

## Myths and Realities of American Political Geography

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**I**n the aftermath of the 2000 election, David Brooks (2001) wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* that America was split into red states and blue states. In red states, people believed in God, watched NASCAR and voted for George W. Bush. In blue states, people ate Thai food, cared about the environment and voted for Albert Gore. The 2004 election, which seemed geographically to be a replay of 2000, only reinforced the perceived value of this framework. Only three states—Iowa, New Hampshire and New Mexico—switched parties between the elections.

In this essay, we revisit America's political geography and ask what is true and false about the "red state/blue state" framework. We begin by identifying five myths associated with this framework: 1) American is divided into two politically homogenous regions; 2) The two parties are more spatially segregated than in the past; 3) America's political geography is more stable than in the past; 4) America's cultural divisions are increasing; and 5) America is becoming more politically polarized.

But despite the myths surrounding the red state/blue state paradigm, the framework captures two important truths. The first important truth is that America is a country with remarkable geographic diversity in its habits and beliefs. People in different states have wildly different views about religion, homosexuality, AIDS, and military policy, as well as wildly different consumption patterns. The distribution of states along all dimensions is continuous, not bimodal, but this continuum should never be confused with homogeneity. Moreover, America's ideological diversity is not particularly new. In the 1930s, New England was much more socially liberal than the South. The extent and permanence of cultural divisions across space is

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one of America's most remarkable features. While spatial sorting on the basis of income or tastes may seem natural to most economists, the remarkable spatial heterogeneity of beliefs—political and otherwise—presents a challenge to the standard models of belief formation. In spite of the fact that they've seen the same evidence, people in different regions have very different views of current events. For example, in the April 2004 CBS/New York Times poll, 23 percent of respondents in Oregon, Washington and California thought that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11, 2001, attacks. Forty-seven percent of respondents in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas had that view.

The second important truth captured by the red state/blue state framework is that political parties and politicians have had an increasing tendency to divide on cultural and religious issues rather than on economic differences. In historical perspective, cultural politics is not unusual. In the late nineteenth century, "Rum, Romanism and rebellion" were the core issues that determined the Republican Party. But the United States did experience a mid-twentieth-century era of economic politics, and so the rebirth of cultural issues is a genuine change.

Why has culture dominated politics so much more effectively than economics during much of American history? Glaeser, Ponzetto and Shapiro (2005), following Murphy and Shleifer (2004), present a model where extremism occurs because political divisions are needed to mobilize inframarginal voters, but going to extremes is only rational when political messages are heard disproportionately by one's own supporters. Political divisions therefore follow social cleavages because social organizations allow politicians to send targeted messages. This model helps explain why economic divisions between the parties only became entrenched in the middle of the twentieth century with the rise of the labor movement and its growing connection to the Democratic Party, and why, as unions have lost their importance, religion has again come to dominate political debate.

## **Five Myths of American Political Geography**

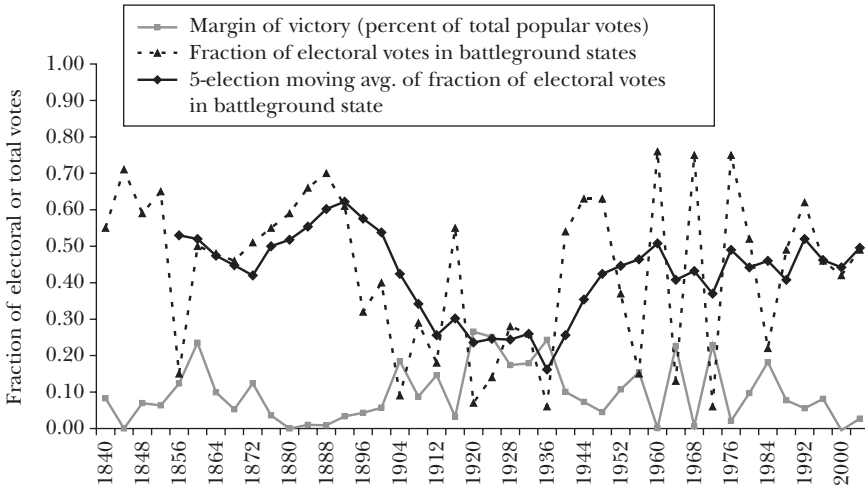
### **Myth #1: America Is Divided Into Two Politically Homogeneous Areas.**

Does the red state/blue state paradigm, which describes the remarkable spatial configuration of Democrats on the coast and Republicans in the heartland, mean that Americans are increasingly living in politically homogenous states, so that a smaller number of people live in swing states? Is it true, as E. J. Dionne (2003) asserted, that "the red states get redder, the blue states get bluer," and, as a result, elections are being decided by a smaller and smaller number of battleground states?

Figure 1 shows the time series of the share of electoral votes in "battleground" states, where we define battlegrounds as those states with a margin of victory that was less than 10 percent. (Alternative definitions using 5 to 20 percent margins of victory show similar results.) The dotted line shows the share of electoral votes in

Figure 1

**Popular Vote Margin of Victory and Share of Electoral Votes in Battleground States (10%) in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1840–2004**



*Note:* Margin of Victory calculated as  $|(number\ of\ Democratic\ votes/total\ votes) - (number\ of\ Republican\ votes/total\ votes)|$ . Battleground states are those with  $(Margin\ of\ Victory) \leq 10\%$ .  
*Sources:* Clubb et al. (2005) for 1840–1972; ICPSR (1995) for 1972–1988; Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections for 1992–2004.

battleground states in every election from 1840 until today. The black line shows the average of the past five elections. The gray line at the bottom of the figure shows the popular-vote “margin of victory” in the last election.

The election-by-election results show a great deal of volatility in the share of electoral votes, or population, connected with battleground states. In close elections, such as 1960, 1968 and 1976, more than 70 percent of the electoral votes were cast in battlegrounds. In blowout elections, like 1964 or 1972, less than 15 percent of the votes are in such states. In the last three elections, between 40 and 50 percent of the electoral votes were in swing states.

To show trends that underlie this volatility, the black line in Figure 1 displays the 20-year moving average of the share of electoral votes in battleground states. The moving average shows no evidence of a general downward trend in the number of swing states. Instead, the time series suggests three periods in post-1840 U.S. electoral history. Between 1840 and 1900, on average, around 55 percent of the electoral votes lived in swing states. Between 1904 and 1948, around 30 percent of electoral votes were in swing states. After 1952, the United States reverted to pre-1900 patterns. The first half of the twentieth century had an unusual abundance of landslide states; the current period does not.

**Myth #2: The Two Parties Are More Spatially Segregated Than In The Past.**

Though the number of states that can be considered “safe” for either party has not been rising over time, could there be more political segregation at the local level? County-level evidence shows that segregation by party is not significantly increasing and is, in fact, much lower than many other forms of segregation.

Two indices commonly used to measure racial segregation can also be used to measure political segregation: dissimilarity and isolation. The dissimilarity index measures the share of the total population of either group 1 or group 2 that would need to be moved across areas for there to be an equal proportion of group 1 in every area.<sup>1</sup> A high dissimilarity index indicates a large degree of segregation; if a large share of the population must move in order to be evenly distributed, then the population must currently be highly segregated. The isolation index measures the share of the population belonging to group 1 where the average member of group 1 lives. A high isolation index also indicates a large degree of segregation; if the typical member of group 1 lives in an area where the proportion of group 1 greatly exceeds the proportion of group 1 in the total population, then the population is highly segregated.<sup>2</sup>

Following Klinkner (2004), we calculate dissimilarity indices and isolation indices for Republicans and Democrats based on voting in the last presidential election, between 1840 and today. For years prior to 1856, the segregation indices represent the segregation between Whigs and Democrats. In all cases, we have eliminated individuals who voted for neither Republican nor Democratic candidates. We use counties as the units of observation. Figure 2 shows the time patterns of these indices.

