26.2 percentage points, respectively. While I do not devote attention to them in this project, they provide an example of another highly salient, controversial ballot issue that would be expected to potentially influence turnout. I define as social issues those that address crime, English as an official language, gambling, gun control, immigration, and lottery matters (concerns addressing the lottery may not perfectly fall under this heading, but the coding of the Pew surveys does not permit their separation from other gambling issues). As I detail in chapter one, the definition of social issues is frequently less limited than the one employed here, and often encompasses what I deem as moral matters as well. While this association is understandable (given the tendency of citizens pitted against each other on social issues to likewise face off on opposing sides of moral issues), the values and attitudes driving opinion on these matters differ substantially.

13 in California) (Sears and Citrin 1982). Additionally, they rank among the least popular taxes (O’Sullivan et al. 1995), and thus may elicit heightened emotions in comparison to other tax concerns. Finally, the selection of a crime issue as representative of those addressing social matters appears sensible given that it was the most recalled such issue in the 2010 CCES survey. I denote each treatment in the model with a dummy variable (those receiving the bond measure serve as the out group).

The key variable of interest is the response of peripheral voters to each question across the treatments. In contrast to previous studies that proxy for them through groups that participate at lower rates than the population average, I devise a more accurate measurement of these individuals from two questions asked on the common content of the CCES. I identify as peripheral voters those who report voting in the 2008 presidential but not the subsequent 2010 midterm election. Such citizens clearly reside in the electorate (having voted in 2008) but lack the consistency of core voters and depend on specific stimuli to a greater degree, such as those from presidential contests or certain ballot measures. To the extent that we can trust their recall of participation, this measurement provides a more accurate identification of peripheral voters than the proxies employed in previous studies.¹⁶ The fact that peripheral voters in this study fit all of the characteristics typically associated with this group (including being less educated, poorer, younger, and more likely to identify as Independents) provides evidence for the validity of this indicator.¹⁷ I code all who voted in both elections (considered core voters) as zero

¹⁶ Over-reporting of voting habits is known to plague survey responses (see Duff et al. 2007 for a discussion of the existing literature). This fact makes the test a conservative one, as it dilutes the number of true peripheral voters captured by the measurement and also likely includes as peripheral voters those who are disengaged from the political process.

¹⁷ See Appendix B for means tests confirming that these peripheral voters share the common demographic, socioeconomic, and political characteristics commonly associated with this group, as they possess lower

and those voting in 2008 but not 2010 as one, leaving us with 94 peripheral voters and 663 core voters.¹⁸ I also interact this variable with the treatments to capture the direct appeal of each ballot measure to these individuals.¹⁹

Results

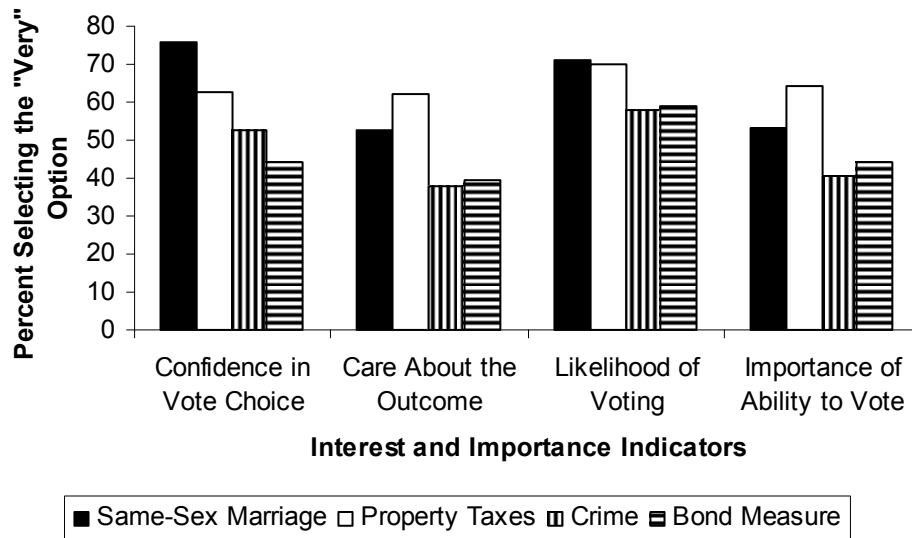
An initial analysis of reported attitudes lends support to the hypothesized relationships. Figure 2.2 presents the percentage of those selecting the “very” option for the entire population across all the issue treatments for the four indicators. As expected, substantially greater interest and importance is afforded to the moral and tax ballot matters than the bond proposition, while the same cannot be said of the social issue treatment. For the tax measure, these differences range from roughly eleven (likelihood of voting) to twenty-two (care about the outcome) percentage points. The moral issue proposition results reflect a similar range, from nine (importance of voting on the matter) to thirty-one (confidence of vote choice) percentage points. Property tax is the highest “very” category recipient for two questions (care about the outcome and importance of voting on the issue), with same-sex marriage ranking first for the other two measurements (confidence in vote choice and likelihood of voting). Based on this information alone, we would conclude that both propositions possess the potential to bring large numbers of citizens to the polls.

levels of education and income, fewer years in age, and are more likely to identify as Independents than those deemed core voters in this analysis.

¹⁸ I exclude from the analysis those who did not vote in either election and those too young to vote in 2008.

¹⁹ By identifying core and peripheral voters in this manner, the sample appears to over represent the former and under represent the latter. This is likely due to the nature of the CCES, as its reported participation rate of 75.2% across all respondents suggests a sample population more representative of registered voters than the nation as a whole (voting eligible turnout was 41.7% in 2010). Providing so few peripheral voters with which to work makes the test a conservative one, as it is difficult to determine any effect based on such a small sample of individuals.

Figure 2.2 – Population Interest and Importance Levels for Hypothetical Ballot Measures on Four Indicators



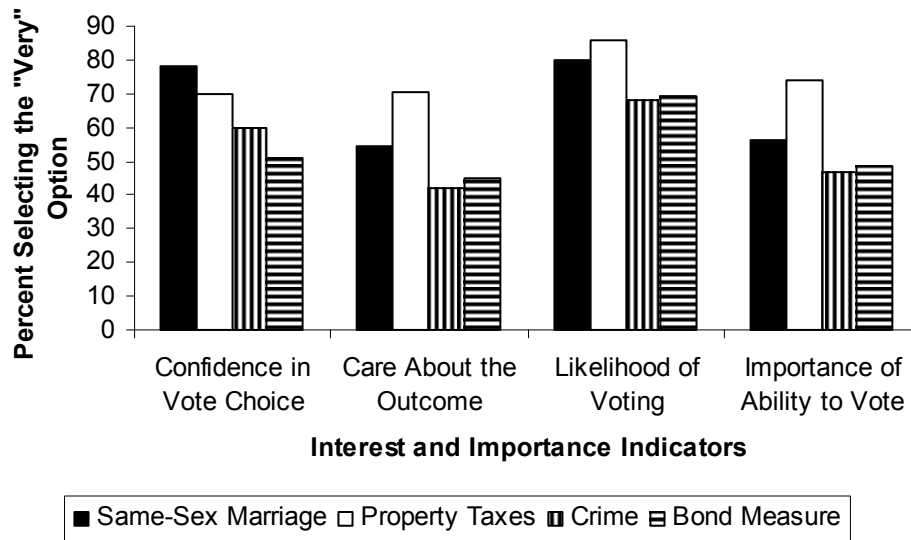
Source: 2010 CCES post-election survey.

Note: Bars represent the percent of the population selecting the “very” option in comparison to the other three options (“fairly”, “not so much”, “not at all”). See Appendix A for a complete description of prompts, question wording, and response options.

When we break down the attitudes by voter status, however, we find such a conclusion premature. Figure 2.3 illustrates the distribution of opinions on the four indicators for core voters only and tells a similar story. Both moral and tax matters maintain the highest levels of interest and importance, with even greater separation between property taxes and the bond measure (the differences now range from sixteen to twenty-five percentage points), though the gap shrinks a bit for the same-sex marriage ban (to eight to twenty-seven percentage points). These changes do not modify our initial observation that both issues appear capable of mobilizing substantial numbers of individuals. Perhaps the most telling piece of information from Figure 2.3 relates to the heightened levels of interest in general across all four ballot matters. For example, over sixty-nine percent of citizens reported being very likely to participate in the special election whose proposition would require voter approval before state agencies could issue

bonds. This is an astronomical rate for any special election, let alone one that deals with matters of substantially depressed interest across the entire population. This statistic especially supports the contention above that core voters will likely turn out regardless of what might be on the ballot, and as such cannot be mobilized above typical participation levels by any proposition issue.

Figure 2.3 – Core Voter Interest and Importance Levels for Hypothetical Ballot Measures on Four Indicators



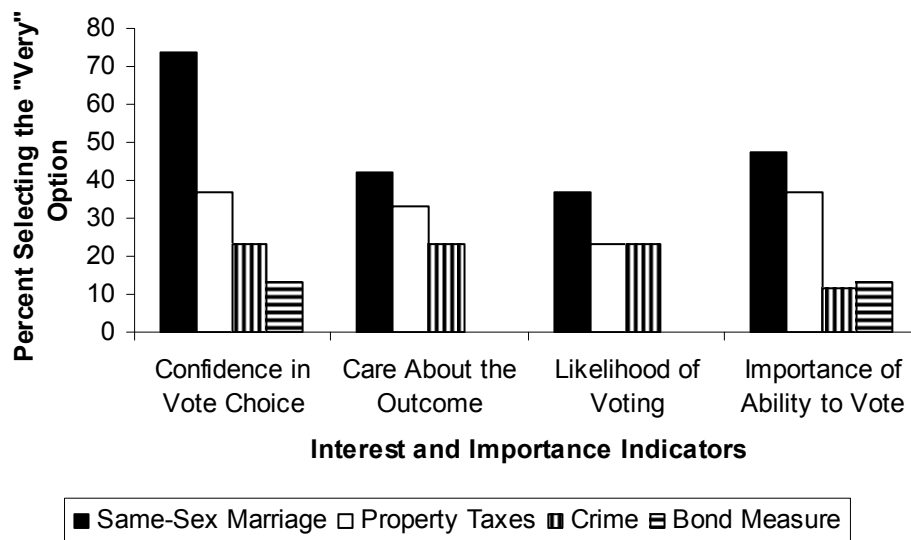
Source: 2010 CCES post-election survey.

Note: Bars represent the percent of core voters selecting the "very" option in comparison to the other three options ("fairly", "not so much", "not at all"). Core voters defined as those who voted in both 2008 and 2010. See Appendix A for a complete description of prompts, question wording, and response options.

Shifting the focus to peripheral voters clearly reveals the fallacy of relying on the attitudes of the population as a whole to anticipate which propositions possess the potential to increase turnout. Figure 2.4 demonstrates the pattern of interest and importance regarding the indicators for these individuals, which exhibits a noticeably different distribution than the previous two figures. The same-sex marriage ban now garners the highest percentages for all four questions, and surpasses the bond measure by a range of thirty-four (importance of voting on the issue) to sixty (confidence in the vote)

percentage points. The property tax measure remains of greater interest and importance than the control proposition (by between twenty-three to thirty-three percentage points), but the moral matter bests it on every indicator by at least eight percentage points. These results are certainly preliminary, and the small number of peripheral voters restricts the ability to state the significance of the large differences, but they comport well with the overall hypotheses regarding the unique nature of moral ballot concerns to draw peripheral voters to the polls.

Figure 2.4 – Peripheral Voter Interest and Importance Levels for Hypothetical Ballot Measures on Four Indicators



Source: 2010 CCES post-election survey.

Note: Bars represent the percent of peripheral voters selecting the "very" option in comparison to the other three options ("fairly", "not so much", "not at all"). Peripheral voters defined as those who voted in 2008 but not 2010. See Appendix A for a complete description of prompts, question wording, and response options.

Having demonstrated suggestive evidence from the simple interest tabulations, I turn now to the more rigorous statistical tests. As with the preliminary analyses, I first examine the entire sample's attitudes toward the hypothetical ballot issues as measured by the factor score, ignoring any potential interaction effect with peripheral voter status.

The first column of Table 2.1 presents the results from OLS regression, which reveal substantial excitement in and importance attached to the moral and tax matters. Those who received these treatments were significantly more likely than those with the control issue to express interest in the assigned ballot measure, while the social issue treatment did not differ in its appeal from the control. The same-sex marriage ban exhibits the largest effect (increasing the score on the interest scale by almost two-thirds of a standard deviation), but the impact of the property tax treatment is substantially significant as well and over eighty percent the size of that of the marriage ban. These findings should not be surprising, as they essentially mirror those in Figure 2.2. From this analysis alone, we would conclude that moral and tax ballot issues appear able to potentially raise participation rates, while social matters (or at least crime) lack a similar capacity.

When we investigate to which voters these issues particularly appeal, however, the relationships differ dramatically. The second column of Table 2.1 reports OLS regression results for the same model in column one, but with the variables for peripheral voters and their interaction with each of the three issue areas as well. Focusing on the attitudes of core voters first, the pattern reflects that of the entire population; individuals who receive the same-sex marriage ban or property tax treatment express significantly greater interest in their ballot measure than the control, while those receiving the crime treatment do not. The size of the effects drop for the moral issue and rise for the tax issue, with the taxation treatment now exerting the largest effect of the three on core voter enticement (the impact of the moral matter is roughly eighty-three percent that of the tax measure).

Table 2.1 – Interest in and Importance Assigned to Hypothetical Ballot Measures

	Entire Sample	Core and Peripheral Voters Only
Same-Sex	0.656* (0.139)	0.508* (0.136)
Property Tax	0.532* (0.153)	0.615* (0.141)
Crime	0.142 (0.150)	0.087 (0.167)
Peripheral Voter (PV)	-	-1.077* (0.125)
Same-Sex*PV	-	0.667* (0.340)
Property Tax*PV	-	-0.160 (0.240)
Crime*PV	-	0.414 (0.232)
Constant	-0.554* (0.100)	-0.201 (0.107)
<i>N</i>	831	741

Source: 2010 CCES post-election survey.

Note: OLS coefficient estimates with sample weights, presented with robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is a factor score of four questions gauging interest in and importance attributed to the randomly assigned hypothetical ballot measure (see Appendix A for exact question wording). Asterisk () denotes statistical significance at $p < .05$.*

Although the tax issue ranks as the treatment of greatest relevance to core voters, it actually excites peripheral voters the least. The interaction term is negative (though it fails to reach standard levels of statistical significance), with attachment to this matter dropping by 0.16 standard deviations for peripheral voters (from an increase of 0.62 to 0.46 standard deviations). As such, the results signal that peripheral voters view this tax

ballot issue with no greater intrigue than the control measure regarding rules for the issuance of bonds, pointing to a strong inability to incrementally mobilize them.

In contrast, as with core voters, peripheral voters consider moral issues on the ballot (in the form of a ban on same-sex marriage) as of substantial importance. The size of the effect more than doubles for peripheral voters, from an increase of 0.51 to 1.18 standard deviations (a change of 0.67 standard deviations). This is a huge substantive difference and signals an unparalleled interest maintained by peripheral voters in moral ballot measures. Surprisingly, the social issue, while of little interest to core voters, also particularly fascinates peripheral voters. The influence approaches standard levels of statistical significance ($p < .08$), though the magnitude of the effect pales in comparison to that of the attempt to ban same-sex marriage (0.50 versus 1.18 standard deviations). As such, while other salient or controversial matters may especially entice those who can be mobilized above normal voting levels to the polls, moral issue propositions possess an unparalleled capacity to do so.

Conclusion

The previous chapter detailed the characteristics of moral issue propositions that afford them the potential to consistently bring citizens to the polls, but it failed to differentiate these ballot issues from other salient or controversial ones. I took up this task in this chapter, and demonstrated the problems of relying on the entire population's attitudes to determine such an ability, as well as the importance of identifying to whom ballot measures particularly appeal. Using tax propositions to illustrate these points, I determined that despite their apparent heightened importance, this enticement extends largely to core voters, or those who cannot be mobilized beyond a specific rate by

propositions. In contrast, peripheral voters attach substantial interest and importance to moral ballot matters, which provides the opportunity for such measures to raise participation rates. These results point to substantially different interests between core and peripheral voters, and suggest that many apparent controversial or salient ballot issues may fail to spark the intrigue of those that matter most (in terms of increasing turnout).

The analysis above certainly cannot be interpreted as closing the book on our understanding on ballot matter appeal, as it exhibits some limitations regarding the issues and sample. Same-sex marriage, for example, may be the most salient moral area (capable of priming candidate evaluations (Donovan et al. 2008)). Combined with the heightened experience of citizens with this issue at the polls (they have appeared on roughly half of state ballots over the past fifteen years, as opposed to six states for abortion and three for stem cell research), the results may overstate the effect of all such ballot matters. In contrast, the lower economic status of peripheral voters may translate into a lower likelihood of residency ownership, which necessarily dictates less concern about property taxes. This means that their use as the tax indicator could create an unfavorable test, and that the relationship would differ if a tax matter that directly affects all peripheral voters' pocketbooks (such as sales or income) was employed instead. Finally, the small sample size and reported participation rates substantially higher than actual turnout provides few peripheral voters, which restricts the desired confidence in the estimated treatment effects.

While I unfortunately cannot speak to the range of moral and tax matters not investigated in the study, the results substantiate the anticipated ability of moral issue

propositions to particularly appeal to those who can be mobilized at higher rates, with a much more limited influence available to tax issue measures. Of course, campaigns do not take place in a vacuum. The results cannot be interpreted as stating that economic issues can never generate sufficient excitement to increase turnout, but only that they likely fail to do so as consistently as moral issues. Possessing favorable attitudes toward ballot measures and being mobilized by them, however, are two different things, and these findings can only point us in the direction of the true relationships. I turn to these relationships in the next chapter, and finally test the actual effect of these propositions on the likelihood of voter participation.

3 - Moral issue propositions at the state level

As discussed in chapter one, the positive relationship between ballot measures and turnout represents perhaps the most robust finding in all of the direct democracy literature. By looking at the average effect of initiatives on turnout across the entire country, scholars contend that propositions can increase the probability of voting in both midterm and presidential elections. The most commonly employed measurement of the process, a count of the number of initiatives on the ballot, was addressed in the previous two chapters. Chapter one detailed the theoretical shortcomings of this measurement, while chapter two empirically illustrated the fallacy of considering all measures as equally influential on levels of interest.

In addition to these concerns, I demonstrate here that the count measurement is only rarely associated with an increase in turnout when we extend the theory behind its use to its logical conclusion. As this measurement solely includes initiatives, it ignores a large number of other propositions that appear on the ballot. These include referenda, which equally provide citizens with the opportunity to legislate from the polls and whose exclusion from this measurement lacks sufficient theoretical justification. When we consider all of the propositions on the ballot, we should expect to find little evidence that simply providing greater opportunities to vote on policies, regardless of the actual issue content put to voters, leads more citizens to the polls.

Along with this focus on direct democracy in general, I continue the differentiation of proposition effects which began in the previous chapter. As demonstrated to this point, substantial theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that moral issue measures meet the requirements of awareness and importance, engender

substantial mobilization contacting, and facilitate the expression of values. These factors mean that an increase in their number on the ballot should positively appeal to peripheral voters, with an anticipated positive affect the likelihood of showing up on Election Day. I finally test this contention, along with the ability of another potentially salient ballot issue area discussed in the previous chapter, tax matters, to likewise increase participation.

I proceed as follows. First, I revisit the existing literature summarized in chapter one that measures direct democracy as a count of the number of initiatives on which citizens can vote. Second, I argue that the theory behind this total number of initiatives count measurement requires us to focus on all types of measures on the ballot. Third, I discuss the state of research on the effect of moral and tax issue propositions on turnout. Finally, I test the ability of this new count of the total number of propositions on the ballot, as well as the number of moral and tax issue ballot measures, to mobilize turnout across all states. Using hierarchical generalized linear modeling and looking at all national elections since 1992, I find that moral issue propositions are associated with both a statistically and substantively significant increase in the likelihood of voting for all midterm and some presidential elections. In contrast, both the total number of measures on the ballot and tax measures only rarely affect turnout, with any increase attributed to the former substantively insignificant. These findings provide significant evidence to refute the dominant contention in the literature that ballot propositions, regardless of how well they are known or the importance attached to them, act to mobilize peripheral voters. Additionally, they signify that many other potentially salient ballot issues lack the influence on the decision to vote maintained by moral issue propositions.

Do more initiatives lead to higher turnout?

As previously mentioned, the most common measurement of direct democracy employed by scholars consists of a count of the number of initiatives on the ballot. This count is designed to differentiate those states that permit the initiative process but do not heavily use it from those that both maintain the process and consistently employ it. Mississippi, for instance, witnessed only two initiatives since the state readopted the process in 1992 (through 2008).²⁰ In contrast, Oregon, the leader in initiative usage, has placed 357 initiatives on its ballot since the state adopted the process. Other heavy employers of the initiative include California (340), Colorado (219), North Dakota (181), and Arizona (177). Looking over the same time period (since 1992), these states all possessed significantly higher numbers of initiatives on their ballot than Mississippi: Oregon had one hundred and one, California had ninety-five, Colorado had seventy, North Dakota had eighteen, and Arizona had forty (I & R Institute 2009 and own analysis). The count of the number of initiatives is intended to acknowledge this significant variation in the employment of the process.

Numerous studies assert that increasing the number of initiatives on the ballot increases turnout on Election Day. Table 3.1 presents a summary of these findings, including the study, the years they investigate, the results, and the data they employ (the importance of which will become clear later in this chapter). Focusing first on midterm elections, significant evidence exists for the relationship in question. Using aggregate-level pooled data, Smith and Tolbert (2004), Tolbert and Smith (2005), and Tolbert et al. (2001) identify a positive effect on turnout levels attributed to the number of initiatives

²⁰ Mississippi originally adopted the process in the middle 1910s, but the state supreme court removed this provision from the state constitution due to a technicality in 1922 (Schmidt 1989).

on the ballot in midterm elections from 1970 to 2002. At the individual-level, scholars find a positive impact on the likelihood of voting due to increasing the number of initiatives on the ballot from 1978 to 1994 (Schlozman and Yohai 2008), and for the elections of 1998 (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003), 2002, and 2006 (Tolbert et al. 2009). Schlozman and Yohai (2008), however, find no evidence for the hypothesized relationship in 1974 or 2002.

With regards to presidential elections, less consistency prevails in the existing literature. Aggregate-level pooled analyses from Smith and Tolbert (2004), Tolbert and Smith (2005), and Tolbert et al. (2001) suggest that an increase in the number of initiatives on the ballot raised turnout levels in presidential elections over the time span of 1972 to 2000. At the individual-level, there is evidence for this relationship in 1992 (Smith and Tolbert 2004), 1996 (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003), and 2004 (Tolbert et al. 2009). Other studies, however, fail to find evidence for this relationship from 1972 to 1996 (Schlozman and Yohai 2008), 2000 (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003), and 2004 (Schlozman and Yohai 2008). In summary, the evidence appears to state that placing more initiatives on the ballot does increase participation in midterm elections, while the existence of this relationship in presidential elections still remains of some debate.

The estimated effect of each initiative on turnout varies noticeably with regards to the type of election, study, and substantive significance. For midterm elections, aggregate-level analyses estimate an increase in turnout in the range of 0.4 to 1.7 percentage points for each additional initiative (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert and Smith 2005; Tolbert et al. 2001). Individual-level estimates fall somewhere in the

Table 3.1 – Previous Literature on Direct Democracy and Turnout Employing a Count Measurement

Study Initiative ^a	Data	Years	Statistically Significant Relationship	Estimated Effect of an
Tolbert, Grummel, (1996) ^b and Smith (2001)	Pooled aggregate	1972-1996	Yes	0.4 (1994); 0.33
Tolbert, McNeal, and Smith (2003)	ANES	1996-2000	1996, 1998	1.0 (1996, 1998)
Smith and Tolbert (2004)	Senate Election Study ANES	1992 1996-2000	1992 1996, 1998	4.0 0.5 (1996); 1.0 (1998)
Smith and Tolbert (2004) elections); (2004) elections)	Pooled aggregate	1970-2002	Yes	0.5 (presidential 1.2 (midterm
Tolbert and Smith (2005) (midterm elections)	Pooled	1980-2002 aggregate	Yes	0.7 (presidential 1.7
Schlozman and Yohai (2008)	CPS ANES	1972-2004 1972-2004	1978, 1990, 1994, 1998 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1994	1.13 (1994) ^c
Tolbert, Bowen, and Donovan (2009)	CPS CCES	2002, 2004 2006	2002, 2004 2006	1.0 (2002); 0.5 (2004) Not reported

a: Increase in percentage points of turnout for aggregate-level studies and in predicted probability of voting for individual-level studies.

b: Tolbert et al. (2001) only estimate effects for the 1994 and 1996 elections.

c: Schlozman and Yohai (2008) calculate their estimated effect by moving from zero to the largest number of initiatives on the ballot for the given election. They only report an estimate for the largest effect in their study, which was an eighteen percent increase in the predicted probability of voting in 1994 (moving from zero to sixteen initiatives on the ballot (CO)). The 1.13 estimate is generated by dividing the eighteen percent estimate by sixteen.

middle, with an increase in the predicted probability of voting associated with an additional initiative of approximately one percentage point (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003; Tolbert et al. 2009). The sizes of these effects are certainly modest, but it should be noted that a one percentage point increase in turnout would translate into millions of more citizens showing up to vote on Election Day.

With regards to presidential elections, aggregate-level estimates of the impact of an additional initiative range from a 0.3 to 0.7 percentage point increase in turnout levels (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert and Smith 2005; Tolbert et al. 2001). At the individual-level, the placement of an initiative on the ballot increases the predicted probability of voting by between half a point and four percentage points (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003; Tolbert et al. 2009). The vast majority of these effects are significantly lower than those for midterm elections (roughly half), and although we cannot ignore the four percentage point impact for 1992 (Smith and Tolbert 2004), the other estimates impress much less. Thus, while meaningful variation exists in the estimates of the effects attributed to more initiatives on the ballot, many of these increases at least straddle the substantive significance fence.

What about the rest of direct democracy?

The ability of an individual ballot measure to mobilize citizens is contingent upon both awareness and importance. To adequately determine this effect, our measurement of direct democracy must account for both of these factors. Using a count of the number of initiatives on the ballot, however, does not permit us to identify either how well known or important a citizen considers each individual proposition. In addition, we cannot account

for the anticipated heterogeneous effects for each ballot measure. The count measurement overestimates the impact of some initiatives on turnout while underestimating the effect of others, treating, for example, those dealing with a highly salient same-sex marriage ban and an obscure bond bill as equally influencing the decision to vote. More generally, it contends that simply placing more initiatives on the ballot, regardless of whether individuals know and/or care about them, will make peripheral voters more likely to show up on Election Day. This contention, however, is implausible, which raises serious concerns about the measurement's employment.

Critics may contend that it is relatively easy to go after this measurement without offering a suitable alternative. As I admit in chapter one, I do not attempt to operationalize my contention that we should look at the issue content of the proposition, but rather argue that it should serve as a framework through which to understand the mobilizing effect of ballot measures. While the flaws associated with the total number of initiatives measurement appear evident, one could maintain that it serves as the best existing measurement to look at the effect of direct democracy on turnout at the national level.

Even if one accepts this argument, however, we must recognize that the measurement is still incomplete because it focuses exclusively on initiatives, or those propositions put on the ballot by citizens. By dealing solely with initiatives, a process allowed in only twenty-four states (see Table 3.2), it ignores a large number of measures that appear on the ballot and permit citizens to legislate from the polls. For example, residents in all fifty states can vote on referenda placed on the ballot by the legislature and/or ratify amendments to the state constitution. These referenda make up a significant

number of the propositions that appear on state ballots, and the failure to include them in the count measurement means that scholars only capture a part of the citizen-legislating process.

Table 3.2 – States that Permit the Initiative Process

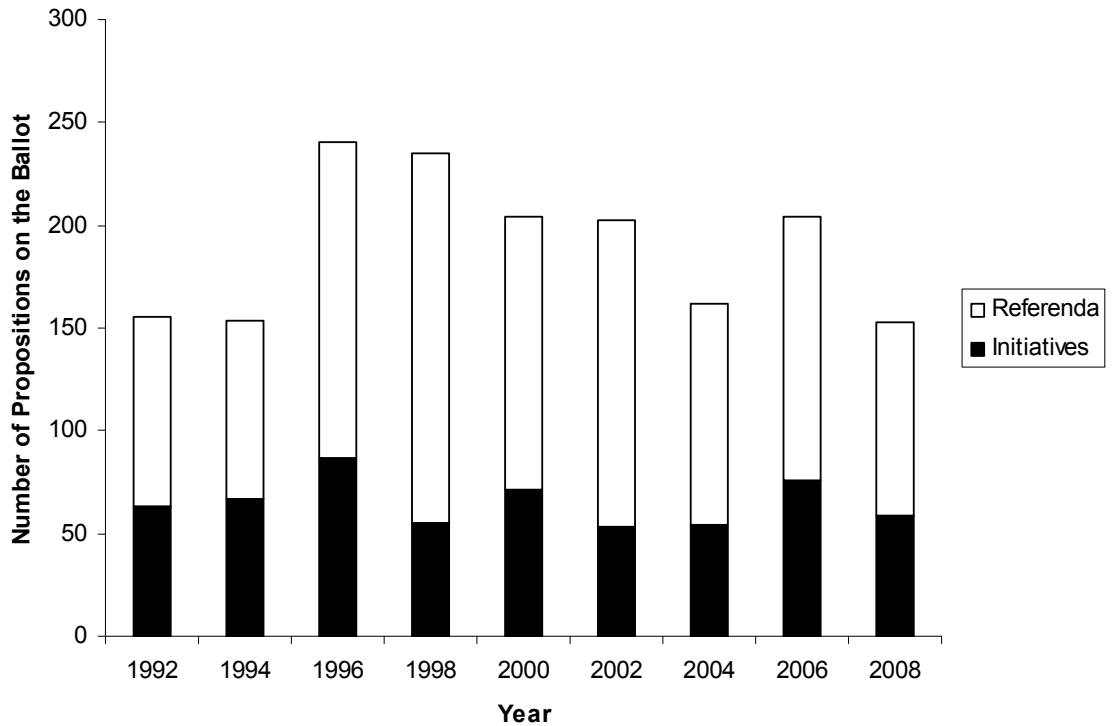
Alaska	Maine	North Dakota
Arizona	Massachusetts	Ohio
Arkansas	Michigan	Oklahoma
California	Mississippi	Oregon
Colorado	Missouri	South Dakota
Florida	Montana	Utah
Idaho	Nebraska	Washington
Illinois	Nevada	Wyoming

To illustrate this point, Figure 3.1 presents a comparison of the number of referenda and initiatives appearing on all state ballots in each national election since 1992. As is immediately evident, focusing solely on initiatives excludes a significant number of propositions on which citizens can vote. Referenda comprised more than half of all ballot measures in every election since 1992 and at least sixty percent of all propositions since 1996. This means that, by tallying only initiatives, the count measurement excludes over half, and sometimes over sixty or seventy percent (as in 1998 and 2002), of the available options for citizens to legislate from the polls.

The exclusion of non-initiative ballot measures from the count likely relates to the conceptual origins of previous measurements of direct democracy. Initially, scholars maintained that the initiative process itself increased turnout, and that simply providing for the possibility of citizens placing their own legislation on the ballot would heighten the likelihood of participation. This belief has since been discarded, due to the inability to find evidence for the relationship in more recent elections and the realization of the endogeneity problems introduced into the analysis by the nonrandom assignment of this

institution. Despite the shift in thinking, however, scholars continue to profess that initiatives differ in some important manner from other forms of direct democracy, and thus exert a unique influence on the decision to vote.

Figure 3.1 – Number of Propositions Appearing on State Ballots by Type, 1992-2008



Source: Initiative & Referendum Institute and National Conference of State Legislatures

Initiatives do clearly differ from other types of direct democracy, most notably because they allow citizens to actually draft the legislation, and this fact undeniably has the potential to affect the issues placed on the ballot and their legislative parameters (Boehmke and Patty 2007). Such a characteristic may tend to make the proposed policies of initiatives, on average, more salient or controversial than other forms of direct democracy. Although this contention provides some support for the focus on initiatives, doing so both includes in the count a number of rather mundane issues that citizens place on the ballot (such as the reduction of the length of legislative sessions or necessity of

building permits under certain circumstances) and excludes a number of highly controversial issues that make it onto the ballot by other means (such as many of the constitutional amendments to ban same-sex marriage). Acknowledging the variance in issue salience or interest is certainly crucial, but the count measurement does not do so, and maintains no expectation that the initiative must exceed some level of “controversialness” to bring citizens to the polls. Because the standard count fails to explicitly take this into consideration, we must look to other potential differences to evaluate the limitation of the measurement to only initiatives.

Both types of propositions permit direct participation by citizens in the legislation-making process, and it is unclear why a measure would be more likely to mobilize citizens simply because a citizen (or interest group) placed it on the ballot rather than the state legislature. This is especially true if we accept that, as discussed in chapter one, the actual initiative process itself does not increase turnout, but some attribute of each individual ballot measure instead. Likewise, while there may be a tendency for larger “campaigns” to arise around citizen-induced initiatives, no barrier exists to groups organizing on their own around other types of ballot measures. Additionally, even if such a campaign does arise for an initiative, it will have difficulty stimulating turnout if the average citizen simply lacks concern for its issue content.

Similar to initiatives, referenda allow ordinary citizens to “take control of the agenda” (Matusaka 2005, 187). While some of these propositions may suffer from a lack of exciting issue content, others rank among those considered as having the greatest potential to mobilize individuals. For example, only six of the eleven same-sex ballot measures that received so much attention in 2004 were initiatives. No theoretical reason

exists to suspect that those same-sex marriage bans placed on the ballot by citizens would affect turnout differently than those appearing on the ballot due to the legislature's actions. This is especially true because the average citizen probably lacks the relevant knowledge to differentiate between initiatives and referenda, and thus cannot do so in making their decision to vote. As such, it remains unclear why this difference would be meaningful with regards to the proposition's ability to mobilize, and it appears that the distinction between the types of direct democracy should not influence one's motivation to vote. In short, there appears to be little theoretical justification to exclude the large number of non-initiative propositions from the count measurement

Moral and tax issue propositions and turnout

Shifting away from the problematic count of the number of initiatives to a focus on issue content, previous work can inform the anticipated impacts of both tax and moral ballot measures. For tax matters, previous research and their failure to spark the interest of peripheral voters in chapter two suggests an episodic (at best) ability to bring citizens to the polls. Significant attention has been devoted to the impact of California's Proposition 13 in 1978, with Lee (1978) noting unusually high turnout for the measure. Sixty-nine percent of eligible Californians showed up to vote (Smith 1998), an astounding figure for a primary election. Similarly, in a broader analysis, Matsusaka (1993a) observes higher turnout on propositions that address distributional issues (under whose heading he includes both tax and moral matters) in comparison to other ballot issues. These findings remain consistent for all California propositions from 1912 to 1989, all North Dakota initiatives from 1914 to 1989, and a cross-section of 1978 measures across states. While potentially suggestive of a constant effect, other

distributional issues may actually drive the estimated impact, with tax matters exerting little influence on their own. This concern, combined with only anecdotal evidence for this relationship and the discussion of these propositions in chapter two, points to an inability of tax ballot measures to habitually mobilize the electorate. In sum, no comprehensive, tax measure specific analysis exists to suggest a consistent impact on participation.

In contrast to the problematic total number of propositions count and other potentially salient measures, we should expect those that address moral issues, based on the discussion in the first chapter, to consistently increase turnout. This possibility has been recognized by scholars, and we need only return to the 2004 presidential election to find an unresolved debate about the influence of moral issue propositions (specifically those attempting to ban same-sex marriage) on turnout. Eleven states placed such measures on their ballots, and while some scholars contend that they exerted no discernable effect on overall turnout (Abramowitz 2004; Burden 2004; Smith et al. 2006), others argue that they increased participation in some, non-battleground states (McDonald 2004). Campbell and Monson (2008) actually conclude that same-sex marriage ballot measures worked at cross-purposes in their overall impact on turnout, mobilizing white evangelical Protestants but demobilizing secularists. Despite the lack of consensus, it is important to note that at least some scholars identified moral issue propositions as being able to raise turnout in presidential elections, when we might expect other factors to overshadow their mobilization ability.

In a more general analysis, Grummel (2008) is among the first to investigate the effect of morality ballot issues on voter participation.²¹ Employing aggregate-level data from 1980 to 2006, he finds that turnout increased by as much as eight percentage points when a morality issue resided on the ballot in midterm elections, though they had no impact on turnout in presidential elections. While insightful, this analysis exhibits three significant limitations. First, Grummel overlooks the inclusion of fixed effects for individual election years, and thus potentially fails to control for important variation that may exist across these years. Second, the employment of aggregate-level data does not permit the determination of a possible individual-level relationship due to concerns about the ecological fallacy. Knowing whether the relationship in question holds at the state level is certainly interesting, but the level of analysis should coincide with that of our theory. Since it is individuals, as opposed to states, who make the decision of whether or not to vote, our analysis should focus on the undetermined impact of moral issue propositions at the individual level (see Hanushek and Jackson 1977).²² Finally, by employing a dummy for states with a morality ballot measure, Grummel does not allow for the cumulative effect that multiple such issues on the same ballot may have on turnout. In essence, this assumes that the placement of a same-sex marriage and an abortion ban on the ballot will exert the same influence on participation as only having the former on the ballot. While the two groups motivated by these measures likely overlap, they probably do not mirror each other exactly. Further work is required to

²¹ Grummel defines morality issues to include same-sex marriage, homosexual rights, stem cell research, abortion, and euthanasia.

²² Hanushek and Jackson (1977) explain that it is a “fact that individual level data are usually richer than aggregate data, permit estimation of more elaborate models, and thus are to be preferred when available” (180). In addition, aggregating across individuals can obscure the relationship one is investigating by suppressing variation in the independent variables across individuals (Hanushek and Jackson 1977).

establish the hypothesized relationship at the individual-level and determine the exact impact of moral issue propositions on turnout.

Hypotheses

Moral issue ballot measures should maintain the ability to stimulate turnout in all elections, though their potential to do so may be somewhat diminished in presidential elections. In contrast, neither the total number of propositions nor the number of tax measures should be associated with an increase in participation in either type of election. Again, I do not contend that moral matters are the only issues that mobilize citizens, and that no other propositions can affect the propensity to vote. Rather, I assert that no theoretical reason exists to believe that simply raising the total number of propositions on the ballot will heighten the likelihood of showing up to the polls. Likewise, the failure to appeal to peripheral voters suggests that tax propositions should be unable to consistently bring individuals to the polls. More formally, I hypothesize:

H1: An increase in the number of moral issues on the ballot will increase turnout in midterm elections.

H2: An increase in the number of moral issues on the ballot will increase turnout in presidential elections, though the effect may be less than in midterm elections.

H3: An increase in the number of total propositions on the ballot will not increase turnout in either midterm or presidential elections.

H4: An increase in the number of tax issues on the ballot will not increase turnout in either midterm or presidential elections.

