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**“Rising Republicanism in the Arkansas Electorate?
A Characterization of Arkansans’ Political Attitudes and Participation Rates”**

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Abstract

This article brings additional data and analyses to bear on the partisanship, political attitudes, and activity level of the Arkansas electorate, paying special attention to the prospect of rising Republicanism in a state long dominated by Democrats. The data are derived from a telephone poll conducted statewide in the fall of 1999. Our results suggest that the rising Republican hypothesis that is becoming increasingly prevalent in contemporary Arkansas political discourse is somewhat overstated. Although the trend is toward relatively larger numbers of Republican officeholders in Arkansas (as it is in much of the South), Republican partisans within the electorate remain fewer in number than either Democrats or Independents. Moreover, Republican identifiers fail to display ideological orientations and, especially, policy preferences that are markedly distinct from those of their non-Republican counterparts.

INTRODUCTION

The partisan temperament of post-Civil War Arkansans has long befuddled social scientists. By many measures, the Natural State’s citizens remained the stalwart ally of the Democratic Party far longer than most of their southern neighbors. As states like Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi finally threw their support behind Republican Barry Goldwater in 1964, for example, Arkansas’s first non-Democratic vote for President was cast for American Independent George Wallace in 1968. After the state’s voters finally did throw their lot in with Nixon in 1972, they rushed furiously back to the Carter camp four years later as if, according to Blair (1988), in penance for their heresy. On the U.S. Senate front, the 1996 election of Tim Hutchinson marked Arkansas’s first post-Reconstruction GOP Senator, making it the last state in the South to award the party such a post. And gubernatorially, the state has awarded Republican victories to only three individuals, all under rather peculiar circumstances.¹

Such late, and still quite limited, Republican victories may come as little surprise in light of the low number of Republican-party adherents historically found among the Arkansas electorate. Republican identifiers in Arkansas in the 1960s, for example, hovered at fewer than 10 percent, expanding only slightly in the 1970s and 80s to between 13 and 15 percent (save a brief surge in 1984 to 26.5 percent) (see Savage and Blair, 1986, Table 9.2). As recently as 1997 even, fewer than one-quarter of the state’s citizens would identify themselves as Republicans, at either the state or national level.

It is important to note, however, that the remaining 75-90 percent of Arkansans who have

¹ Arkansas handed two election victories to the self-financed, East Coast maverick Republican Winthrop Rockefeller in 1966 and 1968; one two-year term to the 1980 GOP nominee Frank White, largely to punish an over-exuberant Bill Clinton who quickly regained the post and served in it until 1992; and (thus far) one and a half terms to Republican Mike Huckabee who ascended to office in the summer of 1996 with the resignation of Whitewater-tainted Governor Jim Guy Tucker and was elected in his own right in 1998.

not identified with the Republican party have not necessarily been Democrats. Instead, the curious and consistent influence of a third presence in the Arkansas electorate plays an almost equally important role in the state's politics and policy. Specifically, the proportion of Arkansans identifying themselves as Independents has hovered between 25 and 35 percent through most of past four decades, a showing so resilient that Savage and Blair actually declared in 1986 that it was Independents who were the real second "party" of Arkansas. Regardless of how scholars have measured it, then, the establishment of a vigorous and successful Republican presence has been relatively elusive in the state of Arkansas. It has been Democrats and Independents who have ruled the day.

Yet some scholars, journalists, and other observers of the state's contemporary political landscape have taken a shine recently to the notion of rising Republicanism within the Arkansas electorate. The statewide newspaper, the *Democrat-Gazette*, published numerous articles in the 1990s on the state's changing political climate, variously attributing a surge in Republican victories to term limits, the Clinton presidency, the notoriety of the brothers Hutchinson, Democratic retirements, voter conversions, and more.² Similar themes are featured in the work of Barth, Blair and Dumas (1999) who conclude that – despite several constraints – the present-day "Arkansas GOP has more reason for optimism than at any point in this century." Indeed, such projections were buoyed by a May 1998 public opinion poll conducted by researchers at the University of Central Arkansas's Survey Analysis Laboratory. The poll found a much larger proportion of their statewide sample to claim Republican allegiance than in any past poll. According to their measurements, the Arkansas electorate finally demonstrated a nearly even split between Democratic identifiers (30 percent), Republican identifiers (29 percent), and Independents (27 percent), a finding which seemed to hold at both state and national levels (Wekkin, 1998a).³

