

The Political Impact of Economic Change: The Class of '65 Meets the “New Gilded Age”

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Over the second half of the 20th century the U.S. economy shifted from a pattern of unusually rapid and egalitarian income growth to one of slower growth and escalating inequality. We examine the impact of this transition on the political attitudes of a pivotal cohort—people who graduated from high school in 1965, near the peak of the mid-century boom, but then lived through the much slower and more unequal economic progress of the “New Gilded Age.” We explore how individuals’ social backgrounds and their economic mobility through early and middle adulthood affected their economic, social, and political attitudes. Contrary to much recent speculation regarding the political impact of long-term income stagnation, we find a strong association between *upward* economic mobility and increasingly conservative economic and political views. For example, whites who experienced above-average income gains in the quarter-century between 1973 and 1997 became 14 percentage points more Republican over that period, while those who experienced below-average income gains became just *two* percentage points more Republican. Our findings suggest that the period of “stagflation” between 1973 and 1982 played a key role in exacerbating class conflict, with upwardly mobile people pulling away from the rest of American society politically as well as economically.

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The stunning election of President Donald Trump spurred a flurry of interest in the political consequences of long-term economic change. During the 2016 presidential campaign, many observers surmised that “Trump is rising because the US middle class has crashed” (Phillips 2016) and because “Trump’s white working class supporters ... have suffered a stunning loss of relative status over the past 40 years” (Edsall 2016). After the election, they inferred that Trump “tapped into the anger of a declining middle class” (Sanders 2016) and “won because many millions of Americans, having endured decades of working more while getting deeper in debt, said ‘enough’” (Johnston (2016). Even those who acknowledged that Trump voters “had, on average, higher incomes” than Clinton voters argued that “the trajectory of their communities felt far worse,” making Trump’s election “more about stagnation, failure, and the dissolution of the American dream than it was about the headline economic numbers” (Lowrey 2016).

Our aim in this paper is not to explain the election of Trump, but to shed light on the broader question of how long-term economic change has shaped Americans’ economic, social, and political views. We focus on a crucial 32-year period spanning the end of the long economic boom following World War II, the era of “stagflation” in the 1970s and early 1980s, and the early stages of the contemporary “New Gilded Age” of slow income growth and escalating economic inequality (Bartels 2016; Noah 2012; Smith 2012). Using a unique long-term panel survey tracking a nationally representative cohort of high school graduates from adolescence in 1965 through middle age in 1997, we examine how their social backgrounds and economic experiences affected their attitudes, policy preferences, and partisanship.

Our analysis reveals a strong association between economic mobility and the

changing political views of the class of '65 over the course of the late 20th century. Overall, this cohort became more conservative on a variety of economic and social issues, particularly during the period of “stagflation” from 1973 through 1982. However, these conservative shifts were concentrated among the *upwardly* mobile members of the cohort, not those whose own family incomes stagnated or declined. This pattern of change is more consistent with a traditional understanding of class politics (Lipset 1960, chap. 7; Butler and Stokes 1974) than with the notion of an anti-government backlash rooted in economic grievances.

Measuring Social Backgrounds and Mobility

Our analysis is based primarily on data from the Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study, an ambitious long-term study of political attitudes and behavior conducted by M. Kent Jennings in collaboration with Richard G. Niemi, Gregory B. Markus, and Laura Stoker.¹ The Jennings study began in 1965 with interviews of 1,669 high school seniors in 97 schools across the United States and one or both of each student’s parents.² The students were reinterviewed in 1973, 1982, and 1997, providing an unprecedented record of political stability and change over more than three decades. Our analysis relies primarily upon the 935 respondents (56%) who participated in all four waves of the study.³

¹ The data are publicly available through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (Jennings et al. 2005; Jennings 2007).

² This study design facilitated the investigators’ goal of examining the impact of families and schools on the political socialization of adolescents (Jennings and Niemi 1974). However, a notable defect of the original sample for our purposes here is that it excluded people who left high school before the spring of their senior year—approximately 26% of this cohort. Thus, all of our findings reflect the experiences of the most educated (and, by extension, more affluent and politically interested) three-fourths of the cohort.

³ Unsurprisingly, sample attrition over the four waves of the study was not entirely random. For example, students who were less interested in politics in 1965 were more likely to drop out of

We rely on two distinct measures of respondents' social backgrounds, family socio-economic status and school socio-economic status. Our measure of *Family SES* is constructed from eight indicators in the 1965 surveys: father's educational attainment, mother's educational attainment, family income, the head of household's occupational prestige, subjective social class, having a telephone, owning a home, and belonging to a labor union.⁴ The distribution of summary scores for the 935 people interviewed in all four waves, shown in the top panel of Figure 1, is roughly bell-shaped, but with a long right tail representing a modest preponderance of high-status families. (14.6% of the respondents have *Family SES* scores above 1.0, while only 9.9% have scores below -1.0.)

*** Figure 1 ***

Our measure of *School SES* is simply the average *Family SES* for the students in each of the 97 high schools represented in the Jennings sample.⁵ The distribution of school backgrounds for the 935 people interviewed in all four waves is shown in the bottom panel of Figure 1. Not surprisingly, the distribution of school averages is

the sample by 1997. In order to minimize the impact of differential attrition on our conclusions we weighted the data to reflect as closely as possible the original distribution of key characteristics. The weighting scheme is described in the Appendix, and the resulting sample weights are reported in Table A1.

⁴ All of these indicators are derived from the parents' survey responses *except* for having a telephone, which is based on the students' responses. The weights attached to the indicators in our summary measure are derived from a factor analysis based on all 1,669 first-wave respondents, regardless of whether they were interviewed in subsequent waves. The first principal factor has an eigenvalue of 2.34; none of the other eigenvalues exceeds 0.25. The factor loadings are .788 for father's educational attainment, .676 for mother's educational attainment, .647 for family income, .644 for occupational prestige, .522 for subjective social class, .259 for having a telephone, .226 for homeownership, and -.200 for union membership.

⁵ The average number of student interviews per school was 17; the range was from 13 to 21. (The student response rate was 99%, reflecting remarkable cooperation from school officials.) In most cases *School SES* reflects the composition of the student's neighborhood as well as her school, although the 11 private or parochial schools in the sample probably drew students from somewhat wider areas than the 86 public schools did.

significantly more compact than the distribution of individual families on the SES scale, though the overall correlation between *School SES* and *Family SES* is .62.⁶

A private school in Chicago had the highest *School SES* in the sample, 1.65. Of the 20 students interviewed there, 18 had higher-than-average *Family SES* and 16 were more than one standard deviation above the mean. All but one reported reading about politics in a daily newspaper, and half read *two* newspapers. Of the 11 students from that school who participated in all four waves of the Jennings study, eight reported above-average family incomes in 1997 (while the other three did not report their incomes), and *five* were in the top income category (over \$230,000 in 2017 dollars, falling in the top 7% of the sample).

The other four highest-status schools, all with *School SES* scores greater than 1.0, were in New York, Syracuse, and the suburbs of Boston and Washington. (Two of these four were also among the five private schools in the sample.) At the other extreme, the three lowest-status schools (with *School SES* scores less than -1.0) were all in small towns or rural areas in the South and all had 100% black student bodies. Of the 51 students interviewed in those schools, 22 did not have a telephone in the house, and all but three had below-average *Family SES* scores. (Of the 14 students from those schools who participated in all four waves of the Jennings study, three reported above-average family incomes in 1997 and two others did not report their incomes.)

A significant advantage of the Jennings data for our purposes is that they reflect both social backgrounds and social mobility in real time. Thus, rather than relying on respondents' imperfect recollections of their past economic and social circumstances, we can observe how the measures of *Family SES* and *School SES* derived from

⁶ The standard deviations of the distributions are .867 for *Family SES* and .537 for *School SES*. Regressing *Family SES* on school indicators produces an adjusted R² statistic of .35, implying that about one-third of the total variation in family backgrounds was *between* schools and the remaining two-thirds was *within* schools.

responses (mostly from students' parents) in 1965 are related to students' subsequent life courses. The statistical analyses reported in Table 1 focus on four key socioeconomic outcomes—college education and family income in the three subsequent waves of the Jennings study.⁷ These statistical analyses take separate account of some important individual characteristics correlated with *Family SES* and *School SES*—race, sex, region (distinguishing the former Confederate states from the rest of the country), and biblical fundamentalism.⁸ However, omitting these control variables produces results roughly similar to those reported in the table.⁹

***** Table 1 *****

Our analysis of college education (based on the number of years of college respondents reported having completed in the 1973 survey) shows, not surprisingly, that both *Family SES* and *School SES* contributed significantly to students' prospects of getting further education after high school. Other things being equal, students from high-status families (one standard deviation above the mean *Family SES*) got about 1.4 more years of college than those from low-status families (one standard deviation below the mean). *School SES* had a separate but smaller impact on college-going, with the expected difference between students from high-status schools (one standard

⁷ Since the environments of students attending the same school are likely to have been similar in ways not completely captured by the *School SES* scores, our statistical analyses employing these scores allow for correlation among the disturbances for students from the same school.

⁸ Respondents in each wave of the Jennings survey were asked to choose among four alternative interpretations of the Bible: “The Bible is God’s word and all it says is true” (1.0); “The Bible was written by men inspired by God but it contains some human errors” (.667); “The Bible is a good book because it was written by wise men but God had nothing to do with it” (.333); and “The Bible was written by men who lived so long ago that it is worth very little today” (0). The 1965 responses were heavily concentrated in the first two categories (41.8% and 52.0%, respectively).

⁹ The parameter estimates for *Family SES* (corresponding to those in the first row of Table 1) are .810, 4.02, 3.52, and 5.91. The parameter estimates for *School SES* (corresponding to those in the second row of Table 1) are .437, 6.56, 11.93, and 24.90.

deviation above the mean) and those from low-status schools (one standard deviation below the mean) with similar *Family SES* and other characteristics amounting to about half a year of additional attendance. Males and (more surprisingly) southerners were also significantly more likely to spend time in college, while biblical fundamentalists were much *less* likely to do so.¹⁰

The relationship between social backgrounds and subsequent earnings, which is summarized graphically in Figure 2, is rather more surprising. *Family SES* had only a modest (and relatively stable) impact on real incomes, with the expected difference in income (measured in 2017 dollars) between students from high-status families and those from low-status families increasing from about \$6,000 in 1973 to about \$9,000 in 1997.¹¹ In contrast, the expected difference in income between students with high and low *School SES* increased substantially over the life course, from about \$6,000 in additional income in 1973 (around age 26) to \$11,100 in 1982 (around age 35) and \$26,900 in 1997 (around age 50). Rather than diminishing over time, the economic advantage associated with a high-status high school environment escalated significantly as the Jennings respondents made their way through adulthood.¹² This long-term advantage underlines the importance of the social bases of economic

¹⁰ The most religious students in the Jennings sample were significantly less likely to attend college (53% versus 72%), and those who did attend were less likely to complete four years (34% versus 47%). Women were less likely than men to attend (59% versus 68%), and those who did were more likely to complete just one year (22% versus 12%), and less likely to pursue postgraduate education (13% versus 19%).

¹¹ The Jennings sample's average real family income (among respondents who reported their incomes) increased from \$72,100 in 1973 to \$90,100 in 1982 and \$122,500 in 1997. These numbers are substantially higher than the contemporaneous average incomes for the U.S. population. The differences are attributable in part to the exclusion of high school dropouts from the Jennings sample and, in 1997, the greater-than-average work experience of this cohort. They may also reflect some over-reporting of incomes in the survey.