Data and methods

To test these hypotheses, I analyze individual-level data for all national elections since 1992,²³ a date that coincides with the explosion in the employment of the initiative process.²⁴ Previous studies looking at the relationship between propositions and turnout use the National Election Study (NES) (see Table 3.1; but see Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Tolbert et al. 2009), which consists of a relatively small number of respondents in total and a very small number of respondents from less populated states. In doing so, scholars draw conclusions about states that frequently use the initiative process, such as South Dakota, from data that consist of either a small sample of their residents or none at all (this is the case with South Dakota in the 2004 NES). In addition, these data sets are only representative at the national level, which raises concerns about their employment given our explicit interest in the influence of ballot measures in each state.

To address these data concerns, I employ the Current Population Survey November Supplement (CPS) from 1992 to 2006 and the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) for 2006 and 2008. The CPS is well suited to address questions about turnout (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980) because of its extremely large sample size (at least 70,000 citizens who state whether they voted) and design to be representative at both the state and national level. In contrast to the NES, however, the CPS, while containing important demographic information, is not exhaustive in providing

²³ As previously stated, I employ individual-level data because that represents the level of the relationship in which I am interested.

²⁴ Prior to 1984, moral issues propositions were sporadic (they were on ballots in CA, MI, and ND in 1972; CA and OR in 1978; and AK in 1982). From 1984 to 1990, moral issue propositions appeared on the ballots in three states in each election (CO, OR, and WA in 1984; AR, ME, and OR in 1986; AR, CO, and OR in 1988; and AK, NV, and OR in 1990). The small number of states with such issues on the ballot in each election over the period preceding the starting point of this study, as well as the limitation of these ballot measures to a few specific states, raises concerns about the ability to generalize any results across the country. Although the 1992 election only had four states with a moral issue on the ballot, I included it to expand the number of presidential elections in the study. The 1996 election, which had only two states with moral issues on the ballot, is included for continuity (though I recognize the results may not generalize across the country).

information on the factors known to affect turnout. To address concerns that the results may be biased by the absence of these factors, such as strength of partisanship and interest in politics, I also employ the CCES, which contains these variables. This survey, conducted over the internet, uses a sampling technique that generates a nationally representative sample of the adult population and ensures adequately sized samples from small states. The CCES, like the CPS, provides the benefit of a large sample size (roughly 36,500 individuals) with which to work.²⁵

The large samples for each year greatly facilitate the ability to account for the clustered (or multilevel) nature of the data. Clustering exists when the data have been compiled from multiple levels. In this case, the data set is hierarchical in nature due to the nesting of the “lower level” units of analysis, individuals (*i*), within the “higher level” units, the states (*j*) (Jones 2007). This feature of the data means that the attributes associated with the states in which individuals reside do not vary across individuals within each state (Primo et al. 2007). For example, every Colorado resident will have the same state minority party, voter registration law, and, most importantly, ability to vote on ballot measures. Such state attributes are either unique to Colorado or at least do not correspond to residents of every other state in the country.

The failure to address the multilevel nature of the data leads to misestimated standard errors. In ignoring this nature, we decline to recognize the dependence among individual responses within the same state. Because these attributes are not randomly assigned to states, and the states that individuals reside in determine their exposure, the errors lack independence, which violates the independent and identically distributed

²⁵ All noncitizens and those under the age of eighteen surveyed in the CPS and CCES are excluded from the analyses.

assumption of OLS regression (Primo et al. 2007). In most cases, positive correlation prevails between the errors, causing the estimated standard errors to be too low and the t-statistics to be too high. Often, this means that predictors will appear to have a significant effect on the dependent variable when in reality they do not. Relating this to our situation, the failure to account for clustering may lead us to incorrectly conclude that propositions exert a positive effect on turnout. The clustered nature of the data necessary to investigate the relationship in question has routinely been ignored by scholars (but see Scholzman and Yohai 2008 and Tolbert et al. 2009).

To account for clustering, I employ hierarchical generalized linear modeling (HGLM) with a logit link function, as the dependent variable, the respondent's self-report of whether they voted in the election, is dichotomous.²⁶ As individual-level (or level-one) independent variables, I include demographic characteristics available in the CPS dataset and known to influence one's likelihood of showing up to the polls. These include the individual's age measured in years and their age squared; ordinal variables for income, education, and length of residency in the same location (as the requirement to re-register after moving can decrease the propensity to vote) (Squire et al. 1987); and dummy variables for males, African-Americans, and Hispanics.²⁷ For models based on

²⁶ Self-reported turnout rates are well known to consistently exceed actual turnout rates. Self-reported turnout rates from the CPS are as follows: 69.5% in 1992, as opposed to the actual voter eligible population turnout rate of 58.1%; 51.6% in 1994, as opposed to the actual rate of 41.1%; 63.0% in 1996, as opposed to the actual rate of 51.7%; 49.4% in 1998, as opposed to the actual rate of 39.3%; 66.4% in 2000, as opposed to the actual rate of 55.3%; 51.4% in 2002, as opposed to the actual rate of 40.5%; 71.8% in 2004, as opposed to the actual rate of 60.7%; 54.3% in 2006, as opposed to the actual rate of 41.3%. While the reported rates are certainly inflated, the differences fall below those associated with the NES of 14 to 18 percentage points over the same period (Duff et al. 2007 and own analysis). CCES self-reported rates are significantly higher, with 85.9% and 72.5% of respondents reporting they voted in 2006 and 2008, respectively (actual turnout rate in 2008 was 62.3%).

²⁷ See Appendix C for a complete description of the coding of each variable.

the CCES data, I include ordinal variables measuring strength of partisanship and interest in politics as well.²⁸

As state-level (or level-two) factors, I include the variable of interest, moral issue measures,²⁹ which is a count of the number of moral issues that appear as propositions on the state's ballot.³⁰ As discussed above, the use of a count allows me to capture the cumulative effect of multiple moral issues.³¹ In addition, I tabulate the number of total ballot propositions on the ballot, as well as those that deal with tax issues in the same manner as done for moral issues.³² Despite concerns about the functional form of these variables, I use a linear estimate based on a preliminary analysis and their previous treatment in the literature.³³ Other state-level variables employed in the model include

²⁸ The nature of the 2006 CCES data does not allow for the inclusion of residential mobility in the model. See Appendix C for a complete description of the coding of each variable in the CCES models.

²⁹ See Appendix Table D for a complete list of all moral issue propositions.

³⁰ I employ count of the number of moral issues on the ballot, as opposed to the number of moral issue propositions on the ballot, to control for when two measures that address the same moral issue appear on a state's ballot, as having multiple propositions dealing with the same issue may have no cumulative effect. This overlap is rare, but it does occur twice in 1998 (Colorado had propositions that would ban partial-birth abortion and require of parental notification prior to a minor's abortion, while Oregon had ballot measures to legalize medical marijuana and modify the criminal punishment for possession of small amounts of marijuana). While the propositions address different aspects of the moral issue, it is unclear whether two ballot measures addressing the same issue will lead to higher turnout. The results for the 1998 model remain roughly the same if I use the number of moral issue measures on the ballot, as opposed to the number of moral issues.

³¹ The employment of a count of the number of moral issues on the ballot may appear counterintuitive, given the argument in the first chapter that any increase in turnout likely derives from the issue content of each ballot measure, rather than their number. All moral issues, just as with all propositions in general, clearly cannot be considered equal. I employ this measurement, however, to account for the cumulative effect of multiple moral issues on the ballot. To determine whether the simple presence of a moral issue on the ballot increases turnout, I used a dummy for all states with a moral issue proposition. This variable only heightens participation in 1994.

³² These lists are compiled from the subject description provided by the National Conference of State Legislatures and the classification by issue concern carried out by the Initiative & Referendum Institute.

³³ One could argue that we should expect a diminished return from each additional measure placed on the ballot. This would suggest that the variable should not be treated as linear, but rather transformed in some manner (such as logging it). For moral issue ballot measures, cross tabulation analyses reveal a relatively constant, linear effect throughout the range of the variable for those years in which the relationship attains statistical significance, suggesting the linear treatment is not problematic. Alternatively, dichotomous variables could be employed for each number of moral issues on the ballot, but the fact that relatively few states have had more than one or two moral issues on their ballot means that for the higher values we would essentially be dummifying out one state. There is likely some point where the effect of placing an additional proposition on the ballot produces a diminished return than that of the previous ballot measure, but, with

dummy variables for the presence of senatorial or gubernatorial races, as they may act to stimulate turnout; a variable for the number of days between the closing date to register to vote and the actual election; and a dummy for Southern states. As is the common practice in the literature, I distinguish between midterm and presidential elections in the analyses.

The level-one HGLM equation, based on the individual-level variables, is:

$$\Pr(\text{voting}) = \beta_{0,j[i]} + \beta_{1,j[i]}(\text{age}) + \beta_{2,j[i]}(\text{age}^2) + \beta_{3,j[i]}(\text{education})_i + \beta_{4,j[i]}(\text{income}) + \beta_{5,j[i]}(\text{black}) + \beta_{6,j[i]}(\text{Hispanic}) + \beta_{7,j[i]}(\text{mobility}) + \beta_{8,j[i]}(\text{male}) + e$$

Treating the intercept as a function of the level-two factors, the level-two model is:

$$\beta_{0,j[i]} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{ballotmeasures}) + \gamma_{02}(\text{senate}) + \gamma_{03}(\text{governor}) + \gamma_{04}(\text{registration}) + \gamma_{05}(\text{south}) + u_{0,j}$$

with all other $\beta_j = \gamma_{j0}$

Results and discussion

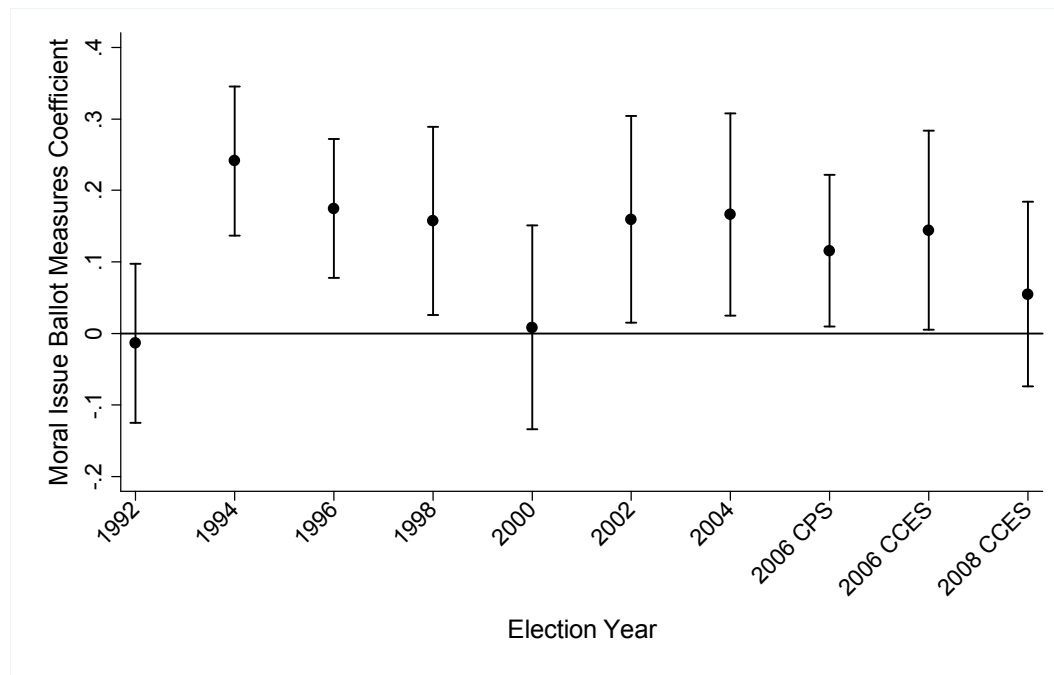
Figure 3.2 presents the HGLM coefficient estimates for the effect of the number of moral issues appearing on the ballot on the probability of voting for all national elections since 1992.³⁴ Focusing first on midterm elections, the figure demonstrates the existence of a positive and statistically significant relationship between moral issue propositions and turnout in all four elections, and for models run with both the CPS and CCES datasets. These results provide substantial support for the first hypothesis, which

regards to moral issues, the small number appearing on the same ballot suggests that the moral issue variable never reaches this point. I do not address the possible nonlinear effect of the total number of propositions here, and instead maintain the conventional treatment in the literature of this variable as linear.

³⁴ This display format possesses certain limitations, as it does not permit the presentation of other estimated coefficients, model specifications, or additional information about control variables. This information can be found in Appendix E. All variables in every model, when significant, exhibit the expected behavior.

maintains that an increase in the number of moral issues on the ballot in midterm elections is associated with an increase in the propensity of showing up to the polls. As the relationship holds when we run models with both datasets, it appears as though the hypothesized relationship exists even when we control for important variables that affect turnout and are absent from the CPS but present in the CCES data.

Figure 3.2 – Coefficient Estimates of the Impact of the Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot on Turnout in National Elections, 1992-2008



Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement (1992-2006) and Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Coefficient estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Estimates are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals.

The results, however, are not as consistent when we shift to presidential elections.

As hypothesized, Figure 3.2 reveals a positive relationship between the number of moral issues on the ballot and turnout in 1996 and 2004,³⁵ which provides evidence that moral

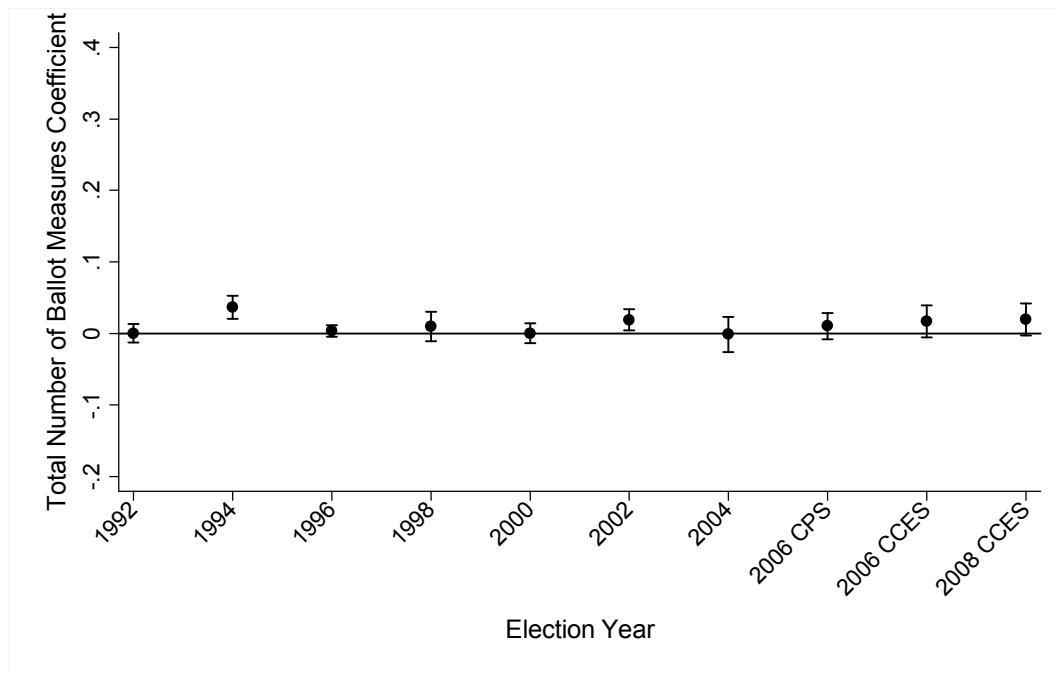
³⁵ As same-sex marriage bans dominate the number of moral issue ballot measures in 2004 (and all other election years to a lesser extent), I ran models for each year with a dummy for these propositions to determine whether they drive the results. Having a same-sex marriage ban on the ballot only increased turnout in 1998, while the relationship in 2000 is actually negative.

issue propositions can increase turnout even in the highly charged atmosphere of presidential elections.³⁶ In contrast, however, the number of moral issues on the ballot does not have any significant effect on turnout for the 1992, 2000, and 2008 elections.

While the evidence indicates that moral issue ballot measures exert a significant effect on turnout, this relationship fails to hold when we shift our attention to the total number of propositions on the ballot. Supporting, but not unequivocal, evidence suggests that simply increasing the number of measures does not raise the propensity to vote in midterm elections. As reported in Figure 3.3, no relationship between direct democracy and turnout exists for the 1998 and 2006 elections. The number of propositions, however, is associated with an increase in the likelihood of showing up to the polls in 1994 and 2002. Although statistically significant, the magnitudes of the coefficients for the moral issue variable dwarf those for the count variable in the corresponding election. The number of moral issues on the ballot coefficients in 1994 and 2002 are more than six and eight times that of their total number counterpart, respectively. Thus, while the analyses indicate an occasional association between the total number of measures on the ballot and the likelihood of voting in midterm elections, the impact of the number of moral issues on the ballot overwhelms that of the number of propositions.

³⁶ These two elections provide an interesting contrast; 1996 was not particularly salient in comparison to other presidential elections, while 2004 was characterized by an active campaign to increase conservative turnout through the presence of moral issues on the ballot. While the results for the 1996 election suggest that moral issue propositions can increase turnout in low salient presidential elections (either when the outcome is not in doubt or the election is not particularly interesting), the 2004 results highlight their ability to increase turnout in the most salient of presidential elections, especially when candidates and parties make them a focal part of their campaign (see Donovan et al. 2008).

Figure 3.3 – Coefficient Estimates of the Impact of the Total Number of Ballot Measures on Turnout in National Elections, 1992-2008



Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement (1992-2006) and Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

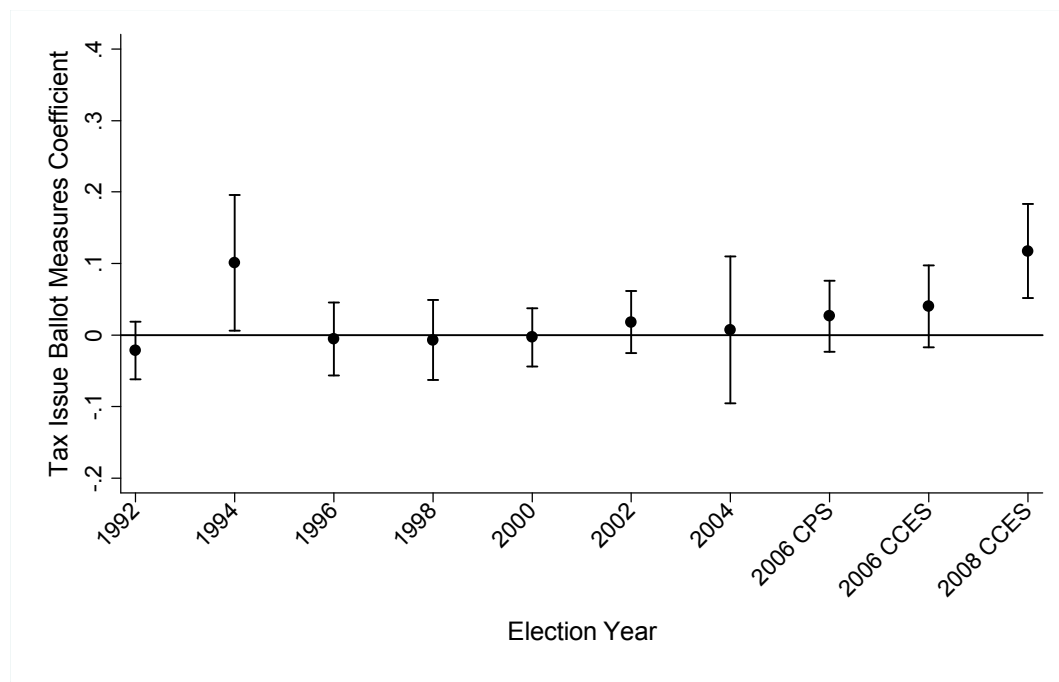
Note: Coefficient estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Estimates are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals.

In contrast, the results in Figure 3.3 show that I identify no discernible effect of the number of propositions on the ballot on the likelihood of voting in presidential elections. As hypothesized, the analyses reveal the absence of this relationship for all presidential elections from 1992 to 2008. These findings support the majority contention in the literature regarding the inability of direct democracy to raise turnout for presidential elections.

The story largely remains the same when we examine those propositions that address tax matters. Figure 3.4 reveals an association between the number of tax propositions on the ballot and an increase in the probability of voting in only two elections: the midterm election of 1994 and the presidential election of 2008. These

results further support the contention of the importance of looking at the issue content of each ballot measure, while also demonstrating that moral issues both impact turnout in the most number of elections and are alone in their uniform effect in all midterm elections. Thus, while ballot measures addressing tax issues may episodically have the potential to increase participation, they do so much less frequently than those dealing with moral issues.

Figure 3.4 – Coefficient Estimates of the Impact of the Number of Tax Issues on the Ballot on Turnout in National Elections, 1992-2008



Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement (1992-2006) and Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Coefficient estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Estimates are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals.

To allow for easier interpretation of the HGLM results, Figure 3.5 illustrates the change in the predicted probability of voting associated with moving from zero to one moral issue on the ballot for all elections, holding all other variables constant at their

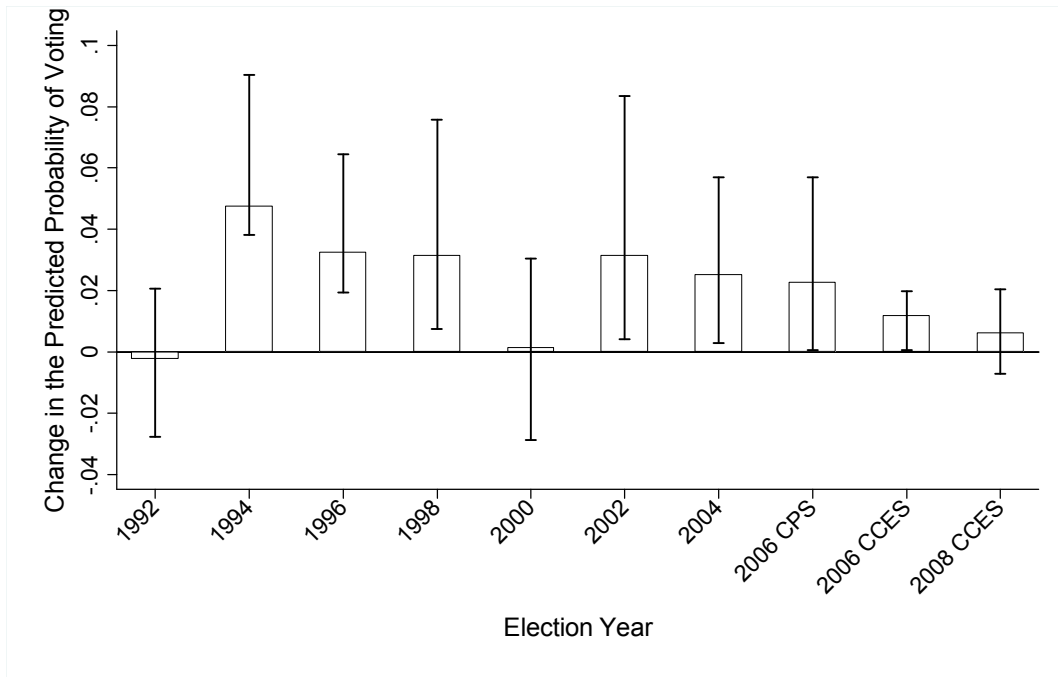
actual values, along with ninety-five percent confidence intervals.³⁷ With regards to the midterm elections, all of the changes in predicted probabilities attain both statistical and substantive significance. The placement of a moral issue on the ballot increased the likelihood of voting by between 2.3 and 3.2 percentage points for the past three midterm elections, with an even larger increase of 4.8 percentage points in 1994 (though this appears to be an aberration). The exception is the 2006 model run with the CCES data, which estimates a greater likelihood of voting due to the placement of a moral issue proposition on the ballot of only 1.2 percentage points. While this lower estimate may reflect the effect of including in the model variables unavailable in the CPS (such as strength of partisanship and interest in politics), it may also be that the incredibly high self-reported turnout in the CCES sample of 85.9% leaves little space for the predicted probability of voting to rise. For the 1996 and 2004 presidential elections (the years in which the change in the predicted probability of voting is statistically significant), the addition of a moral issue proposition to the ballot heightened the propensity to vote by 3.3 and 2.5 percentage points, respectively.³⁸

Shifting our attention to the total number of measures on the ballot, Figure 3.6 reports the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero to one proposition on the ballot for all elections, along with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. As hypothesized, none of the changes in predicted probabilities for presidential elections reach statistical significance. With regards to midterm elections, the analyses

³⁷ Confidence intervals are generated through a simulation process that draws one thousand sets of coefficients from the multivariate normal distribution, based on a mean vector created for the coefficient and covariance matrices. For each individual, the change in the predicted probability is calculated from each set of simulated coefficients, generating a thousand simulated probabilities from which the confidence intervals are computed (see Hanmer and Kalkan (2009) and Herron (1999) for further explanation of the simulation procedure).

³⁸ We should exercise caution in generalizing the effects of the analysis of the 1996 model across the entire population, as only two states had moral issues on their ballot in this year.

Figure 3.5 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Moral Issue on the Ballot for National Elections, 1992-2008



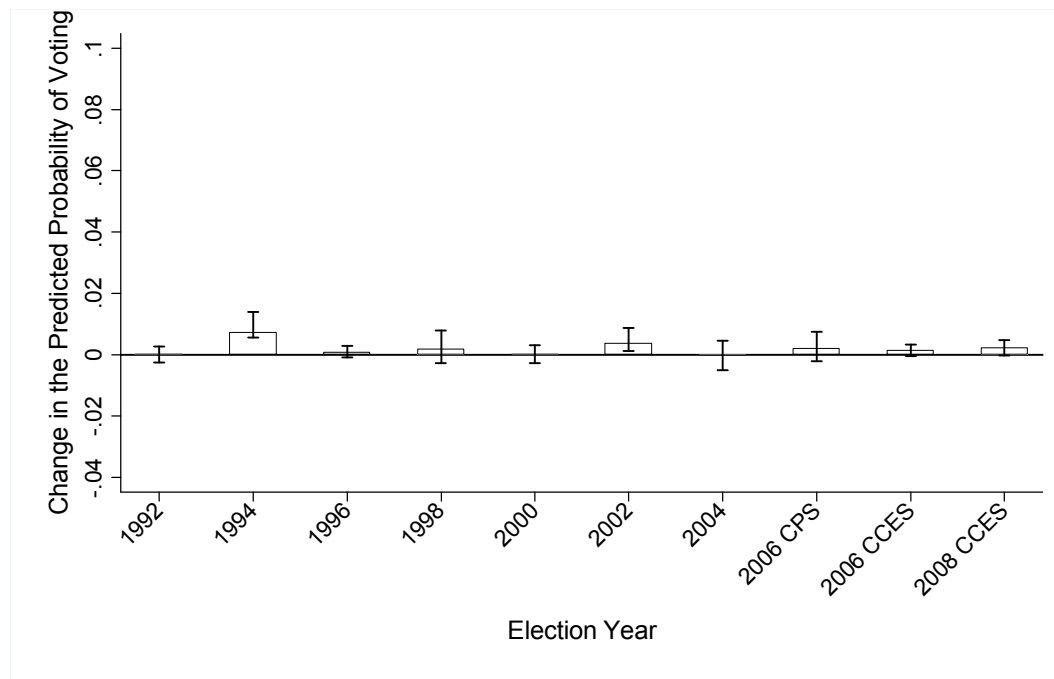
Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement (1992-2006) and Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted probability, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

reveal a statistically significant increase in the predicted probability associated with the placement of one proposition on the ballot in 1994 and 2002. The changes, however, fail to attain substantive significance when interpreted either on their own or in comparison to the effect of a moral issue ballot measure in the same election. In 1994, moving from zero to one proposition on the ballot increased the probability of showing up to vote by 0.74 percentage points. While not an inconsequential movement, the impact is more than six times smaller than that of a moral issue ballot measure in the same election. For 2002, the placement of a proposition on the ballot raises the propensity to vote by 0.38 percentage points. This influence is of questionable substantive significance when interpreted on its own and more than eight times smaller than that of a moral issue

proposition in 2002. In short, while the total number of propositions on the ballot may occasionally have a positive impact on turnout, an additional ballot measure in these rare circumstances only exerts a relatively minor effect.

Figure 3.6 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Measure on the Ballot for National Elections, 1992-2008



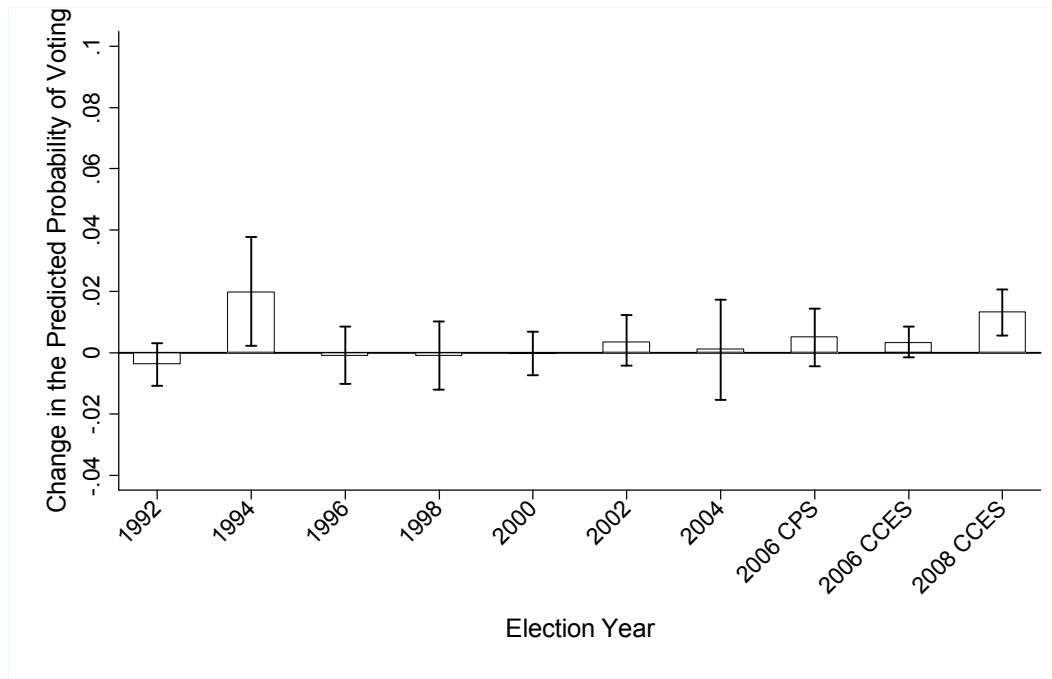
Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement (1992-2006) and Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted probability, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

The substantive influence of tax ballot measures is equally unimpressive. Figure 3.7 illustrates the change in the predicted propensity to vote due to the placement of a tax proposition on the ballot. As is evident, the presence of a tax matter on the ballot increased the likelihood of turning out by 2.0 percentage points in 1994 and 1.3 percentage points in 2008, the only two years in which a positive relationship exists. These effects certainly attain significance, and they compare favorably to the low end of the estimated influences of moral issues measures. A relationship in only two years,

however, pales in comparison to the impact of moral matters. These findings thus reinforce the contention that many ballot issues possess the potential to increase turnout, though they lack the consistency of moral issue propositions to do so.

Figure 3.7 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Tax Issue on the Ballot for National Elections, 1992-2008



Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement (1992-2006) and Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero tax issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted probability, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

In comparison to previous studies, the inclusion of both initiatives and referenda in the count measurement of direct democracy, as well as the proper treatment of the clustered nature of the data, leads to the identification of the relationship in question in much more limited circumstances. Existing investigations find that an increase in the number of initiatives on the ballot heightened the likelihood of turning out in the presidential elections of 1992 (Smith and Tolbert 2004), 1996 (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003), and 2004 (Tolbert et al. 2009). I, however, identify no relationship

for any presidential election from 1992 to 2008, a conclusion supported by Smith and Tolbert (2004) and Tolbert et al. (2003) for the 2000 election and Schlozman and Yohai (2008) for elections from 1992 to 2004. For midterm elections, others discovered a significant relationship for the 1994 (Schlozman and Yohai 2008), 1998 (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003), 2002, and 2006 elections (Tolbert et al. 2009). While I find evidence of this relationship in midterm contests, I do so only in 1994 and 2002 (though Schlozman and Yohai (2008) do not), a much smaller set of elections. To be fair, some of these studies also fail to address the multilevel nature of the data (in addition to focusing only on initiatives), which somewhat hinders any direct comparison. Even when we limit the discussion to those investigations that do so, however, the relationship between all propositions on the ballot and turnout fails to materialize in years for which an association with the number of initiatives on the ballot has been identified (1994, 1998, and 2006 (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Tolbert et al. 2009)).

More importantly, when we account for all propositions on the ballot, I attribute a substantially smaller effect to each additional ballot measure than previously estimated for those years in which the relationship attains statistical significance. The previous impact associated with the 1994 election is 1.13 percentage points (Schlozman and Yohai 2008), while my estimate is 0.74 percentage points, or only sixty-five percent of the previous calculation. Similarly, Tolbert et al. (2009) identify the influence of an additional ballot measure on the propensity to vote in 2002 of roughly 1 percentage point, in comparison to my estimate of only 0.38 percentage points. As both Schlozman and Yohai (2008) and Tolbert et al. (2009) address for the clustered nature of their data, the

differences derive solely from the decision to include all propositions in the count measurement. Thus, even when the relationship reaches statistical significance, the focus on all measures on the ballot drastically reduces the estimated effect of an additional proposition.

Conclusion

Looking at all national elections since 1992, this chapter demonstrates that moral issue propositions significant increased the probability of voting in all midterm and some presidential elections over this time period. Their influence on the likelihood of turning out is substantively impressive for each year in which the relationship attains statistical significance, ranging from 1.2 to 4.8 percentage points (for the 2006 model estimated with CCES data and 1994 election, respectively). In contrast, while tax ballot measures exert a positive effect on the propensity to vote in specific elections (1994 and 2008), these issues do not raise participation rates in nearly as many elections, nor as consistently, as moral issues. These results support the contention highlighted in the previous two chapters that, while other seemingly salient ballot issues may possess the potential to mobilize individuals in specific contexts, they simply cannot match the consistency of moral issue propositions in doing so.

In addition, this chapter provides convincing evidence against the prevailing wisdom that simply increasing the number of propositions positively effects turnout in midterm and at least some presidential elections. The analyses here are the first to account for all propositions on the ballot, instead of solely looking at initiatives. As argued above, no theoretical reason exists to exclude any ballot measures from the count. When we include all propositions in the measurement and control for the multilevel

nature of the data, this variable only influences the decision to vote in the two midterm elections of 1994 and 2002, and never does so in presidential elections for the period under investigation. Thus, not only does this measurement of direct democracy exhibit theoretical concerns (as explained in chapter one), but it very rarely significantly impacts turnout. Furthermore, in these rare circumstances the substantive significance of its effect fails to impress. In short, these findings illustrate the fact that the presence of large numbers of propositions on the ballot is inadequate on its own to get more citizens to the polls.

More broadly, the results illustrate the crucial importance regarding the way in which we choose to measure the direct democracy process to the conclusions we draw about its true impact on turnout. By failing to employ a measurement that accounts for individual ballot measure awareness and importance, we probably overestimate both the occurrence of the relationship and the influence of specific propositions on turnout. Ideally, I would like to look at the effect of each moral issue on participation (i.e. does a proposition addressing euthanasia exert a comparable impact on turnout as one dealing with same-sex marriage?). Insufficient variation of the individual moral issues across state ballots, however, prohibits the calculation of these effects at this time.

Having demonstrated that both direct democracy in general and tax propositions do little to bring citizens to the polls, I focus solely on moral issue measures in the next two chapters (though I return to these two measurements in chapter six). With the relationship between moral issue propositions and turnout at the national level firmly established, I turn my attention to the possible existence of this relationship at the local level in the next chapter.

4 - Moral issue propositions at the local level

The previous chapter illustrates the ability of statewide moral issue propositions to enhance participation rates. Direct democracy, however, does not only occur at the state level. Localities across the country make frequent use of this institution, and citizens frequently vote on a large number of local level moral issue ballot measures. While we should expect these propositions to affect turnout in the same manner as their statewide counterparts, the greater barriers to mobilization associated with local level propositions provide for a more rigorous and conservative test of the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter. If this framework is valid, then we should be able to identify similar effects attributed to these ballot measures despite the atmosphere of lower turnout, salience, and relevant information that dominate local level affairs. At a minimum, such measures should increase turnout in local level elections, which lack state and federal contests to potentially overshadow the proposition and maintain a larger pool of potential voters from which to draw due to lower participation rates. The investigation of local level moral issue ballot measures thus serves as an ideal manner in which to check the robustness of the results and attempt to replicate them in an environment much more hostile to the possibility of affecting participation rates.

In this chapter, I present the first investigation of whether local level moral issue ballot measures (specifically those dealing with homosexual rights) mirror the effect on turnout of their statewide counterparts. I rely on voter history files and carefully selected control cases to test the mobilization impact of these local level propositions across a variety of electoral contexts and states from 2002 to 2009 (and employ a form of exact matching as a robustness check). The results demonstrate that these moral issue

propositions enhance turnout in local level elections and suggest that they may possess the potential to do so even when state or federal offices are on the ballot (such as in midterm or presidential elections). As such, the findings provide additional evidence for the theoretical reasoning behind the ability of moral issue propositions to bring citizens to the polls and highlight the important implications of voting on these issues at the local level.

Direct democracy at the local level

Despite significant interest in the numerous potential secondary effects accruing from direct democracy and the substantial prevalence of the local level initiative, the institution at this level has received little attention. As one might suspect, the institution is heavy ingrained in the politics of western states. In California, for example, voters in every city have a constitutional right to make use of direct democracy (Hanjal and Lewis 2002). More generally, seventy-seven percent of cities in western states allow the process. The institution, however, is not limited geographically, as forty-seven percent of northeastern cities, thirty-five percent of southern cities, and forty-nine percent of central state cities employ the institution.³⁹ Roughly half of all cities in the country permit the initiative process, including many of the largest cities. In fact, evidence suggests that the likelihood of having the initiative process increases as the city population increases (Matsusaka 2004).

Comprehensive information on direct democracy employment at the local level does not exist, so I cannot speak to the frequency and number in which such propositions appear on ballots. Anecdotal evidence, however, can help to at least partially illustrate

³⁹ Central states include North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio.

proposition usage in the cities. Looking at four southern counties in California (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino), Matsusaka (2005) finds that on average at least eighty measures made it onto their ballots per year from 1970 through 2000. In the past decade, these counties have either maintained this rate or actually increased their usage of the institution. Given California's history of frequently using direct democracy at the state level, these counties likely do not serve as a representative sample of the rest of the nation. Their rates, however, while state specific, do suggest that a nontrivial number of local level propositions appear on ballots.

Theoretically, no reason exists to suspect that the same framework developed in chapter one (and supported by evidence in chapter three) regarding the effect of propositions on turnout lacks validity for local level measures. These ballot measures still provide the opportunity for citizens to legislate from the polls, and the scope of the proposition should not matter in its ability to affect the decision to turn out on Election Day. While the characteristics of local level elections differ drastically from their state and federal counterparts, the dynamics of local level direct democracy should mirror those of the state level institution. In other words, any local level proposition that fulfills the two necessary requirements to increase turnout (awareness and importance) should be able to do so.

