Journal of Economic Perspectives—Volume 20, Number 2—Spring 2006—Pages 97–118

Purple America

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America, we are told, is a nation divided. Maps of the electoral votes cast by the states in recent U.S. presidential elections reveal a striking pattern. The base of the Democratic Party is firmly rooted in the northeast and upper Midwest—a region stretching from Maine to Minnesota—plus the Pacific West, anchored by California. The Republicans are said to own an L-shaped region covering the South, the "breadbasket" states, and Mountain West, extending from the Carolinas to Arizona and up to Montana and Idaho. The cartographers who draw up the maps of U.S. election results have inadvertently branded a new division in American politics: Republican red versus Democratic blue.

What is the source of this division? Most observers point not to the bread-and-butter economic issues of the New Deal alignment but to a "culture war." America, it is argued, is torn by a struggle over issues such as abortion, gay marriage and school prayer that has transformed the geography of American elections and has eclipsed the traditional political questions of peace and prosperity (for example, Hunter, 1991; Wattenberg, 1995; Green, Guth, Smidt and Kellstedt, 1996; Williams, 1997; Walsh, 2000; Brooks, 2001; Shogan, 2002; Frank, 2004; Greenberg, 2004).

This view challenges economic theorizing about elections and government policymaking. Most models assume that voters care first and foremost about economic issues: taxation, public goods, regulation, income redistribution, unemployment, and growth (Myerson, 1995, Persson and Tabellini, 2000, and Mueller, 2003, provide surveys and additional references). Many models focus on income redistribution, making the natural assumption that voters with higher incomes favor

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lower tax rates and less redistribution. This approach leads to a simple understanding of politics in the United States and throughout much of the industrial world since the Great Depression. The Republican Party is viewed as a coalition of business and upper-income voters, who favor lower taxes, less government spending and minimal economic regulation. The Democratic Party is viewed as the party of labor, favoring economic redistribution via higher taxes, social welfare spending and regulation.

Students of the culture war contend that the economic models have it wrong, that most Americans now set economic issues aside when thinking about politics. Thomas Frank (2004) offers a biting and ironic critique of the politics of the culture war in his book *What's the Matter with Kansas?* He argues that low-income Americans living in rural areas and small towns vote strongly Republican because of their moral convictions, even though the Republican Party's economic policies cut strongly against their economic interests.[1] As Shapiro (2005) points out, in many places the flip side of this pattern also holds true—high-income citizens in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Upper West Side of New York City vote overwhelmingly Democratic even though the tax policies of the Republican Party treat them much more favorably. Why do they vote this way? Because moral issues, such as abortion and gay marriage, dominate economic self-interest. Citizens' attitudes on moral issues may even shape their beliefs about what policies best serve their economic interests. As a result, the main political cleavage in the United States today cuts across both income and economic liberalism.

The culture war argument, if correct, would have real consequences for public policy. It would lead government to engage in less economic redistribution and provide fewer social services than in a world where citizens merely voted their economic self-interest (Roemer, 1998; Lee and Roemer, 2005; Hacker and Pierson, 2005). If citizens care only about income, then the median voter—whose income will be below average because of skewed distribution of income—will typically demand a large amount of redistribution, and political parties will respond (Romer, 1975; Roberts, 1977; Meltzer and Richard, 1981). But if citizens also care about cross-cutting issues—moral, religious, racial and ethnic—then the equilibrium amount of distribution will shrink as parties compete for votes on these other issues.[2]

In this paper we challenge the culture war argument. This argument makes three claims: First, voters are polarized over moral issues, and this division maps onto important demographic categories like religious affiliation. Second, moral issues have more salience or weight in the minds of voters than economic issues. Third, this division accounts for red and blue cartography—red-state voters are

[1] Variants of this argument go back at least to Karl Marx and also appear in the writings of Schumpeter (1942), Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and others.

[2] The models by Lindbeck and Weibull (1987) and Dixit and Londregan (1995, 1996) also incorporate noneconomic issues and show how these issues affect distributive politics. In particular, these models highlight the importance of "swing" voters.

moral conservatives who vote on moral issues without regard for their economic interests or preferences.

Drawing on data from three decades of survey research, we examine how the electorate divides along economic and moral issues. While showing that moral values are not irrelevant, the survey data roundly reject the basic claims of the culture war thesis.

First, like other political scientists who have tackled this issue, we find that most Americans are ideological moderates on both economic and moral issues. Second, our central claim is that economic issues have much more weight in voters' minds than moral issues. Contrary to many claims in this literature, the weight of moral issues does not vary across social groups; even Protestant Evangelicals and rural voters place more emphasis on economic than moral issues. Third, the differences in voting behavior between red states and blue states is driven at least as much by economic as by moral issue preferences. Preferences on economic and moral issues together can account for most of the difference between red- and blue-state voting. Red-state voters are slightly more conservative on economic issues than blue-state voters, and noticeably more conservative on moral issues. However, the relatively large weight that voters place on economic issues means that economic preferences account for much of the difference in voting behavior across states.

We conclude by reaching beyond the era of survey research to put this constellation of issue cleavages and electoral maps into historical perspective. The great divide across the American states is not really much of a divide at all. The difference between "strongly Republican" states like Kansas and "strongly Democratic" states like California is, on average, only 8 percentage points in the vote. That difference pales in comparison with the divisions of a century ago. Over the course of the twentieth century—a period of impressive economic and cultural convergence—we have not seen a great political chasm opening between the states, but rather a noteworthy political convergence.

Issue Preferences of Individual Americans

Is there a deep divide in the American electorate, especially on abortion, gay rights and other moral issues? If so, does the divide map into the political geography of the United States today?

In an exhaustive assessment of survey data, Fiorina, with Abrams and Pope, (2005) find scant evidence that there are deep divisions among the American public on a wide variety of issues. To the extent that there are any differences across social groups, they conclude that Protestants, particularly fundamentalists, are somewhat more conservative (see also Page and Shapiro, 1992). Here we offer our own assessment of the distribution of public preferences on economic and moral questions. We take a somewhat different approach from Fiorina, Abrams and Pope (2005). We construct measures of individuals' policy preferences over economic and moral issues. It is difficult to get an overall sense of the distribution of

preferences, or to analyze their impact on voting behavior, by sifting through a battery of individual questions. Picking particular survey items leaves too much room for interpretation and manipulation. For example, the wording of questions related to abortion or homosexual rights may have a dramatic impact on the appearance of polarization. Another problem with analyzing individual survey questions is that many items are plagued with measurement error (Achen, 1975).

To address these problems, we aggregate as many questions as possible to create two scales to capture economic and moral dimensions of preferences. While the basic idea underlying these scales is straightforward, there are a number of technical details—including the exact questions used—which we describe in online Appendix A. This appendix is available at ⟨http://www.e-jep/org⟩, appended to the online article, and also at ⟨http://web.mit.edu/polisci/research/portl.html⟩.

We use two independent surveys, the American National Election Study (ANES) and the General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS has been conducted annually since 1973, and the ANES has been conducted in every national election since 1952. Because of changes in content in the ANES, we focus on the elections from 1992 to 2004. Each of these surveys provides measures of respondents' attitudes on questions concerning economic, moral, social and foreign policy. These studies involve large samples and large numbers of questions, and they are designed to get at exactly the sorts of research questions raised here. We use the two studies in tandem to corroborate each other.[3]

We first classify the questions into two sets according to issue type: economic or moral. Questions on economic issues include topics such as the overall size of government, spending on various social programs, business regulation, environmental protection, Social Security and unemployment insurance. Questions on moral issues include topics such as abortion, school prayer, the rights of homosexuals, the accuracy of the Bible, and women's role in society. We drop questions that are difficult to classify as economic or moral, such as items on crime and civil rights. We then perform factor analyses on each set of questions. In both surveys the factor analysis on each set of questions uncovers a dominant issue dimension. Factor analysis allows us to construct a weighted average of the questions, without having to determine the weights beforehand, or even how many dimensions underlie the data. The results support the idea that there are two dimensions—an Economic Issues Scale and a Moral Issues Scale. These scales are only modestly correlated, indicating that at least two issue dimensions are necessary to account for voters' issue preferences. In the American National Election Study the correlation between the two scales is .28 (for the period 1992–2000), and in the General Social Survey it is .04. We standardize each scale to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation

[3] We analyze the 2004 election separately from the other elections for two reasons: First, it is intrinsically interesting because many observers believe that moral issues played an especially prominent role in voter behavior during this election. Second, several of the ANES questions changed or were dropped, so we are a bit uncomfortable combining the 2004 survey with the other surveys.

of one, and orient them so that higher scores are associated with more conservative preferences.

