

Culture wars, voting, and polarization: divisions and unities in modern American politics

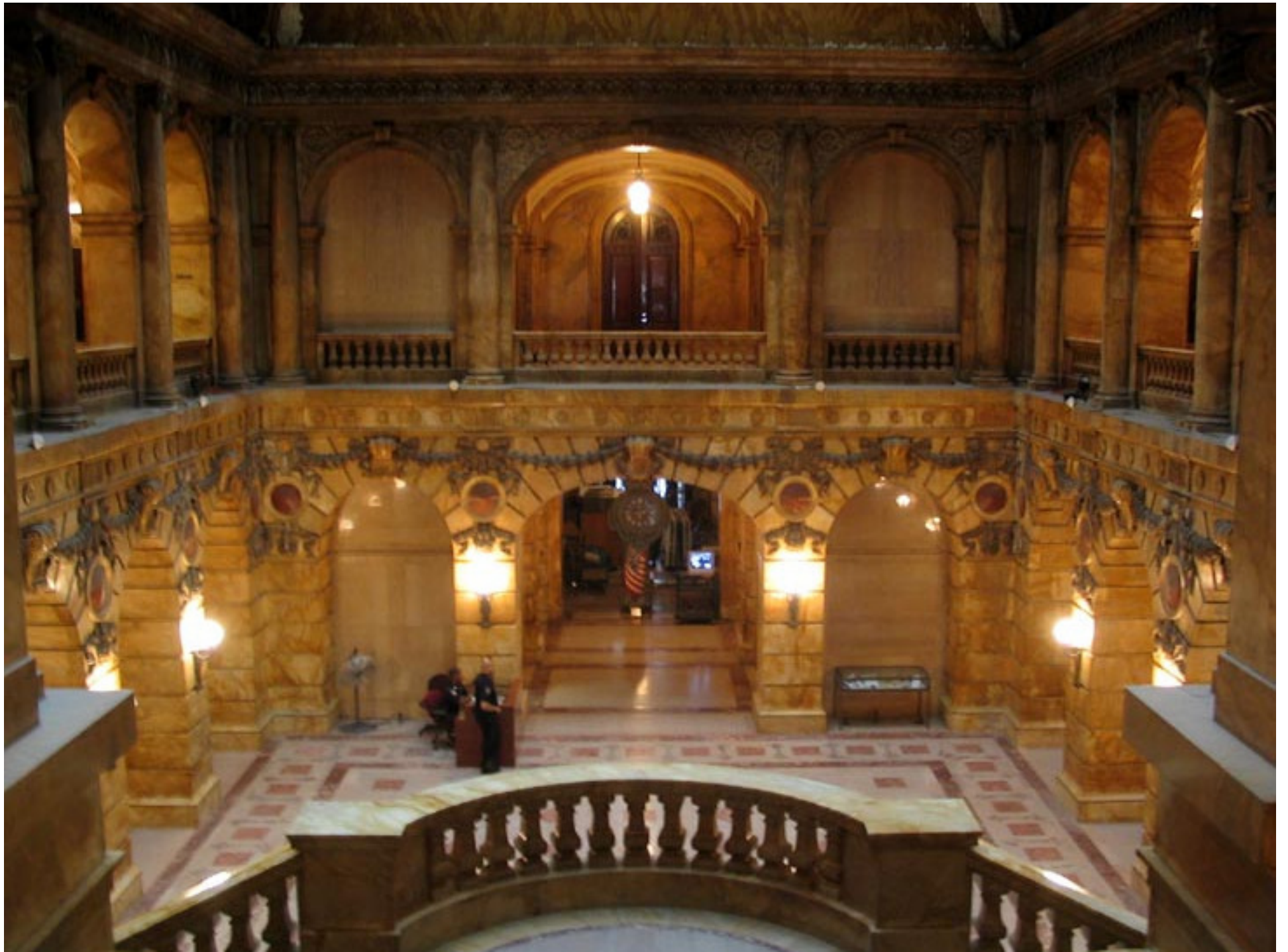
Andrew Gelman, Statistics and Political Science,
Columbia University

Talk at Dartmouth College, 12 Oct 2007

The “polarization” story

- First, the good old days of partisanship
....







- Then, the unraveling of the consensus . . .





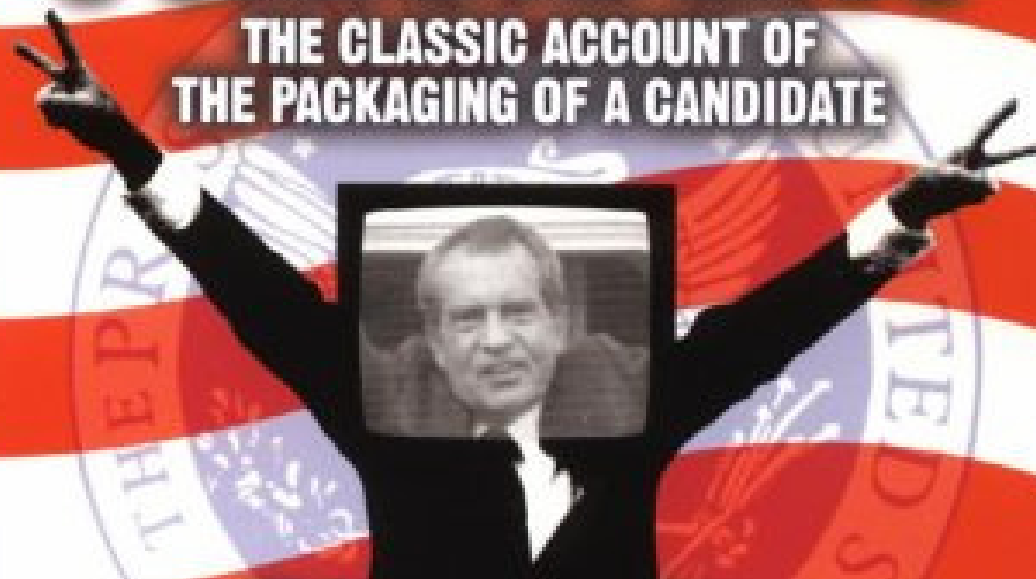
“The Party’s Over”





THE \$ELLING OF THE PRESIDENT

THE CLASSIC ACCOUNT OF
THE PACKAGING OF A CANDIDATE



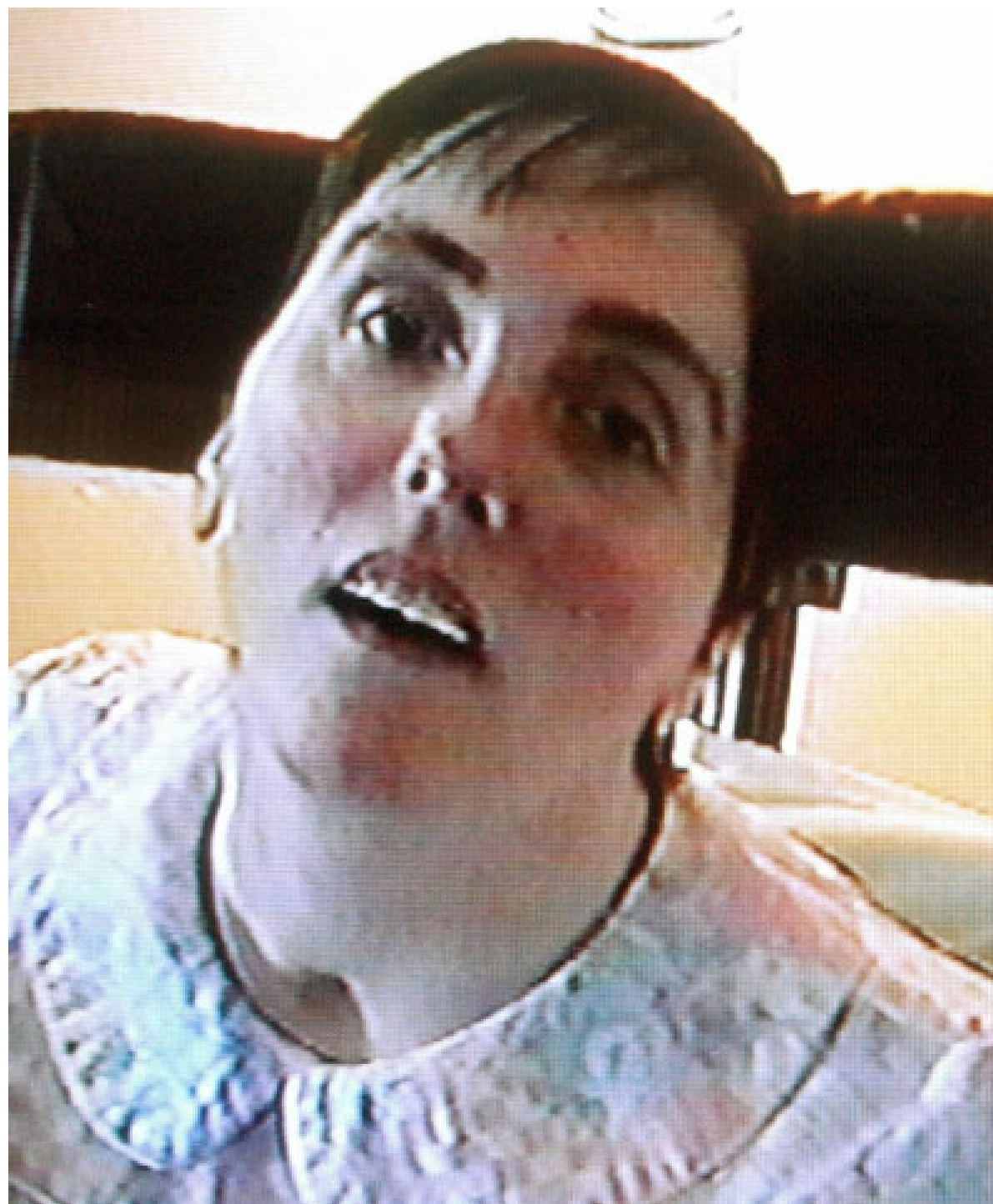


- Now, the new polarization . . .









Bush: 'Our Long National Nightmare Of Peace And Prosperity Is Finally Over'

JANUARY 17, 2001 | ISSUE 37-01

WASHINGTON, DC—Mere days from assuming the presidency and closing the door on eight years of Bill Clinton, president-elect George W. Bush assured the nation in a televised address Tuesday that "our long national nightmare of peace and prosperity is finally over."

 ENLARGE IMAGE



President-elect Bush vows that "together, we can put the triumphs of the recent past behind us."

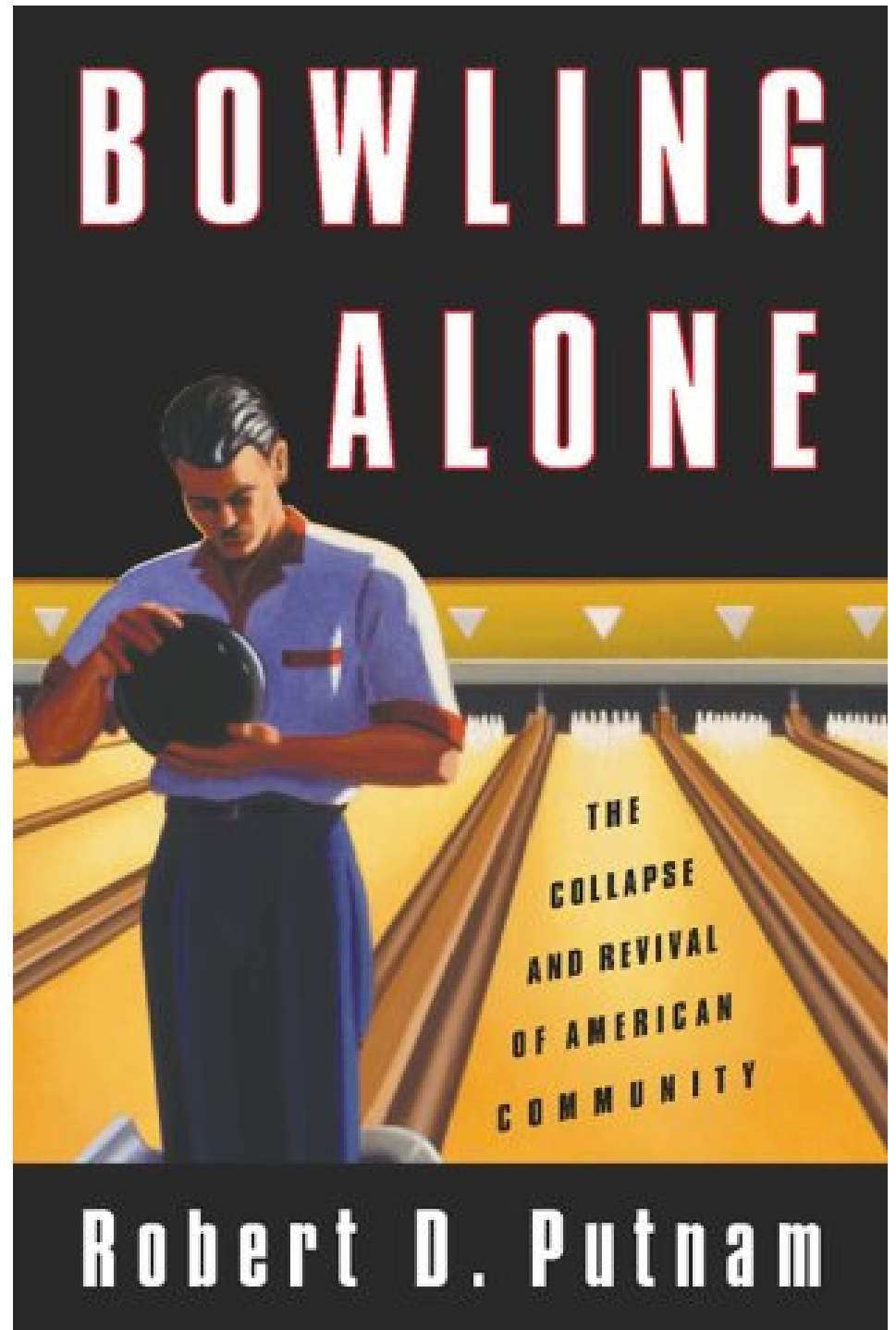
and sustained peace overseas. The time has come to put all of that behind us."

"My fellow Americans," Bush said, "at long last, we have reached the end of the dark period in American history that will come to be known as the Clinton Era, eight long years characterized by unprecedented economic expansion, a sharp decrease in crime,

- Then . . .



- And now . . .



- Then . . .



And now . . .



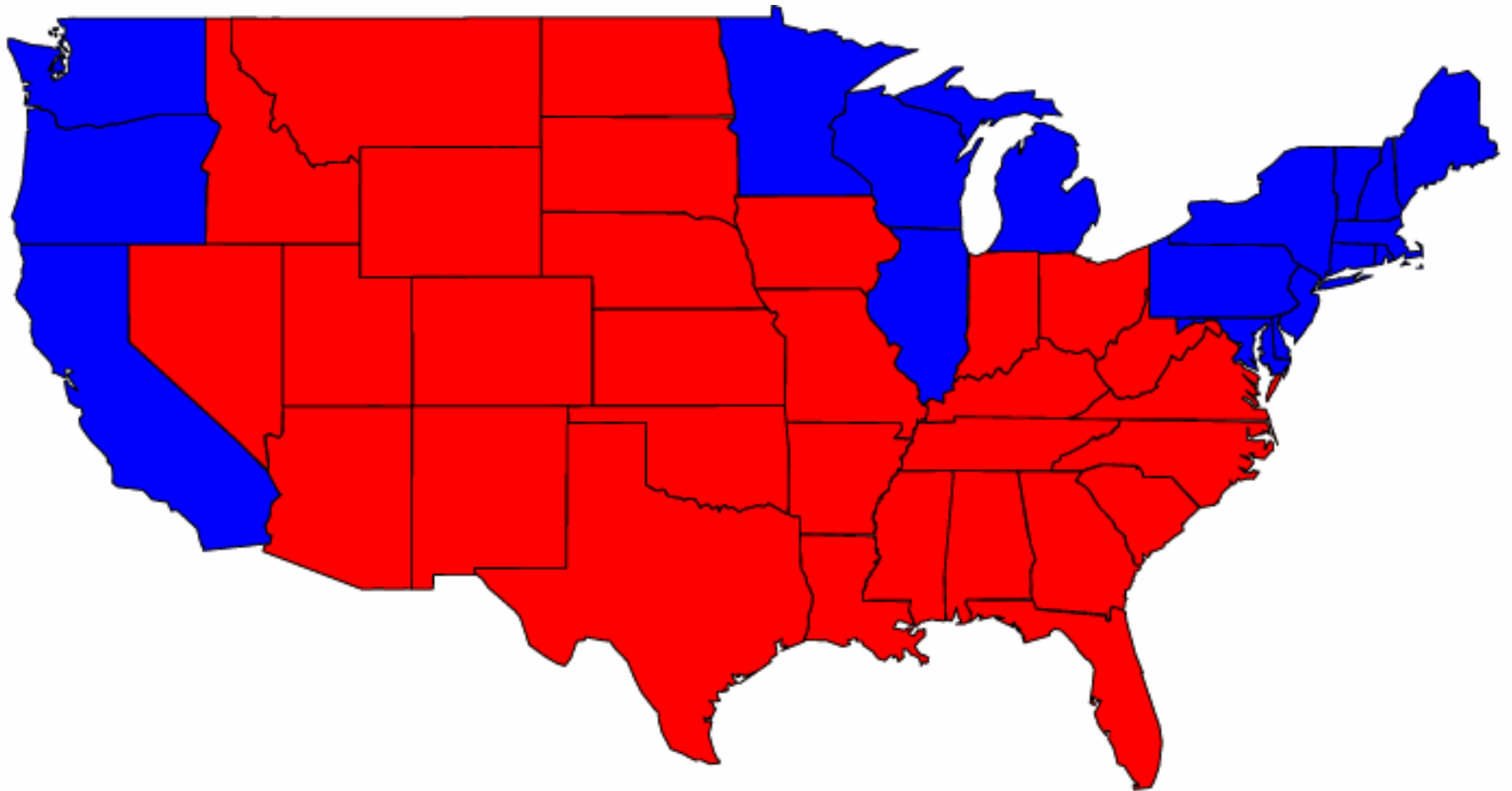
Polarization and politics

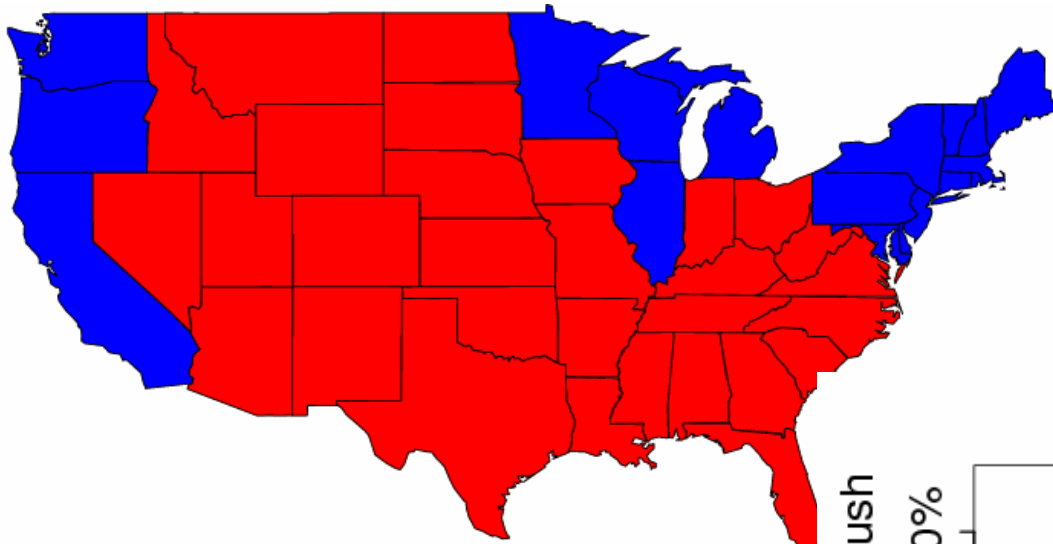
- From the left: focus on economic polarization (“two Americas”)
- From the right: focus on cultural polarization (“red America vs. blue America”)
- “Polarization” as a loser’s cry

How can we study polarization?

