

Moral Power: How Public Opinion on Culture War Issues Shapes the Authoritarian Disposition

Paul Goren
Department of Political Science
University of Minnesota
pgoren@umn.edu

Christopher Chapp
Department of Political Science
St. Olaf College
chapp@stolaf.edu

Draft: October 25, 2018.

Please do not cite

The Zaller-Feldman (1992; Zaller 1992) theory of the survey response represents the paradigmatic view about the nature of policy attitudes in the mass public. The theory states that most people do not hold true attitudes on most issues. Rather, when asked to report their views about a specific issue most people construct a response in real time based on whatever ideas happen to be at the top of the head. We agree that most people do not hold crystallized attitudes about important political issues, but argue that the critical culture war issues – abortion and gay rights – are fundamentally different.

In what follows, we define culture war issue-attitudes and theorize about what makes them strong. Our explanation draws on theories of attitude strength, symbolic politics, and moral intuitions to propose that attitudes toward abortion and gay rights are much stronger than virtually all other policy attitudes and rival the power of political identities, religious predispositions, and authoritarianism (Converse 1970; Sears 1983, 2001; Krosnick and Petty 1995; Eagly and Chaiken 2007; Fazio 2007).

To preview the argument, attitude strength is a function of evaluative frequency and consistency. When people render bottom-line judgments about an issue at multiple points in time and routinely express similar sentiments about the issue, attitudes crystallize. People evaluate culture war issues more frequently than other issues for a couple of reasons. First, abortion and gay rights have the potential to spill over into people's personal lives more readily than other issues. Second, culture war issues symbolize how people feel about sex, gender roles, and family, topics that elicit more thoughts and feelings than more distant issues. Said otherwise, people think about "bedroom" issues more so than typical "guns and butter" issues.

Evaluative frequency is necessary but not sufficient for developing strong, crystallized attitudes. Attitude crystallization results when the evaluative responses to a given issue prove

consistent across occasions and over time. Abortion and gay rights activate ingrained mental modules, such as the behavioral immunity systems and the purity/sanctity moral foundation, that automatically push some individuals to take culturally orthodox positions. The issues activate moral anger among other segments of the population that lead to the adoption of progressive positions on culture war issues. Whenever people think about abortion and gay rights, moral intuitions inform their bottom-line judgments.

The combination of evaluative frequency and consistency vest culture-war issues with moral power. Because young people are attuned to “bedroom issues” during their impressionable years and are constrained (like people of all ages) by moral intuitions to respond habitually to these issues with the same emotional valences, culture war attitudes crystallize early in the political life cycle. The result is that attitudes toward touchstone culture war issues are more durable, harder to change, and more impactful than virtually all other policy attitudes – in a word, strong.

The theory of moral power contends that culture war issue-attitudes match the strength of core political predispositions, core religious predispositions, and authoritarianism. The attitudes people hold toward culture war issues compels revision of closely related political identities, religious predispositions, and even their normative worldviews. This chapter broadens the scope conditions of our theory by wagering that culture war issues structure authoritarianism. Three key findings emerge from our analyses. First, culture war issue-attitudes are more durable over time than authoritarianism. Second, authoritarianism does not appear to shape abortion/gay rights preferences. Third, authoritarianism is endogenous to how people feel about moral issues.

STRONG ATTITUDES AND WEAK ATTITUDES

To define policy attitudes requires first a working definition of attitudes. For this, we turn

to Eagly and Chaiken (2007: 583). They define an attitude as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor.” The entity can be a person, a place, a group, an idea, an art form, or any other object (Albarracin and Shavitt 2018). The evaluation may be a “hot” emotional reaction to the stimulus, a cooler cognitive judgment about the goodness or badness of the object, or some combination thereof (Fazio 1989). Evaluations range from extremely positive to extremely negative. The “psychological tendency” refers to the durability and consistency of the valence. For some objects, bottom-line judgements are invariably favorable or unfavorable. For other objects, judgments shift capriciously from good to bad.

People vary widely in how often they judge an entity and the degree to which their evaluations of it are typically positive or negative. This variation has implications for attitude strength. Insofar as someone assesses an object multiple times and reliably responds with the same valence, the attitude strengthens or crystallizes.¹ The more this process unfolds over time, the more “affective mass or “evaluative knowledge” accrues to the object (Sears 1983, 2001; Krosnick and Petty 1995; Fazio 1989, 2007). As Converse (1970: 177) once put it, “*attitudes take practice*—practice which is genuine in the sense of having been powered by own psychic energy aside from the kind of transient situation created by the experimentalist or the survey researcher. Where such practice has not occurred, the state to be measured is non-existent.” Attitude objects that have accumulated a great deal of affective mass are durable over time, hard to change, and impactful – in short, they are strong attitudes (Krosnick and Petty 1995).

In contrast to familiar objects, people conjure up evaluations of objects they have never

¹ People will not render an identical evaluation every occasion. There will be some variance around a central evaluative tendency. The more crystallized the attitude, the narrower the evaluative variance.

before encountered. The Eagly-Chaiken definition covers such temporary attitudes. When asking someone to report her impression of a novel entity, there is no evaluative knowledge to recall. At this point, she has two options. She could admit that she has no opinion. Alternatively, she might construct an evaluation on the spot based on whatever considerations are at the top of the head (Fiske and Taylor 1978; Zaller and Feldman 1992). Such considerations might include how the question was framed, the desire to make a positive impression to herself or her interlocutor, or unrelated affect tied to her current mood. This process reflects the logic of attitude construction. We call this a very weak or uncrystallized attitude.

In the political domain, attitudes toward politicians, political parties, other groups (e.g., liberals and conservatives), institutions (e.g., Congress, the United Nations) and other objects (e.g., foreign aid) are crystallized to varying degrees. People hold strong attitudes toward exceptionally salient objects, such as Barack Obama and Donald Trump. However, since politics is not important to most people, most political attitudes are not very crystallized.

MOST POLICY ATTITUDES ARE WEAK

As noted, the consensus among public opinion scholars is that most people hold weak, uncrystallized attitudes about most policy issues and controversies (Converse 1964; Neuman 1986; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017). Two rich bodies of research undergird this view. The first centers on response instability in issue opinions over time. Strong attitudes are durable. They hold steady over time and resist change. The empirical implication is that the answers people give to issue questions in the present should accurately predict the answers they give to the same question in the future. If someone favors more government spending on social programs in 2012, she should favor more government spending in 2016. Statistically, we should see strong test-retest correlations for expressed opinions on identically worded questions.

The American public performs dismally on such tests. Converse (1964) concluded that many people lack real policy attitudes after discovering astonishingly weak test-retest correlations for multiple issue questions on the 1956-1958-1960 NES panel. Scholars have replicated this finding repeatedly. Converse and Markus (1979) found that opinions on standard domestic and foreign policy issues measured in 1972 typically explain less than 25 percent of the variance on identically worded items measured in 1976 (cf. Feldman 1989; Alwin and Krosnick 1991; McCann 1997). Other analyses report that political elites, political activists, and the most sophisticated strata of the electorate hold stable policy attitudes in an absolute sense and relative to the much larger, less sophisticated bulk of the mass public (Jennings 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Such studies suggest exceptionally high levels of political interest and knowledge are a prerequisite for the development of durable policy attitudes.

Complementary work on questionnaire and framing effects buttresses the claim that people hold feeble policy attitudes. Decades of research demonstrate that the responses people give to policy questions are swayed by trivial or even arbitrary changes in question wording, question order, frames, source cues, interviewer characteristics and other factors (Schuman and Presser 1981; Tversky and Kahneman 1982; Bishop et al. 1984).

To take one example, Cohen (2003) reports an experiment in which self-identified liberals supported punitive welfare reforms when the policy had the backing of most Democrats, while self-identified conservatives backed generous welfare reforms when most Republicans backed such changes. To take another example, Rasinski (1989) used GSS data to show that 68 percent of the public favored more spending on “protecting Social Security” while 53% favored more spending on “Social Security.” The introduction of the single word “protecting” moved public support from a slight majority to a super majority. For many respondents, the policy is of

secondary importance.

The response effects literature repudiates the claim that people have crystallized attitudes toward most political issues (Bartels 2006). Policy attitudes thus, lack the second attribute of strong attitudes – they are malleable. In conjunction, the separate research streams on response instability and questionnaire effects cast serious doubt on the claim that people hold strong attitudes about public policies. Strong attitudes do not fluctuate erratically over time nor do they move so easily in response to small changes in question wording or framing.²

John Zaller and Stanley Feldman integrate these findings into a constructionist theory of policy attitudes (Zaller and Feldman 1992; Zaller 1992). Since most people know and care little about politics, they do not work out their positions on specific issues. Instead, they chance upon disparate bits of information in political discourse and absorb some mixture of these “considerations”. The considerations people absorb vary as a function of political awareness and core predispositions (e.g., party identification, values, etc.).

The interplay between information flows in political discourse, core predispositions, and political awareness govern which considerations have come to mind when someone answers an issue question on a survey or expresses a policy opinion in some other venue. People construct the attitude that guides the response by averaging across temporarily primed considerations. In

² This in turn suggests that policy attitudes are unlikely to have much of an impact of political behavior and choice. Some of the strongest evidence against the claim that people hold impactful views on public policies appears in Lenz’s work (2012). Drawing on multiple data sets covering a wide range of issues and historical elections, Lenz shows that once the media primes a specific issue, voters’ issue positions do not engender changes in candidate support. Instead, pre-existing attitudes toward a candidate induce shifts in issue positions. More succinctly: “voters first decide they like a politician for other reasons, then adopt his or her policy views” (Ibid: 3). Since policy attitudes are unstable and malleable, their lack of impact follows.

short, the issue opinions people report do not reflect durable evaluative tendencies lodged in memory, but rather, reflect a stochastic mishmash of accessible, often contradictory ideas at the top of the head. The Zaller-Feldman model explains why policy attitudes move erratically over time and in response to question wording and other survey design features. Said simply, the model explains why most people hold weak policy attitudes on most issues.

Zaller and Feldman (1992: 608) allow that some individuals hold crystallized attitudes on “doorstep issues—that is, issues so close to everyday concerns that most people routinely pay some attention to them.” To take one example, the busing issue in the 1970s may have been especially important to some parents directly affected by government efforts to desegregate their schools. To take another example, farmers that sell most of their crops in overseas markets likely have fixed attitudes about tariffs. Additionally, people “driven toward cognitive consistency . . . are well captured by ‘conventional’ true attitudes models” (Zaller and Feldman 1992: 610). However, since politics is a low priority for most people, they rarely recognize that they hold conflicting considerations about issues. As such, internal drives for cognitive consistency do not come into play.

CULTURE WAR ISSUE-ATTITUDES ARE STRONG

Defining Culture War Issue-Attitudes

In this section, we define culture war issue-attitudes and explain what makes them strong. Multiple issues fall under the “culture war” heading, such as school prayer, gun control, climate change, and so on. Without denying the potency of these divisive controversies, scholars identify abortion and gay rights as the central cultural issues for two reasons.

First, abortion and gay rights evoke universal concerns about sex, gender, motherhood, marriage, and family. Issues that touch on intimate concerns like these attract closer scrutiny than

less personal issues. They do so in part because they have enormous symbolic power. Second, abortion and gay rights have been front on center on the political agenda for the past 25 years and show no sign of abating. By contrast, school prayer, gun control, climate change and other cultural issues cannot match the persistence of abortion and gay rights on the national political agenda (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Most such issues move onto the national agenda for a brief period only to fall away shortly thereafter (Dancey and Goren 2010).

By culture war attitudes, we mean durable tendencies to evaluate abortion and gay rights with some degree of favor or disfavor. We characterize pro-choice and pro-gay rights Americans as culturally progressive, and their pro-life and anti-gay rights counterparts as culturally orthodox. Many people take positions between these extremes. Because abortion and gay rights are distinct in some respects, readers may question merging these issues. They might argue that attitudes toward abortion and gay rights should be treated as distinct constructs. This is a fair point to raise, but prior factor analytic work indicates that responses to abortion and gay rights survey questions load onto a single latent factor. This suggests that responses to both derive from the same latent attitude (Jelen 2009). We present evidence on this score in chapter 4.

Our theory of moral power proposes that culture war issue-attitudes are exceptionally strong – they are stable over time, resist change, and impactful. The theory rests on two key propositions. First, culture war issue-attitudes are as durable as party identification, symbolic ideology, religious predispositions, and authoritarianism – the unmoved movers of U.S. public opinion. Second, culture war issues are bedrock predispositions, and thus, have the power to move party, ideology, religion, and authoritarianism.

Attitude Strength as a Function of Evaluative Frequency

Why should attitudes toward abortion and gay rights be so powerful? What theoretical justifications exist for reclassifying culture war issues as core predispositions? As we described above, attitude strength is a function of evaluative frequency and evaluative consistency. The more frequently someone evaluates an issue, the larger the affective mass (or the evaluative knowledge) that attaches to the issue node in memory. Additionally, people must react with consistent positive or negative valence toward the issue. When they do, attitude crystallization results (Converse 1970; Sears 1983; Eagly and Chaiken 2007; Fazio 2007).

If an issue elicits positive reactions on some occasions and negative reactions other times, crystallization is inhibited (Hochschild 1981; Feldman and Zaller 1992). Because most people are so apathetic about politics, they rarely think about issues or express policy views. This is why they have to construct policy attitudes when answering questions on public opinion surveys (Zaller and Feldman 1992).

We theorize that attitudes toward abortion and gay rights are strong because people evaluate both issues more often than other issues and moral intuitions – some innate and some learned – generate consistent emotional reactions to these stimuli. Importantly, the emergence and subsequent crystallization of culture war attitudes commences during late adolescence and early adulthood, thereby ensuring the emergence of crystallized attitudes by early adulthood.

We assume people evaluate culture war issues more frequently than other issues for two reasons. First, cultural issues encroach on private matters, often in very intimate and personal ways. The abortion issue may arise as heterosexual couples consider risking unprotected sex or contemplating options in the case of unplanned pregnancies. Women weigh birth control options in order to avoid unplanned pregnancies and the possibility of abortions. Couples may think about it in the context of family planning. Parents talk to their teenage children about birth

control options, including abortion. Friends and confidants share stories about abortion options, experiences, possible regrets. Some deeply religious people talk about the sanctity of life – unborn and unborn. They may pray for the lives of the unborn. For our purposes, the question of whether one is pro-life, pro-choice, or something in between is irrelevant. What matters is that abortion seems likely to come up more frequently in the lives of citizens than issues such as taxes or Medicaid expansion or defense spending or Middle East peace.

