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ORIGINAL PAPER

The Cultural Realignment of State White Electorates in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the partisan leanings and presidential voting of state white electorates have been changing. Drawing on party realignment theories and analyses of cultural politics, this paper hypothesizes that cultural issues may be the dimension along which the realignment is occurring. The empirical findings are consistent with this view. The cultural issue preferences of state white electorates are strongly related to change in partisanship from 2000 to 2016. Further, only cultural issue attitudes have become a stronger predictor of state white presidential voting over this period. The apparent effects of partisanship, economic issue attitudes, and racial attitudes have either declined over time or been substantial in some elections and less so in others.

Keywords Party realignment · Partisanship · Cultural attitudes · Presidential elections

For more than 150 years, while the major parties' names in American politics have remained the same, what they stand for has undergone substantial change. This paper analyzes how the most recent changes have contributed to the ongoing transformation of partisanship and presidential voting in the mass public (Adams 1997;

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Carmines and Stimson 1989; Claassen 2015; McCarty et al. 1997, 2006; Layman 2001; Layman et al. 2010; Schickler 2016). Drawing on research on partisan realignments along with work that argues for the centrality of "culture war" issues like abortion and gay rights (Goren and Chapp 2017), I investigate whether cultural issues have been reshaping state electorates across the country, specifically state white electorates.[1]

The paper reports two central findings, which in combination suggest that a major and possibly enduring cultural realignment is taking place. First, cultural issue attitudes of state white electorates in 2000 have strong predictive power for state white partisanship in 2016. Over time, state partisanship has come into alignment with preexisting state cultural attitudes. Second, with respect to presidential voting, compared to partisanship, economic issue attitudes, and racial issue attitudes, only the relationship with state white cultural issue attitudes has consistently strengthened over time. In short, cultural issues appear to be an important realigning force in contemporary white American politics.

The results in this paper make important contributions to the scholarly understanding of partisan (re)alignments in mass American politics (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Mayhew 2004; Miller and Schofield 2003; Karol 2009; Bawn et al. 2012). Whereas the process of racial realignment is now reasonably well understood (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Valentino and Sears 2005; Schickler 2016; Tesler 2016), the same is not true for cultural issues, especially in recent decades. While few disagree that cultural issues have risen in prominence, whether they have served as a realigning force or instead have mapped onto existing partisan alignments remains uncertain (Adams 1997). Both the extent of "partisan sorting" on cultural issues and the relative centrality of partisanship and cultural attitudes are open questions (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; Fiorina et al. 2011; Stimson 2015; Achen and Bartels 2016; Hopkins 2017). In light of recent work on the power of party identification and politics to shape even religious orientations and identities (Campbell et al. 2018; Margolis 2018a, b), the possibility that the cultural attitudes of white state electorates have come into alignment with preexisting partisanship gains even greater plausibility. Thus, by analyzing the interrelationships among cultural attitudes, partisanship, and presidential voting across states and over time, this paper makes significant contributions to our understanding of the ongoing evolution of the party system in American politics.

Cultural Issues and Political Change in America

In the midst of a host of debates about cultural issues and their relationship to the contemporary party system in America, there exists agreement on the answers to a variety of important questions that inform the present study. First, over the past

[1] I use the term "white" to refer to people who are white and not of Latinx ethnicity. The focus on white state electorates is due to the divergent trends between whites and nonwhites, the greater homogeneity across nonwhite electorates, and some empirical limitations. All three reasons are discussed more fully below.

several decades the positions of the major parties have increasingly diverged on cultural issues with the Democratic party moving in the liberal direction and the Republican party moving to the right. On the issue of abortion, Adams (1997) reports only modest difference between Democrats and Republicans in Congress in the early 1970s that had grown substantially larger by the early 1990s. Layman (2001) and Lindaman and Haider-Markel (2002) replicate Adams (1997) for other cultural issues and report similar patterns. Layman (2001) also analyzes the parties' platforms and finds that in addition to growing polarization, there is more attention paid to cultural issues over time.[2]

Explanations for the changes among party elites typically identify an important role for party activists, or "intense policy demanders" (Bawn et al. 2012), who appear to polarize first, provide important resources to electoral candidates, and act as informal gatekeepers of party nominations (Miller and Schofield 2003; Layman et al. 2010; Bawn et al. 2012; Claassen 2015; Karol 2009). As Miller and Schofield (2008, p. 439) put it, "the critical element of partisan realignment is the repositioning of party candidates in response to party activists." There is less agreement—and less research—on the explanation for the particular timing of the cultural realignment among political elites.[3] However, the process is generally viewed as unfolding over time rather than a single "critical election" serving as a demarcation between the old and new party alignments (Mayhew 2000, 2004).

As party elites staked out new positions on key cultural and religious issues like abortion and gay rights, what has happened in the mass public? At the individual level, scholars have made important progress. Few doubt that among individuals, the association between party identification and cultural policy preferences has strengthened over time (Adams 1997; Layman and Carsey 2002; Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Hopkins 2017) and that heightened "party sorting" is evident (Fiorina and Abrams 2008; Levendusky 2009). And, cultural issues have become more salient in the mass public (Layman 2001). All of this is consistent with the "issue evolution" theory of party realignment (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Stimson 2015; Carmines and Wagner 2006). Further, Goren and Chapp (2017) develop a theory of "moral power" that locates cultural issues as central in the belief systems of ordinary citizens, arguing that "abortion and gay rights habitually activate deeply ingrained, biologically informed emotional and cognitive systems" (113).

[2] Republican party platforms "have asserted the fundamental right to life of the unborn; have criticized efforts to extend civil rights protections to homosexuals [and] have called for an expansion of public religious expression, particularly in the schools…. Democratic platforms, in contrast, have asserted the fundamental right of women to choose an abortion, have strongly supported the Equal Rights Amendment, and have called for expanded protection of the rights of homosexuals. Moreover, although there have been clear differences between the parties' stands on cultural matters since 1980, these differences have grown ever larger over time" (Layman 2001, pp. 122–123).

[3] For example, Miller and Schofield (2003, 2008) claim there is long-term periodicity driven by underlying instability of party competition in multidimensional space while Claassen (2015) emphasizes how demography and demographic change shape the political landscape and composition of the activist pool. of the antecedent causes, there remains agreement regarding the importance of activists to the process of party realignment.

Here, I build on the individual level analyses and examine aggregate level political change, thus following in the tradition of work like *The Macro Polity* (Erikson et al. 2002). To gain leverage and expand the number of observations from one to fifty, rather than focus on national level changes as in Erikson et al. (2002), I focus on the American states and ask if changes in state-level partisanship and presidential voting can be traced to cultural issue attitudes.