¹² A simple comparison of raw average incomes for people with *School SES* scores above and below zero produces a similar pattern: \$75,000 versus \$69,900 (+7.4%) in 1973; \$95,700 versus \$85,800 (+11.5%) in 1982, and \$134,700 versus \$112,800 (+19.5%) in 1997.

opportunity stressed, in rather different ways, by Charles Murray (2012) and Robert Putnam (2015), among others.¹³

***** Figure 2 *****

Figure 2 also shows the estimated impact on future incomes of two additional background characteristics, sex and biblical fundamentalism. These effects also increased significantly between the 1982 and 1997 waves of the Jennings survey. On average (and holding constant race, region, and socio-economic status), men's family incomes were about \$2,000 higher than women's in 1973 and 1982, but more than \$14,000 higher in 1997. Similarly, people with secular outlooks (one standard deviation below the mean on our measure of biblical fundamentalism) out-earned fundamentalists by about \$5,000 in 1973 and 1982, but by \$15,000 in 1997, other things being equal.

An important feature of the statistical results reported in Table 1 is that social backgrounds account for much less variation in incomes than in college education. Despite the substantial impact of *School SES* (and sex, region, and biblical fundamentalism) on 1997 incomes documented in Table 1, 94% of the overall variation in economic standing at age 50 is unrelated to these social background factors. Indeed, the Jennings data reveal a great deal of economic mobility throughout the life cycle—the correlation between reported family incomes in 1982 (around age 35) and 1997

¹³ Only a relatively small part of this advantage reflects the impact of *School SES* on college-going. Adding years of college as an explanatory variable in the analyses reported in the third and fourth columns of Table 1 reduces the estimated impact of *School SES* on 1982 incomes from 10.33 to 8.27 (with a standard error of 6.33) and the estimated impact of *School SES* on 1997 incomes from 25.05 to 20.47 (with a standard error of 9.10). Meanwhile, each additional year of college boosted students' expected incomes by \$5,044 (with a standard error of \$1,047) in 1982 and by \$8,744 (with a standard error of \$1,489) in 1997. Of course, our simple tally of years spent in college may understate the impact of privileged backgrounds on the academic and social *value* of the college education students received.

(around age 50) is only .46.¹⁴

In the rest of this paper we explore how economic mobility over the course of the Jennings respondents' working lives shaped their economic, social, and political views. The panel structure of the data allows us to focus on *changes* in income—a direct measure of economic mobility—rather than *levels* of income as in conventional cross-sectional surveys. Moreover, the fact that Jennings' team measured a variety of important economic, social, and political attitudes repeatedly (and in consistent ways) over the years allows us to focus primarily on *changes* in attitudes that are plausibly attributable to concomitant changes in economic circumstances (Bartels 2006), providing a more precise and more persuasive account of the political impact of economic mobility.

The Era of Stagflation (1973-1982)

In the eight years separating the first and second waves of the Jennings study Americans enjoyed the final stage of the nation's long post-war economic boom. Real GDP per capita increased by 26% over that period, while real disposable income per capita increased by 33%. But in the nine years separating the second and third waves of the study that long period of prosperity came to a jarring end. The OPEC oil embargo in the fall of 1973—just six months after the completion of the second wave of Jennings' interviews—triggered a sharp recession that persisted for more than a year.

¹⁴ Measuring incomes as percentiles (which reduces the importance of fluctuations at the top of the income distribution) increases this correlation only slightly, to .48. Adding college education and income reports from both 1973 and 1982 (with statistical allowance for measurement error in the income reports) to the array of explanatory factors in Table 1 increases the share of “explained” variation in 1997 incomes, but only from .06 to .28. We estimate that an additional 7 or 8% of the observed variation in 1997 incomes reflects measurement error. Thus, almost two-thirds of the observed variation in 1997 incomes represents genuine economic mobility unaccounted for by the social background factors and previous economic experiences measured here. Parallel calculations similarly suggest that 65 to 70% of the observed variation in 1973 and 1982 incomes reflects genuine economic mobility.

Unlike most previous recessions, this one was accompanied by substantial price inflation which continued unabated for most of the next decade; economists dubbed this unfamiliar, toxic combination *stagflation*. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 sparked another major energy crisis and a “double-dip” recession exacerbated by the efforts of the Federal Reserve under Paul Volcker to bring rampant inflation under control through aggressive interest rate hikes.

When Jennings’ respondents were reinterviewed in the summer of 1982 the economy was (again) in a recession, real GDP per capita was only 10% higher than it had been nine years earlier, prices were still going up by 7% per year, and the unemployment rate was 9.6% and rising. Being better-educated than the population as a whole and having just entering their prime earning years, the respondents fared better than most Americans in the era of stagflation. *On average*, their real family income increased by almost 25% between 1973 and 1982. Nonetheless, there was substantial variation in their economic fortunes, with one-third experiencing *declines* in real income and 30% experiencing gains of \$30,000 or more (in 2017 dollars)—more than twice the sample average.

To the surprise of some observers (Schlozman and Verba 1979; Kenworthy and Owens 2011), politics in this period moved to the right, not to the left. The failure of established Keynesian economic theory to explain the simultaneous surges of inflation and unemployment “provided a political opening for those interested in disciplining the labor market” and even suggested to some that “the New Deal would have to go” (Cowie 2010, 223). Many observers concluded that the election of staunch conservative Ronald Reagan as president in 1980 “showed that most American voters wanted limits on the growth of government” (Barone 1990, 596).

Like the country as a whole, the Jennings respondents expressed distinctly more conservative views in 1982 than they had in 1973. Their ideological self-identification

shifted substantially from liberal (by 35% to 23%) to conservative (by 37% to 24%).¹⁵ They were also less sympathetic toward labor unions (by six points on a 100-point “feeling thermometer”), slightly *more* sympathetic toward big business, less enthusiastic about government providing jobs¹⁶ and helping minority groups,¹⁷ and much more concerned about stopping crime even at some risk to the rights of the accused.¹⁸ However, analysis of the Jennings data demonstrates that this conservative reaction was *not* primarily a response to personal economic distress. Rather, it was concentrated among people who were *upwardly* mobile and among economically advantaged groups—whites, males, and Republicans.

¹⁵ The remainder described themselves as “middle of the road” (29% in 1973 and 27% in 1982) or said they “haven’t thought much about this” or didn’t know (13% in 1973 and 12% in 1982). “We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?”

¹⁶ “Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Others believe that the government should let each person get ahead on his or her own. And other people have opinions somewhere in between. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?” The proportion agreeing (to varying degrees) that the government should ensure jobs and living standards decreased from 26% to 16%, while the proportion saying that “the government should just let each person get ahead on his own” increased from 43% to 59%.

¹⁷ “Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every possible effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks and other minority groups. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help minorities because they should help themselves. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?” The proportion favoring government help for minority groups declined from 40% to 24%, while the proportion saying that minority groups should “help themselves” increased from 31% to 48%.

¹⁸ “Some people are primarily concerned with doing everything possible to protect the legal rights of those accused of committing crimes. Others feel that it is more important to stop criminal activity even at the risk of reducing the rights of the accused. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?” The proportion leaning toward protecting the rights of the accused declined from 50% to 24%, while the proportion more concerned about stopping crime increased from 27% to 50%.

The analyses reported in Table 2 examine the impact of economic mobility on four key economic attitudes in the 1982 Jennings survey.¹⁹ The first column focuses on attitudes toward labor unions and big business as measured by the difference in “feeling thermometer” ratings for these two groups. The AFL-CIO’s legislative priorities were stymied in the late 1970s, even with a Democratic president and congressional majority; and President Reagan’s dramatic dismissal of striking air traffic controllers in 1981 “dealt a telling blow” to the already-declining union movement (Barone 1990, 561, 617-618). Since attitudes toward labor unions and big business were also measured in the 1973 Jennings survey, we include the lagged relative rating as an explanatory variable in our analysis; the associated parameter estimate, 1.005, reflects impressive persistence in these views over a period of eight years.²⁰ Nonetheless, the results suggest that a Jennings respondent whose real income increased by \$74,700 between 1973 and 1982 (one standard deviation above average) would have increased support for business over labor by 4.4 points on the 100-point “feeling thermometer,” relative to an otherwise similar respondent whose real income *declined* by \$40,000 (one standard deviation below the average income change). Whites, males, and people with college education also became substantially more favorable toward business relative to labor during the era of stagflation.

¹⁹ We lack income data for 16.7% of the survey respondents in 1973, 16.4% in 1982, and 6.3% in 1997. Most of these missing data are for respondents who were surveyed by mail and not asked to report their incomes. We include these respondents in our analyses, but also include indicator variables for each group to capture any difference between their responses and those of otherwise similar people who reported their incomes. (The parameter estimates associated with these indicator variables are not reported in the tables.) Of course, we exclude observations with missing data on the *dependent* variable for each analysis (again, mostly reflecting questions omitted from the mail-back surveys); these exclusions account for the variation in sample size from column to column and table to table.

²⁰ The estimated stability of this attitude and others is bolstered by our statistical allowance for random measurement error in the survey responses (Achen 1983; Bartels 2006). Our errors-in-variables estimation strategy is described in the Appendix, and the estimated measurement reliabilities of our explanatory variables are reported in Table A2.

*** Table 2 ***

Income gains had an even larger impact on views about whether the government should “see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living.” The statistical results presented in the second column of Table 2 imply that the difference between upward mobility (one standard deviation above average income growth) and downward mobility (one standard deviation below average income growth) was associated with a 6.3-point decline on a 100-point scale measuring support for government involvement in providing jobs and income support. In this case, Republicans also turned sharply against government provision of jobs and social welfare, as did whites and males (though not the college educated).

The same patterns appear in our analysis of responses to a question about cutting government spending and services, reported in the third column of Table 2.²¹ In this case, since the question was not asked in 1973, our analysis is of *levels* of support rather than *changes* in support. Nonetheless, it is clear that political pressure for spending cuts in the era of stagflation came, primarily, *not* from those who were themselves being most squeezed by high unemployment and inflation but from those who were doing well despite the hard times.²² As Robert Kuttner (1980) put it, the “revolution against government” discerned by Jimmy Carter’s pollster, Pat Caddell, was a “Revolt of the Haves” (Cowie 2010, 300).

²¹ “Some people think the government should provide many fewer services, even in areas such as health and education, in order to reduce spending a lot. Other people feel it is important for the government to continue the services it now provides even if it means no reduction in spending. And other people have opinions somewhere in between. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?”

²² Adding *levels* of family income and state economic inequality in 1973 as additional explanatory factors (to allow for the fact that we have no lagged dependent variable) produces an even larger estimated effect of *changes* in income on support for spending cuts, .1776 (with a standard error of .0348).

The analysis reported in the fourth column of Table 2 focuses on attitudes toward beneficiaries of government assistance—specifically, on the perceived influence of “people on welfare.”²³ It might seem odd to think that welfare recipients had much “influence in American life and politics,” especially in the conservative political climate of 1982. “Legislators who had voted for or gone along with great increases in Aid to Families with Dependent Children benefits between 1963 and 1973 were content to let inflation erode the value of these benefits after 1973” (Barone 1990, 572). Nonetheless, Ronald Reagan’s harangues on the campaign trail in 1976 and 1980 about a “welfare queen” collecting lavish government benefits tapped into “a long and deeply racialized history of suspicion of and resentment toward families receiving welfare” (Black and Sprague 2016; also see Gilens 1999). The distribution of views in the Jennings data reflects that suspicion and resentment, with 31% of respondents in 1973 and 30% in 1982 saying that welfare recipients had too much influence (and many of the rest saying they had “just about the right amount of influence”). But here, too, the statistical results presented in Table 2 make it clear that the suspicion and resentment were concentrated among economically privileged groups—whites, males, Republicans, the college educated, and the upwardly mobile—*not* among the people who were merely “Stayin’ Alive” as members of the struggling working class (Cowie 2010).²⁴

²³ “Some people think that certain groups have too much influence in American life and politics, while other people feel that certain groups don’t have as much influence as they deserve. On this page are three statements about how much influence a group might have. For each group I read to you, just tell me the number of the statement that best says how you feel.” The response options were “too much influence” (100), “just about the right amount of influence” (50), and “too little influence” (0).