Local level measures, however, face larger obstacles to reaching these thresholds and matching the mobilization ability of those at the state level when state or federal contests appear on the ballot. Offices up the ballot, for example, likely garner significantly more attention, such as races for the presidency or other national offices. Even in odd-year elections, the presence of an important statewide race (such as for

governor) can potentially overshadow even a highly controversial local matter. Their limited application to a certain city or county (as opposed to the entire state) necessarily dictates that their influence is less than that of a statewide proposition. The ability of local level elections to command considerable attention is admittedly lower, with less attention paid to city level races than other levels of government (Lowery and Lyons 1989). While some larger localities may witness high levels of political coverage by local news sources, this may not be the case in many, especially smaller, cities (Oliver 2001). Furthermore, although political interest varies considerably depending upon a number of factors (such as population size and heterogeneity) (Oliver and Ha 2007), this difficulty is reflected in the substantially lower turnout rates and number of votes cast for local level elections (Green et al. 2003), especially when they are not held at the same time as presidential or congressional elections (Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Wood 2002).

Citizens also likely possess less knowledge about local affairs, given their limited knowledge of national issues and politics in general (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). While we have little information about levels of knowledge regarding local contests and offices, we should expect them to be even lower than those of state level affairs and officials, which are significantly lower than those regarding their national counterparts (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Hogan 2008; Patterson et al. 1992; Songer 1984). For example, significantly fewer respondents to the 2008 CCES were able to identify which party controls their state legislative chambers than both chambers of Congress or the party identification of their governor and members of the House and Senate. Likewise, the accuracy of relevant information on local level politics, such as knowledge regarding school expenditures and tax rates, remains remarkably low (Teske et al. 1993). Due to

the depressed level of political knowledge and awareness of this important information, we should not expect significant numbers of citizens to recognize candidate stances on the number of housekeeping tasks addressed at the local level (Lowery and Lyons 1989; Teske et al. 1993). Given these circumstances, successfully raising awareness of a local level proposition and sufficiently advertising its importance becomes a daunting task.

On the other hand, the admittedly lower competition for attention in local elections could potentially facilitate the ability of ballot measures to increase the likelihood of participation. In addition, given the limited campaigning that occurs and the small number of newsworthy political events at this level, any effect of a treatment intended to increase turnout may be more readily evident (Green et al. 2003). These factors, combined with the larger number of individuals from which to mobilize provided by the low participation rates in local elections, may mean that the bar for local level ballot measures to increase turnout rates is not as high as it initially appears. Despite the problems described above, existing research on California, though not representative of the nation as a whole, suggests higher turnout in local elections with a proposition on the ballot (Hanjaj and Lewis 2003). We should thus expect local level propositions that meet the requirements of awareness and importance to be able to increase participation in elections without state or federal offices on the ballot, while their ability to do so in midterm and presidential elections remains less clear.

Moral issue ballot measures at the local level

Concerns regarding these obstacles matter even less for propositions addressing moral issues because of the relevance to the expressive choice framework in explaining the decision to vote on these ballot measures. With moral issues, a limited scope of the

ballot measure (i.e. addressing only a locality as opposed to the entire state) does not hinder the decision to vote, as this decision is not contingent on the ability to affect the outcome or ensure its application to the widest number of individuals. In addition, because the vote serves as an expression of values, the lower attention and media coverage afforded to local issues, combined with depressed levels of political knowledge regarding local affairs, simply do not affect the propensity to turn out to nearly the same degree as they might for other proposition issues.

Propositions addressing moral issues consist of a small percentage of the number of local level measures on the ballot, and likely comprise a much lower proportion of total measures than at the state level. One reason for this is the fact that many moral issues are defined at the state level, leaving fewer issue areas in which local ballot measures can legislate. Policies concerning the implementation of the death penalty, permission of euthanasia, legalization of stem cell research, and access to abortion, for example, are all decided at the state level, making any local level attempt to address them largely futile. Likewise, the definition of marriage is a state issue, and while some localities (such as San Francisco) have issued or threatened to issue same-sex marriage certificates, the determination of these relationships at the state level has severely limited any attempt to deal with this issue at the local level. In addition, while some cities have passed ordinances attempting to legislate obscenity, little of this debate has spilled onto the ballot. As such, local level reformers can only hope to possibly affect policy in a few areas, such as drug legalization and homosexual rights.⁴⁰ This restriction of moral issue

⁴⁰ While federal drug policy overrides any enacted law at the local level (or state level), this does not prohibit localities from dictating how their officials will enforce existing laws. For example, legalizing medical marijuana in a city does not protect a user or officially recognized dispensary from federal prosecution, but it does protect them from local law enforcement officials. As such, these ballot measures

areas subject to legislation from the ballot understandably limits the number of such local level propositions. Instead, less salient issues, such as growth and institutional reform, may dominate ballot measure issue content (such as in California) (Hanjal and Lewis 2002).

Despite this fact, there have been a number of local level propositions addressing some moral issues. For example, citizens in many localities across the country over the past decade formulated policy regarding marijuana from the ballot. The substantial range of policies placed on the ballot at this level includes lower penalties for possession, making prosecution of possession the lowest priority for law enforcement officials, decriminalization of the possession of small amounts of the drug, and the legalization of medical marijuana. Localities in as diverse states as Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, and Washington all dealt with the issue of marijuana at some point in the past decade through a ballot proposition. While they are not the focus of this chapter, these propositions illustrate the prevalence of moral issues at the local level across the country.

In this chapter, I focus specifically on local level propositions that address homosexual and transgender rights. Since the early 1970s, there have been at least 114 measures addressing these rights on city ballots, including twenty-one in the past decade (Haider-Markel et al. 2007; Keck 2009; Leonard 2008, 2009a).⁴¹ These propositions sought to enact or repeal the extension of civil rights to homosexuals in employment, housing, and public accommodations; ban gay books; enact domestic partner laws; allow or repeal domestic partner registration; and ban gay rights laws. While cities across the

are not solely political statements, in contrast to those propositions addressing other issues considered at the state or federal level.

⁴¹ See Appendix F for a complete list and description of these propositions.

country addressed at least one of these issues at the polls over the past few decades, localities in Florida, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Ohio, Texas, and Washington all did so in the past ten years. This significant number of local level ballot measures should serve as an adequate population from which to draw cases to test their ability to mobilize citizens.

Hypotheses

Because they meet the two necessary requirements to affect participation rates (awareness and importance), we should expect all propositions addressing moral issues to potentially increase the likelihood of voting, regardless of their scope. The empirical results presented in chapter three, which show that statewide moral issue ballot measures raise turnout in all midterm and some presidential elections, suggest that these propositions consistently impact the propensity to vote when their scope matches that of the highest office on the ballot. I suspect that local level moral issue ballot measures follow a similar pattern, bringing more citizens to the polls in off-year local level elections in which no state or federal contests (for elected offices or propositions) are present to overshadow their ability to do so. In contrast, the limited resources available to local level measures make it unlikely that they can raise participation rates in the presence of more resource-rich contests for state or federal office. More formally:

H1: The presence of a local level moral issue measure on the ballot will increase turnout in local level elections with no state or federal contest on the ballot.

H2: The presence of a local level moral issue measure on the ballot will not increase turnout in state or federal elections.

Data and methods

Pitfalls to turnout analyses at the local level

Any investigation of the effect of local level institutions on turnout faces significant hurdles. One such concern is the lack of adequate data. Many analyses of turnout employ nationwide survey data, which severely limit the number of respondents one can hope to find from the relevant locale. While this might be readily evident with regards to the NES, other larger surveys, such as the CPS and CCES (which are employed in the last chapter), also lack sufficient numbers of individuals to perform any meaningful analysis. Surveys targeted at a specific city or county can help to overcome this problem, but their existence and availability are rare. One can turn to aggregate-level data, but its employment raises concerns about ecological fallacy. In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter, data at the same level of the investigation (individual-level) is preferable. In short, neither of these commonly employed strategies are desirable for the analysis in question.

A second roadblock to this investigation entails the identification of a proper comparison group, or counterfactual. The number, variety, and competitiveness of contests on ballots differ significantly from city to city on Election Day. Without a consideration of these variations, it is difficult to assign responsibility to the ballot measure for any differences in participation rates. How can we know, for instance, that the real reason behind the higher turnout rate in city A versus city B was not the presence of the proposition, but rather the fact that city A had a mayoral race on the ballot as well while city B did not? This may not be much of a concern for midterm or presidential elections, as one can reliably suspect that the federal and state level offices on the ballot trump any variation in city or county level contests. For off-year local level elections in particular, however, something must be done to address the potential differing electoral

contexts between the treatment and control groups (locales with and without moral issue propositions, respectively).

Similarly, the significant heterogeneity in city population characteristics further hinders the ability to identify an adequate comparison group. This concern highlights the problematic nature of estimating causal effects from observational data. When the treatment is not randomly assigned (as is the case here), fundamental differences often exist between those who do and do not receive the treatment, which can bias our estimates.⁴² Overcoming these obstacles is crucial to providing any confidence in the estimated effects of moral issue ballot measures on turnout, a task that I attempt to accomplish below.

Overcoming obstacles to analysis

To overcome the data limitations described above, I rely on voter history files obtained for the state in which the election took place. These rolls contain every registered voter in the locale of importance, providing tens of thousands (or hundreds of thousands, or millions) of individuals to compare who do or do not have the opportunity to vote on a moral issues proposition. While this large number of individuals provides sufficient individual-level cases for the analysis, the files often lack important covariate information for which to control. All voter rolls contain the potential voter's age and date of registration, but beyond that there is significant variation in the information collected by each individual state, such as indicators for partisanship, gender, race, and ethnicity. I do, however, have the ability to control for participation in previous elections, though this information may only go back a few years (and even less if the individual has recently moved). Despite their limitations, the employment of these voter rolls, due to the large

⁴² See Appendix G for a more detailed discussion of this potential problem.

number of individuals that comprise them, provides significant leverage in determining any effect of moral issue propositions on turnout.

Additionally, we can address concerns about the identification of a valid comparison group through its careful construction. In doing so, I focus on two key areas of comparison. The first is the variation in electoral contests across city ballots. For local level elections, I take care to ensure that the treatment group does not have a higher up the ballot contest that could, instead of the moral issue proposition, be responsible for any difference in turnout rates. For example, if the treatment locality has a mayoral race on the ballot, it makes little sense to compare it to a city that only has city council elections. The second area of variation for which I guard against is the composition of the sample. I take significant care to ensure that the aggregate populations for the two groups resemble each other as much as possible on indicators for which I lack control variables in the voter file. This includes education (percent with a high school degree), median household income, race, and ethnicity.

Selection of cases

I restrict my analysis to propositions that have appeared on city ballots in the past decade for reasons described below, which provides twenty-one potential elections to examine. From this list, specific contests are selected based on three criteria. The first is the ability to identify a proper comparison group. As discussed above, this problem plagues investigations of local level effects, especially in local level elections (i.e. those with no state or national office on the ballot). The list of races on city ballots must be comparable in order to be able to assign any difference in turnout levels to the impact of the moral issue ballot measure, and the control group needs to at least come close to

matching the treatment city on relevant population characteristics. If both of these requirements cannot be fulfilled, then one cannot confidently attribute an estimated effect to the ballot measure, rendering any analysis futile. Despite an extensive attempt to identify and/or construct sufficient control groups for each of the treatment areas, this criterion leads to the elimination of nine of the cases.⁴³ Many of these are cases where differing ballot contexts do not permit an adequate investigation, while others involve localities sufficiently different from the rest of the surrounding areas so as to suggest that no proper analysis could be carried out under any electoral context. As such, I must concede that the results presented below may not generalize across all cases throughout the country.

The second criterion applied is the availability of voter history rolls. To conduct these analyses, one ideally needs the first voter file created after the election in question to ensure the most complete list of voting activity. The further one gets away from the election date, the less reliable the voter files are for the investigation. For example, let us assume that we would like to investigate the effect of a measure on the ballot in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, in November 2003. Using a recent voter file (June 2010) introduces an almost seven year gap between the election and the time of analysis. During this time, individuals have undoubtedly moved, died, and been (improperly) removed from the voting rolls, among other possibilities. In the Cleveland Heights context, despite the fact that roughly forty percent of registered voters took part in the elections, the June 2010 file lists this as closer to one percent.

⁴³ These cases include the 2009 measure in Gainesville, FL; the 2008 measure in King County, WA; the 2006 and 2001 measures in Austin, TX; the 2005 measure in Topeka, KS; the 2002 measure in Miami-Dade County, FL; the two 2001 measures in Miami Beach, FL, and the 2000 measure in Weston, FL.

Such a drastic difference in these two files illustrates that any convincing estimation must be based upon data that is sufficiently close to resembling the original voter rolls. This makes the selection of cases highly dependent upon the ability to acquire such lists. Unfortunately (for this analysis), the administration of elections at the state and county levels leads to significant variation in the quality and maintenance of these older voter files across states. In Washington and Michigan, for example, neither the relevant county nor state archives their older lists. A related barrier to obtaining these lists is cost; Maine, for example, charges \$2000 for a copy of the most recent file, making any analysis of ballot measures in this state cost prohibitive.⁴⁴

Third, we should exclude any cases in which a statewide proposition dealing with a similar issue also appears on the ballot, as it will probably overshadow the local level measure. If, for example, there is a proposition dealing with homosexual rights on the ballot at the state level, then one would suspect that any effect that the local measure might have on turnout will be trumped by its statewide counterpart. Such a contention reflects the justification behind the measurement employed in chapter three, which argues that we should not expect two propositions addressing the same issue content to have a greater effect on turnout than one ballot measure addressing that issue. While uncommon, this occurs in Cincinnati in 2004, as voters in the city were also met with a state constitutional ban on same-sex marriage when they entered the polling booth. Because the statewide ballot measure likely received significantly more media coverage and campaign expenditures than its local level counterpart, it makes little sense to test

⁴⁴ These barriers exclude from analysis the 2000 ballot measure in Fernland, MI; the 2001 measures in the Michigan cities of Huntington Woods, Kalamazoo, and Traverse; and the 2002 propositions in Ypsilanti, MI, Westbrook, ME, and Tacoma, WA.

whether the local level measure had any effect on turnout above and beyond that of the statewide proposition.

After these eliminations, four elections remain in which to investigate the effect of local level moral issue propositions on turnout. These include Sarasota City, FL, in 2002; Cleveland Heights, OH, in 2003; Hamtramck, MI, in 2008; and Kalamazoo City, MI, in 2009. The data employed in the analyses are from January 2003 for Sarasota City, June 2004 for Cleveland Heights, and June 2010 for both Michigan cases.⁴⁵ Although the extenuating circumstances do not allow for a random selection of ballot campaigns to investigate, and despite the fact that I only have information on four elections, these cases manage to cover roughly all parts of the decade and provide a variety of electoral contexts in which to test the ability of local level moral issue propositions to enhance turnout (one presidential, one midterm, and two local level elections). This significant range in the year and type of contest should provide an adequate description of when (if ever) local level moral issue measures increase participation rates.

Overcoming the remaining obstacles

I employ a probit regression model as the dependent variable, whether or not the individual voted, is dichotomous. To account for the remaining variation between the treatment and control groups, I use a form of matching as a robustness check. The goal of this technique is to adjust the data prior to its statistical analysis in order to eliminate or reduce the relationship between the treatment and the covariates that may explain the assignment of the treatment, while at the same time inducing little bias and inefficiency.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Florida and Michigan data were obtained from the relevant Secretary of State's offices; Ohio data was shared by Michael McDonald.

⁴⁶ Doing so requires the pruning of observations from the data set so that the remaining data exhibit a better balance between the treatment and control groups, or that the empirical distributions of the covariates (X_i)

Most matching methods involve finding and matching at least one control unit for each treatment unit that is similar on all the covariates. The simplest manner in which to understand this idea is in terms of one-to-one exact matching. In this case, one treated unit is matched with one control unit for which all of the values of covariates are identical. For example, one individual from Cleveland Heights (who received the treatment) would be matched to someone in the comparison group (who did not receive the treatment) who shares the same age, year of registration, voting history, and any other characteristics included in the voter file. In essence, these two individuals are exactly the same (at least in terms of the characteristics for which we have information) except that one received the treatment and one did not. This process is then repeated for all individuals in the sample, creating two essentially equivalent groups. The resulting preprocessed data set is the same as the original data set minus any unmatched control units, which are dropped from the analysis.⁴⁷

While exact matching is ideal, it can often lead to identifying few matches and thus employ little of the data. As one would imagine, identifying essentially equivalent groups can be a significant challenge, as the number of comparisons to be made can grow at an almost exponential rate, depending on the number of independent variables and their nature. This is especially true if the covariates are highly dimensional or contain continuous variables. To address this concern, I use a variation called coarsened exact

explaining assignment of the treatment (T_i) are more similar between the two groups. Matching is thus a form of preprocessing the data, not a technique to actually analyze the data. If the data can be adjusted so that T_i and X_i are completely unrelated (and exact balance is achieved), then a simple means test on the matched data will suffice. If one is unable to make them completely unrelated, then model dependence is not eliminated but may still be significantly reduced. In doing so, one can select, duplicate, or selectively drop observations from their sample without increasing bias as long as doing so is only a function of T_i and X_i (Ho et al. 2007).

⁴⁷ While discarding unmatched control units can decrease both bias and variance, so can discarding unmatched treatment units. As such, dropping cases through matching can actually increase the efficiency of estimates (Ho et al. 2007).

matching (CEM) (Iacus et al. 2008), which temporarily coarsens each variable into substantively meaningful groups that are then exactly matched. These groups are then dropped, and the original values of the matched data are employed in the analysis.⁴⁸ While pre-processing the data is often used for the primary data analysis, here it serves only as a robustness check on the probit regression results.⁴⁹

Results

To provide a better picture of when local level moral issue propositions can increase turnout, I examine the elections by their type (local, midterm, or presidential), as opposed to chronological order.

Local level elections

In 2003, residents in Cleveland Heights, OH faced Issue #35 when they showed up to vote in the November 4 Cuyahoga County general election. The local level initiative proposed the establishment of a domestic partner registry. Such a registry, while not conferring any outright benefits, serves as a certified record of a couple's relationship that has been used in other jurisdictions to grant health insurance and other benefits reserved for spouses. The organization Heights Families for Equality led the charge in support of the ballot measure, with members collecting the necessary signatures

⁴⁸ This strategy shares many of the same benefits as exact matching while using a greater proportion of the data. The drawback, however, depends on the size of the coarsened bins; as the range of values included in each group expands, the number of total bins decreases, which leads to greater variation within each group and potentially higher imbalance (Iacus et al. 2008). In my case, all variables in the model are dummies except for year of birth and registration. As such, the amount which the analyses are dependent upon coarsening the data is limited. Analysis of each case below using exact matching does not change the direction of the estimate or the (non)existence of the relationship but does prune significantly more cases from the data than CEM. CEM is employed because it allows me to employ more of the data while still achieving balance for all control variables. I also use matching with replacement and permit more than one-to-one matching to both increase the number of matches that can be made and the balance.

⁴⁹ Matching achieves balance on the included covariates in each of the examples below, but the limited number of such variables available in the voter files raises concerns about whether we can really consider the treatment and control groups as essentially equivalent. The fact that the results largely remain the same in models with and without the preprocessed data suggests substantial confidence in the estimated effects.

to put the issue to the voters. In response, the city council declined to enact a domestic registry law, which meant that it automatically went before citizens on the ballot (Maria Santana 2003).

Individuals and organizations on both sides of the issue mobilized to affect the outcome. In the campaign to support the proposition, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force contributed \$27,500 and sent both paid workers and volunteers to the city in the days before the election (Maria Santana 2003), while Heights Families for Equality spent nearly \$85,000 during the campaign (Resnick 2003b). The ballot measure also received endorsements from United States Representatives Dennis Kucinich and Stephanie Tubbs Jones (O'Malley 2003). Opponents of the ordinance included the organizations Saving Our Families Together and Cleveland Heights Families First Initiative, as well City Council member Rev. Jimmie Hicks Jr., the lone opponent of the ordinance on the council (Resnick 2003a).

The proposed ordinance was passed with 54.9% of the vote, as 7,600 residents voted in favor and 6,290 against (Leonard 2003). While roughly sixty localities in the country maintained similar registries when the proposition was enacted (Resnick 2003a), this outcome marked the first time that a domestic partner registry was adopted through the use of a ballot initiative. Although San Francisco had earlier enacted such a registry through popular vote, its proposition was placed on the ballot by the Board of Supervisors, not citizens. (Leonard 2003).

The counterfactual constructed for Cleveland Heights consists of residents from Shaker Heights, South Euclid, University Heights, and Euclid. The first three cities all neighbor Cleveland Heights, while Euclid's close proximity to the city and comparable

population size make for a favorable comparison (all citizens in the analysis reside in Cuyahoga County). This comparison group closely reflects the treatment city on a range of demographic indicators. According to the 2000 Census, the racial and ethnic composition of Cleveland Heights is 52.5% white, 41.8% African American, and 1.6% Hispanic. Its median household income is \$46,731, and 91.6% of adult residents possess at least a high school degree. This compares favorably to the range of these indicators for the cities that comprise the counterfactual; a population that is between 59.9 and 75.4% white, 20.6 and 34.1% black, and 1.0 and 1.6% Hispanic; a median household income of between \$35,151 and \$63,983; and a high school degree attainment rate of between 82.1 and 94.6%. Cleveland Heights tends to fall in the middle of these boundaries on education and income indicators, though it possesses somewhat less white and more black residents than the counterfactual average.⁵⁰ If anything, however, this makes the test a conservative one (given the on average lower voting rates of the African American population in comparison to the white population).

Because no state or national elections appear on the ballot, the construction of the counterfactual is contingent on similar electoral contexts prevailing in each city. Each locale has a comparable list of contests on their ballot to the city council elections and two ballot measures that greeted voters in Cleveland Heights. All of the cities in the counterfactual have city council elections; Euclid, Shaker Heights, and South Euclid have mayoral races; and Euclid, Shaker Heights, and University Heights have propositions on their ballot. Turnout in Cleveland Heights for the general election reached 44.1%, which compares to 41.3% in Euclid, 32.3% in Shaker Heights, 44.6% in South Euclid, and

⁵⁰ Other neighboring cities (Cleveland and East Cleveland) are excluded from the analysis due to substantial differences on one or more demographic variables that cannot be controlled for in the matching analysis.

40.1% in University Heights. This translates into a turnout rate of 39.3% for the control group. Of the overall sample in the analysis, 29.77% received the treatment.

I begin by performing a pre-matching probit analysis using the information available in the voter file as control variables. Unfortunately, the Ohio voter files are not as exhaustive in the information they collect as other files, lacking data on race, gender, and partisanship. They do possess voting histories for the 1999 to 2002 general elections, as well as the 2000, 2002, and 2003 primaries, along with year of birth and registration. In addition, a proxy for partisan identification is included, which labels an individual as belonging to a party if they vote in their primary for two subsequent elections.⁵¹ The first column of Table 4.1 presents the results, which demonstrate that the moral issue proposition has a positive effect on turnout.

The pre-matching analysis determines the effect of the moral issue proposition on the propensity to vote if the treatment is randomly assigned or if the treatment and control groups are essentially equivalent with regards to all of the relevant covariates. Because we know that the treatment lacks random assignment, I test the contention that the two groups are essentially equivalent. Column two of Table 4.1 reveals statistically significant differences between the means for the two groups exist with regards to almost every control variable (turnout rates in the 2000 and 2002 general elections being the lone exceptions). I match on all of the control variables to determine whether these findings rely upon the nonrandom assignment of the ballot measure.⁵² The third column of Table

⁵¹ The coding of each control variable in all analyses can be found in Appendix H.

⁵² This procedure leads to 96.3% of all of the individuals receiving the treatment being matched and a dramatic reduction in the mean differences for the treatment and control groups. As evident from the fourth column of Table 1, balance is achieved for every control variable, providing significant confidence in moving forward with the analysis.

4.1 presents probit results for the model run with the preprocessed data, demonstrating that the estimated effect of the treatment remains positive and statistically significant.

Table 4.1 – Presence of Moral Issue Measure on the Ballot and Turnout, Ohio 2003

	Pre-Matching		Post-Matching	
	β	Balance	β	Balance
Moral Issue Ballot Measure	0.283	-	0.344	-
	(0.019)		(0.020)	
General 1999	0.837	0.043	0.741	0.000 ^a
	(0.022)		(0.025)	
General 2000	0.334	0.001	0.209	0.000 ^a
	(0.024)		(0.025)	
General 2001	0.671	-0.014	0.655	0.000 ^a
	(0.021)		(0.023)	
General 2002	0.937	-0.006	0.910	0.000 ^a
	(0.020)		(0.022)	
Primary 2000	-0.016	-0.047	0.053	0.000 ^a
	(0.022)		(0.024)	
Primary 2002	-0.084	0.007	0.077	0.000 ^a
	(0.031)		(0.034)	
Primary 2003	0.962	-0.046	0.911	0.000 ^a
	(0.021)		(0.022)	
Democrat	1.571	-0.055	1.597	0.000 ^a
	(0.020)		(0.021)	
Republican	1.913	0.016	1.921	0.000 ^a
	(0.036)		(0.044)	
Birth Year	0.003	-3.127	0.002	-0.000 ^a
	(0.001)		(0.001)	
Registration Year	-0.002	-4.207	-0.002	0.052
	(0.000)		(0.000)	
Constant	-4.795	-	-5.809	-
	(1.021)		(1.417)	
N	109,420		100,873	
Pseudo-R ²	.412		.412	

Source: June 2004 Cuyahoga County, OH voter history file.

Note: β estimates are probit coefficients. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Balance is the mean difference between the treatment and control groups for the relevant variable. Coefficients and mean differences in bold signify statistical significance at $p < .05$.

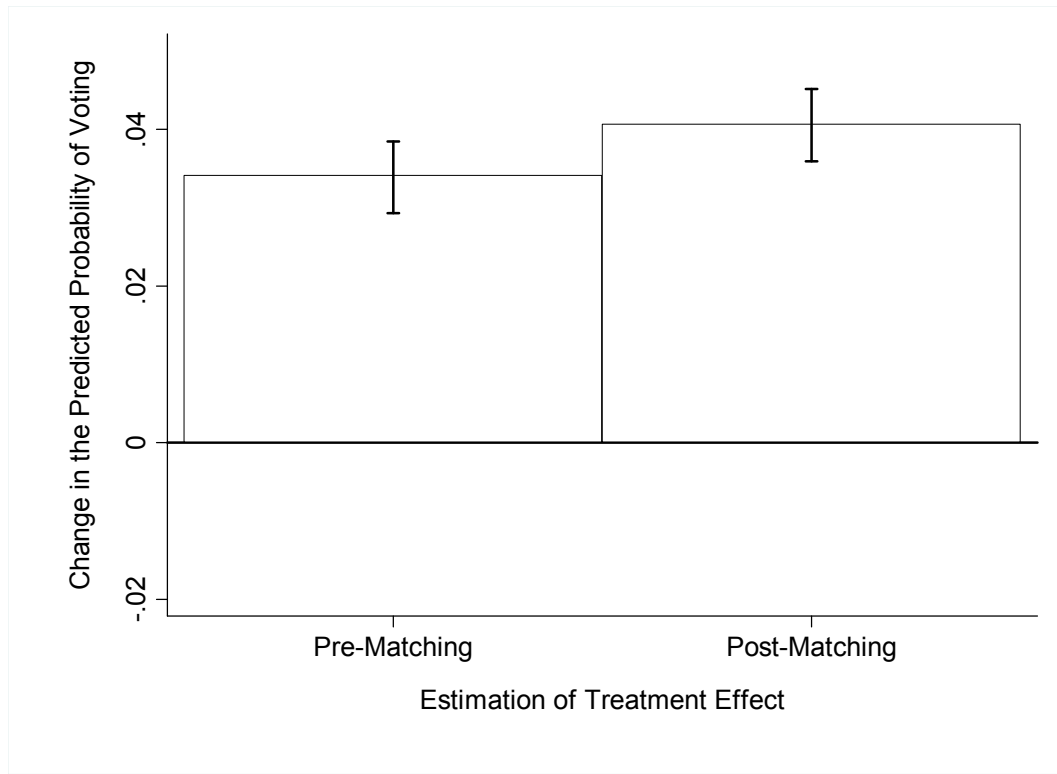
a: Differences are smaller than 0.001.

To facilitate the interpretation of the estimated treatment effect, I calculate the change in the predicted probability associated with the placement of the moral issue measure on the ballot pre- and post-matching, holding all other variables at their actual values. Figure 4.1 presents these results, along with ninety-five percent confidence intervals generated through simulation.⁵³ In the pre-matching model, receiving the treatment increases the likelihood of voting by 3.41 percentage points. Post-matching, the estimated increase rises slightly to 4.07 percentage points. The consistency in overall direction, magnitude, and statistical significance in both models suggests substantial confidence in the estimated effect.

The second local level election in the sample took place in Kalamazoo City, Michigan, in 2009. In December 2008, the Kalamazoo City Commission unanimously passed a gay-rights ordinance. In response, citizen opponents collected sufficient signatures to place the issue on the ballot for the May 2009 election. Instead of placing the issue on the ballot, the city commission decided instead to simply rescind the ordinance in January. The body, however, chose to unanimously readopt the ordinance on June 29, and the new policy went into effect on July 9 (Liberty 2009). Opponents of the new law again organized against it, and a successful second petition drive forced the ordinance onto the November ballot (Mack 2009).

⁵³ Confidence intervals are generated through a simulation process that draws one thousand sets of coefficients from the multivariate normal distribution, based on a mean vector created for the coefficient and covariance matrices. For each individual, the change in the predicted probability is calculated from each set of simulated coefficients, generating a thousand simulated probabilities from which the confidence intervals are computed (see Hanmer and Kalkan (2009) and Herron (1999) for further explanation of the simulation procedure).

Figure 4.1 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Moral Issue on the Ballot, Ohio 2003



Source: June 2003 Cuyahoga County, OH voter history file.

Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted probability, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

The policy adopted by the city commission, Ordinance No. 1856, banned discriminatory practices on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in the provision of housing, public accommodations, and employment. The drive to repeal the law was led by Kalamazoo Citizens Voting No to Special Rights Discrimination, which counted among its members numerous religious leaders and county officials (including the county treasurer). Pro-ordinance organizations, led by One Kalamazoo, mobilized to counter the opposition and received financial backing from a wealthy local philanthropist, the ACLU, and many unions (Jessup 2009b). Opponents argued that the city overstepped both state and federal law in creating a protected class, and in doing so infringed on the

rights of other citizens, especially those who view homosexuality as immoral. Proponents, on the other hand, contended that the ordinance sent the signal that Kalamazoo is inclusive and willing to go beyond existing policies to guarantee the equal treatment of all residents in the city (Jessup 2009a).

On November 3, voters in the city approved the referendum (and thus maintained the ordinance) by a significant margin. The vote total was 7,671 to 4,731, with approval coming in all but three of the city's voting places and absentee voters passing the measure by a large margin. In doing so, Kalamazoo became the sixteenth Michigan city to adopt a gay-rights ordinance covering these protections (Mack 2009). Campaign expenditures were high (over \$458,000 in total by both sides), though proponents of the ordinance drastically outspent opponents \$402,035 to \$55,209. This was the most ever spent on a single ballot measure in Kalamazoo County and translated into roughly \$37 spent for every vote cast on the proposition (Jessup 2009b).

The counterfactual consists of residents from the rest of Kalamazoo County with elections at the same time. These areas include Alamo Township, Parchment City, and Portage City. The racial and ethnic makeup of Kalamazoo City, according to American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for 2006 to 2008 (the closest estimates available), is 71.7% white, 21.5% African American, and 5.1% Hispanic. The median household income for the city is \$31,735, and 88.9% of the adult population possesses a high school degree. In comparison, the populations in the counterfactual range from 87.6 to 96.6% white, 1.0 to 5.4% black, and 0.9 to 3.0% Hispanic. Their median income ranges from \$40,074 to \$53,583, with a high school degree attainment rate of between 90.6 and

93.6%.⁵⁴ As such, Kalamazoo City is more racially diverse and has a lower median household income than its counterfactual (the two are fairly comparable with regards to education). Based on what we know about the influences of these factors on turnout, however, if anything these differences should mean that residents in Kalamazoo City are less likely to vote in general (making the test a conservative one).

As with Cleveland Heights, the lack of state or national races on the ballot necessitates the identification of locales for the counterfactual with similar electoral contests on the ballot. In addition to the moral issue ballot measure, the Kalamazoo City ballot also has elections for city commissioners and an additional proposition on the ballot. Each of the localities in the comparison group has a similar electoral context; residents in Alamo Township voted on a commissioner recall, those living in Parchment City elected city commissioners, and voters in Portage City selected both a mayor and city council members. Overall, 12% of registered voters who received the treatment turned out to vote, compared to 15.9% of those in the control group. Out of the entire sample, 73.55% received the treatment.

Again, I perform a pre-matching probit analysis employing all relevant control variables included in the voter file. As with the Ohio voter file, the demographic information collected by the secretary of state is less than desirable and limited to birth year, year of registration, and gender. The file, however, does contain a significant voter history that includes the general elections of 2000, 2002, and 2004 to 2008; the primary elections in even numbered years from 2000 to 2008; and the presidential primary

⁵⁴ Because the ACS only generates estimates for areas with more than thirty thousand people, all statistics for Alamo Township and Parchment City discussed above come from the 2000 census.

election of 2008.⁵⁵ The results of this analysis, presented in the first column of Table 4.2, reveal that the ballot measure increased the predicted probability of voting. As the model lacks balance for every control variable except gender (see column two), I match on all of the control variables as a robustness check.⁵⁶ Using the preprocessed data, the effect of the moral issue proposition remains positive and statistically significant (see column three of Table 4.2).

To more easily interpret the effect, I again determine the change in the predicted probability of voting associated with the existence of the moral issue measure on the ballot. Figure 4.2 presents the results, which reveal small but significant pre- and post-matching increases in the likelihood of voting of 1.14 to a 1.42 percentage points, respectively. As with the previous example, matching increases the estimated impact slightly but the effect remains similar in both models. These two electoral contests both demonstrate the ability of local level moral issue ballot measures to increase turnout in local level elections (as hypothesized), which should not be surprising given the other contests on the ballot and the ability of their state level counterparts to do so in midterm elections.

Midterm elections

Shifting our focus to midterm elections, voters in Sarasota City, Florida, in 2002 encountered a pro-homosexual rights ballot measure when they went to vote in the November general election. Question 1 proposed to require the city commission to adopt a civil rights law that included protections based on sexual orientation, in essence

⁵⁵ Coding for each variable can be found in Appendix H.

⁵⁶ 79.8% of the treatment group receives a match, with balance achieved for every control variable (as demonstrated in column four of Table 2), providing confidence for the estimation from the preprocessed data.

Table 4.2 – Presence of Moral Issue Measure on the Ballot and Turnout, Michigan 2009

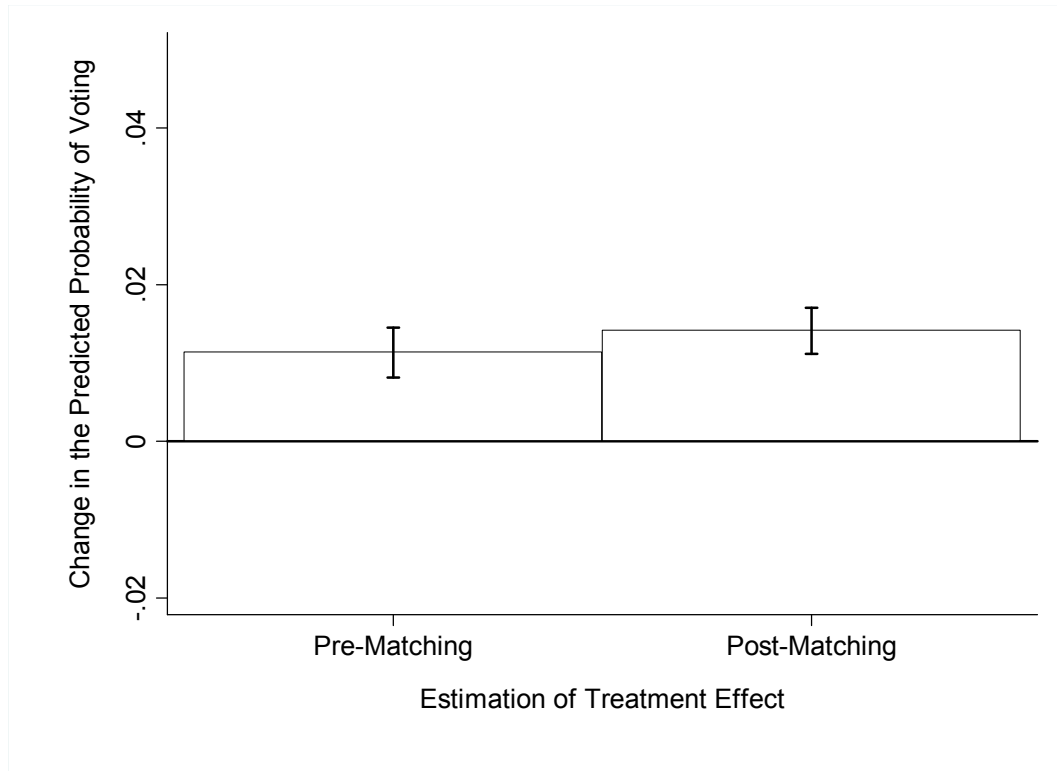
	Pre-Matching		Post-Matching	
	β	Balance	β	Balance
Moral Issue Ballot Measure	0.103	-	0.213	0.000 ^a
	(0.020)		(0.028)	
General 2000	-0.194	0.111	-0.118	0.000 ^a
	(0.029)		(0.043)	
General 2002	0.189	0.095	0.240	0.000 ^a
	(0.029)		(0.043)	
General 2004	-0.214	0.126	-0.127	0.000 ^a
	(0.031)		(0.039)	
General 2005	1.669	0.043	1.848	0.000 ^a
	(0.023)		(0.040)	
General 2006	0.649	0.107	0.717	0.000 ^a
	(0.030)		(0.038)	
General 2007	0.941	0.161	0.933	0.000 ^a
	(0.022)		(0.036)	
General 2008	1.465	0.084	1.492	0.000 ^a
	(0.040)		(0.049)	
Primary 2000	-0.025	0.015	-0.202	0.000 ^a
	(0.028)		(0.049)	
Primary 2002	0.199	0.064	0.150	0.000 ^a
	(0.026)		(0.043)	
Primary 2004	-0.214	0.015	-0.276	0.000 ^a
	(0.027)		(0.048)	
Primary 2006	0.188	0.033	0.130	0.000 ^a
	(0.025)		(0.045)	
Primary 2008	0.188	0.031	0.109	0.000 ^a
	(0.025)		(0.046)	
Pres Primary 2008	0.287	0.046	0.343	0.000 ^a
	(0.022)		(0.034)	
Male	-0.000	-0.001	-0.022	0.000 ^a
	(0.018)		(0.024)	
Birth Year	0.006	-3.000	0.011	0.006
	(0.001)		(0.001)	
Registration Year	-0.034	-0.517	-0.004	-0.035
	(0.002)		(0.003)	
Constant	51.643	-	-18.628	-
	(3.217)		(5.828)	
N	150,095		121,852	
Pseudo-R ²	.285		.222	

Source: June 2010 MI voter history file.

