

THE OTHER GREAT MIGRATION: SOUTHERN WHITES AND THE NEW RIGHT*

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This article shows how the migration of millions of Southern whites in the twentieth century shaped the cultural and political landscape across the United States. Racially and religiously conservative, Southern white migrants created new electoral possibilities for a broad-based coalition with economic conservatives. With their considerable geographic scope, these migrants hastened partisan realignment and helped catalyze and bolster a New Right movement with national influence over the long run. More than just augmenting the conservative voter base outside the South, they influenced non-Southerners by building evangelical churches, diffusing right-wing media, and mixing through intermarriage and residential integration. Tracking non-Southern households, we show that exposure to Southern white neighbors increased adoption of conservative religious norms. Overall, our findings suggest that this mass migration blurred the North–South cultural divide and reshaped the geography of conservatism in the United States. *JEL Codes:* D72, J15, J18, N32, P16.

*We thank Brian Beach, Matilde Bombardini, Vicky Fouka, Taylor Jaworski, Maggie Jones, Ilyana Kuziemko, Ted Miguel, Melissa Rogers, Marco Tabellini, Marianne Wanamaker, and participants at Boston University, Brandeis, George Mason University, Harvard, Lehigh University, Northwestern, Peking University, Stanford, SUNY Binghamton, Tilburg University, Toulouse School of Economics, UC Berkeley, UCLA, UCSD, Universidad de Montevideo, University of Alabama, University of Bonn, University of Colorado Denver, University of Notre Dame, UdeSA, Vanderbilt, Yale, the NBER DAE Spring Meeting 2022, 91st SEA Meeting, the 2022 ASSA Meeting, the 2022 Cliometric Society Annual Conference, the 2022 EHA Meeting, and the 2022 Mountain West Economic History Conference for valuable comments and feedback. Carmen Arbaizar-Mazas, Riccardo Di Cato, Katarina Fedorov, and Eli Locke provided excellent research assistance. We are grateful to Jacob Whiton for sharing data on the 2021 electoral college count; to Paul Matzko for sharing data on Carl McIntire’s radio program; to Matt Daniels and Simon Rogers for sharing gastronomy data from Google News Lab; and to Dan Hopkins for sharing the state platform data from [Hopkins, Schickler, and Azizi \(2022\)](#). We gratefully acknowledge funding support from the Russell Sage Foundation and the Initiative on Cities at BU. All errors are our own. An earlier version of this article circulated in 2021 under the title “The Other Great Migration: White Southern Migrants and Right-Wing Politics in the U.S.”

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The Quarterly Journal of Economics (2023), 1577–1647. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjad014>. Advance Access publication on March 17, 2023.

I. INTRODUCTION

Migration has shaped and reshaped the geography of culture and politics throughout U.S. history. Several groups left a distinctive imprint, including Europeans through the “Age of Mass Migration” (Grosjean 2014; Giuliano and Tabellini 2020) and Southern Blacks during the “Great Migration” (Fouka, Mazumder, and Tabellini 2022; Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini 2023). In this article, we study the cultural and political effects of Southern white migration across the U.S. during the twentieth century. Despite being larger in scale than the Black Great Migration, this episode has received far less attention.¹ We examine how this “other Great Migration” influenced the trajectory of the New Right, a coalition of economic, racial, and religious conservatives that began to emerge in the 1960s.² Our findings suggest that the Southern white diaspora played an important role in shaping this durable movement mobilized behind the Republican Party.

In the early twentieth century, millions of Southern whites migrated across the United States, settling in rural areas, small towns, and big cities. They brought with them a distinctive set of conservative attitudes on race and religion tied to the history of the South. Survey evidence through the 1960s shows that relative to non-Southern whites in the same non-Southern county, whites born in the South were on average more likely to identify as evangelical, favor various forms of racial segregation, and oppose racially inclusive forms of economic redistribution. This historical background informs our analysis of how the mass migration of Southern whites influenced U.S. politics.

We begin by establishing the effect of the Southern white diaspora on Republican Party presidential vote shares in the twenty-first century, a proxy for the local strength of the New Right in the long run. We rely on county-level variation in exposure to Southern white migrants as measured using complete-count

1. Among the exceptions referenced throughout the paper is the important historical research of Gregory (2005) on the Black and white “Southern diaspora,” a term that we adopt.

2. Following previous studies, we use the term “racial conservatism” to characterize opposition to legislation and policies designed to change the prevailing racial hierarchy at a given moment in time (Feinstein and Schickler 2008; Schickler 2016; Bateman, Clinton, and Lapinski 2017; Kuziemko and Washington 2018). Such opposition does not necessarily entail overt expressions of racism, even if it often appears in combination with racial grievance, resentment, or animus.

census data from 1940, a year that predates the partisan realignments of the postwar era. As a key part of our identification strategy, we develop a shift-share instrumental variable (SSIV) based on “push factors,” as in [Boustan \(2010\)](#) and [Derenoncourt \(2022\)](#), who study the Black Great Migration. Our SSIV combines predetermined Southern white migration networks as of 1900 (shares) with predicted aggregate migration flows out of the South for each decade from 1900 to 1940 (shifts). This approach addresses biases due to economic or ideological sorting as well as place-based confounders of conservative politics. To ensure that pre-1900 migrants are not driving later outcomes, we control for 1900 migrant shares, thus identifying the distinct influence of changes in Southern white migrant population shares from 1900 to 1940. We further allay concerns about early migrant sorting by developing an alternative IV strategy based on [Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian \(2020\)](#), which leverages the coincidental timing of initial railroad connections outside the South and overall white migrant flows from the South.

The SSIV estimates indicate that Southern white migration in the early twentieth century is associated with significantly higher Republican vote shares in the twenty-first century. This finding is robust to (i) alternative definitions of the North–South divide (our baseline defines the South as the former Confederacy plus Oklahoma), (ii) omitting individual origin and destination states, (iii) reweighting counties by their electoral importance, (iv) identification and inference checks for SSIVs ([Adão, Kolesár, and Morales 2019](#); [Goldsmith-Pinkham, Sorkin, and Swift 2020](#); [Borusyak, Hull, and Jaravel 2022](#)), (v) constructing the SSIV based on Southern-origin counties rather than states, (vi) accounting for the simultaneous effects of Southern Black migrants, and (vii) including fixed effects for within-state county pairs with the most similar 1870 Southern white migrant shares, 1900 Republican vote shares, or changes in Republican vote shares from 1900 to 1940, which account for heterogeneity in early political leanings. Together with the similar estimates based on the railroad-connection IV, these results point to a causal interpretation.

Our IV estimates imply sizable electoral influence, with each additional migrant in 1940 associated with more than one conservative vote in the twenty-first century. We identify tipping points underlying these more-than-compositional effects: Southern white migrants had an outsized influence on voting outcomes in counties where they reached a critical mass. Such

nonlinearities suggest cultural transmission to non-Southerners, which we explore later in the article. We also use a heuristic exercise to quantify decisiveness in close elections and find that the broad geographic scope of the diaspora bolstered its influence via the electoral college, which assigns greater weight to low-population states.

Having identified the diaspora's legacy in the twenty-first century, we go back in time to understand how Southern white migration shaped the historical trajectory of conservative alignment behind the modern Republican Party. We trace out voting effects across the twentieth century, identifying significant effects beginning in the 1960s as large-diaspora counties moved away from the Democratic Party. These county-level estimates are consistent with American National Election Survey (ANES) data showing that after the mid-1960s, Southern white migrants were more likely to dealign from the Democratic Party than were non-Southerners in the same county. Democrats ultimately lost not only the South (as shown by [Kuziemko and Washington 2018](#)) but also diaspora communities outside the South.

We shed further light on the emergence of the New Right with three complementary analyses. First, we find that the Southern white diaspora played an important role at a critical juncture of partisan realignment in the 1968 election, when migrants amplified support for third-party candidate George Wallace. Known for his segregationist positions as governor of Alabama, Wallace campaigned on a unique combination of racial and religious conservatism with working-class appeal ([Carter 1995](#)). His strong support in large-diaspora counties foreshadowed their consolidation behind the Republican Party in the 1970s. This Southern white influence was distinctive. Although Northern white migrants also contributed to the emerging New Right coalition by bringing economic conservatism to new areas of the country, we find that they reduced support for Wallace and had smaller effects on partisan realignment. In the lineage of the New Right, Southern white migrants may have been an early harbinger of change, illuminating a viable path for the Republicans' "Southern strategy" to move beyond the South.