In a similar vein, people likely think more about gay rights – or, more broadly, gays and lesbians in American society – compared to run-of-the-mill political issues. The question of gay rights touches on “normal” sexual preferences, the meaning of love, the definition of a family, equality under the law and in the eyes of God, and the nature of sin. Many people have close relatives or good friends that are gay. Many know gays and/or lesbians at school or work and make choices about how to treat same-sex individuals. In situations like these people come into contact with gays and lesbians, and some of them will wonder about the equal treatment more broadly. These situations provide people with opportunities to express how they feel about the treatment of gays and lesbians. Abortion and gay rights start to come up during the teenage years as young people seek sexual and/or romantic partners and think about all that these pursuits entail.

There is second reason why we think people evaluate culture war issues more readily than they evaluate other issues. People gravitate toward belief systems that meet basic human motivations and deep seated psychological needs (Schwartz 1992, 1994; Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009). Since most people care little for politics and lack well-developed attitudes on most issues, policy attitudes are ill suited to satisfying these needs. Bedroom issues hit much closer to home than other issues. They express self-concepts clearly and immediately.

Specially, culture war judgments satisfy a pair of self-expressive needs. These include value-expressive needs that let individuals signal what is important to them, and social-expressive needs for acceptance by one's cultural groups (Katz 1960; Herek 1986; Johnston, Lavine, and Federico 2017). In terms of value-expression, culture war issues express core beliefs about the moral order, about what is right and wrong and what is intrinsically good and evil in the world. With respect to social-expression, these issues reflect judgments about who the good guys and bad guys are in the private and public life of the nation and where one's cultural allegiances lie (Hunter 1991; Sears 1993; Legee et al. 2002). Put differently, culture war issue-attitudes symbolize one's cultural identities and affinities.

To illustrate these ideas, support for gay rights signals commitments to equality between straight and gay people, sympathy toward gays and lesbians, and aversion to religious fundamentalists and the religiously meddlesome more broadly (e.g., the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition). If someone feels that gay and lesbian couples must be treated the same as heterosexual couples, opponents of gay marriage and gay adoption are intolerant, irredeemable bigots. On the abortion question, a pro-life without exception position connotes commitment to the sanctity of life, support for traditional gender norms and family structures, fondness for religious fundamentalists, and anti-feminist sentiments. If someone feels that abortion is murder, abortion supporters condone murder. One can brook no compromise with such people. By allowing people to convey core cultural values and group loyalties through policy attitudes, culture war issues function as “expressively motivated signals of identity” (Johnston, Lavine, and Federico 2017: 5). Issues such as tax reform or Medicaid expansion or defense spending do not symbolize cultural values and affinities the same way. They cannot bear that symbolic weight.

We assume that these expressive processes launch during the impressionable years of late

adolescence. By this time, young people are socialized into particular cultures. Most have adopted particular constellations of values endorsed by their cultural groups, their social networks, and influential peers. This includes beliefs about the proper moral order and the groups worthy of esteem or disdain. Abortion and gay rights function as a conduit for social- and value-expressive needs. This helps facilitate the crystallization of culture war issue-attitudes among young people.

To sum up, we posit that individuals have more opportunities to evaluate abortion and gay rights than just about any other political issue. Culture war issues intrude more often and deeply into people's lives. Moreover, culture war issue-attitudes reflect deeply held views about sex, women, and family organization as well as social group allegiances. They are symbolic attitudes *par excellence*. All of this suggests people evaluate culture war issues to a greater extent than exclusively political issues. More practice leads to stronger attitudes. Lastly, we presume the developmental process begins during the impressionable years. When young people evaluate bedroom issues and relate these to their burgeoning self-concepts, they develop strong attitudes about the core issues in America's culture wars.

Attitude Strength as a Function of Evaluative Consistency

As noted earlier, Zaller and Feldman (1992) suggest that politically sophisticated individuals and others compelled toward cognitive consistency may come to hold true policy attitudes. We concur with Zaller and Feldman that few people satisfy these criteria. For the vast bulk of the populace, political issues are too far afield to merit much thought. Hence, few people experience cognitive drives to reconcile conflict among incompatible considerations they have picked up in public discourse. Indeed, they are probably unaware any inconsistencies exist. In short, pressures for cognitive consistency seem a poor bet for generating consistent evaluations

of culture war issues.

Absent cognitive consistency pressures, why should people evaluate abortion and gay rights in a similar fashion across different occasions? Our answer centers on moral emotions. We propose that individuals experience innate or learned emotional drives that engender evaluative consonance over time. To elaborate, the appraisal of certain stimuli activates deeply engrained mental systems that prime moral emotions (Haidt 2012; Aarøe, Bang Petersen, and Arceneaux 2017). These emotions feed directly into evaluations of the stimulus. Upon exposure to such entities, these systems generate consistent emotional reactions. In other cases, people learn from their culture that particular symbols warrant particular emotional responses. Emotional responses link to these symbols early on and subsequently harden through further expressions (Sears 1983, 2001).

Whether the emotional drivers are innate or learned, as evaluative frequency increases, additional evaluative knowledge accrues to entity. Because these mechanisms are rooted either in the neurophysiological architecture of the brain or conditioned via social learning, the evaluation process occurs automatically and spontaneously, lying beyond the person's conscious control (Hibbing, Smith, and Alford 2014). In short, people render consistent evaluations of culture war issues because the positions they take *feel* right.³

Two moral emotions – disgust and anger – are especially important. Both emotions systematically affect the positions people take on culture war issues. We begin with disgust. Evolutionary psychologists theorize that disgust sensitivity is an adaptation that helped our

³ More broadly, there is a rich body of theoretical and empirical work on the role emotions play in guiding political judgment and behavior (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000; Valentino et al. 2011; Albertson and Gadarian 2015).

ancestors survive by avoiding lethal diseases. The behavioral immune system sounds emotional alarms by evoking feelings of disgust in the presence of potential contamination from unseen pathogens. Disgust motivates withdrawal behavior from the perceived contaminant, thereby minimizing the danger and increasing survival odds (Schaller 2006; Schaller and Duncan 2007). In short, disgust functions as an “evolved disease avoidance mechanism” (Park, Faulker, and Schaller 2003: 67).

The behavioral immune system is hardwired into the human brain. The same objects that disgusted our ancestors remain disgusting today, but there now exists a larger set of disgust elicitors. These include human bodily fluids and waste, violations of the body envelope, some sexual practices (e.g., incest), and people with physical disabilities. All of these targets tie back to a hyper-vigilant behavior immune system. However, another class of threat stands apart from this set of triggers. Many people find violations of interpersonal and social norms disgusting. Moral psychologists refer to this as “moral disgust” (Haidt, Rozin, McCauley, and Imada 1997; Chapman and Anderson 2013).

Moral disgust is preadaptation that has moved away from its evolutionary origins as a disease avoidance mechanism and spread to other types of threats (Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley 2008). Most people find violations of interpersonal ethics quite loathsome. These include betrayal, cheating, hypocrisy, lying, obsequiousness, and theft, among others (Rozin et al. 2008). In addition, the transgression of social norms elicits disgust. For example, sexual practices that deviate from heterosexual norms disgust some people. What someone finds repulsive depends on universal human biology and the specifics of one’s socialization experiences in a given the culture. “Disgust may have its roots in evolution, but it is also clearly a cultural product” (Haidt et al, 1997. 111).

Turning back to culture war issues, biology and culture jointly affect attitudes toward abortion and gay rights. We begin with the link between biological disgust and culture war attitudes. A burgeoning line of research shows that feelings of disgust—“the most primitive and central of emotions”—predict positions on abortion and gay rights (Smith et al. 2011: 1). This holds for both self-reported measures of disgust sensitivity and physiological measures of disgust. The more psychologically and physiologically sensitive people are to revolting stimuli (e.g., vomit, maggots, etc.), the stronger their opposition to abortion and gay rights. Multiple studies across the psychological sciences demonstrate that different manifestations of disgust sensitivity correlate with culture war issue-attitudes, controlling for a large number of covariates (Oxley et al. 2008; Inbar, Pizarro, and Bloom 2008; Inbar et al. 2009; Terrizzi et al. 2010; Smith et al. 2011; Kam and Estes 2016). Put simply, orthodox positions on culture war issues take root in moral disgust that arises automatically and spontaneously.

Closely related work on moral foundations theory suggests that attitudes toward abortion and gay rights are rooted in innate moral modules that generate automatic, gut-level judgments about right and wrong (Graham et al. 2013). In one especially comprehensive work, Koleva et al. (2012) demonstrate that the moral foundation of purity predicts attitudes toward abortion and same-sex marriage to a much greater extent than other moral foundations (e.g., harm, fairness, etc.). People predisposed to purity concerns are especially likely to condemn abortion and gay rights relative to those with less intense purity drives. Given the close relationship between disgust sensitivity and the purity foundation, these results are not surprising.

Just as importantly, this research shows that disgust sensitivity has little or no effect on other political issues such as government spending, tax policy, affirmative action, environmental issues, the death penalty, defense policy, and so on (Inbar, Pizarro, and Bloom 2008; Terrizzi et

al. 2010; Smith et al. 2011; Kam and Estes 2016). Likewise, the moral purity foundation manifests much weaker effects on cultural issues such as euthanasia, global warming, and teaching creationism than on abortion and gay rights (Koleva et al. 2012). This suggests that the positions people take on most political issues are detached from moral feelings that arise automatically and spontaneously. Abortion and gay rights represent the exceptions.

So far, we have explained how moral disgust generates consistently negative reactions to culture war issues. Next, we argue that moral anger helps explain why some people render consistently positive evaluations of these issues. Like moral disgust, moral anger governs how people react to a wide range of non-political stimuli. Some of these reactions are innate; other reactions develop via socialization processes (Sears 2001; Moll et al. 2005; Haidt 2012). People feel moral anger toward those that violate the personal autonomy of others in various settings. To take some examples, individuals get angry when a smoker lights up in a small, waiting room that bans smoking, when someone expresses racist sentiments, or when reminded of Nazi gas chambers (Rozin et al. 1999). Whereas moral disgust is preadaptation that has moved beyond disease avoidance to cover moral threats, the anger people feel in response to violations of social norms may be more a product of socialization within a given culture. Whatever the mix of inputs, people feel moral anger across multiple contexts in their everyday lives.

Moral anger operates in the domain of politics. For example, moralistic resentments against African Americans systematically affect how whites evaluate racially ameliorative policies, the political parties, and presidential candidates (Kinder and Sears 1981; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears and Tesler 2010; Tesler 2016).

The key question is whether moralistic resentments operate on culture war issues. Recent research by Gardarian and van der Vort (2018) find that they do. In one study, they show that

anti-gay primes spontaneously elicit disgust among one set of subjects and anger among other subjects. The former result echoes work on the link between disgust sensitivity and gay rights-opposition summarized above (e.g., Kam and Estes 2016), while the latter result shows that anti-gay messages generate emotional backlash among people sympathetic toward gays and lesbians. Importantly, Gardarian and van der Vort also show that many individuals simultaneously felt disgusted by anti-gay messaging. In a second experiment, they demonstrate that anti-gay news stories and images depress support for gay rights among respondents disgusted by homosexuality and enhance support for gay rights among subjects angered by anti-gay rhetoric. These results show how moral emotions spontaneously inform public opinion about gay rights.

In contrast to moral disgust, we suspect that the arousal of moral anger depends more heavily on conditioned affects learned early in the political life cycle than on innate mental modules such as the behavioral immunity system. In the pre-adult years people learn from their social and cultural networks that discrimination is wrong, and many of them attach negative emotions to such acts. This would explain why people automatically feel moral anger against those that denigrate gays and lesbians and consistently render positive evaluations of gay rights. As the evaluative frequency of culture war issues rises during late adolescence and into adulthood moral sympathy for gay rights accrues, thereby accelerating attitude crystallization (Sears 1983, 2001).

What about the abortion? Do people feel some mix of anger and disgust at the prospect of restricted abortion access? Given the close correspondence between people's positions on abortion and gay rights and their grounding in common cultural symbols, we think it is likely that the same process that generates emotional backlash among cultural progressives on gay rights operates for abortion. That said, we are not aware of studies documenting connections

between moral anger and support for abortion rights. Luker (1984) provides qualitative evidence suggesting that such processes play out among pro-choice activists.

Overall, complementary streams of research on disgust sensitivity, moral foundations, and moral indignation suggest that abortion and gay rights habitually activate biologically engrained emotional systems and conditioned affective responses tied to important cultural symbols and beliefs about sex, gender, and families (Hibbing et al. 2014; Sears 2001; Leege et al. 2002). These systems begin working during the early years of political development once bedroom issues can intrude into people's personal lives. Because abortion and gay rights automatically and spontaneously elicit powerful moral emotions at a subconscious level, people are constrained to react to the stimuli in the same way upon repeated exposure.

This helps to explain why people will evaluate culture war issues in a generally similar way over time. If one feels that abortion and same-sex marriage are disgusting, they automatically react the same way when exposed to these issues. Likewise, if one abhors limiting female autonomy and opposition to same-sex rights, they will automatically experience strong emotional compulsions.⁴ These mechanisms push culture war issue-attitudes toward the disposition end of the attitude continuum in the Eagly-Chaiken framework.

Summary: Why Culture War Issue-Attitudes are Strong

To sum up, we have argued that culture war issue-attitudes are strong in absolute terms, and stronger than virtually any other political issue. The Zaller-Feldman model does a good job

⁴ To be clear, we are not saying the people are prisoners to the emotions they feel, nor that the positions they take on culture war issues depend entirely on these responses. Instead, we claim that people possess drives for emotional consistency that can take the place of the drives for cognitive consistency Zaller and Feldman identify as precursors for the emergence of crystalized policy attitudes, and that these moral emotions provide strong (not definitive) nudges to take progressive or orthodox positions on abortion and gay rights.

explaining why people hold weak attitudes on most issues. Integrating models of attitude strength, symbolic politics, and moral psychology, we have theorized that people develop strong attitudes about issues they evaluate frequently on the basis of moral intuitions. Most issues fail this test. By contrast, people think about bedroom issues in their daily lives starting in their teenage years, and they are constrained by moral emotions to reach the same bottom-judgment about the issues on different occasions. Since abortion and gay rights meet both conditions, they should possess the attributes of strong attitudes. They should be durable, resist attack, impact information and guide political judgment and behavior. Vested with moral power, culture war issues are well positioned to guide a wide range of political phenomena.

WHAT IS AUTHORITARIANISM?

Next, we take up authoritarianism. In their seminal work, Adorno et al. (1950: 223-224, 229) define authoritarianism as an antidemocratic personality type comprised of nine related traits: conventionalism, submissiveness, aggression, anti-intraception, superstitious, tough mindedness, cynicism, projectivity, and sexual preoccupation. Altemeyer (1981) winnowed the list of defining attributes from nine to a more manageable three and developed a vastly improved measure of the construct. Conceptual and measurement refinements have continued to this day (Feldman and Stenner 1997; Feldman 2003; Stenner 2005; Hetherington and Weiler 2009).