²⁴ Limiting the analysis to whites produces very similar results, but with a slightly *larger* estimated effect of economic mobility, .0999 (with a standard error of .0332). Because respondents’ views regarding the influence of people on welfare were not solicited in 1997 it is impossible to calculate the measurement reliability of this variable using the Wiley-Wiley model. For purposes of the analysis presented in Table 2 we assume that the measurement reliability of this variable is .50, somewhat higher than for most of the other “influence” measures in the

The conservative shift between 1973 and 1982 was not limited to the economic domain. One standard question included in the Jennings survey registered an 11-point drop (on a 100-point scale) in support for government assistance to blacks and other minority groups. Another showed an even larger 17-point increase in support for stopping crime even at some risk to the rights of the accused. The statistical analyses reported in the first two columns of Table 3 indicate that these shifts, too, were concentrated among people with above-average income growth, even after allowing for the effects of race, sex, education, partisanship, and other factors. The income gradient for the question about reducing crime is modest in magnitude and rather imprecisely estimated; but the difference for the question about affirmative action for minorities is larger and more precisely estimated, suggesting that the difference between upward mobility (one standard deviation above average income growth) and downward mobility (one standard deviation below average) was associated with a 5.6-point drop in support for government help—enough to offset four and a half years of college education or to match the expected difference in views between a strong Democrat and a strong Republican.

***** Table 3 *****

A common interpretation of politics in the 1970s (and before and since) is that “race and class were often at odds,” with “white working people” having “typically chosen their race over their class” (Cowie 236). It is always hard to know what to make of the evocative but imprecise phrase “white working people”; as a literal matter, the vast majority of white people of working age, then and now, have worked for a living (or been supported by someone who worked for a living). If the phrase “white working

survey due to its greater observed (total) variance. Varying this assumption does not greatly alter the results. For example, assuming that the measurement reliability is .60 produces an estimated effect of income growth of .0899 (with a standard error of .0325), while assuming the reliability is .40 produces an estimate of .0798 (with a standard error of .0312).

people” is supposed to refer more specifically to people on the losing end of economic change, then our results suggest that the impression of a conflict between “race and class” in the era of stagflation should be tempered by a realization that *upwardly mobile* whites, not those whose incomes were stagnant or declining, were in the vanguard of increasingly conservative public opinion regarding the role of government, welfare, affirmative action, and crime.²⁵

However, it is also worth noting the limited domain of this “Revolt of the Haves.” While conservative shifts on the issues of affirmative action and crime were concentrated among people with larger-than average income gains, economic mobility generally seems to have had weaker and less consistent effects on other social attitudes. For example, while views of the military became significantly more positive in the decade following the end of the Vietnam War (increasing by 8 points on a 100-point feeling thermometer), the statistical analysis reported in the third column of Table 3 indicates that that shift was much more strongly related to sex, race, and college education than to economic mobility.

A question in the Jennings survey about the appropriate social role of women represents an even more striking exception to the general pattern of opinion change during the era of stagflation.²⁶ In the Jennings sample as a whole, support for women having an equal role with men increased by almost 14 points (from 65.6 to 79.4 on a 100-point scale) between 1973 and 1982. The statistical analysis reported in the last

²⁵ On the other hand, if “class” is taken to refer to education rather than economic mobility, our findings are mixed. Even when the statistical analyses are limited to whites, people with little or no college education were more likely to shift toward opposing government aid to minorities; but they also became relatively *less* concerned about the influence of people on welfare, other things being equal.

²⁶ “Recently there has been a lot of talk about women’s rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government. Others feel that women’s place is in the home. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?”

column of Table 3 indicates that this liberal shift occurred more or less across the board—with the notable exception of the biblically devout (and, to a lesser extent, southerners). If anything, people who experienced greater income growth probably liberalized at a faster rate than those whose incomes were stagnant, other things being equal. But this difference is fairly small, statistically uncertain, and contrary to the general pattern of conservative shifts among the economically advantaged during this period.

Finally, Table 4 presents analyses of changes in civic attitudes between 1973 and 1982. These attitudes reflect a rather puzzling pattern of change. On one hand, trust in government (as measured by responses to six standard survey questions about the motivations and competence of government officials) declined precipitously, from an average of 44 to 36 on a 100-point scale.²⁷ At the same time, however, the proportion of respondents who agreed that “the American system of government is one that all nations should have” *increased* significantly, from 26% in 1973 to 38% in 1982. This disjuncture seems to have been driven in substantial part by biblical fundamentalists and Republican partisans—both groups became less trusting of government but much

²⁷ “Now I’d like to talk about some of the different ideas people have about the government in Washington and see how you feel about them. These opinions don’t refer to Democrats or Republicans in particular but just to the government in general. For example: Over the years, how much attention do you feel the government pays to what the people think when it decides what to do, a good deal, some, or not much?” “Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are dishonest, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are dishonest?” “Do you think that people in the government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don’t waste very much of it?” “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?” “Do you feel that almost all of the people running the government are smart people who usually know what they are doing, or do you think that quite a few of them don’t seem to know what they are doing?” “Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all people?” Trusting responses to all six of these items declined between 1973 and 1982, with especially large declines (ranging from 10 to 12 points on a 100-point scale) for the last three items.

more enthusiastic about exporting the American system of government to other countries. Perhaps they were responding to the rhetoric of Ronald Reagan, who referred to America in his 1980 election eve address as “a shining city on a hill” and a beacon to the world, but declared in his first inaugural address a few months later that “government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.”

***** Table 4 *****

For our purposes here, the key finding reported in Table 4 is that, other things being equal, people who were upwardly mobile expressed significantly more trust in government *and* much more enthusiasm for exporting the American system of government than those whose real incomes had declined over the preceding nine years. The economic winners in the era of stagflation, having themselves become more conservative economically and (in some respects) socially between 1973 and 1982, also became relatively more trusting and proud of a political system that had moved in the same direction. However, these relatively favorable attitudes toward the political system do not seem to have extended to the specific issue of governmental responsiveness²⁸—big income-gainers were not significantly more likely, other things being equal, to see the government as responsive to their views.²⁹ Nor did their favorable attitudes extend from the political realm to other aspects of daily life.

²⁸ The scale reflects agreement or disagreement with two statements: “I don’t think public officials care much what people like me think” and “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.”

²⁹ The biggest factor in accounting for changes in perceptions of government responsiveness was college education. The gap in perceived responsiveness between people with more than two years of college and those with two years or less doubled between 1973 and 1982, from 9.2 points on the 100-point scale (73.2 versus 63.9) to 19.9 points (79.9 versus 60.1). More generally, college education was associated with substantially more favorable civic attitudes across the board—a striking indication of the extent to which people with college educations were insulated from the “malaise” affecting American society and government in the era of stagflation.

Indeed, other things being equal, upwardly mobile people probably became (relatively) *less* trusting of people.³⁰

Our findings regarding shifts in public attitudes during the era of stagflation raise interesting challenges for a variety of familiar perspectives on class politics and economic change. On one hand, contrary to what might be expected in response to a period of slow economic growth and high unemployment (Schlozman and Verba 1979; Kenworthy and Owens 2011), the Jennings respondents (and Americans more generally) became significantly less supportive of government efforts to cushion economic well-being. On the other hand, contrary to what might be expected in light of recent writing on the “white working class” and the politics of economic grievances, that conservative shift was concentrated among upwardly mobile individuals and economically advantaged groups—*not* among those whose own economic experiences and social locations would seem to make them most vulnerable to economic distress. The millions of Americans who directly suffered the consequences of recession, soaring prices, and industrial decline were, for the most part, politically inert, while those who prospered through this period of wrenching economic change increasingly pulled away from their fellow citizens politically as well as economically.

The Advent of the “New Gilded Age” (1982-1997)

The period between the third and fourth waves of the Jennings study ushered in another series of significant economic changes. The tight monetary policy that had exacerbated the deep recession of 1981-82 began to gain traction, bringing down inflation and long-term interest rates. The unemployment rate fell from 11 percent at

³⁰ The scale averages responses to three questions: “Generally speaking, would you say that most of the time people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” “Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?” “Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance or would they try to be fair?”

the end of 1982 to 8 percent a year later. By the time President Reagan ran for reelection in 1984, double-digit inflation was a receding memory, the economy was booming, and Reagan's campaign ads touting "morning in America" carried him to a landslide victory (Barone 1990, 644-647).

While the economic rebound of the 1980s was immediately salient and politically consequential, a more insidious trend only gradually came into focus: the fruits of economic growth were increasingly accruing to people who were already well off (Edsall 1985; Danziger and Gottschalk 1995). According to Census Bureau tabulations, the share of total income going to the most affluent five percent of households increased from 17% in 1982 to 21.7% in 1997, while the share going to the bottom *forty* percent of households fell from 14% to 12.5%. Separate tabulations based on tax data indicate that the share of income going to the top *one* percent increased even faster, from 11.3% in 1982 to 16.6% in 1997. Regional variation in levels of economic inequality also accelerated; the standard deviation of state Gini coefficients for the Jennings sample increased by about 10% between 1965 and 1982, but by 50% between 1982 and 1997.³¹

If anyone expected these developments to reverse the significant conservative shifts that had occurred during the era of stagflation, they were to be disappointed. On the whole, the economic and social attitudes of the Jennings respondents were only slightly less conservative in 1997 than they had been in 1982. After declining by 8 points between 1973 and 1982, support for government ensuring jobs and living standards increased by a single point between 1982 and 1997. The 6-point decline in attitudes toward labor unions relative to big business was partially reversed by a 2-

³¹ Census Bureau data are from the Historical Income Tables: Households (<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-households.html>). Tax data are from the World Wealth & Income Database (<http://wid.world/data/>). State inequality data are from Frank (2009; http://www.shsu.edu/eco_mwf/inequality.html).

point increase. Support for government aid to minority groups, which had fallen by almost 12 points between 1973 and 1982, held steady between 1982 and 1997. Enthusiasm for fighting crime even at the risk of reducing the rights of the accused receded by one point after having jumped by 17.

Of course, stability in the aggregate may obscure important changes in the views of individuals or groups. The first column of Table 5 presents the results of a statistical analysis of changes in attitudes toward labor and business between 1982 and 1997, while the second column focuses on changes in views about the role of government in ensuring jobs and living standards. These analyses parallel the corresponding analyses of changes between 1973 and 1982 presented in Table 2. In both cases, while the associations between personal economic experience and shifts in economic attitudes were not as strong in 1997 as they had been in 1982, they were similar in kind: upward mobility, not income stagnation, seems to have produced waning support for labor unions (versus big business) and waning support for government activism, other things being equal.

***** Table 5 *****

Figure 3 provides a graphical summary of the impact of economic mobility on these economic attitudes in both 1973-1982 and 1982-1997. The comparison in each period is between the expected change in economic attitudes for an otherwise typical downwardly mobile person (with income growth one standard deviation below average) and the expected change for an otherwise typical upwardly mobile person (with income growth one standard deviation *above* average).³² While the figure clearly reflects the overall conservative shift in the Jennings respondents' economic attitudes

³² The comparisons of expected shifts in attitudes hold other characteristics in the tables constant at their sample average values.

between 1973 and 1982 and the slight liberal rebound between 1982 and 1997, it also reflects the impact of economic mobility, with respondents whose own family incomes had increased at a faster-than-average rate accounting for much more than their share of the conservative shift and much less (if any) of the subsequent liberal rebound.

