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The shifting and diverging White working class in U.S. presidential elections, 1972–2004 [☆]

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies have sparked lively debates about White working class voting in the U.S. On one hand, there is evidence that the White working class has shifted to vote Republican, and on the other hand, there is evidence that the White working class continues to vote Democratic. Using the American National Elections Studies (ANES), we examine 32 years of presidential election results (1972–2004). We utilize theoretically justifiable measures of routine white collar, skilled and unskilled workers, which we then combine into broad and restricted measures of the White working class. Also, we distinguish between the male and female White working class and consider a variety of other predictors of vote choice. We scrutinize the entire period as a whole, each election year individually, and then concentrate on the 1996–2004 elections. In the entire period, the odds that White working class men voted Republican were greater by a factor of about 1.35. By contrast, White working class women were not significantly different from the electorate. Yet, this conceals temporal variation. Although the White working class was more Republican than the general electorate in 1972 and 1984, and more Democratic in 1976, the White working class generally was consistent with the electorate through 1992. Since 1996, there has been a sharp divergence between the male and female White working class. Men very strongly supported Republicans 1996–2004, while there is some evidence women supported Democrats in 1996 and 2004 (but not 2000). From 1996–2004, the odds White working class men voted Republican were greater by a factor of about 2.0. These patterns are not confined to the South and hold despite controls for a variety of predictors of vote choice.

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In his 2004 book *What's the Matter with Kansas?* Thomas Frank tackles an issue that has become increasingly contentious in both academic and popular discussion: has the White working class left the Democratic Party? His answer is a resounding yes, and he attributes the shift to a “Great Backlash” against liberal positions on “cultural wedge issues” that inspires the working class to vote Republican even though the Party’s policies are contrary to their economic interests (Frank, 2004, 245).² Although Frank presents an engaging account, his book is not based on systematic evidence to substantiate his claim that a large scale shift in electoral behavior has truly occurred. This issue has received attention among academics, with one set of scholars that reach conclusions consistent with Frank, and another set that reach conclusions contradictory to him. Given the

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² By “wedge issues,” we are referring to Frank’s discussion of cultural and social values issues like abortion, gay marriage, the death penalty, and an amorphous set of ideational controversies linked to religion and gender.

controversy and the empirical uncertainties of Frank's account, it would be worthwhile to investigate these provocative claims about White working class voting with the contemporary techniques of and theoretical guidance from sociological voting studies. In particular, we suggest that the recent resurgence in sociological voting studies and longstanding approaches to class analysis can inform this debate.

In this paper, we examine 32 years of presidential elections (1972–2004) to evaluate competing claims about White working class voting behavior. We scrutinize the entire period, each election, and then concentrate on the three most recent elections 1996–2004. We evaluate the effects of White working class location, decompose those class effects by sex, and consider a variety of other predictors of vote choice. Because much of the controversy in the scholarly debate preceding and especially following Frank can be traced to disagreements on the appropriate definition of the working class (e.g. Bartels, 2006), we utilize a measure of the working class based on the Erikson–Goldthorpe seven-category class schema (cf. Evans, 1992; Hout et al., 1995; Manza and Brooks, 1999). In contrast to much of the popular discussion, which seems to use the “working class” as a metaphor for “ordinary Americans” or possibly the median voter, we highlight sociological class analysis as a means to advance this debate. Based on this operationalization of class, we show that White male working class voters were previously fairly similar to the general electorate, but have become significantly more likely to vote Republican beginning in 1996. In contrast, the patterns are more ambiguous for the White female working class, although there is some evidence this group has leaned Democratic. Moreover, we find that other social cleavages, partisan identification, likely attitudes and a host of other predictors of vote choice cannot fully explain these trends in White working class voting.

1. Background

By delving into the political culture of his home state through historical anecdotes, interviews, and commentary, Frank offers an expansive account of the forces driving White working class voters to the Right. According to Frank (2004, 6–7), this shift stems from cultural wedge issues that encourage White working class voters to identify with the Republican Party despite its economic policies favorable to the upper class and business. For example, Frank (2004, 91, 93–95) cites the 1991 anti-abortion protest that helped to establish the Evangelical Religious Right as a force in Kansas Republican politics and locked in the Republicans as the party for those whom religion is most salient. In a more speculative vein, Frank (2004: 176; 2005: 11) argues that the rise of White working class support for Republicans has resulted because Democrats have ceased to advocate for economic issues, hence offering little to working class voters. By Frank's (2005, 16) own admission, his book is not intended to be a scientific examination of voting behavior, but rather a “cultural study” designed to chronicle the rise of a significant sociopolitical phenomenon. In turn, Frank never explicitly defines class. Still, in response to some initial critiques, Frank (2005, 6) offers evidence from voting data to demonstrate that there has, in fact, been a decline in White working class support for Democratic presidential candidates. In doing so, he offers a definition of the working class as individuals without college degrees.³ Based on these results, Frank defends his original thesis, maintaining that it holds up as long as one utilizes an appropriate definition of the working class.

Of course, Frank is by no means the first to investigate the notion that the White working class is moving away from the Democratic Party. This issue received significant attention in the 1970s following Nixon's success in mobilizing his so-called “silent majority” of White working class males who were upset with Democratic positions on race and social issues. Among others, this weakening of Democratic support among the White working class was noted by scholars including Glenn (1973, 6, 19) and Ladd and Hadley (1975, 234–237).

Since these earlier studies, there has been further evidence that White working class attachment to the Democratic Party has continued to decline (e.g. Dione, 1991; Weakliem and Heath, 1999a). By tracking voting trends for manual workers, Abramson et al. (1995: 152–153) contend that this measure of working class shows a decline of almost 30 percent in support for Democratic presidential candidates from 1964 to 1992, a pattern they find repeated in their analysis of the 2000 election (2002: 109). Further, Manza and Brooks (1999, 67) report that unskilled workers exhibited a significant drop in support for Democratic presidential candidates from 1980 to 1992. While acknowledging the persistent Republican advantage among southern Whites (see e.g. Shafer and Johnston, 2006), Carmines and Stanley (1992) demonstrate that Northern Whites have gradually become less Democratic from 1972 to 1988, and importantly, this finding holds within union households, across socio-economic status, and even among those self-identified as “working class.” Others have examined this working class dealignment from the Democratic Party in the context of larger social issues, and found that a key component of the decline is working class dissatisfaction with Democratic policies on racial issues (Edsall and Edsall, 1991; Huckfeldt and Kohfeld, 1989).