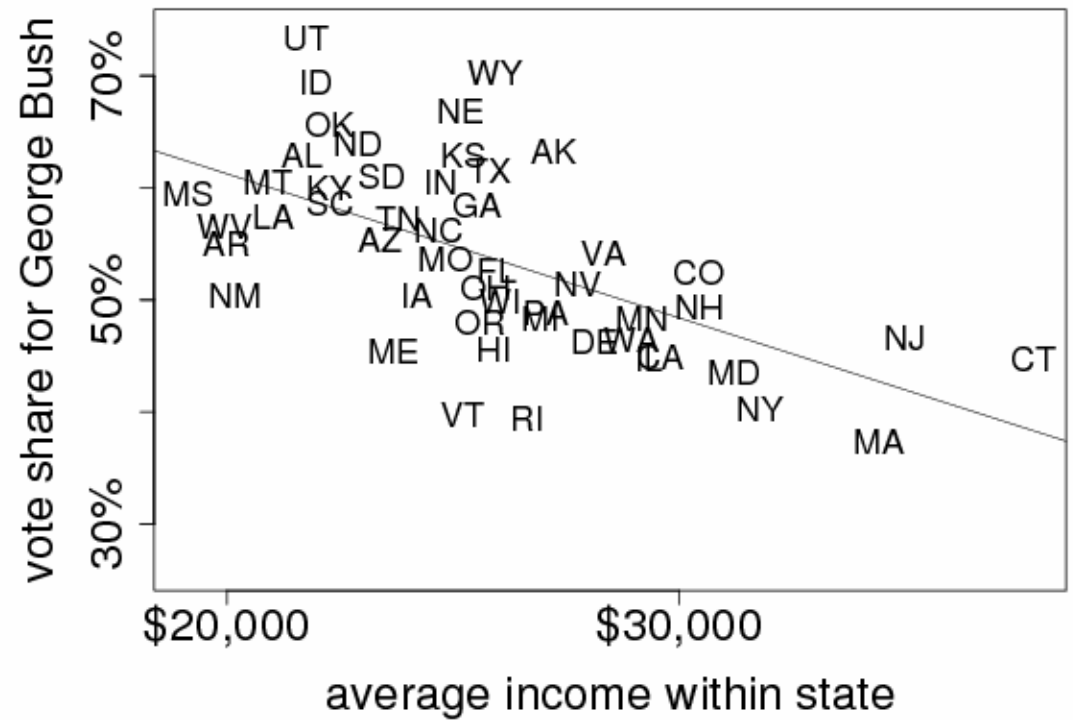
- Voting patterns of rich and poor in different states
- Polarization in issue attitudes
- Social networks

That map

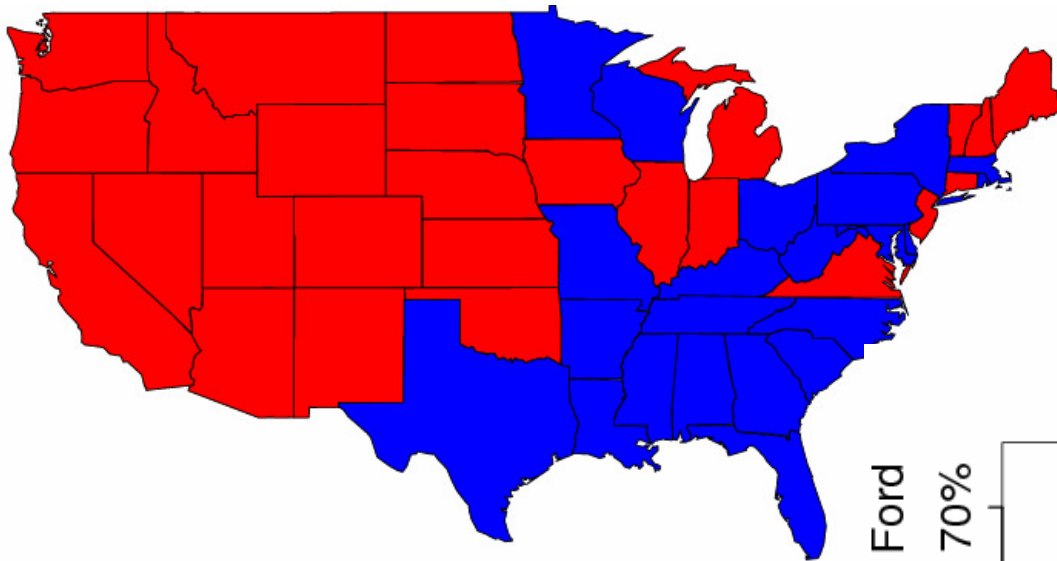




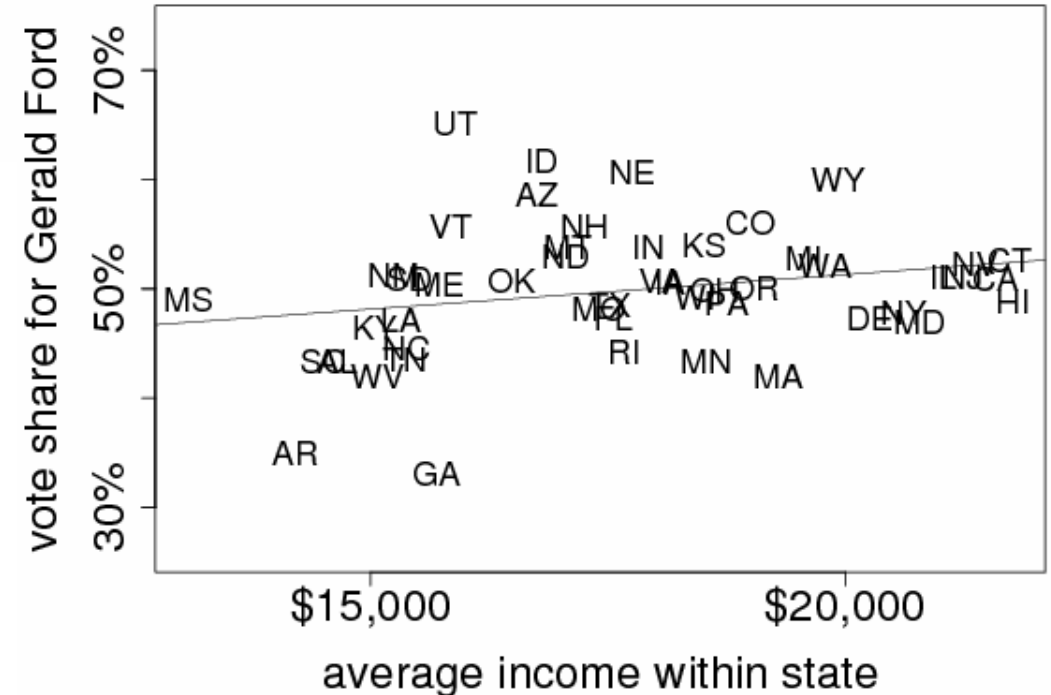
Republican vote by state in 2004



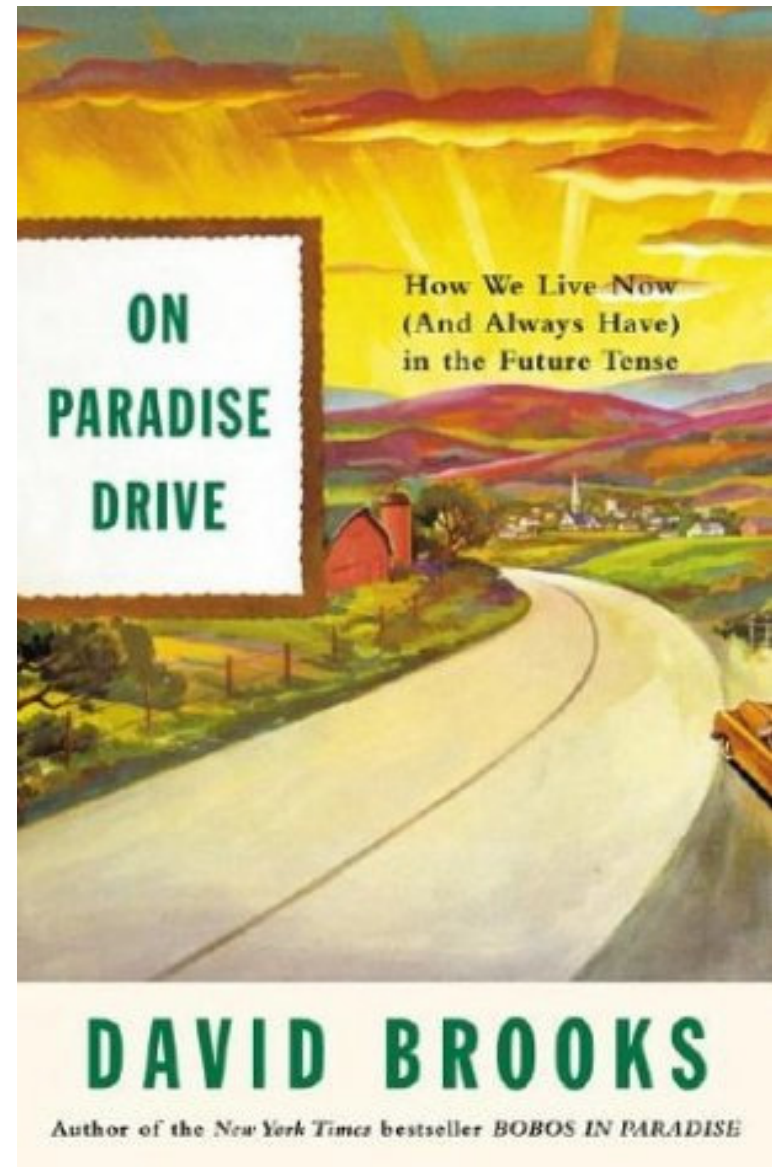
Things were different 30 years ago . . .



Republican vote by state in 1976



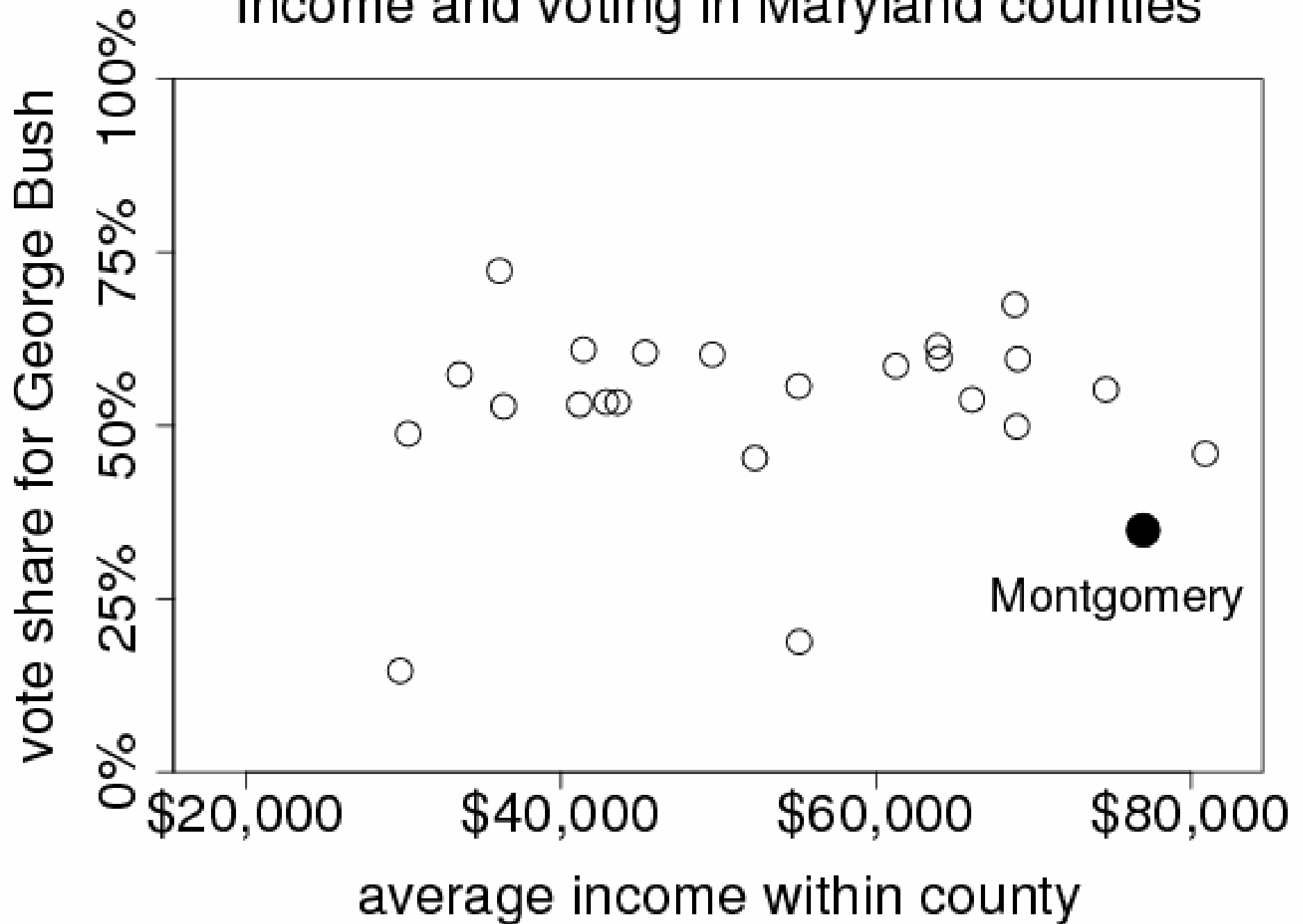
The pundits speak



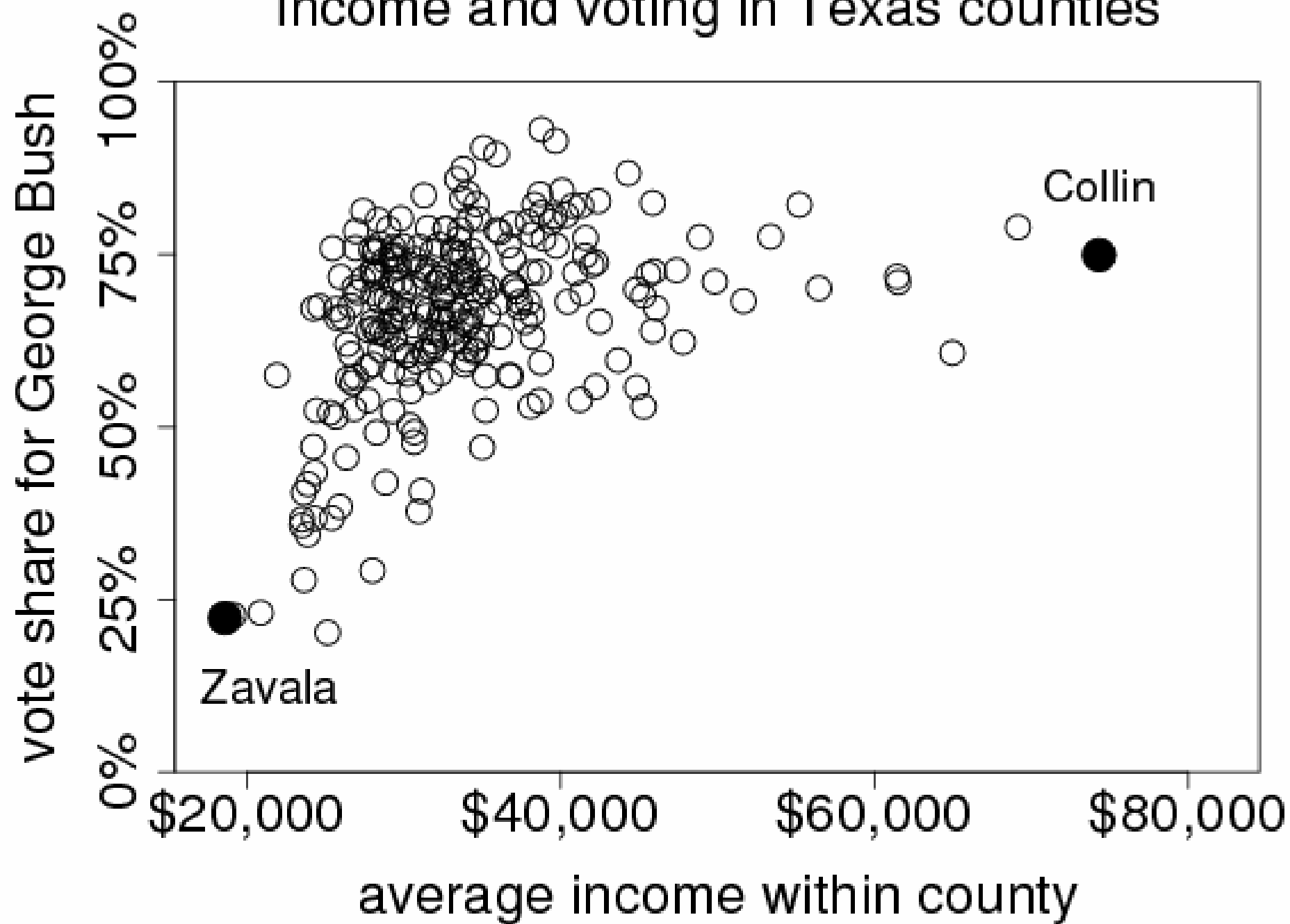
“Like upscale areas everywhere, from Silicon Valley to Chicago's North Shore to suburban Connecticut, Montgomery County [Maryland] supported the Democratic ticket in last year's presidential election, by a margin of 63 percent to 34 percent.”

