

# **U.S. 2004 Presidential Election Voting Patterns**

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## ***Religious Activity and Education Levels as Correlates of Voting Patterns***

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# How well did religious participation correlate with 2004 voting patterns?

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*Many analysts suggest Bush won because he received the votes of those more oriented toward religion. Do the data support this hypothesis? What about education levels?*

- **For the United States and Wyoming, this study examined three sets of data**
  - ▶ *For the year 2000, the proportion of “Religious Adherents” in each state or county (an independent variable)*
    - In 2000, the Glenmary Research Center worked with churches, synagogues, and mosques in every U.S. county to determine the number of “Religious Adherents” in every county.
      - *A “Religious Adherent” is someone who belongs to a church, synagogue, or mosque, or attends regularly without being a member.*
  - ▶ *For the year 2000, the proportion of people with a bachelor’s degree (or higher) in each state or county (an independent variable)*
    - The 2000 U.S. Census determined this statistic for every county in America.
  - ▶ *For the year 2004, the percentage of votes received by President Bush (a dependent variable)*

# Measuring correlation

***Correlation suggests the strength of relationship between two variables: the “independent” and “dependent” variables***

- A statistic called “r-squared” indicates how strongly two variables are correlated
  - *Two perfectly correlated variables have an r squared value of 1.0*
    - I.e. Knowing the independent variable, the result of the dependent variable could have been perfectly predicted
  - *Two perfectly non-correlated variables (i.e. two randomly related variables) have an r squared value of 0.0*
- This study used proportion of “Religious Adherents” and proportion of college graduates as independent variables, and asked the question: “How well did the percentage of votes received by President Bush correlate with a state or county’s religious participation and education levels?”
  - *If the r-squared value is 1.0, then President Bush’s percentage could have been perfectly predicted based on the proportion of “Religious Adherents” or college graduates*
  - *If the r-squared value is 0.0, then President Bush’s percentage is completely unrelated to the proportion of “Religious Adherents” or college graduates*
- **NOTE: Correlation does not equal causation. Two variables may be strongly correlated, but have nothing to do with each other.**