In contrast to this research detailing the decreasing support of the White working class for the Democratic Party, others have produced work that contradicts Frank's conclusion (Brewer and Stonecash, 2001; Stonecash, 2000). Halle and Romo's (1991) earlier analysis of blue collar voting behavior suggests that it may be too simplistic to declare that these workers have experienced a consistent rightward shift in their voting patterns or ideology. Stonecash and colleagues (2000) argue that although Democrats have lost the support of working class southerners in recent elections, these losses have been offset by an increase in support by White working class citizens in other regions. Several others have shown that White working

³ Drawing on such a definition, Frank (2005) cites Judis and Teixeira (2005) in order to show that non-college educated Whites supported Bush 24 percent more than Kerry in 2004, an even greater margin than Bush's 19 percent advantage over Gore among this group in 2000.

class support for Republicans is quite conditional, qualified, and potentially unstable (e.g. Greeley and Hout, 2006). Indeed, (Teixeira and Rogers, 2000) argue that the “White working class forgotten majority” is sympathetic to Leftist economic arguments and could certainly be won by the Democratic Party.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy contributions to this debate has been Bartels' (2006) provocative critique: “What's the Matter with *What's the Matter with Kansas?*” (see also Bartels, 2008; Krugman, 2008; Stonecash, 2005). Bartels contends that any working class movement away from the Democrats is confined to the South, and that no significant trend can be seen for White working class voters in non-southern regions. He utilizes the American National Election Studies (ANES) to analyze all presidential elections since 1952. Bartels (2006, 206) employs Frank's definition of the working class as those voters without college degrees, although he makes clear that he would prefer a measure of class based on income. Bartels initially shows a 6 percent drop in Democratic presidential vote choice among White voters without college degrees, which seems to support Frank's theory of a White working class that has abandoned the Democratic Party. However, Bartels disputes this conclusion and emphasizes key differences by income and region within the non-college educated. For example, Bartels (2006, 210) finds that low income White voters without college degrees have actually increased their support for Democratic candidates by 4.5 percentage points since 1952, whereas it is the middle and especially high income voters without college degrees who have reduced their support for Democrats. In addition, Bartels demonstrates that a decomposition of the White working class into southern and non-southern residents accounts for almost the entire drop in working class support for Democratic candidates.⁴ Ultimately, Bartels declares that Frank is wrong to claim that the White working class has abandoned the Democratic Party.

In evaluating these respective arguments, it becomes clear that a key issue behind the debate is a fundamental disagreement over which voters belong to the working class. Frank makes it clear that he refers to persons without college degrees, and although Bartels agrees to utilize this definition, a key component of his argument is decomposing members of this group by income level. This effectively introduces an alternative measure of the working class into his analysis, and means that he and Frank are no longer debating on the same terms. Given this confusion, it would be useful to incorporate advances in class analysis as a means to resolve this controversy in defining and measuring the working class.

2. Class analysis

Prior to its recent resurgence in the early 1990s, many voting scholars had grown quite skeptical of the sociological model of voting (e.g. Dalton and Wattenberg, 1993). As part of the rejuvenation of sociological studies of voting, one of the major conclusions was that this skepticism had been based on research that used unsophisticated and theoretically unsound measures of key sociological variables (Brooks et al., 2003; Evans, 1999, 2000; van der Waal et al., 2007; Weakliem and Heath, 1999b).⁵ For example, Manza and Brooks (1999, 3) make a persuasive case that the impact of class on voting hinges on an adequate measure of social class: “Studies concerned with the effects of social cleavages should use adequate measures of each cleavage. For example, class analysts should employ a theoretically sound, multi-category class schema that takes into account changes in the class structures of the United States and other Democratic capitalist societies in the second half of the twentieth century.” In order to fairly assess the effects of social cleavages like class, race, gender and religion, it is essential to employ theoretically justifiable measures of those cleavages.

In light of this development, it is striking that recent studies of the voting behavior of the working class have often neglected to mention *any* recent sociological research (e.g. Bartels, 2006).⁶ Instead of using theoretically justifiable measures of class, several recent studies of class voting have utilized proxies like income or thirds of the income distribution (Bartels, 2006; Brewer and Stonecash, 2001; Carmines and Stanley, 1992; Stonecash, 2000; Stonecash et al., 2000), subjective self-identification as working class (Carmines and Stanley, 1992), or union households (Carmines and Stanley, 1992). Frank (2005) and, in response, Bartels (2006) defined the working class as those without a college degree.⁷

As we show in Table 1, these proxies are simply not adequate measures of working class location. Below, we explain and justify our measures of the working class—measures that correspond to Manza and Brooks (1999), and other recent similar studies (Evans, 2000; Hout et al., 1995). However, granting our measures, we compare them with (i) less than a college de-

⁴ Bartels (2006, 210) shows that while southern support for Democrats among Whites without college degrees decreased by 19.7 percentage points since 1952, there was only a 1 point decline in support among non-southern White voters during this time. According to Bartels, these findings demonstrate that the decline in support for Democratic candidates among Whites without college degrees disappears once one excludes voters who are too wealthy to belong to the working class and controls for the demise of the Solid South. These findings are consistent with a growing consensus that view southern Whites as having distinctly conservative attitudes and voting behavior compared to non-southern Whites (e.g. Shafer and Johnston, 2006; Valentino and Sears, 2005).

⁵ A significant contribution of the recent rejuvenation of sociological models of voting has been to show that class has not truly declined as a source of vote choice (Evans, 1999). Although Manza and Brooks (1999) found a decline in class voting in the 1990s, the broader pattern is of stability in the post-World War II era (Hout et al., 1995). The debate over whether class effects on voting are actually declining is something we address in the conclusion.

⁶ For example, in Yglesias' (2006) recent *American Prospect* article summarizing the debate, he fails to cite the work of any sociologists even though he laments the difficulties in measuring the working class. To the best of our knowledge, Bartels has not cited any of the voluminous sociological class voting literature.

⁷ Teixeira and Rogers (2000) also use education as the measure of class. Unfortunately, many of these proxies that include the bottom segments of the educational or income distribution tend to absorb those that do not even attain working class status. For example, encompassed in the bottom third of the income distribution and those without a college degree are the poor (who may have quite different political behavior than the working class). As well, some continue to use blue-collar vs. white collar distinctions even though Hout and colleagues (1995) have shown this is severely limited. It is also important to point out that Brooks and Brady (1999) have shown that class and income have independent effects, and both significantly influence vote choice.

Table 1Correlations between various measures of working class ($N = 8769$)

	Democratic vote choice	Broad working class	Restricted working class	Less than college	Bottom 1/3rd of income distribution
Broad working class	.050				
Restricted working class	.041	.706			
Less than college education	.040	.303	.236		
Bottom 1/3rd of income distribution	.152	.045	.033	.243	
Bottom 50% of income distribution	.150	.081	.065	.257	.695

Note. Broad working class includes skilled and unskilled workers and routine white collar. Restricted working class includes skilled and unskilled workers, but excludes routine white collar.

gree, (ii) bottom third of the income distribution, and (iii) bottom 50% of the income distribution. The differences between these proxies and our measures of working class are evident. Table 1 shows that our working class measures (broad or restricted definition) are strongly correlated with each other ($r = .71$), and weakly correlated with these prevailing proxies. Although less than a college degree is correlated .3–.2 with our measures, the income distribution measures are negligibly associated with our measures ($r < .082$). Since our measures have more theoretical justification as measures of class (see below), we suggest this provides convincing evidence that these proxies are not adequate to assess the effect of working class location on voting behavior.⁸

Our analysis of the relationship between working class location and vote choice is guided by developments in modern class analysis (see e.g. Aminzade, 1993; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1993; Evans, 1992, 1999; Ganzeboom and Treiman, 1996; Weeden and Grusky, 2005; Wright, 1997, 2005). Regardless of whether one prefers a Marxist, Weberian or other class schema, modern class analysis departs from gradational measures like income or education, and emphasizes the relations within a structure of class locations (Wright, 2005, 26). Such class locations typically differ according to relations of authority/monitoring and ownership and the control over scarce skills (Breen, 2005: 40; Wright, 2005: 14). The group of people occupying a class location are said to constitute the class, and the effect of being a member of the class is supposed to have effects on life chances that are independent of gradations in education or income. Class analysis has made tremendous progress at least since the 1970s, and there are several guidelines that are generally agreed upon within its community of scholars. We highlight a few of those conventions in order to illustrate the limitations of recent research on working class voting, and to offer a foundation for our measurement and modeling decisions below.⁹

First, even if one is interested in the behavior of an aggregate as large as the “working class,” it is inadequate to use a simplistic two-class model (Evans, 2000). As Manza and Brooks (1999, 3) explain, “such a representation of class structure fails to capture many recent changes and thus leads researchers to underestimate the political effects of class.” In our analyses below, we end up creating a larger group called “the working class,” but *only after* we first construct a more sophisticated class schema, and then combine the smaller groups of routine white collar workers, skilled and unskilled workers. In order to measure class properly, one must first assign respondents within these more theoretically justified measures of class, and only then combine them for the purposes of speaking of a broader set of classes.

