Comparing Elected and Appointed Election Officials: 
The Impact of Selection Method on Policy Preferences and Administrative Outcomes

Barry C. Burden*  
David T. Canon* 
Stéphane Lavertu*+  
Kenneth R. Mayer*  
Donald P. Moynihan±

* Department of Political Science, University of Wisconsin Madison  
+ Department of Political Science, University of Colorado-Boulder as of Fall 2010  
± La Follette School of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin Madison

Paper prepared for the American Politics Workshop, Department of Political Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Preliminary draft not for citation.

Acknowledgements: The larger project to which this paper is connected is supported with funding from the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board and the Pew Charitable Trusts. These organizations bear no responsibility for the findings or interpretation reported in this paper. We thank Leticia Bode, Hannah Goble, Matt Holleque, Patrick Moran, Jacob Neiheisel, David Nelson, and Sarah Niebler for research assistance.
Abstract
The method by which we select public officials can have a significant effect on their environment, the pressures they face, and ultimately the policy goals they pursue. In particular, elected officials may be more likely than appointed officials to pursue policies that are in line with the perceived preferences of the electorate. We explore this phenomenon using election administration as a case. Specifically, we examine the extent to which elected and appointed election officials differ in terms of their policy preferences and the administrative outcomes they help produce. To do so, we employ a uniquely rich dataset that includes the survey responses of over 1,200 Wisconsin election officials, qualitative data from interviews with dozens of these officials, and data on administrative outcomes from the 2008 presidential election. The results indicate that elected officials are more in favor of policies that are thought to promote turnout than appointed officials, that their municipalities are associated with higher voter turnout, and that their municipalities have lower voter purge rates. We find lower turnout when an official’s partisanship differs from the partisanship of the electorate, but this effect obtains only for appointed officials. Overall, the results support the notion elected officials are more likely to express attitudes and generate outcomes that reflects their direct exposure to the policy preferences of voters, in contrast to the more insulated position of appointed officials.
Introduction

The method used to select public officials can have a significant effect on policy outcomes. Different methods of selection may attract different types of officials and may introduce different behavioral incentives once officials are in office. One of the most fundamental dilemmas in any political system is finding an appropriate structure of control and accountability over administrative functions. One might want to appoint officials to insulate them from the public and to enable them to draw on their policy expertise or professional norms. On the other hand, one might want to elect officials so that they might be more responsive to the demands of the electorate. In either case, the method of selection makes a difference. In this paper, we use the Wisconsin setting to examine whether or not method of selection affects the policy preferences of local election officials, and whether or not the method of selection is related to administrative outcomes—particularly, voter turnout.

Whether or not the method employed to select local election officials has an impact on election administration depends on how much influence these officials possess. Scholars have argued that local election officials often have a significant amount of discretion and that their policies can have an impact on voter access and turnout—as a result of how forcefully they choose to enforce registration and voting rules, how committed they are to keeping voting lines down, the voting technology they choose to adopt, and so on (Ansolabehere and Stewart 2005; Hall and Alvarez 2003; Kimball, Kropf and Battles 2006; Bassi, Morton and Trounstine n.d.). The decentralized system of election administration in Wisconsin, which relies on over 1,830 clerks to administer elections in about 1,850 municipalities, likely allows for even greater variation in administrative outcomes. Thus, if the method of selecting election officials has an impact on election administration, one should be able to detect it by comparing the policy preferences and administrative outcomes associated with the elected and appointed clerks who administer elections in Wisconsin.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we review literature that suggests that election officials in the United States are able to influence election administration significantly and that some may do so to serve partisan interests. Second, we consider the specific methods of selection employed in election administration in Wisconsin, arguing that elected officials have stronger incentives to respond to voter preferences by increasing voter access and turnout. Third, we describe the data collected for the empirical analysis. Fourth, we present qualitative data that helps us identify the policy preferences of elected and appointed officials in Wisconsin, and we present the results of statistical models estimating the impact of selection method on officials’ policy preferences and the administrative outcomes with which they are associated.

The results indicate that elected officials are more in favor of policies that are thought to promote turnout than appointed officials, that their municipalities are associated with higher voter turnout, and that their municipalities have lower voter purge rates. Additionally, we find that voter turnout is lower when an official’s partisanship differs from the partisanship of the electorate, but that this effect obtains only for appointed officials. We conclude that these results are consistent with the notion that elected officials are more responsive to the preferences of the electorate than appointed officials.
The Influence of Election Officials

The impact of administrative discretion on elections can be significant. Election officials have discretion over a wide variety of policy choices that influence ballot design, the use of voting technology, the treatment of provisional ballots, standards for counting absentee ballots, the maintenance of registration rolls, and the implementation of voter identification rules. In addition, discretion can come not only in the form of a choice enabled by delegated authority, but also a choice taken where the law is silent, or a deliberate or accidental disregard of the rules during the implementation process (Lipsky 1980). A little bit of mischief or incompetence could affect the likelihood that voters turn out to vote, the potential that their vote is counted, and ultimately the electoral fates of candidates.

For example, research indicates that the behavior of poll workers – who in Wisconsin are selected and trained by local clerks – can have a significant impact on voter confidence (Hall, Monson and Patterson 2009), and even on the number of residual ballots (Ansolabehere and Stewart 2005). Ansolabehere (2007) finds that black and Hispanic voters were more likely than white voters to be asked to produce photo ID at the polls. Similarly, Atkeson et al. (2009) report that Hispanics and men were more likely to show identification in a 2006 congressional election in New Mexico. While they do not have direct evidence that the disparities result from a discriminatory application of the state’s voter ID laws, their findings “suggest the possibility of an unequal application of voter identification laws” (2009, 71).