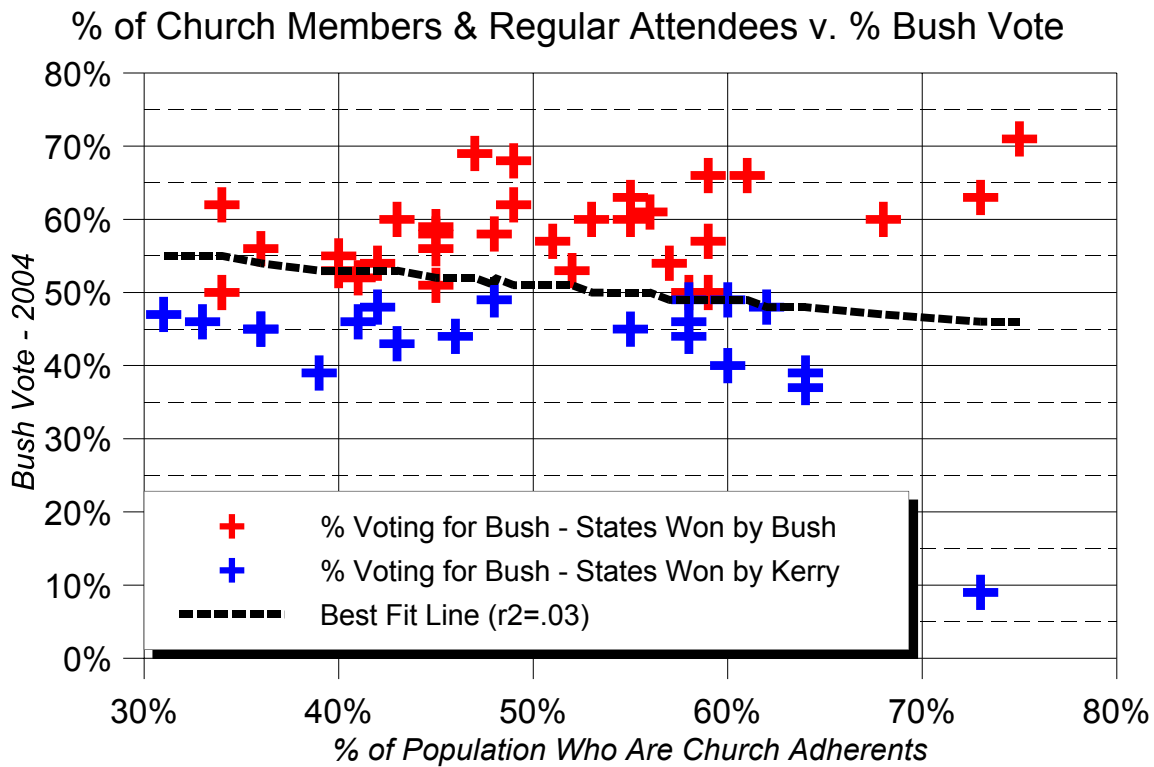
# Findings 1: Religious Adherents

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***Religious activity in a state or Wyoming county did not correlate well with support for President Bush***

- **Findings: U.S.**
  - ▶ ***There was essentially no correlation (r-squared of 0.03) between the proportion of “Religious Adherents” in a state and the percentage of votes received by President Bush***
- **Findings: Wyoming**
  - ▶ ***There was a weak correlation (r-squared of 0.25) between the proportion of “Religious Adherents” in a county and the percentage of votes received by President Bush***
    - ***This higher correlation is in part a result of the smaller sample size (23 Wyoming counties v. 50 states plus the District of Columbia)***

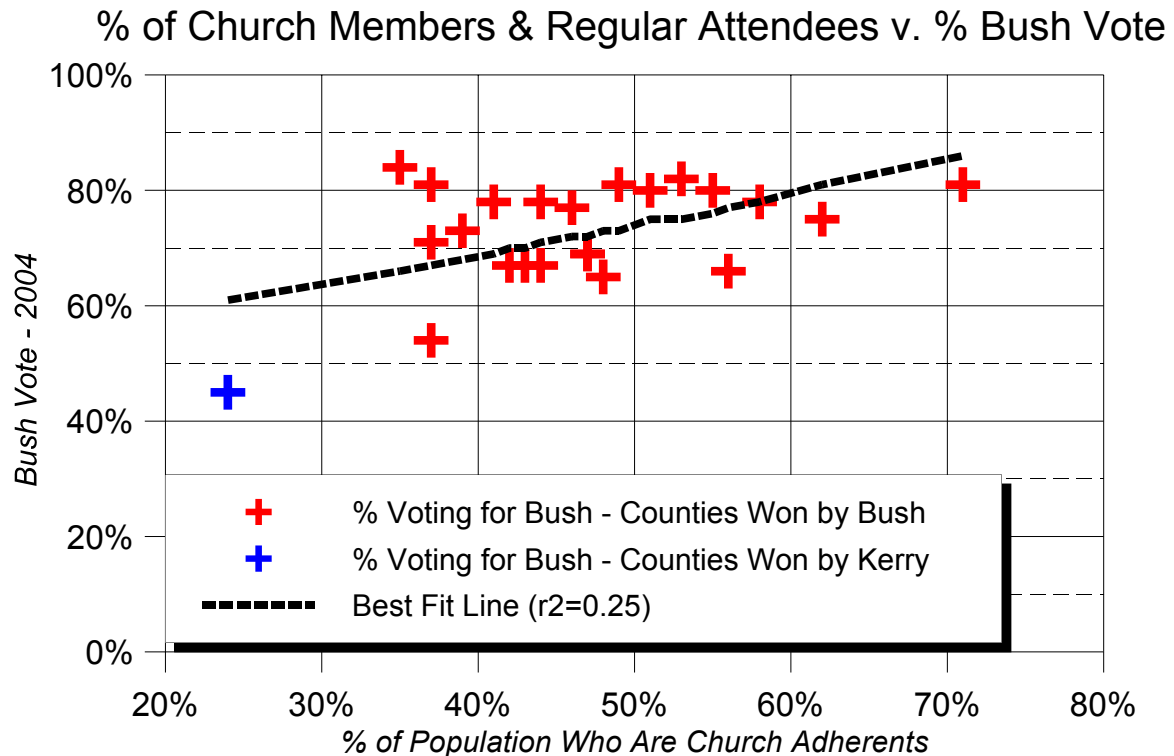
# 2004 Presidential Election: U.S. Voting by State