What do different positions on these scales mean? Call someone at the 25th percentile a Liberal and someone at the 75th percentile a Conservative. On the economic scale, a respondent who wants to increase government spending on Social Security, food stamps, child care, the poor, the homeless, and education, and has the mean preference on all other items, would be (approximately) a Liberal. A respondent who wants to reduce government spending on welfare and food stamps and hold spending constant on Social Security, child care, the homeless and education,[4] and has the mean preference on all other items, would be (approximately) a Conservative.

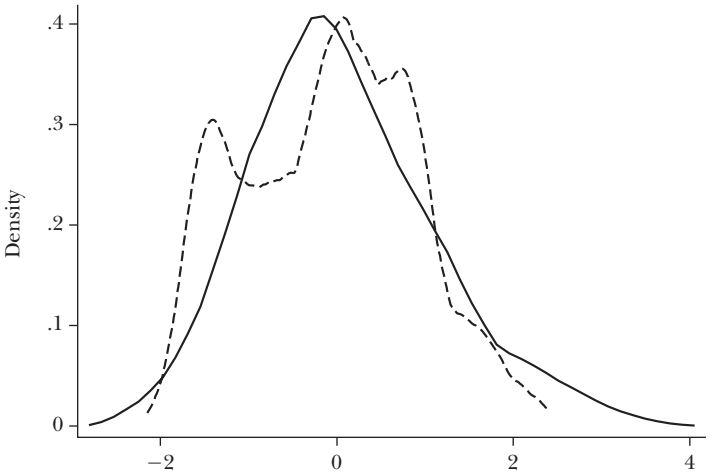
On the Moral Issues Scale, a respondent with the following profile would be (approximately) a Liberal: favors laws to protect homosexuals against job discrimination (but not strongly); feels that homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces (but not strongly); believes that homosexual couples should be legally permitted to adopt children; believes that by law a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice; believes that the law should allow public schools to schedule time when children can pray silently if they wish; and holds the mean preference on all other items. A respondent with the following profile would be (approximately) a Conservative: opposes laws to protect homosexuals against job discrimination (but not strongly); feels that homosexuals should not be allowed to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces (but not strongly); believes that homosexual couples should not be legally permitted to adopt children; believes that the law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest or when the woman's life is in danger; believes that the law should allow public schools to schedule time when children as a group can say a general prayer not tied to a particular religious faith; and holds the mean preference on all other items.

What does the distribution of public preferences look like across these issue dimensions? If Americans are polarized, we should see a distribution of scores with peaks on each side and a valley in the middle. Figure 1 graphs the estimated frequency of people at each point on the Economic Issues Scale (solid line) and the Moral Issues Scale (dashed line) for the General Social Survey over the period 1977–2002.

Consistent with Fiorina, with Abrams and Pope (2005), we find that Americans are not polarized on economic issues. The distribution of economic policy preferences follows a bell curve, with a high fraction of respondents expressing moderate opinions. This shape is not due to pooling many years of data, as the distribution looks similar in each year of the General Social Survey. Individual issues, such as whether the respondent favors more government regulation, show similar patterns

[4] On most spending items, the average response calls for an increase in spending, so holding spending constant is a relatively Conservative position. This is probably due in part to the fact that the questions do not directly mention tradeoffs—such as tax increases spending cuts on other items—that would be required to pay for increases in spending.

Figure 1
Distribution of Voter Preferences on Economic Issues Scale and Moral Issues Scale, 1993–2002



Note: On the horizontal axis, the Economic Issues Scale and the Moral Issues Scale are normalized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of 1. The vertical axis shows the share of responses occurring at each score, such that the total area under the curves represents all responses.

of moderation. The American National Election Study results produce almost the same picture.

On moral issues, there is apparently more heterogeneity of preferences, though hardly a deep division. In contrast with economic issues, there is a smaller density of voters in the middle, and higher densities closer to the extremes. We hesitate to infer much from this distribution, however, because the analogous histogram for moral issues using the ANES looks more like the economic issues. Moreover, the "polarization" in the GSS Moral Issues Scale is driven by a single issue—abortion.[5]

The "divided America" rhetoric, though, reflects more than polarization in preferences. Different states and regions of the country, it is argued, prefer markedly different moral and economic policies. The high degree of moderation on

[5] The General Social Survey has measured attitudes on abortion consistently since the mid-1970s, presenting seven different scenarios and asking the respondent to state when abortion should or should not be allowed (examples include risk to the life of the mother and rape). We scaled these items to extract a single measure of policy preferences on abortion. This measure exhibits a clearly bimodal distribution. At one mode, over 25 percent of the electorate holds the most liberal position on this question, providing for the legality of abortion in all circumstances. The other mode on the scale would allow abortions, but only in the cases of rape, incest, and where the health of the mother is in jeopardy. Few people choose the middle ground on this issue, and few want an outright prohibition. Abortion attitudes were unique; few other items showed any degree of bimodality.

economic issues might readily be undone if all people in red states hold conservative attitudes and all people in blue states hold liberal views.

Comparing the economic and moral issue preferences of the red- and blue-state voters reveals statistically significant but modest differences across these states. In the General Social Survey, we contrast blue regions (census regions of about five states each) and red regions. In the American National Election Study, which has state identifiers, we contrast blue and red states.[6] Both show significant differences on both economic and moral issues, and the differences are approximately the same in both surveys. On the Economic Issues Scale, respondents who live in blue states are approximately .15 points more liberal than respondents who live in red states. On the Moral Issues Scale, respondents who live in blue states are approximately .32 points more liberal than respondents who live in red states. While statistically significant, the differences between red- and blue-state survey respondents are relatively small (recall that the standard deviation of each scale is 1). Approximately 45 percent of those in red states have economic preferences that are left of the typical blue-state voter, and approximately 40 percent of those in blue states have moral policy preferences that are to the right of the typical red-state voter.

The red/blue division of the American electorate, with its apparent roots in the culture war, is as much about changes over time as it is about current differences. Many observers argue that the rising geographic division in U.S. politics results from an increasing division across the states in the voters' preferences on moral policies.

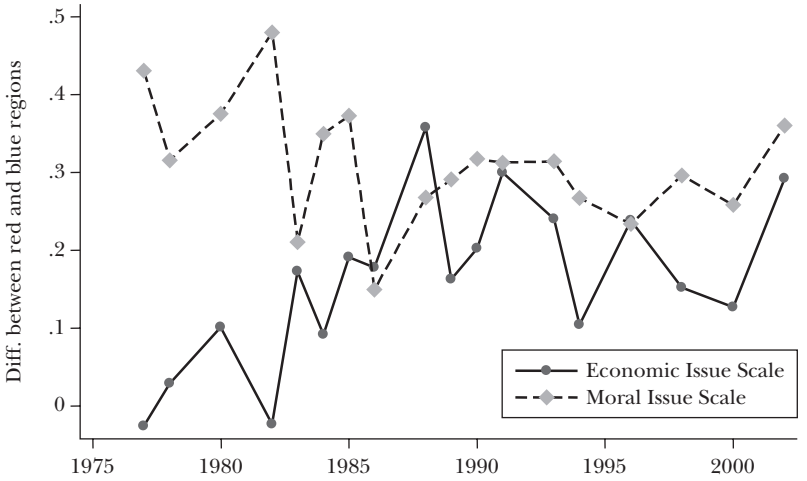
The General Social Survey (GSS) data suggest otherwise. Figure 2 graphs the difference between red-region and blue-region voters in the GSS for the moral issues dimension and the economic dimension for each year from 1977 to 2002.[7] The differences between red-region and blue-region voters were noticeably larger on moral issues than on economic issues in the 1970s and early 1980s. The difference on moral issues was about two-tenths of one standard deviation on the scale, and the difference on economic issues was nil.

There has been change over time, but not of the kind posited in the culture war canon. Red and blue America have converged somewhat on moral issues since the 1970s, and the gap has been relatively stable since then. Even on the polarizing issue of abortion, the differences between the regions have remained steady since the 1970s. On the other hand, preferences on economic policies have grown further apart. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, preferences on economic policies differed little between the regions that by the 1990s became the red and blue

[6] Blue states are those in which the average share of the two-party vote cast for the Democratic presidential candidate in 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004 was .51 or greater. Red states are those for which the average was .47 or less. This leaves nine states—Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri, New Hampshire, Nevada, Ohio and Tennessee—which we do not classify either as blue or red.

[7] We continue to define red and blue states as above, using the elections of 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004. The vestiges of the southern Democrats and northern Republicans remained in 1976 and 1980. Recall that the General Social Survey does not identify states but regions.