Second, any class measure must be anchored in what Weeden and Grusky (2005, 141) refer to as “the site of production.” That is, a measure of class requires objective information on respondents’ employment status, and the authority relations, prestige and economic standing of their occupations (Wright, 1997). Basing class on occupation instead of current income has the clear advantage that occupation is a much better predictor of permanent income than current income (Hauser and Warren, 1997). A measure of class cannot be constructed *solely* on educational credentials, as many respondents might be in occupations that do not correspond to those credentials and because of class heterogeneity within educational levels. As we showed in Table 1, and as we demonstrate below, education does not associate very strongly with and cannot account for the effects of our working class variables on vote choice. Although education has some relationship with class, it is not an adequate proxy for occupation. For example, among the highly educated, professionals are very likely to support Democratic candidates while owners, the self-employed and managers are all very likely to support Republicans (Manza and Brooks, 1999). Moreover, it is not sufficient to use subjective measures of working class identification as a proxy for objective class location. The problem is that subjective social class is actually a measure of social-psychological identity and ideology more than an accurate report of one’s class location (Vanneman and Cannon, 1987; Wright, 1997). Indeed, deploying subjective social class as a measure of class is only possible if one ignores the extensive literature on class identification as a dependent variable (e.g. Davis and Robinson, 1998; Vanneman and Cannon, 1987; Wright, 1997). To measure class, one must assess the objective nature of the respondent’s occupation and employment in the market.

⁸ If we exclude Black voters and reestimate this correlation matrix on what we define below as White voters, this conclusion holds. Less than a college degree correlates .3 with the broad and .23 with the restricted measure. Neither of the income distribution measures correlates greater than .073.

⁹ One of the most useful (but in our view underappreciated) statements on this matter is Aminzade’s (1993, 7) discussion of “non-reductionist class analysis.” Aminzade emphasizes that “Class relations typically produce politically variable outcomes due to: (1) the complexity of class relations; (2) the different interpretations of interests that can be attributed to particular class positions; (3) the role of non-class factors, including shifting political opportunity structures; and (4) the importance of contingency, that is, of temporally and spatially specific events.”

Third, any analysis of class must recognize that class is not the only identity that respondents carry (Aminzade, 1993; van der Waal et al., 2007; Wright, 1997). In recent years, class analysis has emphasized that people hold multiple identities, these identities often contradict or interact with each other, and non-class identities can often be more important than class (Manza and Brooks, 1999, 45).¹⁰ In order to understand the effects of class, one must consider other group memberships (e.g. race, sex, religion), and (a) see if those other group memberships explain the effects of class on voting better or (b) can be useful for decomposing the effects of class.¹¹ Therefore, although bivariate graphs and correlations are useful for descriptive purposes, a multivariate model is essential for identifying the unique effects of class. Thus, our analyses investigate if other social cleavages can account for the effects of class.

Finally, while it is common practice to decompose the working class by race (i.e. Black vs. White working class), we argue that it is also necessary to decompose class by gender (Birkelund et al., 1996). Just as African-Americans encounter hurdles such as discrimination that differentiate their experiences from those of Whites, women face obstacles because of their gender. For example, women continue to occupy disadvantaged positions in the labor market: earning lower wages and finding employment options limited by occupational sex segregation (England, 1992). Moreover, women face greater economic insecurity than men (Brady and Kall, 2008) and tend to vote differently than men generally (Manza and Brooks, 1999). Since differences in the experiences of African-Americans compared to Whites are often linked to voting behavior (Dawson, 1994), it seems likely that gender differences in labor market opportunities might also produce differences in vote choice (McVeigh and Sobolewski, 2007). Further, there is evidence that perceived threats to men's social position have made gender an increasingly salient identity among White males (Faludi, 1999). Based on these notions, we separately analyze the voting behavior of the male and female White working class to allow for an examination of differences in vote choice.

3. Methods

Sample and technique

Our analysis is based on the American National Election Study (ANES) surveys conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan. The surveys are from nationally representative samples of the U.S. population and have been conducted biannually since 1948. These surveys collect information about respondents' characteristics, voting behavior, and a variety of attitudes. We focus on the past nine presidential elections from 1972 to 2004. We confine our analyses to this period as detailed information on respondents' religious preference is only available from 1972 onward (Brooks and Manza, 2004), and in order to concentrate on recent trends in working class voting behavior.

We utilize logistic regression to analyze a dichotomous dependent variable. In a series of models, we examine the entire 1972–2004 period ($N = 8769$), each election year, and the 1996–2004 period ($N = 2349, 2341$ and 1807). Thus, we pool the data from multiple elections in some models and examine specific elections in other models. Whenever we pool multiple elections in one model, we robust cluster the errors by year using the Huber–White correction.¹² Our analyses include all respondents who reported voting for a Republican or Democrat in U.S. presidential elections.

Dependent variable

A gate question is asked to assess if respondents voted in the recent presidential election.¹³ If respondents answer “yes,” they are asked which candidate they voted for. A dummy variable is created to denote the political party of the candidate they chose (1 = Democratic; 0 = Republican). Following recent research (Manza and Brooks, 1999), we exclude those who voted for third party candidates or who did not remember for whom they voted. In sensitivity analyses, we coded Wallace voters in 1972 and Perot voters in 1992 and 1996 as 0 and the substantive conclusions were consistent. Descriptive statistics for the dependent and all independent variables are displayed in Appendix I (for the 1996–2004 sample).¹⁴

¹⁰ In a directive that is worth quoting at length, Manza and Brooks (1999, 45) write, “Suitable measures should be compatible with multivariate analyses incorporating relevant controls. Individuals are always members of multiple groups, some of which may be cross-cutting (e.g. Black managers) or reinforcing (White conservative Protestants). In the former case, the effects of either race or class will tend to be muted by the other, while in the latter case the effects of one attribute will combine with the other, disposing the voter to support the same party. Surprisingly . . . many scholarly studies of the class, gender, and religious cleavages in American politics (as well as in cross-national, comparative analyses) have often employed bivariate models that cannot incorporate additional variables. Such models are not only unrealistic but provide no basis for answering inherently multivariate questions about the simultaneous impact of multiple social cleavages on political alignments.”

¹¹ For example, Greeley and Hout's (2006, 49, 68) study of conservative Christians reveals significant income differences among conservative Protestants in voting, and “Above all, they are more deeply divided on class and class issues than any other similarly large group in American society.”

¹² An alternative is to add dummies for each election year. In analyses available upon request, we found the results to be consistent with year dummies. In 1996 and 2000, the ANES experimented with telephone surveys in both the pre- and post-survey. In analyses available upon request, we found that respondents interviewed by phone in both the pre- and post-survey were significantly less likely to vote Democrat. Nevertheless, including these controls in models with 1996 and 2000 in the sample does not alter any of our conclusions.

¹³ In a well-specified model of voter turnout (including age, race, income, and education, for example), our working class variables did not have significant effects. This suggests that turnout selectivity is not a major problem for estimating the effects of working class location on vote choice.

¹⁴ Descriptive statistics for all other samples are available upon request.