The central objective of this paper is to bring additional data and analyses to bear on the partisanship, political attitudes, and activity level of the Arkansas electorate, paying special attention to the prospect of rising Republicanism. Though the data in our study – derived from a telephone poll conducted statewide in the fall of 1999⁴ – provide just another snapshot of the Arkansas electorate at a particular point in time, they do supply three additional tools to researchers seeking to understand the propensities of Arkansas voters. First, because there are ample demographic data on each of our respondents to identify the characteristics of party-identifiers and non-party identifiers alike, we are able to assess what an Arkansas Republican, an Arkansas Democrat, and an Arkansas Independent "looks" like. Are they similar in all other ways besides party name – or do they differ demographically, regionally, and/or ideologically? Second, we were able to ask several policy preference questions such that we could identify any substantively different ideological strains in our sample, and investigate their relationship (if any) to the partisan preferences respondents expressed. In other words, we wanted to see if Arkansas's Republicans and Democrats were indeed different from one another. Finally, because the survey included a battery of questions about political activity, we have been able to investigate the relative fervor with which Arkansans of different partisan and ideological

² See, for example, Doug Thompson, "State GOP Sees Gains, Wrestles with Growing Pains," *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 17 May 1999, p. 1A, 8A.

³ But see Wekkin (1999b, 2000).

⁴ Between September 15th and October 2nd of 1999, the Survey Research Center at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville dialed 3,738 randomly selected Arkansas telephone numbers. These attempts yielded 885 completed surveys. A completed survey consisted of 68 questions and the margin of error was +/- 3 percent. The text of the survey protocol is available on-line at <http://plsc.uark.edu/arkpoll>. See the Appendix for a description of the survey's representativeness.

orientations attempt to influence politics and policy. We added this element to our analysis to test the prevailing wisdom that what Arkansas Republicans may lack in numbers, they compensate for in their level of activism.

REPUBLICANS IN ARKANSAS: WHO ARE THEY?

Recent electoral outcomes in Arkansas do lend some support to the rising Republican hypothesis. The ascension in 1996 and then emphatic election in 1998 of Mike Huckabee to the governorship, and the political success of the “brothers Hutchinson” – Tim in the U.S. Senate and Asa in the U.S. House of Representatives – are properly viewed as new and relevant indicators of a more vibrant Republicanism to be sure (see also Wekkin 1998b). If these new “big three” of Arkansas politics enjoy continued popularity and support among the state’s citizens, in fact, Barth, Blair, and Dumas (1999) seem to suggest that Arkansas Republicanism will have “made it.” Recent newspaper accounts also have pointed to a recent (if slim) Republican majority on the 13-member Washington County Quorum Court, and the GOP’s overwhelming presence in Benton, Sebastian, and other Western Arkansas county governments. And, though a 2001 presence of 30 Republicans out of 100 seats in the state House of Representatives (and 7 of 35 in the state senate) does not a revolution make, the gains have been impressive, and significant, relative to the rareness of Republican legislators in the recent past.⁵

But who, and where, are the voters presumed to be driving these developments? Do Republican electoral victories spell a Republican electorate? To begin to address these questions, we asked survey respondents the following question: “Do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?” As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, roughly 35 percent of the respondents identified themselves as Democrats, 31 percent as Independents, and 23 percent as Republicans. Probed further, 33 percent of Independents stated they were closer to the Republican party, 29 percent claimed they were closer to the Democrats, and 34 percent stated they were “Just Independent.”⁶

⁵ A presence of 25 percent or more by the opposition party in at least one chamber of the Arkansas General Assembly is significant because a three-quarters majority of both chambers is constitutionally required to increase tax (except sales) rates in the state; most appropriations measures require the same super-majority.

⁶ Note that percentages do not always add to 100 percent. This is because “Don’t Know” and “Refused” responses are not always reported in the analysis.

FIGURE 1

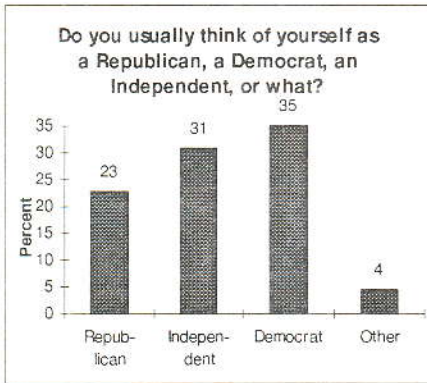
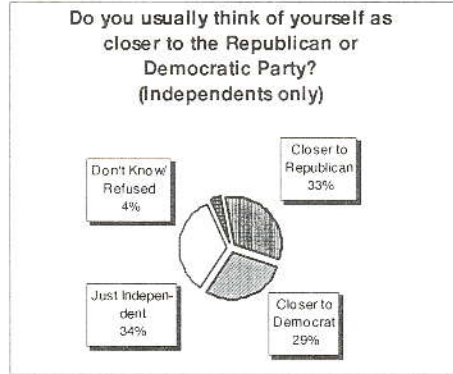


FIGURE 2



With respect to the demographic characteristics of these three camps, several interesting – though not large – differences are evident. For example, though men were only slightly more likely to call themselves Republicans (32 percent) than Democrats (29 percent), twice the percentage of women who identified with a political party claimed Democratic, as opposed to Republican, allegiance (46 percent Democrat, 23 percent Republican). Moreover, men were more likely than women to identify themselves as Independents. The ethnicity of respondents also played a part in determining party affiliation. Whereas Arkansas's white residents are roughly split in thirds among Democrat, Republican, and no-party identification, a large proportion of the state's ethnic minorities claim Democratic identification (60%). Only one in eight of the state's racial minorities claim an allegiance to the Republican Party. These findings are reflected in Figures 3 and 4 below.