Figure 2
Trends in Blue Region vs. Red Region Differences on Economic Issue Scale and Moral Issues Scale

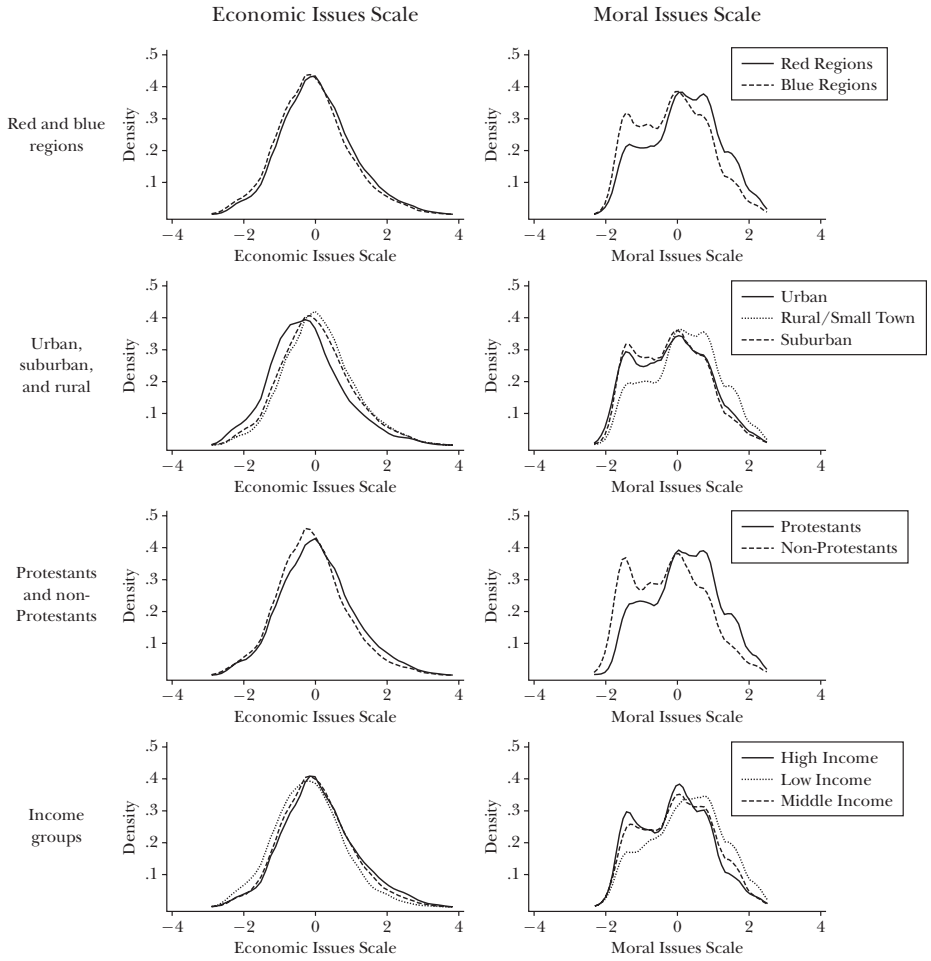


regions. However, by the 1990s, a gap had emerged. Those in blue regions were on average .10 units more liberal on economics than those in red regions. The trends in preferences, then, run wholly counter to the common observation that morals are an increasing division trumping economics in American political geography.

While our focus here is largely on the rhetoric about state-level electoral maps, the expansive literature on the culture war touches on many other possible divisions—especially income and religion—that might help shape those maps. Before proceeding, it is useful to describe some of these divisions, which are displayed graphically in Figure 3 along with the red/blue regional division. Consistent with Thomas Frank's (2004) argument, rural voters are more conservative on both moral and economic issues than other voters. Protestants and regular churchgoers are much more conservative on both scales, and especially so on the Moral Issues Scale. In fact, the religious divide in the United States is perhaps the most substantial. Protestants and non-Protestants differ by as much as a full standard deviation on the moral scale and by more than a half of a standard deviation on the economic scale. The difference is even greater when we contrast Evangelical Protestants with the rest of the population.

Finally, there is the matter of income, which lies at the center of much economic thinking about policy preferences. Economists commonly assume there is a tight relationship between income and economic preferences. Roemer (1998), Frank (2004), and others argue that moral issues constitute a cross-cutting cleavage—that is, lower-income people, because of their greater propensity to attend church, are morally more conservative. Not surprisingly, income and economic conservatism are positively correlated, but the relationship is not tight. The raw correlation between economic policy preferences and income is only .26 in the

Figure 3
Issue Scale Distributions by Group, GSS, 1977–2002



American National Election Study and .32 in the General Social Survey. These correlations suggest that wealthier people are more economically conservative, and thus their preferences tend to be "in line" with their self-interest in lower taxes, less redistribution, and so forth. However, the weakness of the relationship suggests that we are not free to equate income or even social class with economic policy preferences. Preferences derive not only from one's status and pecuniary interests, but from beliefs and understanding about what is right or what is in the best interests of the community, the country, or even the world.

The relationship between income and preferences on moral issues is also weak but significant. The correlation between income and moral issue preferences is −.11 in the ANES and −.22 in the GSS. If we divide the electorate into three groups by income—low, middle and high—the lower- and middle-income groups hold

slightly more conservative views on moral issues compared to the upper-income group, as shown in the final panel of Figure 3. The cross-cutting moral values cleavage is driven as much by the moral liberalism of the wealthy as the moral conservatism of the poor decried by Frank and others. Also, while the degree of polarization on moral issues is not large, it is slightly larger among higher-income individuals than among lower-income individuals.

The Relative Importance of Economic and Moral Issues in Voting

The results in the previous section are notable because they show that statistically significant differences exist across social groups and political geography in the economic and moral policy preferences of American voters. Whether these differences are politically meaningful, though, depends on how much weight voters place on these two dimensions. Issues on which large differences exist may matter little in politics if those issues receive very little weight in voters' thinking. Issues on which only small differences exist will matter greatly if voters weight those issues heavily.

The relative importance of moral and economic questions depends on a variety of factors, including the salience of the issues, the intensities of voters' preferences on the issues, and the policy choices offered by the parties. If an issue is highly salient, such as unemployment in the 1930s, inflation in the 1970s, or crime in the 1980s, then the dimension of which that issue is a component will be more important in voters' minds. If voters have more intense preferences on one dimension than the other, then small policy differences on that dimension will translate into large differences in preferences. If the parties are far apart on an issue, then clear electoral choices on that issue will divide the electorate. We do not attempt to distinguish among these factors. Rather, we estimate the overall importance of issues in voter decisions, leaving open the question of how issues affect voting decisions.

To measure the relative weight of the two issue dimensions we conduct a regression analysis in which the probability of reporting to have voted for the Republican presidential candidate is a function of the voters' economic and moral policy preferences. This approach allows us to determine the relative weight of these two dimensions of political choice and whether they have changed. It does not allow us to determine why the change has occurred.

Also, as noted above, we focus on just these two dimensions because we are following the line of argumentation developed by various writers who have described the polarization of the American electorate in terms of economic and moral issues. Other factors, such as race, foreign policy and candidate traits, matter as well. In this analysis, however, we focus only on the economic and moral dimensions in voting behavior. We do include year-specific fixed effects in our analysis, which may capture much of the voting based on retrospective evaluations of the economy.

Table 1 presents the estimated effects of economic preferences and moral policy preferences on partisan attitudes and voting behavior. We measure how well economic and moral policy preferences predict the likelihood of voting for the Republican candidate (rather than the Democrat) in various elections and the effects of these two dimensions of preferences on party identification.[8] Here, we consider the basic findings and their implications.

The numbers in the column labeled "dP/dX" give estimates of the change in the probability of voting for the Republican, or the change in party identification, for a unit change in the voters' preferences along the relevant policy dimension. The numbers in the column marked "Conservative vs. Liberal" correspond to the comparison of a Liberal (someone at the 25th percentile on the relevant scale) and a Conservative (someone at the 75th percentile). The numbers in these columns are the differences in the estimated probabilities that a Conservative and a Liberal on the relevant scale vote for Republican candidates or identify themselves as Republicans, holding all other variables at their mean values.

Table 1 shows striking and clear evidence that economic policy preferences are more important than moral policy preferences in accounting for voting behavior and party identification. Compared with the Moral Issues Scale, the Economic Issues Scale is roughly twice as important, even in the most recent elections. Consider the relationship between presidential voting and the two issue dimensions using the General Social Survey for the period 1993–2002. The difference in the rate of Republican voting between an economic Conservative and an economic Liberal is 31 percentage points, while the difference between a moral Conservative and a moral Liberal is only 18 percentage points.

Table 1 also shows that the results for presidential voting are not an anomaly. The pattern of coefficients is similar for a variety of other dependent variables, including party identification, voting for U.S. senators and voting for U.S. House representatives. In fact, the relative importance of economic preferences appears to be even larger on these items than it is for presidential voting.