Contemporary treatments view authoritarianism as an enduring evaluative predisposition that centers on the proper balance between a group and an individual (Duckitt 1989). What sets authoritarianism apart from other social and political attitudes is that abstract principles serve as the target of evaluation. Authoritarians prefer social order to social fluidity; the conventional over the unusual; certainty over ambiguity; uniformity over diversity; conformity to personal autonomy; submissiveness to group authorities over independence; and aggressiveness over

restraint. Non-authoritarians (or libertarians, as they sometimes called) hold reverse value preferences. Although psychologists emphasize different principles in their conceptualizations, most agree that the tradeoff between what is best for the individual and what is best for the group elicit strong feelings about good and bad, and right and wrong. Across many different definitions of authoritarianism, scholars agree that it is a strong attitude. Johnston, Lavine, and Federico (2017: 23) capture the consensus when they write: “Authoritarianism is typically defined as a general attitude of deference to authority and convention, couple with punitiveness and animosity toward ‘deviant’ outgroups, and a skeptical view of democracy.”

Different scholars emphasize different principles, but everyone views authoritarianism as a bedrock disposition—arguably the bedrock predisposition—that anchors the political belief systems of ordinary people. Authoritarianism is a “normative ‘worldview’ about the social value of obedience and conformity” (Stenner 2005: 17), an “exogenous, perhaps apolitical predisposition” (Barker and Tinnick 2006: 250) that “structures opinions about both domestic and foreign policy issues” (Hetherington and Weiler 2009: 4).

An example: authoritarians typically adopt more conservative positions on civil liberties than libertarians do. Another example: authoritarians hold more hawkish positions on national security relative to libertarians. A third example: authoritarians offer less support for protections for racial and ethnic outgroups relative to the positions adopted by libertarians. Finally, recent evidence shows that authoritarianism predicts support for the GOP and its presidential candidates (Federico, Feldman, and Weber N.d.). To conclude, authoritarianism is one of the most powerful attitude dispositions in the study of public opinion. As such, it represents a least likely case to issue attitudes.

CAN CULTURE WAR ATTITUDES MOVE AUTHORITARIANISM?

We have argued that culture war attitudes possess the attributes of strong attitudes. That is, culture war attitudes are durable, resist attack from other attitudes and beliefs, and guide judgment. Empirical research supports each of these propositions. To begin with durability, studies affirm that positions on abortion and gay rights hold steady in the minds of voters (Converse and Markus 1979; Dancey and Goren 2010). Second, studies show that culture war attitudes are hard to move. In work on party sorting, Levendusky (2009) establishes that party id induces meaningful change in every policy issue he examines save abortion. Dancey and Goren (2010) show that public opinion on gay rights is surprisingly resistant to partisan-updating. Tesler (2015) finds that attitudes toward gays and lesbians, once primed, do not move in response to pre-existing evaluations of the incumbent president. And while Carsey and Layman (2006) find that abortion attitudes prove susceptible to partisan updating, this effect is confined to small subsets of the mass public. Lastly, findings reported in chapters 6 and 7 show that culture war issues systematically affect political, ideological, and religious predispositions while, at the same time, being only marginally affected by these predispositions.

These findings attest to the moral power of culture war attitudes. As such, the possibility that culture war attitudes shape authoritarianism cannot be dismissed out of hand. That said, some might counter that authoritarianism is demonstrably stronger than political and religious predispositions. It is a worldview that structures political and religious predispositions. By definition, world views are fixed. This is a testable proposition. Beyond this obvious point, there are theoretical reasons to suggest that authoritarianism is not as impervious to change as commonly assumed.

The presumption that core values are durable and resist attack has not always fared well when tested. Scholars define core values as “relatively abstract and durable claims about virtue

and the good society” (Kinder 1998: 808); “overarching normative principles and belief assumptions about government, citizenship, and American society” (McCann 1997: 565); and “fundamental and enduring attitudes towards general moral and political principles” (Heath, Evans, and Martin 1996: 115). Core values “act as general points of reference, helping to guide mass opinion on specific issues” (Pollock, Lillie, and Vitties 1993: 29) and thus “function as the backstops of belief systems” (Tetlock 2000: 247). Such conceptualizations assume durability and impact.

Elsewhere, we have utilize panel data and experimental data to show that a number of core principles (e.g., equality, self-reliance, limited government, and tolerance) are subject to the influence of partisan identities (Goren 2005; Goren, Federico, and Kittilson 2009). To take an example, when Democratic sources endorse equal opportunity, Democratic and Republican identifiers in the sample polarize on these values. Likewise, when GOP sources endorse self-reliance, Democratic and Republican subjects again polarize (Goren, Federico, and Kittilson 2009). McCann’s findings (1997) prove especially damaging to the thesis that core values are fixed normative standards. Utilizing a two-wave panel design, he demonstrates that attitudes toward presidential candidates systematically affect – without being affected by – general beliefs about equality and tradition (cf. Lenz 2012). In conjunction, this body of work shows that views about abstract moral and political principles are less durable and impactful than typically assumed.

Like core values more broadly, scholars see authoritarianism as a durable principle that function as central element in mass belief systems. This assumption underlies all work that treats authoritarianism as a stable dispositional input that shapes a wide range of issues without, in turn, being shape these issues. We are unaware of any work that uses test-retest correlations to

show that authoritarianism is stable over time. Furthermore, we know of no work testing whether authoritarianism moves in response to political orientations. We think culture war-issues attitudes are a good bet to do just that.

HYPOTHESES

If authoritarianism functions as a worldview that is exogenous to politics, it should prove more durable over time than culture war attitudes. It should also predict views on issues that emphasize the tradeoff between individual autonomy and conformity to group authority. Abortion and gay rights rank high on the list of such issues, because they pit personal choice on matters of family structure, gender roles, and human sexuality against long standing cultural norms about these ideas. The conventional framework leads to the following hypotheses.

- H₁: Authoritarianism is more stable over time than attitudes toward culture war issues.
- H₂: Authoritarianism induces changes in culture war attitudes over time.

By contrast, our theory of moral power proposes that emotionally charged, identity expressive attitudes toward abortion and gay rights are durable in their own right and can induce changes in related dispositions. This reasoning leads to our rival hypotheses.

- H₃: Attitudes toward culture war issues are as stable over time as authoritarianism.
- H₄: Culture war attitudes induce change in authoritarianism over time.

DATA AND MEASURES

We test these hypotheses using data from multiple GSS and NES panels. We begin with the 2006-2010, 2008-2012, and 2010-2014 GSS panels before turning to NES data. To tap culture war issues in the GSS surveys, we rely on the seven yes/no questions that ask respondents about the acceptability of abortion under different scenarios and the two items on

gay relationships and same-sex marriage (see Chapter 4 for question wording). Recall that additive scales formed from these items are exceptionally reliable (typically over 0.90).

To measure authoritarianism, we use the standard forced-choice items that gauge respondent's attitudes toward child-rearing practices (Feldman and Stenner 1997; Stenner 2006; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Johnston et al. 2017). The introductory prompt reads: "Although there are a number of qualities that people feel that children should have, every person thinks that some are more important than others. I am going to read you pairs of desirable qualities. For each pair please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have". Here are the item pairings.

Q1: Independence or respect for elders

Q2: Obedience or self-reliance

Q3: Curiosity or good manners

Q4: Being considerate or well-behaved

Scholars score "respect for elders", "obedience", "good manners", and "well behaved" as authoritarian responses. Expressed preferences for these qualities denote commitment to conformity, deference to group authority, and conventionalism. Conversely, the endorsement of "independence", "self-reliance", "curiosity", and "being considerate" signify an evaluative preference for self-direction and individual autonomy.

The child-rearing items have appeared on multiple NES surveys since 1992. They serve as the benchmark measure of latent authoritarianism. Alas, the GSS panels lack these measures. Fortunately, the questionnaire includes reasonable substitutes. The GSS has a child-rearing battery that begins with the following prompt: "If you had to choose, which thing on this list would you pick as the most important for a child to learn to prepare him or her for life?"

Respondents then rank-order five values: “to obey”, “to be well-liked or popular”, “to think for himself or herself”, “to work hard”, and “to help others when they need help.” We tap authoritarianism subtracting the “think” score from the “obey” score. The result is an eight-point scale that gauges the relative importance of personal autonomy vis-à-vis group conformity. We key our measure to run from zero (most libertarian) to one (most authoritarian).

Ideally, we would have more than two items to work with. Having said that, we believe the GSS items are serviceable for several reasons. First, they directly tap the autonomy versus authority tradeoff. Like the NES questions, the GSS questions force respondents to choose between an authoritarian (“obey”) and libertarian (“think for herself”) orientations. Second, question wording is abstract. The items do not refer to particular groups, issues, or controversies. Third, despite containing only two items the scale proves reasonably in cross sectional surveys. The mean ordinal alpha equals 0.69 across the GSS instruments, which is comparable to the NES scales we use below. Fourth, Stenner (2005: 165-168) reports that a number of the usual variable (e.g., education and verbal ability) predict scores on the GSS measure, thereby establishing construct validity. Fifth, as we demonstrate below, the conclusions we draw from the GSS data parallel the conclusions we draw from the NES data. In sum, the GSS items, though limited, appear to work about as well as the NES standards.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

The GSS Stability Tests

We begin with the stability tests. Table 8.1 reports the Pearson r test-retest correlations for our multiple indicator measures of culture war issues and authoritarianism across the 2006-2010, 2008-2012, and 2010-2014 GSS panels. Readers should ignore the NES correlations for the time being. The culture war correlation averages .83 across the GSS panels with no

significant year-to-year variation. The authoritarianism correlations average only .52 across the panels. That translates into a large mean difference of .31. The differences imply that culture war issues are sturdier over four-year periods than child-rearing values.

[Tables 8.1 and 8.2 about here]

We use a nine-item scale for culture war issues and a two-item scale for authoritarianism. A critic might charge that the higher stability for culture war scales results from superior (i.e., more reliable) measurement. The ordinal alpha reliability estimates exceed .90 on average for our culture war scale across the six panel waves and .69 for the child-rearing values scale across all waves. Perhaps the attitudes are equally stable, but the nine culture war indicators do a better job capturing latent positions than the two child-rearing values do with respect to latent authoritarianism. If this is true, Table 8.1's attenuated correlations are uninformative.

To explore this possibility, we use the reliability estimates to correct for random measurement error in the correlations. Table 8.2 reports the corrected correlations for both variables. A comparison of the corrected correlations shows that culture war attitudes remain more stable. Because the culture war scales are highly reliable, the mean corrected correlation rises only slightly from .83 to .87 on average. By contrast, the lower reliability for the child-rearing scales leads to a much larger corrections for measurement error. The mean correlation rises from .52 to .75. That said, the corrected correlations for the culture war variable continues to surpass the corresponding mean for the authoritarianism variable by a non-trivial .12. Even if we assume all of the measurement error results from flawed questions rather than flawed respondents—which seems dubious and likely leads to over-correcting—culture war opinions prove more durable than child-rearing values.

To sum up, culture war attitudes hold steadier over time than authoritarian dispositions.

These findings challenge the received wisdom that culture war attitudes must be weaker than normative worldviews and substantiate our rival claim that such attitudes are as resilient as many of the dispositions on which they purportedly depend. We turn now to testing our key theoretical proposition, which is that culture war attitudes predict changes in authoritarianism over time.

GSS Cross-lagged Models

Our efforts begin with lagged dependent variable (LDV) models of the relationship between culture war attitudes and authoritarianism over time. We use time 1 observations for both variables to predict time 2 values measured four years later. We control for age (measured in years), sex (1=0 female, 0=male), marital status (1=married, 0=other), African American (1=black, 0=non-black), college education (1=BA/BS degree, 0=other), and region (1=south, 0=other). The appendix tables A8.1-A8.3 summarize the full set of OLS estimates for the 2006-2010, 2008-2012, and 2010-2014 GSS analyses, respectively.

We present the quantities of interest in graphical form. For all graphs, moving left to right on the horizontal axis, and from bottom to top on the vertical axis, denote increasing authoritarianism and cultural traditionalism (i.e., pro-life and anti-gay rights). To begin with, the 2006-2010 panel, Figure 8.1's left pane shows the predicted effect of authoritarianism₀₆ on culture war issues₁₀, holding culture war issue₀₆ and the demographics constant. The right pane shows the predicted effect of culture war issues₀₆ on authoritarianism₁₀, controlling for lagged authoritarianism and the demographic variables.

The evidence reported in Figure 8.1 lends no support to either the conventional view or our alternative hypothesis. Neither variable has an impact on the other. The effect of authoritarianism₀₆ on culture war issues₁₀ is substantively trivial ($b = 0.02$) and statistically indistinguishable from zero ($t = 0.29$). The effect of culture war issues₀₆ on authoritarianism₁₀ is

equally inconsequential ($b = 0.00$, $t = 0.04$). We see this plainly in the horizontal slopes in both panes.

[Figures 8.1 and 8.2 about here]

Figure 8.2, covering the period 2008-2012, displays a more encouraging set of results for the theory of moral power. The left pane furnishes no evidence that prior authoritarianism systematically affects contemporaneous culture war opinions, holding past culture war opinions constant ($b = 0.02$, $t = 0.55$). By contrast, the right pane supports the issue-based change hypothesis. Respondents who took the most traditional positions on abortion and gay rights in 2006 score 17 percent higher on authoritarianism₁₀ relative to respondents that took the most progressive positions on abortion and gay rights in 2006 ($t = 4.10$). That is a substantial effect. The standardized OLS coefficient is also large ($b = 0.22$). Note further that this culture war effect is significantly larger than the reverse effect authoritarianism₀₆ has on culture war opinion₁₀ ($0.17 > 0.02$, $p < .03$).

[Figure 8.3 about here]

What about the 2010-2014 panel? Figure 8.3 reinforces what we have just seen. First, previous authoritarianism does not appear to influence culture war opinions ($b = 0.04$, $t = 1.00$), controlling for lagged issue opinions. Second, lagged culture war issues predict current authoritarianism ($t = 6.90$), *ceteris paribus*. Substantively, the difference between the most traditional and most progressive positions on culture war issues₁₀ is associated with a 21 percent difference in authoritarianism₁₄, once we have partialled out variance explained by authoritarianism₁₀ and demographics. The standardized analogue sits at 0.26. Finally, the culture war₁₀ coefficient on authoritarianism₁₄ proves significantly larger than the reciprocal effect of authoritarianism₀₆ on culture war issues₁₄ ($0.21 > 0.04$, $p < .01$).

To tally up the LDV results for the GSS data, the test-retest correlations – corrected and uncorrected – imply that culture war issue attitudes change less over time than authoritarianism. Additionally, Figures 8.2-8.3 demonstrate that positions on culture war issues predict positions on authoritarianism four years later (but not in Figure 8.1). The magnitude of the effects proves sizeable as well. The theory of moral power holds up well in two of three data sets.