Second, we revisit the origins of the New Right coalition to understand how Southern white migrants helped consolidate different strands of conservatism behind the Republican Party. The New Right emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, bringing racially and religiously conservative voters together with

supporters of previous conservative coalitions defined by fiscal conservatism and anticommunism. As the Democratic Party came to favor racially inclusive federal redistribution, racially conservative Southern Democrats increasingly aligned with economically conservative Northern Republicans (Black and Black 2003; Lowndes 2009; Schickler 2016). Meanwhile, religious conservatives decried federal overreach in education and marriage and saw traditional family values as inconsistent with growing Democratic interventionism. We characterize this dynamic coalition-building process using data on congressional representatives' voting behavior and speech, state-level party platforms, and survey data on voter preferences and partisan identification. Across these domains, we see an increasing coalescence of economic conservatism with racial and religious conservatism after the 1960s.

Third, we show that the Southern white diaspora helped catalyze and expand this New Right coalition. Using a congressional-district-level SSIV, we find that a larger diaspora is associated with racially conservative voting and greater deployment of religious rhetoric by House representatives. As large-diaspora districts realigned toward Republicans over time, those representatives voted more conservatively on economic issues, too. Migrants influenced local policy agendas, as reflected in the text of state-level party platforms compiled by Hopkins, Schickler, and Azizi (2022). Although most platforms moved left on race after 1964, Republican platforms in states with a larger diaspora became more racially conservative, as we show in state-level SSIV regressions. Together with our findings on presidential elections, these results suggest that diaspora whites were not merely following a nationwide realignment already under way but played a direct role in the grassroots shift toward the Republican Party.

In the final part of the article, we examine several potential channels through which Southern white migrants transmitted culture and expanded the conservative voting base beyond the initial diaspora. We begin by showing that purely demographic mechanisms—differential fertility and chain migration—led to intergenerational growth of the diaspora, albeit not enough to explain its more than compositional effects on long-run voting outcomes. This motivates our focus on horizontal and oblique cultural transmission, and we find evidence in support of several complementary mechanisms.

First, we see a larger electoral imprint of the Southern white diaspora in counties with greater residential mixing and

intermarriage between Southern and non-Southern whites, relative to random matching rates. These results echo [Giuliano and Tabellini's \(2020\)](#) findings on European immigrant integration and electoral influence. Our findings suggest that social integration may have facilitated cultural transmission and thus amplified the rightward shift at the ballot box in large-diaspora counties.

Second, Southern white migrants hastened the diffusion of religious conservatism through evangelical institutions and right-wing radio. We show that the diaspora provided the leadership and congregant foundations of evangelical expansion and innovation outside the South. This includes, most prominently, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), which had defended slavery and split from the national Baptist church over the issue in the 1850s. When the SBC began allowing congregations outside the South in the 1940s, migrants helped the church expand into new areas. These churches, along with others (e.g., Pentecostal), became a key force in mobilizing the religious vote behind the Republican Party later in the twentieth century (see [Jones 2018](#); [Butler 2021](#)). We find a similarly large diaspora imprint on the spread of conservative talk radio beginning in the 1950s with religious radio programs like Carl McIntire's *Twentieth Century Reformation Hour* and persisting through the early twenty-first century with the preeminent *Rush Limbaugh Show*. By differentially entering markets with a larger diaspora, these conservative broadcasters expanded the orbit of right-wing messaging beyond the South.

Finally, we use individual-level data to provide direct evidence of cultural transmission from Southern to non-Southern populations. Tracking non-Southern-origin families who moved between census rounds, we find that greater exposure to Southern white migrants in small neighborhoods increased the likelihood of giving one's children biblical names. This increase in religiosity suggests that localized contact facilitated cultural change, which helps explain why residential mixing had persistent effects on voting. Moreover, such hyperlocal transmission complemented the broader reach of evangelical churches and right-wing radio. Together with the spread of Southern food and country music via diaspora communities, these findings clarify how the "other Great Migration" contributed to the "Southernization" of the United States—a process of long-standing popular interest (see [Egerton 1974](#); [Appelbome 1997](#); [Richardson 2020](#); [Gaillard and Tucker 2022](#)).

This article makes several contributions to our understanding of migration, cultural change, and conservatism in America. Economists have largely focused on Southern Black migration (Boustan 2010, 2016; Derenoncourt 2022; Fouka, Mazumder, and Tabellini 2022), with a few studies characterizing the migration of both Blacks and whites (Collins and Wanamaker 2015; Stuart and Taylor 2021). Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini (2023) show that Southern Black migrants increased support for civil rights legislation among Northern whites. We show that Southern white migrants also left a major historical imprint as they helped bolster a new conservative movement with far-reaching political consequences.³ Moreover, we relate Black and white settlement patterns and argue that the two together offer a more complete characterization of how the Great Migration transformed U.S. politics.

We offer some of the first quantitative evidence connecting the insights of historians on the Southern white diaspora (Berry 2000; Dippel 2005; Gregory 2005; Dochuk 2010) with those of political scientists on the realignment (Schickler 2016) and the New Right (Lowndes 2009). We identify critical junctures in the New Right trajectory and use congressional data and state party platform texts to provide a sharper lens on the coalescence of economic, racial, and religious conservatism after the 1960s. Our evidence on the transmission of religious ideology and shifts in racial politics illustrates a key role for this historical migration episode in shaping the political landscape across twenty-first-century America.

Our findings offer a new perspective on the origins and consequences of partisan realignment. The realignment of racially conservative white voters in the South is well understood (Black and Black 2003; Kuziemko and Washington 2018). We show that a similar realignment took hold in white diaspora communities outside the South. The geographic dispersion of these

3. Two studies explore how waves of Southern white migrants strengthened conservative politics outside the South. Ramey (2021) examines this for white Plains migrants settling in California during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, and Reisinger (2021) examines this for Southern white migrants as of 1970 across the non-South. Among other differences, our study is distinct in four key ways: (i) our analysis of realignment, the critical 1968 election, and the bundling of racial, religious, and economic conservatism; (ii) our evidence on racial sorting and coalition change; (iii) our exploration of multiple cultural and ideological channels of transmission; and (iv) our evidence of causal exposure effects and cultural change among non-Southern whites. We learned of these studies after distributing our working paper in 2021.

communities, and their pervasiveness across the Western United States, may have increased the electoral viability of Republican Party efforts to court the racially conservative vote nationally. The partisan dynamics we identify support the conjecture that racial animus drives some of the unique opposition to redistribution in the United States (Alesina, Glaeser, and Sacerdote 2001). By bundling aspects of racial resentment with religious and economic conservatism, the Republican Party assembled a broad and durable electoral coalition—what Maxwell and Shields (2019) call the “long Southern strategy,” riffing on Nixon’s original Southern strategy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This article provides quantitative evidence on the role of the white Great Migration in the formation and electoral effectiveness of this right-wing movement.

We also contribute to a growing literature on the role of migrants in fostering cultural change throughout U.S. history. Recent work explores the influence of European immigrants on redistributive preferences (Giuliano and Tabellini 2020), honor culture (Grosjean 2014), and gender norms (Haddad 2021), as well as the influence of frontier settlers on a culture of rugged individualism (Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilas 2020). We explore an understudied episode of mass migration and trace its long-run implications for the geography of culture and politics. While hiding in plain sight, the influence of the Southern white diaspora cuts across many domains of public life. Its contribution to the New Right coalition helped reshape the geography of polarization across America: while the North–South divide dominated historically, today’s landscape reveals sharp divisions within regions.⁴

The article proceeds as follows. Section II provides historical background on Southern white migration. Section III describes our empirical strategy. Section IV establishes the effects on electoral outcomes in the twenty-first century. Section V works backward in time to characterize the trajectory of Southern white diaspora influence on partisan realignment and the foundation of the New Right movement in the twentieth century. Section VI

4. We offer here a note on interpretation. While identifying an important role for Southern white migrants in right-wing politics outside the South, we are not ruling out a large influence of non-Southern whites in driving those same outcomes. Nor are we arguing that all Southern white migrants had the same attachments to Southern culture or that all supporters of the New Right were equally attached to the movement’s racial, religious, and economic conservatism.

identifies mechanisms for cultural transmission from Southern white migrants. [Section VII](#) concludes with a discussion of future research on the legacy of the Great Migrations.