Those who sense a growing culture war in American elections have tapped at least one important trend: Moral issues have become increasingly important over the past 30 years. Such issues have grown from insignificance to a clear second dimension in American elections. As the General Social Survey results in Table 1 show, voters' positions on the Moral Issues Scale had no discernable impact on partisan voting decisions or party identification in the 1970s, and were of little importance in the 1980s. This pattern could be because the parties were nearly converged on these issues, or it could be because the campaigns chose not to emphasize abortion and other questions. In the 1990s the weight that voters placed on the Moral Issues Scale grew sharply.

However, moral issues have not supplanted economic policy preferences. Instead, Table 1 shows that voting decisions depend more on the Economic Issues

[8] More complete details of the analysis are in Appendix B, which is appended to this paper at the website ⟨http://www.e-jep.org⟩ and also available at ⟨http://web.mit.edu/polisci/research/portl.html⟩.

Table 1
Relative Impact of Economic Issues Scale and Moral Issues Scale on Voting and Party Identification

	Economics Issues Scale		*Moral Issues Scale*	
Dependent variable and survey	*dP/dX*	*Conservative vs. Liberal*	*dP/dX*	*Conservative vs. Liberal*
Presidential vote, GSS				
All Years	.27*	.29*	.04*	.07*
1977–1980	.22*	.23*	−.01	−.02
1981–1992	.27*	.29*	.02*	.03*
1993–2002	.28*	.31*	.11*	.18*
Presidential vote, ANES				
1992–2000	.31*	.39*	.18*	.24*
2004	.38*	.46*	.18*	.26*
U.S. Senate vote, ANES				
1992–2000	.23*	.30*	.13*	.17*
2004	.27*	.34*	.26*	.24*
U.S. House vote, ANES				
1992–2000	.22*	.28*	.09*	.12*
2004	.28*	.35*	.15*	.22*
	Regression coefficient	*Conservative vs. Liberal*	*Regression coefficient*	*Conservative vs. Liberal*
Party ID, GSS				
All Years	.81*	.91*	.04	.07
1977–1980	.70*	.78*	−.07	−.12
1981–1992	.80*	.90*	−.04	−.06
1993–2002	.86*	.97*	.21*	.34*
Party ID, ANES				
1992–2000	.95*	1.27*	.27*	.36*
2004	1.02*	1.33*	.40*	.60*

Note: * Statistically significant at the .01 level.

Scale than in the past. According to the General Social Survey data, the difference in Republican voting between an economic Conservative and an economic Liberal was just over 20 percentage points in the late 1970s. Today, that division has surpassed 30 percentage points.

The growing weight of these two issues does suggest a reorientation of voting behavior. Those who take liberal positions on economics and moral and religious questions are becoming more Democratic, and those who take conservative positions are becoming more Republican. Such a shift may have emerged because politics have become more issue oriented, because voters' preferences have become more intense, or because the parties have become more distinctive. In addition, other factors that are omitted from our analysis—such as the cold war and foreign affairs, racial issues and retrospective voting on the economy—might have become less important.

The data suggest that the American public is being pulled in two directions at once. Both moral and economic issues have grown in importance in American elections. Economic issues pull voters in the direction of voting consistent with their income, because higher-income voters are more conservative economically. At the same time, moral issues can pull voters away from their economic self-interest because higher-income voters tend to be more liberal on moral issues. But to date, the influence of economic policy preferences—on which the vast majority of Americans are moderates—has dominated the more divisive moral issues in explaining vote choice.

Variations on a Theme

On average, economic policy preferences dominate moral policy preferences in accounting for the vote. This pattern may mask important variations in electoral behavior within the American electorate that magnify the importance of moral issues. Such variations may take two forms: First, some demographic or political groups are thought to give very high weight to moral issues and little weight to economics—for example, Evangelical Protestants or rural Americans. Second, politicians and interest groups may be more successful at mobilizing voters on moral issues than on economic issues.

Are Moral Issues More Important to Some Segments of the Electorate?

One line of argument suggests that some social groups, especially those lower on the income scale, place greater weight on moral issues than other social groups. Thomas Frank (2004) suggests that moral issues hold greater sway than economics in determining the votes of low-income Americans, while high-income Americans think more in terms of economic issues, and that moral issues dominate the vote in red states like Kansas, in rural areas, or among evangelical Protestants. Sociologists of religion have suggested that frequent churchgoers are exposed to political messages on moral issues by an increasingly politicized clergy, making them more inclined to vote on moral issues (Hunter, 1991; Layman, 2001; Layman and Green, forthcoming 2006). Union members might be socialized in the workplace to place more emphasis on economic issues.

To examine these possibilities, we returned to the analysis conducted earlier, but this time we estimated the combined effects of the Moral Issues Scale, the Economic Issues Scale, indicator variables for each of these population subgroups, and their interactions on the likelihood of voting for a Republican presidential candidate. The bottom line of these analyses is clear: whether we use the GSS or ANES, there is not a single group for which the coefficient on the Moral Issues

Scale is nearly as large as the coefficient on the Economic Issues Scale, and the coefficients are strikingly stable across groups.[9]

The results are not at all what one would expect given recent discussions about "moral values" voters. The impact of moral issues on vote choice is actually slightly *smaller* for Protestants (in the GSS), evangelical Protestants (in the ANES) and regular churchgoers (in the ANES) than for the rest of the population. The impact of economic issues on voting is slightly *larger* for these groups than other voters. Even Evangelical Protestants who attend church regularly appear to place more weight on the Economic Issues Scale than on the Moral Issues Scale in voting. Geographic groups also vote the "wrong" way. Moral issues have a slightly *larger* impact on the vote choices of blue-state residents than red-state voters, and a slightly *smaller* impact on the vote choices of rural residents than urban and suburban residents.

The results on income are also interesting. In both data sets, the coefficients for both issue scales are larger among high-income groups than low-income groups. In the General Social Survey, low-income Americans are significantly *less* inclined to vote based on moral values than are high-income groups. In fact, we find that higher-income voters are more inclined to rely on issues (economic and moral) in making their voting decisions.

We should restate our main point, however, so it is not lost. Even for red-state, rural and religious voters, economic policy choices have much greater weight in electoral decisions than moral issues do.

Are Moral Issues Better at Mobilizing Voters?

The possibility of higher or lower voter turnout introduces another possible twist. Political commentators, strategists, and some academics have conjectured that moral conservatives, whether motivated by their convictions or mobilized by their churches, vote more in elections. One conjecture about the 2004 election was that initiatives calling for a ban on gay marriages were placed on the ballot in several states to bring large numbers of moral conservatives to the polls. Ansolabehere and Stewart (2005) compared the returns from the 2000 and 2004 elections and found no evidence that states with gay marriage bans on the ballot had a higher Republican presidential vote than states without such referenda. In every state, the Republican vote share in 2004 was nearly identical to that in 2000, but shifted uniformly toward Bush by approximately 1.5 percentage points.

A closer look at the survey data on voter turnout provides further evidence against the culture war argument. First, the simple correlation between turnout and moral preferences run counter to popular claims. In both the ANES and the GSS, voters are slightly more Liberal than nonvoters on the Moral Issues Scale—for example, by .05 points in the ANES—not more Conservative. By contrast, voters are noticeably more Conservative than nonvoters on the economic issues scale—by .37

[9] The interested reader can find more complete results in Tables B2a and B2b of Appendix B, appended to this article at ⟨http://www.e-jep.org⟩ and ⟨http://web.mit.edu/polisci/research/portl.html⟩.

points in the ANES and .27 in the GSS. Thus, differential turnout produces an electorate that is economically Conservative, and (slightly) morally Liberal, relative to the entire population.

Second, the ANES and the GSS reveal that "extremists" on both issue scales are more likely to vote than "moderates"—but economic preferences have at least as large an effect as moral preferences. Controlling for age, education, income and other standard factors that affect the propensity to vote, a moral Conservative or moral Liberal is about 3 percent more likely to vote than a moral moderate (a respondent at 0 on the scale). There is an asymmetry with respect to economic preferences. Economic Conservatives are nearly 6 percent more likely to vote than economic moderates, while economic Liberals are only 1 percent more likely to vote than economic moderates.

Differential turnout may create an electorate that is somewhat more polarized than the overall population. This observation is consistent with a finding from research on political advertising and other communications that campaigns largely reinforce the beliefs and voting behaviors of strong partisans and more ideologically extreme voters (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1996). However, we do not want to exaggerate the difference between voters and nonvoters. It reflects a marginal difference compared to the striking degree of centrism exhibited overall by the American electorate. Moreover, this difference only bolsters our central claim that economic preferences are more important than moral values in determining voting behavior.

Accounting for Red States and Blue States

The culture war argument at first blush tastes of an old wine in a new bottle. The old wine is the argument that democratic institutions fail to reflect the economic preferences of voters adequately. The new bottle is the political geography of the United States. Evangelical Protestants in the United States, concentrated in the South, breadbasket states, and the Mountain West as well as in rural counties, reputedly are led by their moral convictions to ignore their economic policy preferences and vote Republican, even though that party does not represent their economic interests.