*** Figure 3 ***

The analyses in Table 2 of support for government spending and services and attitudes toward people on welfare cannot be replicated for 1982-1997 because those items were not included in the final wave of the Jennings survey. However, the impression of consistency in the apparent effects of economic mobility in the two periods is bolstered by the analyses reported in the third and fourth columns of Table 5 of two other economic attitudes—support for the “free market” vis-à-vis “strong government”³³ and perceptions of the influence of rich people.³⁴ In these cases, too, even after allowing for differences in education, partisanship, and other factors, people whose incomes flourished in the 1980s and '90s expressed more conservative economic views than those whose incomes stagnated.³⁵ Insofar as the escalating

³³ Respondents were invited to say which of two statements was closer to their opinion: “We need a strong government to handle today’s complex economic problems” or “The free market can handle these problems without government being involved.” 54% chose “strong government” and 44% chose “the free market.”

³⁴ 82% of respondents said that rich people had “too much influence in American life and politics” while 16% said that rich people had about the right amount of influence and 2% said they had too *little* influence. This distribution of opinion was almost identical to the distribution in 1982, when 83% said rich people had too much, 16% said they had about the right amount of influence, and 1% said they had too little influence. Because there was no parallel question in the 1973 survey it is impossible to estimate the measurement reliability of this item. The statistical results presented in Table 5 are based on an assumed reliability of .50.

³⁵ Since the “free market” item was not included in previous waves of the Jennings survey, our analysis does not include a lagged value among the explanatory variables. Allowing for that fact by adding *levels* of family income and state economic inequality in 1982 as additional

inequality of the Reagan era generated concerns about big business, the rich, and “the rational market” (Fox 2009), those concerns were concentrated among people with direct experience of being on the losing side of economic change.

Table 5 also presents suggestive, though less consistent, evidence that escalating economic inequality itself may have affected the economic views of the Jennings survey respondents. Increases in local inequality (as measured by changes in state-level Gini coefficients between 1982 and 1997) were strongly associated with increases in support for labor unions vis-à-vis big business and with increases in support for government ensuring jobs and living standards.³⁶ The statistical results imply that the increase in state-level inequality experienced by a typical Jennings respondent over this 15-year period increased her relative enthusiasm for labor unions over big business by 11 points and increased her support for government ensuring jobs and living standards by almost 8 points—both substantial effects.³⁷

The association between increases in local inequality and more liberal opinions

explanatory factors produces a slightly larger estimated effect of *changes* in income on support for the free market, .0584 (with a standard error of .0291).

³⁶ Since changing Gini coefficients are measured at the level of states their distribution is quite lumpy, with the eight most common values accounting for almost 40% of the weighted observations. Thus, it is particularly difficult to rule out the possibility that our parameter estimates reflect the impact of other relevant characteristics of states which happen to be correlated with changes in economic inequality. We return to this inferential problem in our subsequent discussion of partisan change. In a subsequent iteration of this analysis we hope to shed additional light on the impact of local economic conditions by drawing on more detailed data on inequality and economic mobility in 741 commuting zones, albeit for a cohort corresponding more closely to the *children* of our respondents than to the respondents themselves (Chetty et al. 2014).

³⁷ Some of the estimated effects of changing state-level inequality on economic attitudes in Table 2 are also very large; but they are much less precisely estimated (due to the scant variation across states in the growth of inequality between 1973 and 1982) and of less substantive importance (due to the modest increase in overall inequality during this period). The standard deviation of the change-in-Gini measure doubled between the third and fourth waves of the Jennings survey (from .014 in 1982 to .029 in 1997), while the average increase in inequality more than tripled (from .025 in 1982 to .083 in 1997).

also appears in the statistical analyses of social attitudes presented in Table 6. People in states experiencing escalating economic inequality became more enthusiastic about government aid to minority groups, less warm toward the military, and (probably) stronger in support of an equal role for women. However, *personal* economic experiences seem not to have been consequential one way or the other—except perhaps on the issue of women’s appropriate social role, where upwardly mobile people seem (as in 1982) to have been liberalizing somewhat more rapidly than those whose family incomes were stagnant or declining.³⁸

*** Table 6 ***

The analyses reported in Tables 5 and 6 also differ from those reported in Tables 2 and 3 in showing much less consistent shifts among economically privileged groups, including whites, males, the college-educated, and Republicans. Between 1973 and 1982, most of these groups became significantly more conservative on most of the issues included in our analysis.³⁹ However, the pattern after 1982 is more varied, with some further shifts to the right (for example, by whites on the issue of government aid to minorities and men on the issue of government jobs) but also some significant

³⁸ In both cases, the statistical estimates probably reflect a reciprocal relationship between attitudes about women’s social roles and family incomes. The national female labor force participation rate increased from about 44% at the time of the 1973 survey to 53% at the time of the 1982 survey and about 60% at the time of the 1997 survey. It seems likely that women were more likely to go to work, increasing family income, in families with relatively liberal attitudes about women’s social roles—and also that female labor force participation reduced support (among both women and men) for the notion that “women’s place is in the home.”

³⁹ Whites moved to the right (relative to non-whites) on attitudes toward business vis-à-vis labor, government ensuring jobs and living standards, the influence of people on welfare, and government aid to minorities between 1973 and 1982. Men moved in the same direction (relative to women) on each of these items, although the magnitudes of the shifts were somewhat weaker for the items focusing squarely on government assistance. College education was associated with shifts to the right on all except government ensuring jobs and living standards. Republicans moved to the right (relative to Democrats) on all except attitudes toward business and labor.

reversals of the shifts observed in the previous decade (for example, in whites' relative enthusiasm for business vis-à-vis labor and men's willingness to curb the rights of the accused to reduce crime).

The civic attitudes analyzed in Table 7 show even less evidence of having been significantly affected by the economic changes of the 1980s and '90s. Neither personal economic mobility nor changes in state-level economic inequality were significantly associated with shifts in trust in government, pride in the American political system, perceptions of government responsiveness, or trust in people. Indeed, the most consistent pattern evident here is that Republicans were substantially less trusting and less positive about the political system in 1997 than they had been in 1982, other things being equal. Presumably that shift resulted in significant part from having lived for four years under a Democratic president, Bill Clinton (Hetherington and Rudolph 2014).

***** Table 7 *****

If the era of stagflation produced a "Revolt of the Haves" (Kuttner 1980) among upwardly mobile people, the subsequent 15 years of escalating economic inequality seem to have had a different and, in some ways, more subtle effect. On the whole, economic "winners" continued to pull away from economic "losers," at least with respect to core economic attitudes regarding the relationships between government and the "free market" and labor and business. However, the effect of these shifts was to halt, and in some cases at least partially reverse, the overall conservative trend of the preceding decade. Moreover, we have provided some suggestive evidence that the escalation of economic inequality itself contributed to stemming the conservative tide, as the Americans most directly exposed to the widening gap between rich and poor responded with increased support for labor unions and an active government role in addressing economic problems and ensuring living standards.

Partisan Change

In the spring of 1965, just six months after a Democratic landslide in the 1964 election, the high school seniors interviewed by Jennings mostly thought of themselves as Democrats. But their partisanship gradually shifted through early and middle adulthood—from a substantial 56-30% Democratic plurality (including “leaners”) in 1965 to a somewhat less substantial 51-30% Democratic plurality in 1973, a 48-38% Democratic plurality in 1982, and an even narrower 49-44% Democratic plurality in 1997.⁴⁰ In this section we explore how those changes in partisanship were related to people’s social backgrounds and economic circumstances.

Perhaps the simplest way to examine the impact of social backgrounds on partisan change is with an analysis limited to explanatory factors measured in 1965. Just as the statistical analyses presented in Table 1 shed light on the total (direct and indirect) effects of social backgrounds on subsequent education and income, parallel analyses can shed light on the effects of social backgrounds on partisanship over more than three decades. Table 8 reports the results of analyses of that sort.⁴¹

*** Table 8 ***

The analysis reported in the first column of Table 8 relates students’ partisanship in 1965 to their family and school socioeconomic status and other important social

⁴⁰ In each case, the rest of the respondents were mostly “pure” independents—people who denied being closer to either party. A few said they supported minor parties or described themselves as “apolitical.”

⁴¹ Since our aim in Table 8 is to provide a clear picture of the political significance of economic and social background factors, we do not include parents’ partisanship as an explanatory variable in these analyses. Previous studies employing these data have handsomely documented the substantial impact of parental partisanship on children’s partisanship (Beck and Jennings 1991; Niemi and Jennings 1991; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009), and that impact certainly mediates some of the associations reported in Table 8, especially in adolescence and young adulthood.

characteristics—race, sex, region, and biblical fundamentalism. Unsurprisingly, the results indicate that non-white students were substantially more Democratic than white students were. Somewhat more surprisingly, they show that females were also more Democratic than males, anticipating a gender gap that only emerged years later in the electorate as a whole.⁴² Students with high *Family SES* scores were substantially more likely than those from lower-status families to identify as Republicans, but *School SES* had no apparent political ramifications beyond those associated with each student's own family background.

The analysis presented in the second column of Table 8 focuses on partisanship in 1973, in the second wave of the Jennings study. Again, race appears to have been the most important factor affecting partisanship, with the gap between nonwhites and whites even larger than in 1965. In addition, religiosity emerged as a significant partisan cleavage, with biblical fundamentalism strongly associated with Republican partisanship. As with the partisan gender gap in 1965, this cleavage anticipated a realignment that appeared only later in the electorate as a whole (Layman 1997).

The apparent impact of *Family SES* declined by about one-third between 1965 and 1973, suggesting that the partisan resonance of family backgrounds among the high school students eroded as they left home, entered the workforce or college, and began to establish their own families (Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009). On the other hand, *School SES* emerged as a significant predictor of partisanship, with people from lower-status high school backgrounds shifting toward the Republican Party even as those

⁴² According to Kaufmann and Petrocik (1999, 868), the gap in Democratic partisanship between women and men in the electorate as a whole increased from zero in 1964 to five percentage points in 1972, dipped in 1976, and then increased substantially (to 14 percentage points in 1996).

from higher-status high schools were leaving it.⁴³ While a detailed examination of the bases of these shifts is beyond the scope of the present analysis, they suggest that Richard Nixon’s appeals to a “silent majority” of Americans (and Republican attacks on his 1972 opponent, George McGovern, as the candidate of “acid, amnesty, and abortion”) played quite differently in these distinct social groups. In the later waves of the Jennings study (analyses reported in the third and fourth columns of Table 8) the impact of family and school backgrounds receded somewhat, while race, sex, and biblical fundamentalism continued to have profound effects on partisanship.

Table 9 provides a different perspective on the evolution of partisanship in the Jennings panel, focusing not on the respondents’ family and school backgrounds but on economic mobility and economic inequality over the course of their adult lives. The analyses parallel those presented in Tables 2 through 7, with *changes* in partisanship between survey waves related to *changes* in income and (state-level) inequality, social characteristics, and previous partisanship. While our primary focus is on the impact of economic mobility and escalating inequality on shifts in partisanship, it is worth noting that these analyses demonstrate an impressive degree of *stability* in partisanship even over a tumultuous quarter-century, with 55 to 60% of people’s partisanship at age 26 persisting to age 50. They also reflect substantial increases over this period in the political significance of three key social characteristics—race, sex, and biblical fundamentalism (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Layman 1997; Ammann 2014).

*** Table 9 ***

⁴³ In terms of raw numbers, the Democratic share of partisan loyalties among people from high-status high schools (*School SES* greater than zero) remained constant between 1965 and 1973, while the Republican share declined by seven percentage points (with a concomitant increase in the proportion of “pure” Independents). By contrast, the Democratic share among people from lower-status high schools decreased by nine percentage points, while the Republican share *increased* by almost seven percentage points.

Independent of these strong partisan cross-currents, the analyses presented in Table 9 suggest that economic mobility and escalating inequality both produced substantial changes in the American political landscape over the last quarter of the 20th century. We saw in Tables 2 and 3 that conservative shifts in economic and social attitudes during the era of stagflation were concentrated among upwardly mobile people. The analysis presented in the first column of Table 9 provides strong evidence that Republican shifts in partisanship were likewise concentrated among the economic “winners” of this era. Other things being equal, a difference of two standard deviations in real income growth (about \$115,000 in 2017 dollars) was associated with a 9-point shift in partisanship, while \$17,300 in real income growth (the sample average) was associated with a 1.4-point increase in Republican partisanship, accounting for about one-third of the 3.8-point overall increase in Republican partisanship over this nine-year period.