As election officials exercise discretion of various sorts in election administration, their partisan beliefs may influence their choices. One unpublished but provocative analysis finds that local partisan election officials increase the turnout of fellow-partisans (Bassi, Morton, and Trounstine n.d.). Stuart (2004) finds that Republican election registrars in Florida were more likely to purge voter rolls of names of suspected felons provided by the state, while Democrats were more likely to resist doing do. Finally, there is evidence that the implementation of the 2004 Help America Vote Act’s provisional balloting rules depended, at least in part, on the partisanship of local election officials, and those officials’ estimate of what rule would help their party: “provisional votes were less likely to be cast and counted in strongly Democratic jurisdictions if the local election official was a Republican. Similarly, in heavily Republican jurisdictions provisional votes were less likely to be cast and accepted if the local election official was a Democrat” (Kimball, Kropf, and Battles 2006, 448).

The possibility that election officials will administer elections in a way that serves their partisan interests can threaten the legitimacy of elections. The general perception is that, in the area of election administration, while there are plenty of examples of partisan control, there are relatively few that represent a level of genuine independence from political pressures (Tokaji 2009). The solution might be to recruit non-partisan election administrators and to insulate them from political pressures that could lead them to such behavior. But it is unclear, however, whether electing or appointing election officials better encourages the neutral administration of election law. Whether or not an election official is motivated by partisan interests, and whether or not he or she will be pressured to make partisan policy decisions, depends on the preferences of those who select them. We examine how methods of selection might impact election administration in the next section.
Methods of Selection

One well-established claim in the study of public organizations is that the operating environment of an official is a powerful influence on administrative behavior and outcomes (Meier and Bohte 2006). Administrators seek autonomy to pursue the goals they want precisely because direct influence by stakeholders restricts their ability to make decisions. This is usually portrayed in terms of the degree of oversight by elected officials or stakeholder groups, but the most extreme version of direct control comes in the form of direct election by the public.

At the local level, governments generally choose between election and appointment for key positions (Frederickson and Johnson 2001). Recent empirical evidence in a variety of contexts suggest that this method of selection matters, and that officials who are directly elected by the public tend to be more responsive to the perceived wishes of citizens. Judges, prosecutors, and regulators are more likely to be consumer-oriented and punitive if they are directly elected (Besley and Coaste 2003; Gordon and Huber 2007; Huber and Gordon 2004; Kwoka 2002; cf., e.g., Primeaux and Mann 1985). From a principal-agent framework, elected officials are more immediately accountable to voters whereas appointed officials are accountable to the municipal bodies that selected them. In both cases deviation from the wishes of the principal can result in termination.

In the area of election administration, we expect that efforts to be responsive to citizen desires will take the form of making voting more convenient. Voters typically are concerned about their rights: votes being counted and elections being administered in a manner that is as convenient as possible for them. Voters can readily observe long lines, and they know whether or not they found voting to be difficult—especially when elections are close or salient. For example, they want short lines and tend to prefer the convenience of practices such as election day registration (EDR) and early voting. We propose that elected clerks will be responsive to these preferences and, therefore, will administer elections in a way that will maximize turnout and the number of votes that are counted. If in doubt, they have an inventive to act in a way that enables rather than denies access for a potential voter. As they become more concerned with satisfying the electorate, elected clerks are likely to be less concerned about administrative costs than appointed clerks.

In contrast, appointed clerks are hired by local government officials. These officials, who are often elected themselves, have somewhat different preferences than the electorate. They are responsible for keeping municipal fiscal affairs in order, avoiding scandal and security concerns at the polls, and generally valuing efficiency over voter access when it comes to election administration. The local election official they appoint is but one office they must monitor, so it will not act as a perfect agent, but it also means that simple indicators such as the costs of running elections will take priority over other considerations. To the degree that they internalize these preferences, appointed elected administrators will emphasize order and cost containment over high turnout and maximizing voter access to the ballot.

For positions that oversee election administration, there is no dominant approach to selection, although it has been the topic of recent policy debate (Tokaji 2009). Nationally, about
half of local election officials are directly elected. Though we propose that elections make officials more responsive to the public, elections are imperfect mechanisms of control. One reason is that the post of election official, will almost always be a low-salience affair, and voters will not have much to go on to evaluate candidates prospectively. This is especially true at the local level, even more so when the positions involves many more duties than running elections, as in the case of the Wisconsin clerks we study. Citizens will have little information about candidate competence, or even their names. When the public actively uses an election to hold administrators accountable, it is usually a reaction to some past scandal or administrative failure. And even then, the links are often vague, with partisan election administrators as likely to be rewarded for their behavior as punished, especially if their decisions work in favor of the majority party.¹

Efforts to make elections nonpartisan affairs have their own problems. Nonpartisan elections deny voters the most important informational shortcut about a candidate, reduce turnout, and provide even greater incumbency advantages (Shaffner, Streb, and Wright 2001). Studies of judicial elections, for example, suggest that they do not provide much in the way of accountability or substance. One review of the literature put it this way:

Many studies over the years demonstrate one commonality: no matter what form of judicial elections, most voters in most elections are largely uninformed about the persons running for these offices, or about the issues raised in campaigns for those offices. Voters respond by relying heavily on partisan affiliation, familiar names, incumbency, or similar cues, or simply do not vote at all for judges on the ballot (Solimine 2002, 562).

The next section details methods of selection and the policy relevant contextual information in the case we study here, which is election administration in the state of Wisconsin.

The Setting: Election Administration in Wisconsin

We turn to local election officials in Wisconsin to investigate how methods of selection influence election administration. Before explaining why this is an attractive setting for addressing these questions, some background on the state is warranted.