Note: β estimates are probit coefficients. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Balance is the mean difference between the

treatment and control groups for the relevant variable. Coefficients and mean differences in bold signify statistical significance at $p < .05$.
a: Differences are smaller than 0.001.

Figure 4.2 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Moral Issue on the Ballot, Michigan 2009



Source: June 2010 MI voter history file.

Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted probability, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

amending the city charter to add sexual orientation to the list of those characteristics on the basis of which one cannot be discriminated against in housing, employment, and public accommodations. The city commission voted unanimously to place the issue on the ballot on July 1, finalized the proposition’s language on July 15, and approved an ordinance calling for a referendum on August 5 (Allen-Jones 2002b; McQuaid 2002).

Groups including the Sarasota Equality Project and the editorial board of the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* supported passage of the ballot measure. These proponents

contended that discrimination against any group, including sexual orientation, was antithetical to the intent of both the United States and Florida constitutions. In addition, they asserted that approval of the proposition would send a message that the city values both tolerance and diversity (Sarasota Herald-Tribune 2002). Those opposed to the proposition, including Save Our Civil Rights and the Florida Family Association, objected to the inclusion of sexual orientation among the list of protected groups. They maintained that homosexuals had failed to demonstrate economic hardship or discrimination based on their sexual preference and that the ballot language was too vague, especially regarding enforcement mechanisms (Allen-Jones 2002c; Thomson 2002). On November 5, the proposition passed in every city district (sometimes by a three to one margin) was enacted into law with 72.9% of the vote (Leonard 2002). The final tally was 10,416 votes for to 3,894 votes against (Allen-Jones 2002a).

The comparison group consists of residents living in the adjacent geographic areas (denoted by zip codes) that fall within the Sarasota County borders, the vast majority of which are unincorporated areas and/or census-designated places. These include Bee Ridge, Desoto Lakes, Fruitville, Gulf Gate Estates, Kensington Park, North Sarasota, Ridge Wood Heights, Sarasota Springs, Siesta Key, South Sarasota, Southgate, The Meadows, and Vamo, as well as the neighboring portion of the town of Long Boat City that resides in the county. According to the 2000 census, Sarasota City's population is 76.9% white, 16.0% black, and 11.9% Hispanic. Its median household income is \$34,077, and 80.1% percent of the adult population has attained at least a high school degree. For the areas of which the control group consists, the populations range from 63.9 to 98.6% white, 0.1 to 30.7% black, and 1.4 to 10.5% Hispanic. While Sarasota

City compares favorably to this distribution, if we remove North Sarasota from the equation, then the treatment city is significantly more diverse than the counterfactual. It also lies towards the bottom of the range of median family incomes (\$33,084 to \$66,397) and high school degree attainment (74.8 to 96.5%). As with the two previous examples, however, these differences actually make the statistical test a conservative one (due to how these demographic factors are known to affect turnout).

The presence of national and statewide races on the ballot (congressional representative and governor) suggests that we need not be concerned with any possible variation in contests further down the ballot. In addition, the entire sample shares the same congressional district to guard against differences in campaign competitiveness across districts affecting turnout levels. Turnout among registered voters in Sarasota City (the treatment group) reached 57.3%, compared to 56.0% for those individuals in the control group. Residents of Sarasota City make up 56.8% of the sample.

In contrast to the voter files from Ohio and Michigan, the Florida dataset consists of a significant number of important demographic controls to employ in the model. These include party identification, race, ethnicity, and gender, as well as year of birth and registration. In addition, the voting history includes all general elections in even numbered years from 1992 to 2000, primary elections in even numbered years from 1992 to 2002, presidential primary elections from 1992 to 2000, and the important and contentious 2002 Sarasota County school district ad valorem millage election.⁵⁷

The initial probit analysis presented in column one of Table 4.3 reveals a negative estimated effect of the moral issue ballot measure (though not statistically significant), signaling no effect of the proposition on turnout. As a significant imbalance exists for all

⁵⁷ See Appendix H for coding details for all variables.

of the covariates (except the presidential primaries of 1996 and 2000) between the treatment and control groups (see column two), matching is used to achieve balance for each variable.⁵⁸ Column three of Table 4.3 shows that the estimate using the pre-processed data remains negative but statistically insignificant.

To better illustrate the magnitude of the estimated effects, Figure 4.3 presents the change in the predicted probability of voting due to the presence of the moral issue measure (along with ninety-five percent confidence intervals). While the employment of matching increases the estimated decrease in the likelihood of voting from 0.43 to 0.70 percentage points, both effects are substantively unimpressive, and the confidence intervals reveal that neither is statistically significant. At least for this contest, it does not appear that a local level moral issue proposition can increase turnout in midterm elections.

Presidential elections

The presidential election example involves Hamtramck, Michigan. In June of 2008, the city council passed an ordinance prohibiting discrimination in housing, public accommodation, and employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (Leonard 2008). Citizens opposed to this policy, backed by the American Family Association, immediately mobilized to put the issue to the voters (Carreras 2008). The resulting measure placed on the ballot in the 2008 general election from this successful movement asked whether the ordinance should take effect (Leonard 2008).

⁵⁸ See column 4; this leads to 54.8% of the treatment group being matched.

Table 4.3 – Presence of Moral Issue Measure on the Ballot and Turnout, Florida 2002

	Pre-Matching		Post-Matching	
	β	Balance	β	Balance
Moral Issue Ballot Measure	-0.029	-	-0.045	-
	(0.018)		(0.023)	
General 1992	0.115	-0.033	0.538	-0.000 ^a
	(0.037)		(0.076)	
General 1994	0.344	-0.026	0.466	-0.000 ^a
	(0.036)		(0.079)	
General 1996	0.189	-0.017	0.306	-0.000 ^a
	(0.026)		(0.039)	
General 1998	0.624	-0.015	0.770	-0.000 ^a
	(0.025)		(0.040)	
General 2000	1.162	-0.018	1.119	-0.000 ^a
	(0.021)		(0.027)	
Primary 1992	0.023	-0.025	0.358	0.000 ^a
	(0.035)		(0.120)	
Primary 1994	-0.006	-0.019	-0.005	0.000 ^a
	(0.037)		(0.138)	
Primary 1996	-0.206	-0.018	-0.164	-0.000 ^a
	(0.037)		(0.158)	
Primary 1998	-0.221	-0.019	-0.485	-0.000 ^a
	(0.039)		(0.154)	
Primary 2000	0.213	-0.013	0.194	-0.000 ^a
	(0.032)		(0.080)	
Primary 2002	2.427	-0.017	2.696	-0.000 ^a
	(0.030)		(0.052)	
Pres Primary 1992	-0.127	-0.012	-0.223	0.000 ^a
	(0.034)		(0.111)	
Pres Primary 1996	0.039	-0.001	0.024	0.000 ^a
	(0.040)		(0.135)	
Pres Primary 2000	0.083	0.002	0.212	-0.000 ^a
	(0.036)		(0.024)	
School District 2002	1.222	-0.034	1.268	-0.000 ^a
	(0.023)		(0.035)	
Democrat	0.686	0.002	0.808	-0.000 ^a
	(0.085)		(0.164)	
Republican	0.191	-0.031	0.236	-0.000 ^a
	(0.019)		(0.004)	
White	-0.138	-0.098	-0.143	-0.000 ^a
	(0.050)		(0.062)	
Black	-0.475	0.095	-0.634	0.000 ^a
	(0.063)		(0.115)	
Hispanic	-0.368	-0.003	-0.483	-0.000 ^a

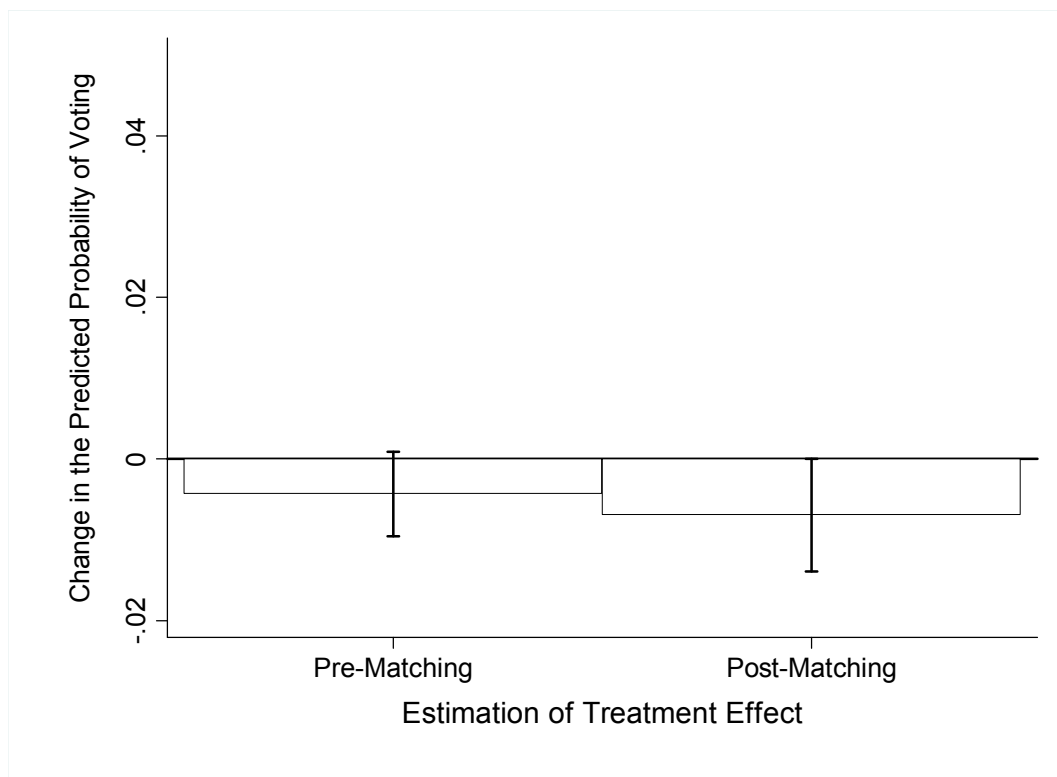
	(0.084)		(0.110)	
Male	0.040	-0.009	0.015	-0.000 ^a
	(0.018)		(0.023)	
Birth Year	-0.011	-1.030	-0.021	0.006
	(0.001)		(0.001)	
Registration Year	0.038	0.791	0.103	-0.020
	(0.002)		(0.004)	
Constant	-55.539	-	-166.677	-
	(3.038)		(7.031)	
N	89,338		49,860	
Pseudo-R ²	.357		.328	

Source: January 2003 Sarasota County, FL voter history file

Note: β estimates are probit coefficients. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Balance is the mean difference between the treatment and control groups for the relevant variable. Coefficients and mean differences in bold signify statistical significance at $p < .05$.

a: Differences are smaller than 0.001.

Figure 4.3 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Moral Issue on the Ballot, Florida 2002



Source: January 2003 Sarasota County, FL voter history file

Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted probability, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

Those looking to overturn the ordinance included a city council member and were led by a combination of religious leaders from Catholic and Muslim institutions (Jessup 2008). These individuals asserted that the enacted policies threatened religious freedom, free speech, and women's privacy rights (Americans for Truth 2008). Proponents of the existing ordinance included Michigan Equality, the ACLU, the Triangle Foundation, the majority of the city council, and state and federal officials representing the city such as Congressman John Conyers, Jr. The mayor of Hamtramck also spoke out, calling for equality for all city residents. In addition, opposition to the existing law was not unanimous across religious leaders, with some arguing it was morally wrong to deny certain rights on the basis of sexual orientation (Carreras 2008).

Supporters of the proposition prevailed on November 4 and rejected the ordinance's implementation with 55% of the ballots cast. In doing so, voters overturned the existing policy with 2,903 votes for and 2,333 votes against (Leonard 2008). Had the ordinance remained on the legal books, Hamtramck would have become the seventeenth city in Michigan to prohibit such discrimination (Carreras 2008).

The counterfactual consists of the adjacent city of Highland Park and the surrounding areas of Detroit (based on zip codes). Based on the ACS estimates for 2006 to 2008, the racial and ethnic composition of Hamtramck is 74.3% white, 12.3% black, and 0.9% Hispanic. The city possesses a median income of \$25,025, while 68.5% of the population over twenty-five earned at least a high school degree. In comparison, the areas that comprise the comparison group include significantly less white (0.7 to 38.2%) and more African American residents (43.4 to 97.7%), though the Hispanic proportion of the population is similar (0.5 to 1.3%). Unfortunately, I cannot control for the significant

variation in racial differences with the selection of alternative control cases, so one must keep this in mind when interpreting the results below. The counterfactual is much more comparable, however, in terms of median household income (\$17,737 to \$42,263) and high school degree attainment rates (56.6 to 81.7%).⁵⁹

We should again expect the presidential election, as well as other salient state and national races, to overshadow the local level elections on the ballot. In addition, to ensure that variation in the competitiveness of other electoral contests do not explain the differences in turnout, all citizens in the sample reside in the same congressional district. The turnout rate for residents of Hamtramck is 53.0%, compared to 43.1% for Highland Park and 57.4% for the surrounding areas of Detroit, or 55.7% for all of those in the comparison group. Just fewer than ten percent (9.7%) of the sample received the treatment.

The pre-matching analysis of the treatment effect controls for the relevant variables found in the Michigan voter file. These include voter histories for the 2000, 2002, and 2004 through 2007 general elections; the primaries for all even numbered years from 2000 to 2008; and the presidential primary of 2008. The analysis also includes controls for gender, year of birth, and year of voter registration.⁶⁰ The results can be found in the first column of Table 4.4, which reveal a positive but statistically indistinguishable from zero estimated treatment effect. As differences prevail between the two groups for all control variables (except voting in the 2006 primary; see column

⁵⁹ Because the ACS only generates estimates for areas with more than thirty thousand people, all statistics for Highland Park are based off the 2000 census.

⁶⁰ Coding details for each variable can be found in Appendix H.

two), I rerun the original model after preprocessing the data, which changes the estimate of the treatment effect from zero to positive.⁶¹

To quantify the estimated effect, Figure 4.4 presents the change in the predicted probability associated with the presence of the moral issue measure on the ballot for both models along with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. This is the one example in the chapter that the estimates differ dramatically, as post-matching the estimated change in the likelihood of voting increases by roughly one percentage point to 1.14 percentage points. While such an impact is an impressive feat for a citywide ballot measure during a presidential election, we must be mindful of the significant racial differences present between the treatment and control groups for which I cannot control. As such, at least some evidence exists to suggest that local level ballot measures can increase turnout even in the presence of state or federal elections, though we should interpret it with caution.

Conclusion

The results above provide substantial evidence of the ability of local level moral issue ballot measures to increase turnout in local level elections. The existence of measures addressing homosexual rights on the ballot increased the likelihood of voting in local level off-year elections by substantively significant margins in Cleveland Heights, OH, in 2003 and Kalamazoo City, MI, in 2009. These results should not be terribly surprising, given the ability of statewide measures to increase turnout when state offices are on the ballot. More surprising, however, is their possible potential to bring citizens to the polls even with state and federal elections on the ballot (as is the case in Hamtramck, MI, in 2008). One must be cautious in reading too much into this finding, given the

⁶¹ Doing so yields matches for 76.7% of those who initially received the treatment and achieves balance for every control variable in the model (as illustrated by column four of Table 4).

Table 4.4 – Presence of Moral Issue Measure on the Ballot and Turnout, Michigan 2008

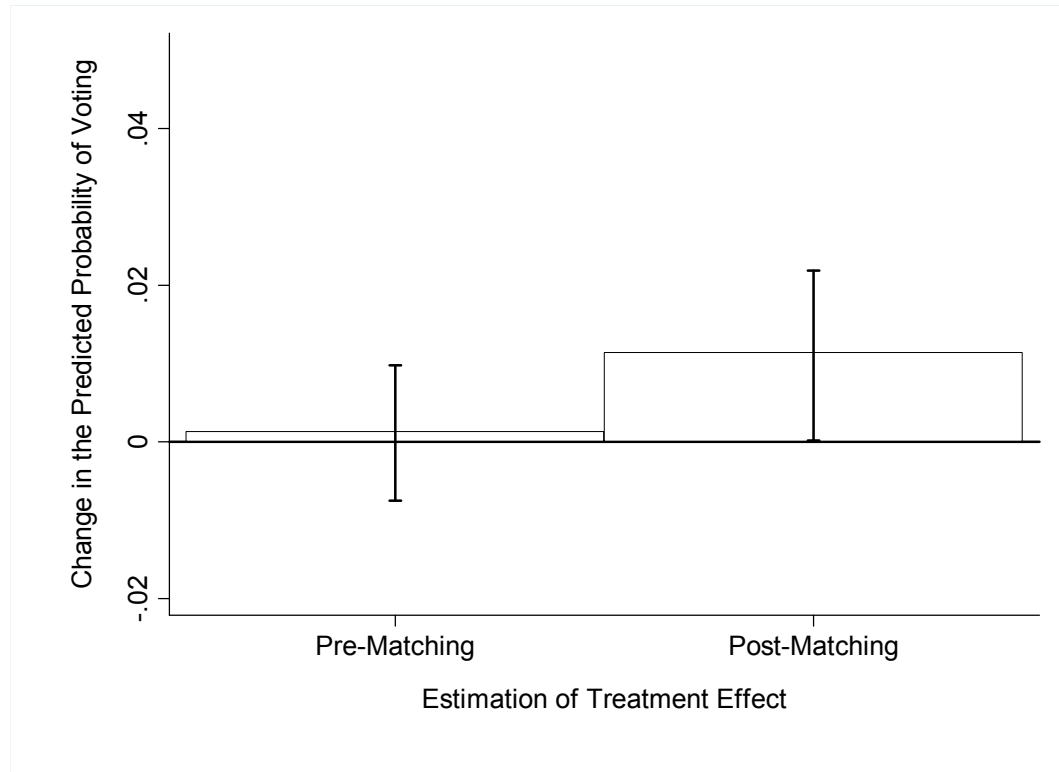
	Pre-Matching		Post-Matching	
	β	Balance	β	Balance
Moral Issue Ballot Measure	0.005 (0.027)	-	0.071 (0.030)	0.000 ^a
General 2000	0.362 (0.024)	0.091	0.587 (0.037)	-0.000 ^a
General 2002	-0.053 (0.029)	0.084	0.045 (0.053)	0.000 ^a
General 2004	0.988 (0.021)	0.080	1.089 (0.027)	0.000 ^a
General 2005	0.444 (0.026)	0.089	0.229 (0.041)	-0.000 ^a
General 2006	1.207 (0.025)	0.082	1.196 (0.036)	0.000 ^a
General 2007	0.650 (0.044)	-0.051	0.789 (0.059)	0.000 ^a
Primary 2000	0.265 (0.074)	-0.086	-1.961 (0.186)	0.000 ^a
Primary 2002	-0.096 (0.032)	0.056	0.064 (0.063)	0.000 ^a
Primary 2004	-0.218 (0.037)	0.048	-0.384 (0.084)	0.000 ^a
Primary 2006	-0.081 (0.039)	-0.002	-0.010 (0.063)	0.000 ^a
Primary 2008	1.359 (0.041)	0.019	1.458 (0.063)	0.000 ^a
Pres Primary 2008	0.672 (0.039)	0.044	0.835 (0.076)	0.000 ^a
Male	-0.162 (0.016)	-0.044	-0.216 (0.020)	0.000 ^a
Birth Year	0.018 (0.001)	-1.016	0.013 (0.001)	-0.035
Registration Year	0.017 (0.001)	-6.193	0.101 (0.002)	-0.130
Constant	-70.198 (1.312)	-	-227.918 (4.307)	-
N	95,805		56,647	
Pseudo-R ²	.293		.221	

Source: June 2010 MI voter history file.

Note: β estimates are probit coefficients. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Balance is the mean difference between the treatment and control groups for the relevant variable. Coefficients and mean differences in bold signify statistical significance at $p < .05$.

a: Differences are smaller than 0.001.

Figure 4.4 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Moral Issue on the Ballot, Michigan 2008



Source: June 2010 MI voter history file.

Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted probability, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

significant racial disparity between the treatment and control groups that could theoretically be driving the results. This potential, however, remains nonetheless impressive given the substantial coverage and campaign spending devoted to these offices in comparison to local level ballot measures.

More broadly, the results in this chapter provide further evidence for the theoretical framework constructed in chapter one. They highlight the fact that ballot measures meeting the two requirements necessary to increase turnout (awareness and importance) have the ability to consistently do so. Furthermore, the analyses suggest that

the scope of the proposition (statewide versus local), at least for those addressing moral issues, may not be incredibly important to their ability to bring citizens to the polls. Because the decision to vote on these propositions can be explained through the framework of expressive choice, the reach of the ballot measure does not impact its effect on turnout. With the ability of moral issue ballot measures (both at the state and local level) to increase turnout well established, I turn to who actually accounts for this higher participation rate in the next chapter. In doing so, I look at whether these propositions can potentially decrease the existing inequalities in participation.

5 - Who do moral issue propositions bring to the polls?

The evidence presented in the two previous chapters provides significant support for the contention that moral issue ballot measures bring citizens to the polls on Election Day. With this assertion empirically demonstrated, we can now investigate who actually accounts for this increase in turnout. Surprisingly, we know little about to whom ballot measures particularly appeal, including those that address moral matters. Previous studies of direct democracy and turnout focus on the ability of this institution to increase peripheral voter participation, but, as we saw in chapters two and three, the average proposition exerts minimal influence on the decision to vote. Such results likely derive from the flawed measurements of the direct democracy process discussed in chapters one through three, meaning that they provide little insight into the question at hand.

The impact of moral issue propositions has received some consideration in the literature, though such studies are inadequate and tend to solely focus on white, evangelical Protestants. While the potential role this group played in the 2004 election explains this attention, they may not be the only individuals who show up at higher levels. Additionally, while chapter two points to the ability of moral issues to potentially mobilize peripheral voters, this categorization fails to provide precise insight into the characteristics of those most affected by such propositions. Beyond the peripheral voter label, we should strive to understand which of the socioeconomic and religious groups (if any) that dominate peripheral voter status witness a disproportionate increase in their participation when moral issues appear on the ballot. In asking these questions, we can understand how direct democracy may (or may not) act to decrease the existing inequalities in turnout.

In this chapter, I look at the ability of moral issue propositions to increase the voting rates of two specific groups that participate at a lower rate than the population average: individuals of a lower socioeconomic status and members of religious groups (including white, evangelical Protestants and African American Protestants) that tend to vote at a depressed rate in comparison to other societal groups. To do so, I employ a nationwide investigation modeled on the analyses carried out in chapter three, along with cross-level interactions to identify the specific effects for each group in question. The results provide some evidence that moral issue propositions disproportionately mobilize those of a lower socioeconomic status, but the differences in their effects on the population are frequently small. In contrast, I find no effect for such measures with regards to either religious group. Thus, while moral issue propositions as a whole appear to play some role in addressing the existing inequalities in participation, their ability to do so is relatively minor. While shedding some light on the subject of who accounts for the increase in turnout attributed to moral issue ballot measures, these findings also raise questions regarding the suitability of such groups as proper proxies for peripheral voters in analyses and of available data to test the hypothesized relationships.

Direct democracy and inequalities in participation

The identification of who exactly accounts for any increase in voting rates plays a vital role in evaluating the entire effect of moral issue propositions on participation. The fact that turnout in the United States remains low in comparison to similar industrialized democracies provides substantial normative reasons to investigate institutions that facilitate the arrival of citizens to the polls. While raising this overall number is often considered desirable, a more important concern regards how any enacted policy affects

the composition of the electorate. Many institutional reforms that may serve to increase turnout, such as early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, and voting by mail, do so through retention (i.e. convincing those already in the voting pool to not skip this election) as opposed to mobilization (i.e. bringing new individuals into the voting pool). As such, many policies touted for their ability to raise participation rates often act to reinforce and/or exacerbate existing inequalities in turnout, creating an even further unrepresentative voting sample of the larger population (Berinsky 2005).

In contrast to the impact of these electoral reforms, proponents of direct democracy at least implicitly contend that those mobilized by this institution come from groups that typically vote at lower rates, meaning that the institution may act to reduce the existing inequalities in participation. This potential ability is crucial to explaining the ability of any ballot measure to increase turnout, as the characteristics of the population to whom it appeals determine its success. If, for example, those most heavily invested in the proposition also include those most likely to vote in elections, then it can do little to increase turnout. For a ballot measure to be the causal influence behind the decision to vote, the citizen must have planned to abstain in its absence, with the proposition alone convincing them to show up on Election Day. These individuals fit the description of peripheral voters (Campbell 1966), for whom participation is highly contingent upon the existence of important stimuli or highly differentiated alternatives. They differ in their participation from core voters, who consistently turn out to the polls and, as such, cannot be mobilized by direct democracy because they will show up to vote regardless of what ballot measure issues (if any) greet them at the polls (see chapter two for a more detailed discussion).

The existing literature, as discussed in chapter two, contends that direct democracy in general can disproportionately bring peripheral voters to the polls. Using proxies for these individuals (as surveys lack the ability to properly identify them), evidence suggests that initiatives may particularly mobilize the lower educated in at least some elections (Tolbert et al. 2009), as well as pique their awareness and interest (though not that of lower income classes) and Independents (Donovan et al. 2009; though see Dyck and Seabrook 2010). These results, however, derive from the flawed count measurement (deconstructed in chapters one and three) that unrealistically treats the effect of every individual proposition as homogenous. In addition, the ability of the average proposition to exert anything close to a meaningful impact on participation rates in only rare circumstances (as demonstrated in chapter three) casts further doubt on this assertion. Even if peripheral voters are responsible for the entire estimated effect of an average ballot measure, the difference in turnout rates would still fail to attain substantive significance. We must thus look more closely at the issue content of individual propositions in order to potentially find any impact on the existing gaps of the composition of the electorate.

Can moral issue propositions address inequalities in participation?

Along socioeconomic lines?

As discussed in chapter two, the characteristics of moral issue propositions suggest that they might be especially successful in bringing citizens to the polls who do not consistently participate. Incremental voters, in general, differ significantly from more habitual voters in terms of their socioeconomic statuses. Peripheral voters tend to be poorer and less educated (Berinsky 2005; Hill and Leighley 1994, 1996; Leighley and

Nagler 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba et al. 1995), and while minorities turn out less consistently than whites, lower class whites are less likely to participate than their higher class racial counterparts. As such, nonvoters disproportionately consist of those who reside at the bottom of the socioeconomic status ladder (Gimpel et al. 2007).

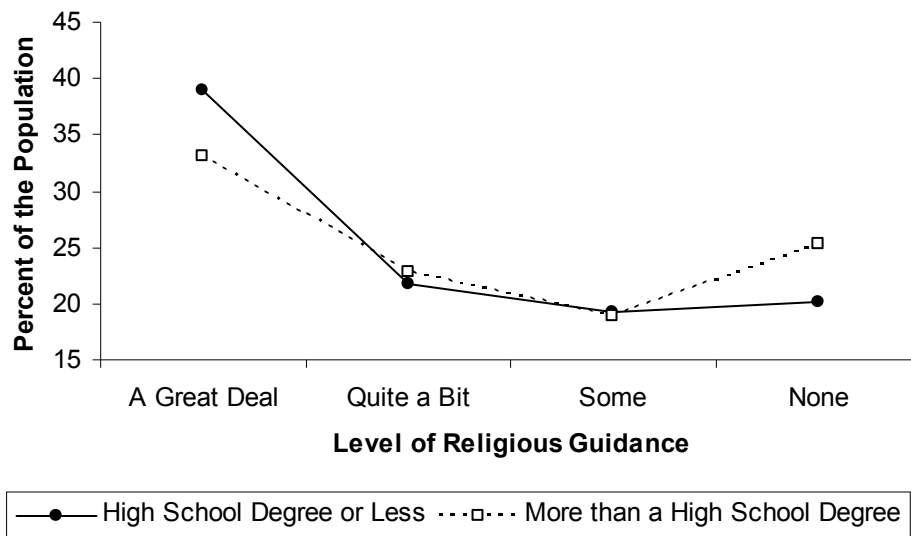
Given these characteristics, moral issue propositions appear particularly well suited to increase turnout among this group because such individuals tend to be more religious than the general public. Figure 5.1 illustrates the aggregate distribution of religious importance, defined as the amount of guidance that religion provides in one's day-to-day living, by one factor of socioeconomic status, education, across National Election Study (NES) surveys from 1980 to 2008 (with 1982 and 2006 omitted due to the exclusion of the measure of religious importance from these surveys).⁶² The table reveals that those with lower levels of education are noticeably more likely than those of higher levels to claim that they draw significant guidance from religion. Thirty-nine percent of those with a high school education or less believe that religion provides a great deal of guidance in their day-to-day life, compared to only thirty-three percent of those who graduated high school.

This relationship strengthens when we move to another component of socioeconomic status: income. Using the same measure of religious importance and looking over the same time period, Figure 5.2 shows those with less income substantially more likely to view religion as providing a great deal of guidance in their everyday life. Roughly thirty-nine percent of those in the bottom thirty-three percent of the income distribution make this claim, compared to just under thirty percent of those in the rest of

⁶² Response options provided to those surveyed include: a great deal, quite a bit, some, and none.

the distribution.⁶³ Furthermore, this is not a recent occurrence, as the relationship between resource-poor citizens and religious importance has been constant over a significant time period.⁶⁴ As such, we should expect the religious nature of moral issues to be of substantial appeal to these individuals and well suited to serve as a catalyst behind their decision to vote.

Figure 5.1 – Importance of Religion to the American Public by Education Level, 1980-2008



Source: National Election Studies Cumulative File 1948-2004 and National Election Studies 2008

Note: Question asks respondents the amount of guidance that religion provides in their day-to-day living. 1982 and 2006 omitted from analysis due to the exclusion of the religiosity question from these surveys.

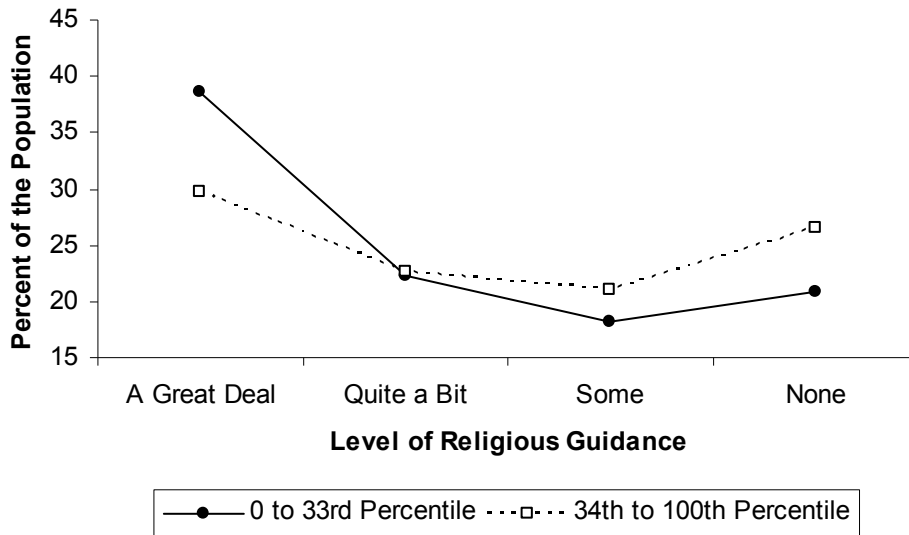
In addition, these resource-poor citizens tend to possess more extreme conservative views on moral issues. We can demonstrate this point by looking at the distribution of attitudes towards abortion among those at the bottom of the socioeconomic status scale. Figure 5.3 presents aggregate responses to an NES question asking

⁶³ The cumulative NES file employed for this analysis divides income into the following percentiles: 0 to 16th, 17th to 33rd, 34th to 67th, 68th to 95th, and 96th to 100th. As such, I can only create a lower income group through the combination of the first two options.

⁶⁴ To ensure that aggregation across all of the years does not act to mask any inconsistencies, I looked at the relationship for each individual year under investigation. The analyses (not shown here) reveal a consistent relationship between religious importance and education/income for every individual year.

individuals to identify when abortion should be allowed by law, by level of education, for election years 1980 to 2008 (2002 and 2006 excluded).⁶⁵ As is immediately evident, more than double the percent of respondents in the lower education category than those of the higher level believe that abortion should never be legal. Around seventeen percent of those with a high school degree or less take this extreme stance, compared to just under eight percent of those who did graduate high school.

Figure 5.2 – Importance of Religion to the American Public by Income Level, 1980-2008



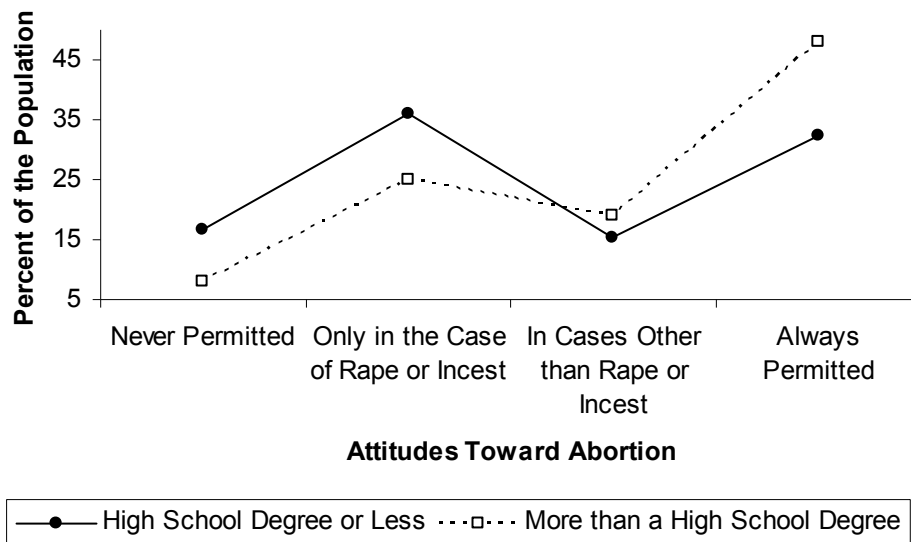
Source: National Election Studies Cumulative File 1948-2004 and National Election Studies 2008
 Note: Question asks respondents the amount of guidance that religion provides in their day-to-day living. 1982 and 2006 omitted from analysis due to the exclusion of the religiosity question from these surveys.

The figure also reveals that those with at least a high school degree hold the most extreme liberal views, and their distribution of opinions may be even more skewed than that of those who did not finish high school. The better educated, however, participate at a much higher rate (Berinsky 2005; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba et al. 1995), and thus likely vote whether or not an abortion issue makes it onto the ballot (though it

⁶⁵ Respondents to the NES question were presented with four options: should never be permitted; should be permitted only in the case of rape or incest; should be permitted in cases other than rape or incest; should always be permitted. The question was not asked in 2002 and, while asked in the pilot 2006 study, the number of respondents is sufficiently small to prohibit informative analysis.

remains plausible that such an issue may motivate at least some from this group). In contrast, the lower turnout rates of those who either did not finish or move beyond high school, combined with their extreme views, provides a large number of citizens that moral issue propositions can potentially mobilize.

Figure 5.3 – Abortion Attitudes of the American Public by Education Level, 1980-2008



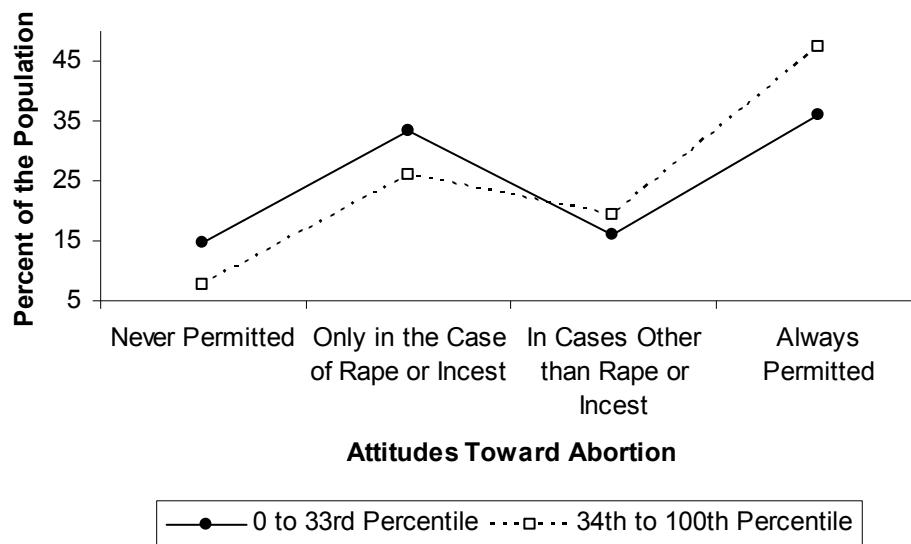
Source: National Election Studies Cumulative File 1948-2004 and National Election Studies 2008
 Note: Question asked respondents when abortion should be allowed by law. 2002 and 2006 omitted from analysis due to the exclusion of the abortion question from these surveys.

A similar relationship holds for abortion attitudes and income. Figure 5.4 illustrates this breakdown of abortion attitudes by level of income for the same time period. Those in the lower income percentiles are more likely to assert that abortion should never be permitted, with almost fifteen percent of these individuals selecting this option. This percent is double that of those in the higher income category who hold such beliefs about abortion (7.5 percent).⁶⁶ As with education, those in the highest percentiles of income maintain the most extreme liberal stances on abortion. Members of this group,

⁶⁶ To ensure that aggregation across all of the years does not hide any inconsistencies, I looked at the relationship for each individual year under investigation. The analyses (not shown here) reveal a consistent relationship between abortion attitudes and education, as well as abortion attitudes and income, for every individual year.

however, maintain a higher propensity to participate (Hill and Leighley 1994, 1996; Leighley and Nagler 1992), and will likely vote regardless of the issues on the ballot (or at least be mobilized at lower rates). In contrast, not only are resource-poor individuals less likely to vote, but the combination of being more religious and holding more extreme conservative views on moral issues than the rest of the population makes their mobilization by these issues potentially larger than that of other groups.

Figure 5.4 – Abortion Attitudes of the American Public by Income Level, 1980-2008



Source: National Election Studies Cumulative File 1948-2004 and National Election Studies 2008

Note: Question asked respondents when abortion should be allowed by law. 2002 and 2006 omitted from analysis due to the exclusion of the abortion question from these surveys.

The characteristics of the potential voters described above indicate that these individuals possess the capabilities necessary to participate on moral issue ballot measures. Typically, resource-poor citizens do not have the interest or ability to parse through complex measures, which greatly hinders their involvement in the political process. While in general they lack sufficient resources, these individuals exhibit the potential to participate on moral issue propositions because the resource they need to take part derives from their religious views. Since they tend to be more religious and maintain

more extreme stances on these issues, such individuals can make use of these resources to overcome this often-faced barrier. Everyone to a certain degree can be considered an expert on morality (Haider-Markel and Meier 1996), and these attitudes, in combination with the nature of moral issues described in chapter one, mean that even those at the bottom of the participation ladder can play their part in moral issue proposition contests.