– David Brooks, 2001

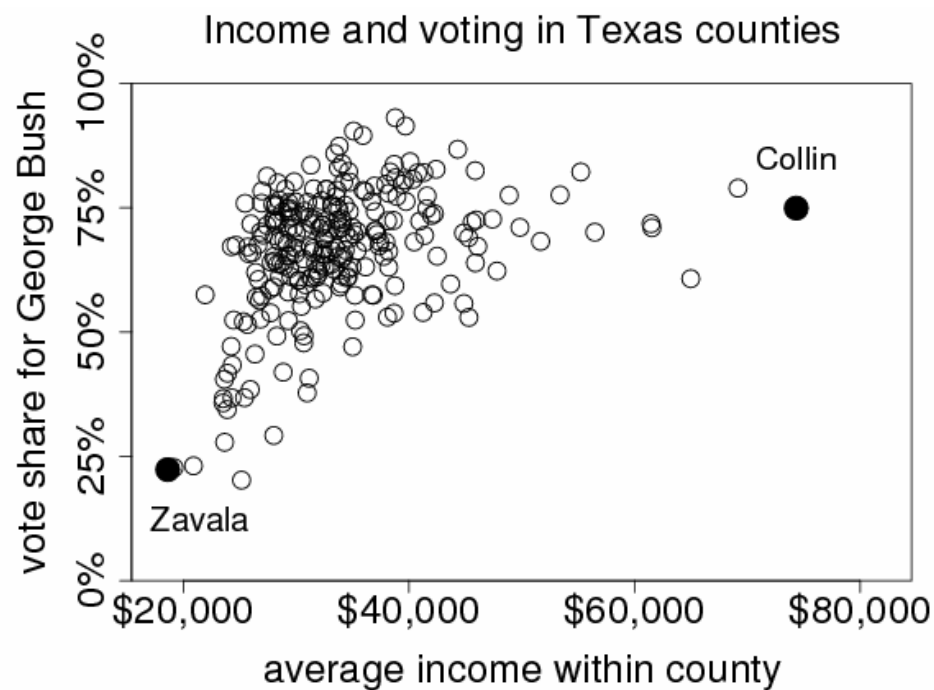
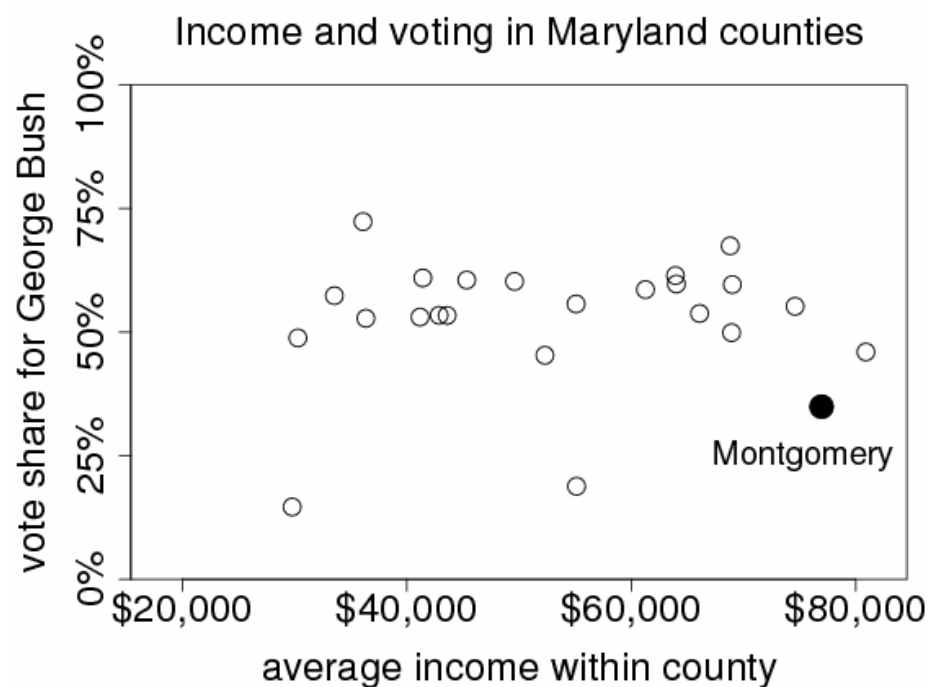
Income and voting in Maryland counties



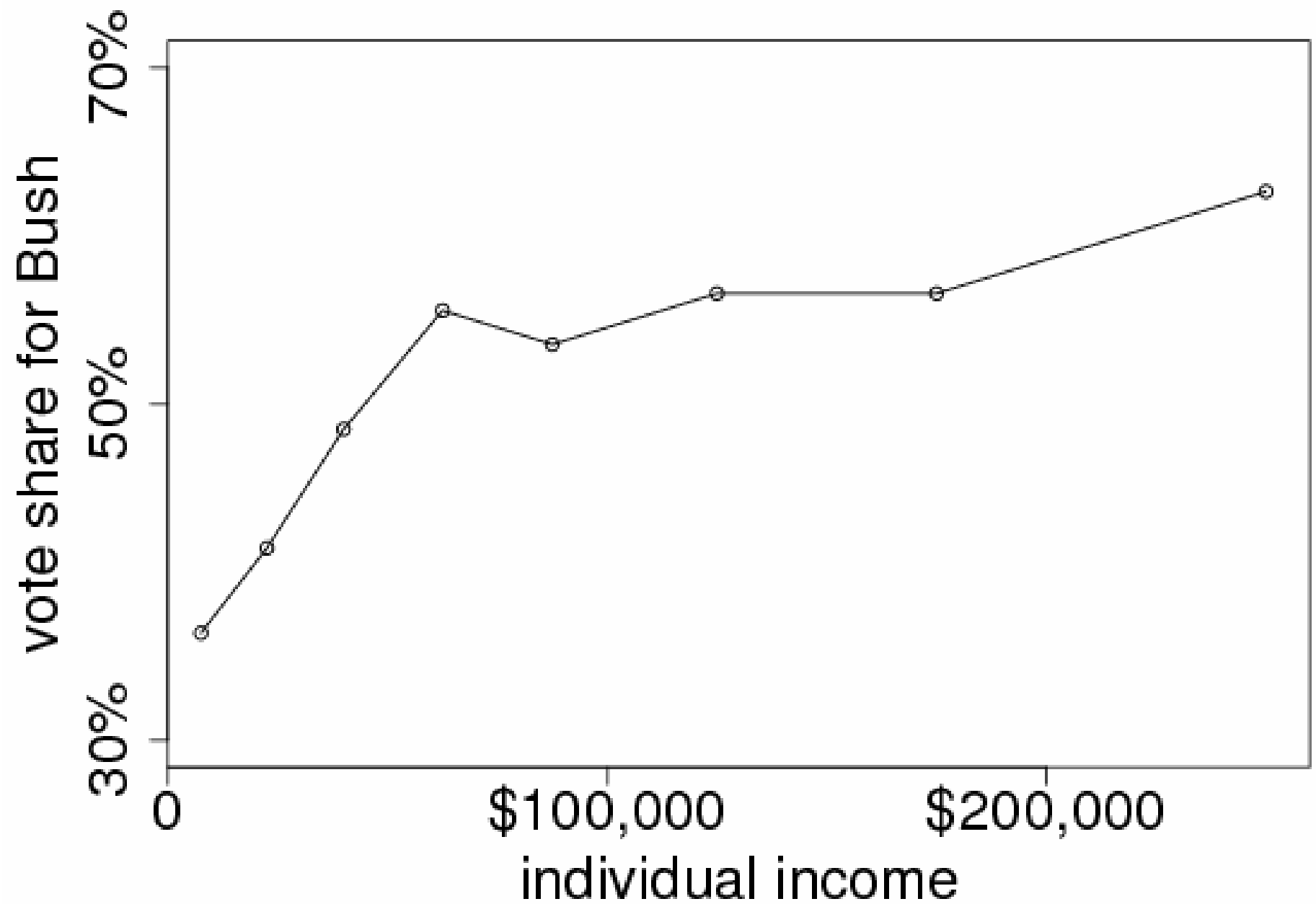
Income and voting in Texas counties



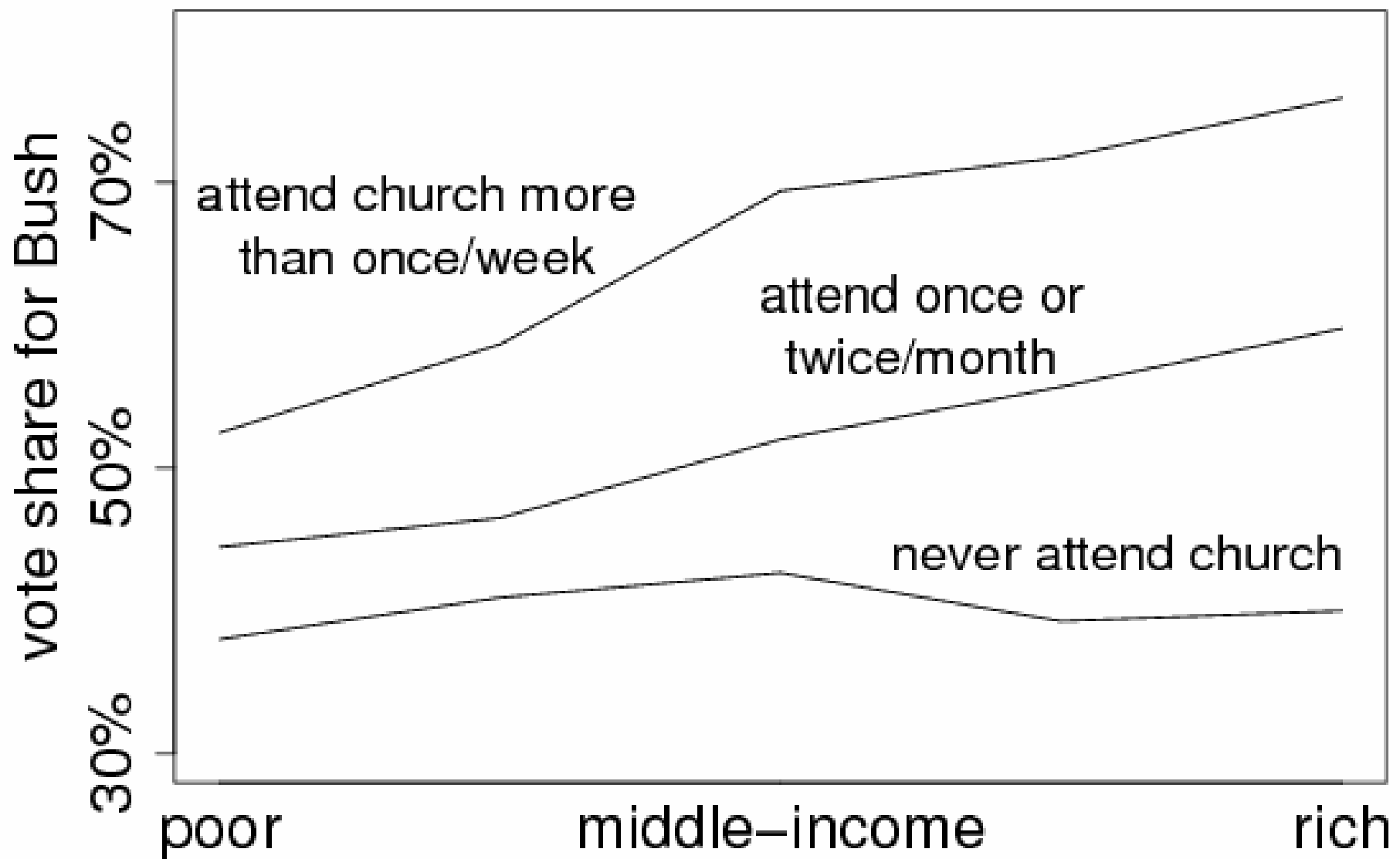
Different polarizations in different places



Bush vote in 2004 by income



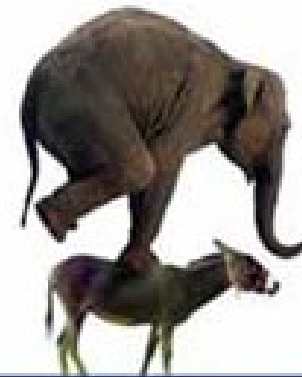
Bush vote in 2004 by income and relig attendance



The pundits speak



**WHAT'S THE
MATTER WITH
KANSAS?**



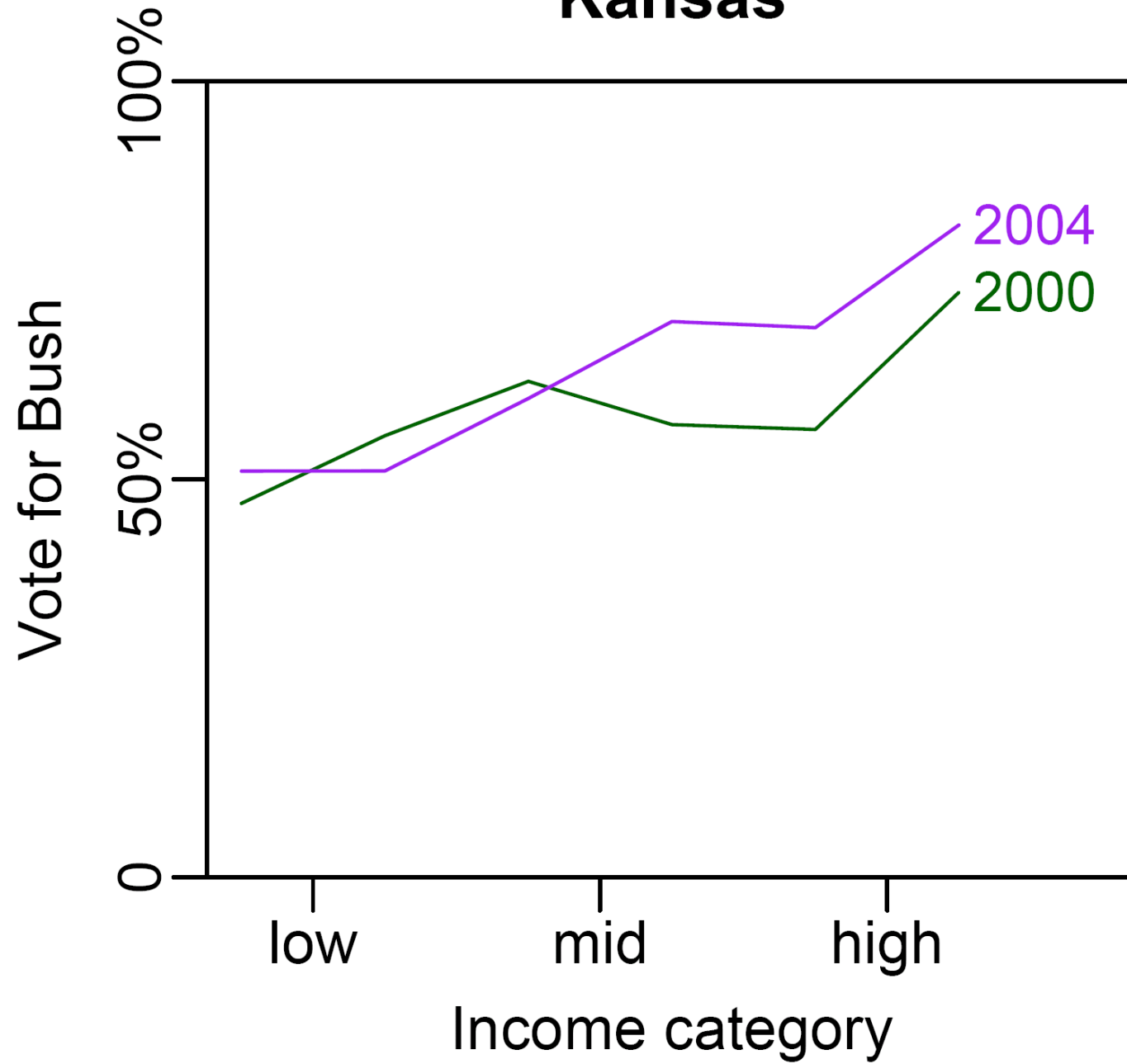
**HOW CONSERVATIVES WON
THE HEART OF AMERICA**

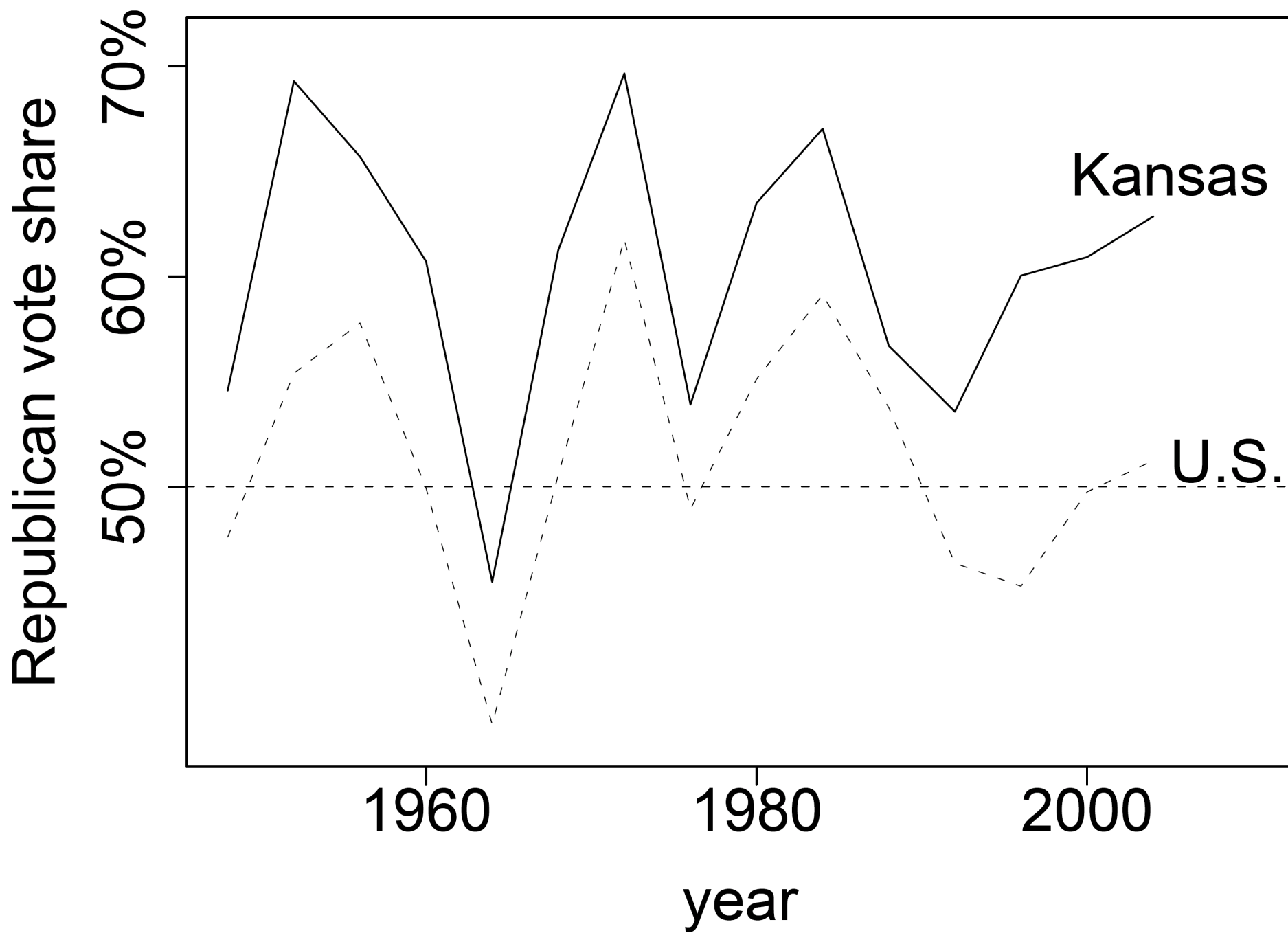
THOMAS FRANK

“We have had upper-class conservatives since the dawn of the Republic; by themselves they can't win elections to any office other than treasurer of the country club.”