FIGURE 3

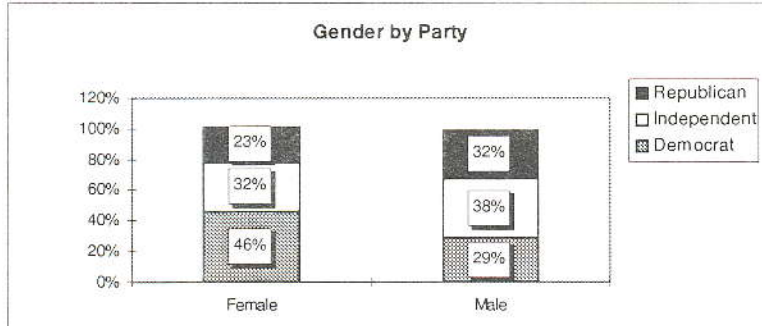
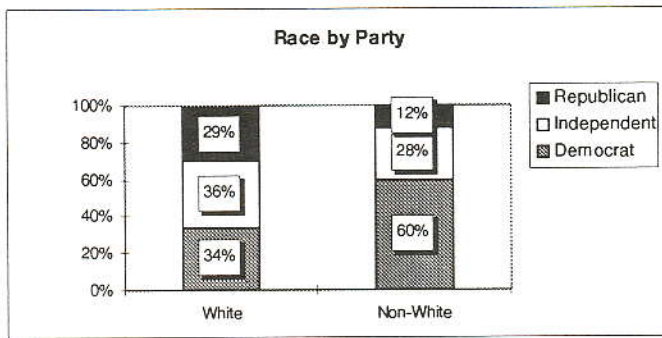


FIGURE 4



Independents and adherents to the two parties also displayed different levels of education and income. Specifically, 23 percent of the Democrats and 21 percent of Independents possessed a college degree, as compared to the 39 percent of Republicans who had graduated from college. The state's Republicans also are somewhat wealthier than their Democratic and Independent counterparts. Almost half (47 percent) of the Republicans surveyed stated they had a household income of over \$35,000, while 37 percent of Independents and just under a third (31 percent) of the Democrats had incomes over \$35,000. Figures 5 and 6 reflect these findings.

FIGURE 5

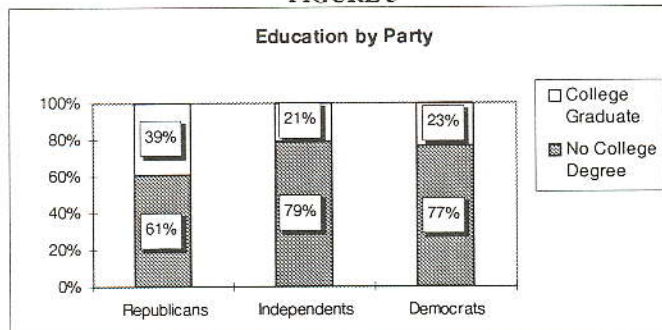
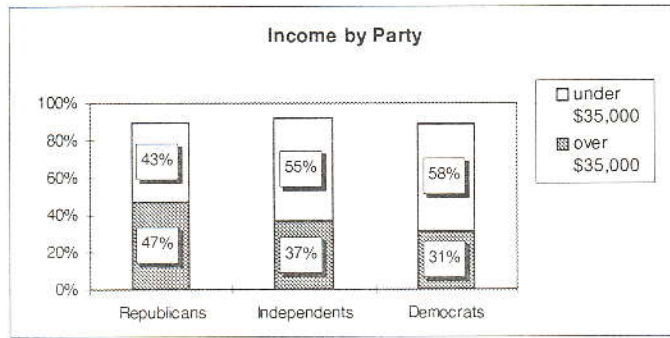


FIGURE 6



Additionally, the geography of our respondents seemed to impact their partisan identification somewhat, though not necessarily in the expected ways. Arkansas's suburbanites, for example, demonstrated a blend of Republican, Democratic, and Independent influences: 28 percent Republican, 20 percent Democrat, and 39 percent – the largest proportion – Independent. Democrats held a plurality in rural areas (35 percent), small towns (37 percent), and cities (36 percent). Perhaps more interesting is the finding that the partisan balance in Arkansas differs by congressional district, but not by as much as is commonly presumed. Democrats, in fact, still outnumbered Republicans in all of Arkansas's four congressional districts. In the Third District even there are fewer respondents identifying themselves as Republicans than Democrats – and, there are more Independents in that district than members of either of the two party camps. Figures 7 and 8 reflect these patterns.