An analysis of electorates rather than individuals brings several important advantages. Most important, examining state-level changes makes it possible to analyze a longer time period than would otherwise be possible in an individual-level analysis. The potential benefit is that patterns of partisan change, when they occur, may unfold over more than a decade. For example, Layman (2001, p. 237) describes the process as "inertial" and Miller and Schofield (2008, p. 439) suggest that partisan realignment occurs "over a period of many elections." From the issue evolution perspective (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Stimson 2015; Carmines and Wagner 2006) or Key's (1959) notion of "secular realignments," even a decade of data might not be sufficient.[4]

Another important aspect of making states the unit of analysis is that these are the units at which important outcomes are determined. As observed by Wright and Birkhead (2014, p. 428), analyzing "state electorates matches the fact that political outcomes are commonly the result of aggregate, not individual processes. In particular, U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections, as well as Electoral College votes in presidential elections take place at the macro-state level." Thus, while an aggregate analysis precludes directly modeling the underlying micro-level processes of change, inferential leaps to the implications of individual-level processes to aggregate-level change are not necessary.[5]

The first central question I address is to what degree, if any, state white partisanship has come into alignment with the cultural dimension of politics.[6] I follow studies like Carsey and Layman (2006), Highton and Kam (2011), and Goren and Chapp (2017) that employ cross-lagged models that focus on how current partisan preferences relate to past preferences (Finkel 1995). Specifically, I analyze whether

[4] "The processes of political change proceeds under the handicap of considerable friction. Preexisting party attachments may have a durability that contributes to the lag…. A new generation or so may be required for one outlook to replace another" (Key 1959, p. 204).

[5] To be sure, against these two advantages is the disadvantage of not observing individual-level change. For example, while the results below clearly show that the partisan alignments of state white electorates have changed over time to come into alignment with preexisting cultural attitudes, the individual-level processes, if any, by which this has come about remain unobserved.

[6] On the question of the micro-level causal interdependencies between cultural issue preferences and party identification, the empirical evidence is mixed. Carsey and Layman (2006) analyzes abortion policy preferences and finds that even among people for whom the abortion issue is salient, the effect of party identification on abortion policy preferences is stronger than the effect of abortion policy preferences on party identification. Goren and Chapp (2017) finds almost an exact opposite pattern. Rather than people brining their policy preferences into alignment with their party attachments, Goren and Chapp (2017, p. 124) reports that "most people ground their partisan identities in judgments about the frontline issues in the culture war [abortion and gay rights]."

partisanship (*PID*) in one presidential election year is related to partisanship and cultural values (*CULT*) in the previous presidential election year 4 years earlier:

$$PID_t = \beta_1 \times PID_{t-4} + \gamma_1 \times CULT_{t-4} + \varepsilon_1 \quad (1)$$

If state partisanship has been realigning along the cultural dimension of politics, then over time while there may be continuity in partisanship ($\beta_1 > 0$), the differences across states in cultural attitudes ($CULT_{t-4}$) will predict PID_t $(\gamma_1 > 0)$, conditional on PID_{t-4}. That is, over time state partisanship may be coming into alignment with preexisting state cultural attitudes. State electorates with more culturally conservative issue attitudes will become more Republican in partisanship while state electorates with more culturally liberal preferences will become more Democratic.

Of course it is also possible that cultural attitudes may be coming into alignment with partisanship. Over time, Democratic state electorates may become more culturally liberal and Republican state electorates may become more culturally conservative.

$$CULT_t = \beta_2 \times PID_{t-4} + \gamma_2 \times CULT_{t-4} + \varepsilon_2 \quad (2)$$

To the extent that this characterization is accurate, then PID_{t-4} will be related to $CULT_t$ ($\beta_2 > 0$), conditional on $CULT_{t-4}$. The value of employing cross-lagged models like (1) and (2) is that they avoid some of the causal ambiguity in observing the correlation between *PID* and *CULT* when both are only measured at one point in time (Finkel 1995).

The analysis of electoral behavior focuses on presidential voting. If a cultural realignment has taken or continues to take place among whites in the mass public, then its effects should be evident in that domain, too. The influence of cultural issue attitudes on voting behavior should have strengthened over time. However, if the key changes are the rising levels of partisanship and its influence on voting (Bartels 2000), then there is no reason to expect cultural attitudes, conditional on partisanship, to have grown in importance for understanding electoral behavior. Any apparent increase would simply be an artifact of the growing association between partisanship and cultural attitudes.

To test these ideas, I examine whether state-level presidential voting among whites (*PRESVOTE*) has come to increasingly reflect preexisting partisan and cultural alignments.[7] For each of the five presidential elections from 2000 to 2016, I estimate the following model:

$$PRESVOTE_t = \beta_t \times PID_{2000} + \gamma_t \times CULT_{2000} + \varepsilon_t \quad (3)$$

If there has been an ongoing realignment in presidential voting along the cultural dimension, then even with increasing time from 2000, the relationship between *PRESVOTE* and $CULT_{2000}$ may grow stronger ($\gamma_{2000} < \gamma_{2004} < \gamma_{2008} < \gamma_{2012} < \gamma_{2016}$). If the key change is heightened salience of partisanship itself, then partisanship may

[7] As in the case of party identification, if there is a contemporaneous correlation between *PRESVOTE* and *PID* or *CULT*, then assessing the direction of influence becomes much more complicated.

increasingly predict *PRESVOTE* ($\beta_{2000} < \beta_{2004} < \beta_{2008} < \beta_{2012} < \beta_{2016}$). Given that election-specific factors sometimes come into play and may influence γ and β, it may be problematic to compare any single pair of elections. But, with five presidential elections spread over 16 years it should be possible to distinguish a longer-term signal from the election-specific noise.

Data and Measures

With the goal of understanding long-term changes in partisan alignments, I sought to extend the period under investigation as far back as possible. The earliest year for which sufficient survey data was available was 2000, so the time period on which I focus is 2000 through 2016.[8] A second consideration has to do with race and ethnicity. Not only are there substantial differences across groups with respect to partisanship, preferences, and presidential voting, but the groups have not moved and realigned in similar ways over time (Abramowitz 2010, 2018; Pew 2016; Philpot 2017; Tate 1993).[9] Consequently, white non-Latinxs, African Americans, and Latinxs should probably not be combined in investigations of possible realignments.