By contrast, the conventional wisdom has not fared so well. We uncover no evidence that lagged differences on child-rearing values predict current differences on culture war issues. This was not a case of meaningful substantive effects falling short of significance because of the uncertainty inherent in modestly sized sample. Lagged authoritarianism’s substantive effects are tiny. Culture war issues shape authoritarianism much more than authoritarianism shapes issues—the opposite pattern called for by conventional theorizing.

The NES Stability Tests

Some readers might wonder if the GSS results are a methodological artifact. Skeptics might fault us for not using the gold standard authoritarianism items that appear on NES surveys. Instead, we constructed a difference score based on how respondents rank “to obey” and “to think for himself or herself” as the “thing on this list would you pick as the most important for a child to learn to prepare him or her for life.” Given a two-item measure of authoritarianism and a nine-item measure of culture war issue-positions, perhaps we stacked the deck against the authoritarianism-based change hypothesis in favor of our issue-based change hypothesis. To address this concern, we turn to NES panels that possess the measures we need.

We start with the 2012-2013 NES panel survey before revisiting the 1992-1996 NES panel for additional analysis. The 2012-2013 NES merges the 2012 NES time series (pre- and post-wave respondents) with a randomly selected subset of people that were re-interviewed in

July 2013. This panel contains the standard four-item set of child-rearing values used in most prior work, thereby letting us tackle the measurement critique head on. Unfortunately, this panel contains just two culture war issue-items that appear on both waves. The first asks for respondent positions on same-sex marriage.⁵ The second is a gays and lesbians feeling thermometer. There are no abortion items. Note that this dilemma turns the criticism of our GSS analyses on its head. With a weaker, two-item measure of culture war issues and the standard four-item measure of authoritarianism, the deck is stacked against our alternative hypothesis in favor of the conventional hypothesis.

We return to the estimates in Tables 8.1 and 8.2, which report uncorrected and corrected test-retest correlations, respectively. To begin with the uncorrected estimates, Table 8.1 shows that culture war attitudes are again more stable than authoritarianism ($0.84 > 0.69$).⁶ The 0.15 difference between the uncorrected correlations indicates that even when we pit the best measure of authoritarianism against our more limited two-item measure of culture war issue-attitudes, issues prove more durable over a seven-month period. Table 8.2 reveals that when we use reliability estimates to correct for random measurement error, both test-retest correlations spike to 1.00.⁷ To the extent that random measurement error reflects confused respondents rather than confusing questions, error corrections make responses seem more stable than they really are

⁵ “Which of these statements comes closest to your views? Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry. Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to formal civil unions but not legally marry. There should be no legal recognition of a gay or lesbian couple’s relationship.”

⁶ Table 8.1 also reveals that the NES four-item measure of child-rearing values is more stable than the two-item GSS scale. Keep in mind that the NES panel spans eight months versus four years for each GSS.

⁷ The alphas equal 0.61 for authoritarianism₁₂, .66 for authoritarianism₁₃, 0.77 for culture war issues₁₂, and 0.76 for culture war issues₁₃.

(Converse 1980).

Overall, the GSS and NES continuity correlations in Tables 8.1 and 8. imply opinions about abortion/gay rights are more durable than expressed child-rearing preferences. For the uncorrected estimates, the mean correlation equals 0.84 for culture war issues versus 0.56 for authoritarianism. For the corrected correlations, the culture war mean of 0.90 exceeds the authoritarianism mean of 0.81. Culture war issues are stronger than authoritarianism.

NES Cross-lagged Models

[Figure 8.4 about here]

Moving onto the NES cross-lagged regressions, we model authoritarianism₁₃ as a function of authoritarianism₁₂, gay rights₁₂, age, and dummy variables for female, married African American, college graduate and southern resident. We then model gay rights₁₃ as a function of the same predictors. Figure 8.4 displays the results (see Table A8.4 in the appendix for the estimates). The left pane in Figure 8.4 yields some modest evidence that authoritarianism₁₂ predicts positions on gay rights₁₃, controlling for previous gay rights views and demographics. The authoritarianism effect is significant at $p < .05$ but substantively modest. The unstandardized coefficient shows that the most authoritarian respondents in 2012 score three percent more conservative on gay rights in 2013 compared to the most libertarian respondents in 2012. The standardized coefficient is similarly underwhelming ($b = 0.03$).

By contrast, the right pane in Figure 8.4 affirms the moral power hypothesis. 2012 subjects that completely reject gay rights score 10 percent higher on 2013 authoritarianism compared to 2012 subjects that fully endorse gay rights ($p < .001$). Note further that the gay rights₁₂→authoritarianism₁₃ effect exceeds the authoritarianism₁₂→gay rights₁₃ effect beyond chance levels ($0.10 > 0.03$, $p < .01$).

The NES results replicate what we found in the 2008-2012 and 2010-2014 GSS data. Readers uncomfortable with the GSS measure of authoritarianism should be reassured because the same pattern repeats when the gold standard NES measure of authoritarianism takes its place. More broadly, the GSS and NES results present clear correlational evidence suggesting that culture war issue-attitudes possess moral power. People revisit and adjust their preferences about group conformity vis-à-vis individual autonomy based on how they feel about abortion and gay rights. If authoritarianism is a fixed worldview, this should not happen.

The 2012-2013 NES contains some unique features that permit further tests of our issue-based change hypothesis. The preceding analysis relied on a thin measure of culture war issue-attitudes. With only two gay rights items and no abortion items to speak of, the limited content domain of the measure invites skepticism about the results. Does subpar measurement attenuate the issue-authoritarianism link? Given the absence of abortion items, can we draw conclusions about culture war issues? Fortunately, the 2012 wave contains an unusually rich set of abortion and gay rights. Indeed, the 2012 wave contains more measures than we have in any other panel. As such, we can leverage these data to estimate the impact that the best measure of culture war attitudes has on the best measure of authoritarianism.

The 2012 wave contains eight abortion questions. The battery begins “I’d like to describe a series of circumstances in which a woman might want to have an abortion. For each one, please tell me whether you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose it being legal for a woman to have an abortion in that circumstance.” The eight conditions are as follows:

Q1: “Staying pregnant would hurt the woman’s health but is very unlikely to cause her to die.”

Q2: “Staying pregnant could cause the woman to die.”

Q3: “The pregnancy was caused by the woman having sex with a blood relative.”

Q4: “The pregnancy was caused by the woman being raped.”

Q5: “The fetus will be born with a serious birth defect.”

Q6: “Having the child would be extremely difficult for the woman financially.”

Q7: “The child would not be the sex the woman wants.”

Q8: “If the woman chooses to have one.”

Respondents who said “favor” or “oppose” received a follow-up probing the intensity of preference. Respondents that opted for the “neither” position got a follow up asking if they lean one way or the other. All told, for each scenario we have a nine-point scale that ranges from favoring abortion a great deal to opposing abortion a great deal.

In addition, the 2012 way has four gay-rights items.

Q9: “Do you favor or oppose laws to protect gays and lesbians against job discrimination?”

Q10: “Do you think gays and lesbians should be allowed to serve in the armed forces or don’t you think so?”

Q11: “Do you think gay or lesbian couples should be legally permitted to adopt children?”

Q12: The same-sex marriage item described used above and described in footnote 5.

For Q9-Q10, respondents receive a branching question that asks whether they feel strongly or not strongly about their preference, which yields four point items.⁸

These 12 items form a remarkably robust measure of attitudes toward the archetypal culture war issues. The content validity of the eight abortions items vastly exceeds the workhorse

⁸ We dropped the gays and lesbians feeling thermometer item because it lacks explicit policy content.

NES item that appears earlier in the book. The same holds true for this quartet of gay rights items. As one would expect, the scales are highly reliable ($\alpha = 0.93$).

A final wrinkle. The NES employed a split ballot design for the “job discrimination” and “armed forces” gay rights items. In $\frac{1}{2}$ of the sample, the items reference “gays and lesbians”. For the other $\frac{1}{2}$, the items reference “homosexuals.” We prefer the “gays and lesbians” wording because it better reflects the terminology used in contemporary political discourse. That said, the homosexual items provide another test of the hypothesis that culture war positions dynamically constrain child-rearing values.

[Figure 8.5 about here]

Figure 8.5 summarizes the quantities of interest. The left pane shows the predicted effect that lagged culture war positions, measured using the “gay rights and lesbian” items, on 2013 authoritarianism, holding lagged authoritarianism and the demographics constant. The culture war effect proves powerful. The most traditional respondents on culture war issue-positions score 20 percent higher on current authoritarianism than the most progressive culture war respondents ($p < .001$). This is an important finding. Put starkly, given a highly valid and reliable measure of culture war positions, we find that it has exceptionally strong predictive effects on the best measure authoritarianism taken seven months later.

The right pane of figure 8.5 displays a similar, albeit weaker, result. When we measure culture war positions using the “homosexual” item wording in place of “gays and lesbians”, prior issue positions remain potent predictors of current child-rearing values ($p < .01$), but the magnitude of the effects drops from 0.20 to 0.11. In any case, these estimates further buttress the conclusion that people update their views of the conformity- autonomy tradeoff based in part on how they feel about abortion and gay rights.

At this point we cycle back to Figure 8.4. The figure shows what happens when we model the dynamic relationship between the NES measure of authoritarianism and a two-item measure of culture war preferences sans abortion. We uncovered little evidence that lagged authoritarianism predicts current positions on the gay rights scale. A skeptic might wonder if the weak $\text{authoritarianism}_{12} \rightarrow \text{culture war issues}_{13}$ result is an artifact of deficiencies in the abortion-free measure of culture war issues. What happens when we use time_1 authoritarianism to predict a time_2 culture war measure that combines abortion and gay right items?

[Figure 8.6 about here]

Fortuitously, the 1992-1996 NES lets us answer this question. The 1992 wave contains the four-item child rearing measure and the four-item culture war variable deployed in earlier chapters. The 1996 wave contains the culture war variable as well. To remind readers, the measure is an additive scale comprised of the standard NES abortion item, the homosexual feeling thermometer item, the homosexual “job discrimination” item, and the homosexual “armed forces” item. Figure 8.6 displays disappointing results for the conventional theory. The most authoritarian in 1992 score four percent higher on culture war conservatism in 1996 relative to the least authoritarian in 1992 ($p < .10$).

To sum up, no matter how we measure culture war issues and authoritarianism, respondent’s issue positions predict their normative worldviews seven months to four years down the line. The data confirm the issue-based change hypothesis in five of six tests and confirm the authoritarianism-driven change hypothesis in one of five tests. The culture war $\text{issues}_{t-1} \rightarrow \text{authoritarianism}_t$ coefficient averages 0.13 across the six panels. The mean $\text{authoritarianism}_{t-1} \rightarrow \text{culture war issues}_t$ coefficient is 0.03. However we look at the evidence, it

favors the theory of moral power over the standard theory.⁹

With-in Case Change using Fixed Effects Models

Stability Tests

So far, we have shown that culture war issue-attitudes are more durable over time than authoritarianism and that lagged culture war opinions predict current authoritarianism. LDV models explain differences between cases over time, but they cannot, absent very strong assumptions, explain whether individuals revise core values in response to changes in their issue positions. In other words, LDV models do not reflect within-person change over time, and thus, miss a critical part of the story. To estimate within-person change, we deploy the simple two-period fixed effects strategy from our earlier chapters. These models let each case serve as its own control for variables—whether observed or unobserved—that do not vary over time (Allison 2009). They permit stronger causal inferences (not definitive) than LDV models.

We gauge within-unit change by subtracting the culture war score at time 1 from the time 2 score. The resulting scale ranges from -1 to 1. A score of -1 means that a respondent with the most traditional position on abortion and gay rights in 2006 adopted the most progressive position on culture war issues in 2010. A score of 1 means that a respondent that took the strongest pro-abortion and pro-gay rights positions in 2006 switched to the strongest anti-abortion and anti-gay rights positions by 2010. A score of 0 reflects individuals that did not change their culture war position at all. We do the same for the authoritarianism. For authoritarianism, a score of -1 reflects maximize movement in the libertarian direction while a

⁹ The appendix at the end of this chapter summarizes the results of a series of robustness checks that seek to address omitted variable bias. The takeaway point is that our key conclusions remain unchanged. That said, we emphasize that our conclusions rest on the analysis of observational data. Panel data do not permit definitive causal inferences, and thus, we do not make definitive causal claims from our data.

score of 1 denotes maximum movement in the authoritarian direction. We use these variables to quantify within-person change over time for moral issues and authoritarianism.

[Figures 8.7 – 8.10 about here]

Figures 8.7-8.9 plot densities for culture war and authoritarianism change in the GSS panels. Figure 8.10 does the same for the 2012-2013 NES. Remember that this NES culture war issues scale is based on only two gay rights items. Two points jump out. First, the culture war densities cluster more tightly around the center (no change) of the distribution than do the authoritarian densities. Second, the tails of the authoritarian densities are thicker than the tails of the culture war distribution. Given this, it's not surprising to find that culture war attitudes change less over time (standard deviation ≈ 0.19 in the GSS and 0.17 in the NES data) than authoritarianism (standard deviation ≈ 0.27 in each distribution) at $p < .01$. Said another way, people's attitudes toward child-rearing values are less stable than their views of abortion and gay rights. Whether we examine relative stability between individuals (Tables 8.1.-8.2) or absolute stability within individuals (Figures 8.7-8.10) makes little difference. Culture war issue-attitudes prove more persistent over time than authoritarianism.

Fixed Effects Models

We now take up the question of whether within-person change in culture war issues predicts within-person change in authoritarianism. We assume that changes in authoritarianism move in response to changes in moral issues positions. We justify this assumption based on results reported above. The test-retest correlations suggested that issue opinions are sturdier over time than authoritarianism. The LDV estimates suggest that culture war opinions dynamically constrain authoritarianism without, in turn, being reciprocally constrained by authoritarianism. The within-person change densities show that culture war opinions are more stable over time

attitudes toward child-rearing qualities. All of this suggests our assumption about the temporal priority of culture-war issues is reasonable.

If culture war attitudes are as strong as claimed in our theory of moral power, they should generate intra-individual change in authoritarianism over time. The fixed effects model tests this proposition directly. Because the model controls for all measured and unmeasured variables that remain constant over time, multiple variables are ruled out as rival explanations for any observed covariation. We cannot rule out the possibility that time varying variables account for all or part of that covariance. That said, the fixed effects approach provides much stronger evidence about presumed causal linkages than the LDV approach.