The dissimilarity index shows that there have been two time periods where the United States was unusually divided spatially: the elections of 1856 and 1860, when dissimilarity topped 40 percent and the geographically based Civil War ensued, and 1924, when dissimilarity was greater than 30 percent. Over the last 60 years, dissimilarity has generally been below 20 percent. The past four elections do show a slight upward trend, but nothing like the remarkable rise seen between 1916 and 1924. Moreover, this level of dissimilarity is much less than the dissimilarity of

<sup>1</sup> The dissimilarity index between group 1 and group 2 is defined as:

$$Dissimilarity = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{All\ Areas} \left| \frac{Population_{1,Area}}{Population_{1,Total}} - \frac{Population_{2,Area}}{Population_{2,Total}} \right|$$

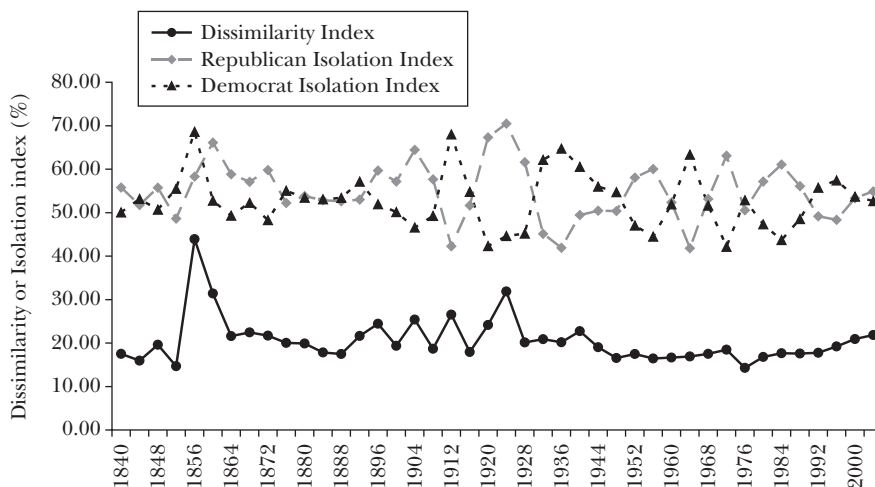
where  $Population_{i,Area}$  refers to the population of group  $i$  for  $i = 1$  or  $2$  in a geographic area and  $Population_{i,Total}$  refers to the total population of group  $i$ .

<sup>2</sup> The isolation index of group 1 is defined as:

$$Isolation = \sum_{All\ Areas} \frac{Population_{1,Area}}{Population_{1,Total}} \cdot \frac{Population_{1,Area}}{Population_{1,Area} + Population_{2,Area}}$$

Figure 2

**County-level Dissimilarity and Isolation Indices for Whig/Republican and Democratic Presidential Votes, 1840–2004**



*Notes:* Dissimilarity index calculated by using:  $\text{dissimilarity index} = (100\%)*(1/2)\sum|(\text{total vote Republican in a county}/\text{total vote Republican in U.S.}) - (\text{total vote Democrat in a county}/\text{total vote Democrat in U.S.})|$ , and the summation was over all counties within the United States. Isolation index calculated by using:  $\text{isolation index for Republicans} = (100\%)*\sum|(\text{total vote Republican in a county}/\text{total vote Republican in U.S.}) - (\text{total vote Republican in a county}/\text{total vote Democrat or Republican in a county})|$ , and the summation was overall counties within the United States. A similar calculation is used for the Democrat isolation index.

*Sources:* Clubb et al. (2005) for 1840–1972; ICPSR (1995) for 1972–1988; Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections for 1992–2004.

college- and non-college-educated adults across counties (.25) or blacks and non-blacks (.46).

The isolation measures show even less of an upward trend. The isolation index in 2004 was 53.4 percent for Republicans and 52.6 percent for Democrats. These numbers are much lower than they were during the Republican 1920s, when the average Republican lived in a county where 70 percent of the voters also voted Republican, or the Democratic 1930s where the average Democrat lived in a county where 60 percent of the voters supported Franklin Roosevelt. There is just no evidence that today’s voters are generally living in politically highly segregated counties.

**Myth #3: America’s Political Geography Is More Stable Than In The Past.**

While the segregation of the political parties hasn’t increased significantly, might American political divisions be hardening, in the sense that political patterns are becoming more stable? It is not a myth that political geography is stable—political geography is quite stable; it is a myth that this stability is new or unusual.

Figure 3 shows two measures of electoral stability over the last 150 years. The top line shows the correlation coefficient across counties between the percent supporting the Republican Party in the current election and the percent supporting the Republican Party in the previous election. The bottom line shows the share of electoral votes that changed parties since the last election.<sup>3</sup> The top line shows how stable political geography has been over the last 130 years. Between 1880 and 2004, there has only been one period where the correlation between current and lagged percentage of Republican voters dropped significantly below 80 percent. In 1964, 1968 and 1972, the coefficient dropped as the South left the Democratic Party. In historical context, this period is unusual, not the 24 years since.

The correlation between the percentage of voters supporting George W. Bush in 2004 and the percentage of voters supporting Bush in 2000 at the county level is over 95 percent. This is a high level, but not unlike the degree of electoral stability engendered in the re-election campaigns of Dwight Eisenhower or Franklin Roosevelt. Over the past 20 years, smoothing out election-by-election variation, the current correlation is lower than the 1932–60 or 1868–1908 periods. Stability has been the norm, not the exception, in American electoral history, and recent trends have returned to this norm.

#### **Myth #4: America's Cultural Divisions Are Increasing.**

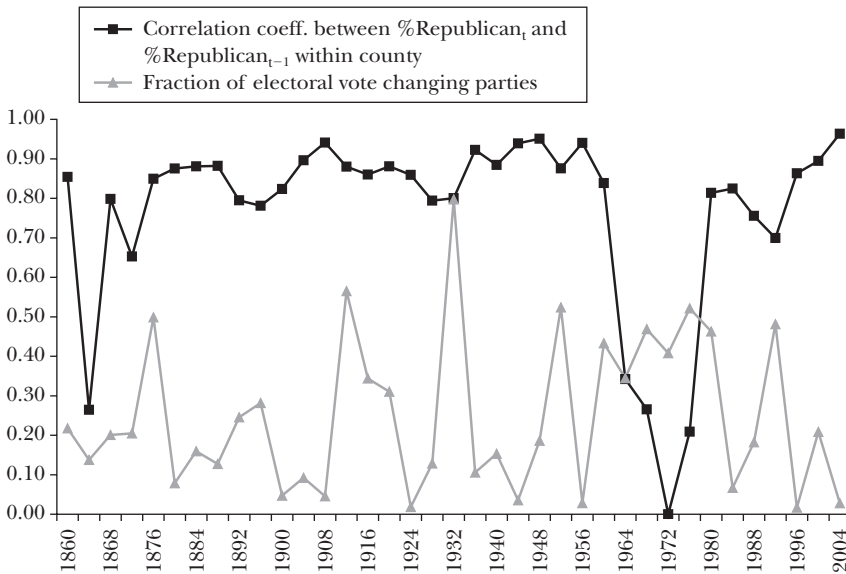
A steady stream of rhetoric proclaims that “there is a religious war going on in this country, a cultural war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America.” (This example is from Davis and Robinson, 1997.)

Fiorina, Abrams and Pope (2004) provide a rich set of examples showing that across a wide range of issues, the distribution of preferences is single-peaked: most people are in the middle of the distribution and not at the extreme. We will later disagree with Fiorina, Abrams and Pope in our interpretation of American political geography, as we believe that there are significant cultural divisions across space and people: Mississippi is not Massachusetts. But we agree with their view that divisions across people and space have not been increasing over time.