II. BACKGROUND ON THE SOUTHERN WHITE DIASPORA

This section provides background on Southern white migration. We describe key historical episodes and then characterize migrant selection and sorting. We conclude with an in-depth look at distinctive features of Southern culture that proved influential in shaping the New Right.

II.A. From the Postbellum Era to the Great Migration

Small waves of whites left the South during the nineteenth century. Many followed Gold Rush routes westward, seeking land on which to rebuild estates lost during the war and in the economic fallout thereafter. Historians emphasize the importance of racial ideology in fueling this westward trajectory ([Dippel 2005](#); [Richardson 2020](#); [Waite 2021](#)).⁵ Historically, Southern whites had long been mobile, following economic opportunities from the East Coast and Appalachia to the Ozarks and the Great Plains, and finally to the West. Agriculture as well as oil, mining, and timber industries created novel pathways out of the South ([Gregory 2005](#)). These early movers, motivated by economic and ideological factors, laid the foundation for future chain migration out of the South.

While early postbellum outflows of Southern whites initiated new migration corridors, those flows were dwarfed by the large-scale migration to the North and West after 1900. [Figure I](#) shows these outflows growing as World War I and immigration restrictions led to increased demand for labor. By 1940, nearly 11% of Southern-born whites lived outside the South, compared with 15.6% of Southern-born Blacks, the latter being a smaller overall population. These outflows persisted, as sustained industrial growth across the country spurred a more general exodus of Southern workers during the 1940s and continued for several

5. Famous California farmer Walter Knott, the son of one such migrant, later remarked that “the carpetbaggers [a derogatory term for Northerners] came down South and disenfranchised every Southerner that had been in the war” ([Dochuk 2010](#), 7). Knott later played an important role in building the conservative movement in California and the United States more broadly.

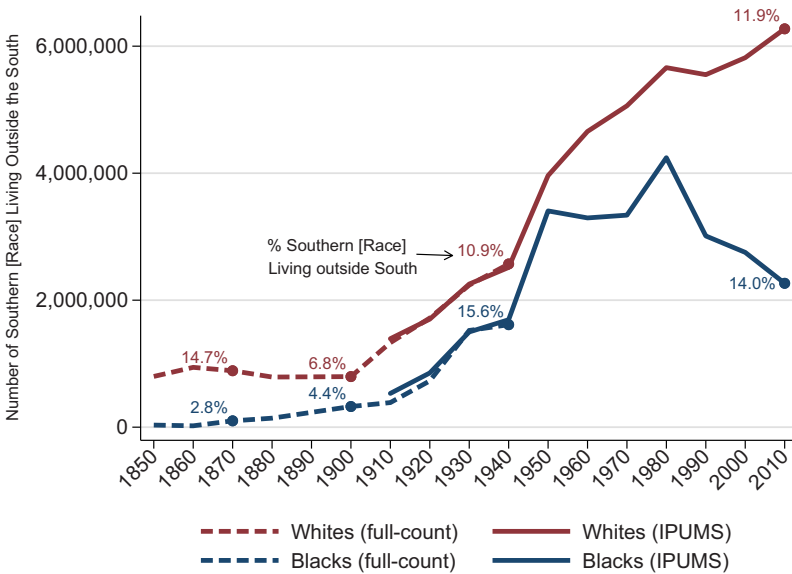


FIGURE I

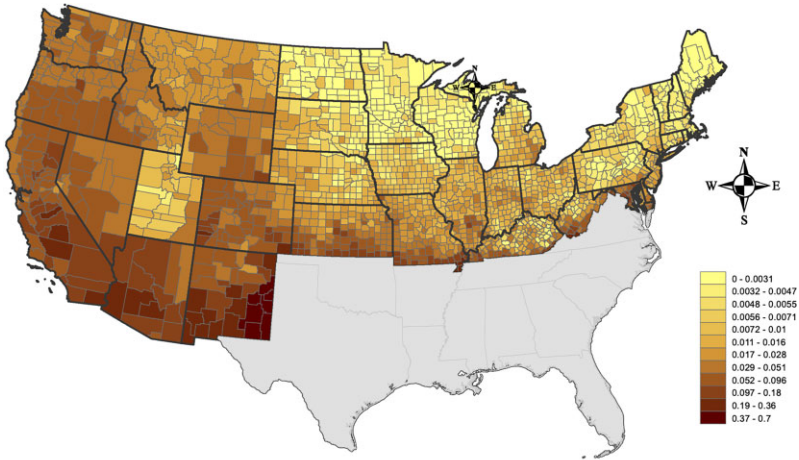
Southern-Born Whites and Blacks Living Outside the South, 1850–2010

The graph plots the number of white and Black people born in the South who reside outside the South in a given census year between 1850 and 2010. Percentages for select years that are central to our analyses are expressed relative to the total white or Black Southern population to show the magnitudes of the Southern outmigration over time by group. We define Southern states as those belonging to the former Confederacy plus Oklahoma. The data for the graph were taken from [Ruggles et al. \(2020\)](#). For Southern-born individuals, the dashed lines were produced using the full-count census files, and the solid lines were produced using the 1% samples (1910–1970 and 2000–2010) multiplied by 100 and the 5% samples (1980, 1990) multiplied by 20. The period of overlap between the full-count and 1% samples from 1910 to 1940 was chosen to show that the scaled IPUMS samples match the full-count data.

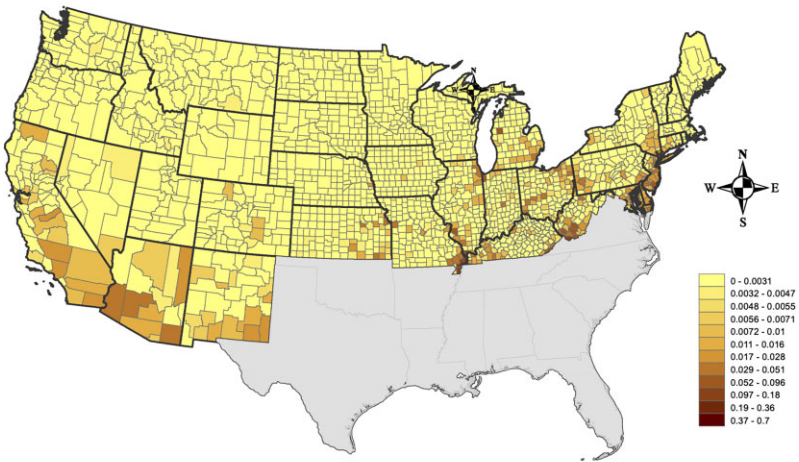
decades. By 1970, nearly 20% of Southern-born whites lived outside the South.

II.B. Migrant Destinations, Origins, and Socioeconomic Backgrounds

Southern whites migrated to many parts of the westward-moving country. By 1940, there were large migrant populations in the West Census Region, the Ohio River Valley, and lower Plains (see [Figure II](#), and [Online Appendix Figures G.1 and G.2](#)).



(A) Southern Whites



(B) Southern Blacks

FIGURE II

Mapping Southern-Born Whites and Blacks outside the South in 1940

This figure maps the county-level population share of (Panel A) white and (Panel B) Black people born in the South and residing outside the South in 1940 according to the full-count 1940 census. The legend shows the identical intervals considered for each split.

Although border states just outside the former Confederacy were popular destinations, large diaspora communities could also be found in faraway regions of central California, eastern Washington, Oregon, and much of Wyoming. Southern whites were less prevalent in former Union states, especially in the Northeast and upper Midwest, where Southern Black migrants were more prevalent (Figure II).⁶ Southern whites were also more likely to settle across the density distribution, from rural areas to small towns to large cities, whereas Southern Blacks concentrated in the densest urban areas (see Online Appendix Figure G.3).⁷

Just as their destination choices differed, Black and white migrants also came from different regions of the South. While Blacks hailed from the “deep South” Cotton Belt, whites left a vast stretch of the “outer South,” including the Great Plains of Oklahoma and north Texas, and the Appalachian hills of Tennessee and northern Alabama (see Online Appendix Figure G.1 and Gregory 2005). Push factors were important: in the Plains, the Dust Bowl caused pervasive drought and farm failure in the 1930s (see Hornbeck 2012; Arthi 2018), while in Appalachia, the Depression severely contracted its industrial sector.⁸ More generally, dwindling farm acreage, declining rates of farm ownership, and manufacturing sector malaise pushed whites out across the South (see Online Appendix Table A.2 and Fligstein 1981). Despite popular media stereotypes about poor, welfare-seeking Southern migrants—disparagingly called “Okies,” “hillbillies,” and “rednecks”—many of these migrants integrated into destination labor markets and were comparable to other white groups in terms of income and

6. Southern whites largely avoided Utah, perhaps due to religious and other cultural differences with Mormons.

7. Collins and Wanamaker (2015) characterize racial differences in sorting across regions from 1910 to 1930. In Bazzi et al. (2023c), we explore these differences from 1850 to 1940, highlighting the importance not only of traditional forces like distance and networks but also ideological and economic differences. For example, Southern whites sorted toward counties outside the South that (i) were more suitable for plantation crops and extractive commodities, and (ii) had a higher vote share for the proslavery Southern Democrat candidate John C. Breckinridge in the 1860 election.