Sources: Glenmary Research Center; cnn.com

Analysis: Summit Management Consulting, Jackson WY

# 2004 Presidential Election - WY Voting by County



Sources: Glenmary Research Center; cnn.com

Analysis: Summit Management Consulting, Jackson WY

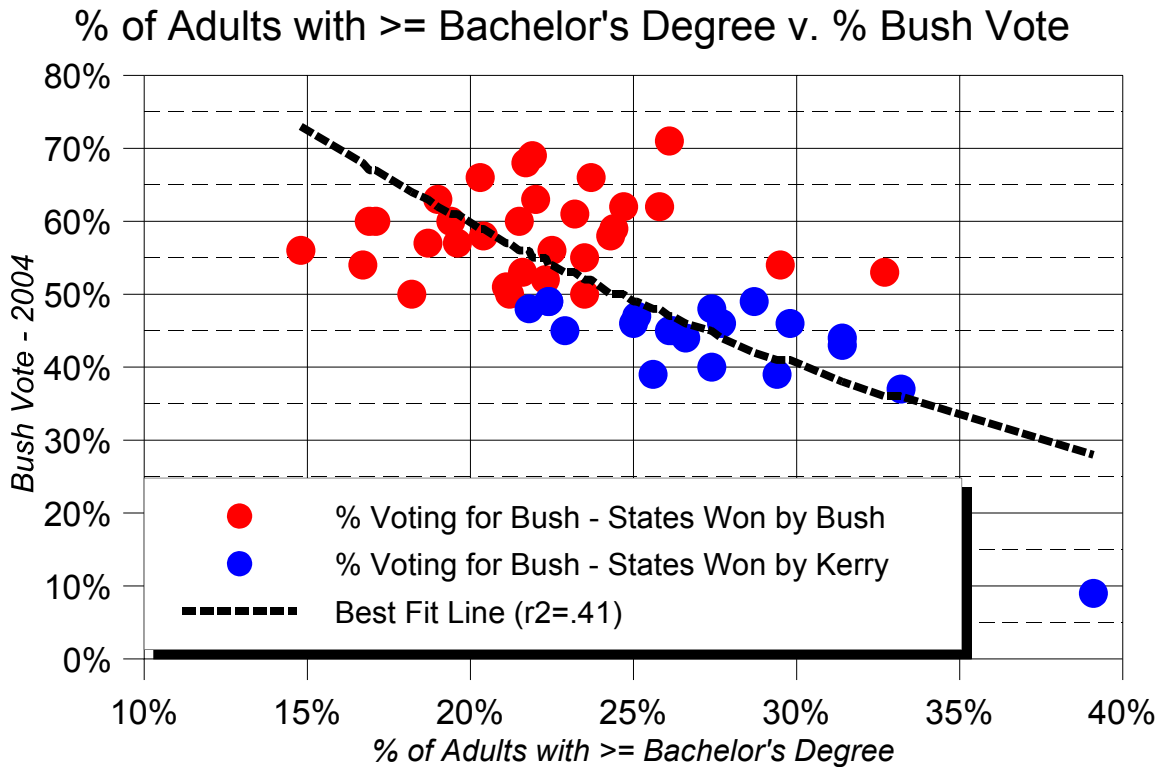
# Findings 2: College Graduates

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*The proportion of people with a bachelor's degree or higher in a state or Wyoming county correlated reasonably well with support for President Bush*

- **Simply glancing at the distribution of red and blue dots suggests a relationship between education levels and voting patterns.**
- **Findings: U.S.**
  - ▶ *There was a mild but clear correlation (r-squared of 0.41) between the proportion of individuals with a bachelor's degree (or higher) in a state and the percentage of votes received by President Bush*
- **Findings: Wyoming**
  - ▶ *There was a reasonable correlation (r-squared of 0.68) between the proportion of individuals with a bachelor's degree (or higher) in a county and the percentage of votes received by President Bush*
    - **This higher correlation is in part a result of the smaller sample size (23 Wyoming counties v. 50 states plus the District of Columbia)**