The second column of Table 9 reports the results of a parallel analysis of shifts in partisanship between 1982 and 1997. Once again in this period upward mobility was strongly associated with increases in Republican partisanship; a difference of two standard deviations in real income growth (about \$145,000 in 2017 dollars) was associated with a 5.9-point shift in partisanship, while the real income growth experienced by an average Jennings respondent over these 15 years, \$33,100, was associated with a 1.3-point increase in Republican partisanship. (The overall net increase in Republican partisanship for the sample as a whole amounted to 2.1 points.)

The analysis presented in the third column of Table 9 focuses on cumulative shifts in partisanship over the whole period from 1973 to 1997. As one would expect on the basis of the separate results presented in the first two columns, long-term upward mobility was strongly associated with Republican gains, with average real income growth (about \$50,000) accounting for a bit more than half of the 5.9-point cumulative net increase in Republican partisanship over this quarter-century. The expected

difference in partisanship between an upwardly mobile 50-year-old (with a real income gain of \$133,400 between 1973 and 1997, one standard deviation above the mean) and an otherwise similar but *downwardly* mobile 50-year-old (with a real income *loss* of \$33,400, one standard deviation below the mean income change) amounted to more than 10 points.

The concentration of Republican gains among economic “winners” implied by the statistical analyses in Table 9 is confirmed by the simple tabulations presented in Figure 4 of changes in partisanship among people with varying economic experiences. For each pair of surveys (1973-1982, 1982-1997, and 1973-1997) we compare people whose real incomes declined, those whose real incomes increased by less than the sample average, and those whose real incomes increased by more than the sample average. To avoid confounding economic and racial politics in these comparisons, we exclude non-whites from the tabulations.⁴⁴

***** Figure 4 *****

Whites with above-average income gains during the period of stagflation from 1973 to 1982 went from being mostly Democrats or Democratic leaners (by a sizeable 49-35% margin) in 1973 to being mostly Republicans or Republican leaners (by a 47-43% margin) by 1982. In stark contrast, the Democratic pluralities among those with less favorable economic experiences barely eroded. Similarly, whites with above-average income gains from 1982 to 1997 went from a bare 45-43% Republican plurality in 1982 to a substantial 55-40% Republican plurality in 1997, after a full term of Bill Clinton’s Democratic presidency. Again, there was little or no erosion in the

⁴⁴ The raw sample sizes range from 159 to 203 for whites whose real incomes declined, from 128 to 220 for those with below-average income gains, and from 291 to 302 for those with above-average income gains. The comparisons exclude people whose income was missing in either of the relevant surveys (the vast majority of whom were not asked to report their incomes because they completed the survey by mail).

Democratic pluralities in partisanship among whites who suffered real income losses or below-average gains during this period. Indeed, whites whose real incomes declined over the entire quarter-century from 1973 to 1997 were still mostly Democrats (by a substantial 54-40% margin) at the end of that period, while those with above-average income gains were solidly (53-42%) Republican. It is as if these two groups of former classmates lived in separate worlds—one upwardly mobile and increasingly Republican, the other downwardly mobile and steadfastly Democratic.⁴⁵

Of course, people's *subjective* sense of social mobility might be more consequential politically than actual income gains or losses. An additional question in the 1997 Jennings survey asked whether respondents were better or worse off than their parents had been at the same age.⁴⁶ The right-most panel of Figure 4 compares changes in partisanship over the entire 32-year period from high school through late middle age for three groups—white respondents who said they were worse off than their parents (16%), those who said they were about as well off (36%), and those who said they were better off than their parents (47%).⁴⁷ The results of this comparison neatly bolster those based on actual income changes. The Democratic partisan plurality among white respondents who reported being worse off than their parents declined by less than four percentage points (from 57-35% in 1965 to 56-38% in 1997), while the

⁴⁵ People who experienced below-average income gains fell midway between income losers and above-average income gainers; 46% were Democrats and 44% Republicans.

⁴⁶ “Now, thinking about your parents when they were your age, do you think that their standard of living was better, about the same, or worse than yours is now?” The responses are plausibly related to our measures of social background and economic mobility: respondents with high *Family SES* and *School SES* were much more likely to say that their parents were better off, other things being equal, while affluent people and those with college educations were much more likely to say that their own standard of living was higher than their parents’.

⁴⁷ The raw sample sizes for these tabulations are 140, 300, and 412, respectively. Again, we exclude non-whites in order to avoid confounding the effects of race with those of subjective social mobility.

corresponding shift among those who reported being about as well or better off than their parents was almost 30 percentage points (from a 52-32% Democratic plurality in 1965 to a 51-42% *Republican* plurality in 1997).

While income growth contributed significantly to the erosion of the Democratic Party's partisan advantage over the last quarter of the 20th century, that erosion may have been significantly offset by the impact of increasing economic inequality. The statistical analyses reported in Table 9 include changes in state-level economic inequality as factors predicting shifts in partisanship over this period. The results suggest no significant relationship between inequality and shifts in partisanship during the era of stagflation, but a strong relationship in the early stages of the New Gilded Age. They imply that if economic inequality had increased only half as fast as it actually did over this 15-year period (an increase in the average state Gini coefficient of .0417 rather than .0834), Republican partisanship would have increased by an additional 3.3 points—substantially more than the 1.3 points attributable to average real income growth over this period.

The corresponding estimate for the whole 24-year period from 1973 to 1997 is even larger, implying an expected difference in Republican partisanship between a Jennings respondent living in a state with slow-growing inequality (a change in Gini of .081 between 1973 and 1997, one standard deviation below the mean) and one living in a state with fast-growing inequality (a change in Gini of .136, one standard deviation above the mean) of 9.6 points. We are reluctant to put too much stock in these estimates, since changes in Gini coefficients may be correlated with a wide variety of other politically relevant characteristics of states. Nonetheless, they provide some very suggestive evidence that escalating economic inequality significantly slowed the

national shift toward the Republican Party among the Jennings respondents.⁴⁸

Conclusion

Momentous changes in the national economy since the mid-20th century have surely impacted American politics, but how? The Jennings data provide an invaluable record of the views of a pivotal cohort of people as they experienced these economic changes over the course of their adult lives. The shifting economic, social, civic, and partisan attitudes of this national sample of members of the high school class of 1965 bear clear marks of their economic experiences. Overall, this cohort became more conservative and more Republican between 1965 and 1997, with most of this shift occurring in the era of stagflation between 1973 and 1982.

Contrary to many expectations, it was not the economic “losers” in this era who turned away from government intervention, soured in their attitudes toward labor unions, and increasingly came to think of themselves as Republicans rather than Democrats. Instead, the increasing conservatism of this cohort was driven by people who experienced above-average income *gains*. Those who prospered during the economic challenges of the 1970s increasingly expressed skepticism about the role of

⁴⁸ The states with especially large increases in income inequality between 1973 and 1997 included Connecticut, New York, California, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey; those with especially small increases included Iowa, Mississippi, Maine, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Kentucky. One simple way to mitigate (though probably not eliminate) the impact of potential confounding factors in these analyses is to include indicators for states of residence at the beginning of each period; then the estimated effects of changes in state-level inequality are driven entirely by people who moved from slow-growing-inequality states to fast-growing-inequality states or vice versa. An ordinary regression analysis of this sort covering the period from 1973 to 1997 produced an estimated effect of changes in state-level inequality on shifts in partisanship of -53.7 (with a standard error of 47.9). A parallel analysis covering the period from 1982 to 1997 produced an estimated effect of -68.0 (with a standard error of 54.2). These estimates are unhappily imprecise; nevertheless, they add some credibility to our tentative conclusion that the escalating inequality of the New Gilded Age reduced Republican partisanship.

government in ensuring economic security, a preference for big business over labor, and concerns about the political influence of welfare recipients. There were some important exceptions to this shift toward conservatism among the upwardly mobile; for example, we find little effect of income growth on attitudes toward the military or views about the appropriate social role of women. However, the upwardly mobile became less trusting of other people in the population, even as they became more trusting of government and more likely to believe American democracy should be exported to the rest of the world.

As the New Gilded Age set in between 1982 and 1997 it became increasingly clear that economic growth was primarily benefiting those who were already well-off. Increases in local economic inequality probably contributed to slowing and, in some cases, slightly reversing the conservative trends observed during the preceding era of stagflation. However, the shift toward the Republican Party among white Americans continued—and once again, it was the “winners” in the new economy rather than the “losers” who disproportionately swelled the Republican ranks.

We began this paper with Donald Trump, whose unexpected election has frequently been attributed to “the anger of a declining middle class” (Sanders 2016) and “a stunning loss of relative status over the past 40 years” among “Trump’s white working class supporters” (Edsall 2016). On its face, that interpretation of the 2016 election outcome presents a stark contrast to our results, which demonstrate that significant conservative shifts in opinion and Republican gains in partisanship in the last quarter of the 20th century were strongly concentrated among *upwardly* mobile people. Perhaps the stark contrast is more apparent than real, since subsequent analysis of voting behavior in the 2016 election has indicated that “about two thirds of Trump supporters came from the better-off half” of the electorate (Carnes and Lupu 2017). Nonetheless, the notion that Republicans appeal to the hard-hit (white) working class has become so familiar in popular political discourse that our results may seem

puzzling rather than predictable, as they would have to previous generations of scholars of class politics.

Clearly, Republicans have succeeded in appealing to *some* downwardly mobile working-class people. Recent work on the political attitudes of working-class whites in rural communities in Wisconsin (Cramer 2016a; 2016b) and elsewhere (Wuthnow 2018) portrays people who are mostly not among the economic “winners” of the New Gilded Age. Indeed, social and economic resentments grounded in a sense of having been left behind seem to be central elements of their political identities. Yet, quite unlike the downwardly mobile people in the Jennings study analyzed here, they have translated their grievances into increasing support for conservative policies and Republican candidates.

One possible explanation for this fact is simply that times have changed. Two additional decades of slow economic growth and escalating inequality may have created new strains of discontent among the people Robert Wuthnow (2018) referred to as “The Left Behind”—and new opportunities to mobilize that discontent for political gain. Has the Republican Party in recent years discovered new ways of appealing to people who have experienced downward economic mobility? The rural white working-class people whose conversations Cramer (2016a; 2016b) observed were drawn to explanations for their perceived lack of cultural and economic status that placed blame on particular out-groups such as public employees, immigrants, Muslims, and leftist urban elites. Negative feelings toward these groups and related concerns about waning respect for the American flag, the English language, and hard work play a key role in defining the cultural conservatism that unites the contemporary Republican Party rank and file (Bartels 2018).

It is worth noting that these out-groups and cultural concerns are mostly only tangentially connected to concrete economic well-being. While scapegoating and ethnic

nationalism may be especially appealing to people under economic pressure, they have been broadly successful in many times and places. Thus, the “resentment” (Cramer 2016b) and “rage” (Wuthnow 2018) of the white “working class” may turn out, upon closer inspection, to have rather little to do with economic grievances of the sort measured by declines in real income, even over decades, and much more to do with a social and historical context in which a significant fraction of citizens perceive significant threats to their communities and their cherished ways of life (Craig and Richeson 2014).

Certainly our analyses in this paper provide support for the notion that the political implications of objective social and economic circumstances can vary dramatically across social and historical contexts. For example, race may be strongly related to shifting views about government jobs in the midst of a severe recession (as in Table 2), but inert in a context of low unemployment and rising wages (as in Table 5). People raised in the South may cling to the notion that “women’s place is in the home” (as in Table 3), then capitulate to the social reality (and also, in many cases, to the personal experience) of female labor force participation (as in Table 6).