8. In addition to some of the same economic factors driving white outmigration, previous work has emphasized factors such as racial violence and hostility as important push factors for Southern Blacks (Boustan 2016; Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini 2023).

education. In fact, they spanned the socioeconomic distribution, and in some periods, white outmigrants were positively selected.⁹

II.C. Characterizing Southern White (Diaspora) Culture

Southern and non-Southern whites exhibited significant cultural differences historically. Southern whites have often been associated with evangelical Protestantism, racial conservatism, and populist ideals rooted in localism and dislike of elites (Gregory 2005; Dochuk 2010). Racial animus among Southern whites has been linked to the history of slavery and Jim Crow (see Green 1988; Engerman 2020), while the importance of evangelicalism traces back to the formation of the Bible Belt in the South, driven by Baptists and Methodists (Boles 1996; Heyrman 2013). This section uses survey data to characterize this distinctive Southern culture and its pervasiveness in the diaspora.

Using data from the ANES waves through 1970, Table I compares Southern- and non-Southern-born whites living in the same non-Southern county. Southern white migrants are substantially more likely to be evangelical Protestant (column (1)) and hold conservative religious beliefs (column (2)). They are also more supportive of racial segregation in various domains (columns (3)–(5)). Although Southern whites are no more opposed in general to government intervention in the economy (column (6)), they are significantly more likely to oppose interventions designed to help support Blacks (column (7)). These patterns highlight a well-established intersection between racial and economic conservatism that became especially important beginning in the civil rights era.

The conservative attitudes in the diaspora have roots in the South. Online Appendix Figure G.4 displays a continuum of conservatism across whites in America: across all outcomes, responses in the diaspora fall squarely between those of Southerners in the South and non-Southerners outside the South (Panel A).

9. See Online Appendix G.2 for evidence from individual-level census data from 1900 to 1940. Gregory (2005, 24) argues that wealthy and educated Southern whites were overrepresented, with “Northern economic opportunities” spurring their migration more so than “Southern distress.” Dochuk (2010), meanwhile, describes the mass migration of “Okies,” predominantly agricultural settlers from not only Oklahoma but also Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. These settlers, he argues, were not destitute but rather were working-class laborers, upended by the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, who followed Route 66 in search of industrial work in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and the Pacific Northwest.

TABLE I
RELATIVE ATTITUDES OF SOUTHERN WHITES OUTSIDE THE SOUTH

Dependent variable:	Religious			Racial			Economic		
	Identify as evangelical (1)	Believe Bible is literal word of God (2)	Favor any segregation (3)	Oppose residential integration (4)	Oppose school integration (5)	Oppose gov't intervention for any (6)	Oppose gov't intervention for Blacks (7)		
Southern white	0.199*** (0.037)	0.095** (0.039)	0.094** (0.039)	0.089** (0.035)	0.106*** (0.037)	-0.034 (0.034)	0.120*** (0.045)		
County FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Survey wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Demographic controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Survey waves	1960-70	1964-68	1964-70	1964-70	1964-70	1956-68	1964-68		
Observations	4,603	1,924	2,458	2,908	2,680	4,087	1,630		
Counties	118	95	96	97	97	116	92		
Control outcome mean	0.151	0.467	0.467	0.256	0.452	0.456	0.530		
Adj. R ²	0.197	0.112	0.084	0.139	0.072	0.135	0.033		

Notes. Regressions of survey questions from the American National Election Survey (ANES), applicable waves through 1970, on a dummy for whether a white respondent is from any of the 12 excluded Southern sending states. Excluded Southern counties are those belonging to states of the former Confederacy and Oklahoma. Our definition of Southern whites includes those respondents that were born and/or grew up in the South. Each dependent variable is a binary outcome equal to one if the respondent answered affirmatively to the given question. The estimates in columns (6) and (7) hold using a fixed respondent sample from 1964 and 1968: -0.010 (0.051) and 0.117 (0.058)**, respectively. The control outcome mean is the mean of the dependent variable for non-Southern whites. Sample excludes respondents living in the South as well as nonwhites. All regressions control for respondent age, age squared, and sex. All regressions include county and survey wave fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the county level are in parentheses. Significance levels are denoted by * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Those in states bordering the former Confederacy—West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware—generally lie in between (Panel B). In other words, while conservative culture is pervasive across white Americans, there is a clear gap between those with and those without Southern heritage, and Southern migrants maintain some of that cultural distinction when living outside the South.

Evangelical Protestantism is an essential feature of diaspora culture and integral to its politics. In the early twentieth century, evangelical presence was limited outside the South. By the end of the century, Southern Baptist and Pentecostal denominations could be found across the United States. Historians provide numerous accounts of Southern white migrants founding such churches (Woodberry and Smith 1998; Gregory 2005; Dochuk 2010). The seeds of their leadership can be seen in complete-count census data from 1900 to 1940, which shows that in non-Southern counties, these migrants were overrepresented in religious occupations (see [Online Appendix Table G.1](#)). By the 1960s, evangelicals began to engage more formally in politics, becoming outspoken on moral issues, such as sex education in schools. Southern evangelical leaders such as J. Frank Norris, Carl McIntire, and Billy Graham appealed widely throughout the diaspora and beyond as a new “Christian Right” coalition gained influence in the Republican Party in the late twentieth century (Wilcox and Robinson 2011).

III. EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

As our core identification strategy, we build an SSIV that combines predetermined migrant networks with exogenous shocks pushing migrants out of the South. Following [Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian \(2020\)](#), we also develop a complementary strategy based on different identifying variation due to the coincidental timing of non-Southern railroad expansion and Southern outmigration.

Our main estimating equation takes the following form:

$$(1) \quad \text{vote}_c = \alpha_s + \beta \cdot \% \text{Southern Whites}_{c,1940} + \mathbf{X}'_c \gamma + \varepsilon_c,$$

where vote_c is the vote share in non-Southern county c for the Republican or other conservative presidential candidate in a given election, and the regressor of interest is the Southern-born white population share in county c in 1940. At the time of writing, 1940 is the last year for which the full-count U.S. Census of Population is available; it also predates the critical juncture of

partisan realignment in the 1960s. We include state fixed effects, α_s , and \mathbf{X}_c is a varying set of controls detailed below and including the 1900 Southern-born white population share. Our baseline sample comprises 1,888 counties in the conterminous United States outside the South defined as the former Confederate states and Oklahoma. We cluster standard errors across counties in 60×60 mile grid cells following [Bester, Conley, and Hansen \(2011\)](#) and show robustness to other forms of spatial correlation ([Conley 1999](#); [Adão, Kolesár, and Morales 2019](#)).

Endogenous location choices imply that OLS estimates of β could be biased. The historical record, discussed in [Section II.B](#), points to two countervailing forces. Ideological sorting implies upward bias as Southern whites move to locations with higher levels of conservatism due to preexisting residents and place-based features conducive to such attitudes. Economic sorting implies downward bias as Southern whites—like most migrants—move to economically vibrant locations, attractive to and capable of hosting large, diverse populations in search of opportunity. Such place-based confounders would create a downward bias even if Southern migrants made these destinations more conservative over time.

We address these biases in several ways, beginning with an SSIV strategy combining two sources of variation. The first is the share of all Southern white migrants from Southern origin j residing in non-Southern county c as of 1900, which we denote $\pi_{jc,1900}$. Our baseline measure of $\pi_{jc,1900}$ defines j at the level of 12 Southern states, following [Boustan \(2010\)](#), [Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini \(2023\)](#), and [Fouka, Mazumder, and Tabellini \(2022\)](#).¹⁰ The second is the change, or shift, in the number of whites from origin j living outside the South from 1900 to 1940, $\Delta M_{j,1900-40}$. Building on [Boustan \(2010\)](#) and [Derenoncourt \(2022\)](#), we use predicted shifts, based on origin-county-specific push factors for each census decade during the 1900–1940 period. The stock of Southern white migrants in c in 1940 is then given by:

$$(2) \quad Z_{c,1940} = \sum_{j=1}^J \pi_{jc,1900} \widehat{\Delta M}_{j,1900-40}.$$

10. Our results are robust to defining j at the level of 1,220 Southern counties. However, this approach requires omitting areas that cannot be linked to the 1880 census, including Oklahoma and Texas, which are important origins of the Southern white diaspora in 1940. As a result, the state-level approach is less noisy and delivers a stronger first stage.