Ideally, all three groups (and other minority groups) would be analyzed, but in this paper the focus is on white non-Latinxs because of the limitations imposed by the geographic distribution people in the United States. According to the 2000 Census African Americans comprised more than 10% of the population in 19 states and more than 15% of the population in just 13. The corresponding numbers of states for Latinxs are 10 and 8. The relatively small numbers of states with substantial populations (and the lower rate of citizenship for Latinxs) carries over into survey data, which poses a problem for reliably estimating the quantities of interest in this paper. For instance in the survey data I rely on to measure presidential voting in 2000, there are only 14 states with more than 250 African American voters and just one with more than 250 Latinx voters. In contrast there are more than 250 white non-Latinx voters in all 50 states.[10]

[8] While 16 years proves to be ample time for the analyses, it is important to note that there is nothing especially significant about 2000, either theoretically or empirically, compared to 1996, 2004, or some other starting point. The key is that the period of time encompassed (a) be long enough to reveal what, if any, realignment has taken place and (b) cover at least part of period during which cultural issues have risen to prominence in American politics.

[9] For example, as the 2016 presidential election approached Pew (2016, p. 6) found that "[w]hile the GOP has made gains overall and among key groups…blacks and Hispanics are as likely to identify as Democrats or lean Democratic today as they were four or eight years ago."

[10] There is also much more homogeneity in preferences across states for African Americans compared to non-Latinx whites. In the 14 states with more than 250 African American voters, the Democratic margin of victory ranges from 70 to 93% points with a standard deviation of about 6 points. In contrast, there is much more heterogeneity among non-Latinx whites with a range of −11 to 63 points and a standard deviation four times larger than that for African Americans, 24 points. Thus for African Americans, and

To measure the partisan preferences of state white electorates, I rely on three data sources. One is the *National Annenberg Election Study* (NAES), which fielded large national surveys first in 2000, and then again in 2004 and 2008. These surveys include between 45,000 (2000 and 2008) and 63,000 (2004) white respondents.[11] State-level exit polls from 2000, 2004, and 2008 also provide data on party identification. These surveys provide a total of between 45,000 (2000) and 63,000 (2008) white respondents in the each year.[12] The third source of partisanship data is the *Cooperative Congressional Election Study* (CCES). To maintain consistency with the other two sources I rely on the presidential election year surveys, which provide data from 2008, 2012, and 2016 with yearly sample sizes of between 26,000 (2008) and 46,000 (2016) white respondents.[13] I computed the mean partisanship for white respondents by state and year from each data source, employing sampling weights when provided. To facilitate comparison across sources I applied a simple linear transformation to put the NAES and CCES on a similar scale as the exit polls.[14]

The Appendix provides detailed information on the measure of party identification, including over-time correlations and within-state change over time. There are two key points to note. First, the direction and magnitude of partisan change is far from uniform across the states. Some state white electorates (e.g., Arkansas and West Virginia) have moved substantially in the Republican direction while others (e.g., California and New Mexico) have moved significantly toward the Democrats. Second, a simple model of linear change (by state) fits the data well. While there is some variation around the linear state trend lines, it is not substantial.

For the analysis of state white presidential voting, I collected exit poll data from the five presidential years (2000–2016) and computed the major party vote margin among white respondents (Republican percentage of the vote minus the Democratic percentage of the vote). As mentioned above, exit polls from all fifty states

Footnote 10 (continued)
possibly Latinxs, variation across states—the focus of this paper—may be less important than variation over time, especially very long periods of time, from reconstruction to the present day.

[11] I coded party identification with the NAES data into five categories: strong Democrats (−100), not strong Democrats, including "leaners," (−50), pure independents (0), not strong Republicans (+50), and strong Republicans (+100).

[12] These polls were funded by a consortium of news organizations and conducted in all 50 states in 2000, 2004, and 2008. In 2012 and 2016 state exit polls were only conducted in selected states. Strong and not strong partisans are not differentiated in these surveys so I code party identification from the exit polls as a trichotomy with Democrats (−100), independents (0), and Republicans (+100).

[13] Like party identification from the NAES I code five categories in the CCES data: strong Democrats (−100), not strong Democrats, including "leaners," (−50), pure independents (0), not strong Republicans (+50), and strong Republicans (+100).

[14] This involved two steps. To put the CCES white state partisanship scores on the exit poll scale, I first regressed white partisanship as measured in the exit polls on white partisanship as measured in the CCES. Then, I computed the predicted exit poll partisanship based on the parameter estimates for all state-years for which CCES data was available. This rescaled version of the CCES white state partisanship scores remains perfectly correlated with the original version of the CCES measure, but its "units" are in terms of exit poll partisanship. Then I repeated the process for the NAES data. Finally, I averaged the available white state partisanship scores by year. Thus for each presidential year from 2000 to 2016 I produced a state-level measure of white partisanship based on the available survey data, all of which was scaled in the same units.

are available for 2000, 2004, and 2008. But, in 2012 (n = 31) and 2016 (n = 28) exit polls were only conducted in a subset of the states. Rather than restrict my analysis only to these states I imputed the values for the 19 states in 2012 and the 22 states in 2016 where exit polls were not conducted.[15]

To measure cultural attitudes, I follow work like that of Layman (2001), Ansolabehere et al. (2008), and Goren and Chapp (2017). I identified questions asking about specific policies (abortion and gay rights) in the cultural domain of politics. I focus on abortion and gay rights for several reasons. First, while there is variation across existing studies in the issues included in measures of cultural attitudes (e.g., Abramowitz 2018; Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Layman and Carsey 2002; Layman et al. 2010; Peress 2013), common to them all are abortion and gay rights. Second, as explained by Goren and Chapp (2017), abortion and gay rights are central to the conception of cultural issues as they have become manifest in American politics:

> A number of discrete issues fall under the culture war rubric, such as school prayer, gun control, climate change, and so on. Without denying the potency of these controversies, scholars identify abortion and gay rights as the central issues in the culture war because these touch upon universal concerns about human sexuality and family organization" (Goren and Chapp 2017, 110).

The 2000 NAES survey includes a total of six abortion and gay rights items (three on each issue). The alpha reliability coefficient for the state means strongly suggests that the items can be combined into a scale ($\alpha = .96$), and as shown in Appendix Table 6, a factor analysis substantiates the point with a single dimension evident in the data. Therefore I use the results from the factor analysis to create a scale of state white cultural attitudes in 2000. In subsequent years, there are fewer items available for making cultural issue scales but there are always at least three. I follow the same procedure I used for the 2000 cultural attitudes scale and find that the reliability coefficients of the scales are all $\alpha > .93$.

In the models of presidential voting, I take into account two other policy issue dimensions that divide the parties: economics and race.[16] There are longstanding differences between the parties on issues of economics and there has been growing party polarization among party elites in this domain (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; McCarty et al. 2006; Layman et al. 2010). For economic issues, the 2000 NAES provides a rich set of items. For each of 12 items in survey asking about issues like taxes, spending on schools, healthcare, and income inequality I computed the state mean for white respondents ($\alpha = .93$) and then created a scale based on the scoring coefficients produced by factor analysis (Appendix Table 7).

