

Dixie's Drivers: Core Values and the Southern Republican Realignment

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Scholarly accounts attribute the American South's historic partisan transformation that began in the 1960s to a combination of political and economic factors, but no prior work emphasizes the connection between individuals' fundamental beliefs and partisan change. Using pooled American National Election Studies (ANES) data from 1988 to 2016, we show that egalitarianism and moral traditionalism are more likely to influence southerners' party affiliation relative to non-southerners. Southerners did not connect their core values to the same extent as other citizens in the early years of our analysis—owing to the vestiges of a one-party system operating in Dixie. But over time, the relationship between core values and partisanship among southerners strengthened remarkably. Moreover, 1992–96 panel data show that egalitarianism in particular influences southern partisanship (but not vice versa). Our results reveal that core values are integral to understanding the southern Republican realignment and southerners' persistent political distinctiveness.

A well-trodden path has been formed by the congested trail of southern politics scholarship. And for good reason: the contemporary partisan transformation of the American South from a long-time one-party Democratic bastion (Key 1949) to its now Republican dominant political system (McKee 2012) is one of the most important developments in US electoral history (Hood, Kidd, and Morris 2012).¹ Indeed, what happens in Dixie does not stay in Dixie: the southern Republican realignment (SRR) has greatly contributed to elite-level partisan and ideological polarization (Fleisher and Bond 2004), partisan resurgence within the electorate (Bartels 2000; Hetherington 2001), mass-level partisan sorting (Hill and Tausanovich 2018; Levendusky 2009b) and heightened competitiveness in congressional and presidential elections (Black and Black 2002), which has manifested in the remarkable volatility and instability of majority control of these federal offices (Shafer 2016).

In this article, we emphasize a neglected component of the SRR that plays a central role in this dynamic party system.

Specifically, we examine core values' role in shaping party affiliation over a generation (1988–2016). Although individuals' symbolic ideological identifications have contributed greatly to partisan sorting in the South (Levendusky 2009a, 2009b)—to an extent that Abramowitz and Saunders (1998) describe southern Republican ascendancy as ideologically driven—we observe a similar dynamic prevailing in the non-South. Further, although racial attitudes are more salient in shaping southern whites' political behavior (e.g., Knuckey 2006; Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997; McKee 2017; Valentino and Sears 2005), they also exert notable effects nationwide (see Gilens 1995; Tesler 2012a). Rather, what are unique to the SRR, and heretofore overlooked, are core values, which have strongly contributed to white southerners' contemporary Republican embrace.

Indeed, core values are prominent features of the political psychology subfield (Goren 2012; Schwartz 1992; Schwartz and Bilsky 1987; Schwartz, Caprara, and Vecchione 2010), but no scholarship of which we are aware investigates core

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1. Throughout this study, we define the American South as the 11 ex-Confederate states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

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values' distinct role in the SRR. We aim to correct this oversight by exploring the potential influence of egalitarianism and moral traditionalism on partisanship among both southerners and non-southerners, controlling for standard predictors such as symbolic ideology (Abramowitz and Saunders 2006; Knuckey 2001), racial attitudes (Carmines and Stimson 1986, 1989; Knuckey 2006; Valentino and Sears 2005), and religiosity (Layman 1997; Layman and Carmines 1997).²

Our pooled cross-sectional analysis of American National Election Studies (ANES) data from 1988 to 2016 indicates that egalitarianism's relationship to partisanship has strengthened substantially among white southerners but not among whites residing elsewhere. Similarly, although to a lesser extent, moral traditionalism is also increasingly associated with partisanship among white southerners, but not white non-southerners. Finally, we leverage the 1992–96 ANES Panel Study to show that egalitarianism in 1992 drives individual-level partisan change over the four-year period among southerners, but not the reverse, whereas this relationship is endogenous among non-southerners. The findings ultimately clarify the nature and extent of multiple existing explanations for the SRR, and most importantly show that egalitarianism, a key component of American party competition and individuals' approach to the political world, is a fundamental and yet previously ignored driver of this historic partisan transformation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

With some exceptions, the SRR literature shows a proclivity toward demographically rooted explanations. This said, the catalyst for southern whites to break from their ancestral loyalty to the Democratic Party was their negative reaction to national Democrats championing the cause of black civil rights—initially in 1948 with the Dixiecrat revolt in response to President Truman's racial liberalism (see Frederickson 2001); then President Kennedy's pro-civil rights statements in the late spring and early summer of 1963 (see Kuziemko and Washington 2018); and finally President Johnson's leadership on the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act (see Carmines and Stimson 1989).

But dealignment from the southern Democracy does not necessarily explain realignment to the Grand Old Party (GOP) (Petrocik 1987). In fact, the absence of any marked shift in favor of white Republican identification for years after passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA) prompted scholars to anticipate prematurely the persistence of a Democratic dealignment and very little likelihood of a Republican takeover (Beck 1977; Converse 1966). By the 1980s, GOP gains were

primarily attributed to demographic change. Specifically, a growing white middle class, with increasing levels of formal education residing in burgeoning urban areas—also attractive to northern in-migrants who at this time were more Republican than native whites—fueled southern Republicanism (Black and Black 1987).

But what was it about the perennially defunct southern GOP that triggered its ascendancy in the 1990s? Generational change was pinpointed as a demographic driver of GOP advancement (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; McKee 2010), but this explanation again motivates one to ask, What made the modern Republican brand attractive to southern whites? Substantively, in the wake of President Reagan's tenure and the subsequent rise of southern congressional Republicans (Black and Black 2002), Dixie's modern version of the GOP looked strikingly similar to its pre-civil rights Democratic Solid South predecessor. That is, by the end of the twentieth century, conservative southern whites had exited the Democratic Party and rebuilt the modern Republican Party in their image (Hood et al. 2012). Hence, the similarities between the "Old South" Democratic Party and the "New South" GOP became patently evident, starting with racial conservatism and extending to religious and economic domains (Glaser 2005; Maxwell and Shields 2019).

Critically, because the contemporary southern GOP counts scarcely any African American adherents, the party is vastly more conservative than its current Democratic counterpart, and this is true across a panoply of political issues (Black and Black 1987, 2002). Of course, southern Republican elites purposely adopted conservative stances that attracted whites while alienating blacks (Black and Black 2002, 138; Hood et al. 2012). So, with respect to ideology, it is hardly surprising that white southerners were drawn to the GOP, since the party positioned itself closer to them (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Hayes and McKee 2008). Likewise, the GOP's sharp turn toward traditional values in the 1970s, specifically in reaction to *Roe v. Wade* (1973), with Ronald Reagan leading the charge (Adams 1997; Stimson 2004), fostered a union with the religious right (Wilcox and Robinson 2011) such that evangelical Christians—notably more prevalent in the South—are now the base of the southern Republican Party (McKee 2019).