FIGURE 7

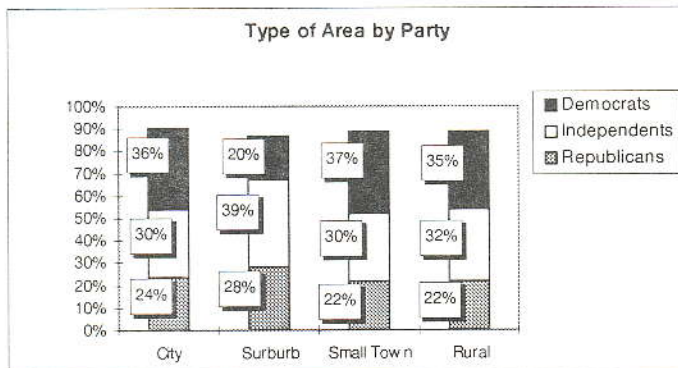
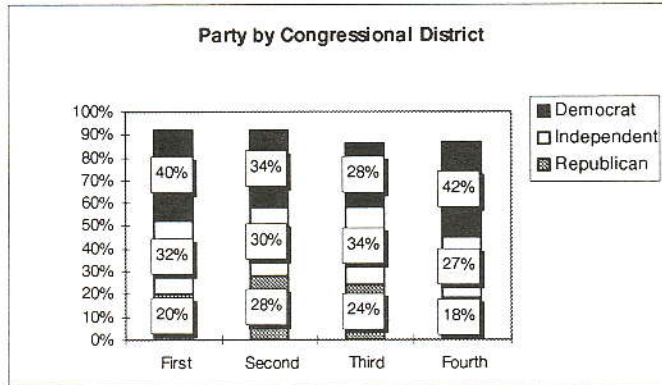
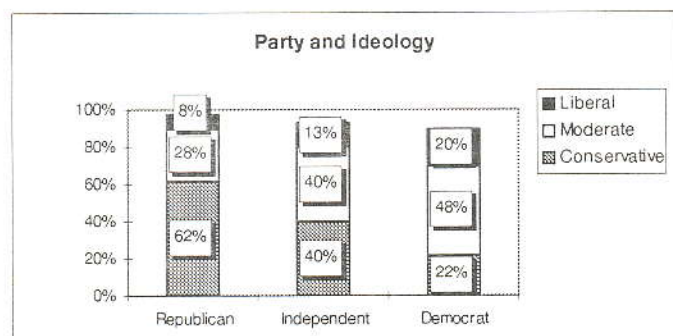


FIGURE 8



Finally, given the relatively small demographic differences among the state's Democratic and Republican partisans, and its Independents, one might expect to find relative homogeneity in their ideological preferences as well. Indeed this is – generally speaking – what our data reveal. When respondents were asked to identify themselves ideologically as liberal, conservative, or moderate, we found a prevailing bias – regardless of partisan leanings – toward moderate conservatism. (See Figure 9.) Republicans, to be sure, were considerably more likely to identify themselves as conservative than were Democrats or Independents (though, rather curiously, almost 8 percent of Arkansas Republicans claimed to be liberal). And, more liberals were found among the Democratic identifiers than among the other two groups. Nevertheless, seventy percent of Arkansas Democrats and 80 percent of Arkansas Independents declared a conservative or moderate bent, signaling that the ideological similarities among Arkansans are still stronger than their differences, or at least are not as tied to party loyalties as an observer – outside the South anyway – might think. Traditional partisan labels were thus revealed not to be particularly meaningful, even in contemporary Arkansas politics.

FIGURE 9



EXPLORING ARKANSAS'S IDEOLOGICAL STRAINS

To probe further whether or not Arkansans can be separated into identifiable ideological strains, we turned to the policy preference questions included in the survey. The respondents were asked questions regarding their positions on issues such as property taxes and their feelings regarding the overall amount of tax they pay to their state and local governments. They also were asked their views on abortion, legalizing casino gambling in Arkansas, and (as noted above) where they would place themselves on an ideological spectrum. Finally, the survey respondents were asked if they thought the Constitution ought to be amended to include a provision granting Congress the ability to ban flag-burning, if they supported attempts to exempt groceries from sales tax, and if they desired stricter gun-control laws. Principal Component Analysis was conducted on the responses to the above questions on the hypothesis that at least two distinct ideological strains would indeed emerge.