[Table 8.3 about here]

Table 8.3 reports the parameter estimates from the four data sets in sequence. To begin, there is no evidence that changes in culture war issues over time predict changes in authoritarianism during 2006-2010. This runs contrary to our expectations, but it matches the LDV findings reported in Figure 8.1. By contrast, the 2008-2012 estimates confirm the issue-based change prediction. The 0.19 coefficient is significant at $p < .001$ and substantively meaningful. Respondents that took more traditional position on abortion and gay rights over time adopted increasingly authoritarian values. The 2010-2014 estimates tell the same story. A conservative shift in opinion on culture war issues predicts a right-wing shift in child-rearing values ($b = 0.24, p < .05$). As individuals update their views of culture war issues, they appear to simultaneously adjust their views of the autonomy-conformity tradeoff. Finally, the 2012-2013 NES coefficient is correctly signed, substantively meaningful ($b = 0.10$), and significant at $p < .01$.

To conclude, the fixed effects estimates fortify the inferences from the cross-lagged

models. In the 2006-2010 GSS, we uncovered no evidence that authoritarianism correlates with culture war opinion in either the LDV or fixed effects models. In the 2008-2012 and 2010-2014 GSS data, culture war opinions predict change in authoritarianism over time in both the LDV and fixed effects regressions. The NES LDV and fixed effects results reaffirm these results. Collectively, the analyses presented here reinforce what we have seen elsewhere in the book. In test after test after test, moral issues move predispositions previously assumed to be largely unmovable.

CONCLUSION

Experts characterize authoritarianism as a pre-political disposition, one of a very small number that hold political belief systems together. Authoritarianism is an exogenous predisposition – perhaps even a worldview – that wields enormous influence across a remarkably wide range of political judgments such as party attachments, racial and moral tolerance, domestic policy positions, foreign policy preferences, and the presidential vote (Stenner 2005; Barker and Tinnick 2006; Hetherington and Weiler 2018).

Ours is a different perspective. We think that authoritarianism might be a powerful disposition that shapes political attitudes and behavior under different contexts, but we would like to see that demonstrated empirically on a claim-by-claim basis. We dissent on two fundamental points. First, authoritarianism, like other predispositions examined earlier in our book, is moveable – in fact, more moveable than commonly recognized. The test-retest correlations and change score results confirm that authoritarianism varies a fair amount over time. Most importantly from our perspective, it appears less stable than public opinion on abortion and gay rights.

Second, our theory of moral power insists that evaluations of the central issues in the culture war are powerful in their own right. Culture war issues are deeply imbued with moral intuitions that reflect what feels right and what feels wrong and symbolic content that reflects cultural identities and affinities (Sears 2001; Haidt 2012). We have theorized that such attitudes have the power necessary to motivate revisions in political, religious, and value-based dispositions. In this chapter, we saw that abortion and gay rights nudge people to update their views of child-rearing practices. Authoritarianism may be a worldview that explains a lot about contemporary divisions in American politics, but if it is, it is one that depends on how people feel about the issues at the heart of America's culture war.

Table 8.1: Uncorrected Continuity Correlations for Culture War Issues and Authoritarianism

	Culture war		Difference
	issues	Authoritarianism	
GSS 2006-10	.83	.52	.31
GSS 2008-12	.83	.51	.32
GSS 2010-14	.84	.53	.31
NES 2012-13	.84	.69	.15
Mean	.84	.56	.28

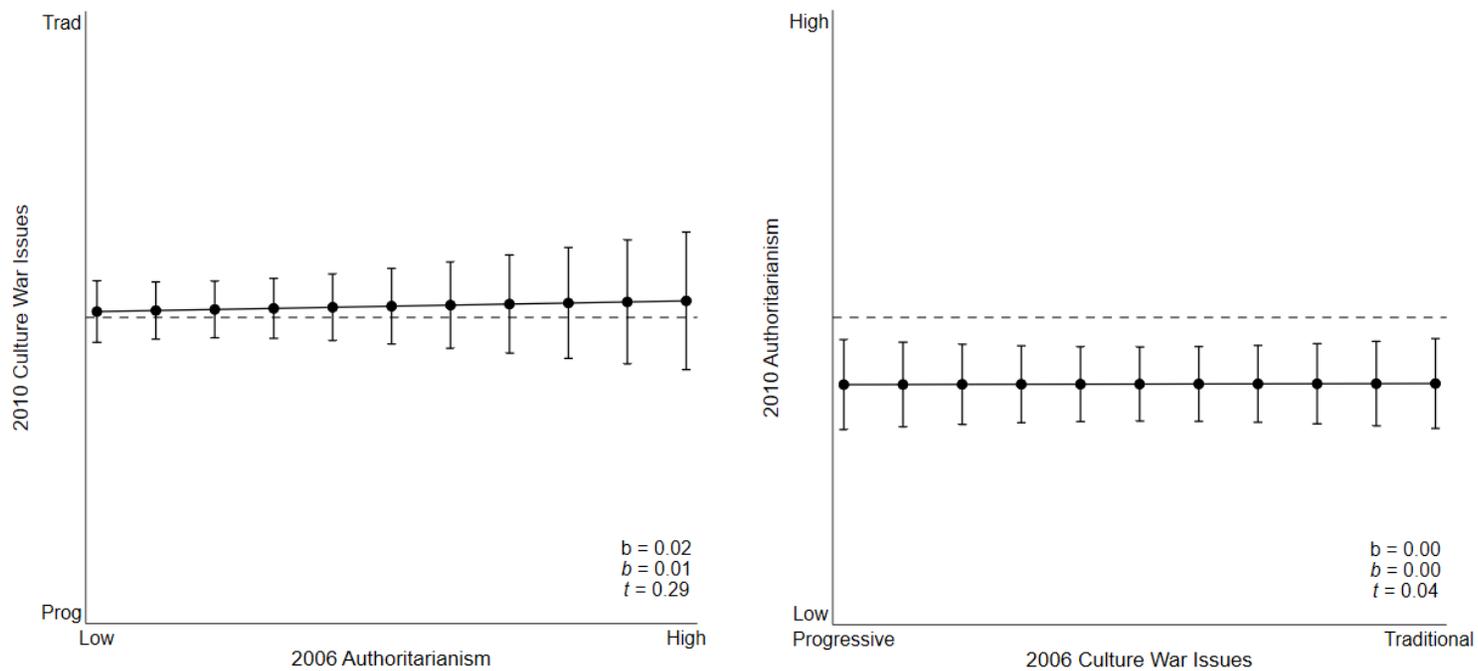
Notes: Cell entries represent Pearson r correlations. Number of observations ranges from 414 to 1,539.

Table 8.2: Corrected Continuity Correlations for Culture War Issues and Authoritarianism

	Culture war		Difference
	issues	Authoritarianism	
GSS 2006-10	.86	.75	.11
GSS 2008-12	.86	.73	.16
GSS 2010-14	.88	.76	.12
NES 2012-13	1.00	1.00	.00
Mean	.90	.81	.09

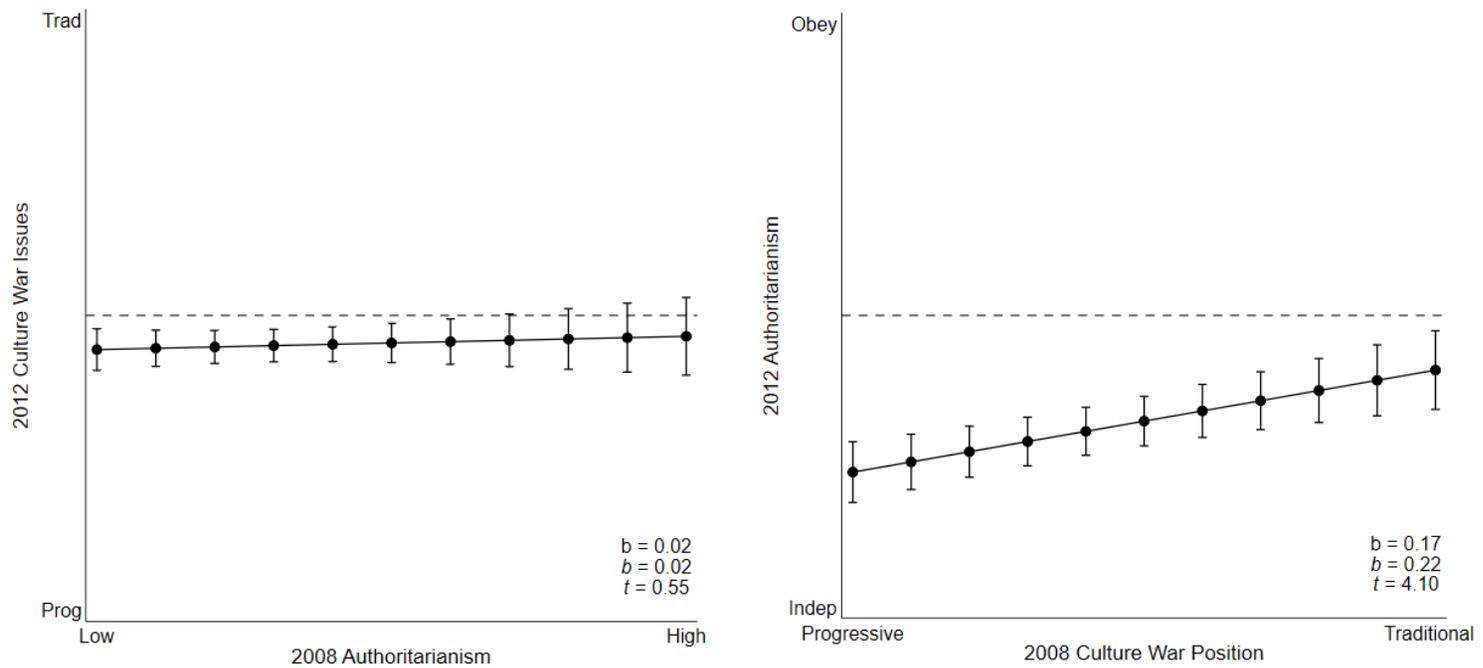
Notes: Cell entries represent disattenuated Pearson r correlations. Corrections used Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients. Number of observations ranges from 414 to 1,539.

Figure 8.1: The Dynamic Relationship between Positions on Culture War Issues and the Authoritarian Predispositions, 2006-2010



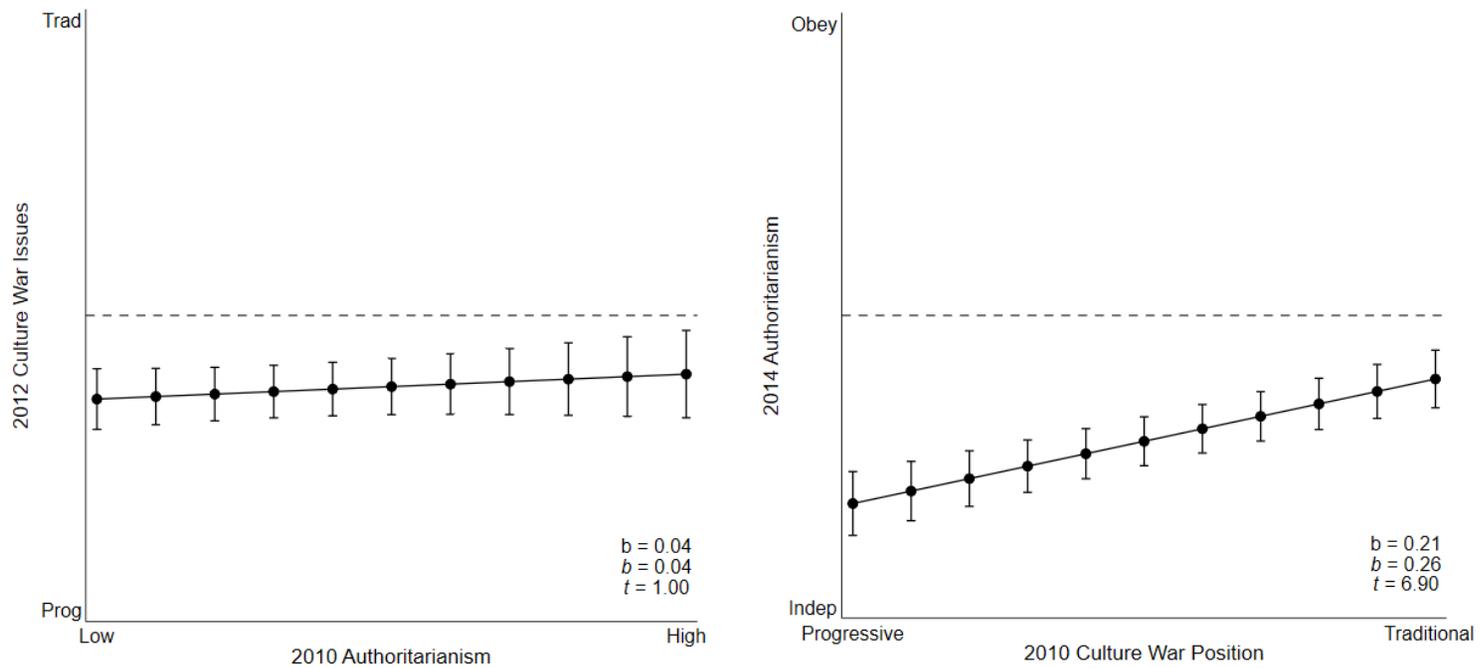
Notes: b = unstandardized OLS coefficient. b = standardized coefficient. t = t statistic. Point estimates bounded by 95% confidence intervals. Number of observations ranges from 191 to 206. Models control for lagged DVs and demographics. See table A8.1 for full model estimates.