Scaling $Z_{c,1940}$ by the 1900 county population gives the SSIV for the 1940 Southern white population share in [equation \(1\)](#).¹¹ As specified, the SSIV isolates the component of the 1940 diaspora due to changes in Southern white inflows from 1900 to 1940 (see [Online Appendix Figure A.1](#) for intuition).

Our use of predicted shifts, $\widehat{\Delta M}_{j,1900-40}$, increases the validity of the SSIV. We first use linked census records from the Census Linking Project ([Abramitzky, Boustan, and Myera 2020](#)) to build a measure of white outmigrant flows from each Southern county o to all non-Southern counties $d = 1, \dots, D$ for each census year $t \in \{1910, 1920, 1930, 1940\}$.¹² Then we use origin-county o push factors to predict Southern white outflows from decade-specific zeroth-stage regressions similar to [Derenoncourt \(2022\)](#):

$$(3) \quad \begin{aligned} \text{Southern white migrants}_{ot} &= \alpha + \mathbf{push}'_{o,t-10} \boldsymbol{\eta} \\ &+ \phi \text{population}_{o,t-10} + \varepsilon_{ot}. \end{aligned}$$

Following prior work since [Boustan \(2010\)](#), we choose push factors from relevant measures of urbanization, development, and extractive industries, including the square and cross-term interaction of all predictors. Using a LASSO algorithm, we shrink the set of predictors to an optimal subset, $\mathbf{push}_{o,t-10}$, from which

11. Specifically, this generates the following first-stage estimating equation:

$$\% \text{Southern Whites}_{c,1940} = \alpha_s + \delta \left(\frac{Z_{c,1940}}{\text{population}_{c,1900}} \right) + \mathbf{X}'_c \boldsymbol{\gamma} + \varepsilon_c.$$

12. Concretely, we use the linked census records together with the complete-count census to generate

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Southern white migrants}_{ot} &= \sum_{d=1}^D \left(\frac{\# \text{ white men in } o \text{ in } t-10 \text{ linked to } d \text{ in } t}{\# \text{ white men in } o \text{ in } t-10 \text{ linked to Census } t} \right) \\ &\times \text{Southern whites}_{o,t-10}, \end{aligned}$$

where o denotes origin counties, d denotes destination counties, and Southern whites $_{o,t-10}$ is from the full-count census. This allows us to approximate, for each decade, total Southern white outmigration from o to all non-Southern counties, which we then put on the left-hand side of [equation \(3\)](#). For 1930–40, the intercensal match rate among white men is 28.6%, and our measure is highly correlated (corr. = 0.93) with an alternative one based on outmigration flows inferred from the five-year backward-looking residency question only available in the 1940 census (see [Online Appendix Figure A.2](#)). Correlations are similarly strong for various migrant subsamples (see [Online Appendix A.1](#)).

Southern white migrants $_{ot}$ is generated for each t . The predicted shift is then the sum of these origin-county o decade-specific shifts, further aggregated to the origin-state j level in our baseline:

$$(4) \quad \widehat{\Delta M}_{j,1900-40} = \sum_{o \in j} \sum_{t=1910}^{1940} \widehat{\text{Southern white migrants}}_{ot}.$$

[Online Appendix A.1](#) provides further details on the SSIV, including zeroth-stage estimates.

Underlying SSIV approaches is the empirical regularity that migrants tend to settle where other migrants from their own group had settled previously, a process commonly referred to as chain migration. The shares $\pi_{jc,1900}$ reflect such historical, pre-1900 migrations of Southern whites. We choose 1900 as the base year because it captures many of the important migration networks established in the postbellum period, and it predates the onset of mass migration out of the South. Although predetermined, these initial migrant networks—established through economic and ideological sorting—may be endogenous with respect to the long-run trajectory of conservatism.

By combining these networks with predicted shifts based on Southern-origin push factors, we build a stronger case for validity of the SSIV. In the standard SSIV with actual shifts, the identifying assumption is that conditional on controls, the unobserved factors that influence political outcomes must not be jointly correlated with the 1900 share of Southern white migrants in non-Southern county c and overall Southern white outmigration from 1900 to 1940. In contrast, our “push factor” SSIV can satisfy the exclusion restriction even if the initial migrant shares are endogenous insofar as the predicted shifts are exogenous to destination county conditions (see [Borusyak, Hull, and Jaravel 2022](#), for theoretical foundations).

In addition to this SSIV strategy, \mathbf{X}_c in [equation \(1\)](#) includes an array of potential confounders that may have affected migrant sorting and downstream politics. None of our results hinge on these controls, but they do provide further evidence of robustness. These include (i) historical economic factors such as population density, manufacturing employment, and average farm values, measured in 1940 and/or 1900 ([Haines 2010](#); [Manson et al. 2020](#)); and (ii) ideological factors such as Union Army enlistment and mortality rates from the U.S. Civil War ([Dupraz and Ferrara 2021](#))

and the vote share for Woodrow Wilson in 1912.¹³ Secondary specifications control for additional potential sorting correlates, including (iii) geographic factors such as ruggedness, (iv) extractive commodity and plantation crop potential, and (v) the vote share for the proslavery candidate John C. Breckinridge in 1860, which was associated with Southern white migration in the early post-bellum era (Eli, Salisbury, and Shertzer 2018). Further robustness checks adopt a Belloni, Chernozhukov, and Hansen (2014) double LASSO procedure to select optimal controls among this large set.

Finally, we also report SSIV estimates controlling for %Southern Whites_{c,1900}. This renders equation (1) equivalent to one with the change in the share of Southern whites from 1900 to 1940 as the key regressor. Although we are interested in how the presence of Southern whites in 1940 shaped the evolution of the New Right, controlling for diaspora size in 1900 helps mitigate concerns about a direct, confounding effect of early migrants, whose presence is part of the SSIV construction. Together, the covariates help address concerns about SSIVs related to endogenous sorting and the exclusion restriction if the pre-1900 Southern white migrants independently affect long-run political outcomes, for example, by shaping initial institutions.

1. *Alternative Identification Strategy.* Although our SSIV approach delivers consistent causal estimates, it does so based on a particular combination of push and pull factors. We also develop a complementary IV that does not rely on initial migrant networks to determine settlement patterns in ensuing decades. This IV isolates variation in diaspora size based on the coincidental timing of migrant outflows from the South and initial railroad connections in counties outside the South.¹⁴ Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian (2020) develop this strategy to capture exogenous variation in European immigration flows across the United States from 1860 to 1920. We adapt their framework to Southern white migration from 1880 to 1940.

13. See the notes to Table II for a full elaboration of the different control variable sets.

14. To gain intuition for the mechanics of the railroad IV, consider Marin and Mariposa Counties in California in 1940. Marin was connected to the railroad in 1883, and Mariposa was connected in 1912. Since Southern white migration was much more limited between 1880 and 1900 (see Figure I), Marin's Southern white population only reached 6.7% in 1940 compared to 10.2% in Mariposa. In 2016, Marin had a significantly lower Republican vote share than Mariposa.

We construct this IV in several steps detailed at length in [Online Appendix B](#) and summarized briefly here. The core ingredient is a zeroth-stage panel regression from 1880 to 1940 with county and decade fixed effects in which the Southern white population share in non-Southern county c in year t is predicted based on the interaction of (i) an indicator for whether c was connected to the railroad in $t - 10$, and (ii) the total outflow of Southern white migrants from $t - 10$ to t . Given the history of westward expansion and migrants' use of the railroad (see [Waite 2021](#)), we allow the effects of railroad access to vary across Western and non-Western regions. This increases instrument strength and is in line with regional subsample results in [Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian \(2020\)](#), Tables 2 and 3). The predictions for the average share of Southern whites from the zeroth stage, $\overline{\text{Avg. \%Southern Whites}_c}$, are then used as an instrument for (i) $\text{Avg. \% Southern Whites}_c$ between 1880 and 1940, analogous to the specification from [Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian \(2020\)](#) for 1860–1920; and (ii) our baseline measure, $\text{\%Southern Whites}_{c,1940}$, in [equation \(1\)](#). Together, these specifications deliver very similar results as the SSIV, which, combined with other identification checks described below, support a causal interpretation of our findings.