For example, consider polling evidence on extreme views about abortion. From 1972 to 2004, the share of the population taking the position that abortion should never be permitted has varied between 10 and 13 percent, according to the National Election Surveys, so there has been no increase in the share that is most

<sup>3</sup> In both cases, as in Figures 7 and 8 below, we deviate slightly from our usual methodology in our treatment of the 1912 election. In that year, we treat Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive supporters as Republicans. Since Roosevelt was a former Republican president, albeit running for election on the Progressive ticket, his supporters do not reflect any real change in support for the Republican party, but rather a temporary deviation to supporting a Republican political idol. Without this correction, the 1912 election would display a particularly unusual degree of political fluidity, as Republicans flocked to Roosevelt in 1912 and then flocked back to the Republican fold in 1916.

Figure 3

**Persistence in Presidential Voting, 1860–2004**

Note: Calculations take into account the change of state electoral votes for each election year.

Sources: Clubb et al. (2005) for 1840–1972; ICPSR (1995) for 1972–1988; Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections, for 1992–2004.

opposed to abortion. Conversely, the fraction of the population that is most tolerant of abortion (who either respond that abortion should never be forbidden or that a women should always be able to obtain an abortion depending on the time period) rose from 25 percent in the 1970s to roughly 35 percent in the 1980s, before peaking at about 45 percent in 1992, and then declining back to the 1980s levels. The only sign of an increase in the share of the population holding “extreme” views on abortion is therefore a 10 percent increase in the share of those who believe abortion should never be forbidden. Similarly, while many Americans are opposed to homosexuality, on the whole, Americans have become significantly more tolerant of homosexuality now than they were 20 years ago. We are not living in an era of increasing cultural divisions between people, even if politicians are increasingly dividing on these issues.

**Myth #5: America’s Political Divisions Are Increasing.**

A final myth is that we live in an era of increasingly polarized politics, where individuals from different parties increasingly despise one another, or as Lawrence (2002) writes, “when George W. Bush took office, half the country cheered and the other half seethed.” Certainly, the heat of the 2004 election does suggest rising tempers and mutual distaste.

One standard political science measure of interparty dislike is the group “thermometer.” In thermometer questions, respondents are asked to give their feelings towards a group on a 0 to 100 scale with 100 indicating the most positive and 0 indicating the most negative. The National Election Survey offers thermometer ratings towards the Democratic Party and the Republican Party bi-annually since 1978 (with the exception of the 2002 survey, which did not include this question). For the whole period, Democrats’ thermometer rating of the Democratic Party averages 73, and their average rating of the Republican Party averages 42. Republicans, on the other hand, rate the Republican Party at an average of 70 and the Democratic Party at an average of 44.

Since these ratings may be influenced both by general attitudes towards politics and by partisanship, we compute each individual’s relative taste for the Democratic Party by subtracting the thermometer rating towards the Republican Party from the thermometer rating for the Democratic Party. We then average this relative preference for the Democratic Party among Democrats and Republicans separately.

Figure 4 shows the average relative preference for the Democratic Party among Democrats and Republicans since 1978. The difference between these two lines should be seen as widening partisan hostility. Throughout most of the past 30 years partisanship has been essentially stable, albeit with a slight upwards trend. There was a slight increase in hostility in the early Reagan years and some swings during George H. W. Bush’s presidency, but from 1982 to 1998 partisanship is essentially flat. Moreover, between 1978 and 1998 any rise in partisanship is statistically insignificant. After 1998, and particularly between 2000 and 2004, there have been sharp increases in both Republican and Democratic partisanship. Republican enthusiasm for the Republican Party is higher than it has ever been. Democratic hostility for the Republican Party is higher than it has ever been. As such, there is certainly some truth to the view that we are currently experiencing a strongly partisan period, but this does not appear to represent any sort of a secular trend. This division really began in 2000 and seems to be more of a George W. Bush effect than any ongoing move towards greater partisan hostility.

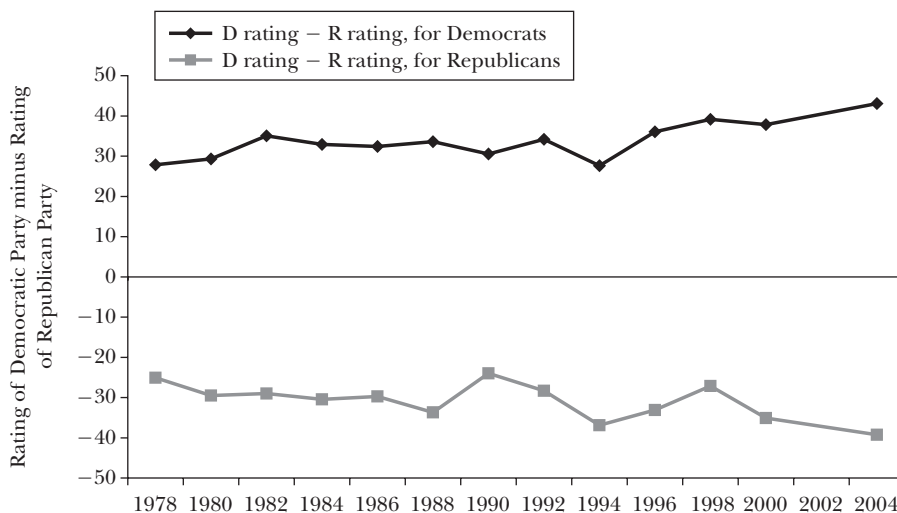
## **The First Reality of American Political Geography: Cultural Heterogeneity**

These myths have led some observers to suggest that there is no truth to the “culture war” metaphor or that the red state/blue state division is just plain false (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope, 2004; Klinkner, 2004). While these metaphors do contain misleading elements, they also contain two essential truths. First, America is a nation of enormous cultural and economic diversity. This diversity is not new and it shouldn’t be news, but it is still the central fact of American cultural geography. Second, American political parties have increasingly become organized around cultural and religious fissures. Thirty years ago income was a better pre-



Figure 4

**Political Partisanship, 1978–2004**



Note: The party trend lines represent the individuals’ thermometer rating of the Democratic Party minus their thermometer rating of the Republican Party averaged by their self-identified party status. Sources: American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1948–2002, and 2004 National Election Study

dictor of party than religious attendance. Today religion rather than earnings predicts Republicanism.

**Heterogeneity of Economics and Society**

Using the Pew Research Center’s 1987–2003 Values Survey (combined dataset), we have calculated state average responses for a number of questions about values and beliefs. Even pooling over this 16-year time period, sample sizes are often modest, so we include only those states with more than 50 observations over the entire time period. In Table 1, we report the ten most extreme states (including the District of Columbia) for six of these questions. We also include the ten most extreme states in terms of median household income.<sup>4</sup> The variation that exists across states is striking.

The first panel shows the state average response rate to the question “Should

<sup>4</sup> One potential issue with a table of this nature is that these samples are not huge and we should expect to see significant variation. However, the variation across states is much higher than we would expect from random sampling error. On average, each state has 440 respondents, and if the true response probabilities were the same across states, we would expect the standard deviation of state-level averages to be .023. The standard deviation of the state means is more than four times this amount. We can soundly reject the view that differences across states just reflect sampling error.