Figure 8.2: The Dynamic Relationship between Positions on Culture War Issues and the Authoritarian Predispositions, 2008-2012



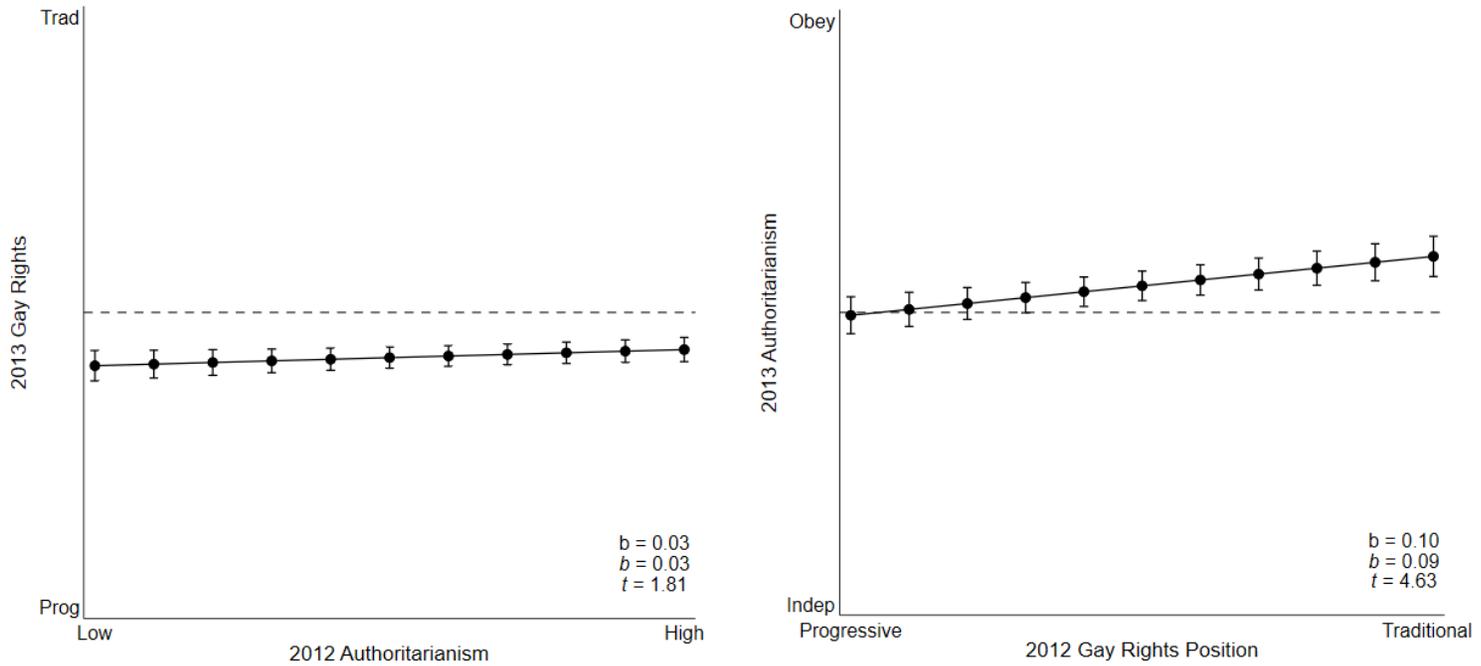
Notes: b = unstandardized OLS coefficient. b = standardized coefficient. t = t statistic. Point estimates bounded by 95% confidence intervals. Number of observations ranges from 386 to 403. Models control for lagged DVs and demographics. See table A8.2 for full model estimates.

Figure 8.3: The Dynamic Relationship between Positions on Culture War Issues and the Authoritarian Predispositions, 2010-2014



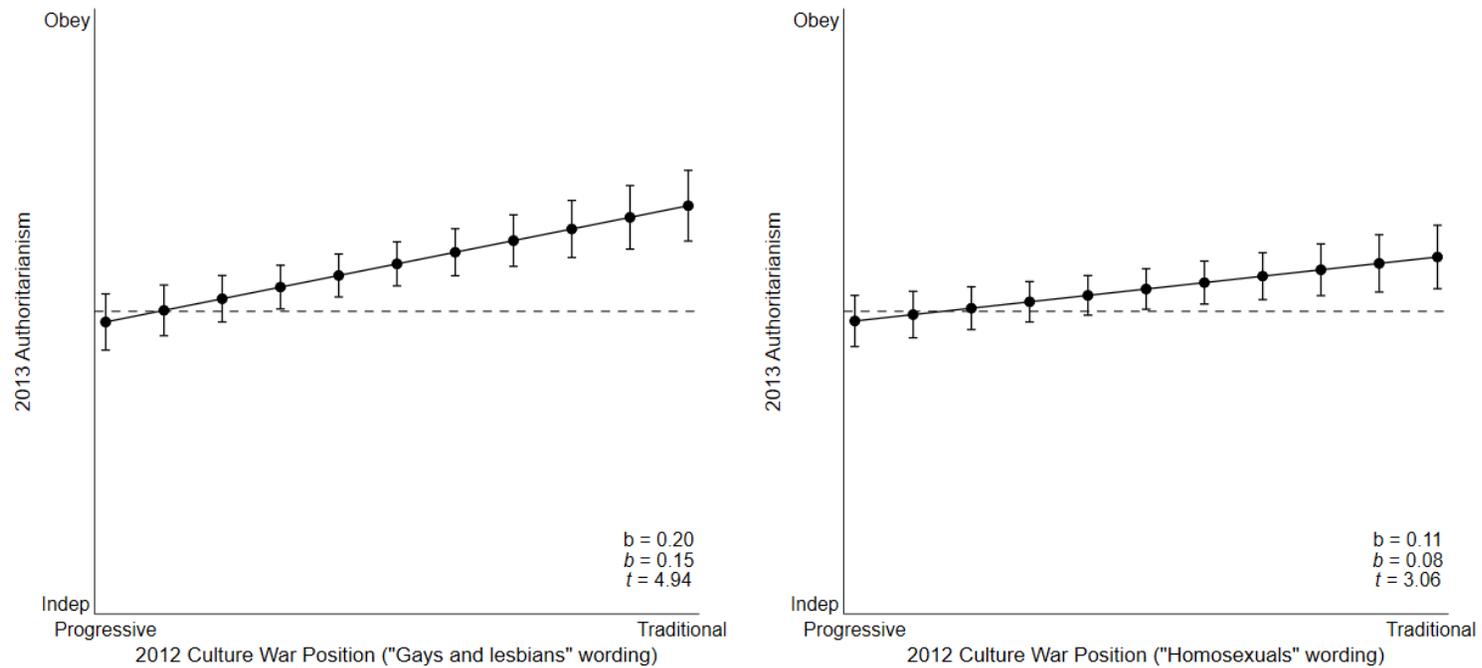
Notes: b = unstandardized OLS coefficient. b = standardized coefficient. t = t statistic. Point estimates bounded by 95% confidence intervals. Number of observations ranges from 358 to 368. Models control for lagged DVs and demographics. See table A8.3 for full model estimates.

Figure 8.4: The Dynamic Relationship between Positions on Gay Rights and the Authoritarian Predispositions, 2012-2013



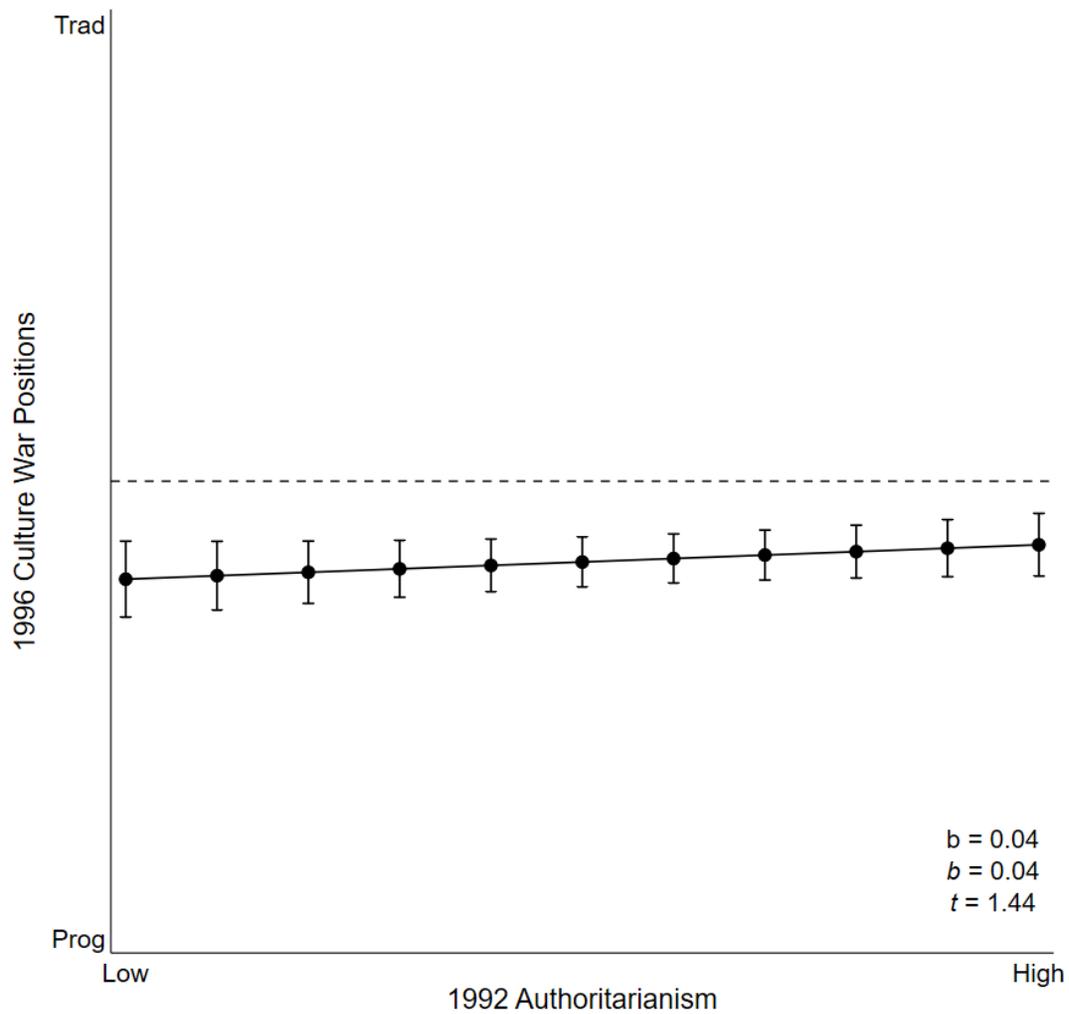
Notes: b = unstandardized OLS coefficient. b = standardized coefficient. t = t statistic. Point estimates bounded by 95% confidence intervals. Number of observations ranges from 1,463 to 1,512. Models control for lagged DVs and demographics. See table A8.4 for full model estimates.

Figure 8.5: Slightly Different Measures of Culture War Issues Predict the Authoritarian Predispositions, 2012-2013



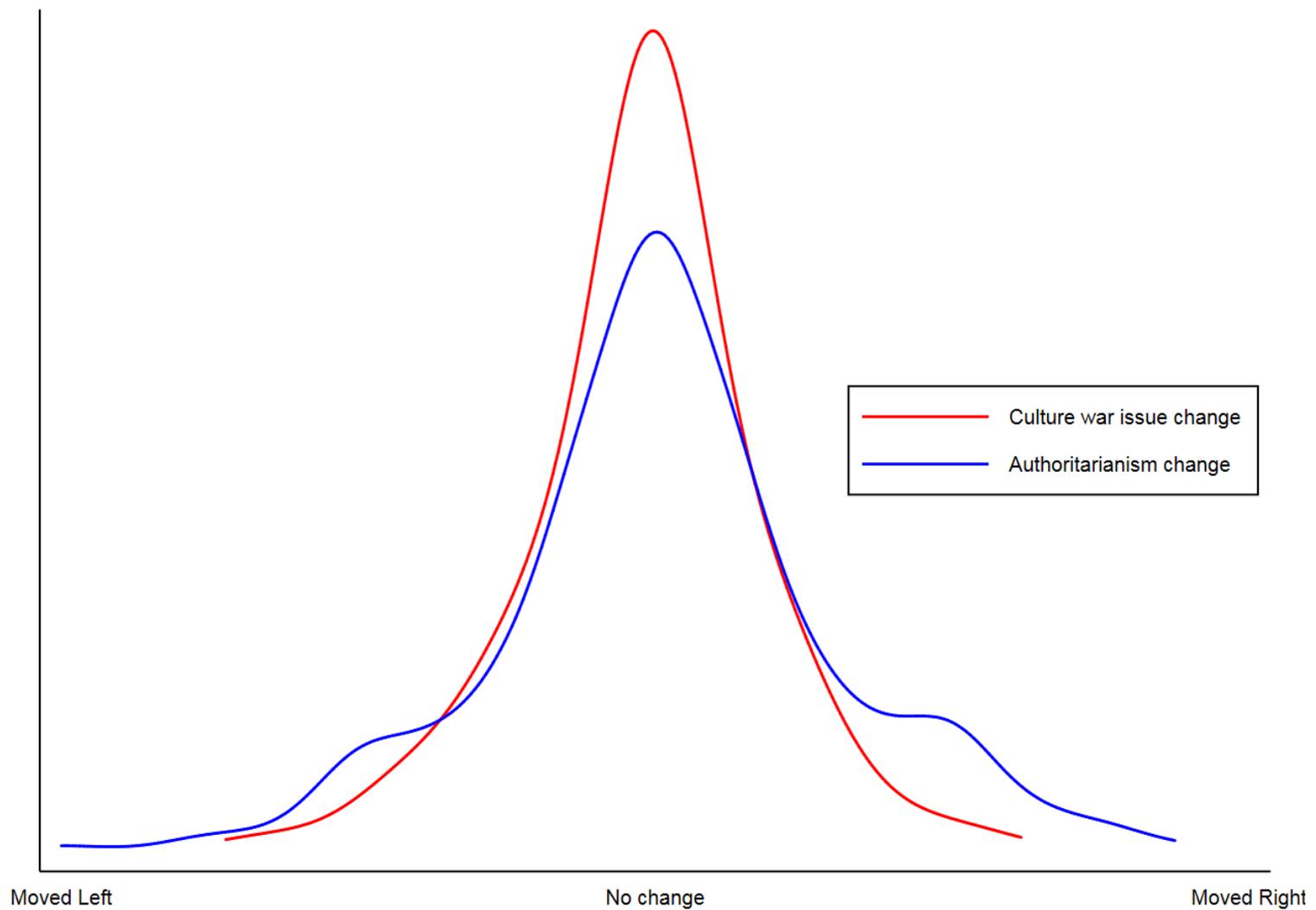
Notes: b = unstandardized OLS coefficient. b = standardized coefficient. t = t statistic. Point estimates bounded by 95% confidence intervals. Number of observations ranges from 720 to 795. Models control for lagged DV and demographics. See table A8.5 for full model estimates.