White working class variables

Following past research on class voting (Evans, 2000; Hout et al., 1995; Manza and Brooks, 1999), we operationalize class based on the occupational codes in the ANES and only code those respondents that are currently employed. We use the Erikson–Goldthorpe (EGP) (1993) class schema to code occupations that fall into the classes of “routine white collar (class III),” skilled workers (V and VI),” and “unskilled workers (VIIa).”¹⁵ We code occupations utilizing Ganzeboom and Treiman’s (1996) guidance for coding the International Standard Classification of Occupations 1988 into the EGP schema. Also, because the ANES reports occupations using U.S. census occupation codes, we consulted information from the (US Department of Labor, 2007). The ANES uses census occupation codes for one or two of the most recent prior U.S. censuses. As a result, we used the 1990 occupation codes for the 2004 and 2000 elections, the 1980 codes for the 1984–1996 elections, the 1970 codes for 1980 and 1976, and the ANES’s 1972 codes for the 1972 election. The precise details on which census occupation codes we put into each class are available in Appendix II. This sort of information on class coding of occupations in the NES has not been readily available from previous scholarship. Hopefully, this appendix can contribute to replication and future research.

In every year, we used the three-digit codes available in the ANES appendices to determine in which class occupations belong. For the years prior to 1988, the ANES provides three-digit occupation codes and data, which we utilize. Unfortunately, from 1988 to 2004, the ANES only makes data on the two-digit occupation codes available. Thus, we code two-digit occupations into an EGP class if the majority of the three-digit occupations are appropriately coded in that EGP class. One consequence of this reliance on two-digit data is that it hinders precise distinctions between skilled and unskilled workers.¹⁶

From this information, we created two working class measures: *Broad Working Class* and *Restricted Working Class* (reference = not working class). The broad measure combines routine white collar, skilled workers and unskilled workers.¹⁷ The restricted measure includes only skilled and unskilled workers. In all analyses, we scrutinize the effects on voting with both measures independently. Since our analyses focus on the White working class, we confine our analyses of the two to *Broad White Working Class* and *Restricted White Working Class*. Because we emphasize the value of decomposing the working class by sex, we mostly analyze *Broad White Male Working Class*, *Broad Female White Working Class*, *Restricted White Male Working Class* and *Restricted White Female Working Class*. In a few models, we decompose White working class males into *Southern* and *Non-Southern* using the census region codes available in the ANES (reference = Northeast, Midwest, and West) (see Bartels, 2006).

Control variables

We examine a variety of other characteristics, party identification, and attitudinal measures that might explain the relationship between our working class measures and vote choice.¹⁸ First, we analyze measures of education and income as additional dimensions of socio-economic status. Education is measured with dummy variables for *Less than High School*, *High School degree*, *Some College*, and *Graduate School*, and the reference being a four-year college degree. *Household income* is measured as a continuous variable that has been scaled to 1984 dollars using the Consumer Price Index for the year prior to the survey. Second, we create dichotomous variables of key demographic variables to control for *Race* (1 = Black; 0 = non-Black), *Married* (1 = married; 0 = single, never married, divorced and widowed), *Female* (1 = female; 0 = male), and whether respondents live in the *South* (1 = south; 0 = non-south). Third, we add controls for religion using the schema proposed by Steensland and colleagues (2000; see also Brooks and Manza, 2004).¹⁹ This schema groups religious preference into seven categories: *Evangelical Protestant*, *Black Protestant*, *Mainline Protestant*, *Catholic*, *Jewish*, *Other Religion* (which is used as the reference category) and *No Religion*. Fourth, we control for *Republican Identification* and *Democratic Identification* (reference = independent, other or no party). Fifth, we include three attitudinal measures that are available in the 1996, 2000, and 2004 surveys. Although we cannot comprehensively test all of the wedge issues that have been mentioned, we can assess a few leading indicators for which data are available. Abortion attitudes are measured with the reference that “Women should always be able to get an abortion,” and dummies for *Abortion Should Be Restricted* (except in cases of rape, incest and medical

¹⁵ Several studies support the validity of the EGP schema (e.g. Birkelund et al., 1996; Evans, 1992; Evans and Mills, 1998, 2000).

¹⁶ Low-level supervisors within skilled and unskilled workers were coded with those workers. Military personnel were excluded from both working class measures (for both choices, see Manza and Brooks, 1999). Notably, the distinction between skilled and unskilled workers has always been a challenge in class analysis (Evans, 1992).

¹⁷ Although one could certainly exclude routine white collar wholly from the working class, we chose to analyze this issue empirically by breaking up the working class into our broad and restricted groups. The major consequence of including routine white collar is that it incorporates a large segment of female workers like secretaries, who might reasonably be coded as working class. The major disadvantage of this is that routine white collar might inadvertently include some low-level administrative and managerial occupations or higher paid clerical workers. Manza and Brooks (1999, 55, 59) specifically point to routine white collar workers as an example of the limitations of blue collar and white collar schemas: this class is not categorized as blue collar, but would be inappropriately coded as white collar (e.g. lack of benefits, hourly wages instead of salaries, and few advancement opportunities).

¹⁸ In addition to these controls, we also considered age, but found it was insignificant and did not alter any of the other effects.

¹⁹ Steensland and colleague’s (2000) schema is preferred, when available, over other schemas, especially ones that categorize denominations on a fundamentalist, moderate, liberal theological continuum (Smith, 1990). This is done because Steensland and colleagues’ schema takes into account the history of American religious traditions (i.e. the difference between White and Black Protestants), does not attempt to give respondents labels most would not accept (i.e. calling a large percentage of the respondents “fundamentalists”) (Woodberry and Smith, 1998), and correctly codes respondents who state they are non-denominational. This leads to more nuanced and historically accurate accounts of the impact of religion on beliefs and behaviors (Steensland et al., 2000, 292–296; 309–310). Advantageously, this schema incorporates church attendance into the assignment of denomination—distinguishing, for example, evangelical from mainline Protestant.

need), and *Abortion Should Never Be Permitted*. We include a dichotomous measure of *Support for Death Penalty for Murder*, with the reference being opposing the death penalty. *Government Assistance to Blacks* is measured with a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = “Government should help Blacks” and 7 = “Blacks should help themselves.”

4. Results

Before proceeding to the analyses, we first present the descriptive trends in Democratic vote choice across the White working class variables. Fig. 1 shows the trends for the entire 1972–2004 period in the probability of voting Democratic in presidential elections. We include the probabilities for all voters for comparison. Fig. 1 suggests that the White working class mirrored the general electorate in several of the earlier elections, although there were a few key departures. The restricted White female working class appears to have been more likely to vote for Carter in 1976 and 1980. All four White working class groups seem to be even more in favor of Reagan in 1984. Thus, the White working class appears to have been a leading constituency—voting even more strongly than the electorate for the winner—in 1976 and 1984. This suggests the salience of the White working class to winning coalitions in several key elections (Teixeira and Rogers, 2000). In 1988 and 1992, the White working class is very close to the electorate. But, beginning in 1996, there is a notable divergence (a) from the electorate and (b) between sexes. White working class women appear to favor Democrats in 1996 and 2004. White working class men, by contrast, were far more likely to vote Republican 1996–2004.