*Table 1*  
**Heterogeneity in Beliefs, Behaviors, and Economic Conditions Across States**

*A: Beliefs—Fraction of States Respondents Who Agree with the Given Statement:*

		<i>Schools Should Have Right to Fire Homosexual Teachers</i>		<i>It is Okay for Blacks and Whites to Date</i>	
<i>1. State</i>	<i>N</i>		<i>2. State</i>	<i>N</i>	
Massachusetts	430	0.23	Kentucky	339	0.35
District of Columbia	74	0.26	West Virginia	230	0.40
Connecticut	272	0.26	Tennessee	497	0.41
Maryland	449	0.27	South Carolina	322	0.43
New Jersey	588	0.29	Alabama	382	0.46
West Virginia	230	0.54	Oregon	240	0.77
Oklahoma	261	0.56	California	1860	0.77
Tennessee	514	0.60	Delaware	58	0.79
Arkansas	226	0.61	Maine	124	0.81
Mississippi	283	0.65	District of Columbia	74	0.88
		<i>AIDS Might be God's Punishment for Immoral Sexual Behavior</i>		<i>The Best Way to Ensure Peace is Through Military Strength</i>	
<i>3. State</i>	<i>N</i>		<i>4. State</i>	<i>N</i>	
Rhode Island	83	0.16	District of Columbia	77	0.36
Connecticut	243	0.19	Vermont	52	0.40
New Hampshire	74	0.24	Oregon	257	0.42
Oregon	226	0.24	Delaware	62	0.42
Maryland	375	0.25	Minnesota	418	0.47
Kentucky	309	0.46	Idaho	122	0.66
Tennessee	438	0.47	Oklahoma	265	0.68
Oklahoma	221	0.48	Mississippi	281	0.69
Alabama	364	0.49	Arkansas	230	0.70
Mississippi	232	0.56	South Carolina	330	0.73
		<i>When Something is Run by the Government, it is Usually Inefficient and Wasteful</i>		<i>We Will All be Called Before God on Judgement Day to Answer for Our Sins</i>	
<i>5. State</i>	<i>N</i>		<i>6. State</i>	<i>N</i>	
District of Columbia	77	0.45	Vermont	51	0.53
Mississippi	292	0.51	Rhode Island	96	0.60
Delaware	63	0.57	Oregon	250	0.63
Nevada	87	0.57	New Hampshire	88	0.65
South Carolina	339	0.58	Nevada	79	0.67
Montana	113	0.72	Tennessee	492	0.92
Nebraska	189	0.72	South Carolina	299	0.93
Arkansas	242	0.74	Oklahoma	247	0.94
Oregon	262	0.74	Alabama	377	0.94
South Dakota	71	0.77	Mississippi	266	0.95

Table 1—continued

<i>B: Income:</i>	
<i>7. State</i>	<i>2003 Median Household Income</i>
Arkansas	32,002
Mississippi	32,728
West Virginia	32,763
Louisiana	33,507
Montana	34,108
Minnesota	52,823
Virginia	54,783
Connecticut	54,965
New Hampshire	55,567
New Jersey	56,045

*Notes:* Data for beliefs are from the Pew Values Survey 1987–2003 Merged File. The fraction agreeing is computed by combining individuals who completely or mostly agree and dividing that number by the total number of respondents. Median household income is from the census.

*Sources:* PEW 1987–2003 Values Survey (combined dataset); U.S. Census Bureau.

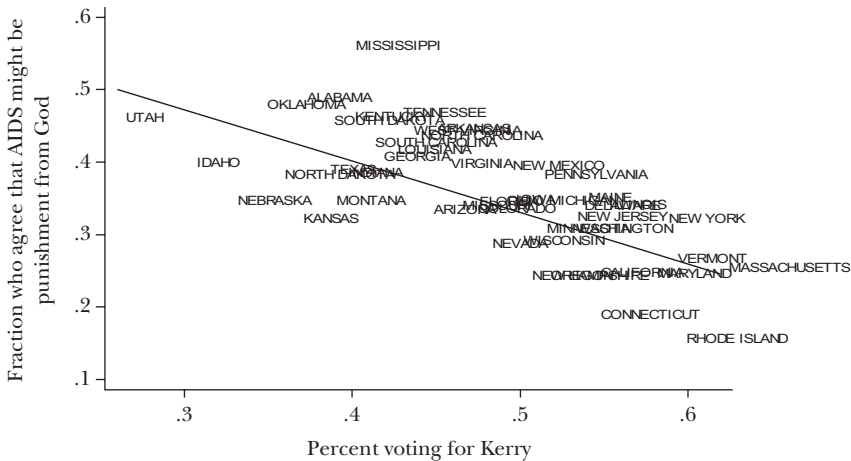
schools have the right to fire homosexual teachers?” Across the entire sample, 42 percent answered yes to this question. But in the five most liberal states (with respect to this statement)—New Jersey, Maryland, Connecticut, the District of Columbia and Massachusetts—less than 30 percent of respondents thought that school should have the right to fire teachers for being gay. In the five most conservative states—West Virginia, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi—a clear majority favored a right to fire homosexual teachers. Almost two-thirds of Mississippi respondents were in favor of such a right.

The second and third panels show similar geographic heterogeneity in responses to the statements “I think it is all right for blacks and whites to date each other” and “AIDS might be God’s punishment for immoral sexual behavior.” While the extreme left- and right-wing states as defined by these first three survey questions are not the same, the correlations in responses across the different questions are quite high. For example, the correlation between the belief that schools should have the right to fire homosexual teachers and approval of black–white dating is  $-.77$ . Cultural attitudes within a state are not just correlated with each other, but they are also highly correlated with voting Democrat or Republican. As shown in Figure 5, in no state that went for John Kerry in the 2004 election did the share of respondents agreeing with the statement “AIDS might be God’s punishment for immoral sexual behavior” exceed 38 percent. In no state that went for Bush did the share of respondents answering no to this question fall below 28 percent. The overall correlation coefficient across states between this variable and voting Republican is 0.70. However, although the distribution of these beliefs is striking, the variation is continuous across states, not bi-modal.

The fourth and fifth panels of Table 1 show that geographic heterogeneity in

Figure 5

**Correlation between Share Voting for Kerry and Belief that AIDS Might Be Punishment from God**



Sources: PEW 1987–2003 Values Survey (combined dataset); Dave Leip’s Atlas of Presidential Elections.

political beliefs is not limited to cultural issues, but extends into foreign and economic policies as well. These panels indicate the share of respondents that agree with the statements “the best way to ensure peace is through military strength” and “when something is run by the government, it is usually inefficient and wasteful.” Between the most liberal and the most conservative states the fraction agreeing with these statements differs by 32 to 37 percentage points. Again, America is not two nations, but it does have a lot of geographic heterogeneity in its beliefs.

The heterogeneity of political beliefs is accompanied by striking geographic heterogeneity in religious beliefs. The Pew data have only a limited number of questions on religious beliefs, such as “I never doubt the existence of God” and “Prayer is an important part of my daily life.” There is geographic variation in the former question: 30 percent of Delaware respondents admit to doubt, while only 4 percent of South Carolina respondents admit to doubt. There is even more geographic variation in the question on prayer. In this case the range is from 58 percent in Rhode Island to 95 percent in Mississippi.

Other data sets, such as the National Election Survey and the General Social Survey, include other interesting questions. For example, the National Election Survey provides evidence on belief about the literal truth of the Bible. In this case, the most believing states were Louisiana and Alabama, where 75 and 69 percent of respondents respectively believed in the literal truth of the Bible. The least two believing states were Massachusetts and Connecticut, where only 17 and 20 percent of respondents respectively believed in the literal truth of the Bible. The General

Social Survey provides evidence on belief in the existence of the devil. The General Social Survey sample is too small to make comparisons across states, but across regions the variation is significant. In the Pacific region (Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii), 49 percent of respondents say that they believe in the devil; in the East South Central region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi), 82 percent of respondents say that they believe in the devil. Panel 6 of Table 1 reports the extreme states measured in terms of responses to the statement: "We will all be called before God on Judgment Day to answer for our sins."

The country doesn't just display remarkable difference in beliefs about religious things like the devil; beliefs about foreign-policy-related facts also differ significantly across space. For example, a CBS/New York Times poll of April 2004 asked respondents, "Do you think Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center?" Of the South Central region respondents (Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and New Mexico), 45 percent said yes to this question, but only 25 percent of the Pacific Southwest respondents (California, Nevada, Arizona and Hawaii) shared this belief. In the same poll, 60 percent of the South Central region respondents and 62 percent of the Mountains and Plains respondents (Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota) said that they think that "Iraq probably does have weapons of mass destruction that the United States has not found yet." Only 43 percent of the Pacific Southwest and 40 percent of the Pacific Northwest respondents (Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Idaho) shared this view.