Finally, the question of equality is not a wholly absent feature of the SRR narrative, but it has been narrowly conceptualized. Indeed, our primary contribution in this study is to recast and further consider the significance of white beliefs about the core value of egalitarianism. Unlike previous work examining the role of economic growth and class (e.g., family income levels) in fostering white southerners' realignment to the GOP (see Brewer and Stonecash 2001; Lublin

2. See Knotts et al. (2005) for an incisive review of these contributors to southerners' partisan change.

2004; Nadeau et al. 2004; Nadeau and Stanley 1993; Shafer and Johnston 2001, 2006), we are concerned specifically with white southerners' egalitarianism. Thus, although a relationship exists between income and party affiliation, one's belief toward equality has become far more politically important.

Previous research emphasizes how southern Republican ascendancy was propelled by a conservative repositioning on civil rights in the 1960s and likewise in its consummation of a political marriage with the religious right in the 1970s. But it has severely downplayed the importance of the GOP's anti-egalitarian ideology and attendant policy positions. Indeed, extant scholarship has fallen into the trap of confining the relevance of equality merely to a demographically rooted class explanation. This approach is fundamentally problematic for at least two reasons: (1) where an individual resides along the economic or class hierarchy does not account for beliefs regarding the core value of egalitarianism and (2) by missing the importance of egalitarianism, scholars of partisan change have essentially overlooked one of the main psychological drivers of the SRR.

Just as moral traditionalism has loomed larger in the South, the black/white racial divide exacerbates inequality to a much greater extent in Dixie. Historically, and to this day, poverty rates are higher in the South and tightly correlated with race (Black and Black 1987, 164–65). Slavery provides a clear cause for the severe race-based political, social, and economic disparities prevalent in the South (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen 2016; Wright 2013). That the southern party system took so long to exhibit a pronounced fault line conditioned by egalitarian views is thus surprising. The South's more pronounced inequality likely has been accepted and tolerated to a greater extent than elsewhere, which delayed this reality from eventually being politically exploited as an avenue for realigning partisan allegiances. Nonetheless, we will show that egalitarianism has become a key factor in altering whites' partisan affiliation, but this has only been true among southerners since 1988.

THE SOUTHERN REPUBLICAN REALIGNMENT AND CORE VALUES

Extant scholarship on the SRR is extensive, detailed, and rigorous.³ Further, leading explanations for southern Republican ascendancy are credible. For instance, we share the

3. An expansive, but necessarily not exhaustive, list of influential works in this tradition includes Black and Black (1987, 2002), Glaser (1996), Green et al. (2002), Hayes and McKee (2008), Hood et al. (2012), Lublin (2004), McKee (2010), Shafer and Johnston (2006), and Valentino and Sears (2005).

widely held position that the apex of the civil rights movement was a critical turning point. A reversal of the national parties' positions on racial issues in the 1964 presidential election (Carmines and Stimson 1989) swiftly and permanently aligned southern blacks with the Democratic Party (Campbell 1977). On the flip side, passage of the 1964 CRA and the 1965 VRA served not only to solidify African Americans' allegiance to the Democratic Party and hasten southern black re-enfranchisement (Alt 1994; Black and Black 1987; Bullock and Gaddie 2009)—particularly in those states where political repression was most severe (e.g., in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana; see Timpone 1995)—but also to trigger southern whites' exodus to the GOP (Hood et al. 2012).

We agree with the standard story of the origins of the SRR as a partisan transformation principally grounded in a racial issue evolution as explicated by Carmines and Stimson (1989; see also Lupton and Thornton, 2019; Valentino and Sears 2005). But issue evolutions can take a long time to run their course (Stimson 2004), and this has certainly been true of the SRR. As Key (1959) observed with New England township data prior to the “critical” 1932 election (Key 1955), partisan change was afoot for many years and large-scale political alterations took decades to complete. Likewise, in the American South, 1964 was the last time a majority of southern whites voted Democratic in presidential contests, but not for another 30 years did Republican advancement in Dixie produce a GOP US House majority (Black and Black 2002). And it would take another two decades for southern Republicans to secure majorities in all 22 of the region's state legislative chambers (McKee and Springer 2015).

Clearly then, the SRR has exhibited a pace in line with Key's (1959) conception of a secular realignment. As late as 1988, after President Reagan left his indelible mark on southern Republicanism (see Black and Black 2002), the ANES still showed more southern whites identifying as Democrats (33%) than as Republicans (27%). But a quarter-century later, the 2012 ANES had 40% of southern whites claiming GOP affiliation versus a mere 18% aligned under the formerly ubiquitous Democratic label. For our purposes, it is fitting that in *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Key (1949, 10) states, “Attachments to partisan labels live long beyond events that gave them birth.” Hence, the mainspring for a partisan realignment likely does not entirely sustain itself without the assistance of additional factors contributing to the changing political allegiances of current and future voters. This theoretical consideration motivates our research.

We make two important departures from the SRR literature. First, although we share the conventional wisdom that the events of the mid-1960s set in motion the SRR, the GOP electoral advantage below the presidential level materializes

in the 1990s (see McKee 2010; McKee and Yoshinaka 2015), and hence there must be some later factor(s) fostering white southern attachment to the Republican Party. Second, given the centrality of party identification for validating the southern GOP's now dominant status, it is surprising that few studies examine the role of psychological factors in altering party affiliation. The significance of ideology to partisan sorting has not been ignored (see Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Levendusky 2009a, 2009b; Zingher 2018), but our analysis shows that ideology has been a driver of party identification both in and outside the South since 1988, leading us to look beyond symbolic ideological attachments to consider a possibly unique southern phenomenon.

Moreover, despite growing evidence that elite political competition has neatly consolidated along a single ideological dimension (Stimson 2004; cf. Carmines and D'Amico 2015; Poole and Rosenthal 2007), the vast majority of individuals still exhibit limited ideological thinking. To be sure, elite conflict extension (Layman et al. 2010) across multiple policy dimensions has caught voters' attention (Hetherington 2001), but notwithstanding voters' growing awareness of the major parties' ideological polarization (Smidt 2017) and the documented contribution of issue attitudes to partisan realignment (i.e., Abramowitz and Saunders 2006), evidence suggests that voters remain largely ideologically innocent (Hill and Tausanovich 2015; Jewitt and Goren 2016; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017).⁴

We therefore turn toward a more widely deployed, influential set of attitudinal beliefs held among the mass public: core values. As defined by McCann (1997, 565), "A citizen's set of core political values consists of overarching normative principles and belief assumptions about government, citizenship, and American society." According to Goren (2005, 881), "Core political values reflect abstract, prescriptive beliefs about humanity, society, and public affairs." Finally, quoting Converse (1964, 211), Feldman (1988, 417) conceptualizes core values "as a sort of glue to bind together many more specific attitudes and beliefs, and these postures are of prime centrality in the belief system as a whole."