The evidence presented here suggests this argument is more wrong than right. The divisions among the public, both on policy preferences and voting behavior, are smaller than this view suggests, and voting behavior is shaped primarily by economic rather than moral preferences.

The culture war argument, however, may still be correct as an explanation of the red/blue cartography, but for a subtle reason. The behavior of voters in red and blue states may still be traced to moral issues, but these differences may be attributed not to the way voters think, but to an accident of geography. Even though voters put more weight on economic matters, the distribution of people across areas might imply that moral issues account for most of the divisions across

states or counties. In essence, this argument holds that the differences in mean preferences across states is such that more of the difference in predicted vote shares across red and blue states is attributable to moral issues, even though such issues have less salience in voters' minds.

Tacitly, the culture war argument and, indeed, all of the arguments about red and blue America assume that economic- and moral-policy preferences in fact account for geographic differences in voting behavior. Do they? Surprisingly (to us), the answer is yes. However, it is not moral values that matter most.

To examine whether and how geographic differences in voting behavior reflect preferences we conduct two analyses. We begin with a probit regression predicting the probability that respondents voted for the Republican presidential candidate using only the red/blue state indicator. This is analogous to calculating simple differences in means. We then add respondents' economic and moral policy preferences. If preferences explain geographic differences in voting behavior, there should be little or no observable differences in the effects of geography once we control for the individual's economic and moral liberalism.

The results suggest that the differences in voting between red and blue states are largely a function of the distribution of voters' preferences on economic and moral issues. In both the GSS and ANES, respondents from blue states report voting for Democratic presidential candidates in the 1992, 1996 and 2000 elections at a rate 8 to 9 percentage points higher than respondents from red states. When we include the Economic Issues Scale and Moral Issues Scale in the regressions, this difference falls to 1 percentage point in the GSS and 4 percentage points in the ANES, statistically insignificant in both cases. Thus, differences in preferences over economic and moral legislation account for most of the difference in voting behavior between red and blue states.

Which issue dimension does more of the work accounting for regional differences in voting? On one hand, the preferences of red-state and blue-state voters differ more on moral issues than on economic issues. On the other hand, voters put more weight on economic issues in deciding how to vote.

In the General Social Survey, the Economic Issues Scale and the Moral Issues Scale are nearly uncorrelated, so it is straightforward to decompose the vote. In the American National Election Study the scales are somewhat correlated (the correlation is .33 among voters), making it more difficult to decompose the geographic differences according to each of the issues.

Focusing on the recent period in the GSS, we attempt to explain the 8 percent difference between the Republican share of the vote in red and blue regions, and find that while both dimensions matter, the economic dimension appears to matter a bit more. Among voters, the absolute difference between red and blue regions is larger on moral issues (.27) than on economic issues (.14). However, since economic issues have a stronger impact on voting behavior, they can account for a larger share of the voting difference. Multiplying the cross-region preference differences by the appropriate parameters from the vote regressions in Table 1 (.28 for economic issues and .11 for moral issues), we discover that preferences over

economic issues accounts for nearly 50 percent of the difference in voting between these two groups of states (.039/.08), while preferences over moral issues only account for about 38 percent of the difference (.03/.08).

If we ignore the correlation between the Economic Issues Scale and the Moral Issues Scale in the ANES, we can perform a similar analysis. We find that in the ANES, moral preferences are slightly more important than economic preferences in accounting for differences between recent red- and blue-state presidential voting, but economic preferences are slightly more important for U.S. Senate and House voting.

Economic and moral policy preferences, then, help us understand most of the variation in the vote across geographic areas. Of the two factors, the economic dimension is at least as important in accounting for this variation. The clearest evidence—from the General Social Survey—suggests that red states are red in part because their voters are morally conservative. But, even more importantly, red states are more reliable supporters of the Republicans because voters in these states are slightly more conservative on economic issues and because those small differences have twice the weight in voters' minds.

Red and Blue America in Historical Perspective

How is it, then, that we can observe that some states are "owned" by Republicans and others by Democrats? The error lies in the popular description of American elections based on a handful of presidential elections. To see the mistake, one must see American elections in historical perspective. From that vantage, red and blue America is a better description of the divisions of the early 1900s, and perhaps the 1950s, than the present. Compared to the past, the political geography of the United States today is purple.

Consider the trends in four indicators of electoral and political competition among the American states: 1) a moving average of the vote margin of the winning candidate for president in each state (Average Winner Vote Margin for President); 2) a moving average of the vote margin for the leading party in each state computed using all statewide offices (Average Winner Vote Margin for Statewide Offices); 3) a moving average of the percentage of races in which one party won more than 55 percent of the vote (Lopsided Races for Statewide Offices); and 4) the average incidence of unified party control of state government (Unified State Government). The first three measures are based on votes, while the last is based on victories.[10]

[10] More precisely, (1) through (4) are constructed as follows. Let d_{jt} be the average Democratic vote share in state j in year t across a chosen set of races. Next, let D_{jt} be the average of d_{jt} in state j over the 9 year interval, $t - 4$ to $t + 4$. Finally, let $M_{jt} = |D_{jt} - .5|$ be the absolute difference of D_{jt} from .5. Let M_t be the average of M_{jt} across states in year t. Also, let $L_{jt} = 1$ if $M_{jt} > .05$ and 0 otherwise, and let L_t be the average of L_{jt} across states in year t. Then, (1) is M_t where we only use the race for president

Figure 4 presents all four variables over the past 100 years. The top panel shows 1 and 2, and the bottom panel shows 3 and 4. The data reveal that the partisan division across states has shrunk sharply over time. For example, Average Winner Vote Margin for Statewide Offices averaged .12 during the period 1900–1940, but only .05 over the period 1970–2000. Similarly, the fraction of Unified State Governments fell from an average of .76 during 1900–1940 to .47 during 1970–2000. The practical importance of the compression of the distribution is that since the 1960s, in nearly all states, neither party has held a solid edge in the votes. Nearly everywhere, the party division is smaller than 60 to 40 percent.

Examining the control of state legislatures provides other insights into these divisions. During the period 1900–1928, Republicans held more than 65 percent of the seats in more than half of the legislative chambers in the United States. Democrats had more than 90 percent of the seats in more than 25 percent of the states. There was little middle ground. In only 12 percent of all state legislatures did the two major parties hold between 40 and 60 percent of the seats. Today, the distribution of party divisions of state legislatures follows something more like a normal curve. Typically, neither party holds more than 60 percent of the seats. In no chamber today does one party hold 90 percent of the seats.

The South is particularly interesting in this regard. Casual accounts and current political punditry commonly describes the South as the bastion of Republicanism. This confuses changes with levels. Republican representation in Southern state governments has grown massively since the 1960s, but that increase came from a floor of literally zero. Several southern states had Democratic governors and *not one* Republican state legislator in the late 1950s. Today, Republicans have wrested control of at least one chamber of the state legislature from the Democrats in almost every Southern state. But the division of seats in the southern state legislatures is almost exactly even. The South is perhaps the most evenly divided region in terms of state politics.

One may also look within the states. While much has been written about the divisions between urban, rural and suburban voters, there has been a similar century-long decline in the partisan divisions within states. The variation in the vote across counties within states has declined significantly. Many other geographic cleavages have also shrunk, such as the "North–South" division in California and Florida, the "upstate–downstate" differences Illinois and Indiana, and the "East–West" schism in Tennessee and Massachusetts. What many observers see as an enormous urban–rural difference—Democratic dominance of cities and Republi-