– Thomas Frank, 2005

Kansas

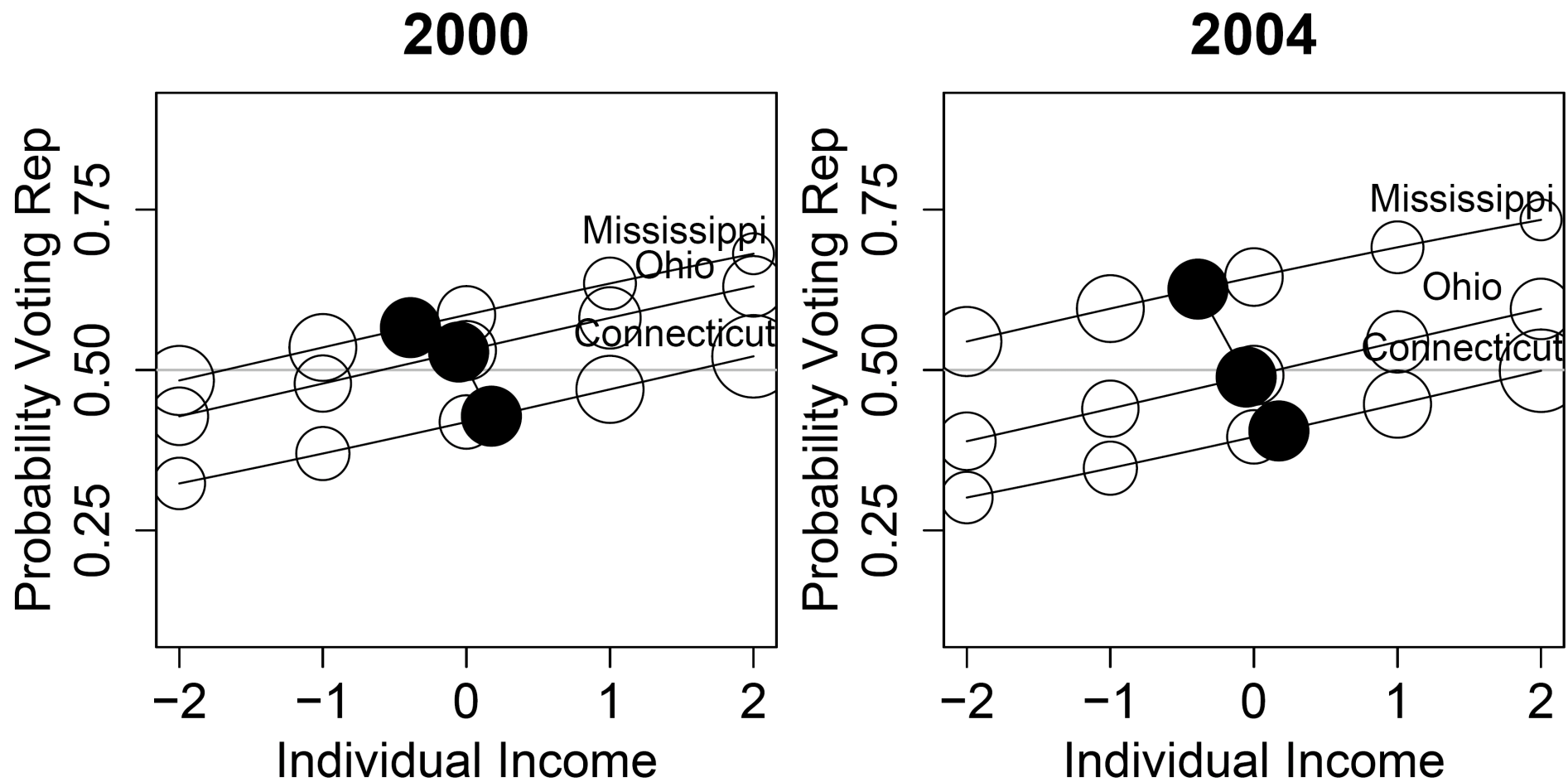




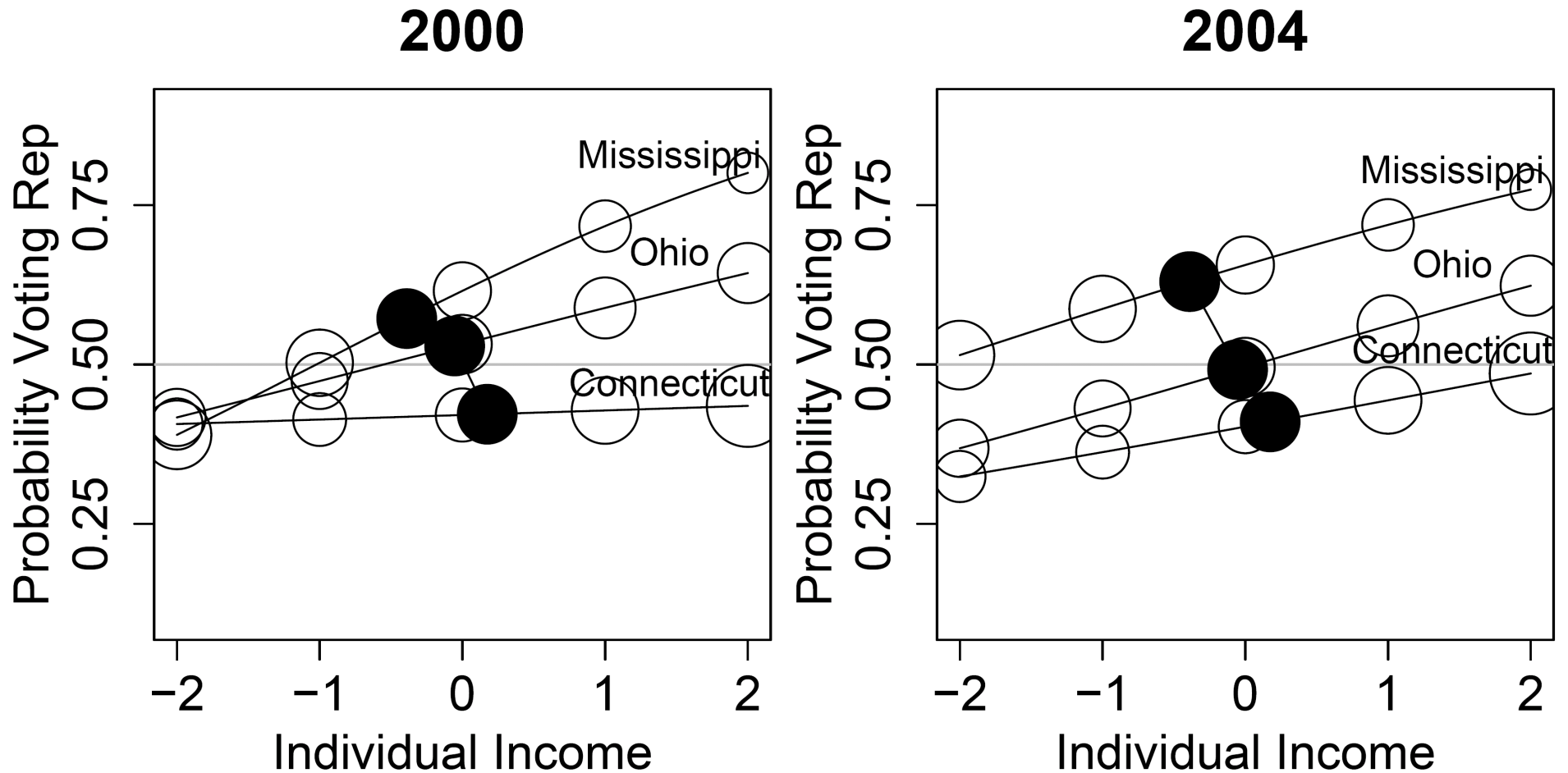
The red-state, blue-state paradox

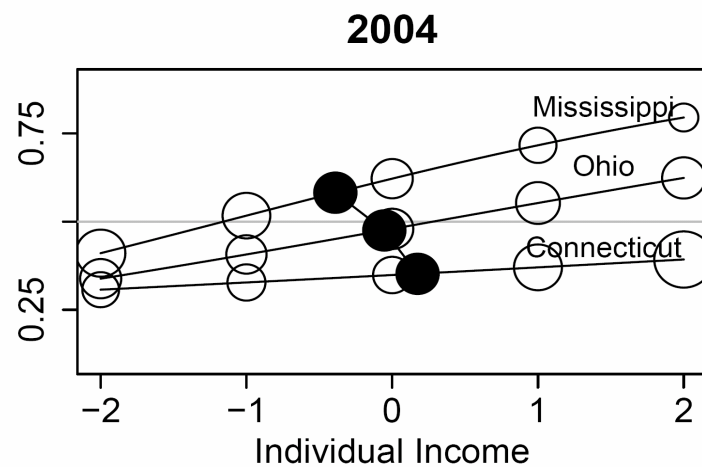
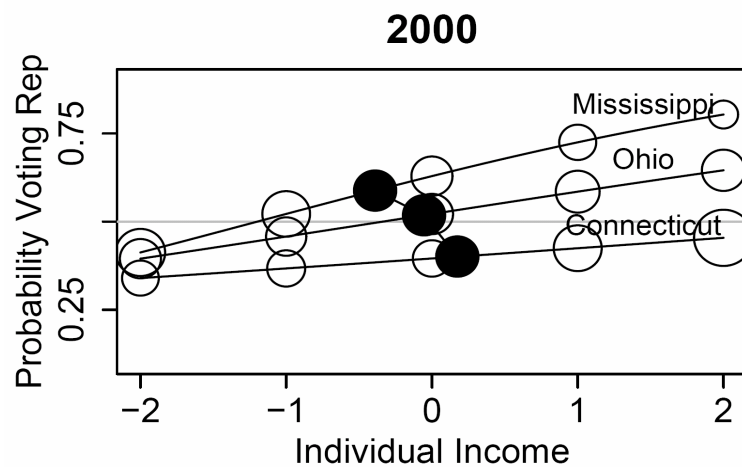
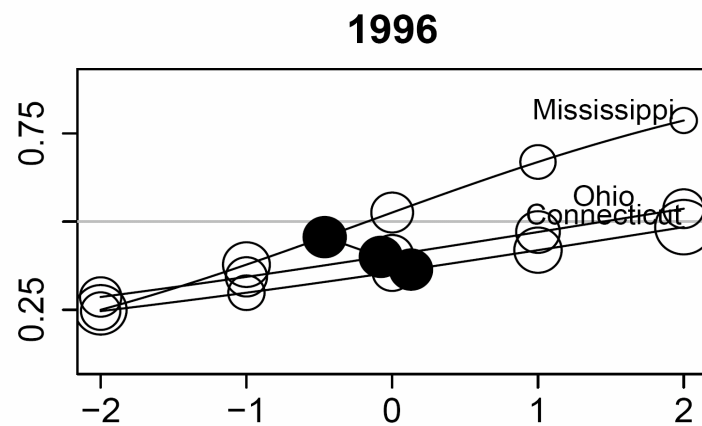
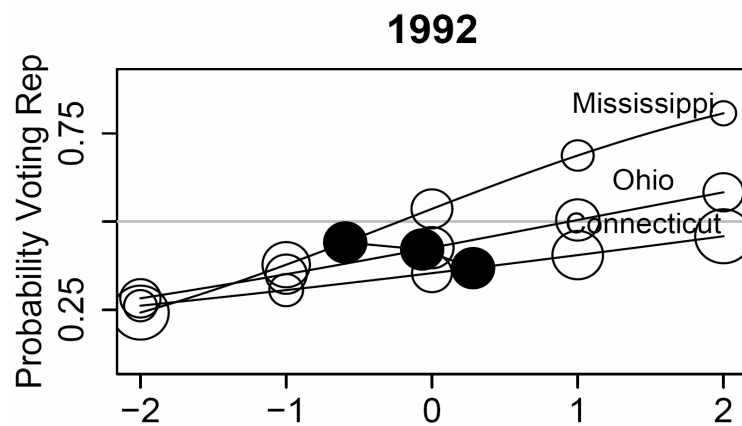
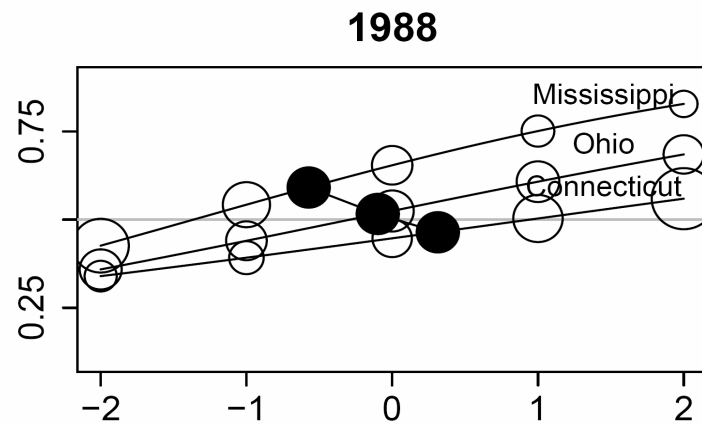
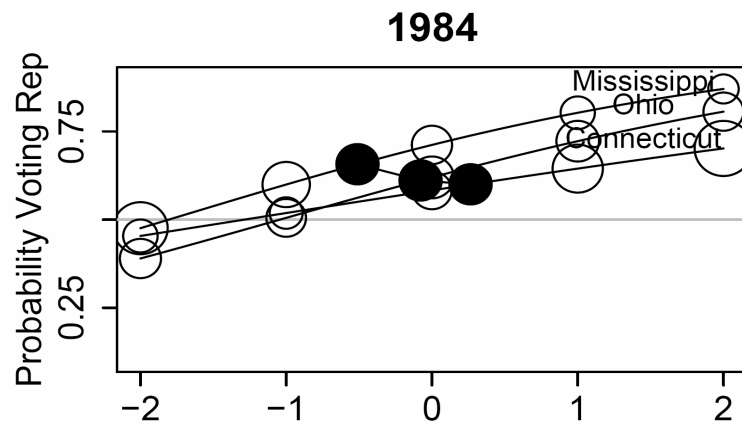
- Richer *states* support the Democrats
(latte vs. Nascar)
- But richer *voters* support the Republicans
(working class vs. fat cats)
- ???

The paradox is no paradox

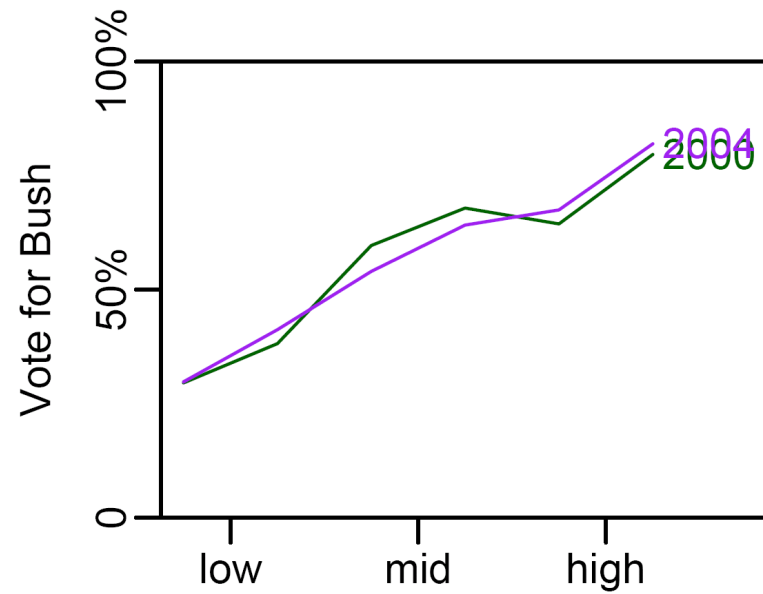


What really happened was . . .