We argue that core values' omission from the SRR canon is consequential for two reasons. First, studies demonstrate

4. In fact, 26.4% of respondents interviewed for the 2016 ANES declined to place themselves on the 7-point ideological scale, a fairly typical nonresponse rate for this survey item (Jacoby 2002). A deficit of political sophistication is the most plausible reason why so many Americans decline to place themselves on the ideological scale. As Lupton, Myers, and Thornton (2015) demonstrate, although elites (e.g., party activists) conceive of their political world as residing along a single liberal-conservative ideological dimension, only a sliver of the mass public hold this perspective (no more than 5%).

core values' capacity to shape party identification directly (Evans and Neundorf 2018; Lupton, Smallpage, and Enders 2020). Second, select southern politics scholarship underscores that partisan change was at least partially ideologically and issue based (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, 2006; Schickler 2016), and a voluminous literature details racial attitudes' contribution to whites' Democratic Party defection (e.g., Knuckey 2006; Kuklinski et al. 1997; Kuziemko and Washington 2018; Sears and Henry 2003; Valentino and Sears 2005). Given that values, or individuals' fundamental beliefs about desirable and undesirable end states (Rokeach 1973) influence the attitudes and policy preferences cited in these works illuminating the SRR, we hypothesize that core values themselves are likely to be increasingly prominent predictors of southerners' partisanship, especially relative to other citizens. This point is critical: We only expect an increasing linkage between white partisanship and core values in the South—namely, egalitarianism and moral traditionalism—because one-party Democratic dominance in the region allowed the Democrats to maintain the support of southerners who would eventually sort in favor of the ascending Republican opposition, which has come to espouse a much more conservative position on both of these aforementioned core values.

Over decades, however, we argue that the Democratic Party's embrace of civil rights and ever more programmatic economic liberalism promoting the government's ability and responsibility to alleviate social and economic injustices should have attracted egalitarians and repelled anti-egalitarians. The Republican Party's heightened antipathy toward government spending, redistribution, and race-based remedies for social problems should have produced the opposite effect.⁵ Similarly, the "culture wars" (Hunter 1992) erupting over religion's role in public life and attendant social issues—especially abortion—now divide the parties nearly to the same extent as traditional economic issues (e.g., Adams 1997; Highton 2012; Layman et al. 2010).⁶ We therefore anticipate that postures toward proper moral behavior will predict partisan affiliation now more than in the past.

Thus, just as the parties are now cleanly sorted along ideological, racial, and religious fault lines (Mason 2016), we argue that the SRR should also be understood as a process of

5. Gerring (1998) and Grossmann and Hopkins (2016) offer excellent treatments of the nature and evolution of the Democratic and Republican Party platforms.

6. Indeed, value polarization in American politics can be observed in roll call votes (Hare and Poole 2014), attitudes among party activists and the mass public (Jacoby 2014; Layman et al. 2010; Lupton, Myers, and Thornton 2015), and party platforms and candidate speeches (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016).

Table 1. Party Affiliation of Whites from the 1950s to 2010s (in Percentages)

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	Change
Southerners:								
Democrats	68	54	43	38	27	22	18	-50
Republicans	16	17	20	24	33	40	41	+25
Non-southerners								
Democrats	41	42	33	32	31	29	30	-11
Republicans	34	31	26	32	30	31	32	-2

Note. All data are from the American National Election Studies (ANES). Percentage of Democrats and Republicans does not include independent leaning partisans, but the percentage Democratic and Republican is out of all respondents registering identification on the 7-point scale. Decades start with years ending in “2” and conclude in years “00” except if it is later in the ANES time series when there is no midterm election data (e.g., 2002, 2004, and 2008 data are for the 2000s, because there are no data for the 2006 and 2010 midterms; the 2012 and 2016 data are for the 2010s).

values sorting, separating egalitarians from anti-egalitarians and moral progressives from moral traditionalists as the southern Democracy finally collapsed. Compared to non-southerners who for decades experienced a more competitive two-party system, southern Democratic Party dominance contributed to a pronounced case of arrested development. Specifically, with regard to the aligning of political attitudes with partisanship, it makes sense that as the SRR has run its course, core values like egalitarianism and moral traditionalism would exert an increasing effect on southerners’ partisan affiliations during this period.

PARTY IDENTIFICATION IN THE SOUTH AND NON-SOUTH

Before assessing the effect of core values on partisan change (1988–2016), in this section we discuss the patterns of party identification among southern and nonsouthern whites dating back to the 1950s, when the Solid South had not yet crumbled. Table 1 displays the percentage of Democratic and Republican identifiers in the ANES by region (South/non-South) in each decade from the 1950s to the 2010s. The table features only individuals who identify with one of the two major parties, and therefore independent leaners are classified as independents (Miller 1991).

Starting with the data on non-southerners, we observe that the shares of Democrats and Republicans have both declined since the 1950s, but the drop is more pronounced among Democrats (-11 points). In contrast, the unfolding of the SRR is undeniable. In the 1950s—the tail end of the Solid South—nearly seven out of 10 whites identify as Democrats (68%) and only 16% as Republicans. The percentage of white southern Democrats declines in every subsequent decade, while the share of white southern Republicans increases. By the 2010s, 41% of southern whites are Republicans versus just 18% who are Democrats, a more than two to one advantage

in Republican identification. The current 18% share of southern white Democrats constitutes a 50-point drop since the 1950s, whereas the percentage of southern white Republicans has increased 25 percentage points over this same span. Notice also that while the greatest drop in southern white Democratic affiliation occurs from the 1950s to the 1960s (-14 points), the largest gain in southern white Republican identification takes place between the 1980s and 1990s (+9 points), a period covering the first dozen years of our empirical analysis (1988–2000). We consider core values’ contribution to these over time changes in party identification.

DATA AND METHOD

Our primary empirical analysis relies on pooled cross-sectional ANES data from 1988 to 2016, which offer us the necessary time horizon for assessing the changing bases of partisanship among both southerners and non-southerners. We analyze these data not only because the 28-year period represents a crucial time in the SRR but also because the surveys include question batteries assessing individuals’ orientation toward egalitarianism and moral traditionalism, two core values (e.g., McClosky and Zaller 1984) that fundamentally shape citizens’ issue attitudes and partisan attachments (Evans and Neundorf 2018; Jacoby 2006, 2014; Keele and Wolak 2006; Lupton et al. 2020).