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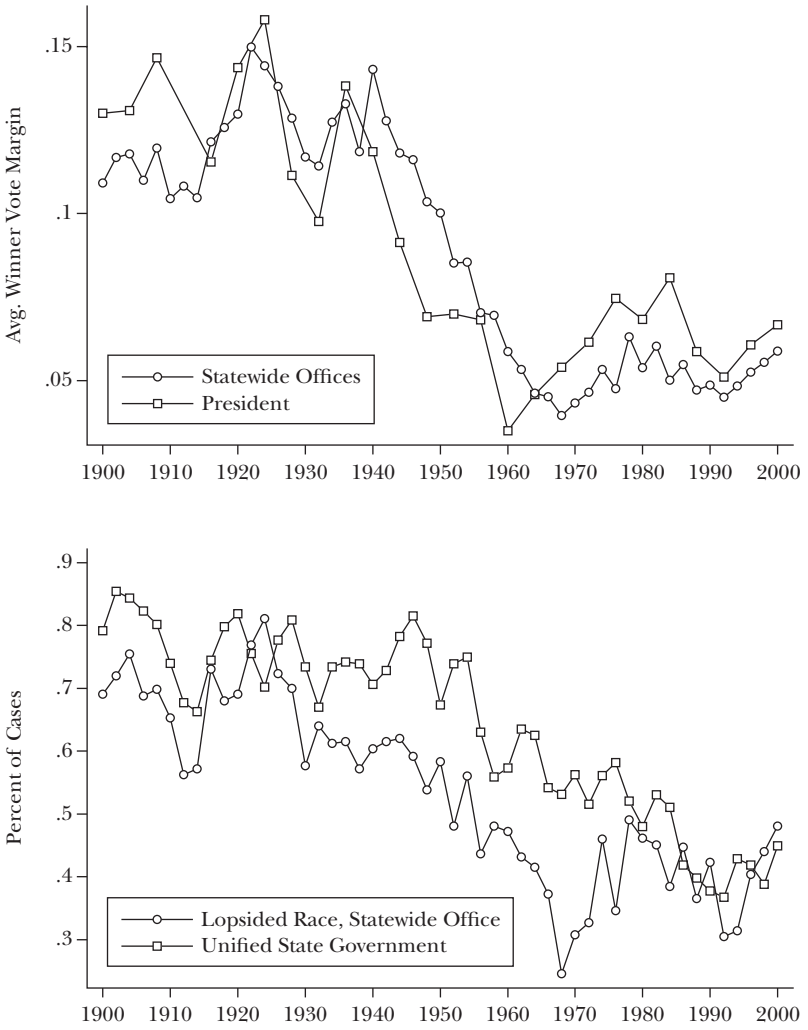
in computing d_{jt}, (2) is M_t where we use all statewide races in computing d_{jt} (see Ansolabehere and Snyder, 2002, for more details about data and sources), and (3) is L_t where we again use all statewide races in computing d_{jt}. To construct (4), we say that a state has *unified government* in a given year if one party controls the governorship and also controls a majority of the seats in both houses of the state legislature. We define (4) as the fraction of states with unified governments in each year t. Note that we do not take a moving average in constructing this variable. Also, we drop Nebraska and Minnesota during the periods in which these states had nonpartisan state legislatures.

Figure 4
Decline in One-Party Dominance in U.S. States, 1900–2000



can dominance in many rural areas—is relatively small when viewed in historical perspective. Differences remain today, but they are half of what they were 50 years ago. If these trends continue, geographic differences will become even less meaningful in the American states.

The past century has produced, not a growing political divide, but political convergence among the American states and counties. At least in terms of the distribution of votes and political control of state governments, American states do not sort cleanly into Democratic and Republican camps. The parties can compete almost everywhere. That does not mean that they always do. With scarce resources in a presidential election, for example, the parties may focus on the dozen or so

most closely divided states. However, even the governorships of states like California or Kansas or the mayoralty of New York City are not out of reach for either party.

The quest to understand the differences between red and blue states, then, seems to us to be on the wrong track. The question is not why are some states red and some states blue, but why has America become purple? That phenomenon—the political convergence of the American states—is the phenomenon that we believe deserves further exploration and explanation.[11]

Conclusion

The rhetoric of red and blue America emerged from an observation about the geography of American politics. In recent presidential elections, most states appear to be regularly Democratic or regularly Republican. Only a dozen states swing one way or another. Beneath that pattern, it has been conjectured, lies a polarized electorate, especially over hot-button moral issues, and these moral issues allegedly lead low-income Americans to vote against their economic interests.

Little in the survey data squares with that interpretation of the American public. Individuals' policy preferences on moral and economic issues can account for differences in voting between red-state and blue-state voters. However, economic issues, not moral issues, have a much greater impact on voters' decisions. As a result, even though there is a somewhat larger divide between the states on moral issues, if anything economic issues account for more of the difference between "regularly Republican" and "regularly Democratic" states. Moreover, that difference is quite small—only about 8 percentage points.

Economic issues also create a strong centrifugal force in American politics. The great mass of the American electorate holds centrist positions on economic policies. Because the weight of economic issues is so much higher in elections than moral issues, the electoral outcomes are more in line with the distribution of economic preferences than moral preferences. The electorate is indeed pulled in two directions, as suggested by Thomas Frank, John Roemer, and others, but the pull of economic issues is so much stronger that the role of moral issues is clearly of secondary importance.

For economists, it may be tempting to see in this account a ringing endorsement of the economic theory of democracy. The standard model of public finance and political economy has held up reasonably well in one respect: preferences over

[11] In a provocative book, McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal (1997) argue that the political convergence in the United States reflects the economic growth of the South and the converging income distribution across states. The survey data examined here raise doubts about that explanation. The effect of income on economic preferences, while in the expected direction, is hardly strong, and the effect of income on moral preferences runs in the opposite direction. It is unclear how these two factors balance out, but the effect of income growth on policy preferences and voting is surely complicated.

economic policies appear to dominate in voters' decision making. However, our analysis exposes a deeper problem. The relationship between economic policy preferences and economic self-interest is weaker than commonly supposed by political economists. Those with higher income tend to hold more economically conservative views, but the distribution of economic policy preferences of lower-income and higher-income Americans do not differ much. In Figure 3 above, for example, roughly 45 percent of the higher-income Americans have economic policy preferences to the left of the average lower-income American.

Ultimately, individuals' beliefs about what is the right or fair economic policy for the nation are difficult to explain. They are only related weakly to one common indicator of self-interest—income—and they are nearly uncorrelated with cultural issues. Since these policy preferences appear to be one of the main forces driving voting behavior, however, explaining them is clearly a key question in American political economy.

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Appendix A
The Factor Analysis behind the Economic and Moral Issues Scales

We first describe the survey items used in constructing the four issue scales. Tables A.1 through A.4 then present the results of the factor analyses, including the eigenvectors, factor loadings, and scoring coefficients. Note that before conducting the factor analyses we standardized each variable to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one.

American National Election Study (ANES)

The *Economic Issues Scale for 1992–2000* is constructed from the following 14 items: Five 7-point scales, as follows: A scale on government spending and services, where 1 = "Government should provide many more services: increase spending a lot" and 7 = "Government should provide many fewer services: reduce spending a lot." A scale on government health insurance, where 1 = "Government insurance plan" and 7 = "Private insurance plan." A scale on government and jobs and standards of living, where 1 = "Government see to job and good standard of living" and 7 = "Government let each person get ahead on his own." A scale on environmental regulations vs. business, where 1 = "Tougher regulations on business needed to protect the environment" and 7 = "Regulations to protect environment already too much of a burden on business." A scale on environmental protection vs. jobs, where 1 = "Protect environment, even if it costs jobs and standard of living" and 7 = "Jobs and standard of living more important than environment." Eight 3-point spending scales, where 1 = "spending should be increased," 2 = "spending should stay the same," and 3 = "spending should be decreased or cut out entirely." The items are: child care, welfare, the poor, homelessness, food stamps, public schools, social security, and environmental protection. We also include one feeling thermometer, for labor unions, with the scale reversed so a higher score means the respondent feels cooler towards unions.[12]

[12] We also constructed an Economic Issues Scale in which we added the following items to those above: A 7-point scale on defense spending, where 1 = "Greatly increase defense spending," and 7 = "Greatly decrease defense spending." A 3-point scale on foreign aid spending, where 1 = "spending should be decreased or cut out entirely," 2 = "spending should stay the same," and 3 = "spending should be increased." Four feeling thermometers for the following groups or institutions: welfare recipients, poor peope, environmentalists, and the federal government. Six 5-point scales on statements about equality and equal opportunity, where the choices are: "agree strongly," "agree somewhat," "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree somewhat" and "disagree strongly." The statements and codes are: "Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed" (1 = disagree strongly . . . 5 = agree strongly). "One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance" (1 = disagree strongly . . . 5 = agree strongly). "If people were treated more equally in this country we would have many fewer problems" (1 = disagree strongly . . . 5 = agree strongly). "We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country" (1 = agree strongly . . . 5 = disagree strongly). "It is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than

The *Economic Issues Scale for 2004* is constructed from the following 13 items: All of the items used in the 1992–2000 Economic Issues Scale, except the 7-point scale on environmental protection vs. jobs, and the 3-point spending scales on homelessness, food stamps and environmental protection. Three items on the scope of government activity, as follows: One item with 1 = "There are more things that government should be doing" and 2 = "The less government the better." One item with 1 = "We need a strong government to handle today's complex economic problems" and 2 = "The free market can handle these problems without government being involved." One item with 1 = "Government has become bigger because the problems we face have become bigger" and 2 = "The main reason government has become bigger over the years is because it has gotten involved in things that people should do for themselves."