The other policy dimension that I take into account is racial issues. At least since the 1960s (Carmines and Stimson 1989), and possibly earlier (Schickler 2016) a racial divide among party elites has reemerged. To measure racial attitudes, I follow Highton (2011) and Tesler (2012, 2016) and rely on the *PEW Values Survey* (PEW). Highton (2011) uses a single item from the survey on opinions about interracial

[15] I employed the *mi* routine in Stata (StataCorp. 2017), using a multivariate normal model and Bayesian iterative Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) procedures. See the Appendix for further details.

[16] See the Appendix for a discussion of two other plausibly important issues (immigration and guns) that are not included in the analysis.

dating to measure "prejudice," while Tesler analyzes the interracial dating question and another on affirmative action. The survey also includes two other questions on racial attitudes, one asking about the level of discrimination faced by blacks and another on the amount of improvement in the position of black people. While these four items might, in theory, tap different dimensions of racial attitudes (e.g., prejudice, old-fashioned racism, racial resentment, etc.), empirically at the state-level they are highly correlated. The alpha reliability coefficient of the state means among white respondents is high ($\alpha = .90$), and the presence of a single underlying factor is suggested by the factor analysis as shown in Appendix Table 8.[17] Therefore I create a single measure of state white racial attitudes based on the factor analysis of these four items.[18,19]

Findings

Table 1 reports the parameter estimates of state white partisanship and cultural issue attitudes from 2004 to 2016 as laid out in Eqs. (1) and (2). The values of all variables range from more Democratic/liberal to more Republican/conservative. To facilitate comparisons across variables and models, I rescaled all of the variables so that the 10th percentile value (the fifth out of the 50 states) was coded 0 and the 90th percentile (the 45th out of the 50 states) was coded 1.

Stability in cultural attitudes and party identification is clearly evident. As shown in Panel A of Table 1, for cultural attitudes ($CULT_t$) the estimated effects of previous attitudes ($CULT_{t-4}$) are never below .80 and average .89 across the 4 models. [In 2004, the estimated effect of previous cultural attitudes (1.06) indicates a 1:1 translation of cultural attitudes from 2000 to 2004.] Partisan stability is also evident, though it appears to be less than that observed for cultural attitudes. As shown in the Panel B of Table 1, the estimated effects of previous partisanship (PID_{t-4}) on current partisanship (PID_t) range from .53 to .91 with an average estimate of .75.

Turning to the cross-lagged effects, conditional on previous cultural attitudes ($CULT_{t-4}$), party identification (PID_{t-4}) is only significantly (substantively and

[17] Because the yearly sample sizes are smaller with the PEW data, following Highton (2011), which is also a state-level analysis (as opposed to Tesler (2012, 2016), which analyzes the individual-level data) I pool all of the PEW surveys over the period of time the four racial attitudes questions were asked from 1987 through 2000. This could put the racial attitudes measure at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the other two attitudinal measures, however as I will show the lack of much apparent effect of racial attitudes on white partisanship is not matched by a lack of apparent effect of racial attitudes on white presidential voting.

[18] A factor analysis of all of the items (cultural, economic, racial) together confirms that there are three distinct dimensions. For one of the three extracted factors, the average loading for the cultural items is .85 compared to .06 for the economic items and .28 for the racial items. On the second factor, the average loading for economic items is .71 compared to .02 for the cultural items and .01 for the racial items. On the third factor, the average loading for racial items is .70 compared to .03 for economic items and .09 for cultural items.

[19] Unlike the measures of state partisanship and cultural issue attitudes, constructing measures of state white economic and racial attitudes in the presidential election years between 2000 and 2016 was not possible due to lack of suitable items. While this places some limits on the analyses that may be undertaken, it does not interfere with testing the key hypotheses about long-term cultural realignment.

Table 1 Parameter estimates of state white partisanship and cultural issue attitudes, 2004–2016

	2004	2008	2012	2016
A. Dependent variable: cultural attitudes ($Cult_t$)				
$CULT_{t-4}$	1.06* (.05)	.88* (.04)	.80* (.06)	.81* (.11)
PID_{t-4}	.08 (.05)	.04 (.05)	.21* (.07)	.16 (.11)
B. Dependent variable: partisanship ($PIDt$)				
$CULT_{t-4}$	.15* (.05)	.06 (.04)	.28* (.08)	.41* (.10)
PID_{t-4}	.80* (.04)	.91* (.05)	.75* (.08)	.53* (.10)

All variables range from more Democratic/liberal to more Republican/conservative. All variables are scaled so the 10th percentile value (the fifth out of the 50 states) is coded 0 and the 90th percentile (the 45th out of the 50 states) is coded 1. See text for details. In addition to including $CULT_{-4}$ and PID_{t-4}, the models also include an intercept term. Standard errors in parentheses

*Indicates $p < .05$

statistically) related to current cultural attitudes in ($CULT_t$) in one of the 4 years (2012) with a parameter estimate of .21 ($p < .05$). Across all 4 years, the average cross-lagged effect of party identification on cultural attitudes is just .12. In contrast, more sizable effects are evident for the cross-lagged effects of cultural attitudes ($CULT_{t-4}$) on party identification (PID_t), conditional on previous party identification (PID_{t-4}). In three of the 4 years the estimated effects are .15 or greater ($p < .05$) and the average effect is 0.23.

Long-term stability and change in cultural attitudes and partisanship over the entire period is evident when the values of these variables at the end of the time period (2016) are regressed on their values at the beginning (2000). Those estimates are reported in Table 2. The estimates of state partisanship in 2016 are in the first column of results in Table 2. Both PID_{2000} and $CULT_{2000}$ have significant effects. Some continuity in partisanship over the 16-year period is evident, as indicated by the estimated effect of .38 for partisanship in 2000. However, the apparent effect of cultural issue attitudes is even more substantial (.63).