IV. RIGHT-WING POLITICS: LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF SOUTHERN WHITE MIGRATION

This section establishes the long-run political legacy of Southern white migration, focusing on elections in the twenty-first century. We first provide causal estimates and then assess electoral implications.

IV.A. *Voting in the Twenty-First Century*

[Table II](#) reports estimates of β in [equation \(1\)](#) for the vote share of Donald Trump in 2016 (Panel A) and the average Republican candidate vote share from 2000 to 2020 (Panel B). Results are quantitatively and qualitatively similar across the two outcomes; for brevity, we reference the latter when discussing magnitudes. OLS estimates with state fixed effects suggest that a 1 percentage point increase in the share of Southern-born whites in 1940 is associated with a statistically significant 0.4 percentage point increase in the Trump vote share (column (1)). Adding \mathbf{X}_c controls from 1940 increases the explanatory power

TABLE II
SOUTHERN WHITE MIGRANTS IN 1940 AND PRESIDENTIAL VOTE SHARES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel A: Dependent variable: Trump vote share, 2016							
% Southern whites, 1940	0.395*** (0.105)	0.632*** (0.076)	1.004*** (0.257)	1.026*** (0.167)	0.853*** (0.155)	1.779*** (0.563)	1.530*** (0.435)
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline controls		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1900 controls					Yes		Yes
Sorting controls					Yes		Yes
1900 share control						Yes	Yes
Observations	1,888	1,886	1,888	1,886	1,883	1,886	1,883
Outcome mean	62.6	62.6	62.6	62.6	62.7	62.6	62.7
Adj. R^2	0.42	0.67					
F -statistic			109.1	115.0	100.9	10.2	10.7
Anderson-Rubin, p -val.			.000	.000	.000	.001	.001
KP underident., p -val.			.000	.000	.000	.012	.007

TABLE II
CONTINUED

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Panel B: Dependent variable: Republican vote share average, 2000–2020							
% Southern whites, 1940	0.381*** (0.107)	0.549*** (0.067)	0.810*** (0.231)	0.887*** (0.148)	0.737*** (0.138)	1.627*** (0.503)	1.396*** (0.390)
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline controls		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1900 controls				Yes	Yes		Yes
Sorting controls					Yes		Yes
1900 share control						Yes	Yes
Observations	1,887	1,885	1,887	1,885	1,883	1,885	1,883
Outcome mean	59.4	59.4	59.4	59.4	59.5	59.4	59.5
Adj. R^2	0.42	0.65					
F-statistic			109.5	115.4	100.9	10.2	10.7
Anderson-Rubin, p -val.			.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
KP underident., p -val.			.000	.000	.000	.012	.007

Notes. Regressions of Panels A and B on the share of Southern-born whites in 1940 in all non-Southern counties (mean of 2.9%). Excluded Southern counties are those belonging to states of the former Confederacy and Oklahoma. Columns (3)–(7) instrument the share of Southern-born whites using a shift-share instrument based on the 1900 cross-sectional distribution of Southern-born whites and the predicted aggregate change in the Southern white population living outside the South from 1900 to 1940. The latter is generated via a set of flexible LASSO regressions, as shown in equation (3). Baseline controls include log population per square mile; percent employed in manufacturing; percent participating in the labor force; percent unemployed; percent of land in farms; log average farm value; percent Black; percent born in Mexico, Germany, Ireland, Canada, and Italy, all in 1940; the vote share for Woodrow Wilson in 1912; the Union Army enlistment rate during the Civil War; and the corresponding mortality rate. Historical controls for 1900 include log population density (per square mile); percent employed in manufacturing; percent of land in farms; log average farm value; and percent born in Mexico, Germany, Ireland, Canada, and Italy. Additional controls capturing sorting correlates include vote shares for Breckinridge in 1860 and Jennings Bryan in 1896; dummies for whether a county was unincorporated and “unsettled” (i.e., > 2 persons per square mile) as of 1860; dummies for any major oil fields (as of 1900 and 1940) and for any mines, measures of cotton and overall agricultural potential, and a set of geographic controls (for elevation, ruggedness, distance to the coast, and distance to the nearest river). Columns (6) and (7) also control for the share of Southern-born whites in 1900. All regressions include state fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the level of 60×60 mile grid cells following the approach of [Bester, Conley, and Hansen \(2011\)](#), where the median cell contains seven non-Southern counties. The Anderson-Rubin p -value corresponds to the null hypothesis that the coefficient on the endogenous regressor is statistically significant and that the overidentifying restrictions are valid. The KP underidentification test p -value corresponds to the Kleibergen-Paap LM test whose null hypothesis is that the equation is underidentified. * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

(R^2 increases from 0.42 to 0.67) as well as the effect size from 0.4 to 0.63 percentage points (column (2)).

The remaining columns of [Table II](#) report SSIV estimates. While the OLS estimates significantly differed with the inclusion of controls, the IV analogues are nearly identical (columns (3) and (4)). Additional controls for place-based confounders (e.g., extractive commodity potential and pre-1900 voting behavior) leave the estimates largely unchanged (column (5)). This suggests that the SSIV isolates variation in the Southern white diaspora size that is orthogonal to important confounders of conservative politics.

When controlling for the initial 1900 share of Southern whites, the coefficient increases substantially (column (6)) and remains large with the full set of controls (column (7)). Recall that these specifications are equivalent to having the change in the share of Southern whites from 1900 to 1940 as the key endogenous regressor. In columns (3)–(5), the SSIV isolated the share of the 1940 diaspora driven by exogenous migration flows from 1900 and 1940. However, those estimates did not allow for independent influence of the preexisting diaspora in 1900. In controlling for such influence, we find an even larger imprint of the white Great Migration on twenty-first-century conservative politics.¹⁵

The IV estimates are sizable and statistically significant in all specifications. The first-stage F -statistic is over 100 in columns (3)–(5), pointing to the strength of chain migration in this context. In columns (6) and (7), controlling for the initial 1900 share leads to a weaker first stage (with F -statistics just over 10) and noisier estimates in the second. Yet the estimates remain precise and hold up to weak-instrument-robust inference (see the [Anderson and Rubin 1949](#) p -values at the bottom of the table) and a conservative

15. This increasing coefficient size, when switching to a specification in changes, is consistent with theoretical insights in [Jaeger, Ruist, and Stuhler \(2018\)](#): since SSIVs defined over a window from t to $t + s$ are often correlated with migration flows prior to t , controlling for those prior migration waves can change the estimates and interpretation of the coefficients on migration from t to $t + s$. In our case, inclusion of the initial 1900 share helps disentangle the effect of Southern white migration from 1900 to 1940, which appears to be larger than the effects conflated with the pre-1900 migrants. The larger effects of the more recent migration wave may reflect decaying effects of the previous one, particularly strong effects of the 1900–1940 migrants, and/or a change in the composition of Southern white migrants over time.

test for underidentification (see the [Kleibergen and Paap 2006](#) p -values).

In Panel B, the IV estimates imply that each additional Southern white migrant in 1940 is associated with 0.8–1.6 additional votes for conservative politics in the twenty-first century. In 1940, first-generation Southern whites made up 2.9% of the population in the average county (standard deviation of 5%). Going from zero Southern-born whites to the average is thus associated with a 2.3–4.7 percentage points increase in the Republican vote share. In the U.S. voting system, where small margins in a few states determine election outcomes, shifts like this could prove pivotal, a possibility we investigate later in this section.

In all cases, the IV estimates are somewhat larger than corresponding OLS ones.¹⁶ This is consistent with two possibilities: (i) economic sorting is more pervasive than ideological sorting, and/or (ii) a local average treatment effect (LATE) whereby counties with the strongest chain migration are those where the initial migrants, and those that followed, retained the deepest attachment to Southern conservatism.¹⁷

1. *Robustness Checks.* Before providing further insights on the electoral implications of our findings, we conduct a suite of additional checks to solidify a causal interpretation of our SSIV estimates. We report several crucial checks in [Table III](#) with further results referenced in the [Online Appendix](#).