The dependent variable in all the models is the 7-point ANES party identification scale ranging from “strong Democrat” to “strong Republican.”⁷ Our first core value, egalitarianism, is a four-item scale ($\alpha = .639$) capturing the extent to which one believes that social and economic equality

7. We conducted exhaustive supplemental analyses featuring a variety of alternative model specifications and alternative operationalizations of the dependent variables. The results of these models, as well as the full question wording for all variables used in this article, can be found in the appendix (available online).

is a problem deserving of government attention. This belief represents the salient and perpetual tension in American politics between citizens who believe in using the government's power to ameliorate inequality to level the proverbial societal playing field, and those citizens who instead hold individuals alone responsible for their lot in life and are thus skeptical of government's need to intervene to mitigate inherent inequalities (e.g., Lane 1963). Egalitarianism predicts attitudes toward social welfare spending (Goren 2008, 2012; Jacoby 2006) and racial policies (Kinder and Sanders 1996), as well as candidate evaluations (Feldman 1988) and Democratic partisanship (Keele and Wolak 2006; Lupton, Singh, and Thornton 2015).⁸

Our second core value, moral traditionalism, is a four-item scale ($\alpha = .722$) representing a belief in the virtue of traditional familial and social arrangements and the view that alternative lifestyles foster moral decay. This value influences attitudes toward hot-button cultural questions such as abortion (Weisberg 2005), gay marriage (Brewer 2003), and transgender rights (Flores et al. 2018), as well as Republican partisanship (Keele and Wolak 2006; Knuckey 2005; Layman and Green 2006). These two bedrock predispositions are enduring orientations in American political culture, and a wealth of scholarly evidence testifies to their importance for citizens' postures toward political issues, candidates, and controversies. However, their potential contribution to the SRR, perhaps the most momentous development in modern American political history, have largely been ignored.⁹

In order to test our argument that core values contributed significantly to the SRR, we specify split-sample regression models separating the South from the non-South. We confine our analysis to white respondents because our research question is whites' partisan change during this period.¹⁰ Our key variables are multiplicative interaction terms between our two core values—egalitarianism and moral traditionalism—

8. One can understand how a conservative southern Democrat circa 1980s could switch to the GOP on the basis of the following credible and frequently stated line: "I didn't leave the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party left me." And in the American South, as the SRR continued apace, there are many examples of elected southern Democrats possessing anti-egalitarian views (like Congressman Phil Gramm of Texas) who declared some version of the aforementioned justification when they defected to the Republican Party (Yoshinaka 2016).

9. We acknowledge that Knuckey (2001, 2006) has examined moral traditionalism's relationship to the SRR, and Hopkins (2017) identifies cultural issues as a defining feature of contemporary party competition, but we are the first to conceptualize moral traditionalism specifically as a core value and connect it to the SRR.

10. A split-sample regression model is akin to conducting a full dummy variable regression in that doing so estimates a different slope for every covariate in the model across groups (Kam and Franzese 2007).

and time, in order to assess the changing relationship between values and partisanship from 1988 to 2016. We examine trends within the South to investigate core values' contribution specifically to southerners' party identification and partisan change, as well as compare southerners to non-southerners to reveal potentially different sectional trends in the relationship between core values and party attachments.

Furthermore, because of ideology's documented role in the SRR (e.g., Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Camobreco 2016), we also interact individuals' symbolic liberal-conservative identifications with time in our regression analyses (e.g., Ellis and Stimson 2012). We do the same for racial resentment because whites' antiblack affect and belief that blacks as a social group violate American norms of hard work and individualism unquestionably contributed to the SRR (e.g., Valentino and Sears 2005). We measure racial resentment using the standard four-item ANES scale of this construct ($\alpha = .804$). Our goal here is not to conduct a mere horse race among competing explanations for white southerners' shifting party identification but, rather, to present the richest portrait to date of a sea change in white southerners' political affiliation.

We also control for economic assessments because retrospective judgments of the incumbent's handling of the economy shape political attitudes and behavior (Lacy and Christenson 2017; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1989). We code the variable so that higher values indicate more positive economic assessments, and we interact it with a Democratic presidential incumbent dummy variable in order to account for the effects of party control on citizens' partisan attachments. Thus, we expect the coefficient for the interaction term involving these two variables to be negative, indicating that more positive economic perceptions during a Democratic presidency are associated with greater Democratic party attachment, whereas the reverse should be true when a Republican holds the White House (i.e., the economic retrospectives constitutive term should be positive and significant).

We also include in our model a two-item scale of religiosity ($\alpha = .604$) because religious commitment and biblical literalism now divide Democratic and Republican Party faithful (Layman 1997). Finally, we control for a host of demographic variables' potential confounding effects—namely, gender, age, education, and income—to ensure that the observed relationships between core values and partisanship are not spurious. Note that all primary independent variables are coded such that higher values are associated with more conservative attitudes and orientations. Hence, higher values indicate greater symbolic ideological conservatism, more anti-egalitarianism and morally traditional

postures, and higher racial resentment. Additionally, partisanship is coded such that higher values reflect stronger Republican identification, meaning that the anticipated sign for the relationship between the lower order term for each primary independent variable and party identification is positive in our conditional models. The next section presents results from a variety of model specifications to demonstrate core values' increasingly intertwined relationship with southerners' partisanship, as well as their contribution to individual-level partisan change among this group.

RESULTS: PREDICTING PARTISANSHIP IN THE SOUTH AND NON-SOUTH

Table 2 displays four split-sample regression models. Each model features multiplicative interaction terms involving ideology, egalitarianism, moral traditionalism, and racial resentment, respectively, and a time variable representing each survey year included in the analysis. The time variable ranges from 0 in 1988 to 6 in 2016, meaning that the coefficient for the interaction effect in each model shows the potential over time change in the relationship between each key independent variable and partisanship across seven presidential election years. We do not analyze 1996 data due to the fact that the racial resentment battery was unfortunately omitted from that survey (i.e., our seven presidential election years are 1988–92 and 2000–2016). The first column for each model shows results for southerners, and the second column reports results for non-southerners.