Employing a rotated factor solution, three components stand out as suggestive of different political orientations in our statewide sample (see Table 1). Of the indicators included in the analyses, three of the four tax-related variables loaded on the first component, suggesting there exist a strong current of anti-tax sentiment within Arkansas's electorate (labeled "Fiscal Conservatism"). Specifically, if respondents stated they thought property taxes were too high, they also preferred that taxes be reduced, and reported that they paid too much taxes overall. Their feelings towards the sales tax, however, were unrelated to the views expressed on the other tax issues.

Table 1

Principle Components Analysis of Responses

	Component		
	Fiscal Conservatism	Social Conservatism	Populism
Property Tax I ⁷	.840	.034	.016
Property Tax II ⁸	.718	.048	-.042
Paytax ⁹	.657	.119	-.210
Abortion ¹⁰	.186	.757	.082
Gamble ¹¹	-.188	.738	.024
Ideology ¹²	.123	.701	-.131
Flag ¹³	-.286	-.094	.717
Sales Tax ¹⁴	.267	-.049	.586
Guns ¹⁵	.143	.121	.461
Eigenvalue	2.051	1.557	1.098
% Variance Explained	22.784	17.297	12.203

The second component suggests a "Social Conservative" strain in the Arkansas electorate. These individuals not only identified themselves as conservative on an ideological spectrum, but also opposed legalizing casino gambling in the state, and were more likely to favor laws restricting a woman's ability to obtain an abortion. The third component reflects a "Populist" orientation. Respondents loading high on this factor opposed stricter handgun laws, supported a constitutional amendment allowing Congress to prohibit burning the American flag, and favored a repeal of the sales tax on groceries.

⁷ Property taxes in Arkansas are too high. Do you Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), or Strongly disagree (1)?

⁸ Property taxes in Arkansas should be Increased (1), Kept the same (2), Reduced (3), or Abolished (4)?

⁹ And, overall, considering ALL the taxes you pay to state and local government, do you think the state and local taxes you pay are too high, too low, or about right (3), or haven't you thought much on this matter? Much too high (5) or only somewhat too high (4)? Somewhat low (2) or much too low (1).

¹⁰ Do you favor laws that would make it MORE DIFFICULT (3) for a woman to get an abortion, favor laws that would make it EASIER (1) to get an abortion or should NO CHANGE (2) be made to existing abortion laws?

¹¹ And, how do you feel about legalizing casino gambling here in Arkansas? That is, do you favor or oppose legalizing casino gambling in our state? Or haven't you thought much about this matter (3)? And how much do you favor legalizing gambling in the state of Arkansas would you say, strongly (1) or only somewhat (2)? And how much do you oppose legalizing gambling in the state of Arkansas, Strongly (5) or only somewhat (4)?

¹² Generally, do you think of yourself as a Liberal, Moderate (3), or Conservative? Would you say you are Strongly Liberal (1) or Somewhat Liberal (2)? Would you say you are Strongly Conservative (5) or Somewhat Conservative (4)?

¹³ And, do you favor (1) or oppose (0) passing a Constitutional Amendment which makes it illegal to burn the American flag?

¹⁴ Do you approve or disapprove of taking the state sales tax off of food purchased at a grocery store? Or haven't you thought much about this matter? Do you strongly approve (4), or only somewhat approve (3)? Do you strongly disapprove (2), or only somewhat disapprove (1)?

¹⁵ Would you say you favor stricter gun control (1), or less strict gun control (3)? (No change (2))

To determine what types of people were of each of the orientations, each respondent's factor scores were converted to a standardized regression variable. Their partisan preferences, along with their various demographic characteristics were then regressed onto each of the three factor scores. The variables included in the regression analysis were political party affiliation, race, age, income, level of education, and gender. An additional dichotomous dummy variable was created to indicate whether the individual identified himself or herself as a political Independent. We also included in the analysis variables indicating whether or not respondents resided in an urban area, and in which of the state's congressional districts they lived. Finally, two additional variables were included which focused on religiosity. First, respondents were asked to indicate their religious affiliation (if any). If they indicated they were Protestants, they then were asked for a specific denomination. Their responses were then collapsed into a dichotomous dummy variable indicating whether they adhered to a fundamentalist religion or not. Second, survey respondents were asked how often they attended church.

The regression scores for the first component, fiscal conservatism, are featured in Table 2. Of the statistically significant factors produced by the analysis, only education appears to play much of a role in the tax-related policy preferences of our respondents. As the members of our sample reported greater levels of educational attainment, they became less likely to display fiscally conservative policy preferences. A weak relationship also was demonstrated between an individual's degree of religious fundamentalism and the fiscal conservatism factor, this time in the positive direction. The more fundamental the respondent, the more likely he or she was to hold fiscally conservative views. It is also interesting to note that although the prevailing wisdom in the state suggests that the Third Congressional District would be a hotbed of anti-tax fervor, such a relationship was also very weak and only approached statistical significance. Note, too, that partisanship appears to have very little indeed to do with our respondents' degree of fiscal conservatism.