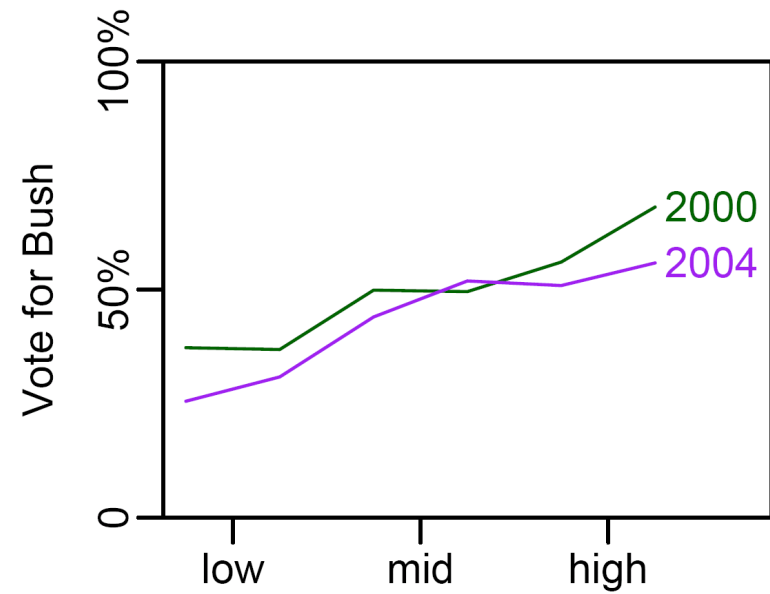




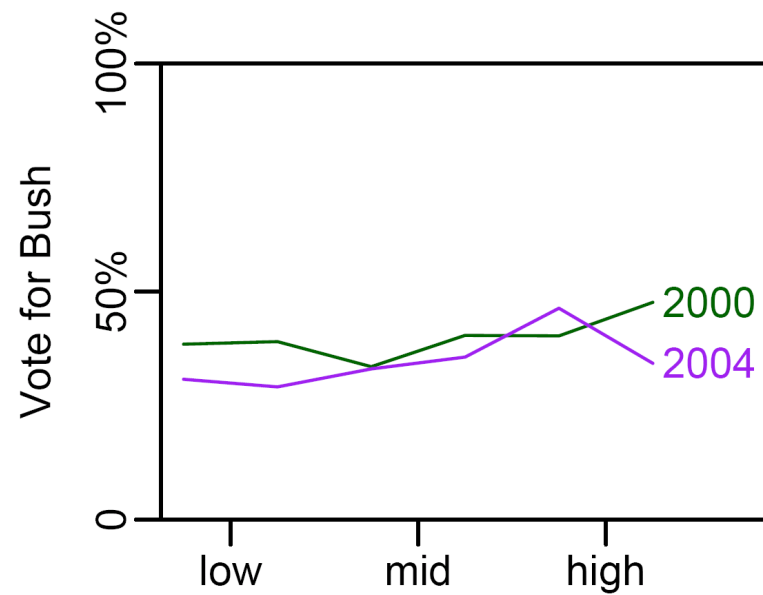
Mississippi



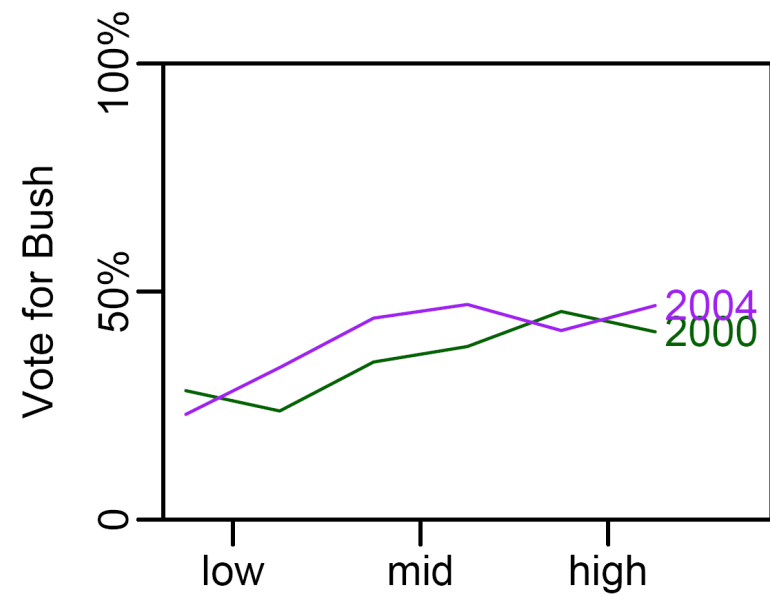
Ohio



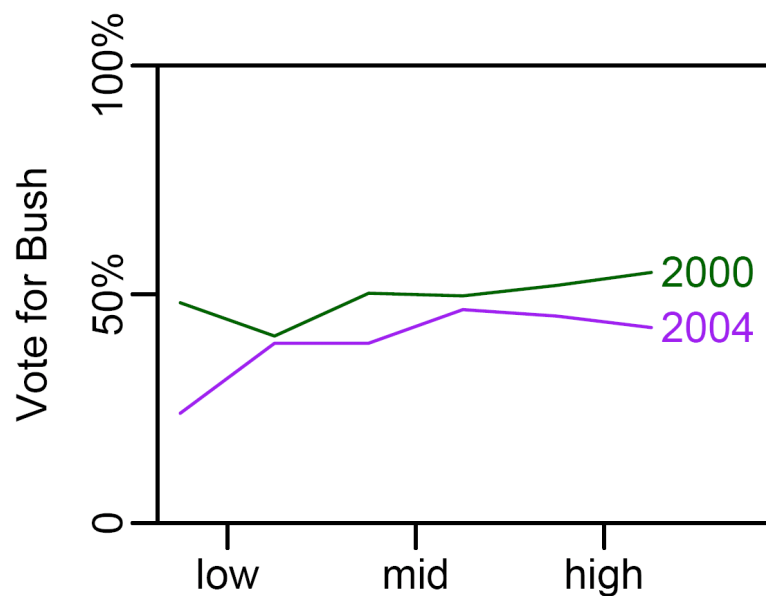
Connecticut



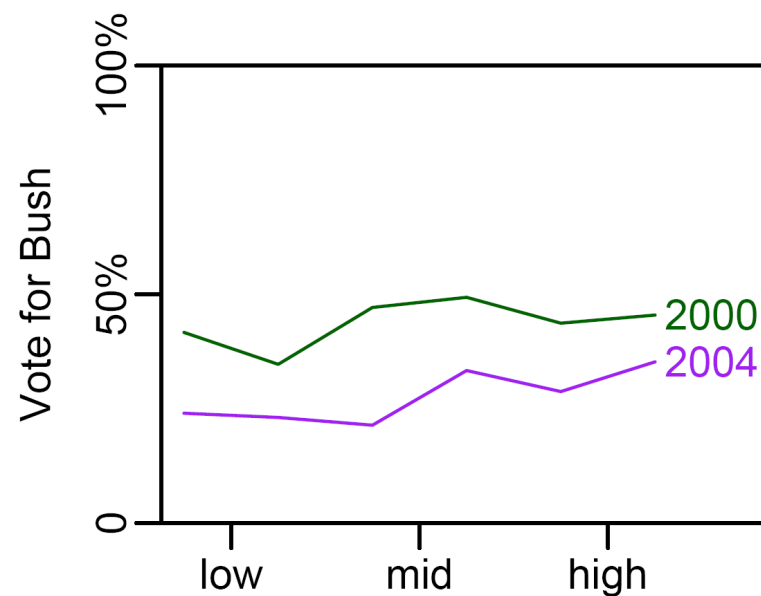
Maryland



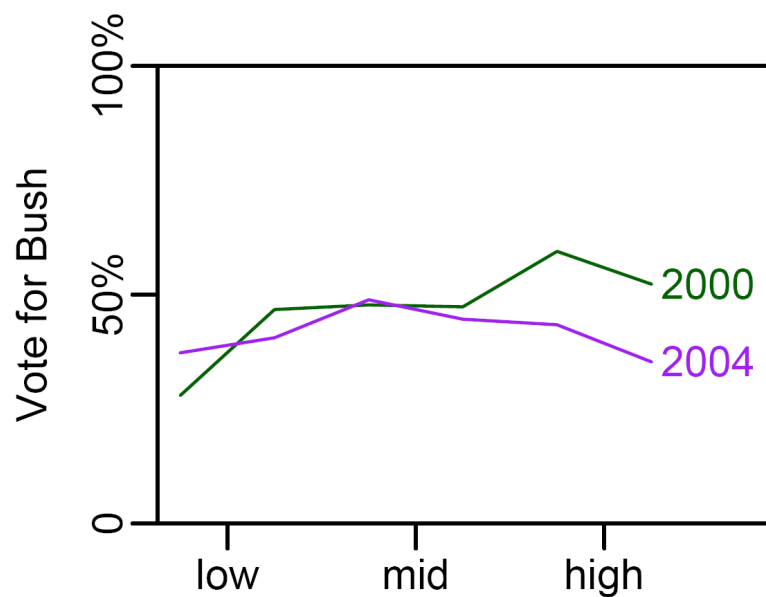
New Hampshire



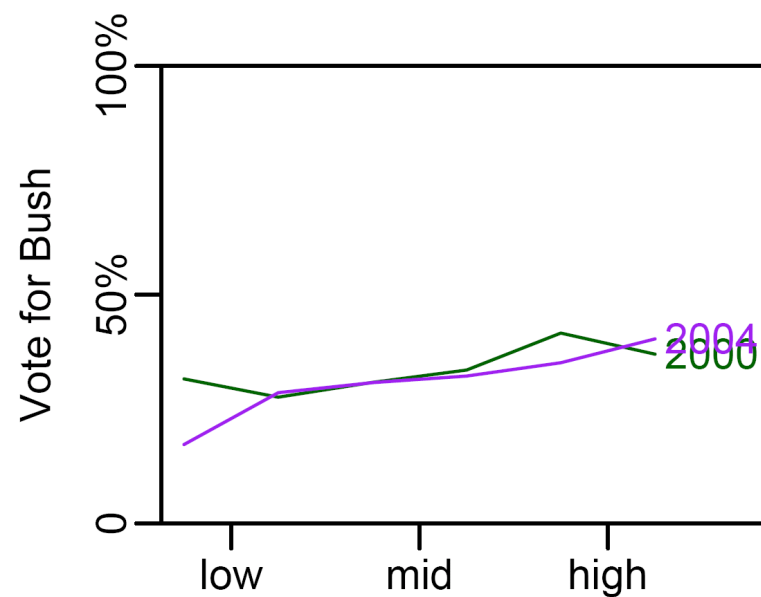
Vermont

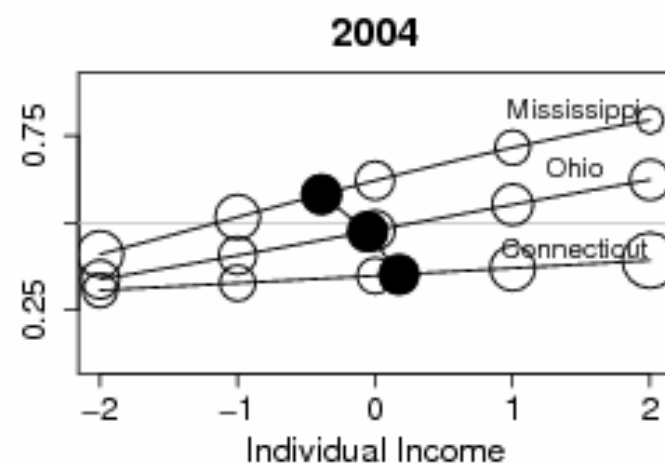
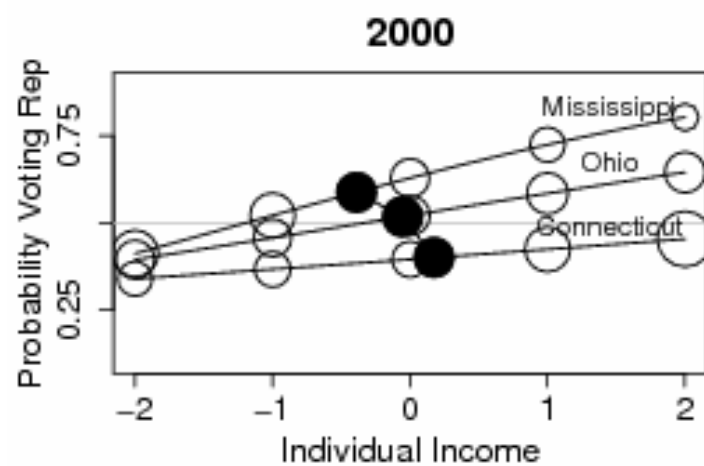
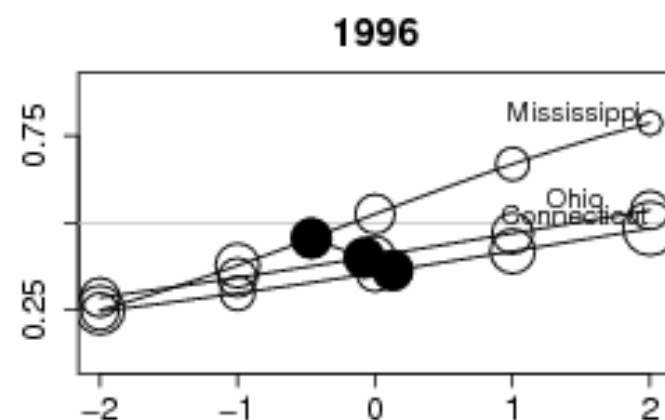
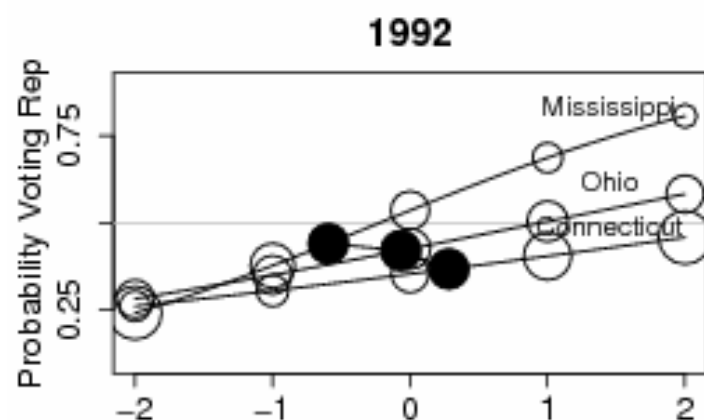
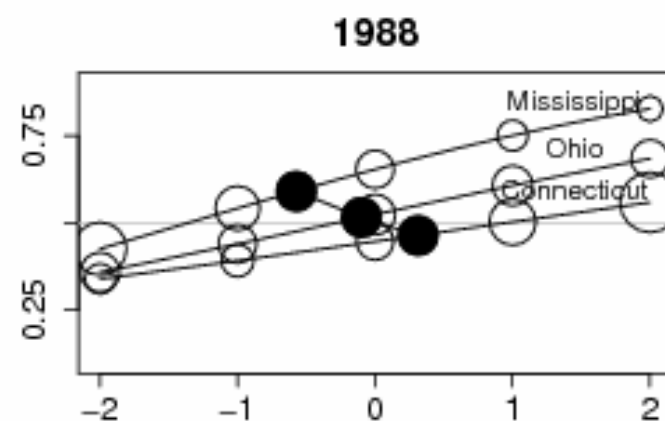
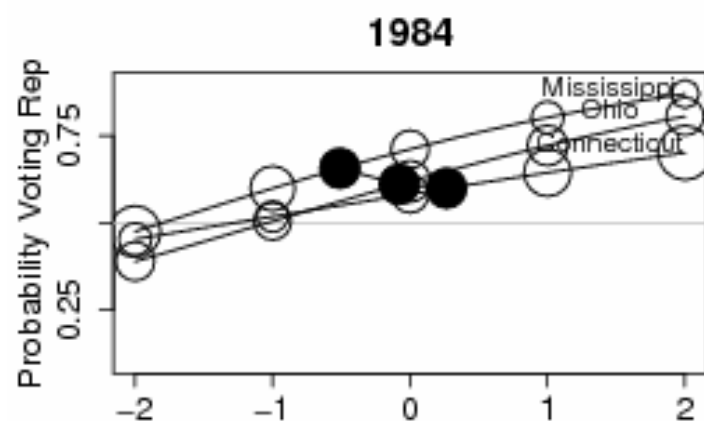


Maine

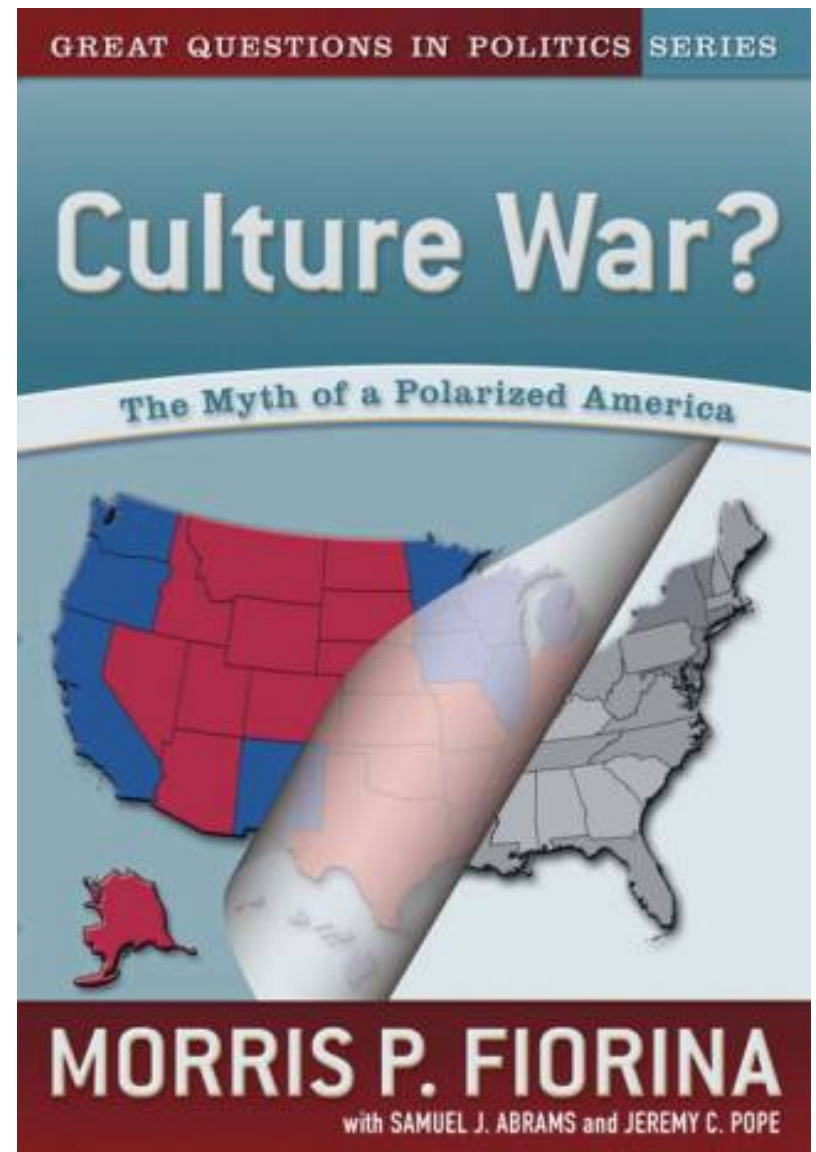


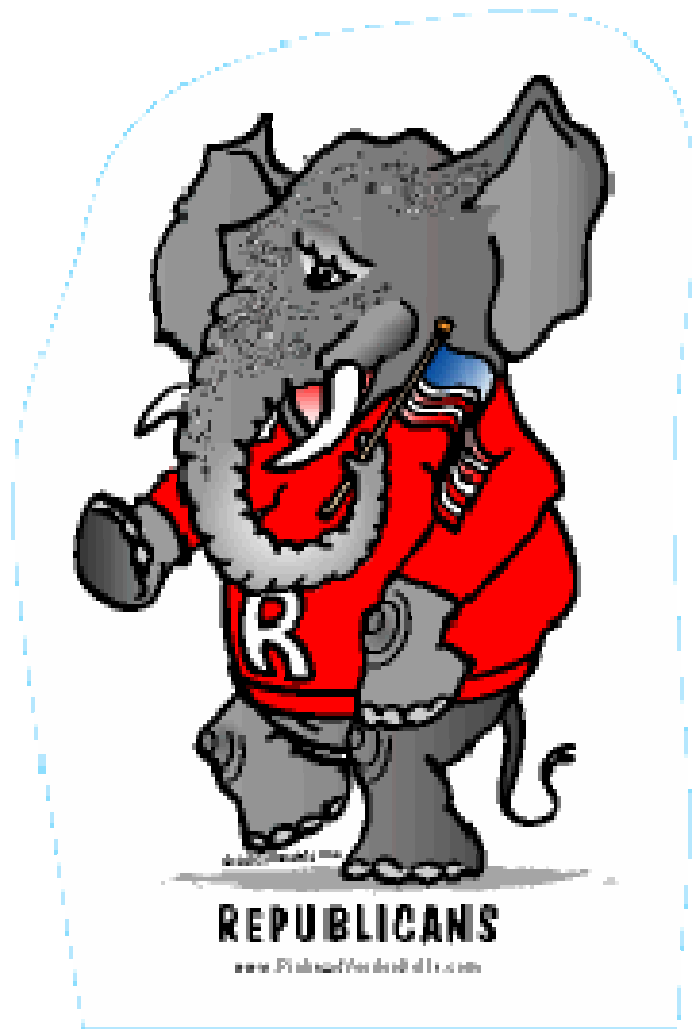
Massachusetts



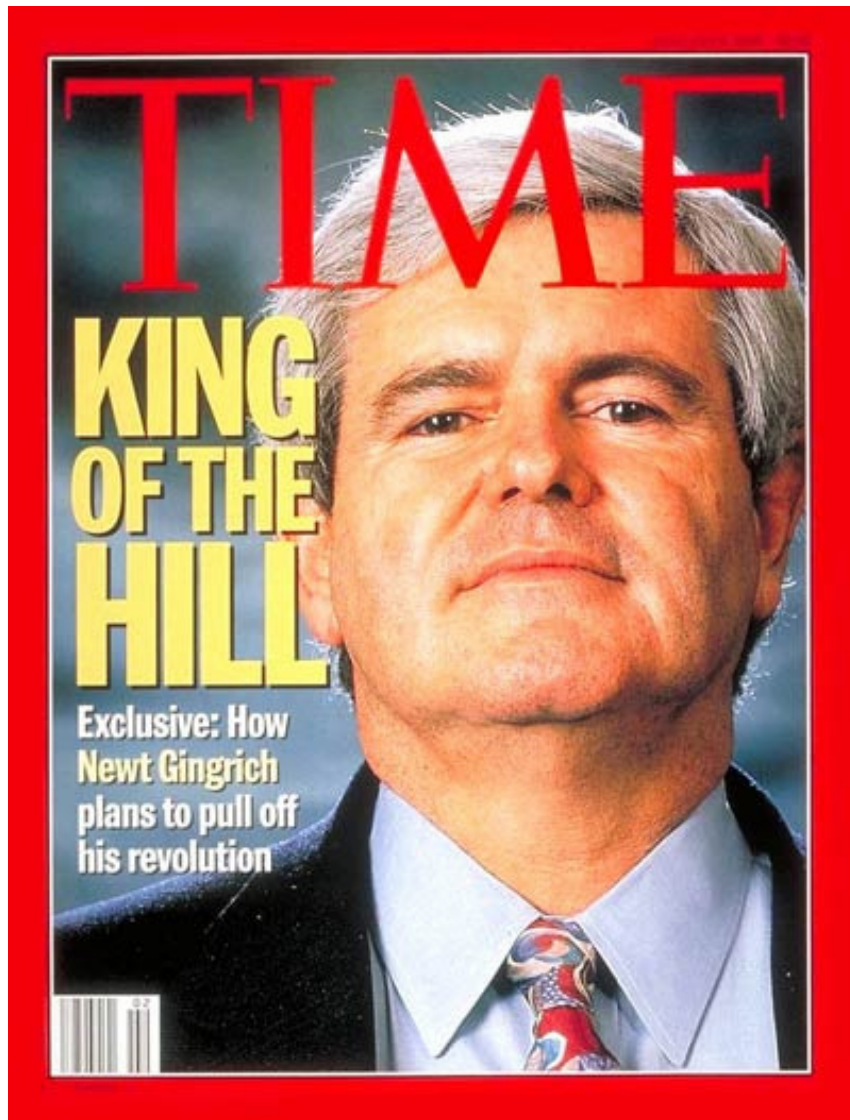


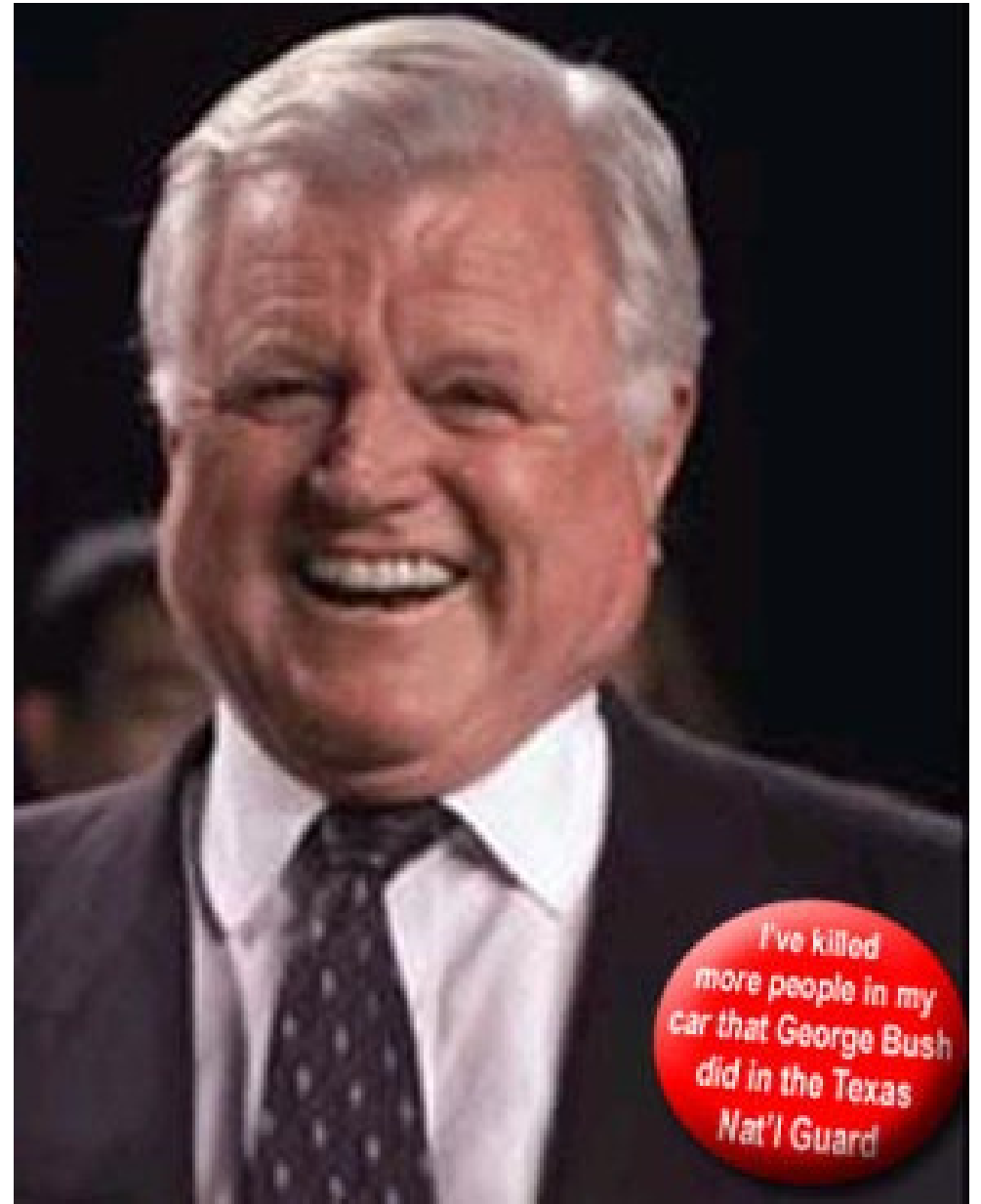
Polarized parties with voters in the middle