Although admittedly unwieldy, we can infer meaningful results from table 2 if we focus on our comparisons of interest for each of the four models, noting that the control variables' relationship to partisanship is as expected in every instance. For example, more positive economic assessments are associated with greater identification with the incumbent president's party, and greater religiosity is associated with more Republican party identification. As lower order terms are interpreted only when the other variables constituting the multiplicative interaction are equal to zero, we interpret the former when the time variable is equal to zero, or the year 1988 (Friedrich 1982). We therefore conclude that ideology, egalitarianism, and moral traditionalism were associated with party identification in the non-South even before elite polarization accelerated and mass public partisanship resurged, testifying to these variables' long-standing role in shaping individuals' partisan attachments.¹¹ However, core values were unrelated to party identification in the South at

11. That is, the constitutive ideology, egalitarianism, and moral traditionalism terms in models 1, 2, and 3, respectively, are statistically significant among non-southerners ($p < .05$).

the outset of this period, whereas ideology and partisanship were already significantly aligned in the South by 1988. Moreover, racial resentment was similarly unassociated with individuals' partisan identities in 1988 among southerners and non-southerners alike. The interactive models thus show how these relationships changed—or did not change—across regions and over time.

We elucidate the interactive relationships more clearly in figure 1, which plots the coefficient estimates for the eight interaction terms, one for each key independent variable for southerners and non-southerners. The estimated interaction term coefficients for southerners are shown in solid circles, and the hollow circles represent the estimates for non-southerners. The horizontal lines accompanying each estimate represent 95% confidence intervals. Figure 1 demonstrates first that the connection between ideology and partisanship has increased significantly over time among citizens residing both inside and outside Dixie, confirming prior evidence that liberal-conservative identifications were instrumental to the SRR (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, 2006; Schreckhise and Shields 2003), and that partisan “sorting”—citizens' movement toward their proper ideological and partisan homes—has increased dramatically over the past three decades (Carsey and Layman 2006; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2008, 2010; Levendusky 2009b, 2010; Mason 2015). Our results also corroborate existing studies documenting racial resentment's role in shaping whites' contemporary partisan affiliations inside and outside the South (e.g., Tesler 2012a, 2012b, 2016).¹²

We next observe that the association between egalitarianism and partisanship increases dramatically among southerners during this period. However, the relationship among non-southerners exhibits no significant change, highlighting the usefulness of examining core values' role in the SRR and southerners' uniquely changing application of their fundamental beliefs to their partisan identities since 1988. As each variable shown in table 2 and figure 1 was coded to range from 0 to 1 to enable a clear comparison of effects, we can conclude that the increase in the correlation between egalitarianism and partisanship among southerners is as large substantively and statistically as that between ideology and partisanship or racial resentment and partisanship. The results, then, provide novel evidence that the connection

12. A coefficient plot of the estimated correlation between racial resentment and party identification indicates that the connection between the two predispositions increased similarly among southerners and non-southerners during this period. We plot the estimated correlation between racial resentment and partisanship among southerners and non-southerners in each year we examine in fig. A2.

Table 2. Predicting Partisanship among Southerners and Non-southerners, Split-Sample Regression Models, 1988–2016 ANES

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	South	Non-South	South	Non-South	South	Non-South	South	Non-South
Ideology	2.869** (.049)	3.470** (.173)	3.589** (.145)	4.199** (.101)	3.563** (.176)	4.200** (.101)	3.569** (.176)	4.188** (.101)
Ideology × time	.190** (.073)	.197** (.038)	...	...	...	...	...	...
Egalitarianism	.991** (.177)	.975** (.106)	.133 (.354)	1.006** (.199)	.980** (.185)	1.001** (.106)	.980** (.185)	.837** (.108)
Egalitarianism × time	...	...	.224** (.081)	−.002 (.043)	...	...	...	...
Moral traditionalism	.693** (.192)	.826** (.108)	.702** (.191)	.846** (.108)	.183* (.337)	.971** (.184)	.709** (.191)	.837** (.108)
Moral traditionalism × time	...	...	...	...	.143* (.074)	−.033 (.039)	...	...
Racial resentment	.719** (.166)	.298** (.092)	.727** (.165)	.329** (.092)	.723** (.166)	.334** (.092)	.169 (.327)	.055 (.168)
Racial resentment × time	...	...	...	...	...	...	.147** (.073)	.070** (.036)
Time	.063 (.049)	−.040 (.026)	.084** (.041)	.067** (.022)	.085 (.052)	.085** (.028)	.076 (.054)	.026 (.330)
Religiosity	.118 (.122)	.127* (.069)	.125 (.122)	.136** (.069)	.121 (.122)	.136** (.069)	.125 (.122)	.139** (.069)
Economic retrospectives	.908** (.147)	.957** (.087)	.896** (.146)	.895** (.087)	.879** (.146)	.891** (.087)	.876** (.146)	.908** (.087)
Democratic president	.287** (.115)	.400** (.079)	.291** (.115)	.426** (.079)	.291** (.115)	.429** (.079)	.291** (.115)	.413** (.079)
Economic retrospectives × Democratic president	−1.586** (.193)	−1.780** (.110)	−1.588** (.193)	−1.796** (.111)	−1.571** (.194)	−1.801** (.111)	−1.571** (.194)	−1.781** (.111)
Gender	−.001 (.066)	−.056 (.038)	−.003 (.066)	−.059 (.038)	.001 (.066)	−.060 (.038)	−.006 (.066)	−.059 (.038)
Age	−.012** (.002)	−.010** (.001)	−.011** (.002)	−.010** (.001)	−.012** (.002)	−.010** (.001)	−.012** (.002)	−.010** (.001)
Education	.141** (.037)	.096** (.021)	.134** (.037)	.095** (.021)	.137** (.037)	.096** (.021)	.135** (.037)	.093** (.021)
Income	.090** (.031)	.116** (.018)	.090** (.031)	.116** (.018)	.092** (.031)	.115** (.018)	.091** (.031)	.117** (.018)
Intercept	−.439** (.265)	−.329** (.146)	−.521** (.243)	−.751** (.136)	−.927** (.247)	−.827** (.154)	−.465 (.287)	−.580** (.149)
R ²	.430	.503	.430	.501	.429	.501	.429	.501
N	2,235	6,717	2,235	6,717	2,235	6,717	2,235	6,717

Note. ANES = American National Election Studies.

* $p < .10$.