Table 2

**Fiscal Conservatism Component Regression Analysis of Political, Socioeconomic,
and Demographic Variables**

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	.685	.315		2.172	.030
Independent ¹⁶	.144	.098	.069	1.466	.143
Party ¹⁷	-.011	.023	-.024	.483	.630
Race ¹⁸	-.208	.135	-.077	-1.537	.125
Age	-.003	.003	-.053	-1.074	.283
Income ¹⁹	-.001	.002	-.030	-.636	.525
Education ²⁰	-.224	.039	-.284	-5.803	.000
Sex ²¹	.104	.092	.054	1.135	.257
Urban ²²	.022	.040	.027	.553	.581
District 1	.106	.134	.047	.791	.429
District 2	.080	.141	.034	.566	.572
District 3	.228	.127	.111	1.790	.074
Fundamental ²³	.217	.099	.109	2.205	.028
Church Attendance ²⁴	.006	.024	.013	.261	.794

R=.360

R Square=.129

Adj. R Square=.102

Table 3 displays the regression analysis on our second component: social conservatism. Two variables are clearly related to this factor, both of which are moderate in magnitude and positive in direction. Specifically, frequent church attendance is positively related with socially conservative policy preferences as is identification with the Republican party. The only other variable approaching statistical significance on this factor was education, but the relationship was negligible.

¹⁶ Do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party? (Independents were coded "1," non-Independents were coded "0.")

¹⁷ Do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? Would you call yourself a Strong Republican (7) or a Not Very Strong Republican (6)? Would you call yourself a Strong Democrat (1) or a Not Very Strong Democrat (2)? Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican (5) or Democratic Party (3)? Respondents stating they were "Just Independent" were coded "4."

¹⁸ White were coded "0," non-whites were coded "1."

¹⁹ Respondents were asked themselves to place their household income on an 8-point scale.

²⁰ Respondents were asked to place their educational level on 7-point scale.

²¹ Men were coded "1," women were coded "2."

²² Do you live in a city (1), a suburb (2), a small town (3) or a rural area (4)?

²³ "Fundamental" denominations were coded according to the classification offered by Smith (1992).

²⁴ Respondents were asked to rate their frequency of church attendance on a 7-point scale ranging from "Never" (1) to "More Than Once a Week" (7).

Table 3

**Social Conservatism Component Regression Analysis of Political, Socioeconomic,
and Demographic Variables**

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	-1.595	.285		-5.594	.000
Independent					
Party	.155	.021	.328	7.498	.000
Race	.228	.122	.082	1.861	.064
Age	.003	.003	.053	1.220	.223
Income	.001	.002	.030	.711	.477
Education	-.066	.035	-.082	-1.885	.060
Sex	-.178	.083	-.009	-.213	.832
Urban	.026	.036	.032	.732	.465
District 1	-.069	.121	.029	.565	.572
District 2	.123	.127	.051	.965	.335
District 3	-.060	.115	-.028	-.517	.606
Fundamental	.126	.089	.062	1.411	.159
Church Attendance	.180	.022	.367	8.325	.000

R=,.566

R Square=,.320

Adj. R Square=.299

Finally, though several variables achieve statistical significance (or near significance) on the populism component, most of the relationships are weak (see Table 4). Male respondents were somewhat more likely than female respondents to hold populist policy preferences such as support for an amendment barring flag-burning, and opposition to the sales tax on groceries and stricter gun regulations. A populist streak also seems to be somewhat positively correlated with a lack of party affiliation and/or with Republicanism, but the relationship, again, is negligible.

Table 4

**Populism Component Regression Analysis of Political, Socioeconomic,
and Demographic Variables**

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	.507	.319		1.590	.113
Independent	.279	.099	.132	2.824	.005
Party	.057	.023	.120	2.462	.014
Race	-.301	.137	-.108	-2.201	.028
Age	-.001	.003	-.011	-.229	.819
Income	-.001	.002	-.028	-.595	.552
Education	.094	.039	.116	2.404	.017
Sex	-.348	.093	-.175	-3.745	.000
Urban	-.049	.040	-.058	-1.209	.227
District 1	.057	.135	.024	.419	.675
District 2	.235	.142	.097	1.657	.098
District 3	.110	.129	.052	.857	.392
Fundamental	-.262	.100	-.128	-2.630	.009
Church Attendance	-.028	.024	-.057	-1.151	.250

R=.390

R Square=.152

Adj. R Square=.125

WHO IS ACTIVE IN ARKANSAS POLITICS?