These differences in beliefs within the United States drive home a central point about how politically relevant beliefs are formed. People in different states have been exposed to quite similar evidence through national media outlets, but they have reached radically different conclusions, and continue to hold these conclusions despite being aware that others disagree. This disagreement requires either different prior beliefs or some other deviation from Bayesian reasoning. One natural alternative model is that people base opinions mostly on the views of those around them. As such, local interactions are critical, and these provide plenty of possibility for wide geographic variation (as in Glaeser, Sacerdote and Scheinkman, 1996; Murphy and Shleifer, 2004).

Of course, the nation is different in many other ways as well. According to 2003 Census Bureau figures, the five wealthiest states (Minnesota, Virginia, Connecticut, New Hampshire and New Jersey) had median family incomes around \$55,000. Mississippi, Arkansas, West Virginia and Louisiana all have median family incomes that are \$20,000 less than this amount. (These are nominal income levels, uncorrected for state cost of living, but certainly the ability to buy traded goods is far lower in these poorer states.) There are healthy correlations between attitudes and income. The correlation between mean income and acceptance of black-white dating is .58. The correlation between income and the belief that schools should have the right to fire homosexual teachers is -.68. A particularly surprising relationship is the fact that the correlation between state median income and share

of respondents that say that poor people have become too dependent on government assistance is  $-.38$ . Indeed, the fact that respondents in poorer states are more likely to have anti-redistribution opinions makes us doubt whether these opinions should be seen as being exogenous variables that reflect true economic interests. Another plausible view is that these opinions are the result of political affiliation and the desire to be consistent with the party line.

While there is a positive correlation between voting Republican and the share of respondents that say that poor people have become too dependent on government, the correlation between state income and Republicanism is  $-.43$ . Since individual-level income still positively predicts voting Republican (albeit weakly), the negative correlation between income and Republicanism at the state level represents one of those instances where aggregate relationships are the reverse of individual relationships (as in Glaeser and Sacerdote, 2001). One explanation for this switch is that the correlation between income and conservative cultural views is weak at the individual level, but quite strong at the state level and these cultural views explain the voting patterns. Indeed, the state-level income–Republicanism relationship disappears when we control for religion questions.

While the geographic differences within America are large, they are not new and they do not seem to be growing. We compared the variance across state averages for these opinions during the 1987–93 period and the 1994–2004 period. Variance across states in the opinion that schools should have the right to fire homosexual teachers has risen slightly. The variance across states in the opinion that it is okay for blacks and whites to date has fallen more. Cross-state variance in the view that AIDS might be God’s punishment has risen; variance in the share of the population that takes the Bible to be the literal word of God has fallen; variance of the share that thinks that the government is often inefficient and wasteful has risen. Overall, it is hard to see a general trend. The nation is different and it has been so for many years.

What explains the remarkable differences in political and social beliefs across the United States? This is an important question that requires more empirical study as well as better theoretical models explaining the diversity of belief over space. There are a few facts that suggest some hypotheses.

First, regional patterns on moral issues appear to be remarkably durable, but regional patterns on economic issues are much more volatile. Today, the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions are America’s most liberal regions, along with the Pacific Coast. In the 1936–37 Gallup national polls, New England and the Mid-Atlantic region were also the most socially liberal areas. For example, 62 and 59 percent of respondents in those two areas respectively said that they would support a qualified Jew for President as opposed to 49 percent in the country as a whole. These regions were also the most liberal in favoring support for federal funding to control venereal disease; supporting a free press; opposing the sterilization of criminals and being willing to vote for a Catholic for president. Indeed, New England’s liberalism can be seen in the early nineteenth century when it was

a hotbed for socially progressive ideas towards slavery and women's rights. While cultural views seem persistent, economic views are not. In the 1930s, New England had the most conservative economic opinions in the country, but this has completely changed over the last 70 years.

Second, liberal attitudes in a region today are not correlated with that region's long-standing connection to the Democratic Party. Support for Democratic candidates 100 years ago is strongly positively, not negatively, correlated with conservative beliefs today, which is not surprising since the political map of the United States has reversed itself over the last century. The correlation of support for William Jennings Bryan in 1896 and support for John Kerry in 2004 is  $-.53$  across states and  $-.11$  across counties.

Third, conservative beliefs today are only modestly correlated with historical religiosity. We use the 1926 Census of Religious bodies to measure the number of church adherents per capita and the share of church adherents who were Evangelical across counties and states. The overall number of church adherents in 1926 is not significantly correlated with beliefs that "AIDS might be God's punishment for immoral sexual behavior" or that "Schools should have the right to fire teachers who are known homosexuals," and even positively predicts voting for Kerry in 2004. Evangelicalism in 1926 is more highly correlated with conservative beliefs, but this correlation disappears when we control for other historical factors like patterns of immigration and industrialization. Historical religious patterns may be responsible for the geographic diversity of views that we see today, but we find correlations that are weaker than one might expect.

On the other hand, liberal social beliefs and support for Kerry in 2004 are robustly correlated with historical immigration and industrialization. For example, the correlation across states between historical industrialization (the share of the population in 1920 over age 10 that was working in manufacturing) and the share of respondents today agreeing that AIDS might be punishment from God is  $-.69$ . The correlation between the share of the population that was foreign born in 1920 and the share of respondents today who say that schools should have the right to fire homosexuals is  $-.77$ .

Running multivariate regressions at the state level about the historical causes of America's cultural differences is problematic because of the small number of observations and the high degree of correlation between the potential explanatory variables, so we focus on county-level results. Consider the following illustrative regression. For the dependent variable, we use the share of votes supporting Kerry in 2004 at the county level. The explanatory variables, representing various possible historical causes of America's cultural differences, include the share of the population in 1920 over age 10 that was working in manufacturing, as a measure of industrialization; the share of the population that was foreign born in 1920, as a measure of immigration; the share of church adherents who were Evangelical across counties in 1926, as a measure of religion; and whether the county was in a Confederate state, as a measure of the aftereffects of slavery.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Democratic Share}_{2004} = & .32 + .42 \text{ Manufacturing}_{1920} + .40 \text{ Foreign}_{1920} \\
 & (.02) (.10) \qquad \qquad \qquad (.08) \\
 & + .04 \text{ Evangelicals}_{1920} + .02 \text{ Confederate State} \\
 & (.04) \qquad \qquad \qquad (.02)
 \end{aligned}$$

Standard errors are in parentheses, and standard errors for countries are clustered at the state level. The R-squared of this regression is .14 and there are 2838 observations.<sup>5</sup> Historical industrialization and immigration predict Democratic votes today, not historical religiosity or membership in the Confederacy. A one percentage point increase in either the share of the population in manufacturing in 1920 or the share of the population that was foreign-born in that year is associated with a .4 percentage point increase in the share of the county that voted for John Kerry in 2004. We speculate that these correlations reflect a complementarity between some kinds of tolerance and industrialization, as ethnic and religious hatred do not help factories run smoothly. However, a full exploration of this relationship must be left for future work.

## The Second Reality of American Political Geography: Politics follows Culture

Around the time of the 2004 election, many authors commented on the remarkable correlation between the tendency to go to church and the tendency to vote Republican. It is conventional wisdom that a strong relationship exists between income and voting Republican, yet the overall correlation between income and Republicanism among white males is essentially zero outside of the extremes of the income distribution (Glaeser, Ponzetto and Shapiro, 2005). However, the relationship between religion and Republicanism is extremely strong. Individuals who go to church only a few times a year vote Republican only 43 percent of the time, but individuals who go to church once per week vote Republican 75 percent of the time.