Wisconsin is a medium-sized battleground state with a voting eligible population of approximately four million and 3.4 million registrants. It has one the highest turnout rates among U.S. states, in part because it allows EDR (e.g., Hanmer 2009). EDR creates some administrative headaches for the election officials who must make available separate processes to register and vote on election day. One of the most decentralized systems in the country, state

¹ The most famous example of partisanship in election administration, the state of Florida 2000 Presidential election is illustrative. Theresa LePore, the Palm Beach County election official who designed the infamous butterfly ballot, occupied an elected position. Ultimately, she did lose a bid for another term in 2004, but by a narrow margin (52-48) in an election that saw 26% turnout (McLachlin, Daugherty and Schwed 2004). Katherine Harris, the Republican Florida Secretary of State who ordered recounts to be halted and declared President Bush the victor, moved to the U.S. House, in an election that, according to the Almanac of American Politics (Barone and Cohen, 2005, 419) was “mostly treated as a coronation.”
law mandates that each municipality have a clerk who is responsible for running elections—although administering elections is but one of their many duties. Local clerks’ election duties include maintaining voter records, recruiting and training poll workers, judging provisional ballots, issuing absentee ballots, and establishing and equipping poll locations, including acquiring voting equipment. They are supported to varying degrees by 72 county clerks who administer elections in unincorporated areas, and serve as the primary local office for tabulating election returns. Atop this structure, the Government Accountability Board serves as the statewide election authority.²

Wisconsin election administration offers certain advantages in testing our hypotheses. There are over 1,830 municipal clerks serving 1,850 communities that range in population from several dozen to several hundred thousand. Sixty percent of clerks are elected and the rest are appointed by municipal executives or boards. The large sample, range of backgrounds, and mix of selection methods provides us with an unusual opportunity to explore the impact of selection method on election officials’ policy preferences and the administrative outcomes they help produce. The decentralized system means that approximately one in every five local election official hails from Wisconsin. This provides us with a large sample even as important (and often unmeasured) variables in explaining voter turnout and the conduct of elections – the set of state election laws and rules, state history and culture – are held constant (Hanmer 2009). Wisconsin is the only state in the nation with enough election officials to allow analysis within a given set of election institutions.

Another advantage of the Wisconsin system is that it allows us to test the impact of employing the method of selection that the public says it prefers for election officials. A national survey found that by a huge margin – 66% to 20% – the public supports nonpartisan election administration (Alvarez and Hall 2005). At the same time, by an even larger margin – 74% to 21% – the public wants election administrators to be elected rather than appointed. The insistence on elected overseers reflects, no doubt, a desire for a strong, direct, form of accountability, while at the same time avoiding the negative aspects of partisanship. The tensions inherent in such a selection model lead Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn (2008, 341) to conclude that “additional research is needed to determine if the public’s choice for elected, nonpartisan election boards is also the electoral governance structure which is best able to prevent electoral fraud and to instill confidence in voters that the process is fair.” Wisconsin provides a useful context for such research, since both elected officials and appointed officials are officially nonpartisan (although in practice the ideological affiliations of clerks are often widely known). We can therefore contrast the method of selection that the public says it prefers – elected nonpartisan – with an alternative.

One potential concern of analysis of the effects of method of selection on turnout is that there is endogeneity in the model, that is, that municipalities whose citizens vote in greater numbers are also more likely to prefer to have more positions subject to electoral control. But again, the Wisconsin case has an inherent advantage here that reduces this concern. Wisconsin municipalities come in three types: city, village, and town. Cities and villages are free to appoint or elect their clerks without much interference, typically via a board comprised of elected

officials. Towns, in contrast, are required to elect their clerks unless a town referendum implements appointment. As a result, 90% of cities and 81% of villages appoint their clerks, while 82% percent of towns elect their clerks. That villages and towns tend to employ different methods for selecting their clerks provides us with a situation that closely approximates a natural experiment. Wisconsin villages and towns are similarly sized—with average populations of 1,787 and 1,256, respectively—and together comprise 89 percent of municipalities. While villages have more governing authority and responsibilities and towns tend to serve more dispersed populations, it is something of an historical accident whether a municipality is a village or town.

Appointed election officials serve the executive or board that hires them. A board may choose to hire a partisan, but there is usually a competitive selection process which would undercut overt partisanship in selection. We assume that appointed clerks look to the board or executive that hired them as their primary principals. Appointed clerks are less visible to the public than elected clerks, and more insulated from citizen concerns. In addition to administering elections (which often is only a small aspect of their jobs), clerks provide support for local boards and councils, maintain the municipal office, handle communications, issue licenses, and keep municipal records. Appointed clerks who serve smaller towns or villages may also serve as treasurer. Elected clerks are popularly elected in spring elections, but otherwise perform duties similar to those of appointed clerks. The only significant difference between the two positions, therefore, is the method of selection.

Despite the advantages of using Wisconsin, conducting analysis in a single state raises questions about generalizability. However, Wisconsin is a diverse state in many regards. Even as much of the state is relatively rural, the city of Milwaukee is a large and diverse metropolitan area with pockets of intense poverty. Wisconsin therefore allows us to understand the impact that the method of selection may have on attitudes and behavior across a range urban and rural settings in a competitive state. One reasonable caveat is that both elected and appointed positions are supposed to be nonpartisan in Wisconsin. Even though the partisan preferences are often widely known, it is difficult to predict if the results we present below would be more or less pronounced in a state where the local election officials are elected on an overtly partisan basis.

Data Collection

To understand the impact of method of appointment on election administration in Wisconsin, we amassed a rich array of data on both clerks and their municipalities, taken from five sources. First, we administered a comprehensive survey of all clerks serving 1,850 municipalities in the spring of 2009 Wisconsin. The survey used two modes (internet and postal mail, depending on clerks’ access to the internet), several follow-ups, and endorsements and incentives provided by state election officials to increase the response rate. The survey resulted in 3

It appears that Wisconsin clerks prefer not to run for election—perhaps because they do not want to be accountable to voters, or perhaps because running for office requires time and effort. Whatever the reason, our data of Wisconsin clerks indicates that only 44% think that election is the better method, and that 87% of appointed clerks think appointment is the better method of selection whereas only 65% of elected clerks believe election is better.
in a 71% response rate (1,320 out of 1,850). There are no obvious selection effects that would render the sample unrepresentative. The survey included a larger battery of questions about clerks’ backgrounds, training, career ambitions, methods of selection, and partisanship, all of which we treat as “inputs.” The survey also asked for their opinions about the effectiveness and problems associated with practices such as election day registration and absentee ballots, which we treat as “outputs.” Most of these questions are straightforward items whose exact wording will be provided below.