** $p < .05$.

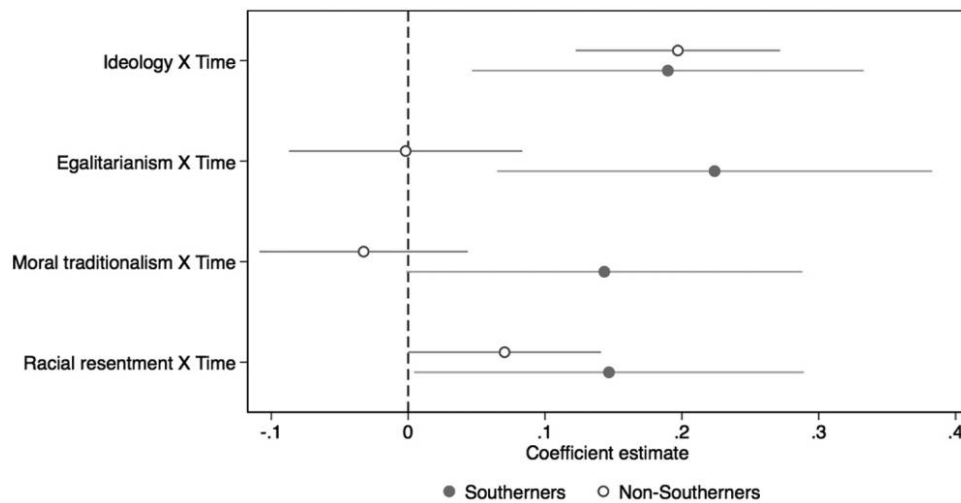


Figure 1. Coefficient plot of the estimated interaction effect involving time and ideology, values and racial attitudes, respectively, on partisanship, 1988–2016 American National Election Studies. Color version available as an online enhancement.

between southerners’ party affiliation and this core value—documented elsewhere to be an influential determinant of partisanship, political attitudes, and candidate evaluations but largely neglected in the realignment literature—has strengthened to the point of being one of the prevailing explanations of the SRR. A similar though somewhat weaker pattern emerges for our other theoretically relevant core value, moral traditionalism, as the estimated over-time association with partisanship is also only evident among southerners during this period. Given its association with moral traditionalism, we suspect that religiosity somewhat attenuates the relationship between moral traditionalism and white southerners’ partisanship.

Figure 1 allows us to infer over-time changes in the plotted relationships among our sectional subsamples, but a different model specification will help us observe South versus non-South differences more directly. Namely, regression models similar to those shown in table 2 but featuring separate three-way interaction terms involving each key variable, time, and region will better illuminate differences in the degree to which individuals’ core values, ideological identifications, and racial attitudes relate to party identification over time among southerners and non-southerners.

These models are identical to those presented in table 2 with the exception that the subsamples are substituted for three-way interaction terms. For the sake of space and clarity, we present tabular results in table A3 (tables A1–A17 are available online). Rather than attempt to interpret complex interactions in text, we present in figures 2–5 marginal effects plots documenting the estimated over-time relationship between ideology, racial resentment, egalitarianism, and moral traditionalism, respectively, and parti-

sanship, conditioned by region. The plots not only highlight each variable’s estimated correlation to partisanship across the entire period of our study, but they also reveal the nature and timing of region’s conditioning effect on our relationships of interest. The estimates for southerners in each figure are shown as a dashed line, and those for non-southerners are shown as a solid line.

Figure 2 showcases ideology’s increasingly robust connection to partisanship across regions. The parallel trends signal that ideology has become more closely linked to party identification among all respondents in these years, confirming the rise of partisan and ideological sorting among southerners and non-southerners alike during this period (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Bartels 2000; Levendusky

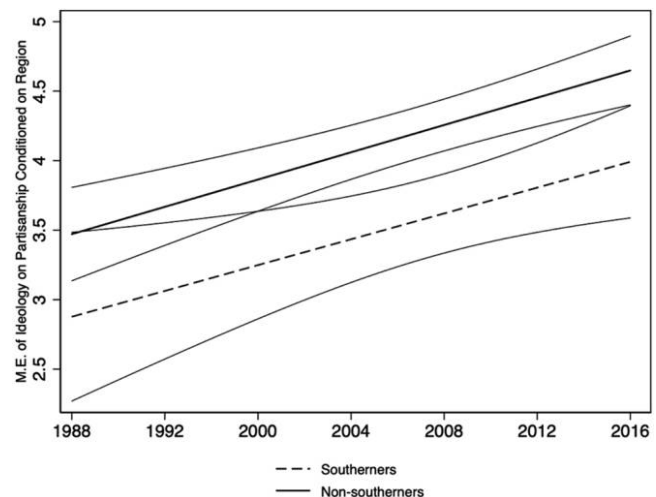


Figure 2. The over-time relationship between ideology and partisanship, conditioned by region, 1988–2016 American National Election Studies. Color version available as an online enhancement.

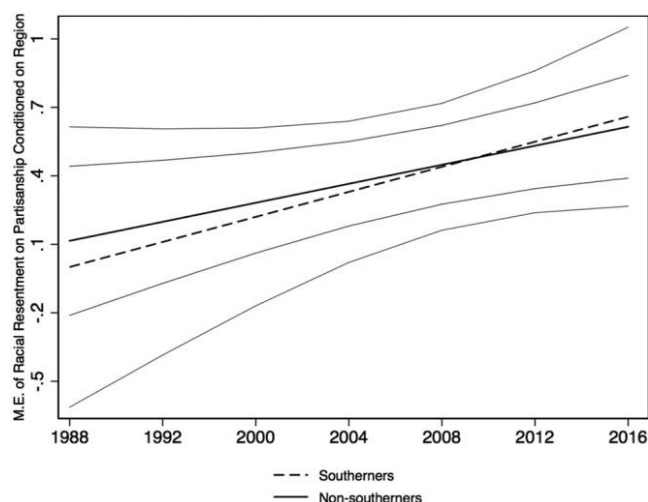


Figure 3. The over-time relationship between racial resentment and partisanship, conditioned by region, 1988–2016 American National Election Studies. Color version available as an online enhancement.

2009b). Indeed, the coefficient for the three-way interaction term is not statistically significant, indicating that region does not condition the increasing over-time correlation between symbolic ideology and partisanship observed in the American electorate. Thus, despite ideology’s unquestioned role in the SRR, its relationship to party identification has not changed substantially more in the South relative to elsewhere since 1988.¹³ We similarly do not observe a statistically significant regional difference in the longitudinal relationship between racial resentment and partisanship (see fig. 3). This finding is consistent with prior evidence documenting that although racial resentment features prominently in southern whites’ partisan realignment (Knuckey 2006; Valentino and Sears 2005), racial attitudes have also become a salient attitudinal fault line among non-southerners over the past generation (Enders and Scott, 2019; Tesler 2016).¹⁴ We are nonetheless surprised that the trends in the relationship between racial resentment and partisanship, controlling for core values and other variables, is virtually indistinguishable across regions.

13. Specifically, table A3 shows that the coefficient for the two-way interaction between ideology and time is statistically significant ($\beta = .196$, $SE = .038$). This relationship is not further conditioned by region (i.e., the three-way interaction effect plotted in fig. 2 is not statistically significant; $\beta = -.010$, $SE = .078$).