This increasing importance of religion does represent a shift over the past 50 years. Figure 6 shows the impact of income and religion on voting for Republican presidential candidates over the past 50 years. The vertical axis depicts the ordinary least squares coefficients from estimation of the following equation for each election year:

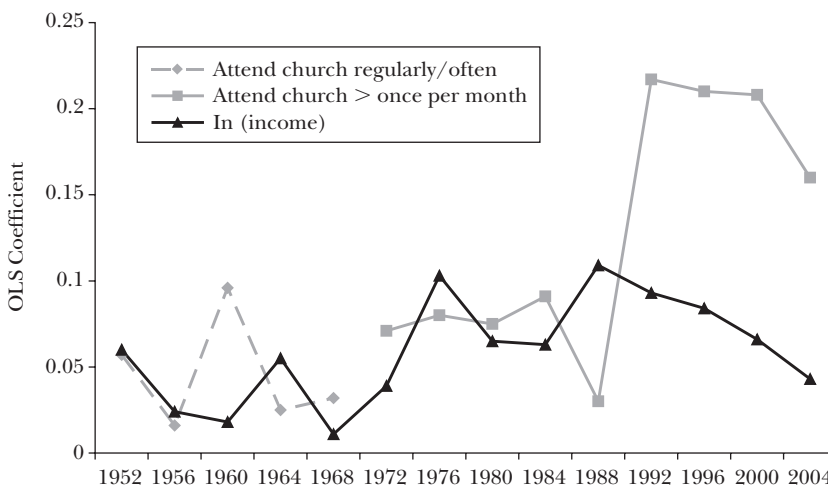
$$\text{Pr}(\text{Republican})_i = \beta \cdot \ln(\text{Income}_i) + \delta \cdot \text{church attendance}_i + \mathbf{X}_i' \varphi + \varepsilon_i,$$

<sup>5</sup> For details of how the Evangelical voters were categorized in the 1926 data, see the appendix that appears with this article at <http://www.ejep.org>.



Figure 6

**Trends in the Determinants of Voting Republican, 1952–2004**



Notes: ANES 1952–2004. Coefficients are from ordinary least squares regression of probability of voting R on logarithm of family income, a dummy if attend church more than once a month (or regularly or often for years before 1970), age, age<sup>2</sup>, race, and a dummy for completing college.

where  $\text{Pr}(\text{Republican})$  takes on a value of one if the individual votes Republican,  $\ln(\text{Income}_i)$  is the logarithm of family income, and church attendance takes on a value of one if the individual attends church once per month or more.<sup>6</sup> The X vector includes controls for gender, race, education and age. We have excluded voters who chose neither Republicans nor Democrats. The black line shows the effect of log of income, and the grey line the effect of attending church more than once a month. The coding of religion in the National Election Survey changed in 1972, so it is inappropriate to compare the magnitude of effects before that date with the magnitudes after then. In the 1970s and before, the coefficients on income and church attendance were comparable. Since 1980, religion has become much more important.

To analyze longer historical patterns in the relationship between income and Republicanism, we turn to county-level election returns and during each election from 1864 until today we regress:

<sup>6</sup> Since income in the National Election Survey is coded categorically, we assign each individual the median value of the category and take the log of that amount. The results do not significantly change if a dummy variable for being high income (top one third) is used instead of the log of income. The church dummy changes in 1972. Before 1972 it is equal to one if the respondent attends church often or regularly. The fraction of respondents in these categories in 1968 (the last year it was phrased in this way) is basically the same as the fraction attending church at least once a month in 1970 (the first year of the new version).

$$\frac{\text{Republican Votes}}{\text{Total Votes}} = \alpha + \beta \cdot \text{Log}(\text{Median Income in } t) + \varepsilon$$

where  $\alpha$  is a constant and  $\beta$  captures the relationship between Republicanism and income. We use three measures of income: average wages in manufacturing in 1890, median family income in 1950, and median family income in 1997. Because of the correlation between income and the South, we also present estimates of  $\beta$  in regressions that exclude states that were members of the Confederacy.

The results of these regressions are presented in Figure 7. The top set of lines shows the estimates from regressions with no Confederacy control. Those regressions show a straightforward rise and decline in the connection between income and Republicanism. The most basic fact is that from the 1870s to the 1950s, richer counties were reliably more Republican and this is no longer true today. On average, a one log point increase in 1950 median income (roughly a doubling) generally increased the share of the population that voted Republican by 20 percent between 1872 and 1956. The bottom set of lines excludes the South, and in this case, there is a very long-term pattern (1870–2004) and a recent pattern (1976–2004) of declining correlations between income and Republicanism, but over in the middle part of the twentieth century, there is extreme volatility in the income–Republicanism relationship, mostly associated with variations in the ability of Democrats to attract high-income urban counties.<sup>7</sup>

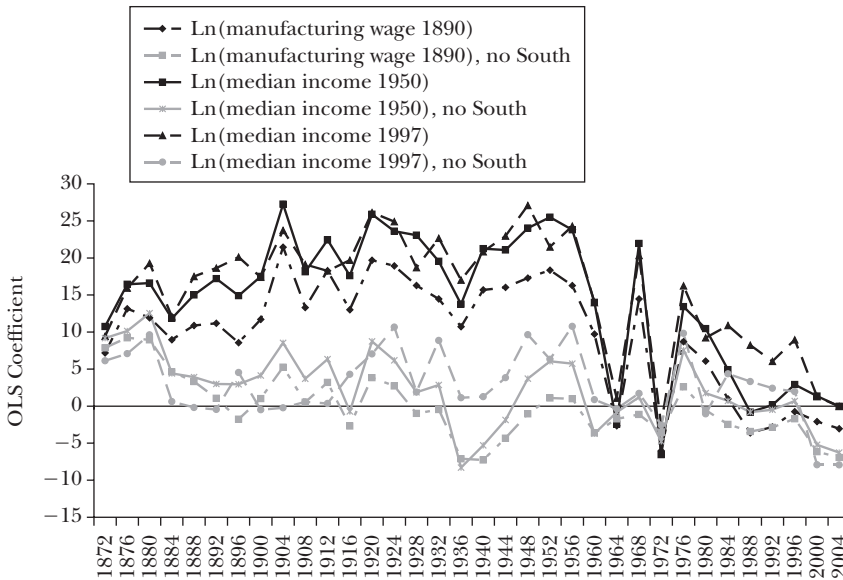
The correlations between income and Republicanism are less robust than often assumed, but there is little doubt that religiosity increasingly predicts voting Republican. Figure 6 shows the rising connection between regular church attendance and voting Republican. In the mid-1970s, someone who attended church more than once per month was 8 percent more likely to vote Republican than someone who didn't attend church so often (controlling for race, income, age and college completion). In the mid-1990s, attending church once per month or more was associated with a 20 percent increase in the probability of voting Republican.

This voting pattern is mirrored by changes in party policies and party platforms. Glaeser, Ponzetto and Shapiro (2005) show the rise in extremism on

<sup>7</sup> In their accompanying paper in this issue, Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder argue that economics remains a more important predictor of political orientation than morals. Our results differ mainly because they use opinions on issues to predict voting and we use actual income and religious attendance. We are dubious about using opinions rather than hard data on income and religiosity for several reasons. First, economic opinions don't appear to respond to economic status; that is, economic opinions are weakly correlated with individual economic status and correlations at the state level generally go in the wrong direction. Second, their Economic Issues Index is made up of an odd mix of questions including enthusiasm for government spending, environmentalism, health insurance and labor unions. One interpretation of the factor analysis is that instead of finding exogenous preferences for economic policy, they have identified the common ideological loyalties of the Democratic Party. Third, economic opinions and party affiliations have flipped over time. In the 1930s, Republican New England was antigovernment and pro-free market and the Democratic South was strongly pro-redistribution, which again makes us wonder what is being measured.