The second column of results in Table 2 reports the parameter estimates of cultural issue attitudes in 2016. The estimated effect of $CULT_{2000}$ (.94) indicates an almost 1:1 relationship between cultural attitudes in 2000 and 2016. There is only a modest effect of PID_{2000} on cultural attitudes in 2016 (.16) and it is notably smaller than the reciprocal effect of cultural issue attitudes on partisanship from the model of party identification (.63). Thus, partisanship in 2016 appears influenced by partisanship in 2000 and (more strongly) by cultural attitudes in 2000 while cultural attitudes in 2016 appear influenced almost exclusively by cultural attitudes in 2000, with a very modest influence of partisanship in 2000.[20]

[20] To investigate whether there is regional variation that might be driving the results, I reestimated the two models including interactions between the independent variables and a dummy variable coded 1 for the 11 former Confederate states and 0 for nonsouthern states. None of the interactions reach conventional levels of statistical significance and tests of the joint significance of the set of interactions (in both

Table 2 Parameter estimates of state white partisanship and cultural issue attitudes in 2016

	Dependent variable	
	PID_{2016}	$CULT_{2016}$
PID_{2000}	.38* (.08)	.16* (.05)
$CULT_{2000}$	.63* (.09)	.94* (.06)
Constant	.02 (.05)	−.03 (.03)
R^2	.78	.90
SEE	.19	.13

All variables range from more Democratic/liberal to more Republican/conservative. All variables are scaled so the 10th percentile value (the fifth out of the 50 states) is coded 0 and the 90th percentile (the 45th out of the 50 states) is coded 1. See text for details. Standard errors in parentheses

*Indicates $p < .05$

The estimated effects from Table 2 are displayed graphically in Fig. 1 with partial plots. Cultural issue attitudes in 2016 is the dependent variable in the two panels on the left side of the figure. Those panels show that strong stability in cultural attitudes over the time period (top left panel) and the modest relationship between partisanship in 2000 and cultural issue attitudes in 2016 (bottom left panel). The two panels on the right side of Fig. 1 show the parallel results for party identification in 2016 where the more modest partisan stability (bottom right panel) and larger effect of cultural attitudes (top right panel) are both evident. Comparing the top left panel to the bottom right panel shows how much stronger the stability in cultural issue attitudes is (top left) relative to party identification (bottom right). Comparing the bottom left panel to the top right panel illustrates the difference in the cross-lagged effects. The modest effect of partisanship in 2000 on cultural attitudes in 2016 (bottom left) is all the more striking in comparison with the more significant effect of cultural attitudes in 2000 on partisanship in 2016 (top right). What appears to have happened over the period covered by the analysis is a realignment of state white partisanship that has brought it more into alignment with the pre-existing cultural issue attitudes of state white electorates.

Given that state white partisanship increasingly reflects the cultural issue attitudes of whites, one would expect an increasing association between cultural issues attitudes and the state white presidential vote over time. That is indeed the case. The correlation between the cultural issue attitudes in 2000 and presidential vote in 2000 is .75, and over the successive four elections the respective correlations are .79, .79, .82, and .87. The increasing magnitude of the relationship is especially impressive given that the time between when cultural issue attitudes were measured (2000) and the presidential election results for which the correlations are computed increases from 0 to 16 years.

Footnote 20 (continued)
models) indicate that null hypothesis of no regional variation in effects cannot be rejected with confidence ($p = .39$ for the parameter estimates of partisanship in 2016 and $p = .61$ for the parameter estimates of cultural issue attitudes in 2016).

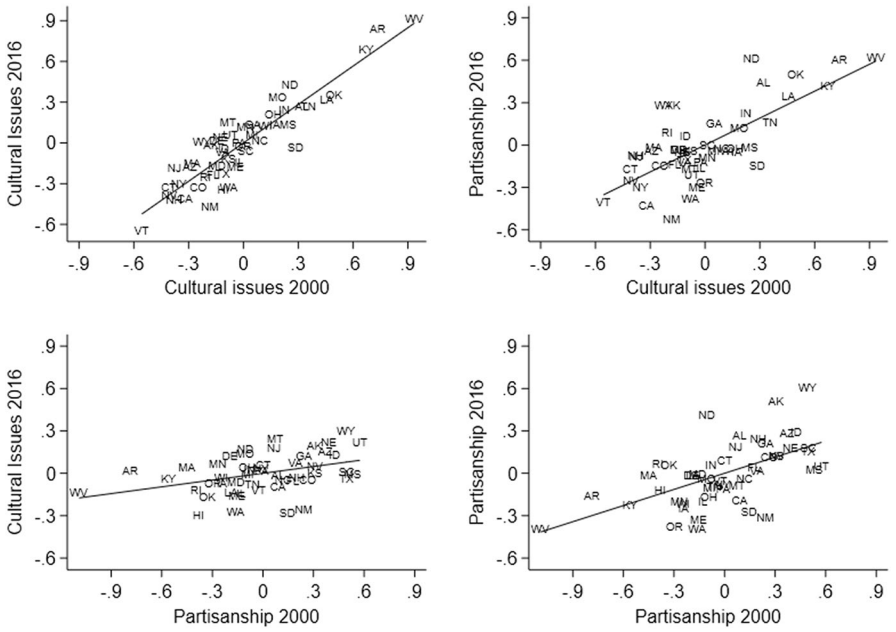

Fig. 1 Estimated effects of partisanship and cultural issues in 2000 on partisanship and cultural issues in 2016 (partial plots). Notes: Based on model estimates from Table 1. See text for details

Table 3 Parameter estimates of state white presidential vote

Variable	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
PID_{2000}	33.2* (4.2)	30.2* (4.8)	24.4* (6.5)	25.7* (6.2)	13.9* (5.6)
$Cultural\ Issues_{2000}$	20.4* (4.1)	22.5* (4.7)	24.2* (6.4)	30.8* (6.1)	38.0* (5.5)
$Economic\ Issues_{2000}$	0.9 (3.9)	−1.4 (4.5)	1.0 (6.1)	−1.7 (5.8)	−4.0 (5.2)
$Racial\ Issues_{2000}$	2.6 (4.0)	12.1* (4.6)	28.0* (6.2)	21.1* (5.9)	12.0* (5.3)
Constant	−12.2* (2.0)	−11.3* (2.3)	−23.8* (3.1)	−14.9* (3.0)	−5.9* (2.7)
R^2	.89	.87	.83	.84	.82
SEE	7.2	8.3	11.3	10.8	9.7

Dependent variable is the state-level Republican margin (in percentage points) among white voters (Republican candidate's percentage of the vote minus Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote). Independent variables are scaled so the 10th percentile value (the fifth out of the 50 states) is coded 0 and the 90th percentile (the 45th out of the 50 states) is coded 1. See text for details. $n = 50$ for all models. Standard errors in parentheses

*Indicates $p < .05$

A more rigorous, election-by-election analysis is presented in Table 3, which shows the OLS estimates of state white presidential vote in each of the five presidential elections from 2000 to 2016. The independent variables in each model are partisanship and cultural issue attitudes along with economic issue attitudes and racial

issue attitudes—all measured in 2000.[21] Recall that the state white presidential vote is the Republican margin (Republican percentage of the vote minus the Democratic percentage of the vote) and that the independent variables are all scaled to set the fifth ranked state (the 10th percentile) at 0 and the 46th ranked state (the 90th percentile) at 1. Thus, for example, the estimated effect of partisanship on presidential vote in 2000 (33.2) indicates that the estimated effect of being one of the most Republican states compared to the one of the least Republican states was associated with a greater Republican margin of victory of about 33 percentage points. In fact, for the 2000 presidential election, the estimated effect of partisanship was the largest of the four independent variables, though there was a substantial estimated effect of cultural issue attitudes, too (20.4). The same was true in 2004 when the respective estimates for partisanship and cultural issue attitudes are 30.2 and 22.5, respectively. Also of note in 2004 is a smaller, but noticeable, effect of racial issue attitudes on the state white presidential vote (12.1). In 2008, with the first major party African American candidate on the ballot, the estimates for partisanship (24.4), cultural issue attitudes (24.2), *and* racial issue attitudes (28.0) were all roughly the same and substantial.