Our most striking examples of the importance of shifting social and historical contexts appear in our analyses of shifts in partisanship. Previous scholarship drawing on the Jennings data has mostly focused on the increasing stability of partisan attachments as the class of ’65 passed through the crystallization period of early adulthood (Beck and Jennings 1991; Jennings and Markus 1984; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009; Niemi and Jennings 1991). However, the analyses presented in Table 8 suggest that that increasing overall stability masked important changes going on beneath the surface in people’s understandings of what it meant to be a Democrat or a Republican. The partisan ramifications of race, sex, socioeconomic backgrounds, and biblical fundamentalism all changed in important ways between the mid-1960s and the late 1990s. Those changes reflect the interaction of large, complex social and historical

forces as well as the group-specific mobilizing efforts of political elites.

Of course, the political implications of social and economic change also, inevitably, depend upon how people experience and interpret that change. We hope in future work to add depth and texture to the analyses presented here by exploring these subjective understandings directly, through in-depth interviews with a select group of the Jennings respondents (now in their early 70s). They are uniquely qualified to shed light on the meaning of their own political lives.

Appendix

Our analysis of the Jennings data relies primarily upon the 935 respondents (56% of the original 1,669) who participated in all four waves of the panel study. In order to minimize the effect of differential panel attrition on our conclusions, we have reweighted the data from four-wave survivors to approximate the joint distribution of race,⁴⁹ region,⁵⁰ sex, partisanship,⁵¹ and political interest⁵² in the original 1965 sample.⁵³ (Where the resulting cells were very sparse, we combined them for the purpose of constructing weights. This had the effect of substituting black females for missing black males, especially in the South.)

The resulting panel sample weights are reported in Table A1. They range from .756 for the respondents who were least likely to drop out of the sample (white southern females who were politically interested Republicans in 1965) to 2.214 for those who were most likely to drop out (blacks who were Republicans or Independents in 1965). However, most of the weights fall in a much narrower range, with 90% between .791 and 1.605.⁵⁴

*** Table A1 ***

⁴⁹ The 1965 survey classified respondents as “white,” “Negro,” or “other (including Mexican and Puerto Rican).”

⁵⁰ We distinguish southerners (those who reported growing up in the 11 states of the former Confederacy) from non-southerners.

⁵¹ We classify respondents who reported being “closer” to the Democratic or Republican Party as partisans and those who reported identifying with some other party or being “apolitical” along with (“pure”) Independents.

⁵² We classify respondents based on whether they reported following politics and public affairs “most of the time” (41%), “some of the time” (42%), or “only now and then” or “hardly at all” (17%).

⁵³ The original sample was itself weighted to reflect differing selection probabilities for the 97 high schools in which Jennings’ team conducted interviews. We employ those weights in characterizing the joint distribution of respondents.

⁵⁴ In combination with the weights associated with high schools in the original Jennings sample, these panel weights produce overall weights ranging from .346 to 3.194. Here, too, most of the weights fall in a much narrower range, with 90% between .611 and 1.742.

The structure of the Jennings panel data set allows us to estimate the measurement reliability of many of the variables employed in our analysis, which in turn allows us to mitigate biases in regression parameter estimates stemming from measurement error by estimating errors-in-variables regression models (Achen 1983). We employ the measurement error model developed by Wiley and Wiley (1970), which exploits the repeated measurements of many of our key explanatory variables in 1973, 1982, and 1997 to estimate the measurement reliability of these indicators.⁵⁵ Table A2 reports the estimated magnitude of measurement error and the corresponding estimated reliabilities of these explanatory variables in 1973 and 1982.

*** **Table A2** ***

The Wiley-Wiley model is based on the assumption that measurement error variance is constant across survey waves. Thus, an increase in observed (total) variance must reflect an increase in “true” variance and, by extension, an increase in measurement reliability. This is the case for most of the indicators listed in Table A2. An alternative measurement error model developed by Heise (1969) is based on the assumption that *reliability* is constant across survey waves (and thus, that an increase in observed variance reflects proportional increases in both true variance and measurement error variance). Under that assumption the estimated reliability for each indicator in 1982, reported in the last column of Table A2, would apply in 1973 as well (Wiley and Wiley 1970, 114), and the errors-in-variables parameter estimates in analyses with explanatory variables measured in 1973 (in Tables 2, 3, and 4 and the first and third columns of Table 9) would be slightly different.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The key assumptions of the model are that “true” scores follow a first-order lag process (so 1997 true scores depend on 1982 true scores but not—directly—on 1973 true scores) and that measurement errors are random (uncorrelated with each other and with the true scores).

⁵⁶ For example, the estimated effects of income gains in Table 2 would change from .0386 to .0392 for business versus labor feeling thermometers and from $-.0548$ to $-.0483$ for government jobs and living standards. The estimated effects of income gains on changes in partisanship in Table 9 would change from .0787 to .0702 for 1973-1982, and from .0613 to .0531 for 1973-1997.

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Table 1: The Impact of Social Backgrounds on Future Education and Income

Ordinary least squares regression parameter estimates (with standard errors clustered by high school in parentheses). Years of college measured 1965-1973. Real family income measured in 2017 \$1000s.

	Years of college	1973 income	1982 income	1997 income
<i>Family SES</i>	.796 (.103)	3.50 (2.72)	3.07 (3.13)	5.13 (4.97)
<i>School SES</i>	.483 (.160)	5.57 (3.39)	10.33 (6.16)	25.05 (8.88)
Non-white	.302 (.254)	.22 (5.98)	-9.28 (5.20)	5.79 (11.68)
Female	-.374 (.121)	-2.34 (3.31)	-2.08 (3.53)	-14.35 (4.48)
South (1965)	.595 (.153)	-2.92 (3.33)	8.13 (5.48)	16.25 (7.13)
Biblical fundamentalism (1965)	-.970 (.336)	-11.54 (7.34)	-13.13 (10.22)	-38.08 (15.63)
Intercept	2.78 (.27)	82.8 (6.3)	101.1 (8.7)	155.7 (13.9)
Standard error of regression	1.74	40.7	50.3	76.4
Adjusted R ²	.22	.02	.03	.06
<i>N</i>	925	781	778	880

Table 2: Economic Attitudes, 1982

Errors-in-variables regression parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).
Missing data indicators for income are included but not shown.

	Labor versus big business feeling thermometers	Government ensure jobs and living standards	Cut government spending and services	People on welfare have too much influence
Δ Family income (\$1000s, 1973-1982)	-.0386 (.0229)	-.0548 (.0199)	.0861 (.0254)	.0860 (.0320)
Δ State inequality (Gini, 1973-1982)	-98.7 (119.7)	-58.2 (104.1)	97.6 (130.6)	210.8 (167.9)
College (years)	-1.917 (.465)	-.031 (.415)	.223 (.520)	1.627 (.683)
Non-white	8.85 (3.05)	10.75 (2.78)	-11.95 (3.34)	-10.23 (4.50)
Female	6.23 (1.75)	3.02 (1.52)	-8.34 (1.94)	-9.03 (2.44)
South (1965)	.25 (2.33)	.47 (2.01)	2.23 (2.54)	-8.34 (3.22)
Biblical fundamentalism (1973)	.67 (5.46)	3.52 (4.79)	7.50 (6.09)	15.84 (7.62)
Republican partisanship (1973)	-.73 (3.93)	-15.93 (3.38)	21.75 (4.13)	12.42 (5.23)
Lagged dependent variable (1973)	1.005 (.073)	.378 (.045)	---	.612 (.072)
Intercept	-2.45 (5.14)	23.32 (5.33)	32.24 (5.61)	-1.25 (7.82)
Standard error of regression	25.44	21.73	28.12	35.09
Adjusted R ²	.36	.23	.12	.25
N	908	871	892	890

Table 3: Social Attitudes, 1982

Errors-in-variables regression parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).
Missing data indicators for income are included but not shown.

	Government should help minorities	Risk violating rights to reduce crime	Military feeling thermometer	Women should have an equal role
Δ Family income (\$1000s, 1973-1982)	-.0486 (.0205)	.0273 (.0230)	.0085 (.0161)	.0203 (.0203)
Δ State inequality (Gini, 1973-1982)	-49.9 (110.9)	78.3 (119.0)	57.9 (83.1)	234.7 (104.2)
College (years)	1.236 (.449)	-1.053 (.485)	-1.000 (.362)	-.601 (.451)
Non-white	13.47 (2.83)	-2.88 (3.07)	3.96 (2.12)	3.83 (2.68)
Female	1.54 (1.58)	.75 (1.74)	-5.10 (1.23)	1.15 (1.55)
South (1965)	-.64 (2.08)	-1.61 (2.32)	2.44 (1.64)	-4.57 (2.02)
Biblical fundamentalism (1973)	1.88 (5.05)	.61 (5.50)	1.20 (4.24)	-16.09 (5.28)
Republican partisanship (1973)	-5.43 (3.40)	7.52 (3.73)	2.83 (2.61)	.41 (3.29)
Lagged dependent variable (1973)	.456 (.045)	.394 (.048)	.534 (.046)	.507 (.046)
Intercept	16.48 (5.68)	37.82 (5.28)	33.37 (3.75)	53.76 (6.29)
Standard error of regression	22.83	25.17	18.05	22.47
Adjusted R ²	.27	.16	.30	.29
N	902	895	926	917

Table 4: Civic Attitudes, 1982

Errors-in-variables regression parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).
Missing data indicators for income are included but not shown.

	Trust in government (scale)	Export American political system	Government responsive (scale)	Trust in people (scale)
Δ Family income (\$1000s, 1973-1982)	.0471 (.0164)	.0871 (.0301)	.0108 (.0313)	-.0384 (.0287)
Δ State inequality (Gini, 1973-1982)	59.0 (84.0)	295.9 (154.4)	-23.2 (163.9)	101.1 (147.7)
College (years)	1.467 (.334)	3.570 (.941)	3.778 (.666)	1.138 (.588)
Non-white	-1.82 (2.24)	10.34 (3.92)	3.52 (4.30)	-3.42 (3.95)
Female	-1.16 (1.24)	-8.68 (2.37)	.16 (2.39)	1.68 (2.18)
South (1965)	-.52 (1.64)	-7.62 (3.17)	-.72 (3.15)	-3.20 (2.90)
Biblical fundamentalism (1973)	-6.77 (4.01)	14.76 (7.58)	-7.96 (7.63)	-14.90 (6.85)
Republican partisanship (1973)	-3.25 (2.63)	10.63 (4.88)	-.57 (5.06)	-.81 (4.61)
Lagged dependent variable (1973)	.576 (.050)	1.367 (.095)	.449 (.055)	.672 (.049)
Intercept	13.37 (3.77)	-22.43 (6.92)	35.71 (7.46)	29.79 (6.60)
Standard error of regression	18.07	33.27	34.91	31.85
Adjusted R ²	.23	.53	.16	.31
N	910	922	911	918

Table 5: Economic Attitudes, 1997

Errors-in-variables regression parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).
Missing data indicators for income are included but not shown.

	Labor versus big business feeling thermometers	Government ensure jobs and living standards	Free market can handle economic problems	Rich people have too much influence
Δ Family income (\$1000s, 1982-1997)	-.0225 (.0132)	-.0298 (.0120)	.0448 (.0273)	-.0257 (.0119)
Δ State inequality (Gini, 1982-1997)	136.9 (41.8)	93.1 (37.4)	-104.6 (86.0)	10.4 (36.5)
College (years)	-.585 (.416)	-.152 (.364)	-.254 (.838)	.639 (.366)
Non-white	-5.69 (2.65)	-3.15 (2.44)	-18.61 (5.54)	2.51 (2.33)
Female	-.15 (1.51)	2.94 (1.36)	-17.75 (3.132)	.82 (1.35)
South (1965)	.80 (2.02)	-.22 (1.83)	-1.39 (4.17)	-.63 (1.77)
Biblical fundamentalism (1982)	-7.82 (4.71)	-10.58 (4.28)	-8.61 (9.74)	-7.36 (4.19)
Republican partisanship (1982)	1.84 (3.80)	-5.01 (3.19)	43.13 (6.35)	2.40 (2.87)
Lagged dependent variable (1982)	.763 (.048)	.525 (.052)	---	.674 (.073)
Intercept	-1.05 (5.60)	20.49 (5.24)	49.44 (11.52)	31.32 (8.36)
Standard error of regression	21.99	19.60	45.81	19.41
Adjusted R ²	.44	.25	.14	.18
N	907	884	915	916

Table 6: Social Attitudes, 1997

Errors-in-variables regression parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).
Missing data indicators for income are included but not shown.