We included this final portion of analysis to investigate whether Arkansas Republicans, despite their relatively low numbers in the electorate, are any more likely to be politically mobilized than Democrats or Independents. Our descriptive results offer mild support for this contention. As is clear from the figures below, the state's Republicans reported voting, writing letters to officials, and attending political meetings at rates slightly higher than those of Democrats or Independents. Further, Republicans were more than twice as likely as the other two groups to report that they had donated money to a political campaign within the past year. Given the small proportion of respondents who reported political activity other than voting (which is, as expected, grossly inflated), however, any conclusions about a small, but highly-mobilized cadre of Republicans in the state would seem to be premature.

FIGURE 10

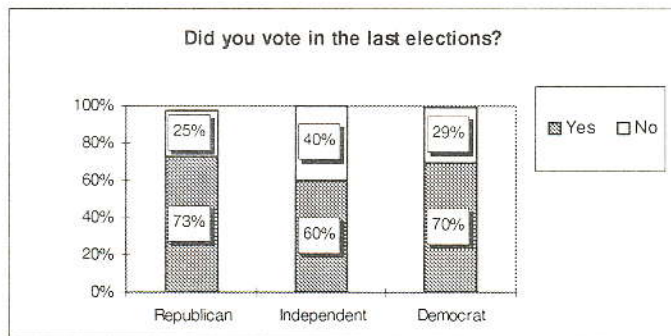


FIGURE 11

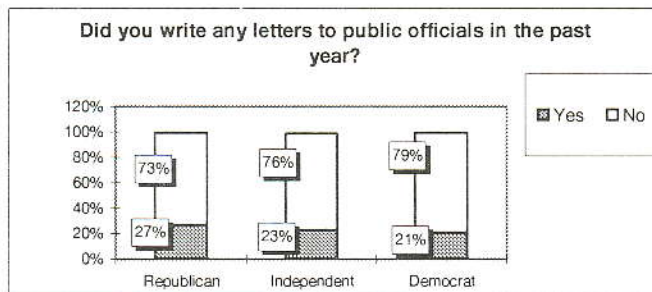


FIGURE 12

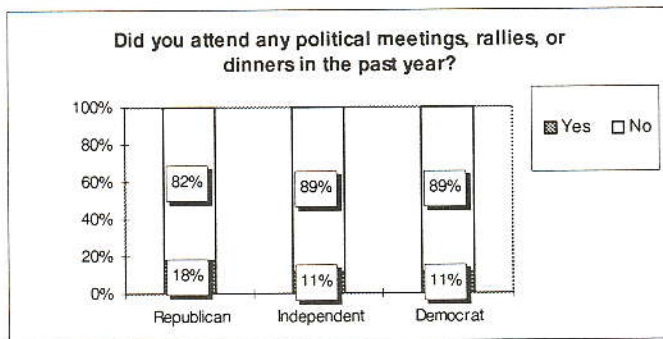
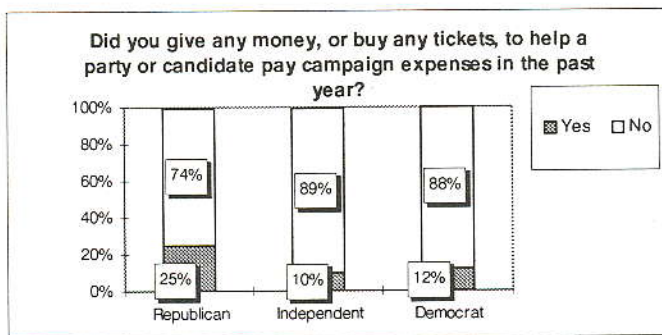


FIGURE 13



We thought it might be instructive to conduct additional analyses to determine whether any one of the three ideological strains revealed in our data participated politically more than the other. In order to determine this, a composite variable was created, composed of four indicators of political participation.²⁵ This composite variable was then correlated with the respondents' scores on each of the three components which surfaced in our factor analysis. Table 5 shows the

²⁵ To assess the respondents' level of political participation, they were asked in separate questions whether they had voted in the last elections, written any letters to public officials in the past year, attended any rallies in the past year, or donated money for a political campaign in the past year. (The last three of these questions were taken from Jim Ranchino's political polling research in the 1960s and 1970s; see Ranchino, 1972.) The number of "yes" responses for each question were tallied to give respondents a score ranging from 0 to 4, with 0 indicating they had engaged in zero activities and 4 indicating they had engaged in all four activities.

correlations between the factor scores and the participation index. Perhaps surprisingly, only the first and third components correlated significantly with the participation index, and both did so only weakly. The fiscal conservatives it appears slightly less likely to report political activity, while the populists slightly more likely to participate. The second component, social conservatism, was weak as well and did not reach statistical significance.