The *Moral Issues Scale for 1992–2000* is constructed from the following 12 items: One 7-point scale on women's role in running business, industry and government, where 1 = "Women and men should have an equal role" and 7 = "Women's place is in the home." Two 5-point questions on homosexual rights, as follows: "Do you favor or oppose laws to protect homosexuals against job discrimination?" The options are: 1 = "favor strongly," 2 = "favor not strongly," 3 = "don't know," 4 = "oppose not strongly" and 5 = "oppose strongly"; and "Do you think homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the United States Armed Forces or don't you think so?" The options are: 1 = "feel strongly should be allowed," 2 = "feel not strongly should be allowed," 3 = "don't know," 4 = "feel not strongly should not be allowed" and 5 = "feel strongly should not be allowed." One question on gay child adoption: "Do you think gay or lesbian couples, in other words, homosexual couples, should be legally permitted to adopt children?" The options are 1 = "yes," 2 = "don't know" and 3 = "no." One question on abortion, with the following options: 1 = "By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice," 2 = "The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established," 3 = "The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger" and 4 = "By law, abortion should never be permitted." One question on school prayer, with the following options: 1 = "By law, prayer should not be allowed in public schools," 2 = "The law should allow public schools to schedule time when children can pray silently if they want to," 3 = "The law should allow public schools to schedule time when children as a group can say a general prayer not tied to a particular religious faith" and 4 = "By law, public schools should schedule a time when all children would say a chosen Christian prayer." One question on how much guidance religion provides in the respondent's daily life, with the following options: 1 = "religion not important,"

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others" (1 = agree strongly . . . 5 = disagree strongly). "The country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are" (1 = agree strongly . . . 5 = disagree strongly). The results using this modified scale are essentially the same as those reoprted in the paper.

2 = "some," 3 = "quite a bit" and 4 = "a great deal." One question on the authority of the Bible, with the following options: 1 = "The Bible is a book written by men and is not the Word of God," 2 = "The Bible is the Word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word" and 3 = "The Bible is the actual Word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word." Four 5-point scales evaluating statements where the choices are: "agree strongly," "agree somewhat," "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree somewhat" and "disagree strongly." The statements are: "The world is always changing and we should adjust our view of moral behavior to those changes" (1 = agree strongly . . . 5 = disagree strongly). "We should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards, even if they are very different from our own" (1 = agree strongly . . . 5 = disagree strongly). "The newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of our society" (1 = disagree strongly . . . 5 = agree strongly). "This country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties" (1 = disagree strongly . . . 5 = agree strongly).[13]

The *Moral Issues Scale for 2004* is constructed from the following 16 items: All of the items used in the 1992–2000 Moral Issues Scale, except the item on school prayer. Two questions on working mothers, as follows: "Working mother can have warm relationship with kids" (1 = agree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, 3 = disagree). "Better if woman cares for home/family and man achieve" (1 = disagree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, 3 = agree). One question on gay marriage, with the following options: 1 = "Same-sex couples should be allowed to marry," 2 = "Same-sex couples should not be allowed to marry but should be allowed to legally form a civil union (volunteered)," and 3 = "Same-sex couples should not be allowed to marry." Two additional questions on abortion, as follows: "Do you favor or oppose government funding for abortions" (1 = favor strongly . . . 5 = oppose strongly). "Do you favor or oppose a law that makes late-term abortions, sometimes called partial birth abortions, illegal" (1 = oppose strongly . . . 5 = favor strongly).

General Social Survey (GSS)

The *Economic Issues Scale* is constructed from the following 12 items: Four 3-point spending scales, where 1 = "too little spending," 2 = "about right" and 3 = "too much spending." The items are: welfare, the environment, health and the problems of big cities. One question asking about the level of taxes, where 1 = "too low," 2 = "about right" and 3 = "too high." One 7-point scale where 1 = "government should do something to reduce income differences between rich and poor" and 7 = "government should not concern itself with income differences." Two 3-point scales about confidence in financial institutions and business, where 1 = "hardly any confidence," 2 = "only some confidence" and 3 = "a great deal of confidence," and one question about confidence in labor (with the scale reversed).

[13] We also constructed a Moral Issues Scale in which we added one question on the death penalty, and feeling thermometers for feminists, the women's movement, homosexuals and Christian fundamentalists. The results using this modified scale are essentially the same as those reported in the paper.

Three 5-point scales about the welfare state: In the first item, 1 = "I strongly agree that government should help improve living standards of the poor," 3 = "I agree with both answers" and 5 = "I strongly agree that people should take care of themselves." In the second item, 1 = "I strongly agree that government should do more to solve our country's problems," 3 = "I agree with both answers" and 5 = "I strongly agree that government is doing too much." In the third item, 1 = "I strongly agree it is the responsibility of government to help in paying for doctor and hospital bills," 3 = "I agree with both answers" and 5 = "I strongly agree people should take care of themselves."

The *Moral Issues Scale* is constructed from the following 19 items: One question asking the respondent about the strength of his/her religion ranging from 4 = "no religion" to 1 = "strong." Seven questions asking whether it should be possible for a pregnant woman to legally obtain an abortion under various circumstances. In all cases, 1 = "yes" or 2 = "no." The circumstances are (a) there is a strong chance of a serious defect, (b) "she is married and does not want any more children," (c) "the woman's own health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy," (d) "the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children," (e) "she became pregnant as a result of rape," (f) "she is not married and does not want to marry the man," (g) "the woman wants it for any reason." Six questions were asked about whether limitations should be placed upon two types of people: atheists and homosexuals. The first two questions ask whether such a person should be allowed to make a speech in the respondent's community, the second two questions ask whether such a person should be allowed to teach in a college or university, and the third two questions ask whether a book written by such a person should be removed from the public library. In all case the responses are 1 = "yes" or 2 = "no." One question asking "Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal or not? (1 = "yes," 2 = "no). Two questions asking about sexual attitudes. The first asks "What is your opinion about a married person having sexual relations with someone other than the marriage partner?" And the second asks "What do you think about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex?" For both questions, the options are, 1 = "not wrong at all," 2 = "wrong only sometimes," 3 = "almost always wrong" and 4 = "it is always wrong." One question about laws related to pornography, where 1 = "There should be no laws forbidding the distribution of pornography," 2 = "There should be laws against the distribution of pornography to persons under the age of 18" and 3 = "There should be laws against the distribution of pornography whatever the age." One 3-point scale about confidence in the clergy, where 1 = "hardly any confidence," 2 = "only some confidence" and 3 = "a great deal of confidence."[14]

[14] A handful of questions were left out of some surveys. We imputed values for the missing years, using the "best subset linear regression" imputation method. We have also constructed a Moral Issues Scale using a smaler set of questions that were present in every survey, obtaining very similar results to those presented in the paper.

Table A.1
Factor Analysis for Issues Scales, NES 1992–2000

Economic Issues Scale

Number of observations = 5,611
Largest eigenvalue = 4.05; proportion of variance = .85
Second eigenvalue = 0.96

Item	Factor loadings	Uniquenesses	Scoring coefficients
Gov. spending & services	.64	.58	.15
Gov. health insurance	.50	.75	.09
Gov. & jobs/standard of living	.53	.72	.10
Environment vs. business	.61	.62	.17
Environment vs. jobs	.35	.88	.06
Spending: child care	.57	.68	.11
Spending: welfare	.55	.70	.12
Spending: the poor	.64	.59	.15
Spending: homelessness	.67	.55	.16
Spending: food stamps	.52	.73	.12
Spending: public schools	.48	.77	.08
Spending: social security	.42	.82	.07
Spending: environment	.50	.75	.10
Thermometer: labor unions	.42	.82	.07

Moral Issues Scale

Number of observations = 5,313
Largest eigenvalue = 3.23; proportion of variance = .93
Second eigenvalue = 0.57

Item	Factor loadings	Uniquenesses	Scoring coefficients
Women's role	.44	.81	.09
Homosexual job discrimination	.50	.75	.12
Homosexuals in military	.55	.70	.15
Homosexuals & adoption	.64	.59	.18
Law on abortion	.56	.68	.14
Law on school prayer	.39	.84	.08
Guidance from religion in life	.52	.73	.13
Authority of Bible	.58	.67	.16
Adjust moral views to change	.39	.85	.09
Tolerate others' moral standards	.50	.75	.13
Newer lifestyles, breakdown	.57	.67	.15
Traditional family ties	.51	.74	.12

Table A.2
Factor Analysis for Issues Scales, NES 2004

Economic Issues Scale

Number of observations = 1,143
Largest eigenvalue = 3.83; proportion of variance = .98
Second eigenvalue = 0.42

Item	Factor loadings	Uniquenesses	Scoring coefficients
Gov. spending & services	.67	.55	.17
Gov. health insurance	.55	.70	.12
Gov. & jobs/standard of living	.63	.61	.16
Environment vs. jobs	.29	.91	.05
Spending: child care	.61	.63	.14
Spending: welfare	.51	.74	.10
Spending: the poor	.58	.67	.13
Spending: public schools	.53	.72	.11
Spending: social security	.47	.78	.09
Gov. scope: do more	.55	.70	.12
Gov. scope: complex problems	.51	.74	.11
Gov. scope: problems bigger	.63	.60	.16
Thermometer: labor unions	.41	.83	.07