In Table 2, we present the effects of the broad and restricted White working class variables with no controls. These models display the general patterns in White working class voting for the entire period 1972–2004 and then for each election (with all other voters as the reference). Unlike Fig. 1, these models actually statistically test whether the White working class was significantly different from the general electorate. In the top panel, we display the results for the broad class schema and the

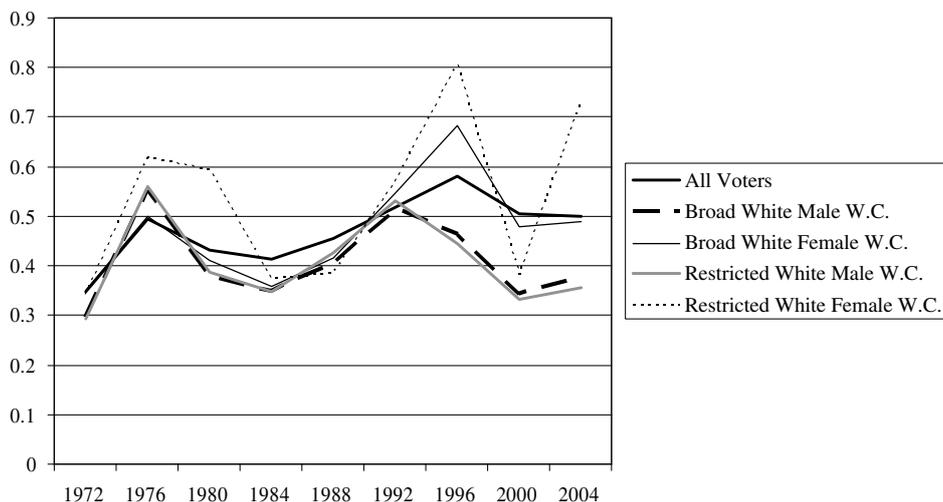


Fig. 1. Probability of voting democrat in U.S. presidential elections, 1972–2004.

Table 2

Logistic regression models of democratic vote choice on working class variables in U.S. presidential elections, 1972–2004: odds ratios and Z-scores in parentheses

	1972–2004	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004
Broad White male working class	.727* (-2.47)	.736* (-2.07)	1.359 (1.96)	.757 (-1.25)	.660* (-2.36)	.757 (-1.48)	.997 (-.01)	.618* (-2.30)	.466** (-2.81)	.513** (-3.36)
Broad White female working class	.889 (-1.55)	.944 (-.37)	1.106 (.66)	.856 (-.78)	.698* (-2.26)	.790 (-1.29)	1.127 (.42)	1.549* (2.10)	.823 (-.79)	.809 (-1.05)
BIC	-67506.634	-8809.062	-6546.632	-4159.378	-6505.430	-5662.031	-4434.737	-5141.510	-3499.769	-3774.198
Restricted White male working class	.749* (-1.99)	.727* (-2.09)	1.435* (2.27)	.839 (-.75)	.705* (-1.97)	.863 (-.74)	1.056 (.18)	.567* (-2.54)	.450** (-2.80)	.515** (-3.04)
Restricted White female working class	1.117 (.62)	.922 (-.37)	1.835* (2.47)	1.932 (1.79)	.789 (-1.00)	.723 (-.97)	1.246 (.49)	2.922** (2.68)	.553 (-1.30)	2.537* (2.07)
BIC	-67501.195	-8809.164	-6552.996	-4161.502	-6500.934	-5660.082	-4434.829	-5146.181	-3500.877	-3778.086
N	8769	1471	1158	788	1146	1023	834	939	683	727

Notes. Constants not shown. Broad working class includes skilled and unskilled workers and routine white collar. Restricted working class includes skilled and unskilled workers, but excludes routine white collar. The 1972–2004 models robust cluster errors by year.

* p < .05.
** p < .01.

bottom panel displays the results for the restricted class schema. The first column reveals that for both the broad and restricted schema, the odds of the White male working class voting Republican were significantly greater in the entire period. White working class males had a greater odds of voting Republican by a factor of 1.38 with the broad schema and 1.34 with the restricted schema. By contrast, White working class women were not significantly different with either schema (positively signed with the restricted schema and negatively signed with the broad schema). Thus, White working class men were more likely to be Republican while White working class women were not different from the electorate. In addition, we examined the White working class with men and women together. Throughout 1972–2004, the White working class variables for both sexes tend to mirror the White male working class variables, although the effects with both sexes tend to be slightly smaller and less significant (see [Tables 3 and 4](#)).

Across the 1972–1992 elections, there was a fair amount of fluctuation without a clear trend. White working class men were significantly more likely to vote for Nixon in 1972, significantly more likely to vote for Carter in 1976 (near significant in the broad schema), and significantly more likely to vote for Reagan in 1984. White working class women were significantly more likely to vote for Carter in 1976 with the restricted schema and significantly more likely to vote for Reagan in 1984 with the broad schema. Aside from these effects, the White working class voted with the electorate and was not significantly distinct.

Beginning in 1996, White working class men moved in a decidedly Republican direction. With both class schemas, White working class men were significantly more likely to vote for Dole in 1996, and Bush in 2000 and 2004. In 1996, the odds of White working class men voting Democratic were reduced by a factor of 1.62–1.76, depending on the broad or restricted schema. In 2000, the odds of White working class men voting Democratic were reduced by a factor of 2.15–2.22—the most disproportionately Republican odds for White working class men in the entire period. In 2004, the odds of White working class men voting Republican were greater by a factor of 1.94–1.95.

During this time when White working class men were aligning strongly with the Republican presidential candidates, White working class women did not have significantly greater odds of supporting the Republican candidate after Reagan in 1984. Indeed, White working class women were significantly more likely to vote Democratic in 1996 (with both schemas) and 2004 (with the restricted schema). In 1996, the odds of White working class women voting Democratic were either 1.55 times or 2.9 times greater. In 2004, with the restricted schema, the odds of White working class women voting Democratic were 2.54 greater. Thus, if one excludes the routine white collar workers from the working class, White working class women were strongly supportive of Democratic candidates in 1996 and 2004. Interestingly, White working class men and women have diverged sharply at least since 1996. In the next two tables, we concentrate on this important 1996–2004 period and scrutinize the effects.

In model 1 of [Table 3](#), we display the effects of the broad White working class measures in the 1996–2004 period. With the broad schema, the odds of White working class men voting Democratic were lowered by a factor of about 1.87. White working class women, by contrast, were not significantly different from the electorate. Models 2 and 3 compare some alternative approaches to estimating the effects of broad White working class. In model 2, we combine men and women into one measure of the broad White working class, and this group is very nearly significantly more likely to vote Republican (odds = .75, $z = -1.93$). The BIC statistic strongly prefers model 1 over model 2, which suggests that it is preferable to decompose the White working class by sex. Model 3 decomposes the White male working class into southern and non-southern, while retaining the measure of White female working class.²⁰ Again, the White female working class is not significantly different, but both the southern and non-southern White male working class is significantly less likely to vote Democratic. Although the odds of southern White male working class voting Republican are even greater than the non-southerners (odds ratios of .41 vs. .60) (cf. [Shafer and Johnston, 2006](#)), both groups tilt heavily and significantly away from Democrats. Thus, the Republican advantage among the broad White male working class is not simply confined to the South (cf. [Bartels, 2006](#); [Carmines and Stanley, 1992](#); [Stoncash et al., 2000](#); [Valentino and Sears, 2005](#)). BIC also positively prefers model 1 over model 3, which suggests that the more parsimonious approach is preferred.

Models 4–7 add controls for other social cleavages to assess if educational and economic status, race, region and marital status, or religion can explain the significant effects of the broad White male working class. In model 4, we add income and education. Although several others use income and education as proxies for class, we find that the broad White male working class measure remains significant and actually has a larger odds ratio than in model 1. The odds of voting Democratic are significantly greater for those with less than a high school education and those with some college (vs. college-educated). As others have shown, income has a linear negative effect on Democratic vote choice ([Brooks and Brady, 1999](#)). Although education and income have significant effects, these variables do not explain away the effect of broad White male working class. Model 5 displays the effects of being Black, residing in the south and being married and female, all of which have unsurprisingly significant effects. Although the effect of broad White male working class is smaller (odds ratio = .7), the effect remains significant.