	Government should help minorities	Risk violating rights to reduce crime	Military feeling thermometer	Women should have an equal role
Δ Family income (\$1000s, 1982-1997)	-.0008 (.0125)	.0119 (.0141)	.0038 (.0093)	.0171 (.0103)
Δ State inequality (Gini, 1982-1997)	75.8 (39.1)	-9.6 (44.6)	-87.0 (28.9)	53.4 (32.1)
College (years)	.326 (.396)	-.112 (.443)	.350 (.302)	.300 (.321)
Non-white	6.05 (2.64)	-3.11 (2.90)	-.36 (1.86)	2.45 (2.07)
Female	1.08 (1.43)	3.41 (1.62)	-3.24 (1.06)	-1.62 (1.18)
South (1965)	.18 (1.91)	-2.67 (2.17)	-.34 (1.43)	3.53 (1.57)
Biblical fundamentalism (1982)	-4.06 (4.46)	16.48 (5.07)	2.71 (3.47)	3.83 (4.65)
Republican partisanship (1982)	-8.05 (3.12)	-8.99 (3.41)	-2.78 (2.22)	-6.65 (2.38)
Lagged dependent variable (1982)	.531 (.046)	.679 (.062)	.730 (.045)	.784 (.062)
Intercept	18.98 (5.66)	9.56 (6.76)	29.66 (4.37)	15.63 (8.31)
Standard error of regression	20.87	23.46	15.43	17.13
Adjusted R ²	.31	.26	.42	.42
N	917	903	922	917

Table 7: Civic Attitudes, 1997

Errors-in-variables regression parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).
Missing data indicators for income are included but not shown.

	Trust in government (scale)	Export American political system	Government responsive (scale)	Trust in people (scale)
Δ Family income (\$1000s, 1982-1997)	-.0065 (.0109)	-.0113 (.0210)	-.0048 (.0191)	.0164 (.0171)
Δ State inequality (Gini, 1982-1997)	-34.6 (33.8)	-69.6 (65.9)	-34.6 (59.8)	-4.4 (53.3)
College (years)	.762 (.338)	.594 (.745)	2.392 (.625)	.165 (.529)
Non-white	.51 (2.18)	-.94 (4.24)	5.58 (3.84)	-6.57 (3.47)
Female	-.68 (1.22)	1.24 (2.40)	4.09 (2.18)	-.67 (1.94)
South (1965)	-3.08 (1.63)	-.16 (3.23)	-1.07 (2.90)	2.11 (2.59)
Biblical fundamentalism (1982)	-4.15 (3.85)	-11.24 (7.98)	-4.07 (6.80)	-1.21 (6.05)
Republican partisanship (1982)	-12.67 (2.52)	-8.87 (4.89)	-8.71 (4.45)	-8.91 (3.98)
Lagged dependent variable (1982)	.633 (.054)	.920 (.059)	.576 (.049)	.683 (.044)
Intercept	23.35 (4.74)	17.52 (8.85)	28.28 (8.46)	31.84 (7.72)
Standard error of regression	17.85	32.01	35.30	28.38
Adjusted R ²	.24	.26	.44	.34
N	909	921	924	916

Table 8: The Impact of Social Backgrounds on Partisanship

Ordinary least squares regression parameter estimates (with standard errors clustered by high school in parentheses). Partisanship ranges from zero (for “strong” Democrats) to 100 (for “strong” Republicans).

	1965	1973	1982	1997
<i>Family SES</i>	5.06 (1.50)	3.27 (1.30)	3.60 (1.31)	1.56 (1.55)
<i>School SES</i>	.06 (3.01)	-7.66 (2.51)	-2.82 (2.62)	-2.95 (2.89)
Non-white	-17.66 (4.71)	-25.44 (3.26)	-27.98 (3.08)	-37.36 (2.78)
Female	-5.52 (2.17)	-1.25 (2.01)	-5.37 (1.94)	-9.28 (2.64)
South (1965)	-3.15 (3.38)	-4.43 (2.86)	-6.00 (2.62)	-.83 (2.44)
Biblical fundamentalism (1965)	1.60 (5.62)	11.77 (4.33)	10.96 (4.79)	14.29 (6.00)
Intercept	44.04 (4.41)	37.10 (3.73)	43.99 (4.23)	45.70 (4.89)
Standard error of regression	30.73	27.48	28.59	31.59
Adjusted R ²	.07	.08	.11	.13
<i>N</i>	925	929	907	922

Table 9: Changes in Partisanship, 1973-1997

Errors-in-variables regression parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).
Missing data indicators for income are included but not shown.

	Republican gains, 1973-1982	Republican gains, 1982-1997	Republican gains, 1973-1997
Δ Family income (\$1000s)	.0787 (.0186)	.0403 (.0143)	.0613 (.0164)
Δ State inequality (Gini)	39.4 (96.4)	-80.2 (44.9)	-172.8 (71.0)
College (years)	-.154 (.381)	.072 (.437)	-.063 (.507)
Non-white	-10.35 (2.50)	-17.68 (2.88)	-23.59 (3.20)
Female	-4.95 (1.42)	-5.47 (1.63)	-9.38 (1.86)
South (1965)	-4.13 (1.88)	2.00 (2.18)	-2.00 (2.50)
Biblical fundamentalism	.25 (4.46)	18.18 (5.08)	19.04 (5.85)
Lagged partisanship	.768 (.030)	.739 (.033)	.576 (.040)
Intercept	15.00 (4.13)	9.85 (6.01)	32.94 (9.39)
Standard error of regression	20.65	23.89	27.10
Adjusted R ²	.53	.50	.36
<i>N</i>	900	913	912

Table A1: Sample Weights

Each cell shows the panel weight for respondents with the corresponding combination of characteristics (in italics), the percentage of the original 1965 sample ($N=1,669$), and the raw number of respondents who participated in all four panel waves ($N=935$).

Partisanship: Democrats; Independents (including other and apolitical); Republicans.

Follow politics: “most of the time”; “some of the time”; “only now and then” or “hardly at all.”

Race: white; black; other. **Region:** non-South; South. **Sex:** male; female.

	Dems, Most	Dems, Some	Dems, Less	Inds, Most	Inds, Some	Inds, Less	Reps, Most	Reps, Some	Reps, Less	Total
White NonS Male	<i>1.035</i> 8.8% (78)	<i>.944</i> 7.1% (71)	<i>1.658</i> 3.5% (18)	<i>1.421</i> 2.6% (17)	<i>.876</i> 2.0% (22)	<i>1.332</i> 1.5% (9)	<i>.854</i> 6.1% (66)	<i>1.111</i> 5.9% (50)	<i>1.242</i> 1.9% (14)	<i>1.056</i> 39.5% (345)
White NonS Fem	<i>.908</i> 7.9% (75)	<i>.916</i> 9.4% (92)	<i>.981</i> 3.5% (32)	<i>1.064</i> 1.5% (13)	<i>.917</i> 2.0% (19)	<i>1.788</i> 1.0% (6)	<i>.816</i> 3.9% (44)	<i>.807</i> 5.5% (59)	<i>1.205</i> 1.5% (12)	<i>.916</i> 36.2% (352)
White South Male	<i>.761</i> 1.9% (26)	<i>.846</i> 2.1% (24)		<i>.964</i> 1.1% (13)		<i>.945</i> 1.0% (11)	<i>.858</i> 1.1% (12)		<i>.851</i> 7.2% (86)	
White South Fem	<i>1.085</i> 1.3% (13)	<i>.791</i> 2.5% (31)		<i>.956</i> 1.3% (14)		<i>.756</i> 0.8% (10)	<i>1.083</i> 1.1% (11)		<i>.898</i> 7.1% (79)	
Black NonS Male	<i>1.079</i> 1.4% (15)	<i>1.605</i> 2.2% (17)		<i>2.214</i> 1.6% (8)						<i>1.432</i> 2.2% (20)
Black NonS Fem										<i>1.329</i> 2.4% (20)
Black South Male	<i>1.374</i> 1.8% (11)	<i>1.940</i> 2.5% (13)								<i>3.364</i> 2.5% (7)
Black South Fem										<i>1.237</i> 2.3% (17)
Other NonS Male	<i>.773</i> 0.6% (9)						<i>.659</i> 0.1% (1)			
Other NonS Fem									<i>.788</i> 0.6% (8)	
Total	<i>.981</i> 23.3% (221)	<i>.945</i> 23.4% (233)	<i>1.307</i> 9.7% (69)	<i>1.262</i> 5.6% (42)	<i>.954</i> 5.4% (55)	<i>1.383</i> 3.2% (22)	<i>.845</i> 12.1% (134)	<i>.949</i> 13.4% (129)		

Table A2: Measurement Reliability Estimates

Estimates of measurement error and reliability based on Wiley and Wiley (1970) measurement error model.

	Measurement error ($\sqrt{\text{var}(\epsilon)}$)	Estimated reliability, 1973	Estimated reliability, 1982	<i>N</i>
Family income (2017 \$1000s)	21.64	.737	.822	649
State inequality (Gini)	.01144	.506	.647	921
Biblical fundamentalism	10.39	.781	.791	876
Republican partisanship	10.45	.867	.880	892
Business versus labor feeling thermometers	18.80	.519	.630	737
Government ensure jobs and living standards	15.05	.709	.633	783
Unions have too much influence	19.81	.445	.474	754
Poor people have too much influence	19.03	.382	.544	763
Blacks have too much influence	13.13	.550	.536	755
Government should help minorities	14.85	.729	.688	868
Risk violating rights to reduce crime	19.10	.632	.521	836
Military feeling thermometer	12.57	.750	.661	788
Women should have an equal role	19.45	.647	.469	900
Trust in government (scale)	13.05	.663	.590	755
Export American political system	32.91	.429	.534	923
Government responsive (scale)	23.64	.633	.622	773
Trust in people (scale)	24.04	.612	.609	909