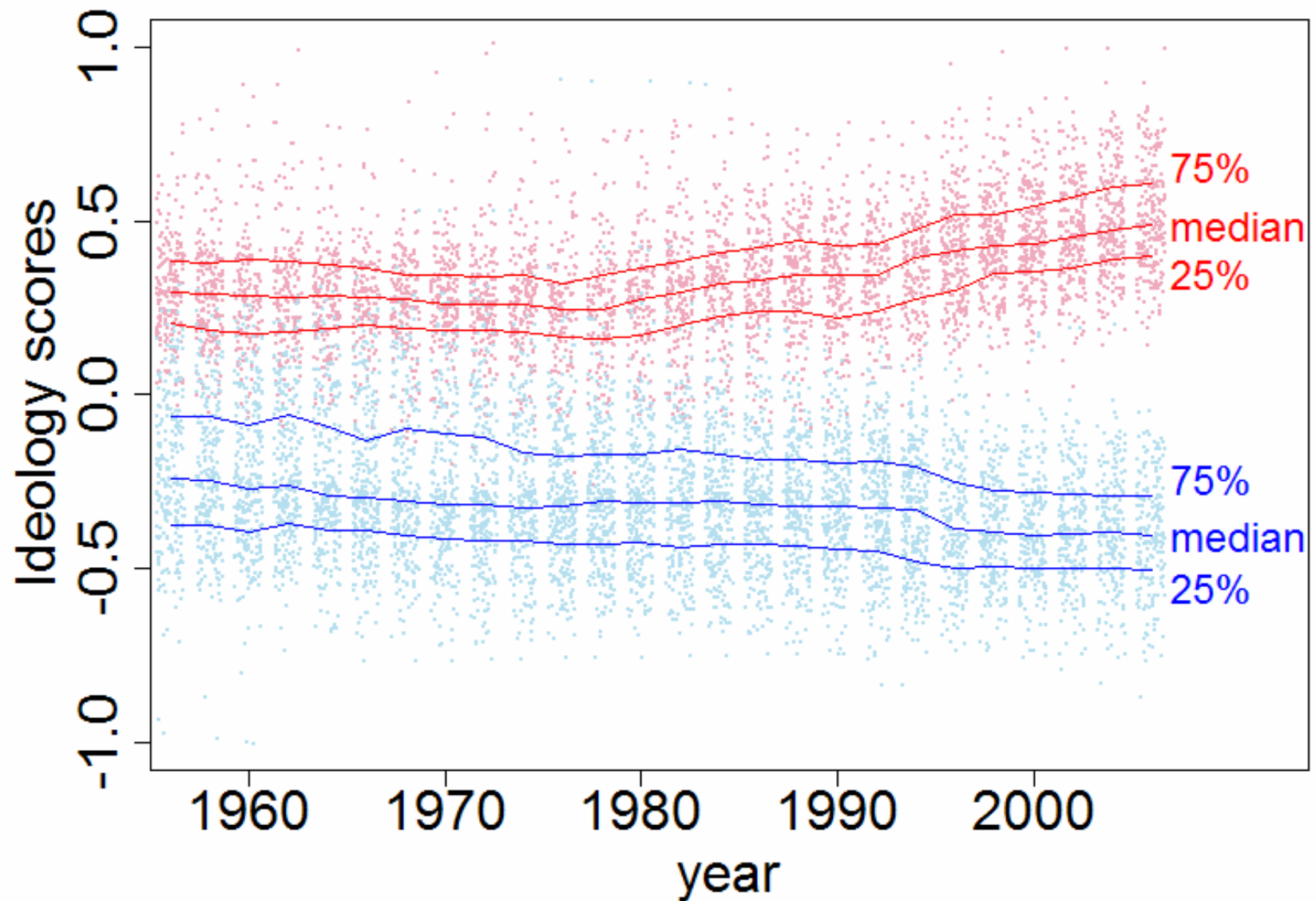




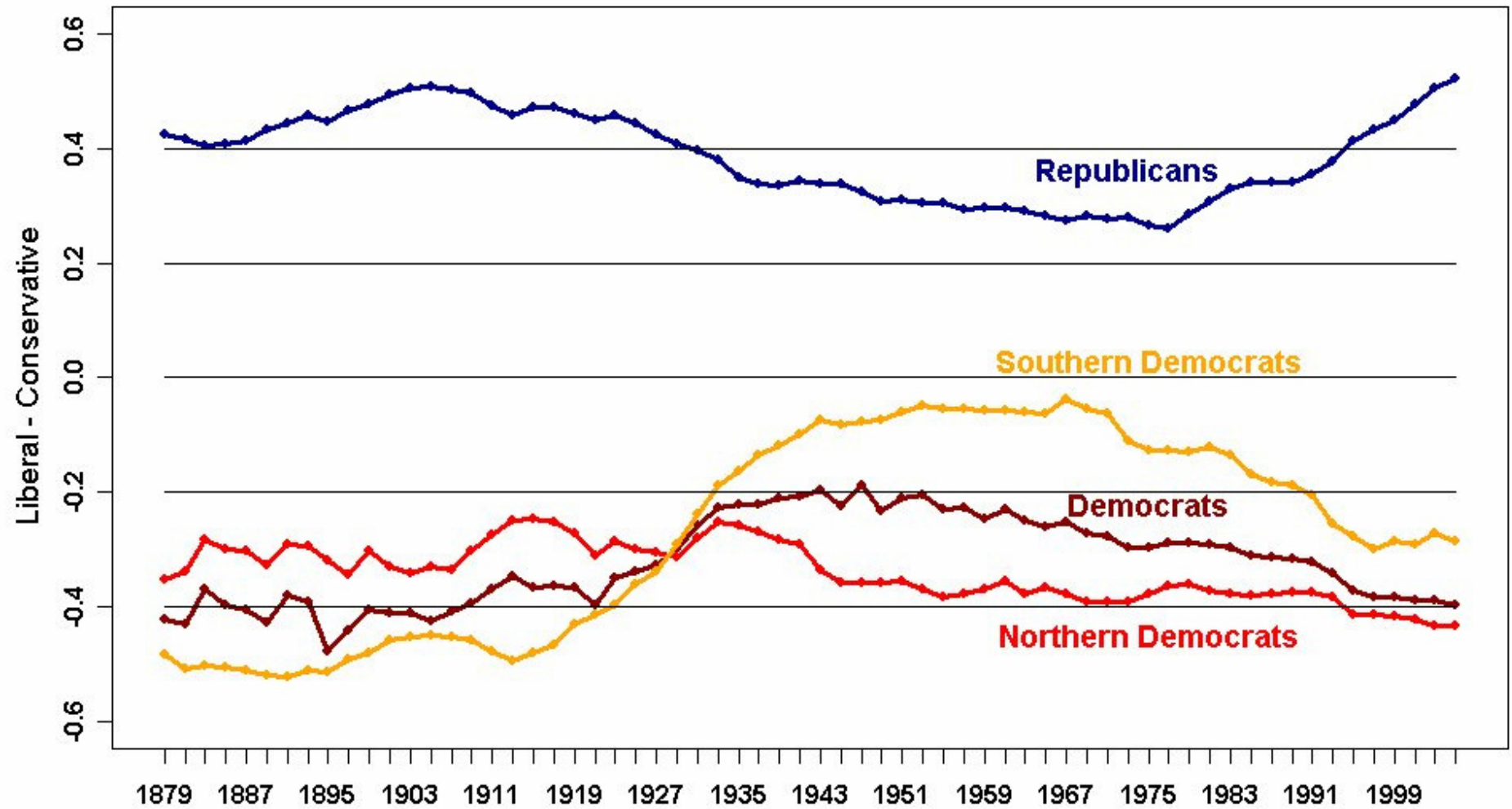




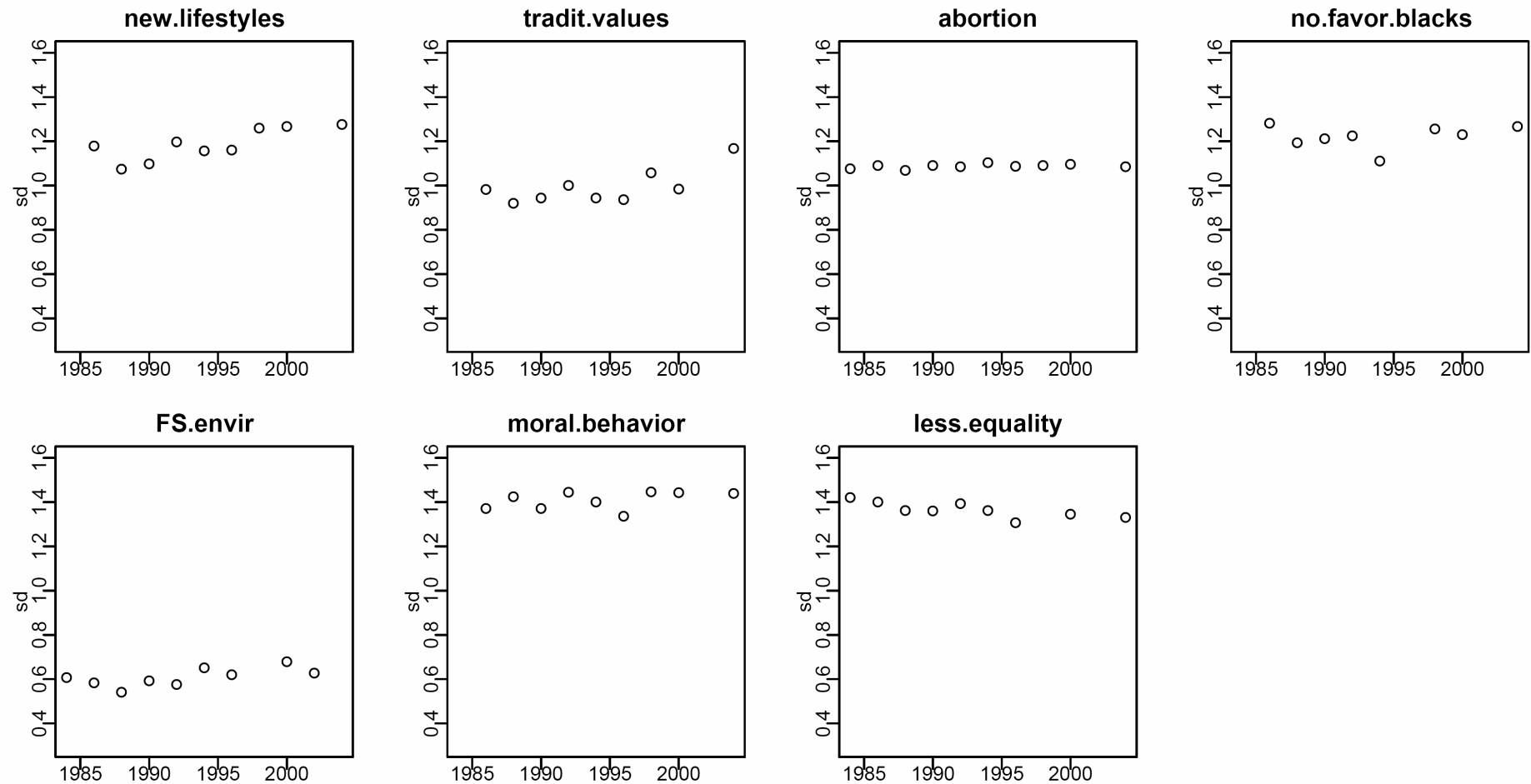
Partisan polarization in Congress



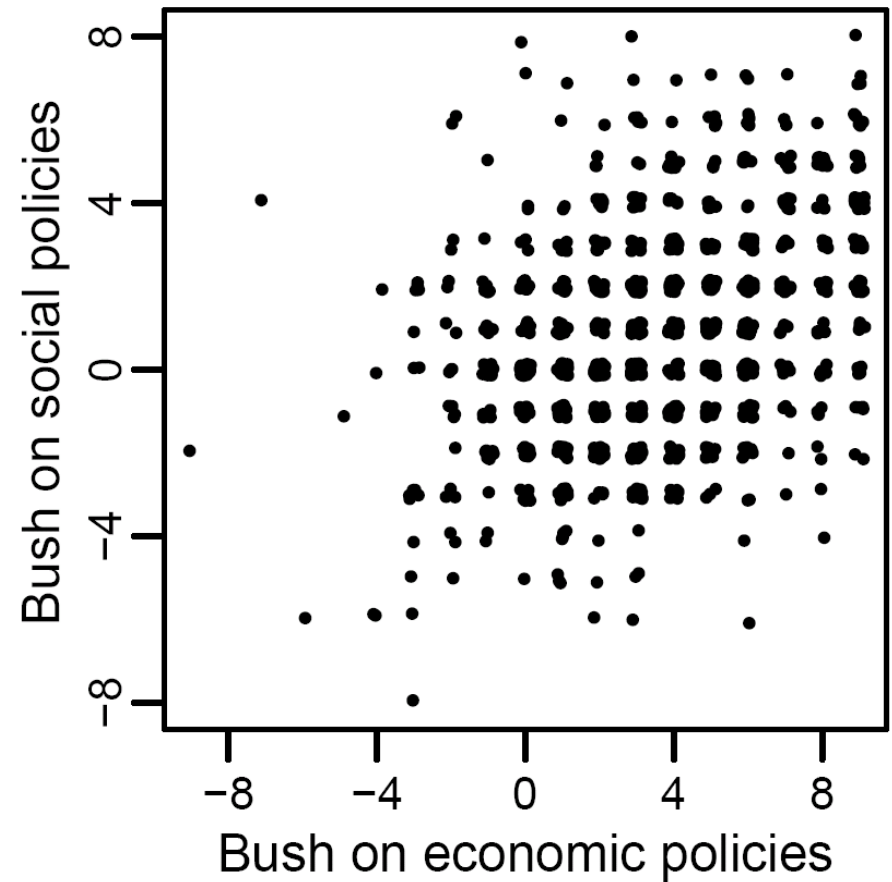
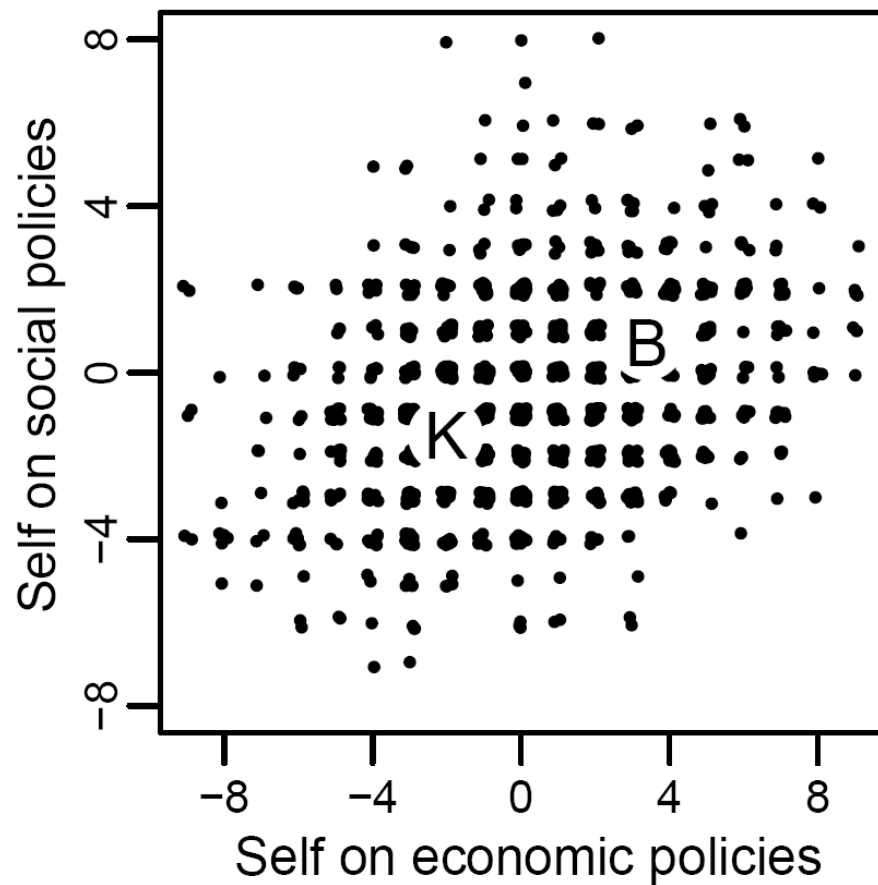
House 1879-2006
Party Means on Liberal-Conservative Dimension



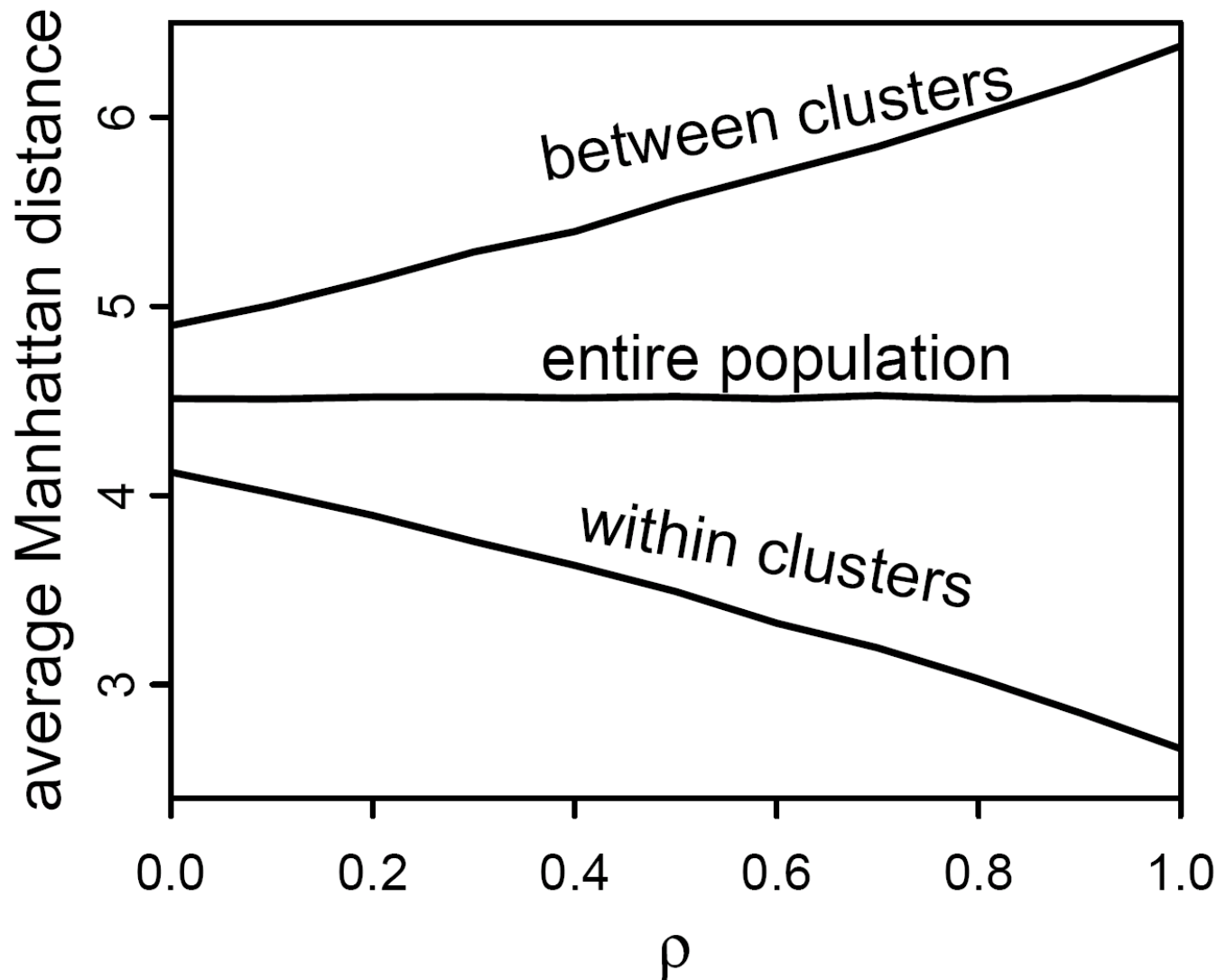
On individual issues, Americans have not become more polarized