2. *Alternative Standard Errors.* The significance of our estimates is robust to an array of inference procedures that guard against biases due to correlated unobservables across counties with similar fundamentals. [Online Appendix Table A.3](#) reports standard errors based on (i) the [Conley \(1999\)](#) approach with cut-offs at 200 and 500 km, (ii) the [Colella et al. \(2020\)](#) generalization

16. This mirrors a similar pattern of OLS and IV estimates in SSIV applications to the Black Great Migration ([Boustan 2010](#); [Derenoncourt 2022](#); [Fouka, Mazumder, and Tabellini 2022](#); [Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini 2023](#)) and immigration to the United States since 1990 ([Mayda, Peri, and Steingress 2022](#)).

17. [Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini \(2023\)](#) make a similar argument in explaining differences between OLS and IV estimates for the Black Great Migration. [Goldsmith-Pinkham, Sorkin, and Swift \(2020\)](#) argue that in general, SSIVs do not have an immediate LATE interpretation when the Rotemberg weights, which reflect the contribution of each origin state to identifying variation in the instrument, are negative. In our case, the vast majority (96%) of these weights are positive.

TABLE III
SELECTED IDENTIFICATION AND ROBUSTNESS CHECKS ON IV ESTIMATES IN TABLE II

Dependent variable:	Trump vote share, 2016 (1)	Republican vote share avg., 2000–2020 (2)
Alternative standard errors		
1. Baseline	1.026*** (0.167)	0.887*** (0.148)
Bester, Conley, and Hansen (2011) 60 mi ² grid-cell	(0.280)	(0.227)
Conley (1999) 500 km spatial HAC	(0.102)	(0.070)
Adão, Kolesár, and Morales (2019) SSIV adjustment		
2. Baseline w/ initial 1900 shares (column (6) of Table II)	1.779*** (0.563)	1.627*** (0.503)
Bester, Conley, and Hansen (2011) 60 mi ² grid-cell	(0.965)	(0.882)
Conley (1999) 500 km spatial HAC	(0.510)	(0.415)
Adão, Kolesár, and Morales (2019) SSIV adjustment		
Alternative samples		
3. Excluding border states (column (6) of Table II)	2.098*** (0.730)	1.604*** (0.582)
4. Border states as senders (column (6) of Table II)	2.327* (1.234)	1.617* (0.868)
5. "Unsettled" counties only (column (6) of Table II)	1.691*** (0.444)	1.219*** (0.365)
Varying control sets		
6. No controls or fixed effects	0.720** (0.291)	0.983*** (0.265)
7. Initial 1900 share control only	2.072** (0.924)	1.709** (0.776)
8. 1900 controls and initial 1900 share control	1.217** (0.574)	0.995** (0.497)
9. Post-LASSO w/ baseline and initial 1900 shares	2.150*** (0.762)	1.969*** (0.679)
10. Post-LASSO with all controls (column (7) of Table II)	2.097*** (0.767)	1.900*** (0.639)

TABLE III
CONTINUED

Dependent variable:	Trump vote share, 2016 (1)	Republican vote share avg., 2000–2020 (2)
Alternative SSIV construction		
11. Push-factor SSIV with origin county shares	1.499* (0.877)	1.505* (0.824)
Matching exercises		
12. Baseline w/ initial 1900 shares + within-state county pair FE matched on 1900 vote share	1.583*** (0.386)	1.499*** (0.421)
13. Baseline w/ initial 1900 shares + within-state county pair FE matched on 1900–1940 vote share changes	1.521*** (0.235)	1.326*** (0.231)
14. Baseline w/ initial 1900 shares + within-state county pair FE matched on 1870 Southern white shares	2.890** (1.201)	2.645** (1.147)
Electoral importance reweighting		
15. Weighting by state's electoral college votes	2.258*** (0.746)	2.324*** (0.747)
16. Weighting by 1940 population	2.283** (1.063)	2.706** (1.058)
17. Weighting by total county votes	2.662** (1.175)	3.051** (1.229)

Notes. This table reestimates Table II using a variety of robustness specifications. See the notes to Table II for the list of controls. All regressions include state fixed effects, except for row 6. All rows instrument the share of Southern-born whites using a shift-share instrument based on the 1900 cross-sectional distribution of Southern-born whites and the predicted aggregate change in the Southern white population living outside the South from 1900 to 1940. The latter is generated via a set of flexible LASSO regressions, as shown in equation (3). Standard errors are clustered using the grid cell approach of Bestler, Conley, and Hansen (2011), with the first two rows also reporting standard errors based on the Conley (1999) spatial HAC with a very wide bandwidth of 500 km and the Adão, Kolesár, and Morales (2019) adjustment for SSIV estimators. See Online Appendix Table A.3 for a larger set of alternative inference approaches. Row 3 excludes counties in the former border states during the Civil War (Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and West Virginia). Row 4 treats those border states as additional Southern sending states in defining the population of Southern whites in 1940. Row 5 uses only counties that were classified by the Census Bureau as “unsettled” by nonnatives as of 1860 (i.e., using the census definition of < 2 persons per square mile). The mean Southern white shares for the samples used in rows 3–5 are 2.7%, 5.8%, and 7.9%, respectively. Rows 9 and 10 choose optimal controls from these sets using the Belloni, Chernozhukov, and Hansen (2014) double LASSO procedure. This procedure first runs a LASSO regression of the Southern white share on the set of controls. It then does the same using the given outcome. Last, it runs the IV regression using all of the controls that were selected in the first two steps. Row 11 uses a shift-share IV based on origin-county instead of origin-state shares. Rows 12–14 control for county pairs in states matched on similarity in (i) 1900 Republican presidential vote shares, (ii) 1900–1940 changes in Republican presidential vote shares, and (iii) 1870 Southern white shares (see Online Appendix A.4). Rows 15–17 weight regressions by (i) state electoral votes in 2016 and 2000, (ii) county population in 1940, and (iii) total county votes in 2016 and 2000 (see Online Appendix Table C.1). * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

using Bartlett kernels, (iii) a wild cluster bootstrap at the state level, and (iv) the [Adão, Kolesár, and Morales \(2019\)](#) correction for SSIV estimators.

3. *Alternative Samples.* Importantly, the core estimates in [Table II](#) are not sensitive to our particular demarcation of Southern states. In [Table III](#), row 3, we exclude the border states of West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware, and in row 4, we consider them as Southern migrant-sending states. Whites from these states have cultural attachments that are more similar to those of Southern whites, relative to those from the rest of the United States (see [Online Appendix](#) Figure G.4). With the latter redefinition, the Southern white diaspora makes up 5.8 percent of the average non-Southern county in 1940, and the resulting IV estimates are very similar to our baseline in [Table II](#), Panel A. Moreover, the estimates are not driven by any particular origin or destination state (see [Online Appendix](#) Figure A.3). The stability of estimates in these exercises points to an electoral legacy that is common across Southern white migrants even though they may vary in their attachments to Southern culture.

[Table III](#), row 5 reports an additional exercise on a restricted sample, in this case focusing on counties that were not yet fully settled as of 1860. With < 2 people per square mile at the time, these counties had more limited scope to attract early Southern white migrants on the basis of preexisting groups and institutions that might also have directly affected conservative attitudes over the long run. Similar estimates hold in this subsample where the migrant shares—and hence the chain migration underlying the SSIV—are effectively based on some of the earliest white settlers in each county.

4. *Varying Control Sets.* We further address concerns about control choice by varying the components of \mathbf{X}_c used in [Table II](#). The point estimates remain sizable and statistically significant at conventional levels across the following alternatives: no controls or state FE (row 6 of [Table III](#)), initial 1900 share control only (row 7), 1900 controls and initial 1900 share control (row 8), as well as double LASSO control selection applied to columns 6 and 7 of [Table II](#) (rows 9 and 10, respectively).¹⁸

18. Point estimates are also insensitive to controlling for recently identified drivers of Republican voting in the twenty-first century. The “China shock” measure from [Autor et al. \(2020\)](#) slightly reduces the coefficient in [Table II](#),

5. *SSIV Based on Origin Counties.* Our baseline SSIV uses origin-state shares in [equation \(2\)](#). In [Table III](#), row 11, we use origin-county shares based on linked census data to determine migrants' origins. Despite a weaker first stage and a less precise second stage, the estimates are quite close to the analogous baseline ones in row 2. The noisier results are consistent with classical measurement error inherent to record-linking as well as the omission from the SSIV of migrants hailing from counties in West Texas and Oklahoma, which were not yet incorporated in the 1880 Census.