In addition, the heightened importance attached to religion by resource-poor citizens serves to counterbalance the fact that they often do not belong to networks that traditionally act to mobilize citizens. Party contact and mobilization attempts are largely limited to those more likely to participate, meaning that lower socioeconomic status citizens necessarily receive less targeting by organized contact efforts (Gershtenson 2003; Goldstein and Ridout 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). While these citizens likely receive more contact and mobilization in battleground states, their participation still remains below that of citizens of a higher socioeconomic status (Gimpel et al. 2007). As such, the nature of political campaigns tends to exacerbate the existing socioeconomic inequalities in turnout (Berinsky 2005). This pattern of mobilization acts to reinforce the existing divisions in participation rates across segments of society, as those in the most need of the benefits provided by contact drives are among the least likely to receive them.

The role that churches play in mobilizing their congregants received extensive discussion in chapter one. These institutions, however, do not merely raise existing turnout levels. By activating their members, churches bring voters to the polls in a manner that, more so than another other type of political or social organization that participates in political mobilization, reduces inequalities in turnout. In doing so, they

serve to at least partially compensate for the relative weakness of existing institutions that ordinarily function to contact disadvantaged citizens. Serving as a location for attempts to recruit citizens into politics, churches possess the potential to at least partially offset the effect of socioeconomic advantage on voting, and do a better job of reducing this gap in civic engagement and political participation than any other institution (Verba et al. 1995).

The strong relationship between socioeconomic status and religious importance suggests that those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder should turn out at a significantly higher rate when moral issue measures reside on the ballot. In contrast, due to their already superior participation rates, those of a higher socioeconomic status are likely not as significantly affected by the presence of moral issue propositions. While some of these individuals may be mobilized by moral issue ballot measures, those of lower education and income statuses likely disproportionately comprise the increase in turnout associated with these propositions. More formally, I hypothesize:

H1: Those citizens brought to the polls by a moral issue proposition disproportionately possess lower levels of education.

H2: Those citizens brought to the polls by a moral issue proposition disproportionately possess lower levels of income.

Along religious lines?

Of course, we should not expect the only movement in turnout rates to come from the poor and lower educated. The religious nature of moral issue ballot measures should directly apply to all of those who are religiously devout. While the previous section linked the level of religious importance with socioeconomic status, not all of these

individuals reside at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. Regardless of education or income levels, members of this group should be expected to participate at higher rates when moral issues make it onto the ballot (potentially mitigating any disproportionate socioeconomic effect). Additionally, the association drawn above does not differentiate between religious traditions, as the effect may not be constant across all religious adherents.

While the ability of churches to mobilize their congregants encompasses numerous religious traditions, many suspect that white evangelical Protestants comprise an important part of the story behind the increase in participation rates. Much of the focus on the effect of moral issue propositions centers on this group due to its role in the 2004 election. During the campaign, Karl Rove, George W. Bush's top campaign specialist, proclaimed that the president's reelection depended on the mobilization of the four million evangelicals who did not vote in 2000 (Cooperman and Edsall 2004). Following his successful reelection, many in the media at least initially championed their participation as a contributory factor to his victory (Dao 2004). Such a contention is certainly plausible given their extreme conservative views on and enhanced personal salience of moral issues. For example, the 2004 Election Study Panel found that in comparison to the general population, more than twice the percentage of evangelical Protestants (sixty-five percent) were against the legal recognition of any type of homosexual unions (cited in Campbell and Monson 2008).

These stronger attitudes actively facilitate the ability of churches to bring these individuals to the polls. White evangelicals in particular are especially likely to be mobilized by a moral or religious group and receive election information at their church,

which often translates into an increase in their participation (Wilcox and Sigelman 2001). Additionally, the presence of moral issues either on the ballot or as major factors of the political campaign serves to maximize the mobilization of evangelicals (Jelen 1991; Rozell and Wilcox 1996; Wilcox and Larson 2006). Furthermore, in contrast to most social structural factors, churches, especially evangelical Protestant churches, at least partially compensate for the relative weakness of existing institutions that ordinarily function to contact disadvantaged citizens (Verba et al. 1995). Such an ability is crucial, given that members of this group vote at a depressed rate. While political participation has increased among white evangelicals since the 1960s, their turnout levels still trail those of both the general population (Campbell 2004; Wilcox and Larson 2006) and most other religious and social groups (Claasen and Poytak 2010.; Guth et al. 2006; Shields 2009).

The focus on this segment of society has significantly shaped the scope of studies documenting the mobilization of individuals by moral issue propositions. All such existing investigations focus exclusively on the effect of same-sex marriage bans on the turnout of white, evangelical Protestants in the 2004 presidential election. These studies reach conflicting conclusions, likely due to the differing techniques employed in investigating the relationship. Smith et al. (2006) conclude that counties in Michigan and Ohio with higher percentages of evangelical Protestants did not have higher turnout rates in the 2004 election. Likewise, Keeter (2007) finds no evidence that either religiously committed voters in general, or white evangelical Protestants in particular, raised their levels of turnout more than other segments of society in 2004. In contrast, Campbell and Monson (2008) eschew aggregate-level data (that can mask individual-level

relationships) and instead focus of individual-level turnout in Ohio. They contend that the same-sex marriage ban on the ballot did mobilize white, evangelical Protestants, though it also demobilized seculars in the state.

Although white, evangelical Protestants may be an important part of the story, we should not expect them to be the only religiously devout to participate at higher rates with moral issues present on the ballot. The role played by churches means that the pool from which to draw potential voters extends beyond these individuals. Another potentially affected group is African American Protestants. Like white evangelicals, black Protestants participate at lower rates than the general population (Shields 2009), providing a significant number of potential voters whose decision to go to the polls can be influenced by moral issue propositions. Black churches possess significant experience in political mobilization and have become particularly adept and successful in doing so. African American churches traditionally serve as a political power base in the community, with a long history of attempts to mobilize its congregants subsidized by religious messages delivered from the pulpit (Calhoun-Brown 1996). These institutions maintain a special potential for increasing participation because their internal structures provide opportunities to practice relevant political skills. They are particularly adept at political mobilization, and the fact that such institutions tend to be more politicized than churches attended by other groups translates into an increased exposure to political stimuli, requests to participate in politics, and political messages for members from church leaders (Verba et al. 1995).

In comparison to Latinos and whites, black church congregants are more likely to report exposure to political stimuli in their churches (Verba et al. 1995). Members of

African American churches, just like white evangelicals, also possess a significantly greater likelihood of receiving electoral information and direct attempts to persuade them to vote in a particular manner at their place of worship (Wilcox and Sigelman 2001). For example, many pastors from African American churches facilitate participation by hosting registration drives at their church, permitting candidates to directly address their congregants, and encouraging their members to partake in political campaigns (Calhoun-Brown 1996; Harris 1999; Wielhouwer 2000). In addition, membership in a political black church heightens the propensity to vote (Calhoun-Brown 1996), despite the heterogeneity of these churches (McClerking and McDaniel 2005). Church-based contacting significantly increases the likelihood of turning out by African Americans, and may even have a greater effect than that of party contacting (Wielhouwer 2000). Furthermore, the informal political discussion that takes place inside black churches can act to mobilize congregants, which may even serve as a more effective stimulus than messages from the clergy (McKenzie 2004).

While the contradictory findings cited above do not clearly demonstrate whether ballot measures addressing moral issues mobilize white, evangelical Protestants at a greater rate than the rest of society, the existing theoretical evidence and conventional wisdom points to such an influence. Likewise, the dynamics of black Protestant churches makes it plausible to expect that propositions addressing moral issues will disproportionately bring members of this group to the polls. Thus, I hypothesize:

H3: Those citizens brought to the polls by a moral issue proposition identify disproportionately as white, evangelical Protestants.

H4: Those citizens brought to the polls by a moral issue proposition identify

disproportionately as black Protestants.

Data and methods

To investigate these hypotheses, I employ a similar nationwide investigation to that carried out in chapter three of the effect of the number of moral issues on the ballot on turnout for elections from 1992 to 2008. I again make use of two data sets, the Current Population Survey November Supplement (CPS) and the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), both of which provide large samples with which to work. The dependent variable is the individual's self-report of whether or not they voted, and I include in the model the same set of individual- and state-level factors that influence the propensity to vote. The individual-level variables consist of age and age squared; an ordinal measurement of mobility; and dichotomous indicators for gender, African Americans, and Latinos. Models run with CCES data also have ordinal measurements of political interest and strength or partisanship (such variables are not available in the CPS data). In contrast to the analyses in chapter three, I collapse ordered measurements of education and income into dichotomous variables that mirror those used in Figures 5.1 to 5.4 (high school degree or below versus more than a high school degree and 0 to 33rd versus 34th to 100th income percentile). Additionally, I insert into the CCES models variables for white evangelical and black Protestants (their coding is discussed in greater detail below). At the state-level, I include dummies for the presence of concurrent Senate or governor races; the number of days between the voter registration deadline and the election (closing date); and an indicator for southern states. I employ

the same operationalization of moral issue propositions, which is a count of the number of such issues on the ballot.⁶⁷

To examine the potential relationships in question, I again employ hierarchical generalized linear modeling (HGLM) but also make use of a key feature of this statistical technique. HGLM permits the specification of cross-level interactions to investigate relationships between the first and second levels (individual and state, respectively). The conception is the same as an interaction term in a non-hierarchical model; the researcher wishes to understand how the effect of some variable conditions the effect of another. In this circumstance, we want to determine how the presence of moral issue propositions on the ballot impacts the influence of education, income, and religious adherence on turnout. Hierarchical modeling, however, allows us to let the influence of state-level variables to vary by state. That is, instead of assuming, for example, that the impact of a moral issue proposition remains constant across all fifty states, we can capture the likely heterogeneous effect for each individual state. Doing so provides the potential advantage of capturing diversity in the influence of these factors that may be missed by other model specifications.

The model results can be found in Appendix J. Because we cannot directly interpret the interaction effects simply from this output, I relegate it to the Appendix and instead calculate the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero to one moral issue on the ballot (as I did in chapter three). All changes in predicted probabilities are generated holding all other variables constant at their actual values and

⁶⁷ See Appendix I for a description of the coding of all variables.

presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals.⁶⁸ Substantial overlap of the confidence intervals indicates that the differences in the changes in predicted probabilities are not statistically significant, though questions arise if more minimal overlap exists.

Results

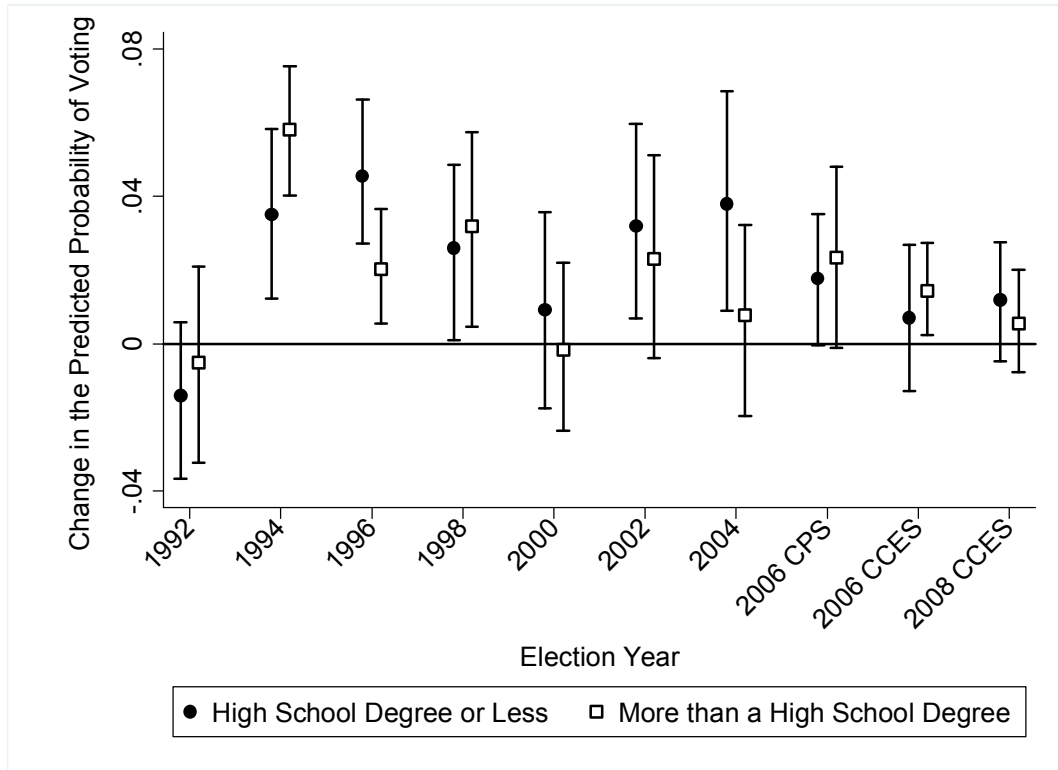
Moral issue propositions and socioeconomic status

Focusing on education first, I employ the same divisions presented in Figures 5.1 and 2 and calculate the change in the predicted probability of voting for two education levels: high school degree or less and more than a high school degree. The results, presented in Figure 5.5, reveal mixed evidence (at best) for the hypothesized relationship. The changes in the predicted probability are largest for the lower educated in only three of the seven elections in which the effects reach statistical significance in chapter three (1996, 2002, and 2004). In each of these elections, the substantive differences are significant; 2.5 percentage points in 1996, 1.0 percentage points in 2002, and 3.1 percentage points in 2004. Furthermore, in 2002 and 2004 only the estimated effects for the lower educated reach statistical significance (those for the higher educated do not).

On the other hand, disproportionately mobilizing the lower educated in less than half the elections with a statistically significant impact (three out of seven) presents less than convincing evidence of a particular appeal to this group. Although the effects in three of the other four models do not exceed 0.7 of a percentage point (1998 and both

⁶⁸ Confidence intervals are generated through a simulation process that draws one thousand sets of coefficients from the multivariate normal distribution, based on a mean vector created for the coefficient and covariance matrices. For each individual, the change in the predicted probability is calculated from each set of simulated coefficients, generating a thousand simulated probabilities from which the confidence intervals are computed (see Hanmer and Kalkan (2009) and Herron (1999) for further explanation of the simulation procedure).

Figure 5.5 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Moral Issue on the Ballot by Education Level for National Elections, 1992-2008



Source: Current Population Study November Supplement (1992-2006) and Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Symbols represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, for each level of education. Range spikes signify ninety-five percent confidence intervals generated through simulation.

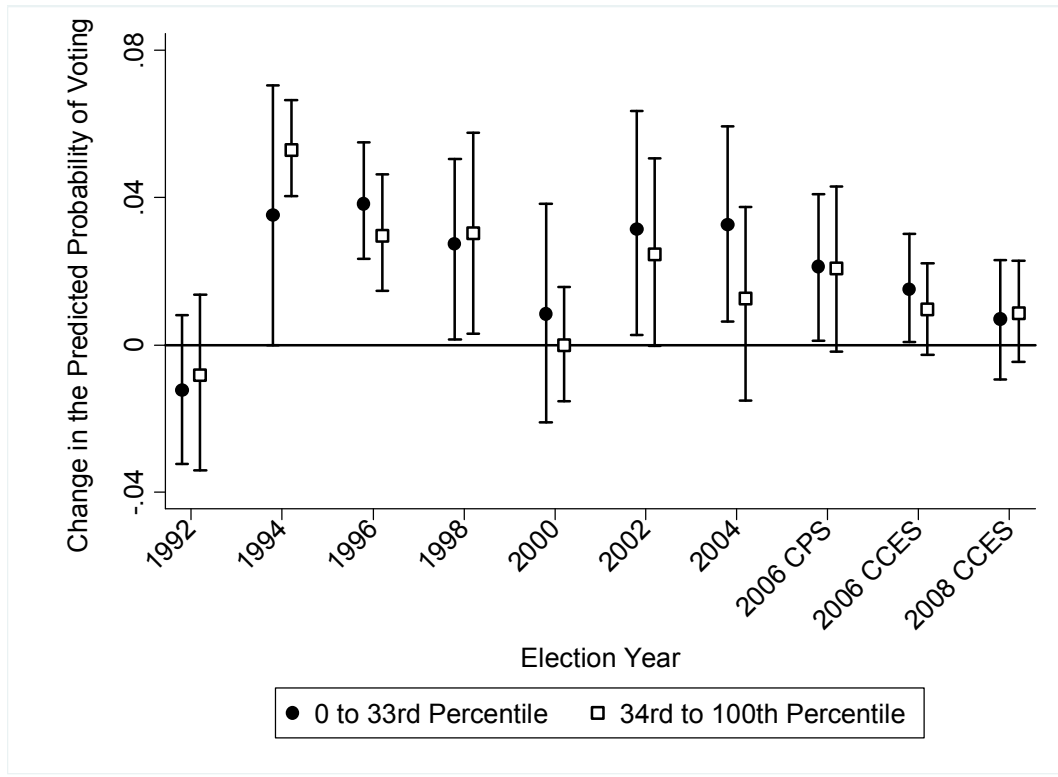
2006 models), it reaches 2.3 percentage points in 1994. Even if we note that the substantial overlap of the confidence intervals in these cases denotes that the estimated effects are likely statistically indistinguishable from each other (signaling no greater effect for the higher educated), they still provide evidence against a disproportionate mobilization of the lower educated. Additionally, the effect for the lower educated does not reach standard levels of statistical significance for two of the four elections (both 2006 models). In sum, there appears to be minimal evidence that moral issue propositions mobilize at any higher rates those at the bottom of the education ladder.

More convincing results emerge when we shift to the second measure of socioeconomic status. Figure 5.6 demonstrates the change in the predicted probability of voting for the two divisions of income employed in Figures 5.3 and 5.4: zero to thirty-third and thirty-fourth to one hundredth percentiles.⁶⁹ For the elections in which the changes obtain statistical significance, the largest effect pertains to the lower income group in five of the seven elections (1996, 2002, 2004, and both 2006 CCES models). These differences, though somewhat minor, range from 0.6 to 2.0 percentage points for four of the five models (though the difference is only 0.1 percentage points for the 2006 CCES model). In addition, in four out of the five elections (including the 2006 CCES model) the effect of moral issue propositions on the participation of those in the higher income category fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

We should note, however, that substantial overlap exists between the confidence intervals for these two income groups for many of the election years. Remember, significant overlap points to no meaningful difference between the two estimates. As such, it is difficult to decisively conclude that moral issue propositions disproportionately mobilize large numbers from the lower income class in a consistent manner. The differences in effects are certainly suggestive though, and appear to provide some evidence of the ability of these propositions to particularly mobilize those at the bottom of the income ladder and at least minimally reduce existing inequalities in turnout to a certain degree.

⁶⁹ The divisions do not exactly mirror each other, as the raw income data is not available in the NES cumulative file or CPS and CCES data sets. The income group divisions resemble those in Figures 5.2 and 5.4 as best as possible, but some minor variation exists for each year.

Figure 5.6 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Moral Issue on the Ballot by Income Level for National Elections, 1992-2008



Source: Current Population Study November Supplement (1992-2006) and Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Symbols represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, for each level of income. Range spikes signify ninety-five percent confidence intervals generated through simulation.

Moral issue propositions and religiosity

The failure of the CPS to collect information on religious adherence significantly hinders any potential analysis of the effect of moral issue propositions on the turnout rates of both black and white evangelical Protestants. While the CCES does do so, it provides data solely for two elections (2006 and 2008), and only in 2006 is the relationship between moral issue ballot measures and the likelihood of participation statistically significant. Employing a different data set to include additional years of investigation, such as the National Election Studies, runs into the problem of insufficient respondents from states with moral issue propositions on the ballot to confidently

generalize results. With regards to black Protestants, the small percentages of the population that identify as members of this group make such an analysis especially untenable. Although we only have two elections in which to test the relationship, doing so will still provide some (though not conclusive) information on the existence of the relationship in question.

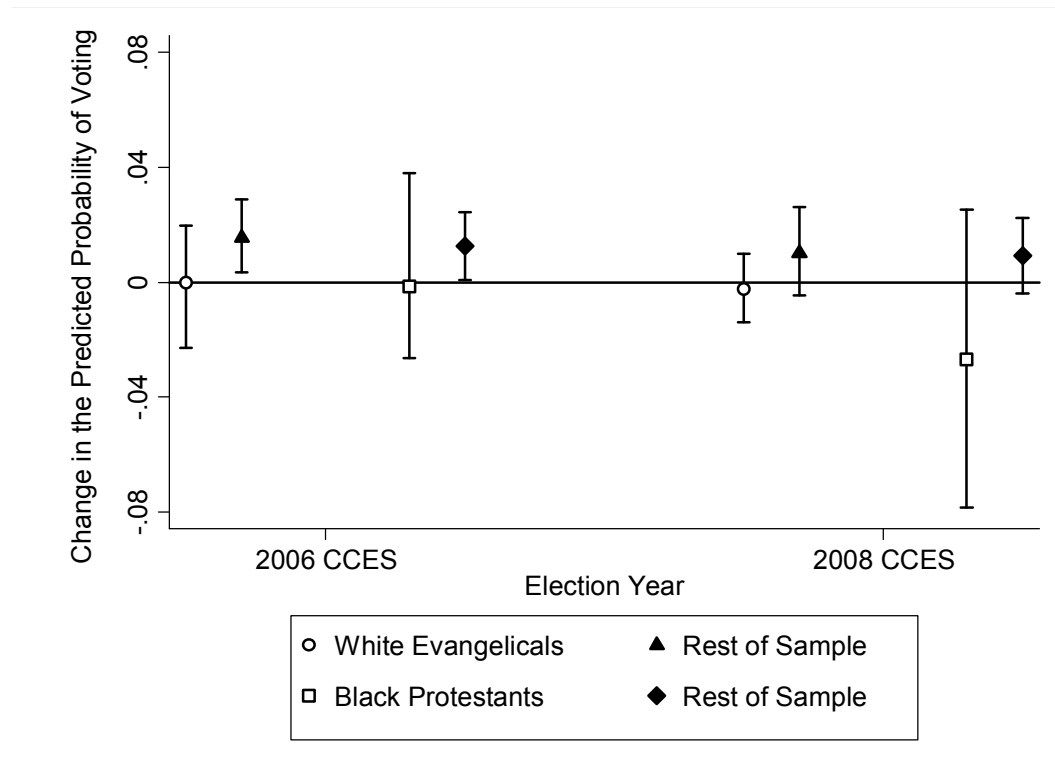
To test the effect of moral issue ballot measures on these religious adherents, I include variables to control for these groups in the CCES models, as well as cross-level interactions with the number of moral issues on the ballot. For the 2006 model, I employ variables for self-identified white, born again Christians and black, born again Christians. As born again and evangelical Protestants are not necessarily the same, it would be preferable to use a more precise measurement. The failure of the 2006 CCES to collect information evangelical Protestant self-identification, however, prohibits such an analysis, so I employ the best available proxy. I code white and black evangelical Protestants in the 2008 model based on the typology constructed by Layman (2001).⁷⁰

Figure 5.7 presents the results from this analysis, which illustrate no disproportionate impact on these groups. In 2006, there appears to be no increase in the predicted probability of voting associated with the placement of a moral issue on the ballot for either white or black born again Christians. In contrast, the estimated effects for both non-white and non-black born again Christians attain standard levels of statistical significance. Similarly, in 2008 the estimated impact of moral issue propositions is lower for all evangelical Protestants than that for the non-evangelical population, though none of the effects attain statistical or substantive significance. At

⁷⁰ See Appendix I for a description of the religious variable coding for both the 2006 and 2008 CCES.

least in these two elections, the data employed here encourage little confidence in the prevalence of the relationship in question.⁷¹

Figure 5.7 – Change in the Predicted Probability of Voting Based on the Presence of a Moral Issue on the Ballot for White Evangelicals and Black Protestants for National Elections, 2006 & 2008



Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Symbols represent the change in the predicted probability of voting for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, for white Evangelicals, black Protestants, and the rest of the sample. Range spikes signify ninety-five percent confidence intervals generated through simulation.

⁷¹ Because I argue in chapter three that it is the number of moral issues on the ballot, not their mere presence, that increases turnout, one might suspect that moving across the range of the number of moral issues on the ballot may be a better measurement of any disproportionate mobilization effect. In other words, it may be that, while moving from zero to one moral issue measure on the ballot has a somewhat equal effect on all groups discussed above, moving from zero to two (or three or four) moral issues on the ballot may exhibit some unequal impact on the turnout rates of certain groups. To test this possibility, I calculated the changes in the predicted probability of voting across the range of moral issue propositions appearing on state ballots for each group for each year under investigation. For those years in which the effect of one moral issue ballot measure is largest for the expected segment of the group (as described above), the gap does widen with the placement of additional moral issue propositions on the ballot. The fact, however, that having these high numbers of moral issue propositions on the ballot is limited to a very select number of states (often only one or two) raises significant concerns about generalizing these findings to the nation as a whole. As such, while the results provide more evidence of a disproportionate effect, they are certainly not conclusive.

Discussion

The analyses above admittedly suffer from data limitations, and cannot be understood as the definitive statement on the effect of moral issue propositions on the likelihood of voting for all groups. For example, one simply cannot draw strong conclusions about the ability of such ballot measures to mobilize members of specific religious traditions based on the results of two models, especially given the very small samples of black religious adherents. Despite these limitations, however, this research generates some evidence that moral issues may act to decrease the significant inequalities in participation that exist across society. While the investigations addressing differences in levels of education yield minimal support for this contention, the expected gaps do emerge with regards to income class. Surprisingly, I fail to find any effects for the religious adherents most often hypothesized as being prime candidates for moral issue proposition mobilization. In short, the analyses here reveal some persuasive evidence for the relationship in question, though it remains less than overwhelming.

In the face of such strong theoretical expectations of a larger and more consistent effect (and despite the data limitations), these results raise questions about the limited ability of moral issue propositions to disproportionately bring to the polls individuals whose characteristics mirror those of peripheral voters. Given the demonstration in chapter two that moral issue propositions particularly appeal to incremental voters, the findings are especially perplexing. Of course, data restrictions do not allow the exact identification of peripheral voters, so it may be that the indicators examined in this chapter serve as poor proxies for this class of individuals. In other words, the inability to precisely define these individuals, combined with the substantial diversity that

encompasses this class of the electorate and the small effects on turnout, may obscure the results. This fact is likely part of the answer, with the inexact proxies partially masking any disproportionate effect of moral issue propositions. Concerns about the proper identification of peripheral voters, however, probably do not completely identify the reasons behind the lack of persuasive results. While conclusive evidence cannot be brought to bear on them, a number of potential explanations exist for the findings above.

With regards to getting out the vote along socioeconomic lines, it could be the case that social and political institutions (be they religious or not) are in fact doing well in getting the lower educated and income classes to the polls. These actions, however, may be matched (at least somewhat) by the mobilization of those of a higher education or income status, which mitigates to a certain extent any disproportionate impact. The end result, then, would be that both groups increase their participation but at similar rates. For example, churches with large numbers from the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder may see their efforts mirrored by churches whose members maintain a higher socioeconomic level but likewise do not participate as frequently (such as the Mormon Church), which acts to counterbalance any disproportionate effect on specific groups underrepresented in the voting pool. In other words, it may be that those individuals who care significantly about moral issue propositions, and thus can be convinced to go to the polls when such issues make it onto the ballot, are dispersed across the spectrum of nonvoters. In such a scenario, these peripheral voters do not disproportionately comprise any group participating at depressed rates. Although plausible, the limitations of the data unfortunately do not allow us to test this contention.

The lack of results for religious adherents is a greater puzzle. Data limitations certainly play a role here, as we can only test the relationship in two election years (only one of which maintains a significant relationship between moral issue measures and turnout). In such circumstances, the idiosyncrasies of any specific election may overshadow or trump what would be expected to be a consistent relationship. Similarly, the small sample sizes of these groups (especially African Americans), even in the larger data sets of the CPS and CCES, make drawing any types of inferences extremely difficult.

At the same time, however, the failure to find even suggestive evidence is discouraging. To be fair, despite the substantial focus on the relationship and its seemingly common knowledge prevalence, only one article provides empirical evidence for its existence (Campbell and Monson 2008), and does so in the context of a hotly contested presidential election taking place in a battleground state. It is conceivable that the relationship lacks the suspected consistency, and instead derives from the concurrent electoral contests and/or dominant political atmosphere. As such, the substantial effect of moral issue propositions that one would expect to see on the propensity of specific religious adherents' participation rates may be highly dependent on a context that closely resembles that of 2004.

More probable, in my point of view, is the possibility that only propositions addressing particular moral issues act to disproportionately mobilize these individuals (the same could potentially be said of lower socioeconomic status citizens as well). If true, then the aggregation of the effects for all moral issues masks the disproportionate impact that some smaller proportion of the issues exerts on turnout. Unfortunately, data

limitations again restrict any such analysis, as insufficient variation exists in the different types of issues across state ballots to test this hypothesis. Such an explanation, however, at least passes the plausibility test. For example, perhaps only particular issues consistently bring out religious conservatives (such as same-sex marriage bans and abortion). This would make sense in the context of Campbell and Monson's (2008) evidence that a same-sex marriage ban brings out white evangelicals at a higher rate, as well as the particular appeal of this issue to peripheral voters shown in chapter two. It would also hold out hope for the claim that at least some moral issues do increase the turnout of this underrepresented group. At this time, however, only anecdotal evidence persists of such an assertion.

Conclusion

Whatever the explanation, the prospects for generating more equal voting levels through direct democracy appear unclear. While the habit-forming nature of voting (Gerber et al. 2003; Green and Shachar 2000) suggests that simply getting new voters to the polls once through a moral issue proposition may convert some into long term members of the electorate, the results in this chapter indicate that moral issue measures can only make a small dent in reducing the existing inequalities in participation. This ability appears limited to those from the lower income levels, with little effect on the lower educated and, to the extent that we can draw conclusions from the analyses, no impact on these disparities for religious whites and blacks. It is difficult to definitively determine here whether the mobilization of new voters or retention of those already in the voting pool accounts for the increase in turnout observed in chapter three, but mixed evidence exists to conclude that a significant influx of new citizens into the voting pool

occurs in these instances. As such, the meaningful effect of these propositions on the existing distribution of participation rates, though not inconsequential, looks less than impressive.

Having examined the effect of moral issue propositions on both the number and composition of those turning out to vote, I now shift the focus to another potential secondary effect of direct democracy. Proponents of this institution assert that it possesses other positive benefits for society, such as raising levels of political knowledge. This ability is of significant interest, given that those looking to increase participation likely desire not only more voters at the polls on Election Day, but also more better informed votes cast as well. I test this capability for moral issue propositions, as well as direct democracy in general and tax measures, in the next chapter.

6 - Moral Issues and Political Knowledge

While the focus until now has pertained to the effect of direct democracy on voter turnout, a significant number of other potential secondary effects are attributed to ballot measures. One such effect includes an increase in political knowledge, with proponents of the institution contending that a greater role in the legislating process will not only increase participation but spur citizens to seek out resources in order to cast better informed votes as well.

Such a possibility comports well with the attention devoted to participation in the previous chapters, given the interest in not only bringing more people to the polls, but also the kinds of decisions made by individuals once they actually enter the voting booth. Scholars have long been concerned about the lack of political knowledge possessed by average Americans, “one of the best-documented features of contemporary politics” (Bartels 1996:194; see also Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992). Yet despite this fact, scholars persist in investigating this phenomenon because it appears incompatible with the tenants of democratic theory. While the situation may not be quite so bleak (Alvarez and Brehm 1995, 2002; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Lupia 1994; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1991), this dearth of political knowledge raises normative questions about the role that the public can and should play in the political process.

Despite the contention of advocates of the institution and substantial theoretical evidence, however, limited support exists for this relationship with regards to a single election (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith 2002; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003), though learning may take place over the course of multiple elections (Smith

2002). Such findings suggest that (as with turnout) proponents significantly overestimate the ability of direct democracy to help generate a more politically knowledgeable public. I concur with these findings, and demonstrate in this chapter that the average ballot measure does little to increase political knowledge. In contrast, moral issue propositions can consistently do so for the same reasons that they act to increase turnout. Such ballot measures draw peripheral voters into the political sphere, which facilitates exposure to (and retention of) political information that they otherwise would not receive. These results further clarify our understanding of the relationship between direct democracy and learning, highlight the consequences of allowing citizens to legislate on certain issues, and speak to the ability of campaigns to shape political knowledge.

Direct democracy and political knowledge

Democratic theory often presupposes that the citizenry possess at least some minimum level of political knowledge. In their seminal work, Berelson and his colleagues (1954) contend that the democratic citizen must be well informed about political affairs and know the issues, relative facts, policy alternatives, and their consequences. They conclude, however, that the average individual falls short of these requirements. This finding, since confirmed by numerous studies (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992), raises important concerns about the ability of individuals to realize the expectations of them in a democratic society. Such a concern appears especially pertinent to direct democracy advocates, given their assertion that the institution can raise participation rates. While increasing overall turnout may be considered beneficial for society, a broader question emerges:

what is the utility of bringing more citizens to the polls if they possess little understanding of what will greet them in the voting booth?

The situation, of course, may not be as bleak as suggested by these studies. Many scholars, for instance, assert that citizens are able to overcome this relative ignorance through the employment of heuristics (Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Lupia 1994; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Popkin 1991; Sniderman et al. 1991). In doing so, citizens can make reasonably informed political decisions without much knowledge on the subject by relying on cues such as party identification, endorsements, or the opinions of trusted sources. Lupia (1994) illustrates this scenario well in the context of ballot measure campaigns. Looking at an election regarding a number of competing California propositions to reform automobile insurance policies, he finds that relatively uninformed individuals capable of correctly identifying the insurance industry's official position emulated the voting behavior of well informed citizens. In other words, relatively uninformed voters possess the ability to use the heuristics of one side's official stance to make an informed decision regarding a complex ballot measure about which they maintain little understanding or knowledge. Of course, such a capability depends upon the existence and knowledge of such heuristics, whose employment relies strongly on the prevailing environmental conditions (Kuklinski et al. 2001). Even if we accept these abilities, however, the general lack of political knowledge exhibited by the American public continues to trouble scholars.

This concern has spurred scholars to identify manners in which levels of political knowledge might be increased. One institution that may possess such a potential is direct democracy, whose proponents believe that it can have a "positive educative value" and

empower citizens to develop a greater knowledge of politics (Smith and Tolbert 2004). Political sophistication is largely related to the ability to assimilate knowledge, motivation to follow matters of politics, and availability of relevant information (Luskin 1990), three issues which direct democracy may address. Through heightened participation in politics, direct democracy in general aids in the development of the dispositions required to effectively take part in the democratic process and fosters the desire for the capability to better interpret the various political arguments presented by different sides (Pateman 1970). Similarly, the engagement of specific ballot questions may spur greater general interest in politics and lead individuals to want to better understand and interpret the political arguments they encounter in their everyday lives (Smith 2002). Such an ambition should facilitate the absorption of politically relevant information normally rejected or ignored (Smith 2002), with the increase in knowledge carrying beyond the specific measure at hand to a larger understanding of politics in general (Smith and Tolbert 2004).

Initiatives that grab the citizen's attention may contribute to this larger understanding by getting them to more closely follow other existing campaigns, from which they can derive considerable political information (Barber 1984). Revising previous contentions about the "minimal effects" of campaigns (Berelson et al. 1954; Finkel 1993), scholars now accept that the opportunities and constraints present in their environment strongly influence what people learn about politics. Campaigns create an environment conducive to political learning (Wolak 2009) by greatly increasing the flow of information to citizens (Zaller 1992) through their dominance of media coverage. In addition, highly contested contests often create information-saturated atmospheres that

make it difficult to avoid such political material (Kahn and Kenney 1999). This increase in the amount of relevant political information available to voters subsidizes its costs, permitting citizens to more easily learn about the crucial factors of the election and their political relevance (Gelman and King 1993). Exposure to such information through the media exerts an important impact on political learning (Arceneaux 2006) and leads to higher levels of factual political knowledge (Mondak 1995), increased knowledge of the candidates (Coleman and Manna 2000), and votes that more accurately reflect the individual's political attitudes (Iyengar and Simon 2000). Even viewing political advertisements can lead to more politically knowledgeable citizens (especially among those with low levels of political information) (Freedman et al. 2004) better able to recall candidates (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995), with negative advertising in particular exposing citizens to important policy information (Geer 2006) and stimulating knowledge about the campaign (Lau et al. 2007).

Initiative campaigns themselves may also facilitate political learning by the citizenry beyond the proposition at hand. Such campaigns, while not realizing the in-depth deliberation and intensive decision making envisioned by early proponents, clearly provide a more engaging role for individuals than other types of political processes (Smith 2002). Ballot measure contests lower the costs of political information by increasing its availability in general (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003), and often involve extensive media coverage that serves to further depress costs (McCuan et al. 1998). As such, these campaigns provide additional opportunities to learn about politics and, if they spark interest, potentially increase political knowledge (Tolbert et al. 2003).

Despite strong theoretical expectations, however, the existing analyses reveal limited support for a short-term increase in political knowledge associated with direct democracy (see Table 6.1 for details on all relevant studies). In the most comprehensive investigation, Schlozman and Yohai (2008), looking at the effect of a single election from 1988 to 2004 (except 2002, for which no knowledge questions exist), discover some indication of a positive association between heavier initiative use and levels of political information, though no relationship exists after 1994. Other studies find a marginally significant effect ($p < .07$) for the 1996 election, but none in 1998 or 2000 (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003). While not actually measuring levels of political knowledge, Bowler and Donovan (2002) conclude that residents of states making frequent use of the initiative are more likely to claim being better informed about politics than those of other states.

The examination of contexts outside the United States, at least recently, provides greater success in identifying the hypothesized relationship. Mendelsohn and Cutler (2000) determine that citizen legislating opportunities, in this case the referendum, do contribute to greater political knowledge for Canadian voters, who learn throughout the campaign. This increase in political knowledge, though limited, takes place even among the least informed segments of society. In a European context, information levels regarding the European Union are higher in those countries that adopted the Maastricht Treaty (the formal decision to join the European Union) by referendum. Similarly, Swiss citizens living in cantons that provide more opportunities for direct political participation possess higher levels of political knowledge than the rest of the population (Benz and

Table 6.1 – Previous Literature on Direct Democracy and Political Knowledge

Study	Data	Years	Significant Relationship	Components of Knowledge Scale
Single Election (U.S. Context)				
Tolbert, McNeal, and Smith (2003)	ANES	1996-2000	1996	Identification of public officials & parties' ideological placements
Smith and Tolbert (2004)	ANES	1996-2000	1996	Identification of public officials & parties' ideological placements
Schlozman and Yohai (2008)	ANES ANES	1980-2000, 2004 1980-2000, 2004	None 1988-1994 (only for voters)	Identification of public officials Parties' ideological placements
(Canadian & European Context)				
Mendelsohn and Cutler (2000)	CES	1992	1992	Position on referendum held by prominent political figures
Benz and Sutzer (2004)	Eurobarometer SELECTS 1996	1996 1996	1996 1996	Knowledge about the RU Swiss political system
20 Year Time Span (U.S. Context)				
Smith (2002)	Senate Election Study	1992	1992	Identification of public officials & parties' ideological placements
Schlozman and Yohai (2008)	ANES ANES	1980-2000, 2004 1980-2000, 2004	None 1988-1994 (only for voters)	Identification of public officials Parties' ideological placemen

Stutzer 2004). These studies, while not directly applicable to the United States, present evidence to indicate the possibility of this relationship in more recent American elections.