By 2016 the estimated effect of partisanship dropped to just 13.9. The estimated effect of racial issue attitudes also declined to 12.0 in 2016. In contrast, the effect of cultural issue attitudes increased from 24.4 in 2008 to 30.8 in 2012 and then again to 38.0 in 2016. In other words, by the time of the presidential election contest between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in 2016, the relationship between the state white presidential vote and state cultural issue attitudes was (a) stronger than it was in 2000, and (b) stronger than the relationship between partisanship and state white presidential vote. Over time, presidential election results, like party identification, appear to have come into stronger alignment with states' preexisting cultural issue attitudes.

Discussion and Conclusion

At the turn of the 21st century, white West Virginians were among the most Democratic state white electorates. Their level of Democratic partisanship was in the top five (along with Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Hawaii) and they ranked above the median state white electorate in terms of Democratic presidential voting. Over the ensuing decade and a half, the movement of white West Virginians toward the Republican party was more substantial than that for whites of nearly every other state. Viewed only from the perspective of the traditional, longstanding economic cleavage between the parties (McCarty et al. 1997, 2006), the change is hard to explain as white West Virginians were in the most liberal group of states on issues of social welfare and economics in 2000. The change becomes more understandable if one also notes that in terms of their cultural

[21] Ideally, in addition to estimating the effects of the independent variables in 2000 on the subsequent presidential elections as in Table 3, I would have also estimated a set of models where presidential vote in year (t) is regressed on previous presidential vote ($t-4$) and the independent variables measured at time ($t-4$). As described earlier, estimating these models was not possible. However, the Appendix provides additional estimates based on the same logic. The results reinforce those reported in Table 3.

attitudes, white West Virginians were among the most conservative in 2000. The results reported in this paper suggest that a realignment among white West Virginians has taken place along the cultural dimension of American politics—a realignment that occurred throughout the country.

Cultural issue attitudes of state white electorates have become increasingly aligned with partisanship and presidential voting. The cross-lagged models estimated in the first part of the analysis strongly suggest that cultural issue attitudes are the primary causal force in the realigning process. The relationship between cultural issue attitudes in 2000 and partisanship in 2016 (conditional on partisanship in 2000) is much stronger than the relationship between partisanship in 2000 and cultural issue attitudes in 2016 (conditional on cultural issue attitudes in 2000).

In light of the strength of the connection between cultural attitudes and partisanship and cultural attitudes and presidential elections, it is natural to ask what characteristics of states are associated with state white cultural issue attitudes. To gain some insight, I analyzed the relationship between state white cultural issues attitudes in 2000 and a host of factors. As shown in Table 4 state racial and ethnicity characteristics (% African American and % Hispanic) are barely related to the cultural attitudes of white state electorates. State measures of socioeconomic state are more strongly related to cultural attitudes. Better educated states and wealthier states had white electorates that were less culturally conservative in 2000, though the latter relationship does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance (p = .24). Two measures of state religiosity are also related to state white cultural attitudes.

Table 4 Correlates of state white cultural issue attitudes in 2000

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error
Southern state	−.01	.10
% African American	.04	.11
% Hispanic	−.04	.07
% with bachelor's degree	−.23*	.11
Income per capita	−.15	.13
% urban	.21	.12
% Evangelical	.38*	.11
Christian Right strength (Conger measure)	.17*	.08
% foreign born	−.29*	.12
Constant	.45*	.09
R^2: .83		
SEE: .17		

To facilitate comparison of coefficient estimates across variables, all variables are scaled the 10th percentile value (the fifth out of the 50 states) is coded 0 and the 90th percentile (the 45th out of the 50 states) is coded 1. n = 50. Positive coefficients indicate that higher values of the independent variable are associated with more conservative cultural attitudes. Negative coefficients indicate that higher values of the independent variable are associated with more liberal cultural attitudes. Standard errors in parentheses

*Indicates $p < .05$

States with a greater percentage of Evangelicals and states where the Christian Right was stronger (Conger 2010) had state white electorates that were more culturally conservative. Finally, those states with a greater percentage of foreign born residents were less culturally conservative than states with fewer born residents.

The results in Table 4 indicate what kind of state white electorates were more and less culturally conservative in 2000. Given the strong connections between state while cultural issue attitudes in 2000 and state white partisanship and state white presidential voting over the ensuing 16 years, the results in Table 4 also indicate what kinds of states became more and less Republican in partisanship and presidential voting over time. Determining whether these transformations are purely state-level phenomena or whether they also (or instead) reflect individual-level processes of change is beyond the bounds of what can be done here. However, it is worth noting that the findings reported in this paper are consistent with individual-level studies like Goren and Chapp (2017) that find partisanship more pliable than cultural policy preferences. They also suggest the possibility of an important caveat to one of Converse's (1964) key claims that a "primary generalization … [is that] the party and the affect toward it are more central within the political belief systems of the mass public than are the policy ends that the parties are designed to pursue" (Converse 1964, p. 241). Rather, over the longer term, when a salient and important issue becomes and remains the basis of a cleavage between the parties, that issue may become more central in ordinary citizens' belief systems and induce change in partisanship, rather than the other way around.[22]

Finally, in light of Key (1959) and many others who have studied the evolution of partisan alignments and realignments and found the process to unfold over an extended period of time, there is no reason to believe that the cultural realignment began with the first year of data analyzed in this paper (2000). Nor is there reason to believe that the process concluded with the last year of data used for this paper (2016). While notably longer than the periods of time covered by most individual-level analyses of partisanship and issue preferences, from the perspective of American party development and change, the 16-year period covered by the analysis in this paper is not terribly long. Nevertheless, even if a less than a complete and comprehensive account, this paper does provide a theoretical and empirical explanation for an important and ongoing process of change in American politics.