The survey data provides some basic descriptive information on the clerks and describe some of the differences between elected and appointed clerks. Nearly all Wisconsin clerks are white (99.5%) and female (just 11.1% of appointed clerks and 15.3% of elected clerks are men). Elected clerks are somewhat less educated than appointed clerks (30.7% are high school graduates or less compared to 22.1%). Appointed clerks are much more likely to have full time positions rather than part time (71.2% versus 15.6%), more likely to serve as treasurer for their jurisdiction as well as duties as clerk (62.5% versus 9.3%), and less likely to hold another job (36.4% versus 64.9%). Not surprisingly, elected clerks are more likely to report ambition for higher office than appointed clerks (32.2% compared to 9.9%). Overall then, the descriptive statistics portray appointed clerks as having more qualifications, experience, and full-time expertise than elected clerks. This is largely attributable to the fact that cities, the largest municipalities, overwhelmingly elect their clerks.

The second form of data collected was qualitative data from clerks, both from open-ended questions in the survey, and from personal interviews with dozens of select municipal and county clerks. For the in-person interviews, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed. The material for this protocol came from the themes in the survey, discussions with clerks at Government Accountability Board meetings, and an open-ended comments section as the end of the survey. A sampling procedure for the in-person interviews assured representation of the state’s 15 largest municipalities, and we randomly selected the remaining 85 in a manner that mimics the distribution of the state’s voting age population.

Third, we utilize data from the 2008 Election Day Survey (EDS) submitted by state election officials to the Election Assistance Commission. The EDS is a massive data collection effort authorized by the Help America Vote Act legislation that created the EAC in 2002. The 2008 survey is the third wave. Importantly for our purposes, the survey requests information about election-related processes and outcomes at the municipal or sub-municipal level, including information on voter turnout, and purging of voter registration rolls. These are important outcomes over which local election officials, and the pollworkers they employ, have some discretion to influence. We aggregated these data to the municipal level and created various indicators of election practices. These are treated as “outputs” that may be the product of clerk and municipality characteristics.

---

4 Approximately 20 clerks are employed by more than one municipality. Their responses are counted twice if they completed surveys for each position they hold. Of the 1,850 municipalities, we were able to merge Census data for 1,845. An additional complication is that some municipalities are divided across county lines, which increases the number of administrative units by a few dozen.

The fourth item added to our dataset is the vote breakdown for president in 2008. Specifically, we know from official election returns how many votes the two major parties won in each municipality and can thus compute vote shares to include as a conditional variable in the multivariate analysis. The fifth and final data source is the 2000 federal Census. The Census collects useful demographic information at the municipal level such as income, education, and racial composition. Although we have little inherent interest in these “inputs,” they serve as important control variables to boost our confidence in the main results. All four dataset sources are merged into a master dataset with a maximum of 1,388 observations, although missing data result in effective sample sizes of about 1,225 for most models.

Results

Below we present empirical results that enable us to compare the policy preferences and administrative outcomes associated with elected and appointed clerks. First, we present qualitative data that illustrates clerk attitudes toward policies that should enhance turnout and affect vote totals. Specifically, we present quotes from clerks on two common practices that increase voter convenience: the use of election day registration (which has been permitted in Wisconsin since 1976) and absentee ballots (which have been permitted in Wisconsin since the early 1900s and since 2000 have not required an excuse). Then, we use quantitative data to estimate differences between appointed and elected clerks in terms of their attitudes toward these policies. Finally, we compare outcomes for jurisdictions administered by elected and appointed clerks. Specifically, we compare voter turnout and voter purge rates, controlling for clerk and municipal characteristics.

Qualitative Analysis of Clerk Attitudes

Qualitative data from the interviews and survey provide some illuminating examples of how clerks think about voting procedures and how those views vary by method of selection. While there are counterexamples, these data indicate that elected officials are more amenable to efforts to expand access to turnout, with appointed officials being more concerned about the administrative burden created. This comment from an appointed clerk was representative:

Election Day registration is a nightmare. It increases pressure at the polls, where we have a hard time finding adequate numbers of staff to work. The workers tend to be elderly and get flustered under the stress of a large election, or have a hard time simply reading and following the forms. There are so many mistakes made that would not happen if we closed registration 3+ weeks before the election. . . I can't say people are enjoying elections anymore.

Clerks in small municipalities were more likely to be concerned about the administrative burdens of elections (in terms of costs, time, and personnel). These comments were often framed in the context of the growing complexity of elections. They often pointed out that election administration is only one of their duties, but that it takes up too much of their time and would take up even more with alternative forms of voting. Some clerks suggested that if this pattern continues, and in particular if there are additional requirements such as early voting, it will make
it increasingly hard to find people to fill the clerk position. One appointed clerk raised emphasized the burden of split responsibilities:

As a part-time municipal clerk, I have many more things to do and be responsible for than just elections. The time spent on trying to absorb all the election information received by mail, e-mail, training, etc. is overwhelming and frustrating…The small municipalities, such as mine, do not need to be expected to conduct elections in the same way as cities. All the forms that need to be filled out get to be too many - especially when they change the form every few days or weeks…If it keeps up at the present pace - another person would need to be hired to just conduct elections and keep up with all the changes and duties.

To a greater extent than elected clerks, appointed clerks explicitly criticized voters for wanting additional convenience in voting.