In contrast, Smith (2002) concludes that direct democracy requires multiple elections to increase political knowledge. Examining the relationship in the context of the 1992 presidential election, he finds that the number of initiatives on the ballot in a single election exhibits little effect on information levels, but that heavy initiative usage over a long period of time (twenty years) does contribute to political learning. Making a vital distinction between voters and nonvoters, Smith (2002) also determines that this impact is limited to the former, or those who actually take part in the process and are expected to follow, be receptive to, and learn from the campaign information they encounter (via mobilization, the media, or some other medium). The same cannot be said of nonvoters, which means that the combining of both groups may mask what is only an effect for a subset of the population (i.e. voters). Schlozman and Yohai (2008) support this contention, identifying the same relationship from 1988 to 1994 for voters only (though they find a single election relationship for these same years and no effect in more recent elections). These conclusions suggest that direct democracy does lead to increased political knowledge, but that citizens must be exposed to many initiatives over a long period of time to realize any benefit. As scholars often only look at the impact of a single election, this could explain the failure to consistently discover the expected relationship.

Readdressing measurement issues

While Smith (2002) posits that learning takes place over the long haul (though see Schlozman and Yohai (2008) for inconsistent evidence of this claim), this should not preclude us from theorizing about when ballot measures might consistently contribute to

higher information levels in a single election. The inability to identify such an increase in political knowledge may relate to how the direct democracy process is measured. In this context, as with turnout (see chapters one and three), scholars use a count of the number of initiatives on the ballot, hypothesizing that higher numbers of initiatives (and thus more opportunities to participate in the political process) will increase political knowledge. By employing this measurement of the institution, those investigating the relationship in question implicitly treat all ballot measures as having the same effect on political knowledge (see the more detailed discussion in chapter one).

As detailed in chapter one, such a treatment is counterintuitive because we should not expect all ballot measures to get an individual to pay attention to campaigns in either a similar manner or to the same degree. For a proposition to do so, the individual must both be aware of and care significantly about it. Similar to the situation with turnout, one cannot argue that a ballot measure affects a citizen's level of political knowledge if they are unaware of it, and, even if aware of the proposition, the citizen must care enough about its outcome to actually follow the campaign. As should be obvious, each ballot measure meets the two requirements of awareness and importance to varying degrees. Some propositions are simply better known or of greater importance to individuals than others, and thus more successful in getting them to pay attention to political campaigns, because of their issue content, campaign spending, campaign intensity, or media attention (Bowler and Donovan 1998; Nicholson 2003). Any proper measurement of direct democracy must account for these two factors. Because the count measurement does not do so, the literature's failure to recognize the heterogeneous effects of individual ballot measures may explain the inability to consistently attribute an increase in political

knowledge to this institution. Only by looking at the issue content of each individual proposition can we expect to attribute any increase in levels of political information to the institution.

By shifting the focus to the issue content of each individual proposition, I again do not contend that moral issue ballot measures alone possess the ability to increase political knowledge, but rather that they consistently possess this potential. Moral issue propositions should be able to do this for the same reasons that they possess the ability to increase turnout (see chapter one for a thorough discussion). While no research exists regarding the effect of moral issue propositions on broad political and campaign knowledge (though those attempting to ban same-sex marriage may engender campaign learning about the ballot measure (Donovan et al. 2008)), chapter three clearly demonstrates their ability to grab the public's attention through the increase in turnout attributed to them (see also Campbell and Monson 2008; Grummel 2008; McDonald 2004). Given this capability, it is at least plausible to suspect that their influence may extend to other secondary effects as well, such as raising political knowledge.

Hypotheses

Because of their nature, moral issue propositions should contribute to an increase in political knowledge in the short-term. As suggested by Smith (2002), however, this learning likely only occurs for voters, or those who actually take part in the political process. Again, I do not contend that moral issue measures are unique in this regard (to the exclusion of other compelling issue areas), but rather that they simply consistently possess the potential to do so. Given the expected heterogeneous effects of each

individual proposition, however, I anticipate that the average measure can do little to increase knowledge over a single election, even for those who vote. In other words:

H1: An increase in the number of moral issues on the ballot will increase levels of political knowledge for voters.

H2: An increase in the number of moral issues on the ballot will not increase levels of political knowledge for nonvoters.

H3: An increase in the number of total measures on the ballot will not increase levels of political knowledge for either voters or nonvoters.

Data and methods

As with investigations of direct democracy and participation, the vast majority of previous studies investigating the impact of the institution on political knowledge suffer from the unavailability of data of sufficient quality to adequately test the relationship. Many rely on the American National Election Study (ANES) (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003), which exhibit two significant limitations. The first concerns its size and sampling technique. As detailed in chapter three, the samples are comprised of a relatively small number of respondents in total and a very small number of (or no) individuals from some sparsely populated states, including those that make heavy use of the initiative process. In addition, while providing a nationally representative sample, this data set is not representative at the state level. These limitations force previous studies to draw conclusions about the impact of propositions in each state from data that do not include enough states, residents of those states, or a representative sample from each state.

The second concern regards the lack of general voting-relevant and policy-oriented questions from which to comprise an adequate measurement of campaign learning. Political knowledge scales derived from the NES or CES consist of questions based heavily on the identification of important political figures, supplemented by questions about a party's issue support, the identification of which party holds power in Congress, and/or the placement of the parties and/or candidates on an ideological spectrum. For example, Smith's (2002) measurement of political knowledge includes the identification of the offices held by Dan Quayle, Al Gore, Thomas Foley, and William Rehnquist; which party is more likely to raise taxes; and the placement of the parties and presidential candidates on an ideological spectrum. Similarly, the knowledge scales employed by Smith and Tolbert (2004) and Tolbert et al. (2003) (which are identical) for the 1998 election consist of the identification of the positions held by Al Gore, William Rehnquist, Boris Yeltsin, and Newt Gingrich; as well as the identification of which party held a majority in the House and Senate before the election. While they do not report the questions that comprise the knowledge measurement for 1996 or 2000, the scales rely on similar questions.

While addressing political knowledge that one would want the average citizen to possess, it is questionable whether many of the correct answers can actually be learned through the course of a campaign. Party control of institutions and their ideological statuses likely receive coverage during the campaign, but the media probably devotes less attention to prominent officials not facing reelection. Such a contention appears plausible, given the empirical findings based on the two distinct political knowledge scales created by Schlozman and Yohai (2008). Knowledge for the first, which consists

only of the identification of political figures, remains unaffected by the direct democracy process in any election from 1988 to 2004. Knowledge on the second, comprised of questions that ask which party is more likely to support a particular policy, did increase with more initiatives on the ballot from 1988 to 1994 (with this increase limited to voters). As such, Schlozman and Yohai (2008) find that the positive effect associated with initiatives regarding the placement of parties on political issues does not extend to the ability to identify specific political figures.

In addition, the direct relevancy of the identification of important political officeholders to the average citizen's capability to cast a better informed vote remains unclear. For example, we should not expect the failure of an individual to recall the office held by William Rehnquist (a question common to political knowledge scales (Smith 2002; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003)) to necessarily hinder their ability to cast a proper vote. In terms of good voting decisions, we should instead, along with party placement and control of offices (which can be deemed as general voting-relevant information), be concerned with whether citizens gain policy-oriented knowledge (which has not been measured in this context). Such knowledge about specific policy facts is valuable because it exerts a significant impact on citizens' political judgments (Gilens 2001) and maintains a tangible relationship to improving their ability to make informed choices.

While one might suspect the possession of policy-oriented knowledge to mirror that of other political knowledge, the two do not go hand in hand. As Barbaras and Jerit (2009) conclude, citizens can score high on a test measuring general information levels but be ignorant of policy-specific information that might otherwise alter their voting

decisions. The failure of previous studies to focus exclusively on general voting-relevant and/or policy-oriented knowledge is not the fault of the authors, who simply employed the best measurements available at the time. To identify single election effects, however, we need to focus on the current electoral context, and existing knowledge scales likely set the bar too high in terms of the information expected to be gained from campaigns. As such, the inability to devise measurements based upon knowledge prevalent in the information environment may help explain why scholars struggle to find the hypothesized relationship.

To address these issues, I employ the 2006 and 2008 versions of the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). Remember that the CCES, conducted over the internet, uses a sampling technique that ensures a nationally representative sample of citizens with an adequate number of individuals from small states and a large number of respondents (around 36,500 individuals) with which to work. In addition, the CCES permits the construction of a better measurement of political knowledge because it contains numerous policy-oriented and/or voting-relevant questions. For 2006, these include the positions of the respondent's senators on key legislation votes (campaign information likely to arise and be retained by those paying more attention to its coverage) for issues such as abortion, stem cell research, the Iraq War, illegal immigration, raising the minimum wage, tax cuts, and free trade; the party of their governor and Senate members; and the placement of the major parties on an ideological spectrum. While the 2008 survey does not contain policy-oriented questions, voting-relevant questions exist regarding which party controls both chambers of the legislature at the national and state level; the party affiliation of their governor and senators; and the placement of both

parties, Barak Obama, John McCain, and George Bush on an ideological spectrum.⁷² The employment of these two years allows us to determine the effect of direct democracy in the differing electoral contexts of both a presidential and midterm election.⁷³

I use these questions to construct the dependent variables. Each individual's value consists of a count of the number of questions answered correctly, ranging from zero (no questions answered correctly) to eighteen (all questions answered correctly) for the 2006 measure and zero to ten for the 2008 measure. All refusals to answer and "don't know" responses are coded as incorrect responses. For both scales, the Cronbach's alpha scores reveal a high level of internal reliability (0.89 for 2006 and 0.85 for 2008).

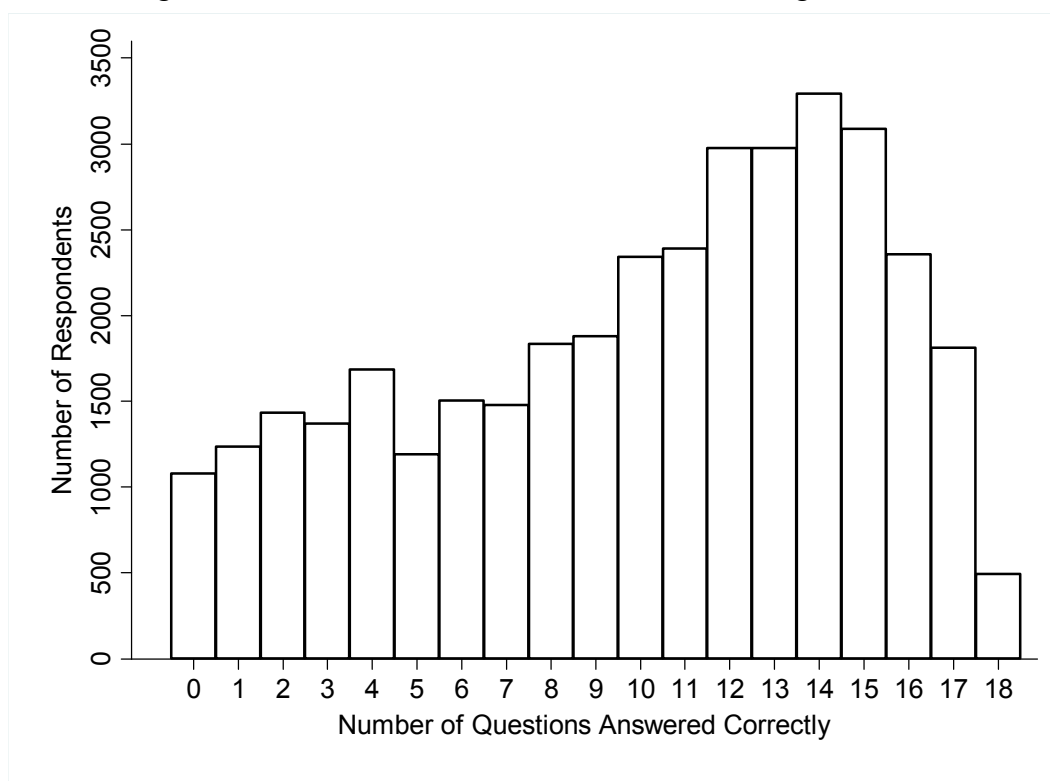
Figures 6.1 and 6.2 present the distribution of the dependent variables for 2006 and 2008, respectively. Although answering all eighteen questions correctly is the least likely score in 2006, Figure 6.1 reveals that many respondents scored very high of the political knowledge scale. The distribution skews somewhat to the left with a mean number of 10.04 correct responses, signifying that the average individual answered more than half of the questions correctly. Shifting to the 2008 measure, Figure 6.2 also illustrates a relatively well-informed sample, with the average respondent capable of answering over half of the questions (6.94) correctly. The data again skew left, and the modal number of correct responses is actually ten (all of the questions). Thus, at least based upon the measurements employed in this study, the samples appear to be fairly knowledgeable.⁷⁴

⁷² See Appendix K for the exact wording of all questions.

⁷³ Presidential elections are higher salience events than midterm elections, which may act to overshadow any impact that direct democracy might have on political knowledge. For midterm elections, voter interests likely focus on state-level issues (Smith 2001) which, combined with less abundant campaign coverage, may create a greater void for ballot measure campaigns to fill.

⁷⁴ While the high knowledge scores and internet nature of the survey may raise concerns that respondents simply looked up the answers, no reason exists to suspect that this possibility interacts with the treatment

Figure 6.1 – Distribution of 2006 Political Knowledge Measure



Source: *Cooperative Congressional Election Study 2006*

Note: See Appendix K for the list of questions and their exact wording.

I employ the same main independent variables of interest as those in chapter three. In doing so, I first look at the effect of the number of moral issues that appear on a state's ballot (employed to allow for the cumulative effect of multiple moral issues on the same ballot).⁷⁵ In addition, I use a count of the total number of all measures of the ballot to test the ability of the average proposition to increase political knowledge levels.⁷⁶ Despite their inability to increase turnout, I test the capability of tax issues to stimulate

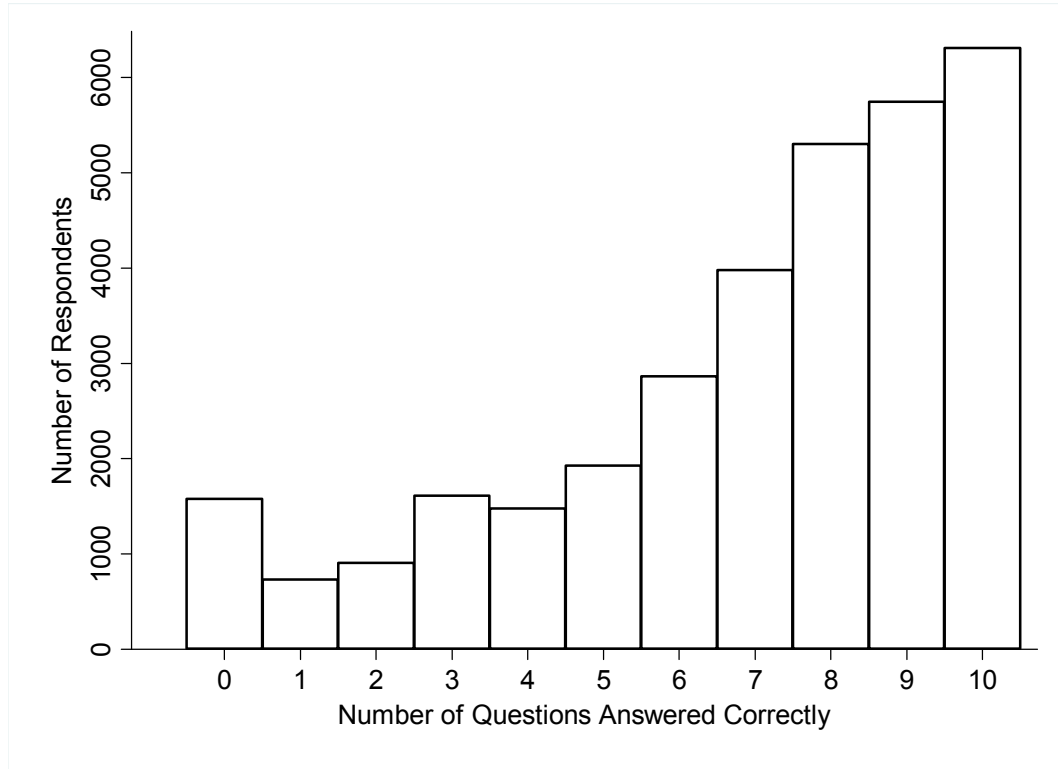
(i.e. those living in states with moral issues on the ballot should be no more likely to do so than those in states without such measures on the ballot).

⁷⁵ See Appendix D for a list of all moral issue propositions on state ballots in 2006 and 2008. To check if the simple presence of a moral issue on the ballot stimulates political knowledge, I employed a dummy for states with a moral issue on the ballot as a variable. The dummy exhibits a positive effect on voters in 2006 but not in 2008, nor for nonvoters in either election.

⁷⁶ This differs from previous studies, which only look at the effect of initiatives on political knowledge. See chapter three for a justification of including both initiatives and referenda in the count measurement.

political knowledge, coding the number of tax measures on the ballot in a similar manner as well.

Figure 6.2 – Distribution of 2008 Political Knowledge Measure



Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study 2008

Note: See Appendix K for the list of questions and their exact wording.

As individual-level control variables, I include in the model a number of variables known to influence one's level of political knowledge and collected by the CCES. These include the individual's age measured in years; income, education, strength of partisanship, and interest in politics measured as ordinal variables; and dummy variables for male, African-American, and Hispanic.⁷⁷ Additional state-level controls include dummy variables for the presence of gubernatorial and senatorial races, as their campaigns may spark interest in the electoral process; a dummy for divided government,

⁷⁷ Unfortunately, the CCES does not include measurements for two variables known to influence political knowledge levels: discussion of politics with others and internal efficacy.

as this may symbolize a more competitive and compelling state political context; and a dummy for southern states.⁷⁸ I treat the dependent variable as a count and employ negative binomial regression with clustered standard errors to account for the multilevel nature of the data.⁷⁹

Results and discussion

Table 6.2 presents the negative binomial regression results for models run with the moral issue proposition variable for both voters and nonvoters for the two elections under investigation. Looking at the first and third columns, a positive and statistically significant relationship exists in both 2006 and 2008 between the number of moral issues on the ballot and political knowledge for voters, providing strong evidence to support this hypothesized relationship.⁸⁰ In addition, the magnitude of the coefficients for this variable, while dwarfed by that of interest in politics and gender in both 2006 and 2008 (and race in 2008), rivals that of many of the other variables in the models. For example, in both models the coefficient for moral issue propositions is either larger or roughly the same size as those for strength of partisanship, education, and income. Although we should note that the majority of these measures address same-sex marriage or abortion, the analyses provide strong evidence in the context of both a midterm and presidential

⁷⁸ See Appendix L for a complete description of the coding of each variable.

⁷⁹ Previous studies looking at the effect of ballot measures on knowledge in the U.S. context largely employ an ordered model (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert et al. 2003), but doing so here is impractical (given the large number of questions in the dependent variables) and would likely violate the parallel regression assumption associated with such models. I use negative binomial regression, as opposed to a Poisson model, because the assumptions required to do so are less restrictive than those of a Poisson model (that events are independent and have a constant rate of occurrence) (Long 1997). Sensitivity tests using an ordered model reveal that the statistical significance of the ballot measure variables does not differ in any circumstance from that of the negative binomial regression models.

⁸⁰ To ensure that the eight same-sex marriage bans on ballots do not drive the results in 2006, I also estimate the model employing a dummy variable for whether or not the state has such a proposition. The relationship is not statistically significant.

Table 6.2 – Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot and Political Knowledge for the 2006 and 2008 Elections

Variable	Voter (2006)	Nonvoter (2006)	Voter (2008)	Nonvoter (2008)
Number of Moral Measures	0.040 (0.020)	0.027 (0.057)	0.036 (0.009)	0.059 (0.022)
Divided Government	0.035 (0.029)	0.008 (0.071)	-0.036 (0.026)	-0.102 (0.049)
Governor Race	-0.004 (0.031)	-0.111 (0.064)	0.005 (0.028)	-0.016 (0.064)
Senate Race	0.064 (0.030)	0.231 (0.075)	0.033 (0.029)	0.010 (0.050)
South	-0.061 (0.034)	-0.080 (0.073)	-0.030 (0.031)	-0.054 (0.052)
Education	0.044 (0.003)	0.136 (0.014)	0.036 (0.002)	0.089 (0.014)
Male	0.176 (0.008)	0.316 (0.047)	0.119 (0.006)	0.325 (0.034)
Age	0.002 (0.000)	0.005 (0.002)	0.002 (0.000)	0.007 (0.002)
Black	-0.056 (0.017)	0.083 (0.059)	-0.118 (0.015)	-0.013 (0.064)
Hispanic	-0.038 (0.010)	-0.005 (0.071)	-0.049 (0.009)	0.117 (0.060)
Income	0.013 (0.002)	0.007 (0.006)	0.015 (0.001)	0.033 (0.005)
Strength of Partisanship	0.034 (0.005)	0.126 (0.021)	0.021 (0.003)	0.153 (0.017)
Interest in Politics	0.366 (0.016)	0.491 (0.038)	0.244 (0.009)	0.404 (0.018)
Constant	0.742 (0.065)	-0.639 (0.170)	0.841 (0.049)	-0.743 (0.117)
Log-likelihood	-43,745	-7,807	-40,268	12,904
N	15,671	2,369	21,949	2,250

Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Coefficient estimates are generated using negative binomial regression with CCES provided sample weights. Dependent variable is a count of the number of political knowledge questions answered correctly. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are in parentheses. Coefficients in bold signify statistical significance at $p < .05$.

election to conclude that an increase in the total number of all moral issues on the ballot leads to higher levels of political knowledge for voters.⁸¹

For nonvoters, the relationship between moral issue measures and knowledge is more complex than originally hypothesized. Table 6.2 demonstrates that no political learning can be attributed to moral issue propositions for nonvoters in the 2006 election. In 2008, however, a statistically significant increase in knowledge prevails for nonvoters. While these findings partially signal that moral issue ballot measures have no effect on learning for nonvoters, they also imply that such propositions possess the potential to increase the knowledge of even those not actively taking part in the political process (though the results may reflect some spillover effect from the presidential campaign as well).

In contrast to the effect of moral issue propositions, significant evidence indicates that no relationship exists between the average ballot measure and political knowledge (as hypothesized). Table 6.3 illustrates no discernible impact of the total number of measures on the ballot on learning for either voters or nonvoters in 2006 or voters in 2008. Surprisingly, however, this count does positively affect knowledge levels for nonvoters in 2008, though the magnitude of the coefficient is less than five times that for moral issues propositions in the same election. These findings largely reflect the limited ability of the literature to identify a relationship between the average ballot measure and

⁸¹ These issues alone, however, do not drive the results in either year. The findings remain robust in additional estimated models that include a dummy for same-sex marriage measures, a dummy for abortion measures, or drop the states with one such issue on the ballot from the analysis.

Table 6.3 – Total Number of Measures on the Ballot and Political Knowledge for the 2006 and 2008 Elections

Variable	Voter (2006)	Nonvoter (2006)	Voter (2008)	Nonvoter (2008)
Number of Total Measures	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.008)	0.002 (0.005)	0.011 (0.005)
Divided Government	0.046 (0.031)	0.012 (0.073)	-0.027 (0.029)	-0.084 (0.048)
Governor Race	-0.011 (0.034)	-0.118 (0.071)	-0.006 (0.032)	-0.012 (0.068)
Senate Race	0.061 (0.031)	0.230 (0.075)	0.021 (0.028)	0.018 (0.044)
South	-0.059 (0.037)	-0.079 (0.074)	-0.034 (0.029)	-0.056 (0.054)
Education	0.044 (0.003)	0.137 (0.014)	0.036 (0.002)	0.091 (0.014)
Male	0.175 (0.008)	0.317 (0.047)	0.119 (0.006)	0.323 (0.034)
Age	0.002 (0.000)	0.005 (0.002)	0.002 (0.000)	0.007 (0.002)
Black	-0.059 (0.017)	0.078 (0.063)	-0.117 (0.015)	-0.012 (0.064)
Hispanic	-0.039 (0.010)	-0.008 (0.070)	-0.036 (0.012)	0.126 (0.057)
Income	0.013 (0.001)	0.007 (0.006)	0.016 (0.001)	0.033 (0.005)
Strength of Partisanship	0.033 (0.005)	0.126 (0.021)	0.021 (0.003)	0.152 (0.017)
Interest in Politics	0.367 (0.016)	0.490 (0.038)	0.244 (0.009)	0.404 (0.018)
Constant	0.745 (0.065)	-0.640 (0.169)	0.853 (0.051)	-0.765 (0.117)
Log-likelihood	-43,755	-7,807	-40,328	-12,908
N	15,671	2,369	21,949	2,250

Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Coefficient estimates are generated using negative binomial regression with CCES provided sample weights. Dependent variable is a count of the number of political knowledge questions answered correctly. Robust standard errors, clustered by state, are in parentheses. Coefficients in bold signify statistical significance at $p < .05$.

political knowledge over a single election while also highlighting the importance of the issue content of each individual proposition to any political learning.⁸²

As previously discussed, I also test the effects of the number of tax issues on political knowledge. Table 6.4 demonstrates that the number of tax measures on the ballot actually decreased political knowledge for voters in 2006, while there was no impact on political knowledge for nonvoters in 2006 or either group in 2008. As with turnout, such measures are incapable of consistently exerting secondary effects on the citizenry. As such, while different ballot issue contents may be able to increase political knowledge, they cannot do so as consistently as those addressing moral issues.

To more easily interpret the results, I calculate the change in the predicted count of questions answered correctly when moving from zero to one measure on the ballot, holding all other variables constant at their actual values. Figure 6.3 presents these changes for moral issues for both voters and nonvoters in the two elections, as well as ninety-five confidence intervals.⁸³ In both elections, the change in the predicted number of correct responses is statistically and substantively significant. In 2006, the placement of a moral issue on the ballot led to an increase of 0.43 questions answered correctly (out of eighteen). In other words, voters living in a state with one moral issue measure on the ballot correctly responded to almost half a question more, on average, than voters living in a state with no such proposition on the ballot. The presence of a moral issue on the ballot in 2008 increased one's score on the knowledge scale by 0.27 (out of nine), or

⁸² Results for all models remain unchanged when I control for the total population of each state, as well as 2008 models when I control for battleground state status or exclude such states from the analysis.

⁸³ Confidence intervals are generated through a simulation process that draws one thousand sets of coefficients from the multivariate normal distribution, based on a mean vector created for the coefficient and covariance matrices. For each individual, the change in the predicted probability is calculated from each set of simulated coefficients, generating a thousand simulated probabilities from which the confidence intervals are computed (see Hanmer and Kalkan (2009) and Herron (2000) for further explanation of the simulation procedure).

Table 6.4 – Number of Tax Issues on the Ballot and Political Knowledge for the 2006 and 2008 Elections

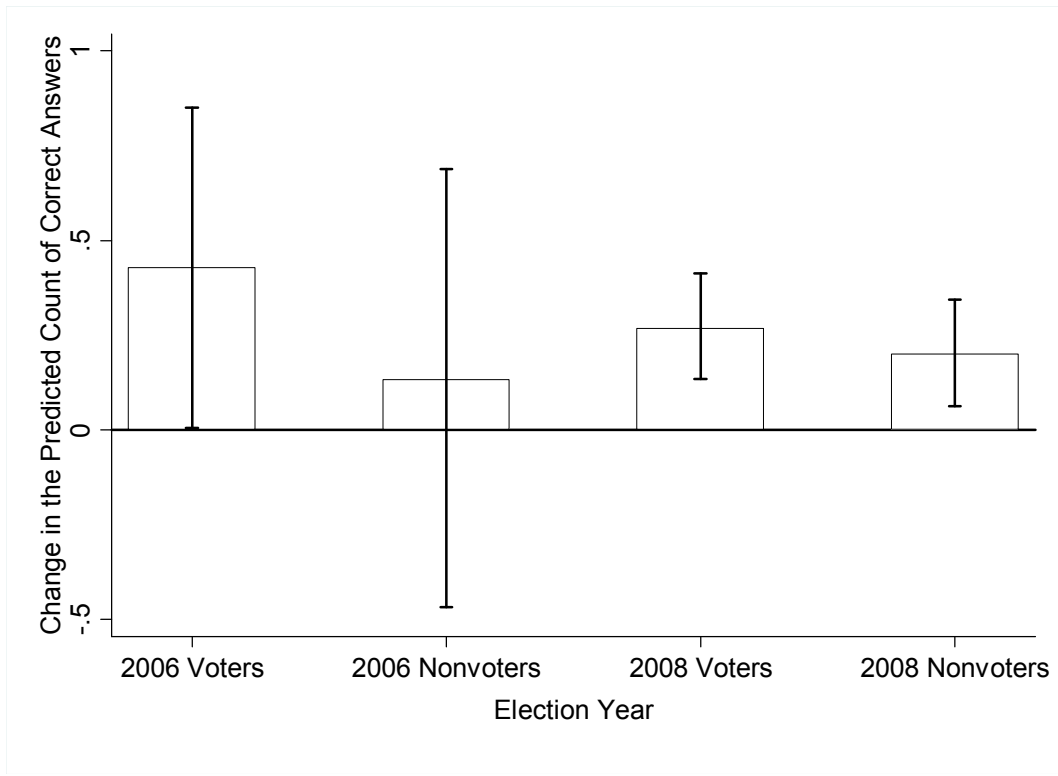
Variable	Voter (2006)	Nonvoter (2006)	Voter (2008)	Nonvoter (2008)
Number of Tax Measures	0.011 (0.011)	-0.001 (0.018)	-0.026 (0.010)	0.011 (0.027)
Divided Government	0.051 (0.031)	0.015 (0.071)	-0.050 (0.023)	-0.087 (0.053)
Governor Race	-0.007 (0.033)	-0.110 (0.067)	-0.031 (0.032)	-0.032 (0.071)
Senate Race	0.066 (0.032)	0.229 (0.076)	-0.006 (0.024)	-0.005 (0.049)
South	-0.068 (0.037)	-0.081 (0.070)	-0.017 (0.023)	-0.074 (0.063)
Education	0.044 (0.003)	0.135 (0.014)	0.036 (0.002)	0.092 (0.015)
Male	0.175 (0.009)	0.318 (0.046)	0.119 (0.006)	0.329 (0.034)
Age	0.002 (0.000)	0.005 (0.002)	0.002 (0.000)	0.007 (0.002)
Black	-0.060 (0.017)	0.083 (0.062)	-0.122 (0.015)	-0.011 (0.064)
Hispanic	-0.038 (0.011)	-0.002 (0.071)	-0.033 (0.018)	0.136 (0.053)
Income	0.013 (0.002)	0.007 (0.006)	0.016 (0.001)	0.033 (0.005)
Strength of Partisanship	0.033 (0.005)	0.126 (0.021)	0.021 (0.003)	0.152 (0.018)
Interest in Politics	0.367 (0.016)	0.492 (0.038)	0.245 (0.009)	0.404 (0.017)
Constant	0.740 (0.064)	-0.632 (0.172)	0.893 (0.046)	-0.717 (0.127)
Log-likelihood	-43,755	-7,807	-40,293	12,913
N	15,671	2,369	21,949	2,250

Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Coefficient estimates are generated using negative binomial regression. Dependent variable is a count of the number of political knowledge questions answered correctly. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Coefficients in bold signify statistical significance at $p < .05$.

more than a quarter of a question. While the increase in both years is relatively modest compared to the effect of political interest or being male, it either matches or exceeds the impact of an additional level of education, as well as an increase in the strength of party identification or income level.

Figure 6.3 – Change in the Predicted Count of Questions Answered Correctly Based on the Presence of a Moral Issue on the Ballot in the 2006 and 2008 Elections



Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted count of questions answered correctly for moving from zero moral issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted count, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

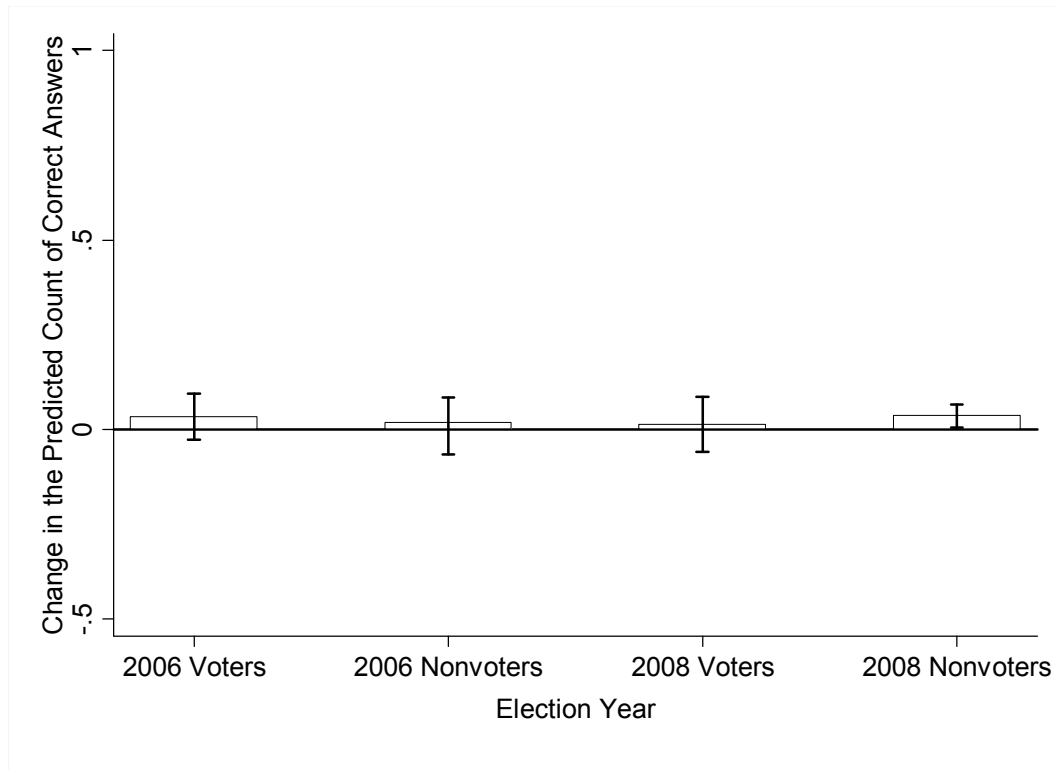
The addition of a moral issue measure on the ballot did not increase learning for nonvoters in 2006, but it did do so in 2008. The substantively significant increase of 0.20 questions correctly answered, however, remains lower than the effect for voters. Thus, while the ability of moral issues to get citizens to pay attention to politics may sometimes extend beyond those who participate, their largest impact pertains to voters. Such a

finding is sensible, as we should expect those more likely to vote to pay both greater and closer attention to campaigns than the less participatory inclined.

Looking at all of the measures on the ballot, Figure 6.4 presents the change in the predicted number of questions answered correctly for moving from zero to one measure on the ballot for both voters and nonvoters in 2006 and 2008, along with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. In contrast to the findings with regards to moral issue propositions, the changes all fail to reach statistical or, due to their small size, substantive significance. In addition, the effect of a moral issue measure on the ballot for voters in the same election dwarfs that of an average proposition by a factor greater than twelve and twenty-one in 2006 and 2008, respectively. Even the statistically significant increase of 0.04 in the predicted count of questions answered correctly for nonvoters in 2008 remains substantively unimpressive, especially given that it is five times less than the effect of a moral issue proposition in the same election for nonvoters. These results signify that the average ballot measure has little impact on political knowledge levels in the short-term.

For the other ballot issue area examined, Figure 6.5 demonstrates the effect of tax propositions on the predicted count of correctly answered questions. Tax measures exhibit no effect on political knowledge, as an additional such proposition does not significantly increase the number of correct responses for either voters or nonvoters in 2006 or 2008. Again, although certain ballot issues may be able to increase political knowledge in specific situations, they appear unable to do so as consistently as those addressing moral issues.

Figure 6.4 – Change in the Predicted Count of Questions Answered Correctly Based on the Presence of a Measure on the Ballot in the 2006 and 2008 Elections



Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

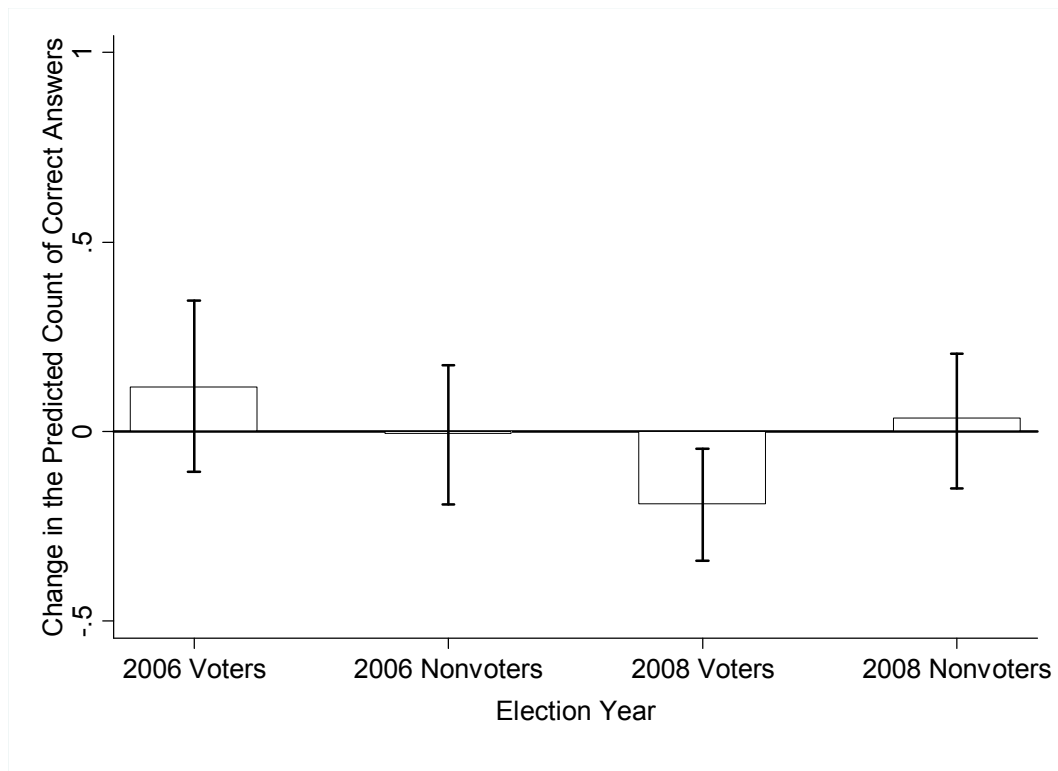
Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted count of questions answered correctly for moving from zero measures on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted count, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

Conclusion

Although strong theoretical reasoning exists to suspect that direct democracy can increase political learning, limited evidence supports this claim with regards to a single election. I reexamined the proposed relationship, crucially employing knowledge scales constructed from voting-relevant and policy-oriented questions (the answers to which can realistically be obtained from campaigns). The results demonstrate that moral issue ballot measures do increase political knowledge for voters and sometimes for nonvoters (though potential spillover effects from the presidential election means we should interpret this result with caution), presumably for many of the same reasons that these

propositions possess the ability to increase turnout. No association prevails, however, between the total number of propositions and learning for either voters or nonvoters, signaling that the average ballot measure can do little in the short-term to increase political knowledge. As is true with regards to turnout, simply placing large numbers of propositions on the ballot does little to increase political knowledge.