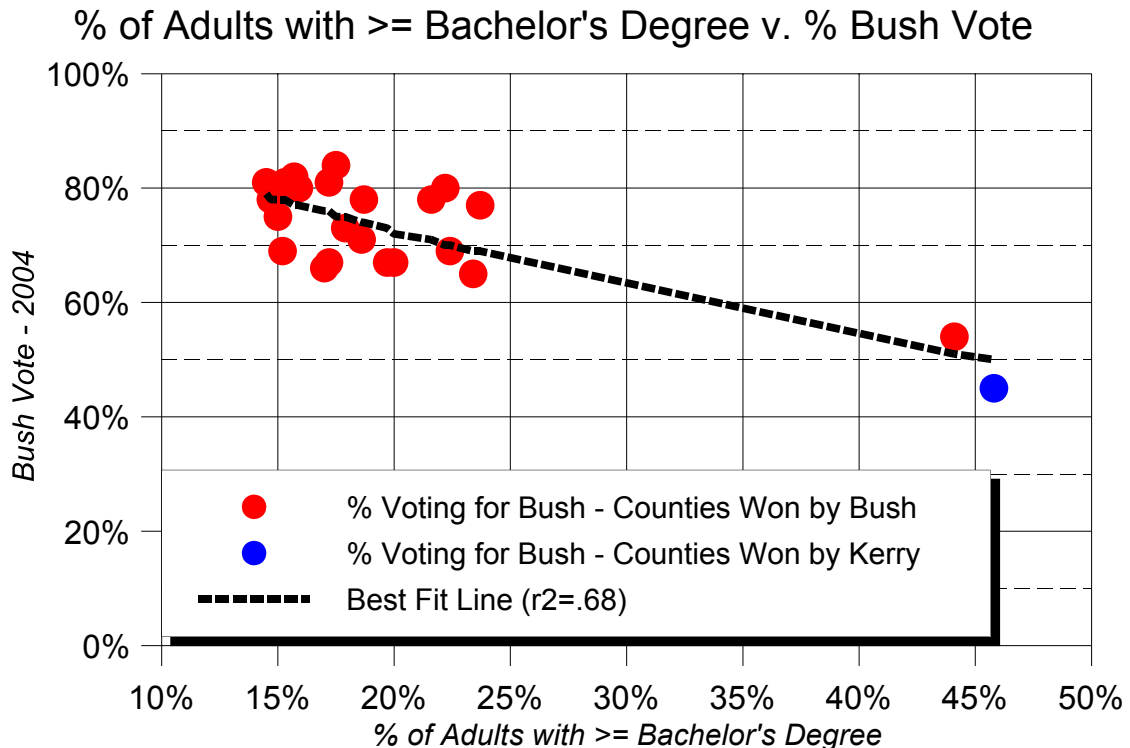
# 2004 Presidential Election: U.S. Voting by State