Figure 7

## Relationship between Income and Voting Republican, 1876–2004



Notes: Lines represent ordinary least squares coefficients from county-level regression of  $\ln(\text{income})$  on percent voting Republican. For 1912, we use the combined Republican and Progressive votes. Sources: Clubb et al. (2005) for 1840–1972; ICPSR (1995) for 1972–1988; Save Liep’s Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections for 1992–2004; Haines and ICPSR (2005); Bradley et al. (1992).

abortion in the party platforms of Republicans and Democrats between 1976 and 2004. During this period, Democrats moved away from the truly moderate stance of 1976, when the party recognized the differing views of many Americans, but found it “undesirable to attempt to amend the U.S. constitution to overturn the Supreme Court decision in this area.” In 2004, the Democrats were no longer even considering a pro-life amendment, but rather their platform stood “proudly for a women’s right to choose, consistent with *Roe v. Wade*, and regardless of her ability to pay.” The “ability to pay” element of this statement is far to the left of the median voter. The Republican platform similarly trended right and in 2004 stated that “the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life that cannot be infringed.” Interestingly, political rhetoric was matched with little visible action; there is no significant difference in the number of abortions per capita under Democratic and Republican presidencies. The abortion gap between the parties is mirrored by gaps in statements on many religious or cultural policies, like gay marriage and embryonic stem cell research. By contrast, in the economic sphere, both party platforms trumpet their commitment to reducing taxes (Glaeser, Ponzetto and Shapiro, 2005), and in foreign policy the debate over the Iraq war, John Kerry claimed to differ primarily in his competence, not in his commitment to the Iraq war. Given

the similarity of party platforms on economics and foreign policy, it is no surprise that religion predicts party preference better than income.

The recent rise in the connection between politics and religion represents a change from the recent past, but also a return to a common pattern in U.S. politics. Following Samuel Burchard in 1884, Republicans accused Democrats of standing for “Rum, Romanism and rebellion.” By contrast, the Democrats relied upon their urban support from Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany. Indeed, the roots of the Republican Party are in the religion-inspired battle against slavery. Protestant ministers like Henry Ward Beecher (whose sister wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*) fervently supported the Republican Party before the Civil War.

To analyze the historical connection between religion and Republicanism, we turn to county-level election returns and for each election from 1864 until today we regress:

$$\frac{\text{Republican Votes}}{\text{Total Votes}} = \alpha + \beta \cdot \frac{\text{Adherents in a Set of Denominations}}{\text{Total Church Adherents}} + \varepsilon$$

where  $\alpha$  is a constant and  $\beta$  now captures the relationship between Republicanism and religious affiliation. In this case, we again present results with and without an additional variable capturing membership in the Confederacy. We use two different religion variables: the share of church members that are Evangelicals and the share of church members that are mainline Protestants. Catholics represent the main excluded category. We use religious censuses from 1890, 1926, 1952 and 1990, and in all cases, we use the data from the chronologically closest religious census. Given the extremely high persistence of denomination over time (the correlation between Evangelicalism in 1926 and 1990 exceeds .8), these results are not particularly sensitive to using religion measures from other years. Mainline Protestants primarily include Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Lutherans and Methodists, while Evangelicals are more conservative and include a wide array of groups like Southern Baptists and Pentecostals.<sup>8</sup> To combine churches into the broader categories, we use the American Religion Data Archive classification available at (<http://www.thearda.com>).

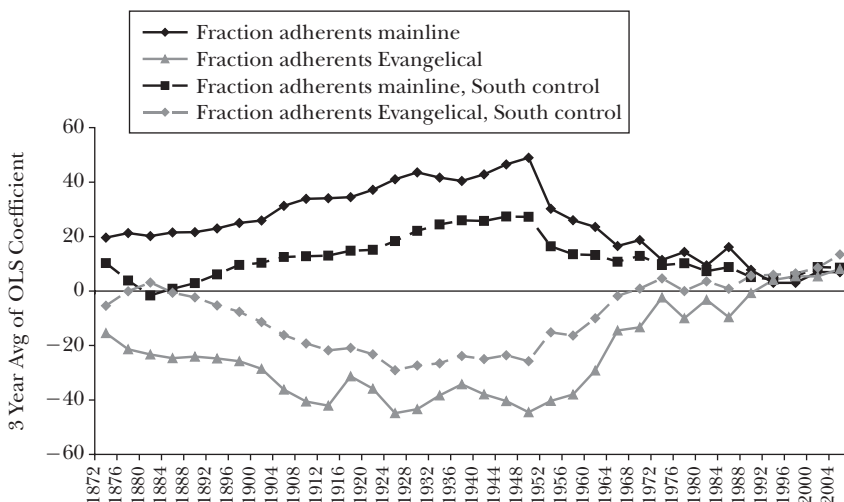
Figure 8 shows a smoothed version of our results, where the data is smoothed by averaging the estimates of  $\beta$  over three elections and graphing the results.<sup>9</sup> The bottom line charts the changing relationship between the Republican Party and

<sup>8</sup> Steensland, Regnerus, Robinson, Wilcox and Woodberry (2000) provide a basic description of the major differences between mainlines and Evangelicals: “Mainline denominations have typically emphasized an accommodating stance toward modernity, a proactive view on issues of social and economic justice, and pluralism in their tolerance of varied individual beliefs. Evangelical denominations have typically sought more separation from the broader culture, emphasized missionary activity and individual conversion, and taught strict adherence to particular religious doctrines.”

<sup>9</sup> As noted earlier, we again treat votes for Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 as votes for the Republican Party in that year.

Figure 8

**Relationship between Religion and Voting Republican at the County Level, 1868–2004**



Notes: Lines represent 3-year moving averages of ordinary least squares coefficients from regressions of the county share voting Republican on the fraction of religious adherents of different denominations in 1890, 1926, 1952, and 1990. Coefficients are computed using the closest year. For 1912, the share voting Republican is the combined Progressive and Republican share. Sources: Clubb et al. (2005) for 1840–1972; ICPSR (1995) for 1972–1988; Dave Liep’s Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections for 1992–2004; Haines and ICPSR (2005); Bradley et al. (1992)

Evangelicals. During the early time period, even controlling for being a Southern county, Evangelical counties were much more likely to be Democratic than to be Republican. Since about 1964, that pattern has changed, and today there is a significant positive relationship between the share of the religious population that is Evangelical and the share of the population that voted for George W. Bush. As the share of the population that is Evangelical increases by one percentage point, the share voting Republican increases by .13 percentage point.

But the graph makes it clear that while the connection between Republicanism and Evangelicalism may be new, the connection between religion and politics is not. The connection between mainline Protestantism and Republicanism during the late nineteenth century was much stronger than the correlation between Evangelicalism and Republicanism today. Even as late as the Eisenhower era, this connection remained strong. Of course, this correlation is partly a reflection of the strong ties between the Republican Party and the mainline churches, but it is also a reflection of the equally strong ties between the Democrats and the Catholic Church.

Religion has usually played a role in party divisions, but the patterns have changed. In the past, mainline Protestantism predicted Republicanism. Today, church attendance is a bigger predictor of voting Republican.

## Explaining Party Divisions

The biggest problem with explaining why parties divide on religious rather than economic issues is that the prevailing paradigm in political science has been the median voter theorem, which predicts that parties will rush to the center. If all parties are at the center, then there is little possibility of explaining why Republicans and Democrats split on religion rather than economics.

To the extent that there has been an alternative paradigm to the median voter theorem, it is that the preferences of leaders or elites pull parties away from the median voter. In this case, party leaders sacrifice votes to achieve their own goals, and the implication is that parties will divide on issues that party elites really care about. This theory can potentially explain the division on religion if party leaders had stronger preferences for religion-related issues than for tax policy. However, this theory gives little guidance about why the connection between religion and party affiliation has changed over time, or why the connection between religion and party affiliation differs across countries. In some countries (like India) religion correlates strongly with political affiliation but income does not, while in other countries (like Sweden), income correlates strongly with political affiliation but religion does not (Glaeser, Ponzetto and Shapiro, 2005). These differences can't be explained by a general tendency of leaders to care more about social issues.

To explain these differences over space and time, Glaeser, Ponzetto and Shapiro (2005) present a model of strategic extremism where parties divide on issues not to appease the tastes of the leaders but rather to increase their chances of electoral success. As Downs (1957) intuited and Riker and Ordeshook (1973) proved, extremism (defined as party policies that differ from those of the marginal voter) hinges on having an intensive margin for voters, like turnout or donations, where intensity of support matters. If there is only an extensive margin (everyone either votes for party A or party B), then moving away from the center is always costly for politicians trying to get elected. Extremism becomes vote-enhancing only when there is a turnout margin so that by moving from the center, you excite your base and get them to come to the voting booths (or get them to offer a higher level of campaign contributions or to act along some other margin where intensity of support matters).