Model 6 adds six dummy variables for religious denomination. Consistent with previous research ([Brooks and Manza, 2004](#)), Evangelical and Mainline Protestants (nearly significant) are more likely to vote Republican, and Black Protestants and Jews are significantly more likely to vote Democratic. Still, the odds of the broad White male working class voting Republican remains about 1.5 times greater. Model 7 combines all of these social cleavage variables into one model, and

²⁰ If we decompose the broad White female working class into south and non-south, neither group's effect is significant (although the southerners have a larger odds ratio [.83 vs. .91] and are closer to significant).

Table 3
Logistic regression models of democratic vote choice on BROAD working class and additional variables in U.S. presidential elections, 1996–2004: odds ratios and Z-scores in parentheses (N = 2349)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8 ^a	Model 9 ^a
Broad White Male Working Class	.534 (–9.48)**			.491 (–17.86)**	.787 (–3.62)**	.659 (–9.65)**	.829 (–4.26)*	.612 (–8.65)**	.671 (–3.08)**
Broad White Female Working Class	1.026(.12)		1.026 (.12)	0.893 (–.57)	1.199 (0.86)	1.266 (1.04)	1.162 (0.75)	1.064 (0.31)	1.291 (0.64)
Broad White Working Class		0.747 (–1.93)							
Southern Broad White Male Working Class			.409 (–7.23)**						
Non-Southern Broad White Male Working Class			.591 (–12.39)**						
Less than High School				2.284 (4.10)**			2.489 (3.52)**		
High School				1.181 (1.1)			1.078 (0.42)		
Some College				1.169 (5.1)**			1.037 (0.57)		
Graduate School				1.391 (1.38)			1.407 (1.55)		
Income				99.998E–2 (–5.70)**			99.998E–2 (–3.91)**		
Black					15.451 (7.86)**		14.331 (7.53)**		
South					.671 (–3.24)**		0.738 (–1.83)		
Married					.655 (–8.17)**		.795 (–2.14)*		
Female					1.260 (8.88)**		1.339 (9.52)**		
Evangelical Protestant					.392 (–5.25)**		.367 (–6.08)**		
Black Protestant					4.843 (10.26)**		0.758 (–.83)		
Mainline Protestant					0.61 (–1.93)		.711 (–2.08)*		
Catholic					0.838 (–.83)		0.902 (–.66)		
Jewish					6.013 (4.43)**		7.883 (4.53)**		
No Religion					0.806 (–.69)		0.708 (–1.45)		
Republican Identification								.081 (–8.19)**	
Democratic Identification								12.643 (8.45)**	
Abortion Should Be Restricted									.342 (–7.98)**
Abortion Should Never Be Permitted									.160 (–9.04)**
Support Death Penalty for Murder									.345 (–7.42)**
Government Assistance to Blacks									.697 (–5.75)**
BIC	–14990.215	–14981.314	–14984.454	–15046.012	–15231.205	–15171.436	–15309.614	–16333.663	–11424.093

Note. Constants not shown.

^a The N for Model 8 is 2341. The N for Model 9 is 1807. The reference groups are “Women should always be able to get an abortion,” opposing the death penalty, and “Government should help Blacks (as opposed to ‘Blacks should help themselves’ on a seven-point scale).” The models robust cluster errors by year.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Logistic regression models of democratic vote choice on *RESTRICTED* working class and additional variables in U.S. presidential elections, 1996–2004: odds ratios and Z-scores in parentheses ($N = 2349$)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8 ^a	Model 9 ^a
Restricted White Male Working Class	.510 (-13.75)**			.479 (-25.10)**	.740 (-4.78)**	.622 (-13.39)**	.782 (-4.33)**	.490 (-7.63)**	.662 (-5.92)**
Restricted White Female Working Class	1.772 (-1.23)		1.772 (1.23)	1.435 (0.76)	2.094 (1.55)	2.207 (1.59)	1.91 (1.28)	1.184 (0.61)	3.683 (3.81)**
Restricted White Working Class		.699 (-2.41)*							
Southern Restricted White Male Working Class			.380 (-12.84)**						
Non-Southern Restricted White Male Working Class			.569 (-14.89)**						
Less than High School				2.242 (4.04)**			2.459 (3.4)**		
High School				1.151 (0.97)			1.073 (0.37)		
Some College				1.136 (2.66)**			1.037 (0.39)		
Graduate School				1.408 (1.32)			1.407 (1.5)		
Income				99.998E-2 (-5.85)**			99.998E-2 (-3.96)**		
Black					15.580 (8.42)**		14.240 (8.72)**		
South					.660 (-3.76)**		.725 (-2.11)**		
Married					.660 (-8.39)**		.797 (-2.18)**		
Female					1.255 (3.82)**		1.327 (4.83)**		
Evangelical Protestant						.396 (-5.25)**	.360 (-3.57)**		
Black Protestant						4.905 (9.37)**	0.774 (-.86)		
Mainline Protestant						0.619 (-1.86)	0.696 (-1.16)		
Catholic						0.839 (-.81)	0.9 (-.44)		
Jewish						6.209 (4.67)**	8.056 (6.25)**		
No Religion						0.79 (-.76)	0.706 (-1.06)		
Republican Identification								.080 (-8.30)**	
Democratic Identification								12.698 (8.34)**	
Abortion Should Be Restricted									.338 (-8.03)**
Abortion Should Never Be Permitted									.159 (-9.03)**
Support Death Penalty for Murder									.333 (-7.52)**
Government Assistance to Blacks									.697 (-5.48)**
BIC	-14997.214	-14980.892	-14991.381	-15047.958	-15240.633	-15180.558	-15316.505	-16340.274	-11440.963

Note. Constants not shown.

^a The N for Model 8 is 2341. The N for Model 9 is 1807. The reference groups are "Women should always be able to get an abortion," opposing the death penalty, and "Government should help Blacks (as opposed to 'Blacks should help themselves' on a seven-point scale)." The models robust cluster errors by year.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

all have similar effects with some fluctuation in significance (except Black Protestant becomes wholly insignificant). Yet, even in this full model with 15 controls, the broad White male working class remains significantly more likely to vote Republican (odds = .83).

In model 8, we control for party identification. We find that, as expected, those identifying with the Democrats are far more likely to vote Democratic and the inverse is true for Republicans. Although party identification clearly improves the model, adding party identification cannot entirely explain why the broad White male working class is significantly more likely to vote Republican. The effect of broad White male working class remains significantly negative.²¹

In model 9, we assess if a few salient wedge issues can explain the effects of the broad White male working class measure. We should note that the number of cases in this model drops to 1807 because of missing data. All of the attitude items have significant effects in expected directions: those opposed to abortion, supportive of the death penalty and opposed to assistance to Blacks tend to vote Republican. Nevertheless, the broad White male working class continues to have diminished odds of voting Democratic by a factor of about 1.5.

In Table 4, we display this same set of analyses for the restricted working class schema. The results are consistent for men, but have some departures for women. In the entire 1972–2004 period, the restricted White male working class has a diminished odds of voting Democratic by a factor of about 1.96. In contrast to men and similar to the broad White working class, the restricted White female working class is not significantly different from the electorate in the entire 1996–2004 period. As in Table 3, models 2 and 3 compare alternative approaches to measuring the White working class within the restricted schema. Model 2 shows that combining women and men into one measure of the White working class results in a significant negative effect. The restricted White working class has a diminished odds of voting Democratic by a factor of about 1.43. BIC, however, strongly prefers model 1, where this variable is decomposed by sex. Model 3 demonstrates that both the southern and non-southern restricted White male working class are more likely to vote Republican, although southerners appear to be even more likely to vote against the Democrats. Because even the non-southern restricted White male working class is significantly more likely to vote Republican, this confirms that this phenomenon is not confined to the South. Again, BIC positively prefers model 1 without this regional decomposition.