14. Specifically, the two-way interaction between racial resentment and time shown in table A3 is statistically significant, but this relationship is not further conditioned by region ($\beta = .026$, $SE = .078$). Note that we use lines for confidence bands in fig. 3 because the estimates for each group overlap so extensively in each year that shaded confidence intervals would render the graph inscrutable.

We do observe, however, a dramatic regional difference in figure 4, which plots the relevant correlations between egalitarianism and partisanship during this period. The stark distinction in the sectional trajectory of this relationship represents the strongest evidence to date regarding core values’ contribution to the changing basis of southern partisanship. Indeed, southerners’ posture toward social and economic equality—and their beliefs about the government’s imperative to ensure it—was scarcely related to party identification at the beginning of the period. However, the linkage strengthened markedly over the decades we examine, even as it remained essentially flat among non-southerners. Although the confidence bands for the two groups overlap slightly at each time point, the coefficient for the three-way interaction term involving egalitarianism, region, and time is statistically significant ($\beta = .197$, $SE = .089$). Additionally, the coefficient for the two-way interaction term involving egalitarianism and time is not significant ($\beta = .010$, $SE = .043$), meaning that the relationship between egalitarianism and partisanship has not changed over time among non-southerners since 1988—this continuity is illustrated by the flat line for non-southerners in figure 4. Finally, the two-way interaction between egalitarianism and South is negative and statistically significant, indicating that egalitarianism was significantly less connected to partisanship among southerners in 1988 compared to non-southerners. This difference eventually evaporated in the ensuing generation as the SRR solidified, and now the degree to which southerners’ beliefs toward equality intertwine with their party attachments is indistinguishable from that of other Americans.

As with egalitarianism, moral traditionalism was significantly less relevant for understanding southerners’ partisanship

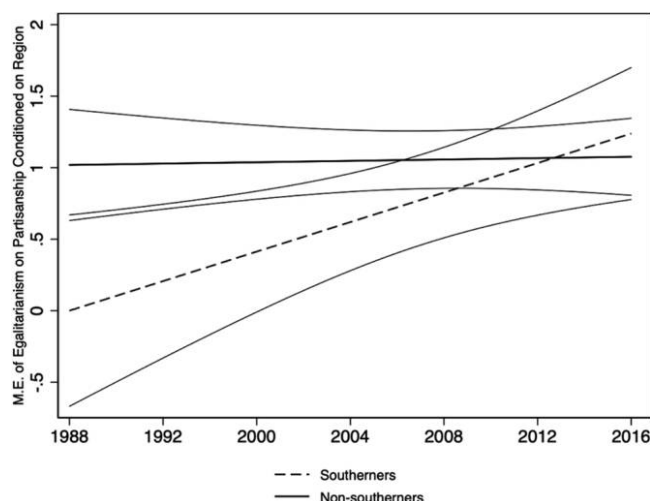


Figure 4. The over-time relationship between egalitarianism and partisanship, conditioned by region, 1988–2016 American National Election Studies. Color version available as an online enhancement.

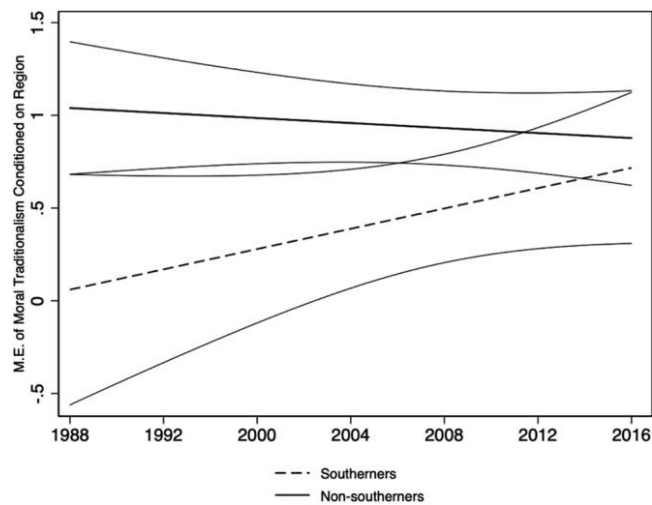


Figure 5. The over-time relationship between moral traditionalism and partisanship, conditioned by region, 1988–2016 American National Election Studies. Color version available as an online enhancement.

relative to that of non-southerners at the onset of this period, but the connection between this core value and party identification increased substantially among southerners from 1988 to 2016, while it has remained flat for non-southerners (see fig. 5).¹⁵ These results in particular highlight core values' role in our understanding of southerners' partisanship, and the overall findings underscore the different considerations that southerners have brought to bear in forming political identities relative to individuals residing elsewhere in the United States over the past 30 years.

PANEL DATA EVIDENCE OF INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL PARTISAN CHANGE

Our analysis thus far demonstrates that the correlates of partisanship have changed disparately over time among southerners compared to non-southerners. Specifically, we confirmed both ideology's and racial resentment's increasingly strong connection to individuals' party loyalties during this period. Further, we presented novel evidence that the relationship between egalitarianism and partisanship increased considerably more in Dixie over the previous three decades, even after controlling for symbolic ideological attachments, retrospective economic assessments, and demographics. This finding is particularly notable because, again, ideology and racial resentment, respectively, have become more closely interwoven with partisanship among southerners and non-southerners alike.

15. Namely, the coefficient for the three-way interaction in model 3 of table A3 is .136 (SE = .080, $p = .087$), and the two-way interaction involving moral traditionalism and South in model 3 of table A3 is $-.979$ (SE = .356, $p = .006$).

However, one unresolved question in this analysis concerns the causal ordering of our key relationship between egalitarianism and partisanship. Although we have shown that the connection between southerners' posture toward social and economic equality and partisanship is significantly stronger now compared to a generation ago, we have not established that the former (egalitarianism) causes changes to the latter (partisanship). Demonstrating this causal ordering is important given that some previous work suggests that partisanship causes core value change rather than the reverse (e.g., Goren 2005). Additionally, our emphasis thus far necessarily has been to understand the changing association between values, identities, and attitudes, respectively, and partisanship. However, our aim is to also explain individual-level partisan change, which we cannot assess directly using our pooled cross-sectional data. We therefore turn to ANES panel data collected from 1992 to 1996, at the height of the SRR (McKee 2010), in order to untangle the observed relationship between egalitarianism and party identification.