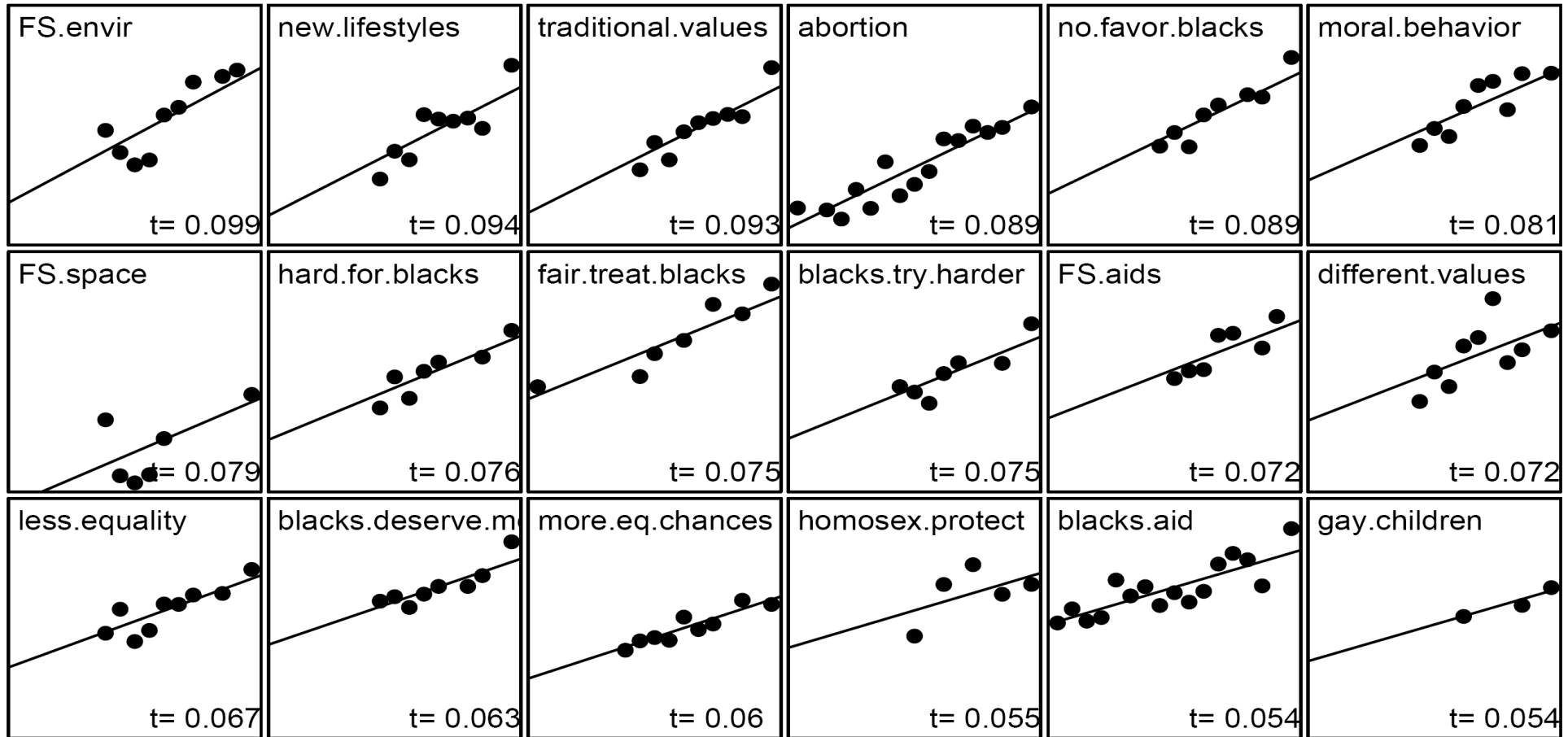
Correlations in issue attitudes



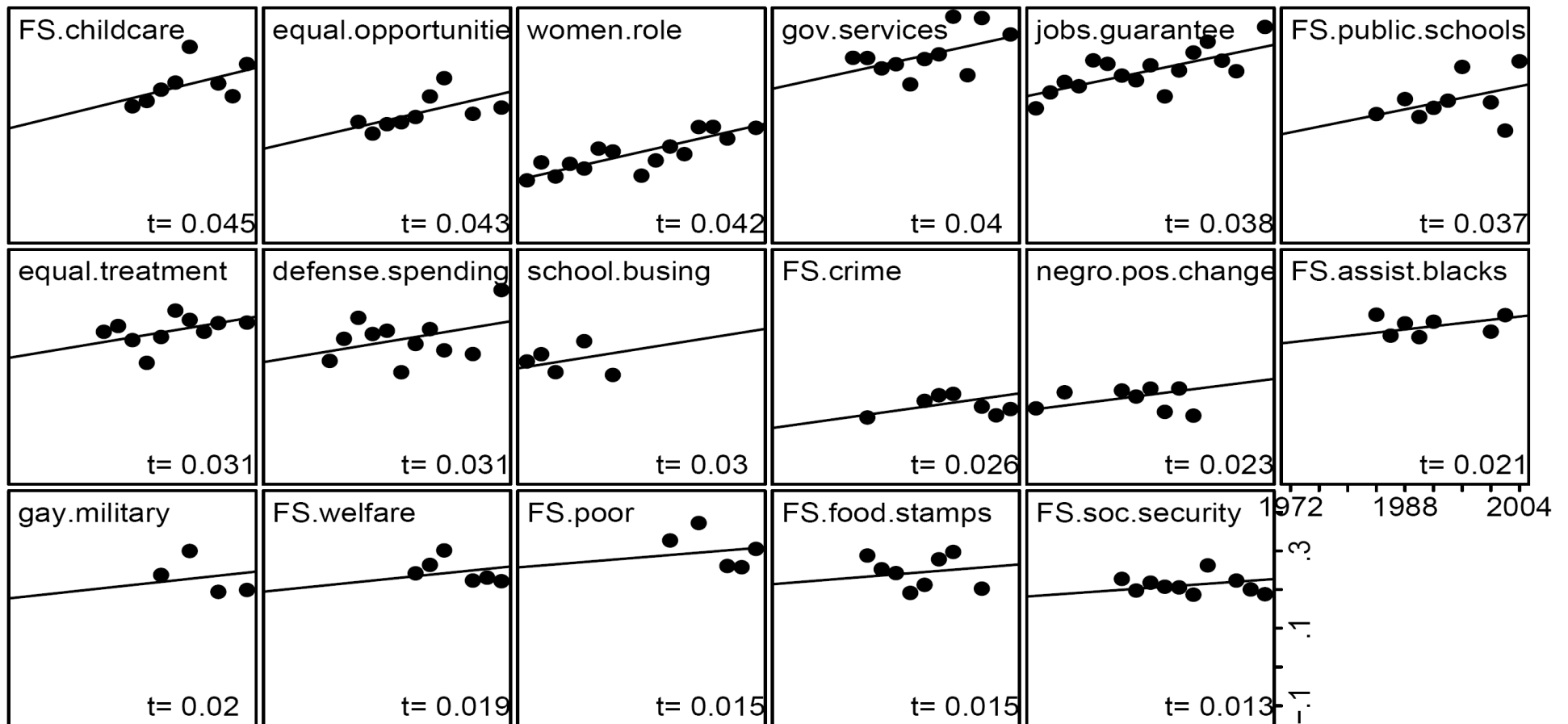
But . . . correlation in issue attitudes
can yield clustering and polarization



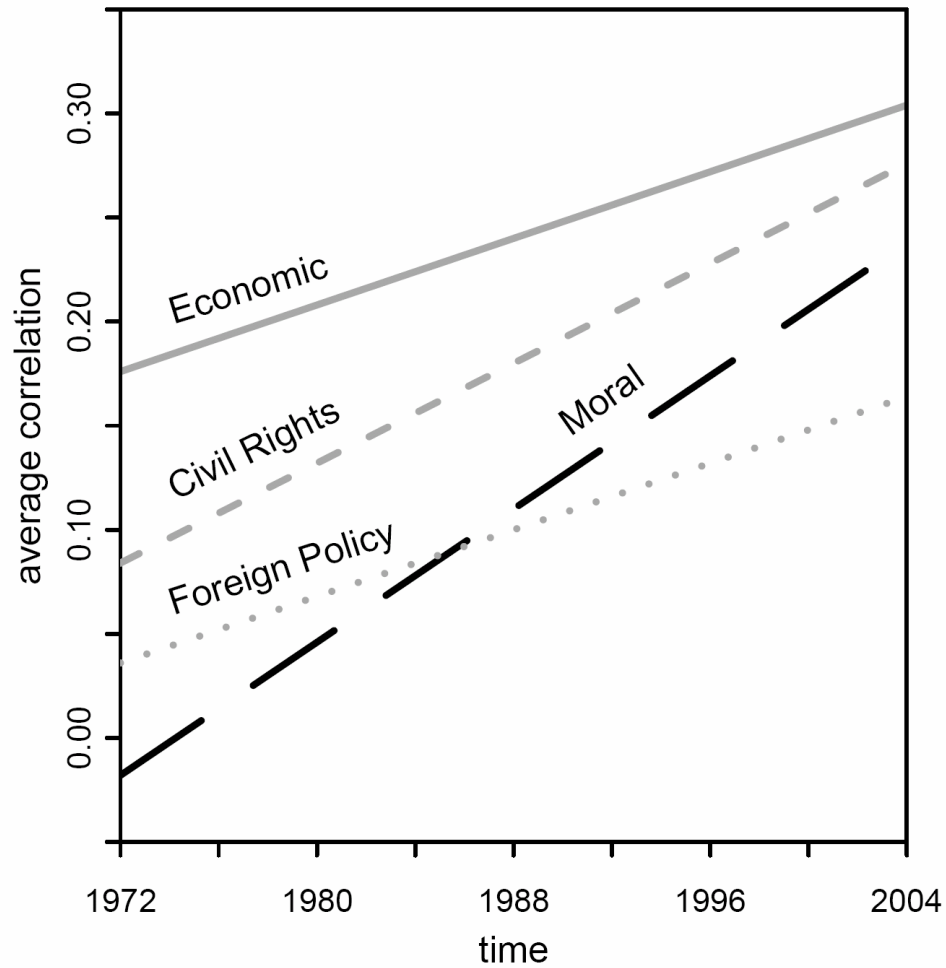
Trends: issue attitudes and political party (correlations increase by about 5% per decade)



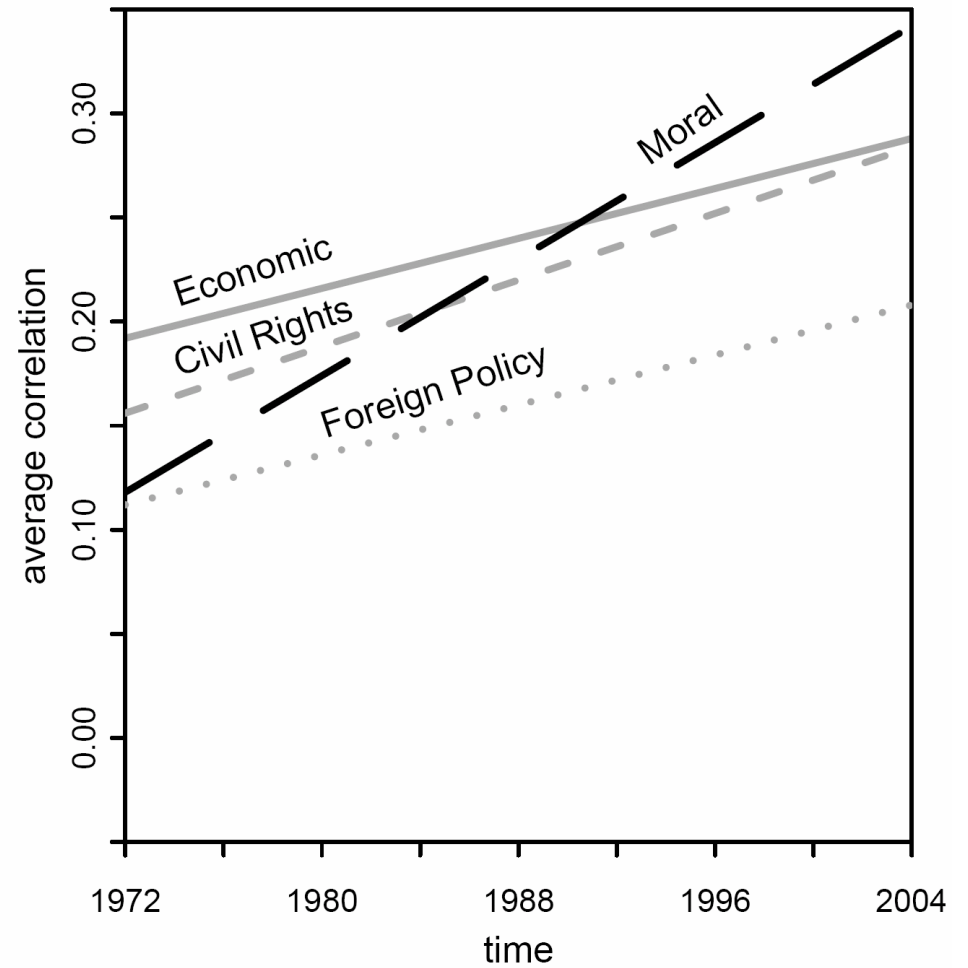
Trends: issue attitudes and political party (correlations increase by about 5% per decade)