Models 4–7 add the other social cleavages into the model, and the results are wholly consistent with Table 3. In model 7 for example, those with less than a high school education, Blacks, females, and Jews are significantly more likely to vote Democratic. Those with a higher income, those residing in the South, the married, and Evangelical Protestants are significantly more likely to vote Republican. Across models 4–7, however, the restricted White male working class is always significantly negative (with odds ratios varying from .48 to .65). Further, the restricted White female working class coefficient approaches but never quite becomes significant. Therefore, these other social cleavages cannot account for why the restricted White male working class is more likely to vote Republican.

In model 8, the results for party identification mimic the results for the broad working class. Party identification has a powerful effect, and clearly improves the models. Yet, party identification cannot explain why the restricted White male working class is significantly more likely to vote Republican. Indeed, the effect of restricted White male working class becomes even more negative and remains significant. Controlling for party identification, the restricted White female working class is not significant.

Finally, in model 9, we display the attitudinal measures. As with Table 3, all of the measures are significant in their expected directions. Also, the restricted White male working class remains significantly negative and the restricted White female working class becomes significantly positive. The restricted White male working class has diminished odds of voting Democratic by a factor of about 1.5. The restricted White female working class has greater odds of voting Democratic by a factor of about 3.7. Once one controls for these attitudinal wedge issues, the effect for men is slightly smaller than it was in model 1, for example, but the effect for women is much larger. Thus, taking these notable wedge issues into account cannot explain fully the potent effect of White working class location on vote choice.²²

5. Conclusion

Our study analyzes U.S. presidential elections since 1972 in order to scrutinize the recent voting behavior of the White working class. Our analyses seek to incorporate developments in class analysis into debates about White working class political behavior. Also, we build on recent sociological studies of voting (e.g. Evans, 1999; Manza and Brooks, 1999) by updating the analyses to include the most recent elections, concentrating on the White working class and decomposing this group by sex. In the entire 1972–2004 period, White working class men were more likely to vote Republican with both the broad and restricted class schemas. Yet, this general pattern conceals salient temporal variation. Although there were some years where the White working class favored the Democratic or Republican candidates more than the electorate, this group was generally consistent with the electorate through 1992. After 1992, however, we find a sharp divergence between the male and female

²¹ This coefficient remains significantly negative regardless of which of Independent, Republican or Democrat Identification is treated as the reference and regardless of whether another category is included for “Other Party” identification. This is also true in Table 4.

²² Nevertheless, in analyses available upon request, we found that White working class men (both schemas) were significantly in favor of restricting abortion (but not significantly different on abortion never being permitted), the death penalty, and “Blacks should help themselves” against the lower values designating government support for Blacks. White working class women were significantly in favor of the Death penalty with both schemas, and with the broad schema, significantly in favor of “Blacks should help themselves” (but not significantly different on either abortion item).

White working class, with men very strongly supporting Republicans and women less consistently supporting Democrats. From 1996–2004, the odds of White working class men voting Democratic were reduced by a factor of about 2.0. By contrast, White working class women have never supported the Republican candidate since Reagan in 1984. Indeed, there is some evidence White working class women were significantly more likely to vote Democratic in 1996 and 2004 (but not 2000).

Perhaps just as interesting as the divergence between male and female White working class voting is the inability of other predictors to fully account for these patterns. In the full model with 15 controls, the broad or restricted White male working class remains significantly more likely to vote Republican. Even after controlling for partisan identification and a set of attitudinal wedge issues, the White male working class remains significantly more likely to vote Republican, and there is some evidence that the White female working class favors Democratic candidates. Thus, we provide evidence of the shifting trends in White working class voting, and demonstrate that there is no simple explanation for why these trends emerged. This contrasts with recent claims that White working class voting might be simply due to certain wedge issues, the southern versus non-southern dynamic, or the mobilization of religious groups. Apparently, there is no simple explanation for why (a) the White working class has diverged by sex, and (b) men shifted so significantly in a Republican direction over time.

Plausibly, our analyses provide some resolution to the debates between scholars like Bartels and Frank. Somewhat in contrast to Frank, we do not find evidence that wedge issues and religious mobilization can fully account for the shift in White working class men towards the Republicans. Also, unlike Frank, we demonstrate a crucial divergence between male and female members of the White working class. Nevertheless, our study supports Frank's central claim. The White male working class has moved suddenly and massively towards the Republican Party since 1992. Our dating of this transition roughly coincides with Frank's identification of the early 1990s as the point when the White working class began to dealign from the Democratic Party (Frank, 2004, 91, 98). In sharp contrast to Bartels, we contradict claims that the White working class shift towards Republicans is isolated to the South. Moreover, we demonstrate that his proxies for class are not adequate and that theoretically justifiable measures of class are essential. Ultimately, at least for men, our study supports Frank's claim that the White working class has dealigned from the Democratic Party.

Although our study can answer several questions about White working class political behavior, our results introduce a new set of paradoxes. First, there are striking changes over time, and it really is only since 1996 that the White male working class has voted Republican.²³ To witness such a significant change in such a short period of time is quite noteworthy. Second, there is a remarkable divergence between male and female members of the White working class. There were a few differences between men and women from 1972 to 1992, but this period was marked more by commonality. Since 1996, however, there is some evidence that White working class women leaned Democratic, while there is clear evidence that White working class men leaned heavily Republican. If scholars expect economic interest to influence vote choice (cf. the significant negative effect of income), it is paradoxical that White working class men vote against their economic interests, but to a certain extent, White working class women vote with their economic interests.²⁴ The last paradox is the inability of a variety of other social cleavages and key predictors of vote choice to completely explain these patterns. Throughout Tables 3 and 4, the White male working class coefficient remains significantly negative. Our findings cannot fully be resolved by consideration of abortion, the death penalty, religion, region, race or partisanship. Thus, it remains an interesting question as to why White working class men have voted Republican since 1996.

Partly to address these questions, we encourage research in several directions. First, our findings suggest some interesting questions regarding party identification. Our inspection of the ANES suggests that there has been a shift in party identification among the White working class. In 1996, 30 percent of the broad White male working class identified as Democrats, but by 2004, only 20 percent did. Yet, from 1996 to 2004, the percent of the broad White male working class that identified Republican only changed from 31 to 32 percent. Thus, it appears that Democratic Party identification among the White male working class has declined precipitously, but mostly, those voters have shifted to Independent status rather than Republican (Halle and Romo 1991). Future studies should scrutinize which factors are driving the changing party identification of the working class, and investigate if the Republican shift in White working class male voting is strong enough to alter how these men identify. Second, we acknowledge our selected attitudinal measures are simply tapping into a few surface-level manifestations of the cognitive dispositions of voters. Certainly, one could point to the potential relevance of other wedge issues that we are unable to test with the ANES: for example, gay marriage, gun control, school prayer, or evolution. It is fair to say that any ANES survey item cannot entirely capture the ideological motivation of voters (Frank, 2005). Perhaps one needs to join survey research with intensive interviews, focus groups, experiments and other methods to fully understand the politics of the White working class (e.g. Prasad et al., forthcoming).