Figure 6.5 – Change in the Predicted Count of Questions Answered Correctly Based on the Presence of a Tax Issue on the Ballot in the 2006 and 2008 Elections



Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Figures represent the change in the predicted count of questions answered correctly for moving from zero tax issues on the ballot to one, holding all other variables constant at their actual values, and are presented with ninety-five percent confidence intervals. Bars are the change in the predicted count, while range spikes signify confidence intervals generated through simulation.

More generally, this study enhances our understanding of the relationship between direct democracy and political knowledge. Although the relationship between this institution and short-term political learning may be limited, certain proposition issues can contribute to learning in some elections, and moral issue ballot measures appear to

consistently possess this potential. Future research should expand this study, with scholars working towards the collection of currently unavailable data to enable an in-depth analysis of the type of information being gained by citizens, as well as whether the information they receive is sufficient to make better decisions in the voting booth. In addition, we need to differentiate the effect on knowledge of each individual issue under the heading of “moral issues” (as was done with same-sex marriage bans). As with the discussion of turnout in chapter three, such an analysis is not permitted at this time due to insufficient variation across state ballots. In spite of these limitations, however, the identification of this relationship, while not likely an intended consequence of the placement of moral issues on the ballot, furthers our understanding of the ramifications of putting such issues on the ballot.

7 - Conclusion

The preceding chapters definitively demonstrate the ability of moral issue propositions to bring substantial numbers of citizens to the polls, as they consistently meet the two necessary requirements of awareness and importance. Their easiness, the derivation of opinion on these matters from core values, and the fact that they tap into existing social cleavages all combine to facilitate such an influence. In addition, their ability to raise participation rates is greatly aided by the mobilization efforts of both social and political organizations, which largely succeed due to the application of the expressive choice framework to the decision to vote on moral ballot matters. Although these characteristics may pertain to other ballot issues as well, those addressing moral concerns list among the few that especially appeal to peripheral voters, or individuals who can be activated above normal turnout levels. These characteristics permit statewide moral issue propositions to consistently increase participation in all midterm and at least some presidential elections, and their local-level counterparts to do so when no state or federal offices appear on the ballot. These measures also maintain the potential to (minimally) reduce the existing inequalities in turnout, as well as contribute to citizen learning of voting and/or policy relevant information. In sum, moral ballot matters largely meet all of the expectations of direct democracy proponents regarding the institution's anticipated secondary effects.

The same cannot be said, however, about many propositions. Despite substantial empirical evidence of such abilities (Schlozman and Yohai 2008; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert and Smith 2005; Tolbert et al. 2001, 2003, 2009), I clearly illustrate that the average ballot measure rarely engenders the hypothesized secondary effects. This

revision of previously held conclusions relates to the acknowledgement of the problematic nature of the dominant measurement of direct democracy, a count of the number of initiatives on the ballot. Because each individual proposition meets the requirements of awareness and importance to differing degrees, this treatment of a constant effect across all measures underestimates the influence of some while overestimating that of others. By including all ballot measures (both initiatives and referenda) in the count measurement, this fact becomes apparent and reveals that simply increasing the total number of propositions on the ballot fails to substantively raise either participation or political knowledge among citizens.

Even some seemingly salient and/or controversial ballot measure issues do no better than episodically enhance these engagement levels. Many matters that on the surface appear more than capable of bringing citizens to the polls, such as tax issue propositions, are of significant interest largely to core voters. This means that they cannot consistently mobilize the masses in an incremental manner, as those to whom their appeal is greatest will likely vote regardless of what (if any) measures appear on the ballot. Although the ability of tax ballot matters to increase turnout under certain circumstances reinforces the importance of focusing on the issue content of individual measures, their frequent failure to do so highlights the unique nature of moral issue propositions in getting those to vote who do not always participate.

Implications of these findings

The implications of the results summarized above relate to two important concerns that warrant further discussion: (1) the employment of moral ballot matters as a tool to consistently increase participation; and (2) the utility of direct democracy, given

that the institution does significantly less to raise turnout levels than previously anticipated. I address each below.

Moral issue propositions as a vehicle to increase turnout

One potential conclusion to draw from the previous chapters is that states should place greater numbers of moral concerns on the ballot to increase the participation rates of their residents. As demonstrated throughout the project, the average proposition, as well as many other seemingly salient ballot issues, cannot consistently bring large numbers of citizens to the polls. In contrast, moral issue propositions appear to exhibit the best of both worlds; they not only habitually raise voting levels, but mobilize in a manner that may (minimally) reduce existing inequalities in turnout. At the very least, these ballot matters do not exacerbate the differences, a characteristic uncommon to the vast majority of institutions designed to facilitate participation (Berinsky 2005). If greater turnout is desirable, then moral ballot issues present the ability to accomplish this goal without further unbalancing the composition of the electorate.

Such an interpretation of the analyses, however, ignores the policy consequences of employing moral ballot issues to mobilize, especially given the ideological leaning of both these propositions in general and those ultimately ratified at the polls. Since 1992, moral ballot matters have had a distinct conservative flavor, with fifty-three of the eighty-three measures (64%) for which an unambiguous determination could be made attempting to enact a conservative policy.⁸⁴ This numerical advantage also mirrors a

⁸⁴ The ideological nature of two ballot measures (Arizona's 1992 Proposition 103 and Wyoming's 1994 Amendment 1) could not be definitively determined. Both propositions deal with technical details of the death penalty that do not easily map onto a liberal vs. conservative spectrum (Proposition 103 required the death penalty to be administered by lethal injection, as opposed to gas, while Amendment 1 created a criminal sentence of life imprisonment without parole but also limited the governor's power to commute a death sentence).

superior passage rate. A measure pushing a conservative stance passed sixty-six percent of the time, compared to only forty-three percent for those attempting to adopt a liberal position. This distribution in both prevalence and enactment provides initial pause to simply throwing more moral matters on the ballot without acknowledging the substantial policy implications of doing so.

Limiting the analysis to those propositions that address homosexual rights (which include same-sex marriage) amplifies this concern about policy outcomes. Existing research suggests a tendency of voters to restrict civil rights via the ballot (Gamble 1997; though see Donovan and Bowler 1998 and Frey and Goette 1998), a relationship observed with regards to homosexual rights by Haider-Markel and his colleagues (2007). Examining both local- and state-level propositions from 1992 to 2002, they determine that this minority group tends to lose out when voters decide such matters. Figures 7.1 through 7.3 reveal a similar story for all statewide measures since 1992. Of the thirty-three propositions that addressed homosexual rights, thirty-two pushed a conservative policy, twenty-seven (84%) of which voters enacted. In contrast, the sole proposed measure to expand homosexual rights was defeated. This consistent restriction of civil liberties serves as a significant counterweight to any effort to increase turnout via moral issue propositions.

Of course, not all proposed moral matter legislation on the ballot is conservative in nature, and Figure 7.1 reveals that some issue measures attempt largely or even solely to enact more liberal laws. As with those addressing homosexual rights, essentially all propositions regarding a specific moral issue advance a similar ideological persuasion, which suggests that the specific issue content may condition the ideological nature of the

Figure 7.1 – Count of Moral Matter Propositions by Ideological Nature and Issue Content, 1992-2008

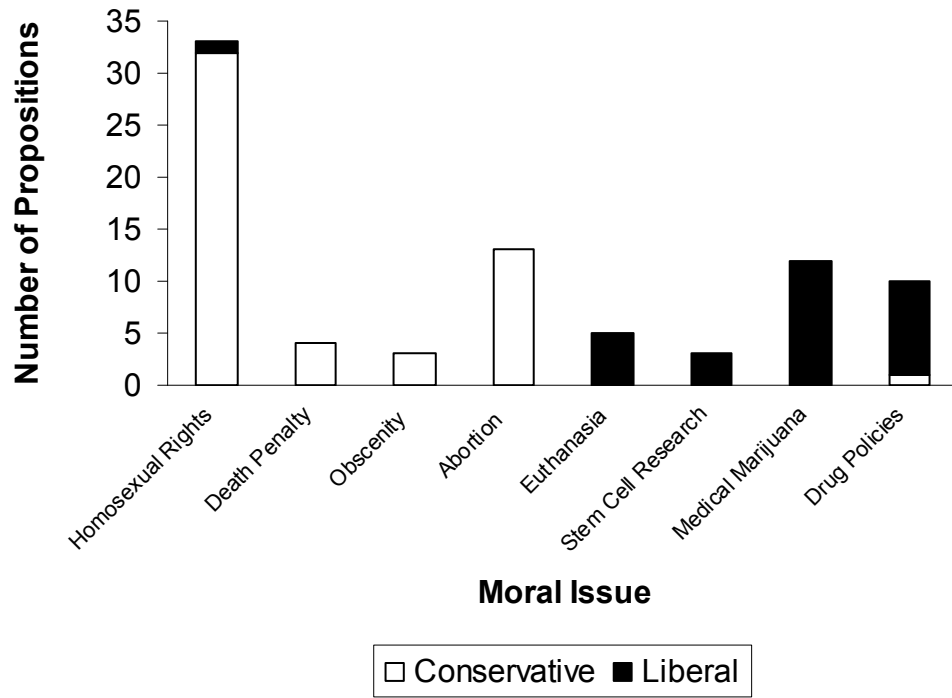


Figure 7.2 – Passage Rates of Conservative Moral Matter Propositions by Issue Content, 1992-2008

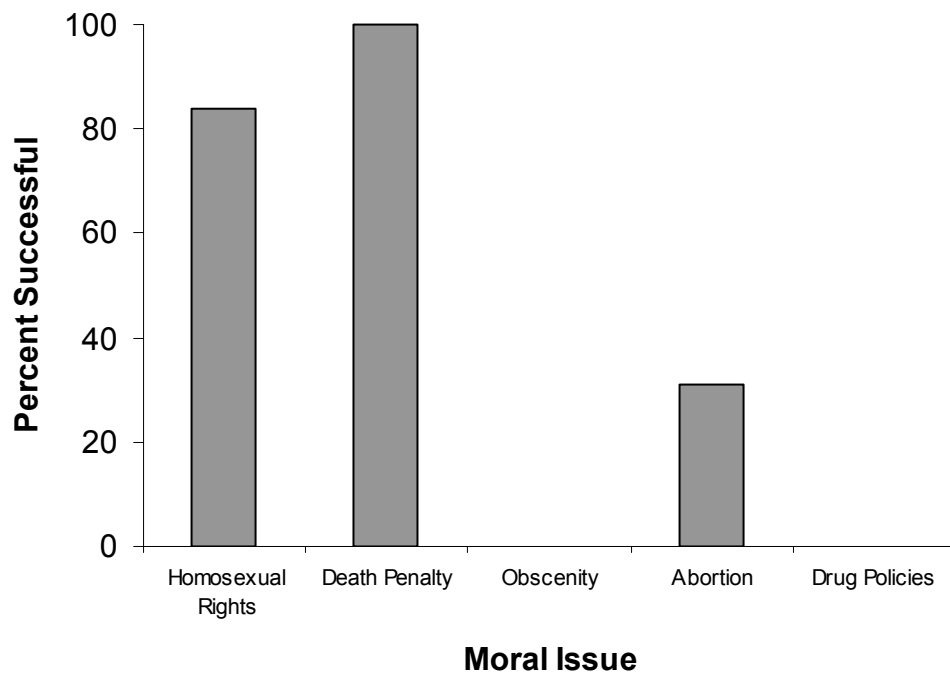
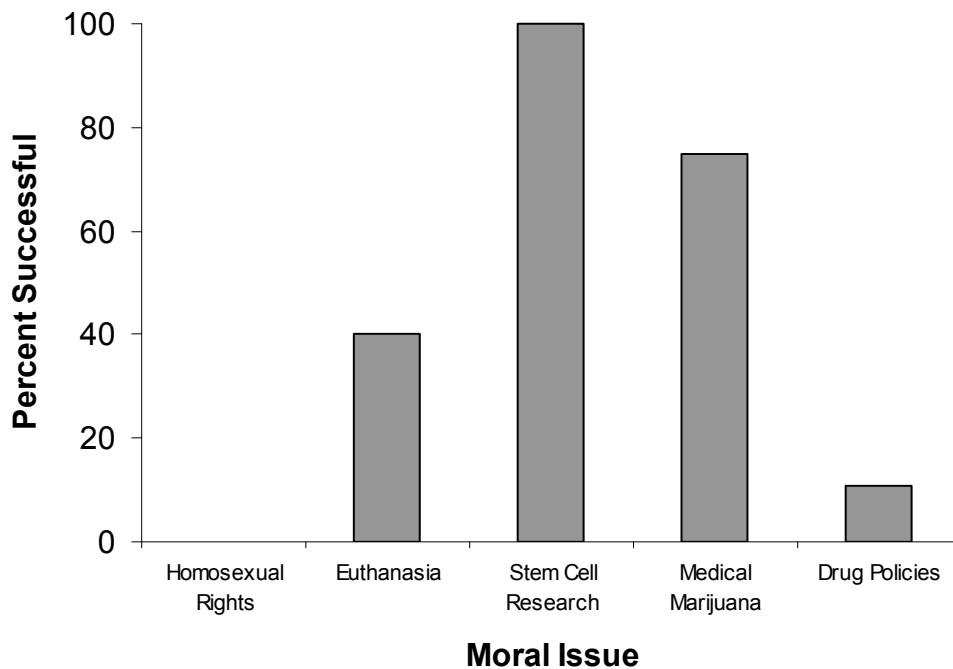


Figure 7.3 – Passage Rates of Liberal Moral Matter Propositions by Issue Content, 1992-2008



enacted policies. For example, all measures involving the death penalty (four), obscenity (three), and abortion (thirteen) pushed a conservative policy. Similarly, every proposition that addressed euthanasia (five), stem cell research (three), and medical marijuana (twelve) reflected a desired liberal outcome, as did nine of the ten drug penalty matters.

Greater diversity exists in terms of their enactment rates, a point illustrated by Figures 7.2 and 7.3. Although all four of the death penalty propositions passed, the other conservative measures received much less support (in the form of success at the polls). These include none of the attempts to legislate obscenity or strengthen drug laws, as well as only four (31%) of the efforts to restrict access to abortion. With regards to their liberal counterparts, substantial variation in enactment again prevails. Only one (11%) of the proposed loosening of existing drugs laws succeeded, but two (40%) of the attempts to permit euthanasia, nine (75%) of the tries to legalize medical marijuana, and all three

propositions addressing stem cell research received a majority of votes at the polls. Despite this variation, however, the distribution still signals a bias toward the adoption of conservative statutes. Without taking into consideration these likely enacted policies, as well as the concerns about the potential restriction of certain group rights, the findings here cannot and should not be interpreted as a call to employ a strategy of greater numbers of moral matters on the ballot to increase turnout.

The utility of direct democracy

The failure of this project to validate proponents' expectations about the secondary effects of direct democracy has another, potentially larger implication. As detailed throughout the previous chapters, supporters champion the institution's ability to have an educative effect on the citizenry that generates numerous benefits for both the public and the health of democracy. This opportunity to legislate from the polls is expected to enhance levels of political participation and knowledge (examined in previous chapters), as well as other measurements of engagement (including interest and efficacy). Given the low levels of all these indicators in the United States, such a potential influence provides a strong justification to both adopt and employ direct democracy, and reflects a broad concern in the literature that attempts to understand how electoral changes and reforms can boost turnout (for extensive citations see Burden et al. 2011; Cain et al. 2008; Hanmer 2009).

The project reveals, however, that the anticipated secondary effects of direct democracy are much more limited than previously thought. Individual ballot measures (due to their issue content) can engender these positive benefits, but those possessing this capability remain only a subsection of all legislating opportunities that greet voters at the

polls. Thus, my demonstration of a less frequent influence than hypothesized by supporters might be plausibly interpreted as weakening the utility of the institution, perhaps to an extent that questions its overall enhancement of democracy.

Although they serve as a major selling point of the institution, the anticipated secondary effects of direct democracy provide only one of three broad justifications for permitting citizens to legislate from the polls. The second is a purely normative one that regards the proper function of the masses in the formation of government policies and, more generally, the democratic process. Proponents maintain that a more direct and deliberative role for citizens, which the institution facilitates, is both healthy and beneficial for democracy (see Barber 1984; Pateman 1970; Smith and Tolbert 2004). As individuals learn to participate by participating, affording a greater influence to the people over governing responsibilities educates them as to how to think and act as public citizens. Some of the consequences of this increased active role relate to the secondary effects discussed above, but the potential societal enhancements extend to the creation of the types of citizens demanded by a more participatory democracy. The “experience of a participatory authority structure might also be effective in diminishing tendencies toward non-democratic attitudes in the individual” (Pateman 1970, 105), prodding the public to be more accepting of dissenting ideas and viewpoints. Such respect for opinions that citizens do not agree with, fail to understand, or even find objectionable contributes to a more inclusive and healthier form of democratic governance.

A third potential benefit of direct democracy is its ability to ensure the better representation of citizen interests. This can obviously be done directly, as the institution provides individuals with the opportunity to propose and enact policies they prefer via the

initiative process and halt laws they oppose through a referendum. Legislating from the ballot can also indirectly shape statutes, proponents contend, because it forces elected officials to be at least minimally receptive and responsive to the preferences and interests of their constituents. According to this argument, if representatives pass laws with little relationship to the desires of the public, then the people can simply bypass them and place their own statutes on the books that more accurately resemble their interests. The costs of undertaking this strategy can be substantial (gathering signatures, contesting a campaign to ensure passage, etc.), so legislators need not fear a direct democracy assault on every piece of legislation that pushes a policy contrary to the will of the majority. If they go too far, however, citizens may overturn the adopted matter, and potentially even put in its place an alternative statute less appealing to representatives than the previous status quo. The lack of a monopoly over the process should thus serve as a citizen constraint on legislative behavior and provide an impetus for legislators to craft laws that better match the interests of citizens (see Arceneaux 2002; Besley and Coate 2008; Bowler and Donovan 2004; Gerber 1996; Lascher et al. 1996; Matsusaka 2001).

Addressing these two matters in any detail is well beyond the scope of this project, which neither speaks to these other institutional justifications nor informs our understanding of them. The unresolved debate about the proper role of citizens in this country's political process traces back to at least its establishment, while substantial uncertainty exists regarding whether states with the initiative process actually adopt policies that more accurately reflect the interests of their residents. Both possibilities, however, provide potential justifications for using direct democracy even in the absence of its hypothesized secondary effects. As such, the failure of direct democracy to exhibit

a more systematic impact on political interest and engagement does not necessarily challenge the relevance of the initiative and referendum processes. Instead, it simply suggests that proponents should be cautious in trumpeting these citizen effects as a reason for their usage, given that the vast majority of propositions will exert little such influence. Even if one believes that the limited occurrences of secondary effects fail to validate calls for its employment, supporters of direct democracy still maintain normative and policy rationales for the institution that the research here cannot refute.

Future research

The research in the preceding chapters provides a number of avenues upon which to expand. The first of these relates specifically to moral issue propositions and involves the determination of the impact of individual matters in this area. Throughout the project, I note that the identified effects can only be attributed to moral issue ballot measures in general. Each type of moral matter, however, may exhibit heterogeneous influence or witness variation in the resources dedicated to its passage, such that only certain moral issues increase turnout. This is not necessarily the case, as the (arguably) most salient moral concern, same-sex marriage, fails to disproportionately drive my results. Still, more investigation is required on the question, which will become more tenable as the number of each moral issue on the ballot increases over time.

More broadly, future work on the secondary effects of direct democracy needs to incorporate the two requirements of awareness and importance into their analyses. Scholars must think particularly hard about those measures we anticipate to positively influence political interest and engagement, which necessitates a focus on the issue content of individual propositions. As demonstrated throughout the project, simply

counting the number of legislative opportunities on the ballot is inadequate to determine the capabilities of direct democracy to mobilize individuals above normal participation rates or raise levels of any desired political engagement indicator. Similarly, other existing measurements of the institution (such as per capita campaign spending or newspaper analyses the day after the election) fail to explicitly account for both awareness and importance, raising serious concerns about their usage. The research conducted here clearly illustrates that how we measure the process is crucial to determining its true secondary effects. Although the proposed solution (an application of the two requirements and focus on the issue content of each proposition) mandates a greater in-depth knowledge of the measures on the ballot than simply their number, these additional parameters are not necessarily undesirable. Forcing scholars to maintain a better understanding of the propositions they wish to investigate can only enhance their, and ultimately our, knowledge of the relationships in question.

Finally, voter turnout scholars should take heed from the manner in which the findings relate to recent investigations of the ability of other electoral institutions to influence the decision to participate. For the subsection of proposition matters that consistently possess the potential to bring citizens to the polls (evidenced by moral issues), their influence on the propensity to vote is relatively small. An increase of two to four percentage points (roughly the range of the estimates) is not inconsequential, but a universal application of this enhancement would do little to raise American voting rates anywhere near those of similar westernized democracies. Furthermore, these propositions only minimally decrease the already existing inequalities in turnout along socioeconomic status lines (see chapter five).

Such findings mirror new advances in the literature. Although early investigations attributed substantial increases in turnout to institutional factors (symbolized by the seminal work of Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) that spawned this research tradition), recent work substantially reduces such influence (see Hanmer (2009) for discussion and citations) and notes its potential exacerbation of existing inequalities in voting levels (Berinsky 2005). This new research signals that institutions (including direct democracy) comprise only a small part of the solution to low rates of political participation, and suggests that scholars need to identify alternative explanations as to why Americans choose not to vote. Given the anticipated heightened usage of direct democracy for the foreseeable future, determining how the institution exactly fits into this existing literature will become increasingly important.

Appendix A – Survey experiment questions

Participants were randomly assigned one of the following four ballot measure issue options and then asked the four questions below. Randomly assigned issues were placed in the location of the brackets (brackets serve only as a placeholder for this description and were not included in the questions). The assigned issue remains constant throughout the entire experiment.

- 1) reassess property taxes
- 2) require longer prison sentences for nonviolent offenders
- 3) require voter approval for state agencies to issue bonds
- 4) readdress the legality of same-sex marriage

1) There may be a special election in the spring to vote on a ballot measure that would [] in the state. How important to you is the ability to vote on this ballot measure?

- Very important
- Fairly important
- Not too important
- Not at all important

2) How likely would you be to vote in this election?

- Very likely
- Fairly likely
- Not too likely
- Not at all likely

3) How much do you personally care about the outcome of the election regarding the ballot measure that would []?

- Very much
- Fairly much
- Not too much
- Not at all

4) Assume that you will vote in this election. How confident would you be in your vote choice?

- Very confident
- Fairly confident
- Not too confident
- Not at all confident

Appendix B – Means tests between core and peripheral voters

	Core Voter Average	Peripheral Voter Average	Difference	P-value	N
Education	3.99	3.59	0.40	.005	751
Income	8.87	7.68	1.19	.001	656
Age	54.83	44.76	10.07	.001	751
Independent	0.08	0.17	-0.09	.002	656

Note: Table reports T-tests on difference of means for education, income, and age, and differences in proportions test for Independents. Education and income are interval variables whose values range from one to six and one to fourteen, respectively. Age is continuous. Independent is calculated from a seven point party identification scale, with those identifying as pure Independents coded as one and those selecting one of the other six options coded as zero.

Appendix C – Chapter 3 variable coding information

CPS

Dependent variable: (0) did not vote, (1) voted.

Independent variables:

Age: in years, 18-85 (topcoded at 85).

Age squared: square of variable labeled Age.

Education: (1) did not graduate high school, (2) high school graduate, (3) some college but no degree, (4) 2 year college degree, (5) 4 year college degree, (6) post graduate degree.

Family Income: (1) less than 5,000, (2) 5,000-7,499, (3) 7,500-9,999, (4) 10,000-12,499, (5) 12,500-14,999, (6) 15,000-19,999, (7) 20,000-24,999, (8) 25,000-29,999, (9) 30,000-34,999, (10) 35,000-39,999, (11) 40,000-49,999, (12) 50,000-59,999, (13) 60,000-74,999, (14) 75,000-99,999, (15) 100,000-149,999, (16) 150,000 or more.

Black: (0) no, (1) yes.

Hispanic: (0) no, (1) yes.

Mobility (time lived at current address): (1) less than 1 month, (2) 1-6 months, (3) 7-11 months, (4) 1-2 years, (5) 3-4 years, (6) 5 years or longer.

Male (gender): (0) female, (1) male.

Moral Measures: number of moral issues appearing on an individual's ballot.

Total Measures: number of total measures appearing on an individual's ballot.

Senate: (0) no Senate race on the ballot, (1) Senate race on the ballot.

Governor: (0) no governor race on the ballot, (1) governor race on the ballot.

Registration (closing date): number of days before the election that registration ends.

South: (0) non-Southern state, (1) Southern state.

CCES (variables not listed are coded as described above in CPS data)

Age: in years (no topcode)

Family Income: (1) less than 10,000, (2) 10,000-14,999, (3) 15,000-19,999, (4) 20,000-24,999, (5) 25,000-29,999, (6) 30,000-39,999, (7) 40,000-49,999, (8) 50,000-59,999, (9) 60,000-69,999, (10) 70,000-79,999, (11) 80,000-99,999, (12) 100,000-119,999, (13) 120,000-149,999, (14) 150,000 or more.

Strength of Partisanship: (1) Independent; (2) lean Republican or Democrat; (3) not very strong Republican or Democrat; (4) strong Republican or Democrat.

Political Interest: (1) not much interested; (2) somewhat interested; (3) very much interested.

Appendix D – State level moral issue ballot measures list, 1992-2008

Year	State	Measure	State	Measure
1992	AZ	Proposition 103 (R) – Death penalty	CO	Amendment 2 (I) – Homosexual rights
	AZ	Proposition 110 (I) – Abortion	OR	Measure 9 (I) – Homosexual rights
	CA	Proposition 161 (I) – Euthanasia		
1994	CO	Amendment 16 (I) – Obscenity	OR	Measure 16 (I) – Euthanasia
	ID	Proposition 1 (I) – Homosexual rights	OR	Measure 19 (I) – Obscenity
	OH	Issue 1 (R) – Death Penalty	WY	Amendment 1 (R) – Death Penalty
	OR	Measure 13 (I) – Homosexual rights	WY	Initiative 1 (I) – Abortion
1996	CA	Proposition 215 (I) – Medical marijuana	OR	Measure 31 (R) – Obscenity
1998	AK	Ballot Measure 8 (I) – Medical marijuana	MI	Proposal B (I) – Euthanasia
	AK	Ballot Measure 2 (R) – Same-sex marriage	NV	Ballot Question 9 (I) – Medical marijuana
	AZ	Proposition 300 (I) – Medical marijuana	OR	Measure 57 (PR) – Marijuana possession
	CO	Amendment 11 (I) – Partial birth abortion	OR	Measure 67 (I) – Medical marijuana
	CO	Amendment 12 (I) – Abortion	WA	Initiative 692 (I) – Medical marijuana
	FL	Number 2 (R) – Retain death penalty	WA	Initiative 694 (I) – Abortion
	HA	Question 2 (R) – Same-sex marriage		
2000	AK	Ballot Measure 5 (I) – Legalize marijuana	NE	Initiated Measure 416 (I) – Same-sex marriage
	CO	Amendment 20 (I) – Medical marijuana	NV	Question 2 (I) – Same-sex marriage
	CO	Amendment 25 (I) – Abortion	NV	Question 9 (I) – Medical marijuana
	ME	Question 1 (I) – Euthanasia	OR	Measure 9 (I) – Teaching of homosexuality
	ME	Question 6 (R) – Homosexual rights		
2002	AZ	Proposition 203 (I) – Medical marijuana	NV	Ballot Question 9 (I) – Legalize marijuana
	FL	Amendment 1 (R) – Death Penalty	SD	Initiated Measure 1 (I) – Legalize marijuana
	NV	Ballot Question 2 (I) – Same-sex marriage		
2004	AK	Measure 2 (I) – Legalize marijuana	MT	CI-96 (I) – Same-sex marriage
	AR	Amendment 3 (I) – Same sex marriage	MT	I-148 (I) – Medical marijuana
	CA	Proposition 71 (I) – Stem cell research	ND	Amendment 1 (I) – Same-sex marriage
	FL	Amendment 1 (R) – Abortion	OH	Issue 1 (I) – Same-sex marriage
	GA	Amendment 1 (R) – Same-sex marriage	OK	Question 711 (R) – Same-sex marriage
	KY	Amendment 1 (R) – Same-sex marriage	OR	Measure 33 (I) – Medical marijuana
	MI	Proposal 2 (I) – Same-sex marriage	OR	Measure 36 (I) – Same-sex marriage
	MS	Amendment 1 (R) – Same-sex marriage	UT	Amendment 3 (R) – Same sex marriage
2006	AZ	Proposition 107 (I) – Same-sex marriage	SC	Amendment 1 (R) – Same-sex marriage
	CA	Proposition 85 (I) – Abortion	SD	Amendment C (R) – Same-sex marriage
	CO	Amendment 43 (I) – Same-sex marriage	SD	Measure 4 (I) – Medical marijuana
	CO	Amendment 44 (I) – Legalize marijuana	SD	Referred Law 6 (R) – Abortion
	ID	HJR 2 (R) – Same-sex marriage	TN	Amendment 1 (R) – Same-sex marriage
	MO	Amendment 2 (I) – Stem cell research	VA	Question 1 (R) – Same-sex marriage
	NV	Question 7 (I) – Legalize marijuana	WI	Amendment (R) – Same-sex marriage
	OR	Measure 43 (I) – Abortion	WI	Advisory Measure (R) – Death penalty
2008	AZ	Proposition 102 (R) – Same-sex marriage	MA	Question 3 (I) – Decriminalize marijuana
	CA	Proposition 4 (I) – Abortion	MI	Proposal 1 (I) – Medical marijuana
	CA	Proposition 5 (I) – Marijuana possession	MI	Proposal 2 (I) – Stem cell research
	CA	Proposition 8 (I) – Same-sex marriage	SD	Initiated Measure 11 (I) – Abortion
	CO	Amendment 48 (I) – Abortion	WA	I-1000 (I) – Euthanasia
	FL	Amendment 2 (I) – Same-sex marriage		

Note: (I)=Initiative; (R)=Legislative Referendum; (PR)=Popular Referendum

Appendix E – Chapter 3 HGLM results

Table E1 – Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Presidential Elections of 1992, 1996, and 2000

Fixed Effects	1992		1996		2000	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)						
Number of Moral Issues	-0.014 (0.056)	0.805	0.175 (0.048)	0.001	0.008 (0.071)	0.906
Closing Date	-0.019 (0.003)	0.000	-0.011 (0.003)	0.000	-0.012 (0.004)	0.002
Governor Race	0.033 (0.063)	0.600	0.026 (0.071)	0.716	0.077 (0.105)	0.471
Senate Race	-0.137 (0.075)	0.074	0.093 (0.043)	0.037	-0.111 (0.069)	0.118
South	-0.266 (0.100)	0.011	-0.083 (0.066)	0.213	-0.000 (0.066)	1.000
Intercept	-4.570 (0.151)	0.000	-5.395 (0.150)	0.000	-5.321 (0.143)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)						
Age	0.056 (0.005)	0.000	0.057 (0.004)	0.000	0.056 (0.004)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.596 (0.018)	0.000	0.536 (0.017)	0.000	0.583 (0.013)	0.000
Income	0.087 (0.004)	0.000	0.078 (0.004)	0.000	0.084 (0.004)	0.000
Male	-0.134 (0.023)	0.000	-0.141 (0.023)	0.000	-0.150 (0.016)	0.000
African American	0.276 (0.064)	0.000	0.421 (0.055)	0.000	0.489 (0.073)	0.000
Hispanic	0.059 (0.093)	0.530	-0.034 (0.044)	0.440	-0.038 (0.044)	0.389
Residential Mobility	0.235 (0.014)	0.000	0.251 (0.014)	0.000	0.203 (0.010)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	75,290		71,011		63,812	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50		50	
Likelihood Function	-107,110		-100,672		-90,447	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplements (1992, 1996, 2000)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E2 – Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Presidential Elections of 2004 and 2008

Fixed Effects	2004		2008	
	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)				
Number of Moral Measures	0.166 (0.071)	0.023	0.055 (0.065)	0.402
Closing Date	-0.012 (0.005)	0.025	-0.008 (0.006)	0.171
Governor Race	-0.016 (0.072)	0.824	0.092 (0.133)	0.495
Senate Race	-0.091 (0.073)	0.219	0.014 (0.094)	0.880
South	-0.141 (0.075)	0.066	-0.172 (0.092)	0.069
Intercept	-2.968 (0.221)	0.000	-4.439 (0.247)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)				
Age	0.026 (0.005)	0.000	-0.082 (0.011)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.493	0.001 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.475 (0.020)	0.000	0.295 (0.031)	0.000
Income	0.085 (0.005)	0.000	0.113 (0.008)	0.000
Male	-0.189 (0.017)	0.000	-0.005 (0.060)	0.933
African American	0.611 (0.064)	0.000	0.558 (0.093)	0.000
Hispanic	-0.198 (0.027)	0.000	0.036 (0.105)	0.729
Residential Mobility	0.205 (0.008)	0.000	0.179 (0.021)	0.000
Interest in Politics	-		1.315 (0.035)	0.000
Strength of Partisanship	-		0.480 (0.025)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	73,805		24,204	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50	
Likelihood Function	-105,402		-34,354	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement 2004 and Cooperative Congressional Election Study 2008

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E3 – Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Midterm Elections of 1994, 1998, and 2002

Fixed Effects	1994		1998		2002	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)						
Number of Moral Measures	0.241 (0.052)	0.000	0.157 (0.066)	0.021	0.159 (0.072)	0.032
Closing Date	-0.009 (0.004)	0.033	-0.013 (0.005)	0.017	-0.011 (0.005)	0.040
Governor Race	0.123 (0.102)	0.233	0.102 (0.092)	0.273	0.061 (0.101)	0.554
Senate Race	0.122 (0.078)	0.127	0.065 (0.102)	0.529	0.176 (0.081)	0.034
South	-0.087 (0.087)	0.319	-0.243 (0.090)	0.010	-0.066 (0.081)	0.418
Intercept	-6.957 (0.187)	0.000	-6.459 (0.267)	0.000	-5.264 (0.187)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)						
Age	0.082 (0.006)	0.000	0.082 (0.005)	0.000	0.063 (0.005)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.471 (0.018)	0.000	0.433 (0.014)	0.000	0.373 (0.012)	0.000
Income	0.071 (0.004)	0.000	0.062 (0.004)	0.000	0.071 (0.004)	0.000
Male	-0.021 (0.025)	0.404	-0.041 (0.017)	0.012	-0.034 (0.018)	0.053
African American	0.149 (0.060)	0.014	0.476 (0.068)	0.000	0.461 (0.048)	0.000
Hispanic	-0.145 (0.079)	0.065	0.003 (0.116)	0.977	-0.178 (0.036)	0.000
Residential Mobility	0.380 (0.012)	0.000	0.278 (0.010)	0.000	0.271 (0.009)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	82,142		69,355		76,606	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50		50	
Likelihood Function	-116,397		-98,297		-108,896	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplements (1994, 1998, 2002)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E4 – Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Midterm Election of 2006

Fixed Effects	2006 (CPS)		2006 (CCES)	
	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)				
Number of Moral Measures	0.116 (0.053)	0.034	0.144 (0.070)	0.044
Closing Date	-0.006 (0.005)	0.229	-0.000 (0.006)	0.939
Governor Race	0.137 (0.088)	0.128	0.016 (0.109)	0.855
Senate Race	-0.001 (0.070)	0.994	0.100 (0.097)	0.313
South	-0.219 (0.073)	0.005	-0.418 (0.101)	0.000
Intercept	-5.078 (0.190)	0.000	-5.247 (0.323)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)				
Age	0.064 (0.004)	0.000	0.027 (0.012)	0.024
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	0.000 (0.000)	0.095
Education	0.353 (0.012)	0.000	0.324 (0.025)	0.000
Income	0.068 (0.003)	0.000	0.079 (0.007)	0.000
Male	-0.058 (0.021)	0.006	0.206 (0.054)	0.000
African American	0.381 (0.065)	0.000	-0.163 (0.142)	0.253
Hispanic	-0.160 (0.070)	0.023	-0.336 (0.095)	0.001
Residential Mobility	0.260 (0.012)	0.000	-	-
Interest in Politics	-	-	1.202 (0.048)	0.000
Strength of Partisanship	-	-	0.346 (0.024)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	70,896		17,504	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50	
Likelihood Function	-100,733		-25,251	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement 2006 and Cooperative Congressional Election Study 2006
 Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E5 – Total Number of Ballot Measures and Voter Turnout for Presidential Elections of 1992, 1996, and 2000

Fixed Effects	1992		1996		2000	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)						
Number of Ballot Measures	0.000 (0.006)	0.959	0.004 (0.004)	0.331	0.000 (0.007)	0.945
Closing Date	-0.019 (0.003)	0.000	-0.011 (0.003)	0.000	-0.012 (0.004)	0.002
Governor Race	0.037 (0.061)	0.542	0.011 (0.070)	0.875	0.076 (0.104)	0.472
Senate Race	-0.140 (0.076)	0.071	0.089 (0.044)	0.051	-0.111 (0.071)	0.123
South	-0.262 (0.100)	0.013	-0.095 (0.065)	0.152	-0.001 (0.064)	0.982
Intercept	-4.570 (0.152)	0.000	-5.394 (0.153)	0.000	-5.321 (0.152)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)						
Age	0.056 (0.005)	0.000	0.057 (0.004)	0.000	0.056 (0.004)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.596 (0.018)	0.000	0.536 (0.017)	0.000	0.583 (0.013)	0.000
Income	0.087 (0.004)	0.000	0.078 (0.004)	0.000	0.084 (0.004)	0.000
Male	-0.134 (0.023)	0.000	-0.141 (0.023)	0.000	-0.150 (0.016)	0.000
African American	0.276 (0.063)	0.000	0.420 (0.055)	0.000	0.489 (0.073)	0.000
Hispanic	0.059 (0.093)	0.529	-0.034 (0.044)	0.438	-0.038 (0.044)	0.389
Residential Mobility	0.235 (0.014)	0.000	0.251 (0.014)	0.000	0.203 (0.010)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	75,290		71,011		63,812	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50		50	
Likelihood Function	-107,087		-100,672		-90,453	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplements (1992, 1996, 2000)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E6 – Total Number of Ballot Measures and Voter Turnout for Presidential Elections of 2004 and 2008