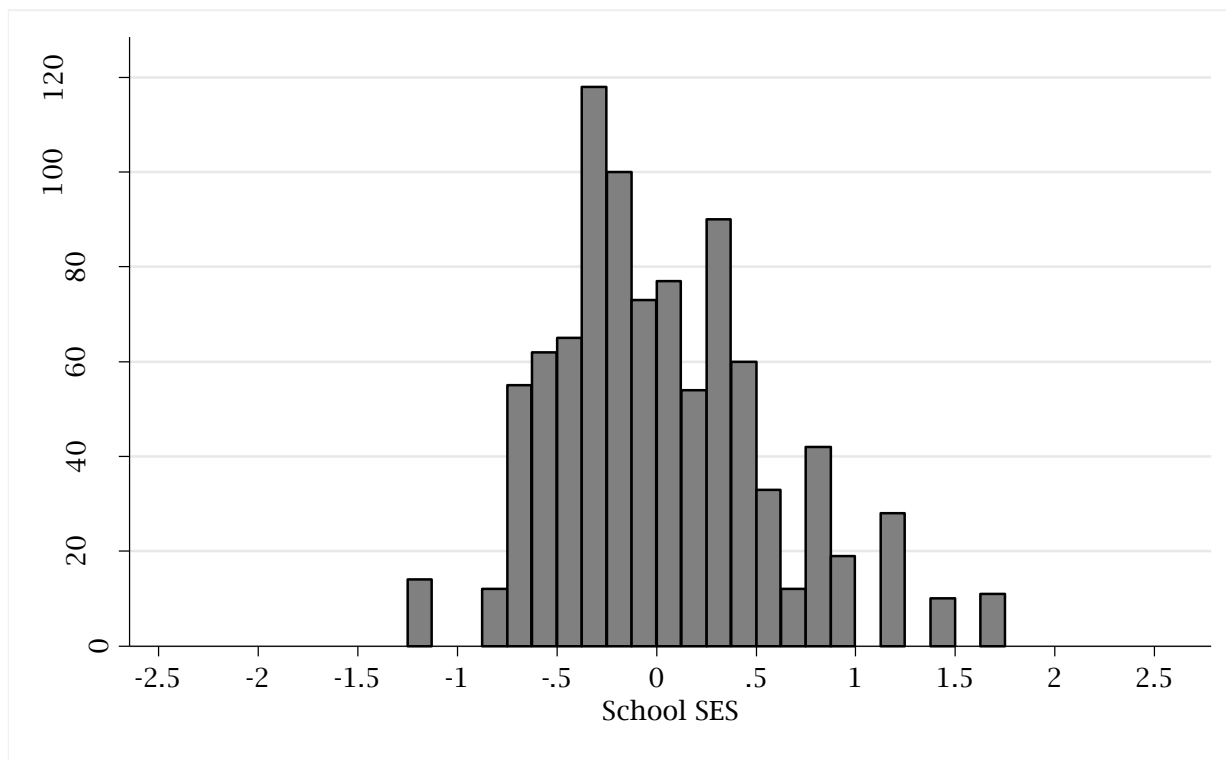
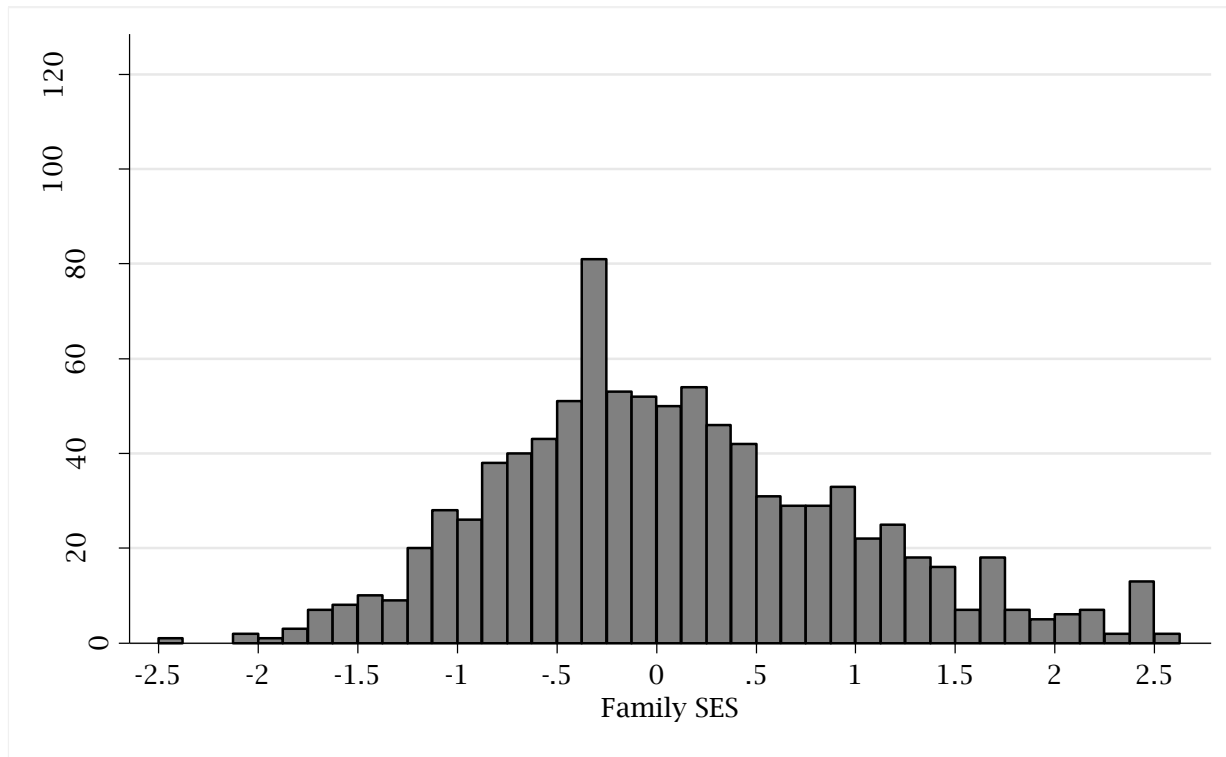
Figure 1: Distributions of Family SES and School SES

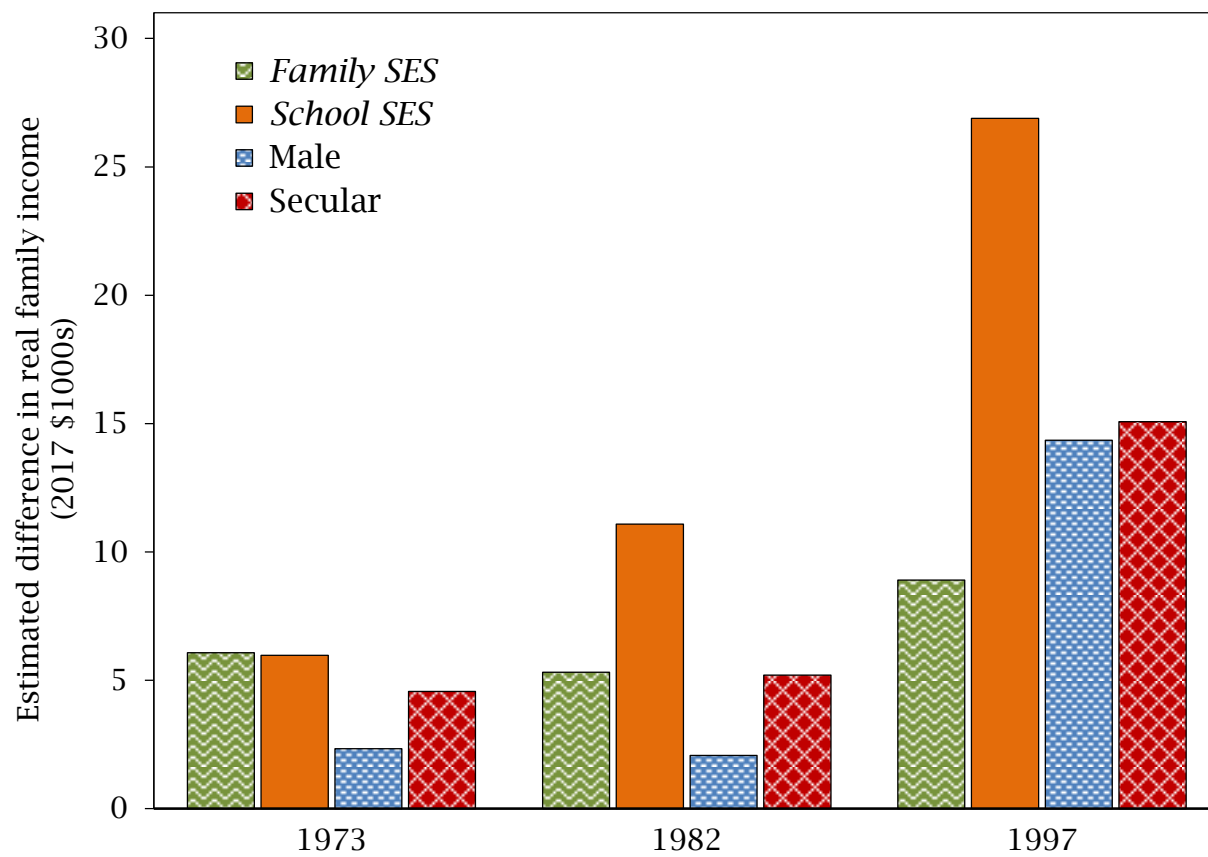
Figure 2: The Long-Term Impact of Social Backgrounds on Future Income

Figure 3: The Impact of Economic Mobility on Economic Attitudes

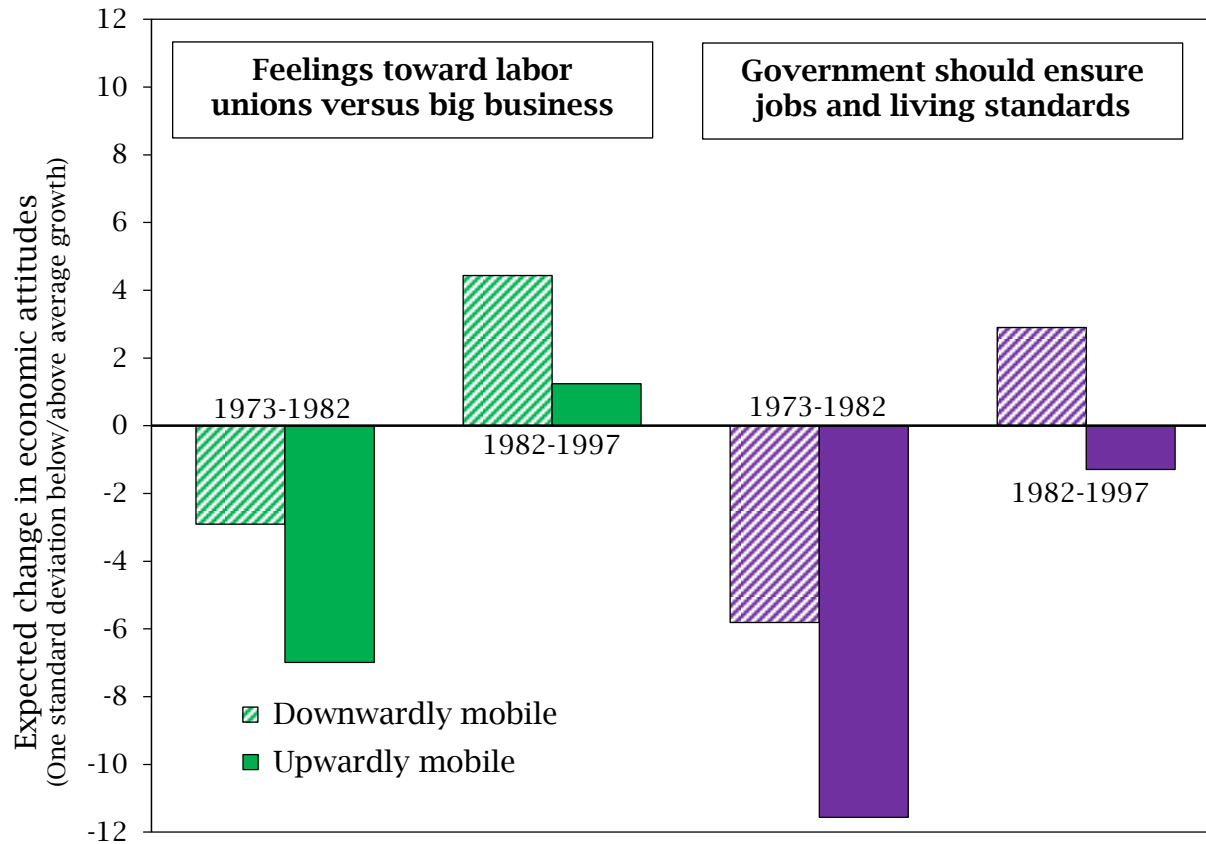


Figure 4: Republican Gains (Whites Only) by Income Growth and Subjective Mobility