One contribution of *What's the Matter with Kansas* is that it helped to renew popular interest in the politics of class. Frank's book emphasizes that class continues to play a vital role in American politics, even though its effects are in new and some-

²³ Since we do not include congressional elections, it remains untested but plausible that the Republican shift among White working class men really originated with the 1994 congressional election.

²⁴ Frank (2004, 127) refers to a "critical rhetorical move: the systematic erasure of the economic" by which Republicans have gained support among the White working class. We do not test the economic awareness or ideologies of White working class voters, but it would be interesting to know if there is a split between men and women on this dimension as well. Frank (2004, 176, 243) criticizes the Democrats for failing to highlight and campaign upon economic issues. But it is perplexing that in 2000, when Gore seemingly spoke more often about economic issues, White working class men were most likely to vote Republican of any election (see Table 2).

times unanticipated directions. Although the scholarship of class politics has a long and distinguished tradition, and even though it has experienced a recent resurgence, we can contrast our study with some scholars' claims of declining class politics (e.g. Hechter, 2004; Clark and Lipset, 2001). Our study also challenges claims that class has become less salient in recent U.S. politics. Like others (e.g. Evans, 2000; van der Waal et al., 2007), we show that class continues to influence how people vote. Of course, we do not find evidence for the classic view that one can mechanically read Leftist voting behavior directly from the economic interests of the working class (Korpi, 1983). What we show instead is that although there is a fair amount of complexity to how class affects voting behavior, class does matter.

Appendix A

Descriptive Statistics in the American National Election Studies, 1996–2004

	Mean	SD
Democratic Vote Choice	.534	.499
Broad White Male Working Class	.132	.339
Broad White Female Working Class	.138	.344
Broad White Working Class	.270	.444
Southern Broad White Male Working Class	.038	.191
Non-Southern Broad White Male Working Class	.095	.293
Restricted White Male Working Class	.109	.312
Restricted White Female Working Class	.037	.190
Restricted White Working Class	.147	.354
Southern Restricted White Male Working Class	.031	.174
Non-Southern Restricted White Male Working Class	.078	.347
Less than High School	.083	.276
High School	.244	.430
Some College	.290	.454
Graduate School	.193	.395
Income	31758.070	21051.790
Black	.115	.320
South	.347	.476
Married	.574	.495
Female	.542	.498
Evangelical Protestant	.241	.428
Black Protestant	.095	.294
Mainline Protestant	.204	.403
Catholic	.275	.447
Jewish	.026	.158
No Religion	.048	.214
Republican Identification	.333	.471
Democratic Identification	.382	.486
Abortion Should Be Restricted	.465	.499
Abortion Should Never Be Permitted	.123	.329
Support Death Penalty for Murder	.499	.438
Government Assistance to Blacks	4.728	1.703

Notes. The Ns are from Tables 3 and 4. The descriptive statistics for 1972–2004 are available upon request.

Appendix B

Below, we list all census occupation codes that were classified as working class for our analysis. In each year, we first coded all occupation codes into three of the Erikson–Goldthorpe (1992) classes. Then, for the analyses, we combined all three classes in the broader schema of working class and combined skilled and unskilled workers into the restricted schema of working class. For the years after 1984, only two-digit occupation codes are available.

1972 Working Class Schema

For the 1972 survey, the NES uses specific occupation codes for the year 1972. The variable for this survey is “V720309.”

Routine White Collar

129, 303, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 311, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 325, 326, 327, 328, 352, 353, 522, 650, 660, 661.

Skilled Workers

124, 136, 203, 302, 401, 402, 403, 404, 406, 407, 409, 410, 412, 413, 414, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 451, 452, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 465, 466, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 513, 520, 521, 524, 526, 527, 533, 534, 537, 543, 544, 545, 548, 555, 663, 669, 678, 610, 612, 616, 850, 630, 613.

Unskilled Workers

304, 310, 313, 314, 323, 355, 405, 408, 415, , 429, 430, 450, 464, 467, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 523, 525, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 535, 536, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 546, 547, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 560, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 662, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 676, 611, 617, 680, 681, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 730, 710, 823, 824.

1976 and 1980 Working Class Schema

For both the 1976 and 1980 survey, we use the 1970 census occupation codes. The variable for 1976 is “V763412” and for 1980 is “v800455.”

Routine White Collar

226, 262, 264, 280, 283, 284, 301, 303, 301–311, 313–315, 325, 330, 341–362, 364, 370–376, 381, 382, 385, 390–395, 625, 704, 922–923, 931, 933, 942, 980.

Skilled Workers

165, 171–172, 211, 401–405, 412, 413, 415, 420, 421, 422, 424, 430, 431, 433–441, 442, 443, 444, 446, 453–454, 470–495, 501, 502–503, 504, 510, 512, 514, 516, 520, 522, 525, 540, 542–543, 545, 546, 550, 551–554, 560–561, 575, 580, 600, 601, 605, 615, 631–633, 634, 636, 644–645, 665, 680, 751, 821, 912, 935, 944, 950, 961, 962, 963–965, 981.

Unskilled Workers

266, 331–334, 383, 410–411, 416, 423, 445, 455–456, 461–462, 511, 521, 523, 530, 531, 533, 534, 535, 536, 562, 563, 571, 572, 602–604, 611, 612, 613, 614, 620–621, 622–626, 630, 635, 640, 641, 642, 643, 650, 651, 652, 653, 656–660, 661–662, 663, 664, 666, 670–674, 681, 690–695, 701–703, 705–715, 740, 750, 752, 755, 753–754, 760, 761–762, 763, 764, 770, 780, 785, 822–824, 901–903, 910–911, 913–916, 932, 934, 940, 941, 943, 945, 952, 960 982, 983–984.

1984 Working Class Schema

For the 1984 survey, we use the 1980 census occupation codes. The variable is “V840462.”

Routine White Collar

177, 263–278, 283, 285, 313–315, 316–323, 325–336, 337–344, 345–348, 353, 359–374, 375–378, 379–389, 406, 446–447, 456–458, 466–468, 823.

Skilled Workers

019, 404, 418, 423, 433, 436, 448, 456, 474, 483–484, 487489, 494, 503, 505, 507–517, 518–534, 535–549, 553–558, 565–567, 573–575, 577–585, 588, 593–594, 596–599, 613, 628, 633, 634, 636–637, 643–653, 655, 656–659, 666–674, 675–684, 686–688, 689–693, 694–696, 783–784, 785–795, 796–799, 824, 826, 843, 848–855, 863.

Unskilled Workers

354–357, 403, 407, 417–418, 424, 425–427, 434–435, 438–444, 447–455, 457–458, 459, 462–465, 469, 486, 488, 495–496, 498–499, 506, 563–564, 569, 576, 587, 589, 595, 614–617, 635, 639, 654, 699, 703–717, 719–725, 726–733, 734–737, 738–749, 753–769, 774–779, 803–814, 825, 829, 834, 856, 859, 864–873, 875–883, 885–889.

1988, 1992, 1996 Working Class Schema

For the 1988, 1992 and 1996 surveys, we also use the 1980 census occupation codes. The variables are “v880435,” “v900572,” and “V960664.” For these years, the individual-level data is only available for the two-digit occupation codes. Thus, the 1984 survey was coded differently.

Routine White Collar

20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 37, 39, 66, 55.

Skilled and Unskilled Workers

30, 35, 36, 38, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70.

2000 and 2004 Working Class Schema

For the 2000 and 2004 surveys, we use the 1990 census occupation codes. Again, only the two-digit individual-level data is available. The variables are “V000968,” and “V043262n.”

Routine White Collar

20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 37, 39, 66.

Skilled and Unskilled Workers

30, 35, 36, 38, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71.

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