Appendix

Party Identification

Table 5 shows the correlation matrix for the measure of party identification across the five presidential election years. The patterns are what one would expect, namely

[22] To be sure, this is not to say the evidence showing that ordinary citizens sometimes adopt or change their preferences to those of their preferred parties is wrong (e.g., Lenz 2009, 2012; Margolis 2018a, b). However, the notion that either partisanship or issue positions are always more central may be in need of revision (Highton and Kam 2011).

Table 5 Correlations between state white party identification from 2000 to 2016

	PID_{2000}	PID_{2004}	PID_{2008}	PID_{2012}	PID_{2016}
PID_{2000}	1.00				
PID_{2004}	.95	1.00			
PID_{2008}	.90	.97	1.00		
PID_{2012}	.85	.87	.90	1.00	
PID_{2016}	.72	.80	.85	.89	1.00

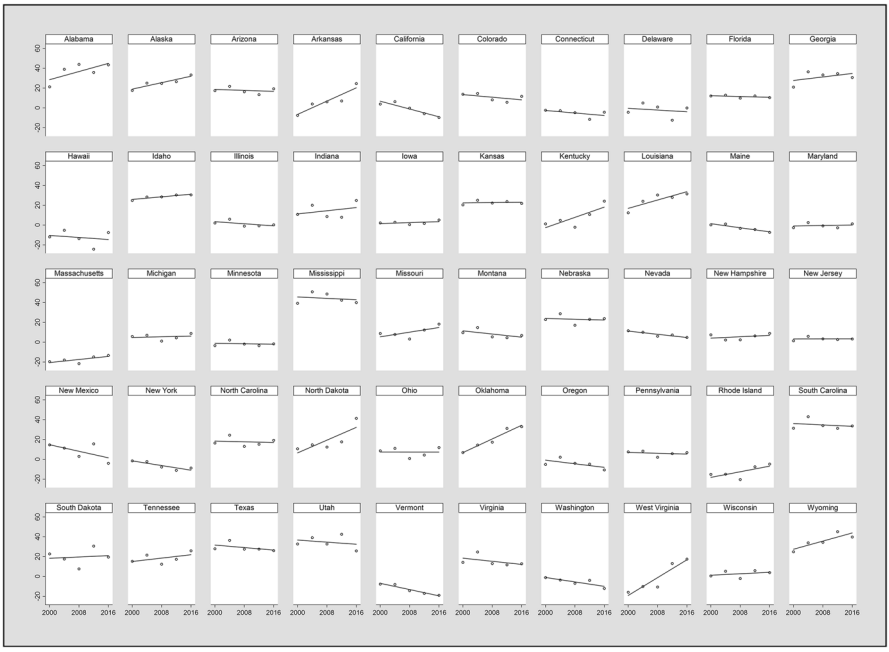

Fig. 2 Trends in state white partisanship, 2000–2016

that the correlations are all positive and substantial but smaller in magnitude as the time between measures increases. The average correlation when the time interval is 4 years is .93.[23] For 8 year intervals the average correlation is .87, and for 12 year intervals the average is .83. The only 16 year interval is from 2000 to 2016 and the correlation between state white partisanship in 2000 and 2016 is .72, indicating that only just about 50% of the variance in white state partisanship in 2016 can be accounted for by white state partisanship in 2000.

Figure 2 presents the observed data in a different fashion, but one that is more relevant for the purposes of this paper. For each of the fifty states, there is a scatterplot

[23] The four intervals are 2000 to 2004, 2004 to 2008, 2008 to 2012, and 2012 to 2016.

Table 6 Measuring state white cultural attitudes in 2000

Item	Factor loading	Scoring coefficient
Make abortion harder to get in general	.93	.14
Federal government make abortion harder	.96	.39
Abortion ban	.86	.06
Homosexuals in the military	.92	.15
Homosexual job discrimination	.87	.17
Homosexual group favorability	.92	.15

Factor loadings from principal-factor factor analysis of the indicated items. Higher values indicate more conservative views. A single dominant factor emerged with an eigenvalue of 5.0. (The second factor had an eigenvalue of .47). The scale of cultural attitudes was constructed using the regression scoring method

showing white state partisanship by year along with a line defined by regressing white state partisanship on time. As noted in the main text, several important observations emerge. First, there is substantial change across some states, but the direction and magnitude of change is far from uniform. Some state white electorates (e.g., Arkansas and West Virginia) have moved substantially in the Republican direction while others (e.g., California and New Mexico) have moved significantly toward the Democrats. Second, a simple model of linear change (by state) fits the data well. While there is some variation around the state trend lines, it is not substantial.[24]

Issue Attitude Scales

As described in the main text, the cultural, economic, and racial issue attitude scales were all multi-item scales and constructed on the basis of factor analysis results. Those results are shown in Tables 6, 7, and 8.

Other Issues: Immigration and Guns

While the goal is create broad-based issue attitude scales that capture the most significant policy areas, some specific issues of plausible political significance are left out. In light of relatively recent events and political conflict, perhaps the two most notable exclusions in this paper are the issues of immigration and guns. First, with respect to immigration the available evidence suggests that it fits more closely with the cultural dimension than the racial dimension of issue attitudes. For example, the one immigration item in the 2000 Annenberg survey has an average state-level correlation of .75 with the six items in the cultural issue attitudes scale and .50 with the

[24] A model of linear change (by state) with time fits the data better than one that also includes a higher order polynomial ($time^2$).

Table 7 Measuring state white economic attitudes in 2000

Item	Factor loading	Scoring coefficient
Taxes versus social security	.72	.08
Taxes versus medicare	.69	.06
Spending on schools	.69	.04
Uninsured as problem	.73	.15
Spending on uninsured	.91	.27
Spending on medicare	.68	.01
Universal healthcare for children	.88	.20
Spending on medicaid	.68	.13
Poverty as problem	.81	.14
Income inequality	.71	.05
Spending on mothers with children	.59	.02
Invest social security in stock market	.69	.03

Factor loadings from principal-factor factor analysis of the indicated items. Higher values indicate more conservative views. A single dominant factor emerged with an eigenvalue of 6.5. (The second factor had an eigenvalue of .82). The scale of economic attitudes was constructed using the regression scoring method

Table 8 Measuring state white racial attitudes in 2000

Item	Factor loading	Scoring coefficient
Perceived improvement in position of blacks	.82	.26
Approval of black-white dating	.86	.32
Support for preferential treatment for blacks	.77	.20
Perceived level of discrimination against blacks	.86	.30

Factor loadings from principal-factor factor analysis of the indicated items. Higher values indicate more conservative views. A single dominant factor emerged with an eigenvalue of 2.7. (The second factor had an eigenvalue of .13). The scale of racial attitudes was constructed using the regression scoring method

items in the racial attitudes scale. For the reasons described in the main text, I did not include immigration item in the cultural attitudes.[25]

The 2000 Annenberg survey also includes two questions about gun control. They are highly correlated (.88) with each other but are not highly correlated with the items in the cultural issue scale (average correlation of .44). In preliminary analyses, I created a separate measure of attitudes about guns, but when included in the

[25] In supplementary analyses I found that whether the immigration item is included or excluded has no effect on any of the substantive results.