Election Day Registration is being abused by people who have begun to presume that it is their right. I think there should be a provision to allow for only certain limited EDR. There is no reason that the vast majority of the voters can not register at least 30 days prior to the election. I believe that voting is both a privilege and a right and more people need to act responsibly and try to be better prepared. There is enough information available that people can easily find out where to register and what proof of residency they need to bring with them.

Registration on Election Day causes confusion, stress, and sloppiness in filling forms… Voting may be their right, but it is also a responsibility. The easier we make it for people, (i.e. allowing absentee voting for anyone too lazy to stand in line for ten minutes), does not bode well for people taking their vote seriously. I have to wait at the doctor's office, the store checkout, why not make people responsible for getting registered 20 days before the election, and getting to the polls the day of election. Won't they take the election process more seriously?

Absentee voting has become the lazy person's way of life. It is so much easier to receive a postage-prepaid ballot in the mail than to go to the polls and possibly stand in line on election day. The average person has no clue how much additional work and cost this is for the municipality. At the very least, the law needs to be changed so that the return of the ballot is at the voter's expense. Why should all taxpayers have to pay postage for those who are too lazy to vote in person? Only absentee voters should have to pay the fee! The "old" rule of needing a reason to vote absentee should be put back in place so that only those who need to vote by absentee would vote by that means.

Appointed clerks also seemed to express more concern about the implications of EDR for ballot security and voter fraud than elected clerks:

Election Day Registration creates such a large post election burden. If WI wants to make changes to elections in WI this should be eliminated. By doing so I think
it could reduce voter fraud and potential errors by poll workers. The day before the election should be the last day to register in the clerk’s office.

I do NOT agree with Election Day Registration because there is no way to catch voter fraud until weeks AFTER the fact. I also think registration requirements are too lax. Photo ID should always be required. The current rules were fine when we were not such a mobile society. Today a person could easily vote in multiple places just by traveling by car, let alone air travel. A responsible citizen can and should register at least 2 weeks prior to the election.

While these quotes are quite illuminating, they obviously cannot establish systematic differences between elected and appointed clerks in terms of their attitudes about voting practices and voter turnout. For that we turn to a multivariate analysis that controls for various characteristics of the clerks and the communities that they represent.

Statistical Analysis of Clerk Attitudes

We model the attitudes of Wisconsin clerks toward election policies as a function of clerk and municipality characteristics. Recall our argument that, due to their desire need to get reelected, elected clerks should be more supportive of initiatives that offer convenience to the public in voting, that is, EDR and absentee voting. Appointed clerks who instead work directly for municipal governments should be less supportive of voting rights and more inclined to reduce costs, minimize mistakes, and avoid security problems. For EDR, our survey asked clerks to rate on a 7-point scale the degree to which they agreed with the following statements:

- “Election Day Registration makes it more difficult to protect the security of the voting process.”
- “Election Day Registration should be considered a voter’s right.”
- “Election day registration increases the administrative burden on election officials like me.”
- “The benefits of Election Day Registration outweigh the costs.”

Clerks were also asked the following question, with possible responses of “no,” “yes,” and “not sure:”

- “Do you think that having Election Day Registration (EDR) in Wisconsin increases voter turnout?”

For mail-in absentee voting, clerks were asked for their agreement on 7-point scales to the following items:

- “The authenticity of a Mail Absentee ballot is difficult to verify.”
- “Mail Absentee Voting should be considered a voter’s right.”
- “The benefits of Mail Absentee voting outweigh the costs.”

These eight measures capture many of the elements that might divide clerks with different methods of selection. The aggregate descriptive statistics for these dependent variables
are presented in Table 1. As the means indicate, there is little consensus among clerks on these matters. Aside from the widespread belief that EDR increases turnout, most of the means are near the center of the 7-point scales. When the EDR and absentee questions are in parallel form, it appears that clerks are somewhat more supportive of the former.

If we separate clerks into appointed and elected categories, clear differences appear in the mean responses between the two groups. These differences support the hypothesis that elected officials are more supportive of policies that increase access to the polls. There are significant differences between elected and appointed clerks concerning their attitudes on absentee voting, early voting, and election day registration. In general, elected clerks are more likely to say that voters have a right to absentee voting by mail (70% compared to 56%), in-person absentee voting (66% compared to 56%), and election day registration (78% compared to 56%). Elected clerks are also less likely than appointed clerks to say that “election day registration increases the administrative burden on election officials like me” (only 18% of elected clerks strongly agreed with that statement compared to 36% of appointed clerks); and, more likely to believe that EDR increases turnout (68% agreed, versus 60% among appointees). Elected officials were less likely to believe that providing greater access to the ballot box raised security concerns. Only 19% of elected clerks agreed that EDR “makes it more difficult to protect the security of the voting process” (compared to 37% of appointed officials), and 29% agreed that the “authenticity of a Mail Absentee ballot is difficult to verify” (relative to 35% of appointed clerks). Overall, elected officials were more likely to judge that the benefits of both EDR and mail absentee ballots outweighed the costs (68% versus 47% for EDR, and 49% to 40% for mail absentee ballots). These descriptive data provides initial support for the claim that elected officials are more responsive to voter preferences than appointed officials, and that they are less concerned about the administrative costs of realizing those voter preferences.

Clerks were asked in the survey whether they are elected or appointed. Since previous work has suggested that partisanship can affect clerk behavior, we asked clerks to specify their partisanship using the American National Election Study item, a single 7-point scale running from “Strong Democrat” to “Strong Republican.” For most of the analyses we create party dummy variables, collapsing the strong partisans, weak partisans, and leaners into a single group. Specifically, the models include a dummy for each major party, with pure independents as the reference category. As Table 1 shows, about two-thirds of clerks are elected and partisanship breaks down remarkably equally with Democrats, Republicans, and independents each comprising about one-third of the sample.