Sources: 2000 U.S. Census; cnn.com

Analysis: Summit Management Consulting, Jackson WY

# 2004 Presidential Election - WY Voting by County



Sources: 2000 U.S. Census; cnn.com

Analysis: Summit Management Consulting, Jackson WY

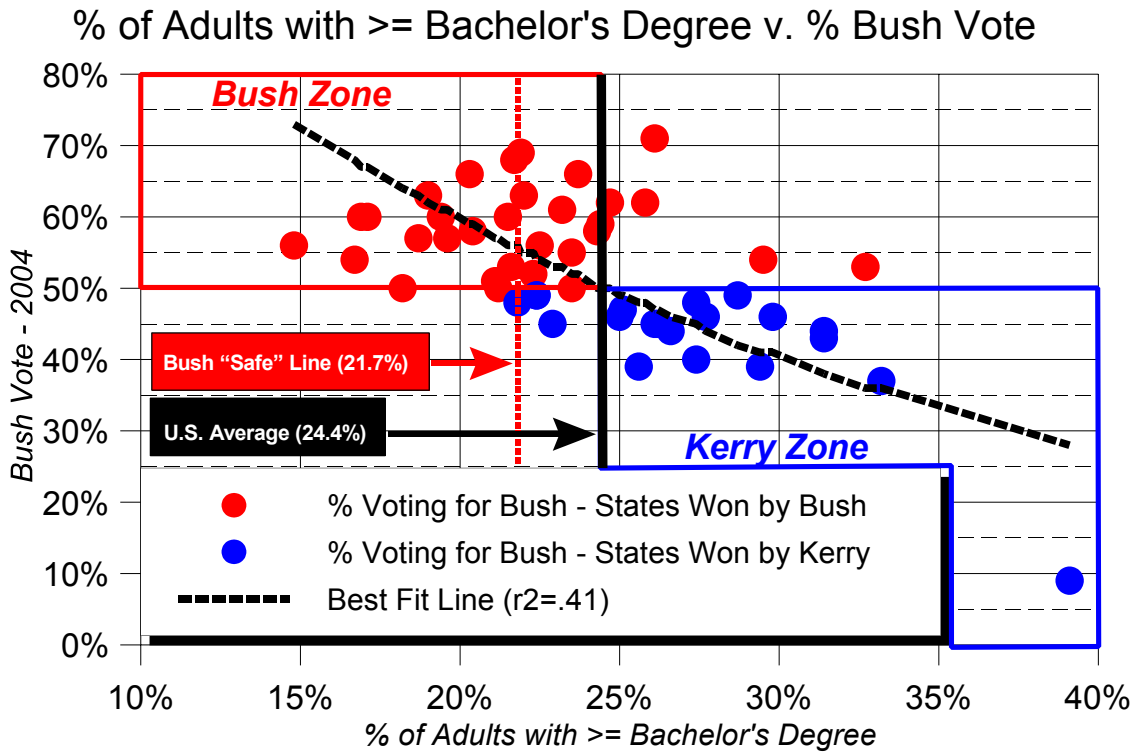
# Discussion 1

## *The 24.4% threshold*

- **In 2000, 24.4% of all American adults 25 years or older had a bachelor's degree or higher**
  - ▶ ***In 30 states, no more than 24.4% of adults had a bachelor's degree or higher. These states account for 43% of America's population.***
    - **In 2004, President Bush won 26 of these 30 states**
      - ***In these states, President Bush out-pollled Senator Kerry 55%-45%***
    - **The Bush "Safe Line"**
      - ***In 2004, President Bush won all 16 states in which 21.7% or fewer of the adults had a bachelor's degree or higher***
  - ▶ ***In 20 states and D.C., more than 24.4% of adults had a bachelor's degree or higher. These states account for 57% of America's population.***
    - **In 2004, Senator Kerry won 16 of these 21 states**
      - ***In these states, Senator Kerry out-pollled President Bush 54%-46%***
    - **In 2004, Senator Kerry won 13 of the 15 states with the highest proportions of college-educated residents.**
  - ▶ ***In 14 states, the percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher ranges between 21.7% (the Bush "Safe Line") and 24.4% (the national average).***
    - **In 2004, President Bush won 10 of these 14 "Purple" states.**
- **In 2000, the results were very similar**
  - ▶ ***The Bush "Safe Line" was at 21.1%, and then-Governor Bush won 24 of the 30 states at or below the national 24.4% average.***



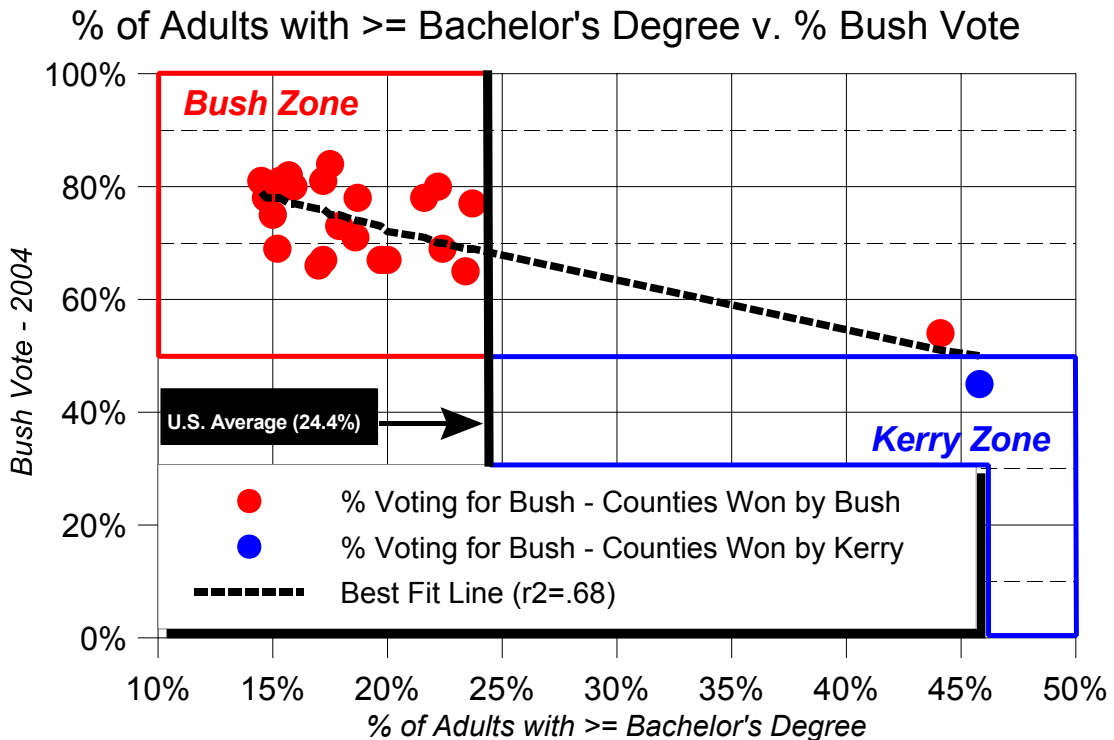
# 2004 Presidential Election: U.S. Voting by State