Fixed Effects	2004		2008	
	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)				
Number of Ballot Measures	-0.001 (0.012)	0.930	0.020 (0.011)	0.085
Closing Date	-0.012 (0.005)	0.019	-0.009 (0.006)	0.135
Governor Race	-0.052 (0.075)	0.490	0.118 (0.132)	0.377
Senate Race	-0.051 (0.080)	0.529	0.032 (0.089)	0.718
South	-0.141 (0.077)	0.074	-0.163 (0.095)	0.093
Intercept	-2.934 (0.224)	0.000	-4.513 (0.249)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)				
Age	0.026 (0.005)	0.000	-0.083 (0.011)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.490	0.001 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.474 (0.020)	0.000	0.297 (0.032)	0.000
Income	0.085 (0.005)	0.000	0.113 (0.008)	0.000
Male	-0.189 (0.018)	0.000	-0.006 (0.060)	0.928
African American	0.611 (0.064)	0.000	0.564 (0.095)	0.000
Hispanic	-0.199 (0.027)	0.000	0.036 (0.106)	0.736
Residential Mobility	0.205 (0.008)	0.000	0.181 (0.021)	0.000
Interest in Politics	-		1.326 (0.035)	0.000
Strength of Partisanship	-		0.484 (0.025)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	73,805		24,204	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50	
Likelihood Function	-105,291		-34,400	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement 2004 and Cooperative Congressional Election Study 2008

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E7 – Total Number of Ballot Measures and Voter Turnout for Midterm Elections of 1994, 1998, and 2002

Fixed Effects	1994		1998		2002	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)						
Number of Ballot Measures	0.037 (0.008)	0.000	0.010 (0.010)	0.340	0.019 (0.007)	0.012
Closing Date	-0.012 (0.004)	0.003	-0.012 (0.005)	0.032	-0.011 (0.005)	0.038
Governor Race	0.087 (0.096)	0.367	0.083 (0.100)	0.410	0.073 (0.091)	0.426
Senate Race	0.086 (0.078)	0.276	0.065 (0.113)	0.569	0.157 (0.075)	0.042
South	-0.012 (0.082)	0.886	-0.286 (0.093)	0.004	-0.074 (0.079)	0.352
Intercept	-6.956 (0.195)	0.000	-6.486 (0.275)	0.000	-5.312 (0.186)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)						
Age	0.083 (0.006)	0.000	0.082 (0.005)	0.000	0.063 (0.005)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.473 (0.018)	0.000	0.433 (0.014)	0.000	0.373 (0.012)	0.000
Income	0.072 (0.004)	0.000	0.062 (0.004)	0.000	0.071 (0.004)	0.000
Male	-0.021 (0.025)	0.404	-0.042 (0.017)	0.012	-0.034 (0.018)	0.053
African American	0.151 (0.060)	0.013	0.475 (0.068)	0.000	0.460 (0.049)	0.000
Hispanic	-0.148 (0.077)	0.052	0.002 (0.115)	0.988	-0.177 (0.036)	0.000
Residential Mobility	0.382 (0.012)	0.000	0.278 (0.010)	0.000	0.271 (0.009)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	82,142		69,355		76,606	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50		50	
Likelihood Function	-116,572		-98,289		-108,926	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplements (1994, 1998, 2002)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E8 – Total Number of Ballot Measures and Voter Turnout for Midterm Election of 2006

Fixed Effects	2006 (CPS)		2006 (CCES)	
	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)				
Number of Ballot Measures	0.010 (0.005)	0.272	0.017 (0.011)	0.136
Closing Date	-0.008 (0.005)	0.113	-0.001 (0.005)	0.834
Governor Race	0.126 (0.094)	0.189	-0.009 (0.108)	0.933
Senate Race	0.007 (0.073)	0.920	0.079 (0.101)	0.435
South	-0.209 (0.074)	0.007	-0.414 (0.098)	0.000
Intercept	-5.033 (0.193)	0.000	-5.230 (0.321)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)				
Age	0.064 (0.004)	0.000	0.027 (0.012)	0.024
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	0.000 (0.000)	0.097
Education	0.353 (0.012)	0.000	0.324 (0.025)	0.000
Income	0.068 (0.003)	0.000	0.078 (0.007)	0.000
Male	-0.058 (0.021)	0.006	0.206 (0.054)	0.000
African American	0.380 (0.065)	0.000	-0.166 (0.142)	0.245
Hispanic	-0.160 (0.071)	0.024	-0.339 (0.094)	0.001
Residential Mobility	0.260 (0.012)	0.000	-	-
Interest in Politics	-	-	1.202 (0.047)	0.000
Strength of Partisanship	-	-	0.347 (0.024)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	70,896		17,504	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50	
Likelihood Function	-100,743		-25,281	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement 2006 and Cooperative Congressional Election Study 2006
 Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E9 – Number of Tax Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Presidential Elections of 1992, 1996, and 2000

Fixed Effects	1992		1996		2000	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)						
Number of Tax Issues	-0.022 (0.020)	0.290	-0.005 (0.025)	0.839	-0.003 (0.020)	0.887
Closing Date	-0.018 (0.003)	0.000	-0.010 (0.003)	0.001	-0.012 (0.004)	0.002
Governor Race	0.027 (0.063)	0.668	0.008 (0.074)	0.912	0.074 (0.104)	0.482
Senate Race	-0.129 (0.077)	0.099	0.087 (0.047)	0.073	-0.113 (0.069)	0.107
South	-0.262 (0.098)	0.011	-0.100 (0.063)	0.129	-0.001 (0.066)	0.993
Intercept	-4.573 (0.150)	0.000	-5.376 (0.160)	0.000	-5.317 (0.143)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)						
Age	0.056 (0.005)	0.000	0.057 (0.004)	0.000	0.056 (0.004)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.596 (0.018)	0.000	0.536 (0.017)	0.000	0.583 (0.013)	0.000
Income	0.087 (0.004)	0.000	0.078 (0.004)	0.000	0.084 (0.004)	0.000
Male	-0.134 (0.023)	0.000	-0.141 (0.023)	0.000	-0.150 (0.016)	0.000
African American	0.275 (0.064)	0.000	0.420 (0.055)	0.000	0.489 (0.073)	0.000
Hispanic	0.059 (0.093)	0.529	-0.034 (0.044)	0.437	-0.038 (0.044)	0.389
Residential Mobility	0.235 (0.014)	0.000	0.251 (0.014)	0.000	0.203 (0.010)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	75,290		71,011		63,812	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50		50	
Likelihood Function	-107,143		-100,683		-90,456	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplements (1992, 1996, 2000)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E10 – Number of Tax Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Presidential Elections of 2004 and 2008

Fixed Effects	2004		2008	
	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)				
Number of Tax Measures	0.007 (0.051)	0.889	0.118 (0.033)	0.001
Closing Date	-0.012 (0.005)	0.024	-0.009 (0.005)	0.096
Governor Race	-0.051 (0.077)	0.514	0.126 (0.133)	0.350
Senate Race	-0.056 (0.083)	0.499	0.033 (0.088)	0.712
South	-0.142 (0.078)	0.074	-0.210 (0.090)	0.024
Intercept	-2.940 (0.218)	0.000	-4.469 (0.234)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)				
Age	0.026 (0.005)	0.000	-0.082 (0.011)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.490	0.001 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.474 (0.020)	0.000	0.296 (0.031)	0.000
Income	0.085 (0.005)	0.000	0.113 (0.008)	0.000
Male	-0.189 (0.018)	0.000	-0.006 (0.060)	0.924
African American	0.611 (0.064)	0.000	0.561 (0.093)	0.000
Hispanic	-0.199 (0.027)	0.000	0.035 (0.106)	0.739
Residential Mobility	0.205 (0.008)	0.000	0.180 (0.021)	0.000
Interest in Politics	-		1.317 (0.035)	0.000
Strength of Partisanship	-		0.481 (0.025)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	73,805		24,204	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50	
Likelihood Function	-105,197		-34,272	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement 2004 and Cooperative Congressional Election Study 2008

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E11 – Number of Tax Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Midterm Elections of 1994, 1998, and 2002

Fixed Effects	1994		1998		2002	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)						
Number of Tax Measures	0.101 (0.047)	0.039	-0.007 (0.028)	0.813	0.018 (0.022)	0.408
Closing Date	-0.010 (0.004)	0.016	-0.011 (0.006)	0.045	-0.010 (0.005)	0.068
Governor Race	0.119 (0.099)	0.236	0.101 (0.097)	0.304	0.091 (0.096)	0.351
Senate Race	0.051 (0.088)	0.566	0.084 (0.107)	0.434	0.139 (0.081)	0.092
South	-0.101 (0.088)	0.258	-0.272 (0.096)	0.007	-0.073 (0.087)	0.409
Intercept	-6.897 (0.195)	0.000	-6.697 (0.285)	0.000	-5.284 (0.185)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)						
Age	0.083 (0.006)	0.000	0.083 (0.005)	0.000	0.063 (0.005)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.472 (0.018)	0.000	0.426 (0.014)	0.000	0.373 (0.012)	0.000
Income	0.071 (0.004)	0.000	0.064 (0.005)	0.000	0.071 (0.004)	0.000
Male	-0.021 (0.025)	0.405	-0.042 (0.017)	0.011	-0.034 (0.018)	0.053
African American	0.149 (0.060)	0.014	0.467 (0.068)	0.000	0.460 (0.049)	0.000
Hispanic	-0.148 (0.077)	0.056	0.002 (0.116)	0.989	-0.177 (0.036)	0.000
Residential Mobility	0.380 (0.012)	0.000	0.352 (0.015)	0.000	0.270 (0.009)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	82,142		69,355		76,606	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50		50	
Likelihood Function	-116,386		-98,343		-108,908	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplements (1994, 1998, 2002)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table E12 – Number of Tax Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Midterm Election of 2006

Fixed Effects	2006 (CPS)		2006 (CCES)	
	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)				
Number of Tax Measures	0.027 (0.025)	0.286	0.040 (0.029)	0.169
Closing Date	-0.007 (0.005)	0.141	0.000 (0.006)	0.935
Governor Race	0.152 (0.089)	0.095	0.037 (0.110)	0.740
Senate Race	0.019 (0.076)	0.809	0.094 (0.102)	0.363
South	-0.239 (0.080)	0.005	-0.462 (0.107)	0.000
Intercept	-5.050 (0.191)	0.000	-5.261 (0.322)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)				
Age	0.064 (0.004)	0.000	0.027 (0.012)	0.025
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	0.000 (0.000)	0.097
Education	0.352 (0.012)	0.000	0.324 (0.025)	0.000
Income	0.068 (0.003)	0.000	0.078 (0.007)	0.000
Male	-0.058 (0.021)	0.006	0.206 (0.054)	0.000
African American	0.380 (0.065)	0.000	-0.166 (0.142)	0.244
Hispanic	-0.160 (0.070)	0.023	-0.337 (0.094)	0.001
Residential Mobility	0.260 (0.012)	0.000	-	-
Interest in Politics	-	-	1.202 (0.047)	0.000
Strength of Partisanship	-	-	0.347 (0.024)	0.000
Level-1 <i>N</i>	70,896		17,504	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50	
Likelihood Function	-100,738		-25,272	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplement 2006 and Cooperative Congressional Election Study 2006
 Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Appendix F – Local level moral issue ballot measures list, 1972-2009

Year	Locale	Issue Content	Locale	Issue Content
1972				
	Detroit, MI	(enact gay-rights)		
1974				
	Boulder, CO	(repeal gay-rights)		
1977				
	Dade County, FL	(repeal gay-rights)		
1978				
	Dade County, FL	(enact gay-rights)	Seattle, WA	(repeal gay-rights)
	Eugene, OR	(repeal gay-rights)	Wichita, KS	(repeal gay-rights)
	St. Paul, MN	(repeal gay-rights)		
1980				
	Davis, CA	(enact gay-rights)	San Jose, CA	(repeal gay-rights)
	Santa Clara County, CA	(repeal gay-rights)	Virginia Beach, VA	(gay book ban)
1982				
	Austin, TX	(repeal gay-rights in housing)	Lincoln, NE	(extend civil rights to gays)
1984				
	Duluth, MN	(repeal gay-rights)		
1985				
	Houston, TX	(repeal gay-rights)		
1986				
	Davis, CA	(repeal gay-rights)		
1987				
	Boulder, CO	(extend civil rights to gays)		
1988				
	Ft. Collins, CO	(extend civil rights to gays)	San Francisco, CA	(Navy treatment of gays)
	St. Paul, MN	(ban civil rights initiatives)	San Francisco, CA	(Navy treatment of gays)
	San Francisco, CA	(gay Olympics)		
1989				
	Athens, OH	(repeal gay-rights)	San Francisco, CA	(enact DP law)
	Irvine, CA	(repeal gay-rights)	Tacoma, WA	(repeal gay-rights)
1990				
	Broward County, FL	(extend civil rights to gays)	Tacoma, WA	(enact gay-rights)
	San Francisco, CA	(allow DP registration)	Wooster, OH	(repeal housing law)
	Seattle, WA	(repeal DP benefits)		
1991				
	Concord, CA	(repeal gay-rights)	San Francisco, CA	(repeal DP registration)
	Denver, CO	(repeal gay-rights)	St. Paul, MN	(repeal gay-rights)
	Ferndale, MI	(enact gay-rights)		
1992				
	Corvallis, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)	Springfield, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)
	Gay Head, MA	(change town name)	Tampa, FL	(repeal gay-rights)
	Portland, ME	(repeal gay-rights)		
1993				
	Canby, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)	Lebanon, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)
	Cincinnati, OH	(repeal gay-rights & ban such laws)	Lewiston, ME	(repeal gay-rights laws)
	Cornelius, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)	Linn County, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)
	Creswell, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)	Medford, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)
	Douglas County, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)	Molalla, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)
	Estacada, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)	Oregon City, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)
	Jackson County, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)	Portsmouth, NH	(enact gay-rights)
	Josephine County, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)	Sweet Home, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)
	Keizer, OR	(ban gay-rights laws)	Tampa, FL	(repeal gay-rights laws)

	Klamath County, OR (ban gay-rights laws)	
1994	Alachua County, FL (repeal gay-rights law)	Marion County, OR (ban gay-rights laws)
	Alachua County, FL (ban gay-rights laws)	Oakridge, OR (ban gay-rights laws)
	Albany, OR (ban gay-rights laws)	Oberlin, OH (enact gay-rights)
	Austin, TX (repeal DP benefits)	Roseburg, OR (ban gay-rights laws)
	Cottage Grove, OR (ban gay-rights laws)	San Francisco, CA (limit DP recognition)
	Grants Pass, OR (ban gay-rights laws)	Springfield, MO (repeal gay hate crime law)
	Gresham, OR (ban gay-rights laws)	Turner, OR (ban gay-rights laws)
	Junction City, OR (ban gay-rights laws)	Veneta, OR (ban gay-rights laws)
	Lake County, OR (ban gay-rights laws)	
1995	Northhampton, MA (give limited DP benefits)	West Palm Beach, FL (repeal gay-rights laws)
1996	Lansing, MI (repeal gay-rights laws)	Lansing, MI (repeal gay-rights laws)
1997	Gay Head, MA (change town name)	San Francisco, CA (campaign code of conduct)
1998	Fayetteville, AK (repeal gay civil rights law)	South Portland, ME (prohibit discrimination)
	Fort Collins, CO (repeal gay civil rights law)	Ypsilanti, MI (repeal gay-rights law)
	Ogunquit, ME (prohibit discrimination)	
1999	Falmouth, ME (repeal gay-rights law)	Albuquerque, NM (prohibit discrimination)
	Greely, CO (prohibit discrimination)	Spokane, WA (repeal gay-rights law)
2000	Ferndale, MI (affirm suspended gay civil rights law)	Weston, FL (prohibit discrimination)
2001	Houston, TX (ban same-sex benefits)	Miami Beach, FL (health care & DP)
	Huntington Woods, MI (prohibit discrimination)	Miami Beach, FL (survivor rights & DP)
	Kalamazoo, MI (anti-gay rights)	Traverse City, MI (ban gay-rights laws)
2002	Miami-Dade County, FL (repeal gay civil rights law)	Ypsilanti, MI (repeal gay-rights law)
	Sarasota City, FL (enact gay-rights law)	Westbrook, ME (enact gay-rights law)
	Tacoma, WA (repeal ban on discrimination)	
2003	Cleveland Heights, OH (create DP registry)	
2004	Cincinnati, OH (repeal ban on gay civil rights laws)	
2005	Topeka, KS (repeal anti-discrimination law)	
2006	Austin, TX (repeal ban on DP benefits)	
2008	Hamtramck, MI (repeal gay-rights law)	King County, WA (enact gay-rights law)
2009	Gainesville, FL (repeal gender identity rights law)	Kalamazoo City, MI (repeal gay-rights law)

Source: Haider-Markel et al. 2007; Keck 2009; Leonard 2008, 2009a.

Appendix G – Difficulties in estimating causal effects from observational data

When the treatment is not randomly assigned (as is the case here), fundamental differences often exist between those who do and do not receive the treatment, which can bias our estimates. For example, the outcomes for treatment and control groups may differ even in the absence of treatment. It may be that those who receive the treatment (the moral issue proposition) are not starting at the same participation rate as those who did not, and that those who have the opportunity to vote on the proposition would participate at a higher rate than those who were not able to do so, even if there was no measure on the ballot. If this is true, then we would likely be overestimating the treatment effect simply by comparing the observed outcomes of these two groups. Alternatively, the potential effects of the treatment may differ for the treatment and control groups. It may be that the effect of the moral issue ballot measure on participation is not constant across these two groups, and would have a larger effect on the participation rates of those who could not vote on it had they received the treatment. In this case, we would be underestimating the treatment effect.

We can better illustrate this problem by reforming the discussion. Let the variable Y be a measure of the outcome of interest (turnout). Individuals can be exposed to only one of two alternative states (treatment or control), but theoretically could be exposed to either state. Each of the two alternative states is characterized by some distinct set of conditions, and the exposure to one of these distinct sets of conditions potentially affects Y . Every individual in the treatment group has an observable outcome in this state (observable because they receive the treatment), and an unobservable counterfactual outcome in the control state (unobservable because they do not receive the control).

Likewise, each individual in the control group has an observable outcome in this state and an unobservable counterfactual outcome in the treatment state. Thus, individuals have potential outcomes in each of the two states, even though they are only observed in one of these states (Winship and Morgan 1999).

Thus, the potential outcomes of each individual are defined as the true values of Y that would occur when they are exposed to the alternative sets of conditions that characterize the treatment and the control. Let Y_i^t stand for the potential outcome for each individual i that would result from their exposure to the treatment and Y_i^c stand for the potential outcome for each individual i that would result from their exposure to the control. Because both potential outcomes exist for each individual, we can define the causal effect of the treatment on the outcome for each individual i as the difference between these two potential outcomes, or

$$\delta_i = Y_i^t - Y_i^c$$

While we can define this individual level effect because both Y_i^t and Y_i^c exist in theory, because we cannot observe both values for any one individual, we cannot directly calculate any individual-level causal effects. The problem can thus be understood as a problem of missing data: the observed Y_i do not contain enough information to calculate the individual-level causal effect because individuals cannot simultaneously be observed under both the treatment and control conditions (Winship and Morgan 1999).

Because we cannot calculate the individual-level causal effect, we focus instead on estimating the average causal effect for the population of interest. To do so, we let \bar{Y}^t denote the average value of Y_i^t for all of the individuals that are exposed to the treatment

and \bar{Y}^c denote the average value of Y_i^c for all of the individuals who are exposed to the control. Thus, \bar{Y}^t is the expected value of Y_i^t and \bar{Y}^c is the expected value of Y_i^c in the population. The average treatment effect in the population is then the expected difference between \bar{Y}^t and \bar{Y}^c in the population, or

$$\bar{\delta} = \bar{Y}^t - \bar{Y}^c$$

While Y_i^t and Y_i^c are unobservable on mutually exclusive subsets of the population, meaning that \bar{Y}^t and \bar{Y}^c cannot both be directly calculated, they can both potentially be estimated (Winship and Morgan 1999).

We can address this problem (in expectation) with a randomized experiment. When individuals are assigned at random either to the treatment or control, we assume that certain physical randomization processes are carried out so that the determination of whether each individual is exposed to either group is regarded as statistically independent of all other independent variables, including Y^t and Y^c . In more simplified terms, if randomization is performed correctly, then random assignment provides the correct counterfactual and rules out bias from self-selection. We can assume that, on average, those who received the treatment would have had the same outcome as those who did not receive the treatment if those who received the treatment did not receive the treatment (and vice versa). We can then simply subtract the mean of the effect of the control from the mean effect of the treatment to calculate the average treatment effect of our independent variable of interest on our dependent variable (Holland 1986).

When the treatment and control are not randomly assigned, however, we have no guarantee that individuals from these two potential states are comparable in their response to the treatment. The independent variable of interest, X^T (moral issue proposition), may be correlated with some other independent variable, denoted as X^U , which also has a causal impact on Y . If we do not measure X^U , then the estimation of the impact of X^T may be either biased or inconsistent when the treatment is not randomly assigned. This problem is often referred to as omitted variable bias (Nichols 2007).

When we have such a situation, we cannot simply run OLS regression. Regression analyses assume the levels on independent variables are randomly assigned, individuals have particular levels on all the independent variables, and any variation in the other covariates or unobserved processes would not change these levels on the independent variables. As the moral issue propositions are not randomly assigned, bias in an OLS regression arises from endogeneity. Consider the true model formula

$$y = \beta_0 + X^T\beta_T + X^U\beta_U + e$$

When we have omitted variable bias, we would regress y on X^T but leave out X^U , perhaps because we cannot observe it. The estimate of β_T , then, has a bias equal to

$$E(\hat{B}_T) - B_T = \delta B_U$$

where δ is the coefficient of an auxiliary regression of X^U on X^T , meaning the bias is proportional to the correlation of X^U and X^T , as well as to the effect of the omitted variables on y (Nichols 2007). If the omitted variable(s) can be measured, or some other variable can serve as a proxy for them, then OLS regression may provide an unbiased estimate. If this cannot be done, however, then the results are likely to be biased in some manner.

Appendix H – Chapter 4 variable coding information

Sarasota City, FL

Dependent variable: (0) did not vote, (1) voted.

Independent variables:

Democrat: (0) not a registered Democrat, (1) registered Democrat.

Republican: (0) not a registered Republican, (1) registered Republican.

White: (0) no, (1) yes.

Black: (0) no, (1) yes.

Hispanic: (0) no, (1) yes.

Male (gender): (0) female, (1) male.

Election Dummies: (0) did not vote in election, (1) voted.

Birth Year: year of birth.

Registration Year: year of registration.

Male (gender): (0) female, (1) male.

Cleveland Heights OH (variables not listed are coded as described above in Sarasota City, FL data)

Democrat: (0) did not vote in the Democratic primary for two subsequent elections, (1) voted in the Democratic primary for two subsequent elections.

Republican: (0) did not vote in the Republican primary for two subsequent elections, (1) voted in the Republican primary for two subsequent elections.

Hamtramck and Kalamazoo City, MI (all variables coded as described above in Sarasota City, FL data)

Appendix I – Chapter 5 variable coding information

CPS

Dependent variable: (0) did not vote, (1) voted.

Independent variables:

Age: in years, 18-85 (topcoded at 85).

Age squared: square of variable labeled Age.

Education: (0) high school degree or less, (1) more than a high school degree.

Family Income: (0) 0 to 33rd percentile, (1) 34th to 100th percentile.

Black: (0) no, (1) yes.

Hispanic: (0) no, (1) yes.

Mobility (time lived at current address): (1) less than 1 month, (2) 1-6 months, (3) 7-11 months, (4) 1-2 years, (5) 3-4 years, (6) 5 years or longer.

Male (gender): (0) female, (1) male.

Moral Measures: number of moral issues appearing on an individual's ballot.

Senate: (0) no Senate race on the ballot, (1) Senate race on the ballot.

Governor: (0) no governor race on the ballot, (1) governor race on the ballot.

Registration (closing date): number of days before the election that registration ends.

South: (0) non-Southern state, (1) Southern state.

CCES (variables not listed are coded as described above in CPS data)

Age: in years (no topcode)

Strength of Partisanship: (1) Independent, (2) lean Republican or Democrat, (3) not very strong Republican or Democrat, (4) strong Republican or Democrat.

Political Interest: (1) not much interested, (2) somewhat interested, (3) very much interested.

White, born again Christian: (0) no, (1) yes.

Black, born again Christian: (0) no, (1) yes.

White, evangelical Protestant: (0) no, (1) belong to one of the following churches (and is white): Southern Baptist Convention; American Baptist Churches in USA; Baptist General Conference; Baptist Missionary Association; Conservative Baptist Association of America; Free Will Baptist; Free Methodist Church; Nondenominational evangelical; Evangelical Lutheran Church in American (ELCA); Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod; Lutheran Church, Wisconsin Synod; Presbyterian Church in America; Cumberland Presbyterian Church; Evangelical Presbyterian Church; Pentecostal; Holiness; Adventist; Christian Reformed Church.

Black, evangelical Protestant: (0) no, (1) yes.

Appendix J – HGLM results

Table J1 – Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Elections of 1992, 1994, and 1996

Fixed Effects	1992		1994		1996	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)						
Number of Moral Issues	-0.066 (0.046)	0.159	0.138 (0.088)	0.124	0.207 (0.044)	0.000
Closing Date	-0.017 (0.003)	0.000	-0.008 (0.004)	0.041	-0.010 (0.003)	0.000
Governor Race	0.031 (0.066)	0.644	0.150 (0.095)	0.124	-0.006 (0.060)	0.917
Senate Race	-0.134 (0.072)	0.071	0.133 (0.078)	0.098	0.050 (0.041)	0.221
South	-0.349 (0.094)	0.001	-0.140 (0.083)	0.100	-0.119 (0.052)	0.022
Intercept	-2.616 (0.157)	0.000	-5.252 (0.177)	0.000	-3.582 (0.135)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)						
Age	0.078 (0.005)	0.000	0.102 (0.006)	0.000	0.083 (0.004)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.001 (0.000)	0.000	-0.001 (0.000)	0.000	-0.001 (0.000)	0.000
Education	1.234 (0.031)	0.000	0.939 (0.035)	0.000	1.121 (0.031)	0.000
Income	0.643 (0.031)	0.000	0.534 (0.028)	0.000	0.517 (0.031)	0.000
Male	-0.131 (0.022)	0.000	-0.013 (0.024)	0.581	-0.119 (0.021)	0.000
African American	0.136 (0.057)	0.016	0.012 (0.062)	0.851	0.262 (0.053)	0.000
Hispanic	0.076 (0.089)	0.394	-0.332 (0.098)	0.001	-0.024 (0.037)	0.528
Residential Mobility	0.240 (0.014)	0.000	0.351 (0.013)	0.000	0.257 (0.014)	0.000
Moral Issues x Education	0.029 (0.089)	0.743	0.121 (0.029)	0.000	-0.086 (0.031)	0.082
Moral Issues x Income	-0.000 (0.060)	0.998	0.057 (0.071)	0.421	0.004 (0.029)	0.903
Level-1 <i>N</i>	75,290		82,142		71,011	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50		50	
Likelihood Function	-106,358		-116,812		-99,920	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplements (1992, 1994, 1996)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table J2 – Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for Elections of 1998, 2000, and 2002

Fixed Effects	1998		2000		2002	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)						
Number of Moral Issues	0.124 (0.057)	0.036	0.055 (0.076)	0.471	0.166 (0.078)	0.039
Closing Date	-0.012 (0.005)	0.025	-0.012 (0.003)	0.001	-0.010 (0.005)	0.049
Governor Race	0.121 (0.084)	0.160	0.051 (0.094)	0.594	0.067 (0.091)	0.465
Senate Race	0.046 (0.096)	0.634	-0.076 (0.065)	0.250	0.166 (0.075)	0.032
South	-0.271 (0.082)	0.002	-0.043 (0.064)	0.505	-0.084 (0.073)	0.255
Intercept	-4.926 (0.252)	0.000	-3.156 (0.142)	0.000	-4.657 (0.180)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)						
Age	0.100 (0.005)	0.000	0.078 (0.005)	0.000	0.083 (0.005)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.001 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.920 (0.022)	0.000	1.138 (0.025)	0.000	0.997 (0.027)	0.000
Income	0.435 (0.021)	0.000	0.636 (0.028)	0.000	0.524 (0.026)	0.000
Male	-0.027 (0.015)	0.072	-0.137 (0.016)	0.000	-0.019 (0.016)	0.252
African American	0.360 (0.066)	0.000	0.347 (0.071)	0.000	0.348 (0.050)	0.000
Hispanic	-0.184 (0.122)	0.132	-0.254 (0.047)	0.000	-0.292 (0.029)	0.000
Residential Mobility	0.274 (0.009)	0.000	0.200 (0.010)	0.000	0.259 (0.008)	0.000
Moral Issues x Education	0.033 (0.041)	0.427	-0.045 (0.078)	0.568	-0.029 (0.041)	0.485
Moral Issues x Income	0.003 (0.050)	0.953	-0.031 (0.040)	0.445	-0.026 (0.038)	0.496
Level-1 <i>N</i>	75,290		71,011		63,812	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50		50	
Likelihood Function	-98,175		-90,077		-108,680	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplements (1998, 2000, 2002)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are

population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table J3 – Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for 2004 and 2006 Elections

Fixed Effects	2004		2006	
	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)				
Number of Moral Measures	0.197 (0.075)	0.012	0.089 (0.047)	0.067
Closing Date	-0.013 (0.005)	0.014	-0.005 (0.005)	0.252
Governor Race	-0.046 (0.070)	0.516	0.151 (0.081)	0.068
Senate Race	-0.088 (0.069)	0.207	0.021 (0.067)	0.758
South	-0.164 (0.074)	0.032	-0.226 (0.069)	0.002
Intercept	-2.138 (0.189)	0.000	-4.457 (0.187)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)				
Age	0.048 (0.006)	0.000	0.080 (0.004)	0.000
Age Squared	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000
Education	1.231 (0.058)	0.000	0.953 (0.033)	0.000
Income	0.678 (0.044)	0.000	0.515 (0.031)	0.000
Male	-0.165 (0.017)	0.000	-0.048 (0.020)	0.016
African American	0.470 (0.062)	0.000	0.276 (0.065)	0.000
Hispanic	-0.334 (0.029)	0.000	-0.258 (0.061)	0.000
Residential Mobility	0.204 (0.008)	0.000	0.254 (0.011)	0.000
Moral Issues x Education	-0.107 (0.076)	0.159	0.041 (0.038)	0.281
Moral Issues x Income	-0.048 (0.059)	0.417	-0.011 (0.035)	0.762
Level-1 <i>N</i>	73,805		24,204	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50	
Likelihood Function	-105,402		-100,569	

Source: Current Population Survey November Supplements (2004, 2006)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are

population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Table J4 – Number of Moral Issues on the Ballot and Voter Turnout for 2006 and 2008 Elections (CCES Models)

Fixed Effects	2006		2008	
	β	p-value	β	p-value
Level-2 (State Context)				
Number of Moral Measures	0.073 (0.081)	0.372	0.095 (0.052)	0.075
Closing Date	0.001 (0.005)	0.816	-0.008 (0.006)	0.177
Governor Race	0.045 (0.109)	0.682	0.063 (0.134)	0.640
Senate Race	0.109 (0.097)	0.270	0.012 (0.092)	0.898
South	-0.424 (0.103)	0.000	-0.166 (0.092)	0.077
Intercept	-4.914 (0.348)	0.000	-3.842 (0.256)	0.000
Level-1 (Individual-level)				
Age	0.047 (0.012)	0.000	-0.072 (0.011)	0.000
Age Squared	0.000 (0.000)	0.967	0.001 (0.000)	0.000
Education	0.813 (0.074)	0.000	0.748 (0.078)	0.000
Income	0.404 (0.060)	0.000	0.633 (0.069)	0.000
Male	0.211 (0.057)	0.000	0.012 (0.059)	0.843
African American	-0.121 (0.137)	0.378	0.603 (0.115)	0.000
Hispanic	-0.277 (0.105)	0.009	0.008 (0.100)	0.934
Residential Mobility	-		0.189 (0.020)	0.000
Interest in Politics	1.221 (0.048)	0.000	1.343 (0.034)	0.000
Strength of Partisanship	0.352 (0.025)	0.000	0.492 (0.025)	0.000
White, Born Again Christians	0.177 (0.100)	0.077	-	
Black, Born Again Christians	0.050 (0.200)	0.801	-	
White, evangelical Protestants	-		0.112 (0.096)	0.243
Black, evangelical Protestants	-		-0.089 (0.222)	0.687

Moral Issues x Education	0.162 (0.118)	0.169	-0.026 (0.041)	0.524
Moral Issues x Income	-0.017 (0.089)	0.851	0.044 (0.043)	0.299
Moral Issues x White, Born Again Christians	0.177 (0.100)	0.077	-	
Moral Issues x Black, Born Again Christians	0.050 (0.200)	0.801	-	
Moral Issues x White, evangelical Protestants	-	-	-0.123 (0.056)	0.029
Moral Issues x Black, evangelical Protestants	-	-	-0.325 (0.186)	0.080
Level-1 <i>N</i>	17,504		24,204	
Level-2 <i>N</i>	50		50	
Likelihood Function	-24,940		-34,050	

Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2006, 2008)

Note: Estimates are generated using generalized hierarchical linear modeling with a logit link function and are population-average results. Dependent variable is whether or not the individual voted (coded 0=no and 1=yes). Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Appendix K – Dependent variable questions

The 2006 dependent variable consists of the following eighteen questions:

1 & 2) First, we'd like to ask about a proposal in Congress to ban a type of late-term abortion sometimes called "partial-birth abortion." Some argue that late-term abortion is a barbaric procedure and should be banned. Others argue that late-term abortions are extremely uncommon and used only in exceptional circumstances best determined by a doctor, not the Congress. The proposed legislation could also be the opening to a broader ban on abortion.

How about [Senator 1 (2)]? Do you think [he/she] voted for or against banning late-term abortion?

3 & 4) Some in Congress argue that this research may lead to cures for diseases and disabilities affecting large numbers of Americans, and should be funded. Others argue that a potential human life has to be destroyed in order to use these cells, and funding it would be unethical.

How about [Senator 1 (2)]? Do you think [he/she] voted for or against funding the research?

5 & 6) Congress also debated a proposal that the president begin phased redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq starting this year and submit to Congress by the end of 2006 a plan with estimated dates for continued phased withdrawal. Some politicians argue that setting out a plan to withdraw would make Iraqis take responsibility for their country and become more independent of the U.S. Others argue that it is too early to start withdrawing, and that doing so would make terrorists grow bolder.

How about [Senator 1 (2)]? Do you think [he/she] voted for or against this plan?

7 & 8) Another issue is illegal immigration. One plan considered by the Senate would offer illegal immigrants who already live in the U.S. more opportunities to become legal citizens. Some politicians argue that people who have worked hard in jobs that the economy depends should be offered the chance to live here legally. Other politicians argue that the plan is an amnesty that rewards people who have broken the law.

How about [Senator 1 (2)]? Do you think [he/she] voted for or against this proposal?

9 & 10) Congress considered a proposal to increase the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.25 within the next year and a half. Some politicians argue that the wage should be increased because it hasn't changed since 1997 and many workers still live in poverty. Other politicians argue that raising the wage might force small businesses to cut jobs and would hurt the economy.

How about [Senator 1 (2)]? Do you think [he/she] voted for or against increasing the minimum wage?

11 & 12) We'd like to ask about cutting taxes on the money people make from selling investments, also referred to as capital gains. This past year the Senate considered a bill to extend capital gains tax cuts passed in 2001. Some politicians argue that these tax reductions make the economy strong and encourage people to invest more. Others argue that the plan would mostly benefit people who are already rich and that any tax cuts should be shared more fairly among all taxpayers.

How about [Senator 1 (2)]? Do you think [he/she] voted for or against increasing these tax cuts?

13 & 14) This year Congress also debated a new free trade agreement that reduces barriers to trade between the U.S. and countries in Central America. Some politicians argue that the agreement allows America to better compete in the global economy and would create more stable democracies in Central America. Other politicians argue that it helps businesses to move jobs abroad where labor is cheaper and does not protect American producers.

How about [Senator 1 (2)]? Do you think [he/she] voted for or against the trade agreement?

15) Do you happen to remember the party affiliation of the Governor of your state?

16 & 17) Do you happen to remember the party affiliation of [Senator 1 (2)]?

18) Ideological placement of the two parties is a combination of the following two questions (using a one hundred point scale from very liberal to very conservative):

Where would you place the Democratic (Republican) Party?

The 2008 dependent variable consists of the following ten questions:

1-4) Which party has a majority of seats in the...

(1) House of Representatives? (2) Senate? (3) State Senate? (4) Lower chamber?

5-7) Please indicate whether you've heard of this person and if so which party he or she is affiliated with.

(1) Governor; (2) Senator 1; (3) Senator 2

8) Ideological placement of the two parties is a combination of the following two questions (using a one hundred point scale from very liberal to very conservative):

Where would you place the Democratic (Republican) Party?

9) Ideological placement of Bush and Obama is a combination of the following two questions (using a one hundred point scale from very liberal to very conservative):

Where would you place President George Bush (Barak Obama)?

10) Ideological placement of McCain and Obama is a combination of the following two questions (using a one hundred point scale from very liberal to very conservative):

Where would you place John McCain (Barak Obama)?

Appendix L – Chapter 6 variable coding information

Dependent variable: Number of knowledge questions answered correctly by the respondent, 0-18 for 2006 and 0-10 for 2008.

Independent variables:

Age: in years (no topcode).

Education: (1) did not graduate high school, (2) high school graduate, (3) some college but no degree, (4) 2 year college degree, (5) 4 year college degree, (6) post graduate degree.

Family Income: (1) less than 10,000, (2) 10,000-14,999, (3) 15,000-19,999, (4) 20,000-24,999, (5) 25,000-29,999, (6) 30,000-39,999, (7) 40,000-49,999, (8) 50,000-59,999, (9) 60,000-69,999, (10) 70,000-79,999, (11) 80,000-99,999, (12) 100,000-119,999, (13) 120,000-149,999, (14) 150,000 or more.

Strength of Partisanship: (1) Independent; (2) lean Republican or Democrat; (3) not very strong Republican or Democrat; (4) strong Republican or Democrat.

Political Interest: (1) not much interested; (2) somewhat interested; (3) very much interested.

Black: (0) no, (1) yes.

Hispanic: (0) no, (1) yes.

Male (gender): (0) female, (1) male.

Religiosity (church attendance): (1) almost never or never, (2) a few times a year, (3) a few times a month, (4) once a week or more.

Moral Measures: number of moral issues appearing on an individual's ballot.

Total Measures: number of total measures appearing on an individual's ballot.

Tax Measures: number of tax issues appearing on an individual's ballot.

Senate: (0) no Senate race on the ballot, (1) Senate race on the ballot.

Governor: (0) no governor race on the ballot, (1) governor race on the ballot.

Divided Government: (0) unified state government; (1) divided state government.

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