Moral Issues Scale

Number of observations = 1,063
Largest eigenvalue = 4.79; proportion of variance = .89
Second eigenvalue = 0.73

Item	Factor loadings	Uniquenesses	Scoring coefficients
Women's role	.43	.81	.06
Working women and kids	.28	.92	.04
Women working vs. at home	.49	.76	.08
Homosexual job discrimination	.51	.74	.08
Homosexuals in military	.49	.76	.08
Homosexuals & adoption	.66	.56	.13
Same-sex marriage	.73	.46	.17
Law on abortion	.65	.58	.13
Gov. funding abortion	.58	.66	.11
Late-term abortion	.43	.82	.06
Guidance from religion in life	.56	.69	.10
Authority of Bible	.61	.62	.11
Adjust moral views to change	.34	.88	.05
Tolerate others' moral standards	.51	.74	.08
Newer lifestyles, breakdown	.64	.59	.13
Traditional family ties	.64	.59	.12

Table A.3
Factor Analysis for Issues Scales, GSS 1977–2002

Economic Issues Scale

Number of observations = 32,557
Largest eigenvalue = 2.34; proportion of variance = .99
Second eigenvalue = .60

Item	Factor loadings	Uniquenesses	Scoring coefficients
Spending: the environment	.32	.90	.09
Spending: health	.40	.83	.12
Spending: problems of cities	.33	.89	.09
Spending: welfare	.44	.80	.12
Gov. role equalizing income	.58	.66	.18
Taxes	.03	.99	.01
Confidence: financial institutions	.13	.98	.04
Confidence: business	.24	.94	.06
Confidence: labor	.23	.95	.06
Gov. response to help poor	.69	.52	.27
Gov. response to solve natl problems	.65	.57	.23
Gov. response to help the sick	.63	.60	.21

Moral Issues Scale

Number of observations = 26,194
Largest eigenvalue = 5.72; proportion of variance = .66
Second eigenvalue = 2.16

Item	Factor loadings	Uniquenesses	Scoring coefficients
Atheist allowed to speak	.50	.75	.08
Atheist allowed to teach	.49	.76	.07
Book by atheist in library	.54	.71	.09
Homosexual allowed to speak	.56	.69	.10
Homosexual allowed to teach	.57	.67	.11
Book by homosexual in library	.57	.67	.09
Legalization of marijuana	.49	.76	.07
Religiosity	.38	.86	.05
Confidence: clergy	.27	.93	.03
Abortion: birth defect	.50	.75	.08
Abortion: want no more children	.74	.45	.15
Abortion: health of mother	.42	.83	.06
Abortion: poor	.70	.50	.11
Abortion: rape	.51	.74	.07
Abortion: single	.73	.47	.14
Abortion: any reason	.72	.47	.12
Homosexual sex	.57	.67	.08
Extramarital sex	.35	.88	.04
Laws regulating pornography	.53	.72	.07

Appendix B
Some Detailed Regression Results

Table B1a

Relative Impact of Economic Issues Scale and Moral Issues Scale on Voting and Party Identification, GSS

	Presidential elections				*Party ID*			
	All years	*1977–1980*	*1981–1992*	*1993–2002*	*All years*	*1977–1980*	*1981–1992*	*1993–2002*
Economic Issues Scale	.27 (.01)	.22 (.01)	.27 (.01)	.28 (.01)	.81 (.01)	.60 (.03)	.80 (.03)	.86 (.02)
Moral Issues Scale	.04 (.01)	*−.01* (.01)	.02 (.01)	.11 (.01)	.04 (.01)	−.07 (.03)	*−.04* (.03)	.21 (.02)
R^2	.15	.08	.14	.19	.13	.08	.12	.15
Observations	14,213	2,681	6,862	4,670	23,797	4,371	15,108	8,342

Table B1b

Relative Impact of Economic Issues Scale and Moral Issues Scale on Voting and Party Identification, ANES

	Presidential elections		*U.S. Senate elections*		*U.S. House elections*		*Party ID*	
	1992–2000	*2004*	*1992–2000*	*2004*	*1992–2000*	*2004*	*1992–2000*	*2004*
Economic Issues Scale	.32 (.01)	.32 (.03)	.23 (.01)	.24 (.03)	.22 (.01)	.24 (.02)	.96 (.02)	.95 (.05)
Moral Issues Scale	.19 (.01)	.21 (.02)	.12 (.01)	.20 (.03)	.09 (.01)	.19 (.02)	.30 (.02)	.51 (.05)
R^2	.33	.33	.20	.28	.17	.25	.27	.32
Observations	3,371	804	2,264	512	3,195	710	4,999	1,040

Notes: Each column shows results from a single regression. In the vote choice equations (labeled Presidential elections, U.S. Senate elections, and U.S. House elections), the dependent variable is a dummy where 1 = Republican, 0 = Democrat, and the coefficients are dF/dX from probit regressions, with robust standard errors in parentheses. In these columns the R^2 reported is the pseudo R^2. In the Party ID equations, the dependent variable ranges from 0 (strong Democrat) to 6 (strong Republican) in both the GSS and ANES and the coefficients are from linear regressions, with robust standard errors in parentheses. All coefficients are significant at the .01 level except those in italics. Year dummies are included in all specifications, but coefficients are not reported.

Table B2a

Relative Impact of Issue Scales on Vote Choice in Presidential Elections Interactions with Selected "Culture War" Social Groups, GSS, 1993–2002

Interaction Variables (Var1 vs. Var2)	*Econ. × Var1*	*Econ. × Var2*	*Moral × Var1*	*Moral × Var2*	*Var1*	*Obs.*	*Pseudo R^2*
Protestant vs. non-Protestant	.30 (.01)	.27 (.02)	.09 (.01)	.13 (.01)	*.03* (.02)	4,660	.19
Churchgoer vs. nonchurchgoer	.27 (.02)	.28 (.01)	.10 (.01)	.09 (.01)	.05 (.02)	4,592	.18
Blue region vs. red region	.29 (.02)	.28 (.01)	.14 (.01)	.08 (.01)	*−.005* (.02)	4,670	.19
Rural vs. nonrural	.29 (.04)	.28 (.01)	*.04* (.03)	.11 (.01)	*.04* (.03)	4,670	.19
Suburban vs. nonsuburban	.27 (.02)	.29 (.01)	.15 (.02)	.10 (.01)	.08 (.02)	4,670	.19
High income vs. low/medium income	.32 (.01)	.22 (.02)	.15 (.01)	.07 (.01)	.14 (.02)	4,217	.21
Low income vs. high/medium income	.23 (.04)	.29 (.01)	*.03* (.03)	.12 (.01)	−.15 (.03)	4,217	.20

Table B2b

Relative Impact of Issue Scales on Vote Choice in Presidential Elections Interactions with Selected "Culture War" Social Groups, ANES, 1992–2000

Interaction Variables (Var1 vs. Var2)	*Econ. × Var1*	*Econ. × Var2*	*Moral × Var1*	*Moral × Var2*	*Var1*	*Obs.*	*Pseudo R^2*
Evangelical vs. non-Evangelical	.35 (.02)	.30 (.015)	.18 (.02)	.20 (.014)	−.06 (.02)	3,371	.33
Churchgoer vs. nonchurchgoer	.34 (.02)	.30 (.02)	.17 (.02)	.20 (.02)	−.02 (.02)	3,358	.33
Blue state vs. red state	.30 (.02)	.32 (.02)	.21 (.02)	.17 (.02)	−.04 (.02)	2,760	.33
Swing state vs. non-swing state	.34 (.02)	.31 (.02)	.14 (.02)	.20 (.013)	.00 (.03)	3,365	.33
Rural vs. nonrural	.28 (.02)	.34 (.02)	.16 (.02)	.20 (.02)	.01 (.02)	2,897	.33
High income vs. low/medium income	.35 (.02)	.28 (.02)	.21 (.02)	.20 (.015)	.12 (.02)	3,257	.33
Low income vs. high/medium income	.24 (.02)	.33 (.02)	.16 (.02)	.22 (.02)	−.13 (.02)	3,257	.34

Each row shows results from a single regression. In each case we interact the Economic Issues Scale and Moral Issues Scale with a dichotomous variable of interest. For example, the first row is: $V = a + b_1$(Economic Issues Scale)(Protestant) $+ b_2$(Economic Issues Scale)(Non-Protestant) $+ b_3$(Moral Issues Scale)(Protestant) $+ b_4$(Moral Issues Scale)(Non-Protestant) $+ b_5$(Protestant) $+ e$. The dependent variable is a dummy where 1 = Republican, 0 = Democrat, and the coefficients are dF/dX from probit regressions, with robust standard errors in parentheses. Year dummies are included in all specifications, but coefficients are not reported.