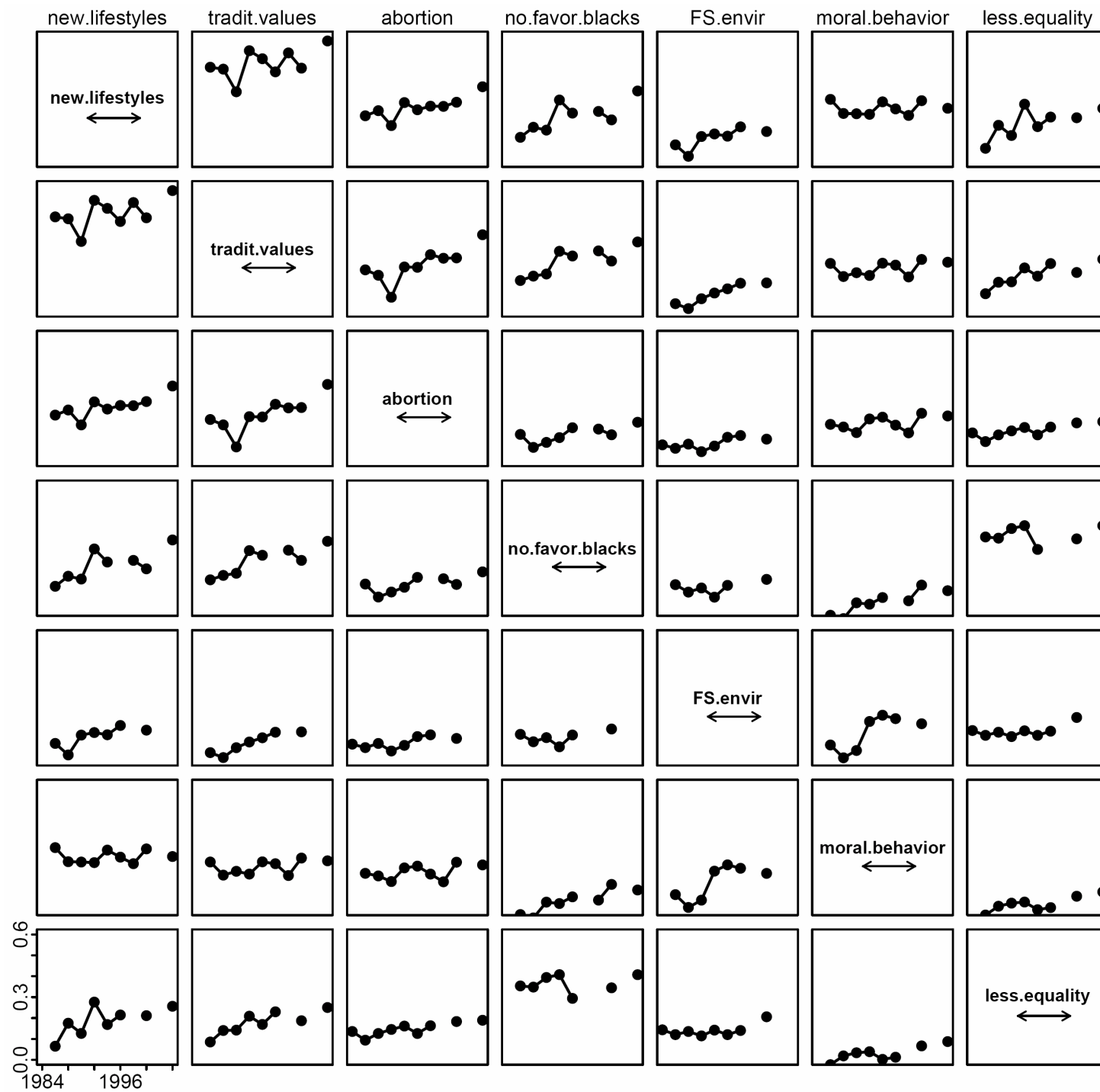


issue x party identification

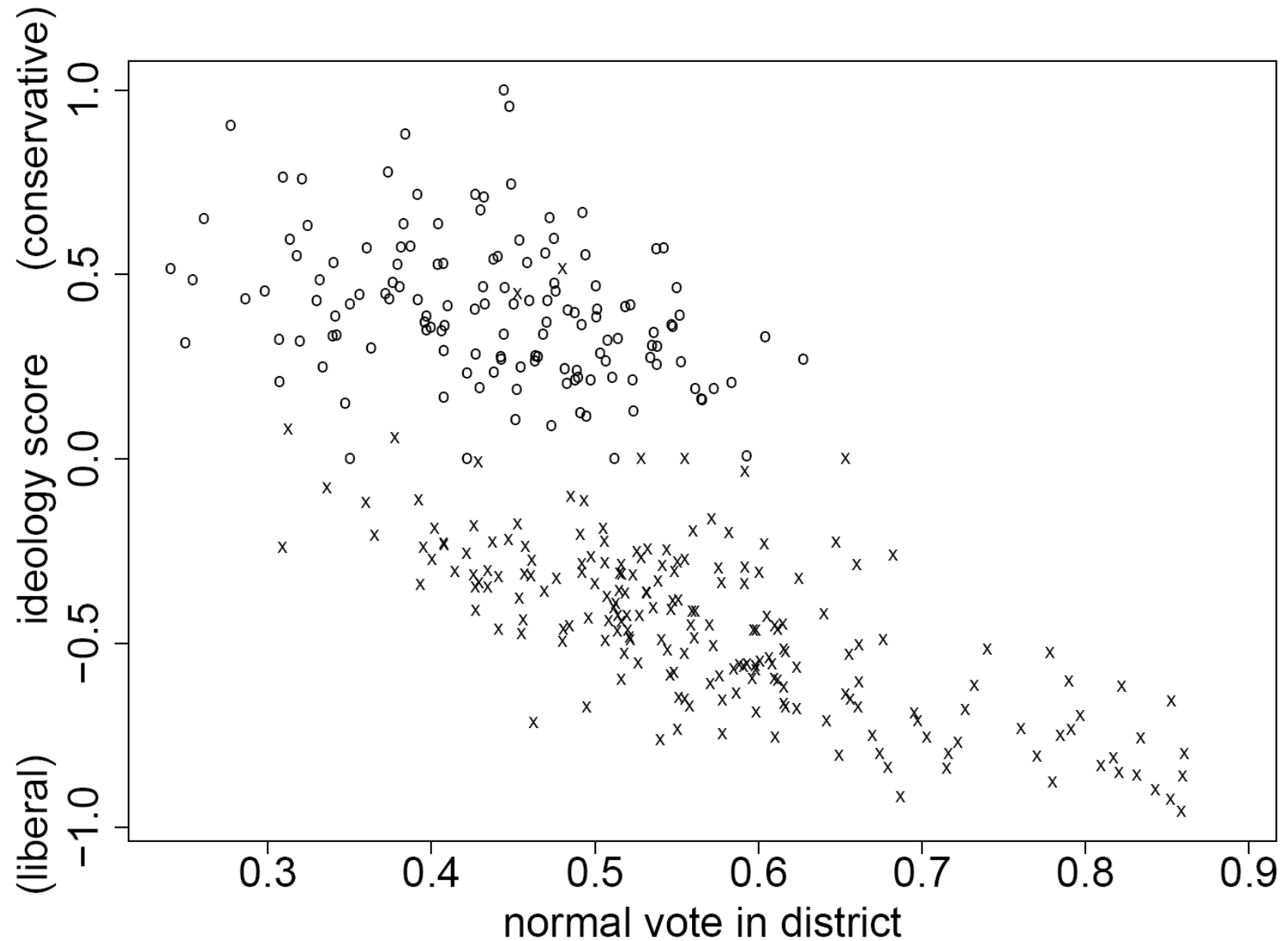


issue x liberal-conservative

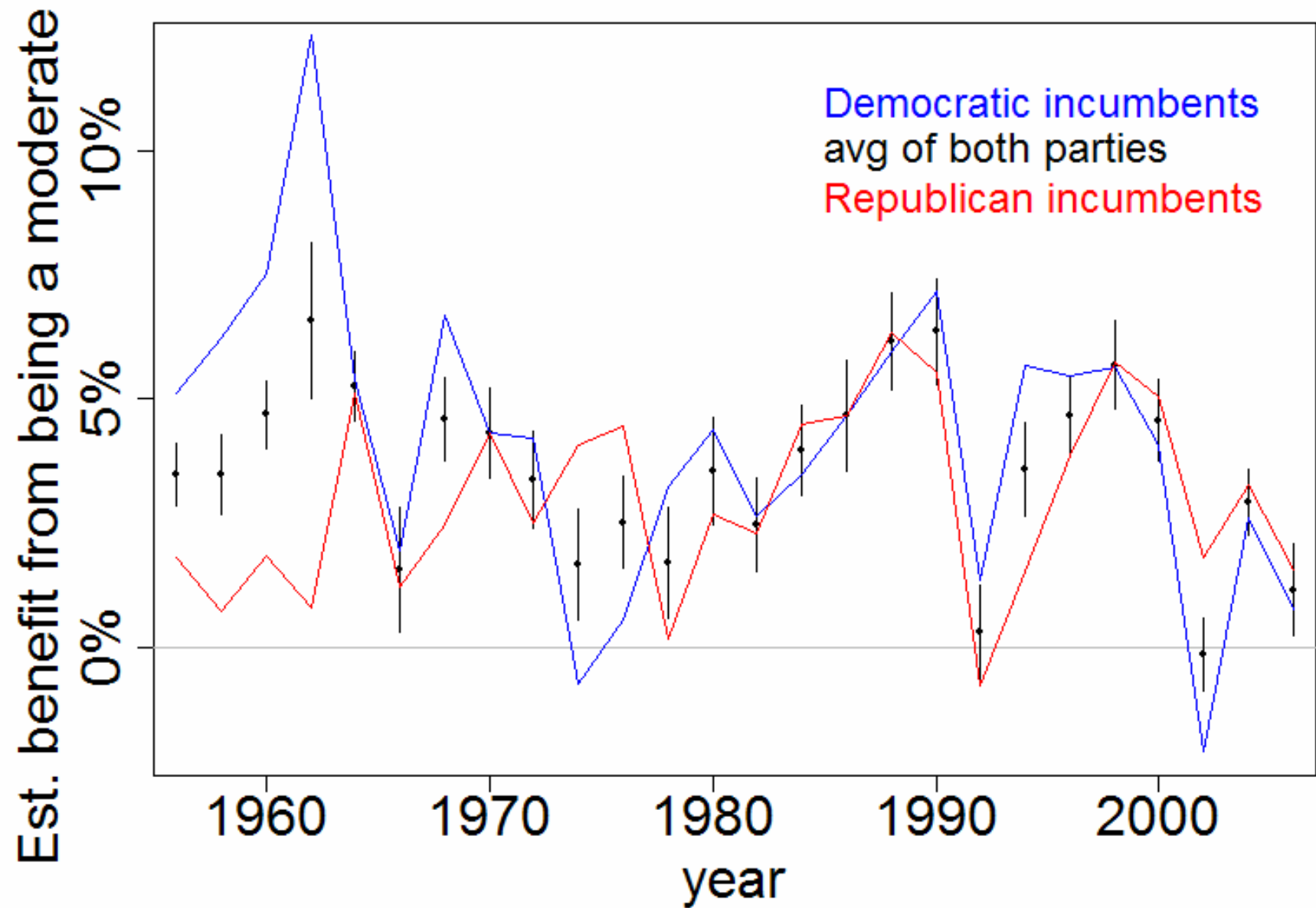




Republican and Democratic congressmembers in 1994



The moderate benefits of moderation



Learning about social and political polarization using “How many X’s do you know?” surveys

Scale-up method:

- On average, you knew 0.6 Nicoles
- 0.13% of Americans are named Nicole
- Assume 0.13% of *your* acquaintances are Nicoles
- Estimate: on average, you know $0.6/0.0013=450$ people

Estimating group sizes:

- On average, you know 2.6 lawyers
- Assume average network size is 450 people
- Estimate: lawyers represent $2.6/450=0.58\%$ of the network
- Estimate: $0.0058 * 290 \text{ million} = 1.7 \text{ million lawyers in the U.S.}$

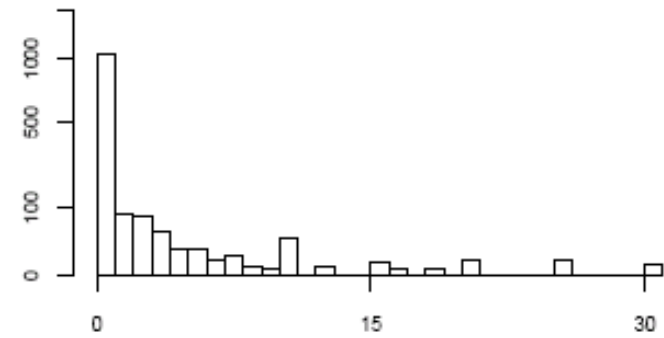
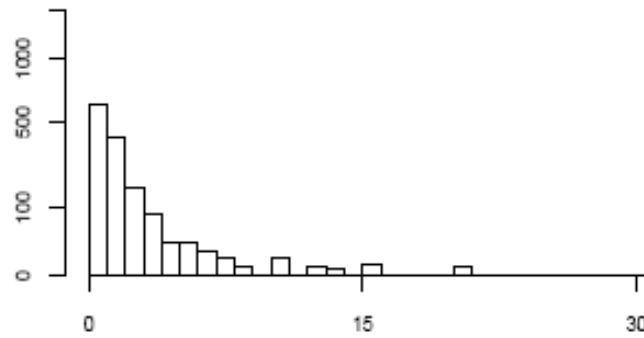
Overdispersion:

- Estimating social structure by comparing the distribution of “How many Jaycees do you know?” to the distribution of names

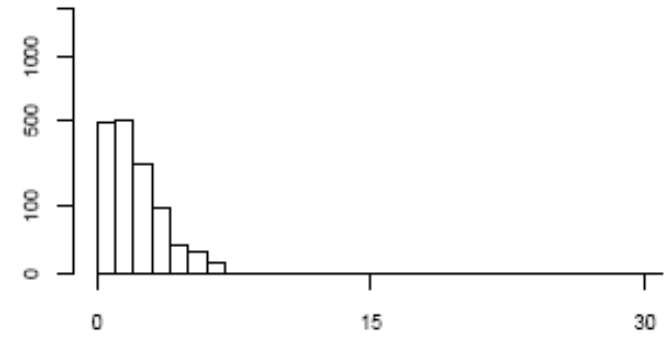
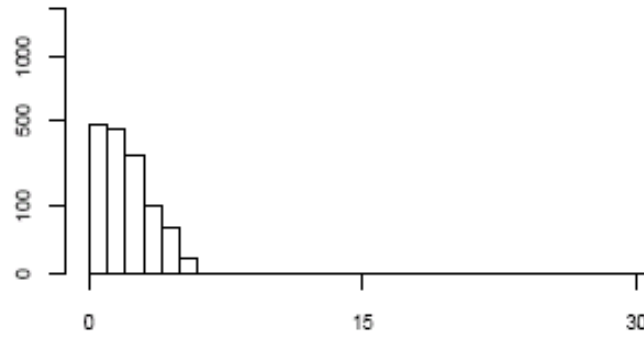
How many Nicoles do you know?

How many Jaycees do you know?

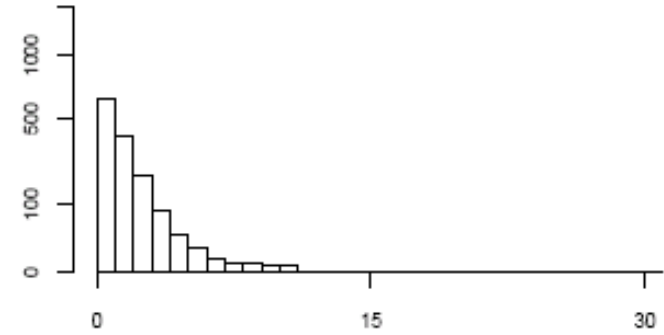
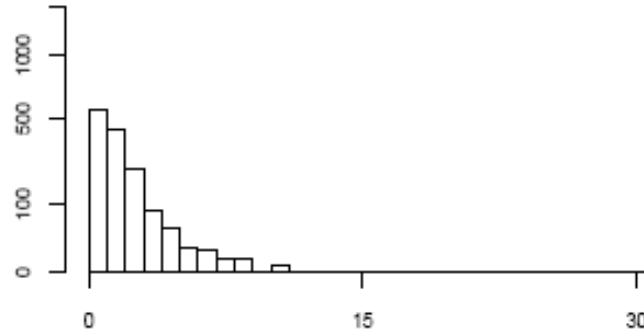
Data



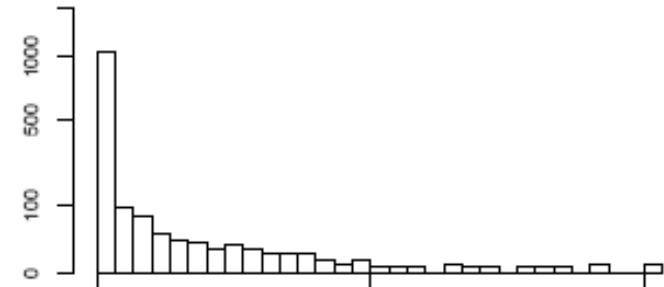
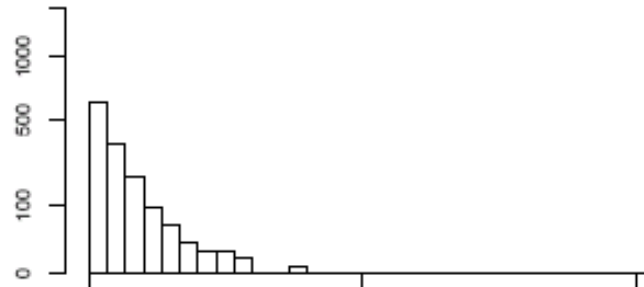
Erdos-Renyi
model



Null
model



Overdispersed
model



Group, j

percentage of network, e^{β_j}
0.03% 0.1% 0.3%

overdispersion, ω_j
1 4 7 10

Stephanie
Jacqueline
Kimberly
Nicole
Christina
Jennifer

Christopher
David
Anthony
Robert
James
Michael

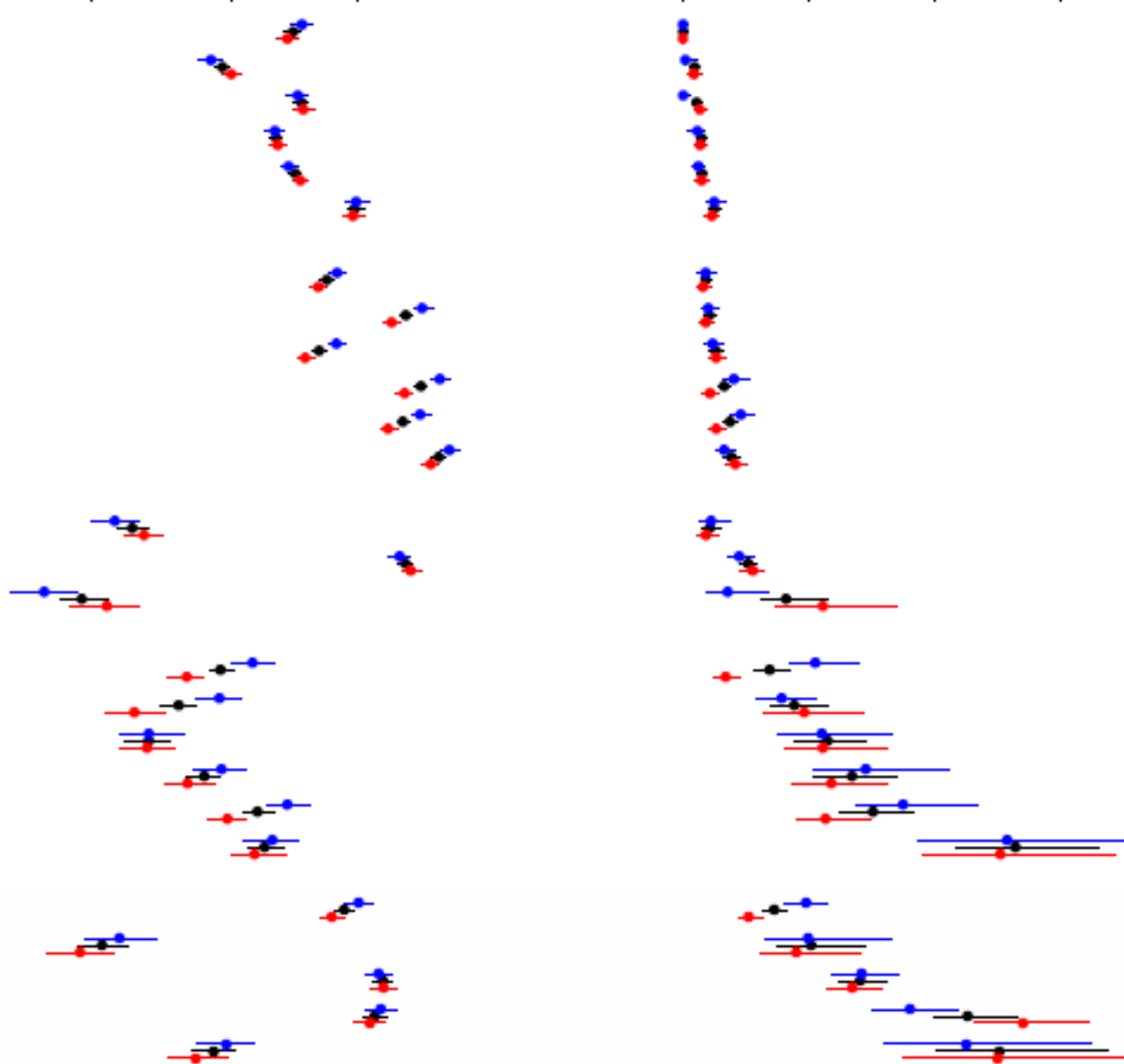
Woman adopted kid in past yr
Gave birth in past yr
Woman raped

Commercial pilot
Gun dealer
AIDS
HIV-positive
Male in prison
Member of Jaycees

Postal worker
Homicide victim in past yr
Widow(er) under 65
American Indian
Homeless

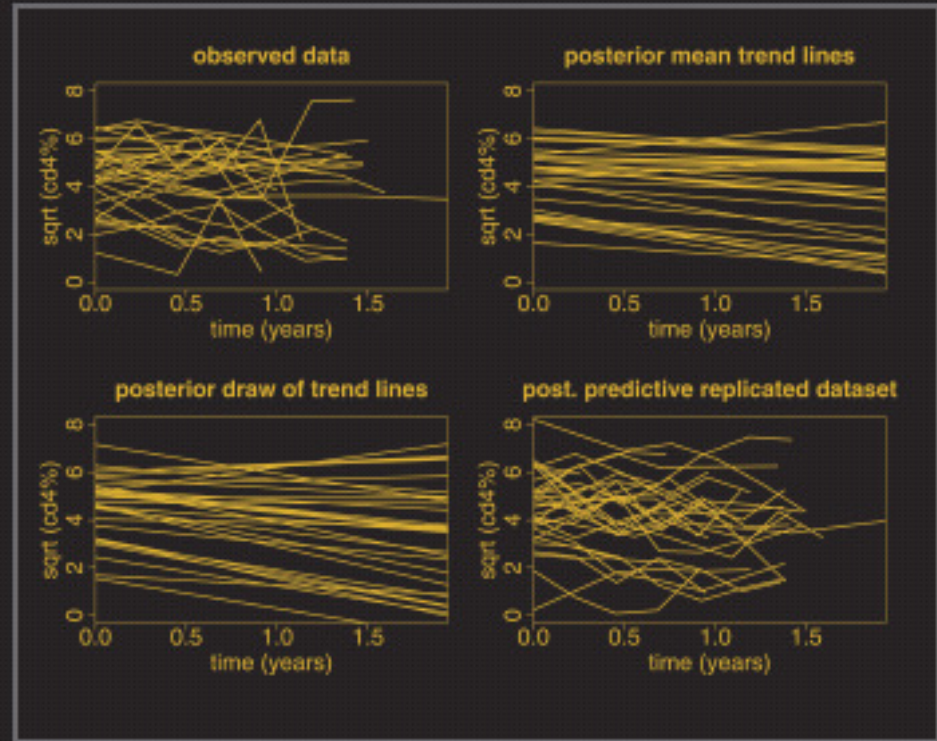
0.03% 0.1% 0.3%

1 4 7 10



Statistical methods:

- Multilevel modeling
- The secret weapon
- Graphical display of data *and inferences*

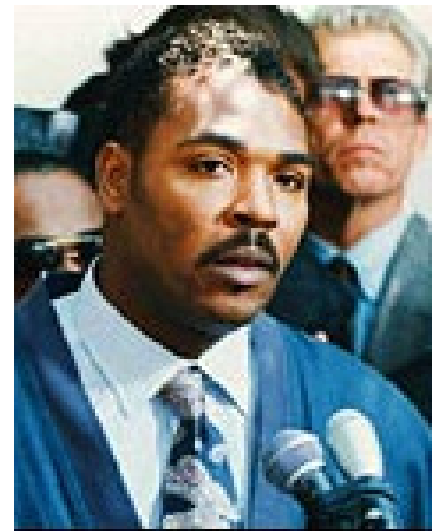


Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models

ANDREW GELMAN
JENNIFER HILL

Culture wars and polarization

- “Sometimes I think this country would be better off if we could just saw off the Eastern Seaboard and let it float out to sea.”
– Barry Goldwater, 1961
- “People, I just want to say, you know, can we all get along?”
– Rodney King, 1992



Thanks to . . .