Figure 8.6: The Effect of 1992 Authoritarian Predispositions (Child-rearing Values) on 1996 Culture War Issues



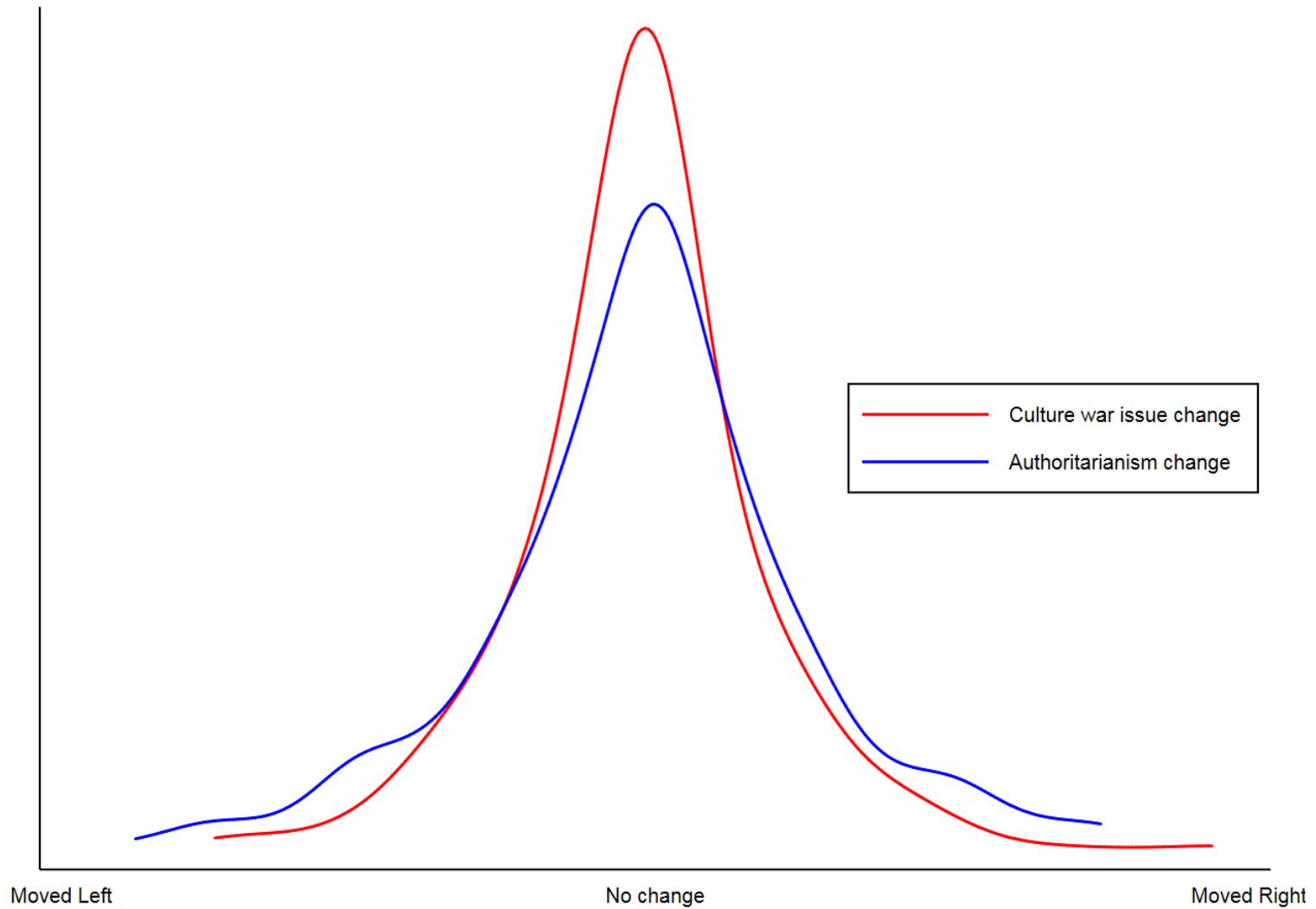
Notes: b = unstandardized OLS coefficient. b = standardized coefficient. t = t statistic. Point estimates bounded by 95% confidence intervals. Number of observations = 509. Models control for lagged DV and demographics. See table A8.6 for full model estimates.

Figure 8.7: Kernel Densities for Within-case Change in Culture War Issue Positions and the Authoritarian Predispositions, 2006-2010



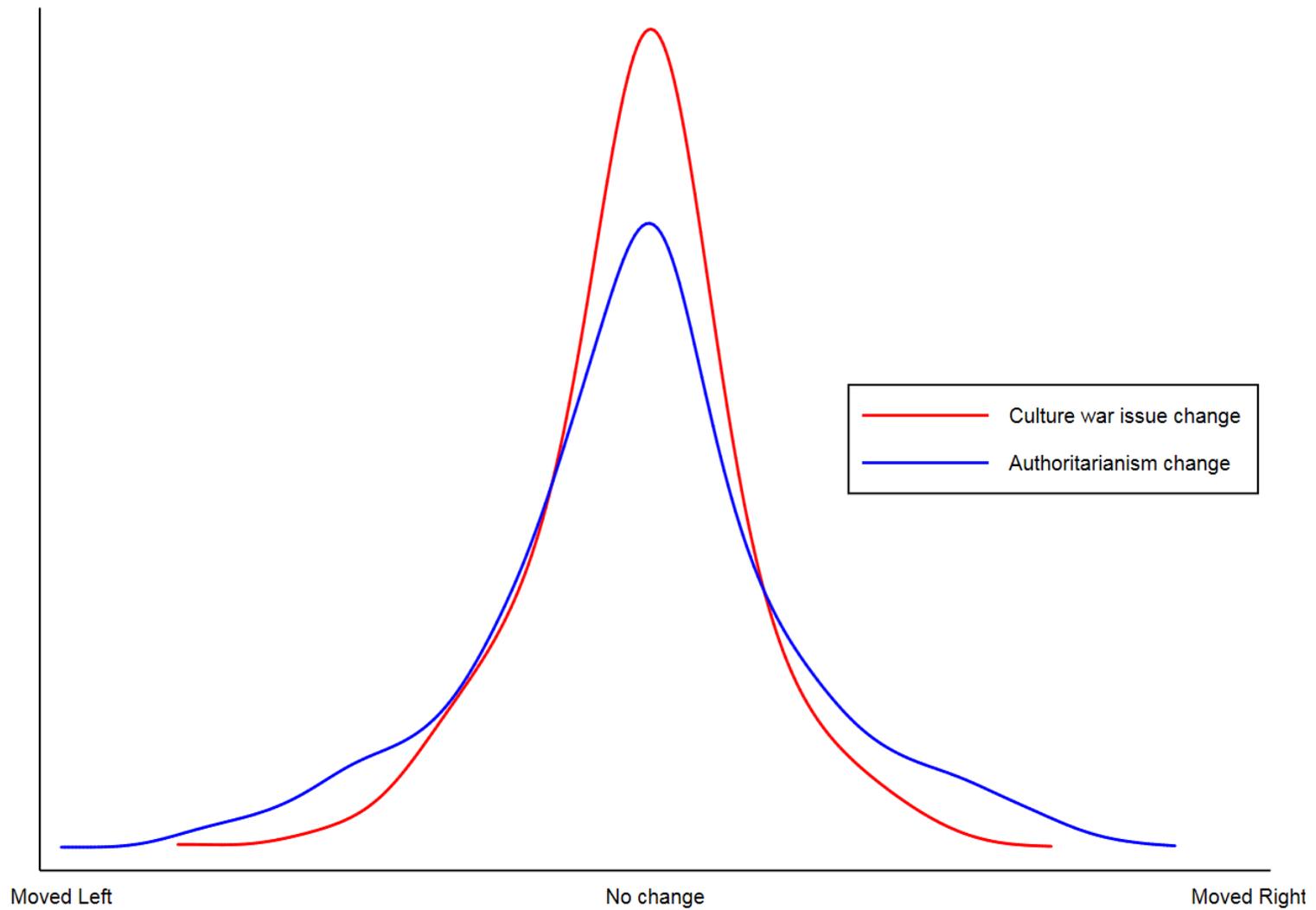
Note: Standard deviations = 0.19 for culture war change and 0.28 for authoritarianism change. These are significantly different at $p < .01$.

Figure 8.8: Kernel Densities for Within-case Change in Culture War Issue Positions and the Authoritarian Predispositions, 2008-2012



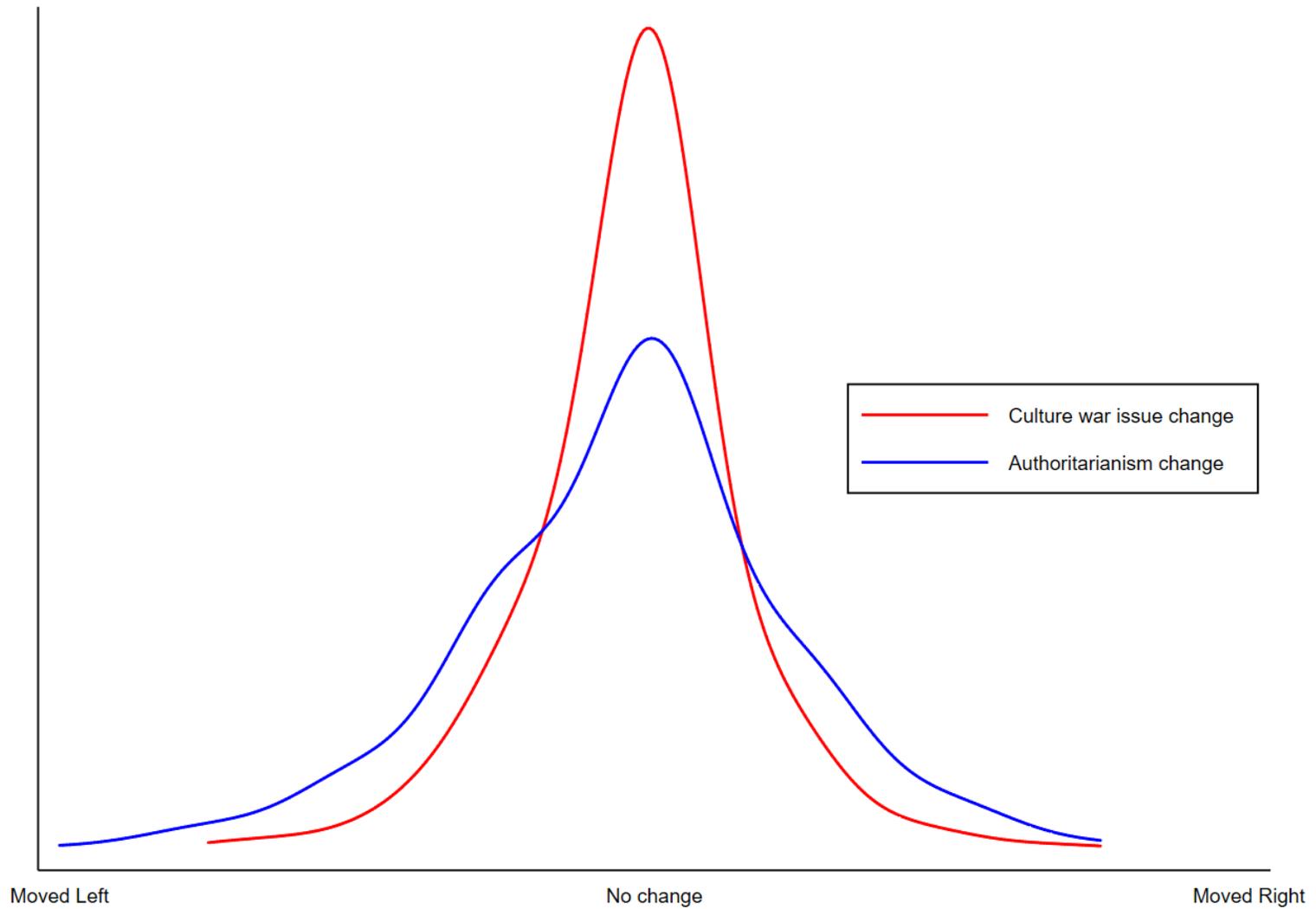
Note: Standard deviations = 0.19 for culture war change and 0.26 for authoritarianism change. These are significantly different at $p < .01$.

Figure 8.9: Kernel Densities for Within-case Change in Culture War Issue Positions and Authoritarian Predispositions, 2010-2014



Note: Standard deviations = 0.18 for culture war change and 0.26 for authoritarianism change. These are significantly different at $p < .01$.

Figure 8.10: Kernel Densities for Within-case Change in Gay Rights Positions and the Authoritarian Predispositions, 2012-2013



Note: Standard deviations = 0.17 for gay rights change and 0.26 for authoritarianism change. These are significantly different at $p < .01$.

Table 8.3: Two-Period Fixed Effects Model of Issue-Driven Change in Authoritarianism, OLS Coefficients

	GSS 2006-2010	GSS 2008-2012	GSS 2008-2012	NES 2012-2013
Culture war issue change → Authoritarianism Change	-0.05 (-0.67)	0.19 (4.34)	0.24 (2.22)	0.10 (2.45)
Number of individuals	190	386	356	1,472

Notes: Unstandardized coefficients. The *t*-statistics are in the parentheses.

Chapter 8 Appendix

Table A8.1: OLS Cross-Lagged Model Estimates for the 2006-10 GSS

	Culture war issues ₁₀	Authoritarianism ₁₀
Culture war issues ₀₆	0.86* (20.72)	0.00 (0.04)
Authoritarianism ₀₆	0.02 (0.29)	0.46* (8.99)
Age	0.00 (0.49)	-0.00 (-0.91)
Female	0.05* (2.17)	-0.06* (-2.37)
Married	-0.02 (-1.10)	0.06* (2.49)
African American	0.05 (1.48)	0.01 (0.23)
College graduate	-0.06* (-2.35)	-0.15* (-5.45)
South	-0.04* (-2.08)	0.07* (2.94)
Constant	0.02 (0.31)	0.28* (4.15)
R ²	.71	.34
F test	214.49*	19.26*
Number of observations	191	206

* p < .05 (one-tailed test).

Notes: OLS = ordinary least squares estimates. The *t* statistics are in parentheses. All estimates adjusted to account for the complex sample design. Culture war issues and authoritarianism coded so that higher scores reflect increasingly conservative positions. All variables lie on a 0-1 range except age, which is measured in years. These estimates are used to produce Figure 8.1.

Table A8.2: OLS Cross-Lagged Model Estimates for the 2008-12 GSS

	Culture war issues ₁₂	Authoritarianism ₁₂
Culture war issues ₀₈	0.85* (30.96)	0.17* (4.10)
Authoritarianism ₀₈	0.02 (0.55)	0.38* (7.67)
Age	0.00 (0.98)	-0.00 (-1.68)
Female	0.00 (0.19)	0.01 (0.83)
Married	0.01 (0.36)	-0.04 (-1.44)
African American	-0.05 (-1.52)	-0.04 (-1.10)
College graduate	-0.01 (-0.76)	-0.07* (-3.14)
South	-0.00 (-0.16)	0.05* (1.96)
Constant	0.02 (0.61)	0.18* (5.73)
R ²	.69	.32
F test	168.58*	46.81*
Number of observations	386	403

* $p < .05$ (one-tailed test).

Notes: OLS = ordinary least squares estimates. The t statistics are in parentheses. All estimates adjusted to account for the complex sample design. Culture war issues and authoritarianism coded so that higher scores reflect increasingly conservative positions. All variables lie on a 0-1 range except age, which is measured in years. These estimates are used to produce Figure 8.2. The effect of culture war issues₀₈ on Authoritarianism₁₂ is significantly larger than the effect of authoritarianism₀₈ and culture war issues₁₂ ($0.17 > 0.02$ at $p < .03$).