We also created a “party mismatch” variable to indicate whether (1) or not (0) the clerk’s party affiliation differs from the party that won a majority of the presidential vote in his or her municipality. In contrast to the straightforward differences expected between parties, this

---

6 These statistics are based on the complete dataset. Distributions are scarcely different in the more limited samples used in the multivariate analysis to follow.
7 The fundamental statistical results are unaffected by whether we use the 7-point scale or the two party dummy variables. In addition, the results are similar when a 7-point ideology scale is substituted for the 7-point partisanship measure.
8 In unreported analyses we also operationalized this as an interaction variable that multiplies the 7-point clerk party identification scale times the percent of the vote won by Obama. The results were similar.
variable picks up whether clerks are more supportive of voting rights and higher turnout when their party loyalties match those of their constituents.

Three other clerk control variables also are included. In Wisconsin many municipal clerks from small communities rely on county clerks to provide services such as processing voter registration. We include a dummy variable to account for these “reliers.”9 The survey also asked whether or not the clerk plans to seek higher office in the future, under the assumption that officials with progressive ambition might be more likely to support initiatives favored by voters. Finally, we include a measure of how many years a clerk has been in their position. It is possible that longer-serving clerks believe and act differently, either as a result of generational differences or because of accumulated experience (Moynihan and Silva 2008). The data in Table 1 show that a majority of clerks are reliers, that about one in five plan to pursue higher office, and that clerks have 12 years of experience on average, although a small number of clerks have many more years in office.

The models also control for characteristics of the clerk’s municipality. These Census measures are median family income, the percentage of the population with a college degree, the overall population size, the percentage of the population that is black, and an indicator for whether or not Obama won the municipality in 2008. Again, there is tremendous variation in these measures, which should help isolate how the method of selection is associated with clerks’ attitudes toward election policy.

Table 2 presents the results of ordered logit models for each of the eight attitudinal measures. The findings are straightforward. In every case the method of selection exerts a strong and statistically significant effect. Elected clerks are more likely to see EDR as a right, as being worth the cost and engendering relatively low administrative burdens, and as contributing to voter turnout, whereas appointed clerks are more likely to view EDR as jeopardizing the security of the voting process and increasing administrative burdens. Likewise, clerks who are elected are more likely to view absentee voting as a right and worth the costs, and are less concerned about the difficulty of verifying the identities of absentee voters. Thus, it appears that election as a selection mechanism either affects the kind of person who takes the office or shapes their preferences by requiring that they be accountable first to the voters who elected them. This results in elected clerks being more in favor of voting access, convenience, and higher turnout, and their being less concerned about vote security and administrative costs.

Partisanship’s effects are more limited. In three of the EDR equations, relative to independents Democrats show greater support, believing that it is a right, worth the costs, and a reason for higher turnout. This finding is consistent with partisan beliefs that enabling greater access to the polls generally favors Democratic Party candidates (Carter-Baker Commission 2005). But the Democratic dummy variable has no effect in the other four equations, and Republicans are not distinguished in any of the models with the exception that they are concerned about the administrative costs of EDR.

Partisanship’s effects are more limited. In three of the EDR equations, relative to independents Democrats show greater support, believing that it is a right, worth the costs, and a reason for higher turnout. This finding is consistent with partisan beliefs that enabling greater access to the polls generally favors Democratic Party candidates (Carter-Baker Commission 2005). But the Democratic dummy variable has no effect in the other four equations, and Republicans are not distinguished in any of the models with the exception that they are concerned about the administrative costs of EDR.

---

9 In future work we hope to analyze how the interaction between nominally non-partisan municipal clerks and partisan county clerks shapes attitudes and outcomes.
Control variables also are largely insignificant, with the exception of relier status. Relier clerks tend to have more supportive views of EDR. Perhaps this is because they seldom face the administrative burden of processing these registrations on election night, as it is the county clerks who provide them with these services. Ambition for higher office and time in office do not have a significant impact on any of the attitudes, with the exception that more experienced officials are more concerned with the difficulties of verifying absentee ballots. Similarly, most of the municipal variables are inconsequential, other than the finding that places where Obama was victorious tend to have clerks that are more supportive of EDR.

**Analysis of Administrative Outcomes**

Having demonstrated that the method of clerk selection has a substantial impact on clerks’ views about election policies, we now turn to how the method of clerk selection is related to the administrative outcomes in the municipalities in which they administer elections. Here we draw upon the Election Day Survey to analyze two outcomes. The first is voter turnout in the 2008 presidential election. As Table 1 shows, the mean turnout in Wisconsin municipalities was just over 69%. The other indicator deals with how registration rolls are handled via the voter registration purge rate. This is the number of voters removed from rolls between 2006 and 2008 as percentage of total voters participating in 2008. This indicator has a relatively low mean but high variance, and is subject not only to state and federal regulations but also discretion by local election officials. We expect that elected officials will be less likely to pursue voter purges.

Table 3 presents the results of OLS models using the same specifications as the attitudinal models above, replacing the dependent variables with each of these behavioral outcomes. The first column reports on turnout among all clerks. Here we see that turnout is about two percentage points higher in municipalities where clerks are elected. This is consistent with our conjecture that elected clerks should be more concerned with enhancing access to the polls than are appointed clerks.

For turnout at least, the party mismatch variable is influential. When the clerk is of a different party than the majority of his or her constituents, turnout is about one point lower. Controlling for party mismatch renders the direct effects of partisanship nonexistent, which is consistent with the notion that clerks will administer elections in a way that depresses turnout only if turnout works against his or her partisan interests. Contrary to the results of the attitudinal models, the municipal level demographics are important predictors of turnout. Communities with higher incomes, more education, larger populations, and few blacks all have higher turnout.