Sources: 2000 U.S. Census; cnn.com

Analysis: Summit Management Consulting, Jackson WY

# 2004 Presidential Election - WY Voting by County

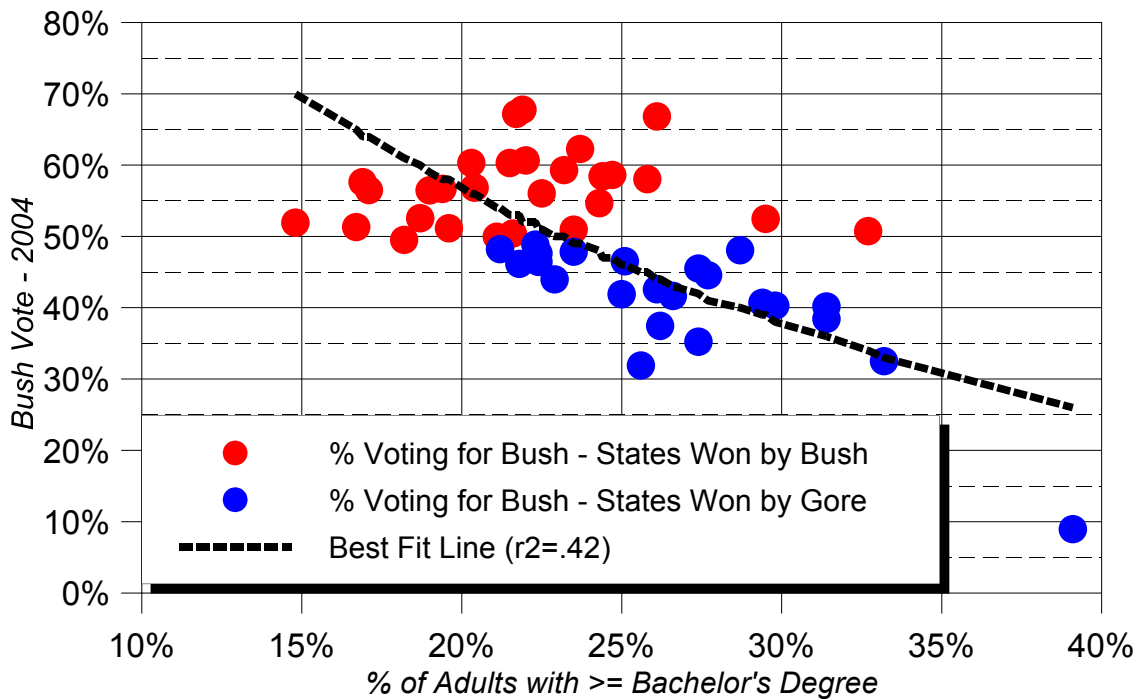


Sources: 2000 U.S. Census; cnn.com

Analysis: Summit Management Consulting, Jackson WY

## 2000 Presidential Election: U.S. Voting by State

% of Adults with  $\geq$  Bachelor's Degree v. % Bush Vote

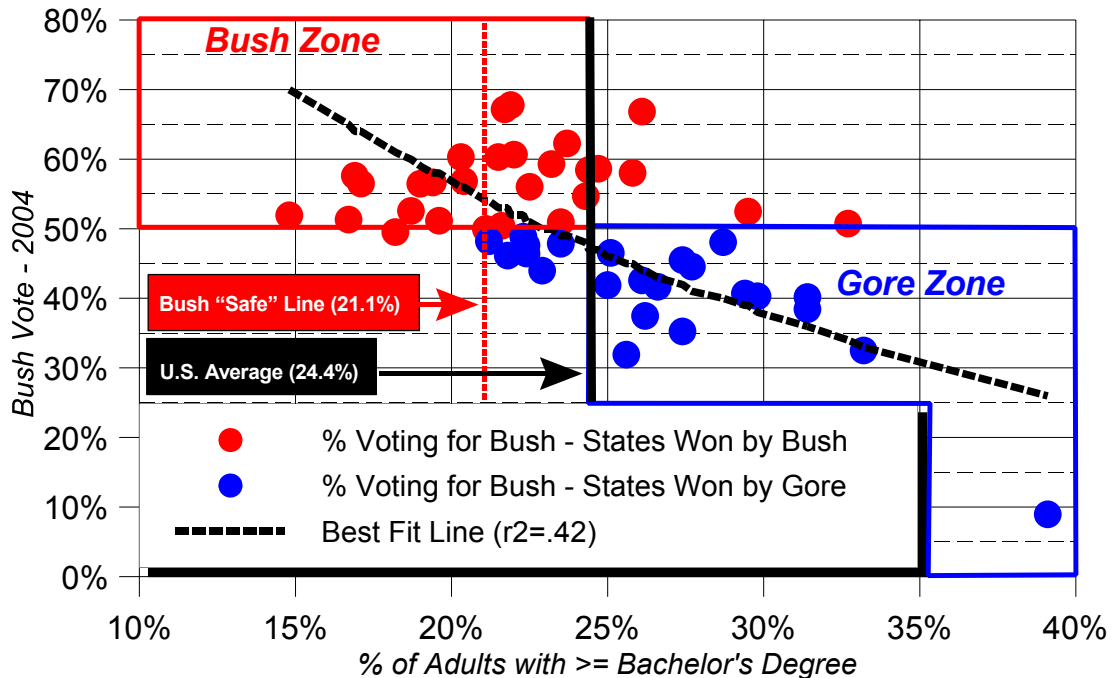


Sources: 2000 U.S. Census; cnn.com

Analysis: Summit Management Consulting, Jackson WY

## 2000 Presidential Election: U.S. Voting by State

% of Adults with  $\geq$  Bachelor's Degree v. % Bush Vote



Sources: 2000 U.S. Census; cnn.com

Analysis: Summit Management Consulting, Jackson WY

# Discussion 2

## Conclusions

- **Conclusion 1: Education levels of a state's or county's voters were far more closely correlated with how they voted in the 2004 Presidential contest than were religious participation levels.**
  - ▶ *President Bush did far better in the states with a lower percentage of college-educated adults; Senator Kerry did far better in states with a higher percentage of college-educated adults.*
    - This suggests Senator Kerry connected with voters' heads; President Bush connected on a more visceral level.
- **Conclusion 2: There is an education divide among the electorate that is at least as great as any cultural divide.**
  - ▶ *Future elections will be won or lost on the Democrats' ability to connect with voters in "Purple Zone" states (those with education levels above the Bush "Safe Line" and below the national average).*
  - ▶ *Conversely, the Republicans' challenge will be to continue narrowing the "Purple Zone" (i.e. moving the Bush "Safe Line" to include even more states).*

# Caveat, caveat, caveat

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***Do not confuse correlation with causation!***

- **The data examined in this study show a correlation between education levels and voting patterns, and no correlation between religiosity and voting patterns. This is all they do.**
  - ▶ ***Put another way, the proportion of votes cast for President Bush could have been predicted with some accuracy by looking at the proportion of college graduates living in a state or county; it could not have been predicted with any accuracy by looking at the proportion of Religious Adherents living there.***
- **The study should not, and cannot, be interpreted as an investigation of, or comment upon, the intelligence or religiosity of those voting for either candidate.**
  - ▶ ***The data don't speak to this question, and the study didn't attempt to answer it.***