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Hanes Walton, Jr. *Reelection: William Jefferson Clinton as a Native-Son Presidential Candidate.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. 352 pp. $49.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-11553-7.

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The Persistence of the "Native Son" Phenomenon

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At the end of the Clinton era, it is appropriate for political scientists to undertake analyses of the two-term president's impact on any number of political and public policy phenomena. In that Clinton's most obvious talent showed itself in the electoral arena where (even in a television era) he formed deeply personal relationships with voters, many of these analyses rightfully will focus on the foundations of Clinton's public support. Continuing a line of research, Hanes Walton, Jr. examines a potential explanation for Clinton's relative strength in one region of the country – the turf on which his political career began – through an in-depth analysis of Clinton's electoral base across time in Arkansas and the South. While the book examines a well-justified question, numerous problems with the methodology through which Walton attempts to answer that question about the ongoing vitality of a "native son" phenomenon unfortunately outweigh this work's strengths. Numerous factual errors as well as muddled writing make the work even more problematic.

In facing the question, Walton is quite conscious of grounding his analysis theoretically, laying out the line of research on the native-son phenomenon in American voting beginning with V. O. Key's highlighting of "friends and neighbors" voting in the Old South. Walton clearly presents the ways in which later scholars built on this research tradition culminating with his own examination of Jimmy Carter's linkages to his fellow southerners. Because of the tremendous shifts in southern partisanship since Key's work, an analysis of the persistence of regionalism in voting in the Clinton era is certainly pertinent.

While the early chapter that presents previous research on that topic is quite sharp, Walton is less clear in another theoretical chapter. After noting the inadequacies of the frameworks that scholars of American politics have traditionally used to describe electoral outcomes (e.g. realignment theory), Walton presents what he terms a "more complete" theoretical approach: a "political party perspective" that posits that individual voters' choices as well as the historical context of a particular election are both important and, of course, linked. Walton goes on to make the (quite logical) contention that

race is the driving force in this vision of electoral politics in the United States. However, the discussion of the "political party perspective" is muddled and, more importantly, Walton does not ground his argument about race's role well enough in the extant literature on the interaction between race and American politics. In addition, the linkage between the two theoretical pieces – the "native son" theory and the "political party perspective" – is never made.

After presenting his theoretical approaches, Walton sets out to paint a picture of the political-historical context of Arkansas and, more specifically, of the racial context exhibited in the state. It is in the second of these chapters that Walton makes his greatest contribution, one that is of primary relevance for students of Arkansas's politics. As he makes clear, African-American voting in Arkansas has not received the appropriate attention by scholars of the state's politics and Walton employees techniques that he terms "political archeology" to creatively recapture African-Americans' role in the state's politics in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Walton then moves to a discussion of Bill Clinton's political entrance into this political and racial context and undertakes a chronological journey through the ups and downs of Clinton's political career in the state, examining the role of his home counties and counties where black voters are most prevalent as the two parts of the state that serve as "friends and neighbors" – to use Key's term – in his political career. Unfortunately, a variety of methodological problems undermine Walton's attempts to examine the two tangentially related parts of his theory as they relate to Clinton's electoral life.

By necessity, scholars of American electoral politics often rely upon county-level data, as Walton does in this work. However, Walton is not careful to note the limitations of such analysis in gaining an understanding of the voting behavior of the individuals living in those counties, particularly in describing the behavior of African-American voters. Moreover, in his analysis, Walton fails to introduce key control variables to enhance one's confidence that home county or racial composition are the true explainers of electoral patterns. Throughout this portion of the text, Walton moves back and forth between analyzing vote percentages and raw votes in the counties. Because of the varying sizes of counties, any statistical analysis of raw votes are irrelevant; despite this, Walton relies upon correlation data on counties' raw votes in making conclusions. He also ignores the fact that presidential and nonpresidential years naturally involve differing numbers of voters, undermining another of his points. In short, the rudimentary statistical analyses presented through the work are incredibly shaky for a variety of reasons.

More specific problems arise in the analyses of the two theoretical arguments. First, although Walton argues for the continuing relevance of the "native son" phenomenon, he examines only the electoral behavior of Clinton's home counties, ignoring the homes of his opponents in the analysis. In addition, as employed by Key, additional maps would have been a much more clear instrument for making Walton's points about the "native son" phenomenon in the state rather than the series of confusing tables that are used here.

Even more problematic is the analysis of the role of African-Americans in Clinton's electoral base. Throughout the text, Walton uses the three counties in the state that have remained majority black to "provide empirical insights into the nature and significance of African-American partisanship over time." The electoral results in three counties that have large numbers of white voters thus become Walton's gauge of Clinton's African-American support in the state as a whole. While any such evidence is statistically fallacious on its face, Walton also fails to discuss the fact that white voters in the South have been found – since Key's writing – to behave differently based on the black population in their locale, with whites in majority African-American counties feeling the most "threatened" and basing their voting behavior on this fear. More problematically, the discussion of African-Americans' role in shaping Arkansas politics is never united with the theoretical framework presented early in the work. This disconnect between the theoretical and empirical portions of the work is the ultimate weakness of the text.

While Walton's understanding of Arkansas politics is somewhat superficial, that is understandable for someone who has not studied the state's politics in the past. Still, the descriptions of Bill Clinton's races in the state – the most important aspect of Walton's discussion of contemporary Arkansas politics – are surprisingly weak analytically. In the recounting of Clinton's first race, for Congress in 1974, there is no discussion of the role of Watergate in aiding Clinton against a long-time Republican incumbent; the discussions of other Clinton races are similarly lacking in crucial detail. Moreover, some obvious errors show themselves as well, including the outcome of a key gubernatorial election in the 1960s, the fact

that Governor Winthrop Rockefeller (from New York) was not "homegrown," and the identity of the congressional district in which Little Rock lies.

Similar obvious factual errors pile up throughout the work, undermining the credibility of the work more generally. Ranging from stating that Richard Nixon ran for President in 1964 to misidentifying the states that George Wallace won in his 1968 independent bid for the presidency and the southern states captured by Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 to the date of the Lewinsky scandal, such errors become a major distraction in one's reading of the work. Parallel sloppiness shows itself in the writing of the work. In addition to arguments not being pulled together and clearly explained, redundancies, poor word choices, and unclear antecedents mar *Reelection*.

It is the larger methodological problems and the disconnection between theory and empirical evidence that ultimately doom the book, however. As the text moves forward, Walton attempts to compare the performance of Clinton as a presidential candidate in his home state and region with that of his predecessor Jimmy Carter. It quickly becomes apparent that, because of the dramatic changes in southern presidential politics through the Reagan-Bush era, any such direct comparisons are of limited relevance. Walton persists, however, in attempting to analyze the electoral bases of the two "native sons." In the end, Walton makes the point that there remains a "regional variable," for southern candidates in presidential elections. Unfortunately, Walton's problematic analysis in this work fails to develop this fairly obvious point further.

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