The next two columns provide the results of models estimating turnout separately for municipalities with appointed and elected clerks. The results reveal that the partisan mismatch effect is conditional on the method of selection. Turnout is 1.6 points lower on average when appointed clerks do not fit with their jurisdictions party loyalties, but turnout in municipalities

---

10 We also attempted to study other indicators of administrative behavior, such as absentee rejection rate, issuance of provisional ballots, number of ballots provided to uniformed and overseas voters. However, concerns about the data, which tended to be highly skewed, subject to influence by outliers, led us to drop them.
administered by elected clerks is unaffected by a clerk-electorate party mismatch. This finding is consistent with the notion that elected clerks are reluctant to appear as if they are administering elections in a manner that is biased against the partisan interests of the electorate. Taken in conjunction with the finding that municipalities of elected clerks are associated with higher turnout generally, this finding strengthens the argument that method of selection shapes clerk behavior, and that appointed clerks are freer to administer elections in a way that contradicts the interests of the electorate.

The final model examines the voter purge rates. As in the turnout model, elected clerks behave in a way that is consistent with voters as their primary principals. Elected clerks purge about one percentage point fewer voters from the registration rolls, again a significant amount relative to the overall average rate of just three percent statewide. In contrast to the voter turnout models, the party mismatch factor is not important statistically significant for either appointed or elected clerks, so we do not present results broken down by method of selection.

Conclusion

In this paper we examine whether the method by which election officials are selected affects their policy preferences, as well as whether the method of selection is related to administrative outcomes, such as voter turnout. For our sample of Wisconsin election officials, we find that the method of selection has a significant impact on policy preferences and that it is related to significant differences in administrative outcomes.

The results indicate that elected officials are more in favor of policies that are thought to promote turnout than appointed officials, that their jurisdictions are associated with higher voter turnout, and that their jurisdictions have lower voter purge rates. Additionally, we find that voter turnout is lower when an official’s partisanship differs from the partisanship of the electorate, but that this effect obtains only in municipalities that appoint their election officials. In other words, municipalities with appointed officials on average have lower turnout when officials have different partisan preferences than the electorate, but the turnout in municipalities with elected officials are unaffected by such a mismatch in partisanship. These results are consistent with the notion that elected officials are more responsive to the preferences of the electorate than appointed officials, as the electorate generally favors policies that reduce the cost to voting. Appointed officials, who serve as the pleasure of local municipal officials, are concerned less with voter rights and turnout and more with administrative burdens, costs, and security.

Another interesting result is that we do not find that election officials’ partisanship affects turnout, independent of the partisan mismatch variable. In other words, we do not find that municipalities with officials who identify as Republican on average have lower turnout than those who identify as independent or Democrat. Indeed, appointed officials who identify with either party are associated with depressed turnouts if the electorate tends to favor a different party. That said, the results of our models estimating attitudes provide some evidence that clerks who identify as Democrats are more likely to favor election day registration. But these partisan attitudes apparently do not translate immediately into outcomes, whereas attitudes derived from the method of selection do appear to be reflected in clerks’ discretionary behaviors that in turn shape important outcomes such as turnout.
The findings should inform an ongoing policy debate about the relative pluses and minuses of methods of control of election systems. The findings on partisan mismatch provide some evidence that elected officials may administer elections in a less politically motivated fashion. While elected officials also appear to generate higher turnout, and purge fewer voters, we are cautious in inferring that elected officials are simply better election officials. Appointed clerks are more likely to have greater skills and expertise, according to our descriptive statistics, which show that appointed officials are better educated, have greater experience, and are more often full-time professionals. We do not test many election outcomes, and even for the election outcomes we do test, the policy inferences are ambiguous. We cannot refute with certainty the claim that a higher purge rate and lower turnout reflect anything other than greater administrative diligence in preventing voter fraud.

These caveats aside, the case of Wisconsin shows elected officials who appear to be more attuned to responding to citizen desires relative to their appointed counterparts. While having insulation from political pressures has benefits, it may also make administrators less concerned with the wishes of the public, and overly concerned with administrative burdens. More troublingly, appointed status may also provide a measure of protection that encourages the use of discretion in ways that reduce turnout. While we noted that there are problems in assuming that the public are informed principals who actively monitor local election officials, the findings do suggest that agents that are elected do seem to be more responsive to the wishes of the public.

11 For appointed officials the administrative costs may loom so large that they distort judgment. It is worth noting that in the one attitudinal question where there is fairly unambiguous empirical evidence – whether EDR increases turnout (Highton 2004) – elected officials were more likely to be correct.
References


Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDR Security is a Problem</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDR is a Right</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDR is Worth the Costs</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDR Increases Administrative Burden</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDR Increases Turnout</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absentee Votes are Hard to Verify</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absentee Voting is a Right</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absentee Voting is Worth the Costs</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter Purge Rate</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clerk Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Mismatch</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relier</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks Higher Office</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Office</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Municipal Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Family Income (in thousands)</td>
<td>49.258</td>
<td>22.188</td>
<td>181.443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with College Degree</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (in thousands)</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>596.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Won</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. How Clerk and Municipal Characteristics Affect Clerk Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clerk Variables</th>
<th>EDR Security is a Problem</th>
<th>EDR is a Right</th>
<th>EDR is Worth the Costs</th>
<th>EDR Increases Admin. Burden</th>
<th>EDR Raises Turnout</th>
<th>Absentee Votes are Hard to Verify</th>
<th>Absentee Voting is a Right</th>
<th>Absentee Voting is Worth the Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elected</td>
<td>-.56*** (.11)</td>
<td>.64*** (.13)</td>
<td>.79*** (.12)</td>
<td>-.62*** (.11)</td>
<td>.30*** (.15)</td>
<td>-.26* (.14)</td>
<td>.46** (.13)</td>
<td>.43*** (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>-.02 (.12)</td>
<td>.36*** (.14)</td>
<td>.30** (.13)</td>
<td>.17 (.14)</td>
<td>.35** (.17)</td>
<td>-.002 (.14)</td>
<td>.12 (.13)</td>
<td>.01 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>.21 (.18)</td>
<td>-.02 (.17)</td>
<td>.07 (.14)</td>
<td>.32** (.14)</td>
<td>-.07 (.17)</td>
<td>.12 (.15)</td>
<td>-.12 (.14)</td>
<td>-.09 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Mismatch</td>
<td>.04 (.13)</td>
<td>-.09 (.13)</td>
<td>-.18 (.11)</td>
<td>-.02 (.12)</td>
<td>-.05 (.15)</td>
<td>-.11 (.13)</td>
<td>.09 (.12)</td>
<td>-.13 (.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relier</td>
<td>-.54*** (.17)</td>
<td>.64*** (.20)</td>
<td>.40* (.21)</td>
<td>-.62*** (.16)</td>
<td>.37** (.16)</td>
<td>-.08 (.13)</td>
<td>.21 (.16)</td>
<td>.19 (.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks Higher Office</td>
<td>-.01 (.14)</td>
<td>.03 (.13)</td>
<td>-.07 (.13)</td>
<td>.10 (.11)</td>
<td>-.17 (.16)</td>
<td>-.19 (.13)</td>
<td>.08 (.12)</td>
<td>-.07 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Office</td>
<td>-.006 (.005)</td>
<td>-.001 (.006)</td>
<td>.001 (.006)</td>
<td>.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.007 (.005)</td>
<td>-.01** (.004)</td>
<td>.001 (.005)</td>
<td>.004 (.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Family Income</td>
<td>.011 (.007)</td>
<td>-.014* (.008)</td>
<td>-.009 (.007)</td>
<td>-.000001 (.000008)</td>
<td>-.003 (.006)</td>
<td>.011* (.007)</td>
<td>-.011 (.008)</td>
<td>-.005 (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with College Degree</td>
<td>.011 (.010)</td>
<td>-.004 (.009)</td>
<td>-.002 (.010)</td>
<td>.01 (.011)</td>
<td>-.0006 (.0111)</td>
<td>-..023** (.009)</td>
<td>.009 (.009)</td>
<td>.006 (.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>.002 (.013)</td>
<td>-.009 (.024)</td>
<td>-.005 (.024)</td>
<td>.000002 (.000009)</td>
<td>-.0009 (.0037)</td>
<td>.001 (.002)</td>
<td>-.006** (.003)</td>
<td>.004 (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>.02 (.05)</td>
<td>.004 (.048)</td>
<td>.004 (.040)</td>
<td>.0004 (.04)</td>
<td>.009 (.022)</td>
<td>-.03 (.03)</td>
<td>.06 (.04)</td>
<td>-.02 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Won</td>
<td>-.17 (.13)</td>
<td>.25** (.17)</td>
<td>.32** (.12)</td>
<td>-.16 (.14)</td>
<td>.21* (.14)</td>
<td>-.13 (.12)</td>
<td>.15 (.13)</td>
<td>.15 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1226</td>
<td>1224</td>
<td>1225</td>
<td>1227</td>
<td>1222</td>
<td>1223</td>
<td>1223</td>
<td>1222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .10, **p < .05, ***p < .01, two-tailed. Models are order logits. The estimated cutpoints are not reported. Standard errors clustered by county.
Table 3. How Clerk and Municipal Characteristics Affect Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clerk Variables</th>
<th>Turnout (All Clerks)</th>
<th>Turnout (Appointed Clerks)</th>
<th>Turnout (Elected Clerks)</th>
<th>Voter Purge Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elected</td>
<td>1.96** (.64)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>- .93** (.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>-.04 (.61)</td>
<td>.26 (.99)</td>
<td>-.33 (.81)</td>
<td>- .30 (.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>.82 (.53)</td>
<td>1.33 (.86)</td>
<td>.36 (.65)</td>
<td>- .44 (.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Mismatch</td>
<td>-.99* (.56)</td>
<td>-1.61** (.77)</td>
<td>-.62 (.73)</td>
<td>- .06 (.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relier</td>
<td>2.27** (.72)</td>
<td>1.84** (.89)</td>
<td>2.14** (.95)</td>
<td>-1.79** (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks Higher Office</td>
<td>-.06 (.49)</td>
<td>-.18 (1.41)</td>
<td>-.002 (.49)</td>
<td>-.01 (.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Office</td>
<td>.002 (.03)</td>
<td>-.003 (.05)</td>
<td>.002 (.03)</td>
<td>-.002 (.013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipal Variables</th>
<th>Turnout (All Clerks)</th>
<th>Turnout (Appointed Clerks)</th>
<th>Turnout (Elected Clerks)</th>
<th>Voter Purge Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Family Income</td>
<td>.29*** (.06)</td>
<td>.31** (.10)</td>
<td>.30*** (.06)</td>
<td>- .06** (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in thousands)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with College Degree</td>
<td>.36*** (.06)</td>
<td>.26*** (.06)</td>
<td>.51*** (.09)</td>
<td>.13*** (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>.05** (.02)</td>
<td>.05*** (.01)</td>
<td>-.14*** (.04)</td>
<td>.082*** (.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in thousands)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>-.97*** (.23)</td>
<td>-.87*** (.16)</td>
<td>-1.26** (.40)</td>
<td>.07 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Won</td>
<td>-1.31** (.67)</td>
<td>-2.08 (1.43)</td>
<td>-.92 (.71)</td>
<td>-.57 (.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>46.46*** (2.96)</td>
<td>47.84*** (4.80)</td>
<td>46.24*** (2.49)</td>
<td>6.34*** (1.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1229</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>1230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.362</td>
<td>.243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .10, **p < .05, *** p < .01, two-tailed. Models are OLS regressions. Standard errors clustered by county. aExcludes 13 outliers where rate is above 8%.