We specify a simple, two-wave cross-lagged panel model in which core values measured in 1992 are used to predict party identification in 1996, and vice versa (Finkel 1995). We also control for ideology and racial resentment and again divide respondents into two groups in order to evaluate potential differences between southerners and non-southerners. The panel model results, featured below in table 3, show that 1992 egalitarianism significantly influences 1996 partisanship among southerners and non-southerners but that the relationship is reciprocal among non-southerners. Notice, however, that there is no statistically significant effect of 1992 partisanship on 1996 egalitarianism in our southern sample. Therefore, we conclude that egalitarianism is a fundamental driver of the SRR and individual-level partisan change in the 1990s, a critical time during this historic American political transformation.¹⁶

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Hindsight is the great teacher of historical events. Looking back on the southern Republican realignment (SRR), despite notable GOP prowess in presidential elections commencing in the late 1960s (Black and Black 1987), the party's slow ascent in down-ballot contests led to the apt characterization of a split-level alignment (Lublin 2004): Republican presidential dominance and persistent Democratic superiority in

16. We also note that 1992 ideological self-identifications predict 1996 partisanship among southerners, whereas the reverse relationship is only true among non-southerners. This result again highlights ideology's importance to the southern realignment (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, 2006), and it suggests that ideological realignment may have occurred somewhat later in the non-South.

Table 3. Cross-Lagged Panel Model of Core Values and Partisanship, 1992–96 ANES Panel Study

Testing for the Reciprocal Influence of Core Values and Partisanship				
First Wave (Independent) Variables	Second Wave (Dependent) Variables			
	Egalitarianism		Party Identification	
	South	Non-South	South	Non-South
Egalitarianism	.351* (.077)	.312* (.055)	.696* (.346)	.614* (.239)
Party identification	.019 (.15)	.027* (.001)	.638* (.065)	.756* (.043)
Ideology	.091* (.030)	.052* (.022)	.583* (.137)	.124 (.093)
Racial resentment	.131* (.038)	.141* (.026)	.196 (.171)	-.000 (.110)
R ²	.455	.423	.632	.640
No. of observations	138	296	138	296

Note. ANES = American National Election Studies.

* $p < .05$.

all other contests. A decade after the 1965 VRA, dealignment was the prevailing pattern of partisan change within the white southern electorate (Beck 1977). But, in the 1980s, dealignment clearly had given way to a Republican realignment (Petrocik 1987). Still, in real time, scholars mistakenly viewed the rise of southern Republicans as a story of convergence with the national party system (see Shafer and Johnston 2006). Now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, we know that just as the South once contained a party system unique in its fealty to the Democratic Party, it is once again out of step with the rest of the nation because it is decidedly more Republican (Bullock 2018).

In this article, we have pursued an understudied angle on the SRR by examining the role of core values in affecting party identification. There is a vast literature on the SRR, but with the exception of symbolic ideology and racial resentment, most of these works focus on nonattitudinal factors like generational replacement, voter mobilization, urbanization, in-migration, a rising middle class, and redistricting to account for white southerners' shift in favor of the GOP. Since the partisan composition of the electorate, barring countervailing short-term conditions, is the most obvious determinant of which party wins or loses the bulk of contests, we endeavored to evaluate the psychological factors—specifically core values—that demonstrate the capacity to alter party attachments. Analyzing almost three decades of survey data, we have shown that one core value in particular, egalitarianism, has greatly contributed to the movement of party

identification in the dynamic setting of a realigning South.

Our pooled cross-sectional data confirmed that ideological symbolism is increasingly tied to respondents' partisan affiliations, but importantly, the heightened correlation between individuals' identification as "liberals" or "conservatives" and their party loyalties is a national development. Likewise, our evidence suggests that racial resentment, an increasingly prominent feature of white public opinion, has become inextricably linked to partisan identities nationwide (Enders and Scott 2019; Jardina 2019). Again, despite overwhelming evidence that racial attitudes contributed to southern partisan change (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Valentino and Sears 2005)—an inference to which our analysis also attests—core values stand as uniquely related to Dixie's extraordinary partisan transformation.

The greater likelihood of individuals receiving elite cues tying parties to ideological labels during this current era of intense polarization (Hetherington 2001) motivated us to consider other potential contributors to southern partisan change over the past generation.¹⁷ We turned toward core

17. Carsey and Layman (2006), Hetherington (2001), Kam (2005), Layman and Carsey (2002), and Levendusky (2010), among others, demonstrate the pervasive influence of increasingly clear partisan cues on citizens' partisan and ideological identities.

values as a potential driver of the SRR because of their documented role as key building blocks in citizens' understanding of their political world, shaping issue attitudes, candidate evaluations, vote choice, and partisan and ideological identifications. Moreover, core values are accessible to individuals regardless of their political sophistication (Goren 2004, 2012). Indeed, our analysis shows that egalitarianism—beliefs regarding social, political, and economic equality—has profoundly shaped white southerners' party identification over the last generation.

Although egalitarianism related to non-southerners' partisan attachments at the start of our period under investigation, orientations toward equality were irrelevant to southerners' partisanship in 1988. The relationship strengthened considerably, however, among southerners during the 1990s and 2000s, a pivotal time (as the descriptive evidence presented in table 1 suggests) in the South's shift toward ever more Republican identification. This association is especially notable considering that the relationship between egalitarianism and partisanship has been flat throughout this period for non-southerners, controlling for ideology, racial attitudes, and other factors. Our 1992–96 ANES panel data analysis offered additional insight into egalitarianism's role in the SRR, as the core value predicted individual-level partisan change among southerners, but the relationship was endogenous for non-southerners. This finding testifies to this fundamental predisposition's crucial role in reshaping white southerners' partisan loyalties. Additionally, the relationship between moral traditionalism and partisanship increased less markedly, but still significantly, over time among only southerners. This finding is noteworthy since we also controlled for religiosity.

The politics of the American South occupy a distinct place in US history because of this region's peculiar features. Chattel slavery, the nation's original sin, was anchored in Dixie, and this unfortunate reality continues to impact southern politics (Acharya et al. 2016, 2018). Given the stark political, social, and economic inequality rooted in racial discrimination dating back to the earliest days of the American South, it is surprising that egalitarianism (or lack thereof) has only recently figured prominently in the SRR. Then again, the extraordinary and enduring one-party Democratic Solid South managed to subdue a multitude of fundamental beliefs that had the potential to spark political divisions and restructure partisan attachments. Although it is readily apparent that a national partisan reversal on civil rights set in motion white southerners' Democratic dealignment (Carmines and Stimson 1989), delivering the death blow to the Solid South, the various components contributing to the subsequent southern Republican realignment continue to be debated and studied. We have shown that core values, and particularly beliefs regarding

equality, have emerged as a fundamental driver of the SRR. Interestingly, this contemporary development is unique to the South and therefore demonstrates that Dixie remains distinctive, despite the ongoing nationalization of American politics (Hopkins 2018; Jacobson and Carson 2016; Sievert and McKee 2019). In this vein, our work makes an important contribution to comprehending what is perhaps the most significant partisan transformation in American history.

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