Table 5

Pearson's Correlations

Participation Index and Factor Loading Score

	Component		
	Fiscal Conservatism	Social Conservatism	Populism
Pearson Correlation	-.099	.074	.129
Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.083	.003
N	547	547	547

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Although the findings presented here shed some additional light on the dynamics of Arkansas electorate, they must be read cautiously. The findings presented in this paper are only from data collected from one point in time. Such findings are useful for presenting a snapshot of Arkansas' electorate and allow us to some comparisons with past research regarding the state's partisan breakdown. However, additional longitudinal research will be necessary to track the long-term trends concerning the different ideological strains and political participation habits of Arkansans.

Further, the descriptive differences we present between the state's Republicans, Democrats, and Independents were, in most cases, not large. And while the three ideological components which surfaced from our factor analysis confirmed past research about Arkansas's own peculiar brand of conservatism and populism, they together accounted for only a little over half of the variance in our sample. This means that a large segment of Arkansas's electorate gravitates toward none of the three components. More precisely, although there may be a sizable faction within the electorate adhering to some other ideological component, the questions from this survey were not conducive to its detection. Finally, none of our regression models predicted more than one-third of the variance in the sample, meaning adherents to each of the three components were probably more similar to each other than they were different.

Nonetheless, the characteristics and components that did materialize are revealing. Republicans in Arkansas are more likely to be male, white, college-educated, and wealthy than

are Democrats or Independents. Republicans are still the minority, however, in each of the state's congressional districts. Additionally, according to the factor analysis conducted on the policy preference and ideology questions, the Arkansas electorate includes identifiable groups of fiscal conservatives, social conservatives, and populists which are – for the most part – independent of partisan preferences. Fiscal conservatives, for example, tend to be less educated and are a little more likely to adhere to fundamentalist religious organizations, but are equally as likely to be Democrats or Independents as Republicans. Social conservatives, on the other hand, are more likely to be Republicans, and are – not surprisingly – frequent churchgoers. Finally, members of the populist strain, perhaps because of their disdain toward formal organization and authority, are somewhat more likely to identify themselves as political Independents. They also are slightly more likely to be male.

With respect to the participation habits of these various groups, drawing conclusions about any single element being more politically active than another is difficult. In short, none of the elements is particularly distinctive. In the descriptive analysis, Republican identifiers were indeed more likely to report having given money to a political candidate within the past year, but relative to the very small portion of any of the respondents, the finding is somewhat suspect. And, although the participation index yielded significant correlations with two out of the three components, the correlations were weak indeed. Thus, despite the fact that Arkansas's fiscal and social conservatives, and its populists, may be different in their political views and demographic characteristics, our data suggest that none is particularly distinctive when it comes to political participation.

The partisanship, political attitudes, and activity level of the various subgroups within the Arkansas electorate are clearly subjects in need of much more investigation than one survey can provide. Nonetheless, our analyses reveal the Republican Party still has quite a ways to go before it can be said it has reached numerical parity with the Democrats in the electorate. Although the trend is toward larger numbers of Republican *officeholders* in Arkansas (as it is in much of the South), Republican *partisans* within the electorate remain fewer in number than Democrats or Independents. Moreover, Republicans fail to display ideological orientations and, especially, policy preferences that are all that distinct from those of their non-Republican counterparts. As yet, these would appear to be obstacles that their only slightly greater propensity toward political activism stands little chance of overcoming.

APPENDIX

SAMPLE INFORMATION

Between September 15th and October 2nd, the Survey Research Center at the University of Arkansas dialed 3,738 randomly selected Arkansas telephone numbers. These attempts yielded 885 completed surveys. The remainder of the surveys were not completed due to the resident's absence, a refusal to participate, a busy line, a "no longer in service" message, or the resident being under the age of 18 years. Employing guidelines established by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, the poll's cooperation rate was 70.6%. This figure reflects completed surveys as a percentage of all eligible individuals contacted. The survey's margin of error is ± 3 percent.

To ensure that the sample drawn for the survey was representative of the state's residents, a comparison was made between the survey respondents' demographic characteristics and those of the state as whole. The results are shown in the below table. As is apparent, the respondents in the sample are similar to the state in terms of income and racial background, yet survey respondents are somewhat older and better educated.

	Arkansas Poll Respondents	State Data
Median Age	48 years	40-45 years (Census, 1990; for those over 18 only)
Gender	46.0% male	48.2% male (Census 1990)
Education	85.7% high school graduates 25.8 % college graduates	66.3% high school graduates 13.3 % college graduates (Census USA Counties 1996)
Income	\$25,001 to \$35,000 (median income range)	\$27,117 (Census 1999)
Race / Ethnicity	81.6% White 11.3% Black 1.9% Hispanic 0.7 % Asian 1.7% Native American	82.7% White 15.9% Black 0.5% Asian 0.5% Native American (Census 1990)

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