However, the possibility of rising turnout margin alone is not sufficient to generate extremism. Going to extremes has, in principle, an equal likelihood of exciting a politician's base and the opponent's base in opposite directions. Only if extreme statements are more likely to be heard by a politician's supporters than by opposition supporters will there be an asymmetry, so the extremism increases turnout (Glaeser, Ponzetto and Shapiro, 2005). This model suggests that policy divisions will be tied to the ability to send coded messages (this was called Dog Whistle Politics in the 2005 British parliamentary race) and will be

tied to large social organizations, like churches or unions, that can provide politicians with the ability to target messages to their members.

One particularly clear example of how social groups determine policy divisions is the role of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) in the rise of the Republican Party. The GAR, a vast veteran's group from the Civil War, provided the Republican Party with a natural means of sending targeted messages reminding voters of Democrat's activities in the Civil War ("not every Democrat was a rebel, but every rebel was a Democrat") and pledging future Republican policies towards veterans and freed slaves. This access ensured that Democrats and Republicans would continue to divide on Civil War-related issues for 50 years after the war.

The theory that extremism is driven by social groups that ally with parties and provide opportunities for targeting messages provides two possible explanations for the changing importance of economic and social issues in American politics over the twentieth century. One possible explanation is the rise and fall of unionization in America. At the beginning of the century, unions were a small part of the population. In mid-century, they rose to over 30 percent of all workers and today have declined to 12 percent (Troy, 1965; Labor Research Association, 2004). While this rise and fall is itself a political outcome, it is at least a reasonable hypothesis that the rise and fall of unionization explains some of the rise and fall of the connection between income and Republicanism shown in Figure 7. In the mid-twentieth century, unions were at their peak and they were closely allied to the Democratic Party. Since unions provided an opportunity to target messages to their members and they were organized around economic issues, unions gave Democrats an incentive to move to the left on economic issues to improve turnout and campaign support from this important base.

Changes in religious participation provide a second possible explanation for the fall and rise of religion in politics. Over the past 80 years, the numbers of mainline Protestants has declined while the number of Evangelicals has risen. It has been hypothesized that as the mainline Protestants declined in importance the Republican Party stopped catering to their interests, and gradually switched to issues that were more significant to the growing numbers of Evangelicals. Democrats have been more successful at connecting with the rise in non-Christian religious groups (Fogel, 2000).

While this story makes sense from a Republican standpoint, it raises questions about Democrats. Why didn't Democrats move to capture the votes of Evangelicals? The presidency of Jimmy Carter suggests that this was far from impossible. There are several hypotheses. First, Democratic policies towards civil rights may have alienated part of the Evangelical population. Second, liberal elites in the Democratic Party were uncomfortable with moving to the right on social issues. Third, the Democrats were dominant during a period of rapid social change in the 1960s and had difficulty running against socially liberal policies that had been enacted and popular during their time in power.

This discussion has emphasized the role of religion as if churches were just another form of social group, and religious views were no different than views on fiscal policy. But, in fact, many people take their religious views far more seriously than views on other topics, and this may also help us to understand why religion is so often an important part of politics. It may be easier for politicians to motivate voters by appealing to core religious values than to topics like tax policy.

## **Conclusion**

There are many myths about America's political geography. The number of swing states has not decreased over time. Democrats and Republicans are no more geographically segregated than in the past. Voting patterns may have become mildly more persistent than in the past, but persistence has usually been quite high, except for the twelve-year period from the late 1960s and into the 1970s when the South left the Democratic fold. Cultural heterogeneity is not increasing and most people are in the middle, not at the extremes (as in Fiorina, Abrams and Pope, 2004). Political hostility between the party members is relatively constant, although there has been an uptick in hostility over the last four years.

But all of these myths should not obscure two primary truths about American political geography. First, America is a nation with an astonishing degree of cultural diversity. The red state/blue state framework makes it appear that states or regions fall into one of two groups, and this is false. There is a continuum of states ranging from the poor conservative places of the South and West to the rich, liberal places of the coasts. These places are quite different and they have been so for many years. At the state or county level, these differences line up well with political affiliation. The second great truth is that American parties are increasingly oriented around religion and culture rather than economics. This change has occurred since the 1970s, but in broader historical perspective it is the 1932–76 period that is exceptional, not the current epoch. Prior to 1932, religion also predicted voting, but during that era the key correlation was between Republicanism and mainline Protestantism.

We believe that religion has played such an important role in American party divisions because religious groups provide institutions that political parties can use to send targeted messages, and because religious issues are emotionally charged and quite effective in getting people into the voting booth.

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## Appendix

### Religious Adherents and Other Historical State and County Data

The data used to describe the historical correlates of American cultural diversity and to construct Figures 7 and 8 come from Michael R. Haines and the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, “Historical, Demographic, Economic, and Social Data: The United States, 1790–2000.” Specifically, data on foreign-born population and manufacturing comes from the 1920 Census and data on median income comes from the 1890 Census, the *1952 County Data Book* and the *2000 City and County Data Book*. Data on religious adherents comes from the *1890 United States Census of Religious Bodies*, the *1926 United States Census of Religious Bodies and Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1952*. The data on religious adherents for 1990 comes from a different source—Martin Bradley, et al, *Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1990*.

Computing the percent foreign-born and the percent of the population over ten employed in manufacturing is straightforward. The measure of percent foreign-born in 1920 is computed by dividing the total white, foreign-born population by the total population. The fraction of the population over 10 employed in manufacturing for states comes directly from the data; however, we computed this measure for the counties by dividing the average number of manufacturing workers in the county by the total population over ten years old.

Constructing state and county measures of religious adherents is more difficult because none of the religious censuses are complete enumerations of all church participants. First, not all churches and congregations participate in these studies, either because they were not contacted or because they chose not to participate. This means that the sample of churches included varies somewhat between the datasets. Second, who churches consider to be members varies across denominations. Particularly troubling is the fact that some churches (for example, Catholics, Lutherans and Episcopalians) consider baptized infants to be members, while most other Protestant denominations include only communicants (typically people over 13). The 1926 census specifically tried to obtain information on those under 13 years old. This information shows that nearly 25 percent of the membership of churches that include baptized infants as members were under 13, but typically well less than 10 percent of the membership of other Protestant denominations were under 13 (U.S. Census, 1929). To correct this problem, we adjust the data to account for differences in membership definitions. Following Johnson et al. (1974), we multiply membership in denominations who underreport children by (total population/total population over 14). We perform this adjustment only for the 1890, 1926 and 1952 data. For the 1990 data we use the adherents (as opposed to membership) numbers which already include a similar adjustment.

After performing this adjustment, adherents of different Protestant denomi-

nations are classified as either Evangelical or mainline following the classification scheme of the American Religion Data Archive (at <http://www.thearda.com>) based on the research of Steensland, et al (2000), Melton (1999) and Mead (1995). The American Religion Data Archive (ARDA) classification specifically groups only the churches included in the 1990 data. As such, it is necessary to match the churches included in the 1890, 1926 and 1952 data to their modern counterparts. For instance, the United Methodist Church is classified by the ARDA, but this church did not exist prior to 1968 and thus does not appear in the earlier censuses. The United Methodist Church represents the re-unification of the three Methodist bodies—the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church (South) and the Methodist Protestant Church. The American Religion Data Archive allows scholars to track denominations mergers and splits over time on their website (at <http://www.thearda.com/test2/Yearbook/Families.html>). We use this feature to match churches in 1890, 1926 and 1952 with their modern counterparts. Once matched, these historical churches are classified as mainline or Evangelical according to how their modern counterparts' are coded.

Finally, we compute the fraction of all church adherents who are members of mainline or Evangelical churches by summing up the number of adherents in the churches in these groups and dividing this total by the total number of religious adherents. We also compute the number of total religious adherents per capita by dividing the total number of religious adherents by the total population in the most recent census.

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