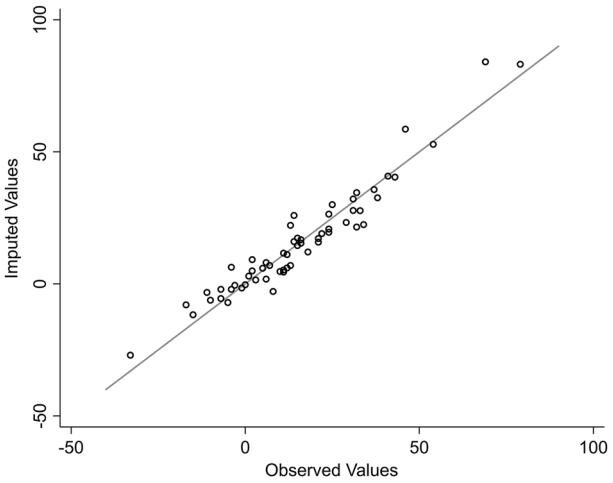

Fig. 3 Observed versus imputed values of state presidential vote (overimputation results). Note: See main text for a description of the imputation (StataCorp. 2017) and overimputation (Honaker et al. 2011) procedures employed

models with the other issue scales no distinct effect of preferences regarding gun control was evident. As a result, the models of partisanship and presidential voting do not include the measure of gun control issue attitudes.

State White Presidential Vote

As mentioned in the main text, I imputed some values of the presidential vote in 2012 and 2016. The imputations are based on the 2008 state white presidential votes for all 50 states, the observed values for the states with exit polls in 2012 and 2016, and the reported state white presidential vote in 2012 and 2016 from the CCES surveys.[26] To assess the quality of the estimates, I employed a procedure developed and advocated by Honaker et al. (2011), called "overimputation." Overimputation involves (a) treating the observed values (one at a time) as if they were missing, (b) running the imputation procedure, and then (c) comparing the imputed values to the observed values. I overimputed the 59 state white presidential vote margins for which state exit polls were available in 2012 and 2016 and found that the imputation performed very well. As shown in Appendix Fig. 3, the correlation between actual and imputed values was nearly 1.0 (r = .96).

[26] An alternative would be to rely on the CCES for the 2012 and 2016 state white presidential vote estimates. As shown in the Appendix, the results are almost identical.

Table 9 Parameter estimates of state white presidential vote

Variable	2004	2008	2012	2016
$Presvote_{t-4}$	.79* (.13)	1.06* (.13)	.85* (.06)	.63* (.10)
PID_{2000}	3.7 (5.4)	−7.6 (5.7)	4.9 (3.2)	−2.3 (4.7)
$Cultural\ Issues_{2000}$	6.1 (4.3)	0.4 (5.0)	10.2* (3.2)	18.5* (5.0)
$Economic\ Issues_{2000}$	−.20 (3.3)	2.5 (3.8)	2.6 (2.6)	−2.9 (3.8)
$Racial\ Issues_{2000}$	9.9* (3.3)	15.2* (4.2)	−2.8 (3.2)	−1.2 (4.3)
Constant	−1.6 (2.3)	−11.8* (2.4)	5.4* (2.1)	3.5 (2.4)
R^2	.93	.93	.97	.91
SEE	6.1	7.2	4.9	7.0

Dependent variable is the state-level Republican margin (in percentage points) among white voters (Republican candidate's percentage of the vote minus Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote). Independent variables (except previous presidential vote, which is not rescaled) are scaled so the 10th percentile value (the fifth out of the 50 states) is coded 0 and the 90th percentile (the 45th out of the 50 states) is coded 1. See text for details. n = 50 for all models

*Indicates $p < .05$

Table 10 Parameter estimates of state white presidential vote

Variable	2004	2008	2012	2016
$Presvote_{t-4}$	.83* (.13)	1.41* (.18)	.79* (.08)	.67* (.11)
PID_{t-4}	2.1 (5.3)	−19.6* (8.4)	3.1 (4.2)	−10.2 (6.3)
$Cultural\ Issues_{t-4}$	11.1* (4.3)	2.8 (5.1)	11.3* (3.4)	18.6* (5.7)
Constant	−0.7 (2.3)	−7.1* (2.5)	4.1* (2.0)	4.7* (2.2)
R^2	.92	.92	.97	.90
SEE	6.5	7.9	4.9	7.3

Dependent variable is the state-level Republican margin (in percentage points) among white voters (Republican candidate's percentage of the vote minus Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote). Independent variables (except previous presidential vote, which is not rescaled) are scaled so the 10th percentile value (the fifth out of the 50 states) is coded 0 and the 90th percentile (the 45th out of the 50 states) is coded 1. See text for details. n = 50 for all models

*Indicates $p < .05$

Alternative Models of State-Presidential Vote

Table 3 in the main text reports the main findings regarding the correlates of state white presidential voting from 2000 to 2016. In those models, all four independent variables (party identification and the three issue attitudes) are measured in 2000. The advantages are that they are all on the same footing—by being measured in the same year—and concerns about endogeneity are mitigated because with the exception of the estimates for presidential voting in 2000, the independent variables are measured at a point in time before the dependent variables.

An extension of the model estimated in Table 3 is shown in Table 9. In that model, lagged presidential vote is included as an independent variable for

predicting state white presidential voting from 2004 to 2016. Across all four elections there is notable stability in presidential voting with the parameter estimates for lagged presidential vote ranging from .63 (2016) to 1.06 (2008). In addition, with lagged presidential vote included in the model, the coefficients for the issue attitude scales provide estimates for change in presidential voting from the previous election (Finkel 1995). The estimates for cultural issue attitudes are all positive, indicating that conservative white electorates changed more toward Republican presidential voting, especially in the 2012 and 2016 elections.

Another extension of the presidential voting model is shown in Table 10. As described in the main text it was not possible to measure economic and racial issue attitudes in the years subsequent to 2000. It was possible for partisanship and cultural issue attitudes. Thus Table 10 relates state white presidential vote to the lagged values of state presidential vote, partisanship, and cultural issue attitudes. The patterns of estimates are similar to those in Table 10, though the magnitudes appear larger for the negative effects of partisanship (in 2008 and 2016).

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