Table A8.3: OLS Cross-Lagged Model Estimates for the 2010-14 GSS

	Culture war issues ₁₄	Authoritarianism ₁₄
Culture war issues ₁₀	0.84* (31.72)	0.21* (6.90)
Authoritarianism ₁₀	0.04 (1.00)	0.37* (5.86)
Age	-0.00 (-0.05)	-0.00 (-0.80)
Female	-0.01 (-0.62)	-0.04 (-1.66)
Married	0.00 (0.24)	-0.01 (-0.31)
African American	-0.04 (-1.48)	-0.05 (-1.64)
College graduate	-0.02 (-1.01)	0.00 (0.00)
South	0.03 (1.37)	0.04 (1.42)
Constant	0.02 (0.47)	0.13* (3.19)
R ²	.70	.33
F test	228.51*	16.97*
Number of observations	358	368

* $p < .05$ (one-tailed test).

Notes: OLS = ordinary least squares estimates. The t statistics are in parentheses. All estimates adjusted to account for the complex sample design. Culture war issues and authoritarianism coded so that higher scores reflect increasingly conservative positions. All variables lie on a 0-1 range except age, which is measured in years. These estimates are used to produce Figure 8.3. The effect of culture war issues₁₀ on Authoritarianism₁₄ is significantly larger than the effect of authoritarianism₁₀ and culture war issues₁₄ ($0.21 > 0.04$ at $p < .01$).

Table A8.4: OLS Cross-Lagged Model Estimates for the 2012-13 NES

	Gay rights ₁₃	Authoritarianism ₁₃
Gay rights ₁₂	0.81*	0.10*
	(53.06)	(4.63)
Authoritarianism ₁₂	0.03*	0.66*
	(1.81)	(30.37)
Age	-0.00	0.00
	(-0.10)	(0.44)
Female	-0.02*	-0.01
	(-2.75)	(-0.63)
Married	-0.00	-0.00
	(-0.17)	(-0.28)
African American	-0.01	0.08*
	(-0.38)	(4.16)
College graduate	-0.03*	-0.05*
	(-2.95)	(-3.49)
South	0.01	0.01
	(0.84)	(1.14)
Constant	0.06	0.11*
	(3.75)	(4.53)
R ²	.71	.49
F test	435.42*	180.70*
Number observations	1,463	1,512

* $p < .05$ (one-tailed test).

Notes: OLS = ordinary least squares estimates. The t statistics are in parentheses. Culture war issues and authoritarianism coded so that higher scores reflect increasingly conservative positions. All variables lie on a 0-1 range except age, which is measured in years. These estimates are used to produce Figure 8.4. The effect of culture war issues₁₀ on Authoritarianism₁₄ is significantly larger than the effect of authoritarianism₁₀ and culture war issues₁₄ ($0.10 > 0.03$ at $p < .01$).

Table A8.5 OLS Cross-Lagged Model Estimates for the 2012-13 NES using Slightly Different Measures of Culture War Issues

	Authoritarianism ₁₃	Authoritarianism ₁₃
Culture war issues ₁₂ (gays & lesbians)	0.20*	
	(4.94)	
Culture war issues ₁₂ (homosexual)		0.11*
		(3.06)
Authoritarianism ₁₂	0.55*	0.72*
	(16.47)	(24.62)
Age	0.00	0.00
	(0.65)	(0.57)
Female	-0.01	-0.01
	(-0.29)	(-0.49)
Married	-0.02	0.01
	(-0.98)	(0.76)
African American	0.11*	0.06*
	(4.06)	(2.26)
College graduate	-0.08*	-0.01
	(-4.22)	(-0.57)
South	0.01	0.02
	(0.49)	(1.02)
Constant	0.16*	0.05
	(4.50)	(1.38)
R ²	.46	.53
F test	75.41	110.34
Number observations	720	795

* p < .05 (one-tailed test).

Notes: OLS = ordinary least squares estimates. The *t* statistics are in parentheses. Culture war issues and authoritarianism coded so that higher scores reflect increasingly conservative positions. All variables lie on a 0-1 range except age, which is measured in years. These estimates are used to produce Figure 8.5.

Table A8.6 OLS Cross-Lagged Model Estimates for the 1992-1996NES

	Culture war issues ₉₆
Culture war issues ₉₂	0.72* (19.23)
Authoritarianism ₉₂	0.04 (1.44)
Age	0.00 (0.76)
Female	-0.03 (-1.50)
Married	-0.01 (-0.42)
African American	-0.07* (-3.44)
College graduate	-0.02 (-0.92)
South	0.03 (1.42)
Constant	0.10* (2.81)
R ²	.59
F test	103.48
Number observations	509

* $p < .05$ (one-tailed test).

Notes: OLS = ordinary least squares estimates. The t statistics are in parentheses. Culture war issues and authoritarianism coded so that higher scores reflect increasingly conservative positions. All variables lie on a 0-1 range except age, which is measured in years. These estimates are used to produce Figure 8.6.

Are the Culture War Effects Robust in the GSS Cross-lagged Models?

We have demonstrated that lagged culture war opinions do a much better job predicting placements on child-rearing values than the reverse. Indeed, we found little evidence that authoritarianism shapes culture war opinion over time. To probe the sensitivity of our estimates to alternative model specifications, we estimate a series of cross-sectional regression models of authoritarianism on culture war opinions, the demographic variables described above, and other covariates that might attenuate or eliminate the relationship between culture war issues and authoritarianism. Sample size limitations precluded inclusion of many of these variables in the LDV models reported above, which is why we turn to the cross-sectional data now.

We draw on Stenner (2005) to identify authoritarianism's covariates that are good bets to correlate with abortion and gay rights. We include respondent knowledge about evolution and the big bang (three point scale ranging from zero to two correct answers); mother's education; father's education; father's occupational prestige; rural resident at age 16; city resident age 16; and the number of children living at home in three age categories (0-5, 6-12, and 13-17). These predictors reflect different aspects of pre-adult socialization and current life circumstances that might nudge individuals toward authoritarianism and culture war conservatism.

We ran regressed authoritarianism on culture war issues, the standard demographics, and these new covariates above using data from the 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014 GSS cross-sections. We sequenced the new covariates in separate models before running a final model that controls for everything at once. The regression coefficient for culture war issues is statistically and substantively significant across all 30 models in all GSS cross-sections (see the online appendices). This coefficient averages 0.31 across the models, which implies that the most traditional respondents score 31 percent higher on authoritarianism relative to the most

progressive respondents, all else constant. The standard deviation of the culture war effect is 0.05. Put another way, culture war issues manifest stable and powerful predictive effects on child-rearing values even when we control for a large number of potentially confounding variables.

Having shown that demographics do not diminish the culture war effect, we turn next to deep psychological forces that might account for it. Johnston, Lavine, and Federico (2017) demonstrate that a general disposition toward openness shapes attitude expression on cultural issues. In light of this, one might posit that variants of this commitment to openness might weaken the culture war effect.

We can test this proposition by exploiting a unique feature of the 2012 GSS cross section. That year the PIs added a battery of Shalom Schwartz's basic human values items (1992, Schwartz et al. 2012), which is widely regarded as the leading theory of personal values in the social sciences (Feldman 2003b; Hitlin and Pinkston 2013; Gollan and Witte 2014). What is important for our purposes is that we can use nine of these items to construct multiple indicator measures of conservation values and openness to experience values. These values map directly onto the personal autonomy versus obedience to authority dimension that defines authoritarianism. Additionally, Feldman (2003a) uses a number of Schwartz items tap authoritarianism in his important work. By adding conservation and openness values to the cross-sectional model, we have another test of the robustness of the moral issue effect.

We start with conservation values. Conservation values prioritize adherence to social convention, social stability, and resistance to social change above all other conceptions of the good and just society. Conservation values map directly onto the obedience/conformity pole of latent authoritarianism. Individuals who endorse these values count as committed authoritarians.

Openness to change values prioritize independent feeling, thought, and action above other desirable end-states and modes of conduct, and thus, correspond to the personal autonomy pole of the authoritarianism disposition. Think of people committed to these values as strong libertarians.

To gauge whether the culture war effect holds in the presence of personal values, we estimated two OLS models. First, we added conservation and openness as separate variables to OLS equations with the full panoply covariates just described. Second, we subtracted the openness score from the conservation score to measure respondents' relative preference for obedience/uniformity to independence/personal autonomy. We entered this as the value predictor in a second OLS model. Table A8.4 in appendix B contains the estimates.

Note first that the demographics perform poorly with the exception of the college graduate variable, mother's educational attainment, and father's occupational prestige. College graduates score lower on authoritarianism compared to non-college graduates. The same hold true for respondents with better-educated mothers. However, respondents with fathers from more prestigious occupation score higher on authoritarianism relative to those with fathers from less prestigious fields. Pre-adult socialization seems to matter a lot.

Second, personal values matter too. The openness variable carries the correct sign, though it does not quite attain conventional significance levels ($p < .10$). The more emphasis people place on openness to experience, the lower the predicted score on authoritarianism. Conservation values are correctly signed and marginally significant as well. Respondents with higher scores on conservation score higher on authoritarianism compared to respondents that downplay conservation. The conservation-openness difference variable proves a potent predictor as well ($b = 0.20, p < .05$).

Third, and most importantly, the culture war effect holds. The positive coefficient 0.21 in both models suggests that increasingly traditional positions on abortion and gay rights are associated with greater authoritarianism, *ceteris paribus*. The “all else equal” clause here is broad—it includes multiple controls for parent characteristics, pre-adult socialization, current life situations, and basic human values.

Table A8.7: The Effect of Culture War Issues on Authoritarianism controlling for Basic Values and other Background Covariates, OLS Estimates, 2012 GSS

	Model 1	Model 2
Culture war issues	0.21*	0.21*
	(3.98)	(4.06)
Age	-0.00	-0.00
	(-1.36)	(-1.35)
Female	-0.00	-0.00
	(-0.06)	(-0.06)
Married	-0.02	-0.02
	(-0.63)	(-0.63)
African American	-0.03	-0.04
	(-0.63)	(-0.59)
College graduate	-0.09*	-0.09*
	(-2.94)	(-2.98)
South	0.03	0.03
	(0.93)	(0.94)
Babies at home	0.01	0.01
	(0.42)	(0.42)
Preteens at home	-0.04	-0.04
	(-1.83)	(-1.83)
Teens at home	0.04	0.04
	(1.40)	(1.39)
Rural resident at 16	-0.01	-0.02
	(-0.50)	(-0.49)
Big city resident at 16	-0.02	-0.02
	(-0.37)	(-0.37)
Mother's education	-0.45*	-0.44*
	(-3.67)	(-3.64)
Father's education	0.02	0.02
	(0.16)	(0.16)
Father's occupational prestige	0.00*	0.00*
	(2.08)	(2.07)
Openness values	-0.14	
	(-1.62)	
Conservation values	0.13	
	(1.58)	
Openness v. Conservation		0.27*
		(2.06)
Constant	0.54*	0.39*
	(4.87)	(4.16)
R ²	.32	.32
F test	9.93	10.57
Number of observations	291	291

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed test).

Notes: OLS = ordinary least squares estimates. The t statistics are in parentheses. All estimates adjusted to account for the complex sample design. Culture war issues and authoritarianism sso higher scores reflect conservative positions. All variables lie on a 0-1 range except age, which is measured in years.

Is the Culture War Effect Robust in the NES LDV Model?

In the body of the chapter, we found that culture war opinions measured in 2012 predict authoritarianism measured in 2013, holding 2012 culture war opinions and issues constant. This section probes the sensitivity of the results by examining whether the culture war effect holds when we control for important covariates of culture war issues and authoritarianism. First, research on personality and politics demonstrates that the openness facet of the Big Five personality traits—along with related constructs such as need for closure and need for cognition—covary with authoritarianism and socially conservative positions on culture war issues (Jost et al. 2003; Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009; Gerber et al. 2010; Johnston, Lavine, and Federico 2012). The 2012 wave of the NES panel contains a two-item measure of the openness personality dimension and a two-item measure of need for cognition. Second, other research suggests that Social Dominance Orientation also covaries with authoritarianism and social conservative positions on culture war issues (Pratto et al. 1994; Altemeyer ____). Fortuitously, a four-item measure of SDO also appears on the 2012 wave.

Tale A8.8 below reports the OLS estimates for a quartet of models predicting scores on the customary four-item child-rearing values scales. We model values as a function of the 12-item culture war issues variable using the “gays and lesbians” items because this is the best measure we have of latent culture war attitudes. The models control for the usual demographic suspects as well. To the baseline we add need for cognition in Model 1, openness in Model 2 and SDO in model 3. Model 4 simultaneously controls for need for cognition, openness, and SDO.

A quick review of the top row of Table A8.8 reinforces our key finding. Controlling for the different variables, the culture war₁₂ effect remains a forceful predictor of authoritarianism₁₃. The predicted effect varies from 0.16 to 0.20 across the models, always at $p < .001$.

Table A8.8: The Effect of Culture War Issues on Authoritarianism controlling for Need for Cognition, Openness Personality Traits and Social Dominance Orientations, OLS Estimates, 2012-13 NES

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Culture war issues ₁₂	0.20* (4.84)	0.20* (4.92)	0.16* (3.67)	0.16* (3.58)
Authoritarianism ₁₂	0.55* (16.07)	0.56* (16.44)	0.56* (16.40)	0.56* (15.97)
Age	0.00 (0.57)	0.00 (0.64)	0.00 (0.42)	0.00 (0.31)
Female	-0.01 (-0.56)	-0.01 (-0.36)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.01 (-0.35)
Married	-0.02 (-0.89)	-0.02 (-0.99)	-0.02 (-0.82)	-0.01 (-0.75)
African American	0.11* (4.05)	0.11* (3.97)	0.12* (4.09)	0.11* (3.97)
College graduate	-0.08* (-3.87)	-0.08* (-4.27)	-0.09* (-4.32)	-0.08* (-4.00)
South	0.01 (0.48)	0.01 (0.55)	0.02 (0.96)	0.02 (1.00)
Need for cognition	0.04 (1.39)			0.04 (1.49)
TIPI Openness		0.08 (1.24)		0.10 (1.55)
Social Dominance			0.08* (1.52)	0.08 (1.51)
Constant	0.15* (4.13)	0.12* (2.40)	0.13* (3.48)	0.07 (1.37)
Adj. R ²	.46	.46	.46	.47
F test	67.34	66.98	66.50	54.77
Number observations	720	719	699	698

* p < .05 (two-tailed test).

Notes: OLS = ordinary least squares estimates. The *t* statistics are in parentheses. Culture war issues and authoritarianism so higher scores reflect conservative positions. All variables lie on a 0-1 range except age, which is measured in years.