6. *Matching Exercises.* Three additional checks suggest limited residual sorting biases in the SSIV estimates. First, we create matched pairs of counties within states based on nearest neighbors in terms of Republican vote shares in 1900. Including these 900+ county-pair fixed effects leaves the core findings unchanged ([Table III](#), row 12). Even among such geographically and once politically proximate counties, the electoral impact of Southern white migrants from 1900 to 1940 remains just as large and significant. Second, we find similar robustness for pairs matched on changes in Republican vote shares between 1900 and 1940, which captures confounding trends in political orientation (row 13). Third, we consider pairs matched on the Southern white migrant share in 1870, which captures the early Confederate diaspora around the Civil War. Again, the estimates remain economically and statistically significant despite this demanding set of fixed effects (row 14). [Online Appendix A.4](#) reports additional matching specifications.

7. *Random Shifts.* In [Online Appendix A.4](#), we also show, using a procedure developed by [Adão, Kolesár, and Morales \(2019\)](#), that the shares are not driving SSIV identification. We replace the predicted shifts, $\widehat{\Delta M}_j$, in the SSIV [equation \(2\)](#) with randomly generated shifts, M_j^{rand} , and find a negligible share of statistically significant estimates across 1,000 trials.¹⁹ This

column (6) to 1.77 (0.56), while the “total frontier experience” from [Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilashe \(2020\)](#) slightly increases it to 1.86 (0.59).

19. Concretely, we construct a pseudo-SSIV by interacting actual migration shares from 1900 with shifts drawn from a random normal distribution with mean 0 and variance 5 and then repeat the baseline analysis with controls 1,000 times. Out of 1,000 trials, 5.4% of coefficients are statistically significant—positive or negative—at the 1% level and 11.5% at the 5% level (which compares favorably with 16.1% of coefficients in [Derenoncourt 2022](#)). Controlling for 1900 initial shares

TABLE IV
REESTIMATING TABLE II WITH AN ALTERNATIVE INSTRUMENT

Dependent variable:	Trump vote share, 2016		Republican vote share average, 2000–2020	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
% Southern whites, 1940	2.988** (1.298)		2.505** (1.124)	
Average % Southern whites, 1880–1940		3.083*** (1.135)		2.585** (1.009)
Estimator	IV	IV	IV	IV
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,887	1,887	1,885	1,885
Outcome mean	62.56	62.56	59.39	59.39
F-statistic	10.14	23.79	10.22	24.16

Notes. This table reestimates Table II using a version of the first railroad instrument from Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian (2020). See the notes to Table II for the list of baseline controls. All regressions include state fixed effects. As in Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian (2020), we always control for averages of the controls used in the zeroth stage, the log number of years since the first railroad connection (relative to the year 2016), and cubic polynomials of county latitude and longitude, and also allow for spatial autocorrelation in the errors using the procedure described in Conley (1999). See Online Appendix Tables B.1 and B.2 for zeroth- and first-stage estimates as well as the analysis using other outcomes. * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

offers prima facie evidence that the predicted shifts, rather than the potentially endogenous shares alone, are fundamental to the identifying variation in our SSIV.

8. Alternative Identification Strategy. In addition to the suite of robustness checks on the SSIV, we find similar results using the alternative railroad-expansion-based IV in Table IV. Following Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian (2020), we cluster standard errors using the Conley (1999) spatial HAC with a 200 km bandwidth and include averages of the controls used in the zeroth-stage regression (see Online Appendix Table B.1), the log number of years since the first railroad connection, and cubic polynomials in latitude and longitude. Both measures of the Southern white diaspora have sizable effects on Republican vote shares in the twenty-first century. At the mean, a 1 percentage point increase in the Southern white share in 1940 is associated with a 2.5 percentage points increase in the average Republican vote share from 2000 to 2020

reduces those to 0% and 0.4%, respectively. See Online Appendix Figure A.4 for a coefficient plot from this exercise.

(column (3)). Although this is somewhat larger than the analogous SSIV estimate in [Table II](#), the two are statistically indistinguishable. Together, these complementary but distinct identification strategies point to a similarly large and persistent influence of the Southern white diaspora on conservative politics over the long run.

9. *The Black Great Migration.* Concurrent with this other Great Migration, millions of Southern Blacks were also moving north and west. [Online Appendix Table D.1](#) shows, for the 2016 election, that the effect of the Southern white diaspora is distinct from that of the Southern Black diaspora. [Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini \(2023\)](#) find that Southern Black migration worked against the Republican Party during the mid- to late twentieth century. Our estimates, based on an analogous SSIV, suggest that this relationship persisted through the twenty-first century. In terms of magnitudes, the absolute coefficient for Southern Black migrants is roughly two to three times larger than for whites: moving from zero to the mean Southern Black share (0.4% of the total population) implies a similar effect size as a 1 percentage point increase in the Southern white share.²⁰

Importantly, the estimates for Southern whites in [Online Appendix Table D.1](#) show little difference with the baseline estimates in [Table II](#). Hence, the two Great Migration SSIVs are indeed capturing orthogonal variation in race-specific migration flows. This is consistent with the two groups' migrant networks forming along distinct origin–destination corridors as Southern Blacks concentrated in urban areas while Southern whites spread across the density spectrum.

IV.B. Assessing Magnitudes: From Causal Estimates to Electoral Effects

The estimates in [Table II](#) point to a sizable effect of the Southern white diaspora on the success of the Republican Party over the long run. This section presents several exercises aimed

20. This large political legacy of Black migration is consistent with three possibilities: (i) Southern Black migrants induced Northern white flight, which, in some cases, meant the departure of conservative white voters from a county ([Boustan 2010](#)); (ii) Southern Black migration induced a leftward turn among more liberal whites remaining in Northern cities as Democrats built a cross-racial class-based coalition ([Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini 2023](#)); and (iii) the Black diaspora as of 1940 attracted many more Black migrants over the ensuing years who further grew the Democratic base in urban areas.

at clarifying the magnitude of this effect. Our findings suggest that Southern white migrants may have swung close elections toward the Republican candidate and influenced voting behavior beyond those in the diaspora.

1. *Electoral Significance.* We begin by providing a heuristic quantitative interpretation of our causal estimates given the unique U.S. electoral system, which bases the winner off of electoral college (EC) votes—apportioned in favor of less populated states—as opposed to a national “one person, one vote” system. In [Table III](#), we reweight counties so as to better reflect their electoral significance (see also [Online Appendix Table C.1](#)). Reweighting by state-specific EC vote allocations ([Table III](#), row 15) increases coefficients relative to the corresponding unweighted estimates in [Table II](#). This is consistent with the fact that Southern whites migrated in large numbers to more sparsely populated Western states (see [Figure II](#)), whose voters often have outsized representation in the EC. At the same time, migrants often settled in population centers within states. Consistent with this, reweighting by county population (row 16, as in [Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini 2023](#)) and total votes cast in the county (row 17, as in [Autor et al. 2020](#)) also leads to larger coefficients. Although these weights may be affected directly by Southern white migration, their use makes clear that our core findings are not driven by small, electorally unimportant counties.

To illustrate the electoral implications, we go a step further and implement a quantification exercise motivated by [Autor et al. \(2016, 2020\)](#). Given our SSIV estimates, we assess how small changes in the population of Southern white migrants might have affected state-level two-party vote margins and hence the general election winner.²¹ [Online Appendix Table C.2](#) shows

21. Concretely, for each county in a given election, we estimate the share of two-party votes that would have been obtained by the Democrat instead of the Republican candidate if the Southern white diaspora had been $n\%$ smaller. We first compute the county-specific product of (i) the total-vote-weighted SSIV estimate (with qualitatively similar results based on population weighting), (ii) the Southern white share, and (iii) the total number of two-party votes. Next we reduce the share of Southern whites in (ii) by 10%, 20%, and 30% of the actual shares and ask how much two-party vote margins change at the state and then national level, accounting for the EC allocations to each state. This counterfactual does not consider the implications of those $n\%$ fewer Southern white migrants remaining

results for three elections won by Republican candidates in the twenty-first century. Small reductions of 10% and 20% in the size of the Southern white diaspora would have flipped the 2000 and 2004 elections, respectively, in favor of the Democratic candidate, whereas even a 30% reduction would not have flipped the 2016 election. Although this exercise highlights the potentially pivotal role of the diaspora, we emphasize that it hinges on very strong all-else-equal assumptions and that many factors could be decisive in close elections.

2. *More-Than-Compositional Effects.* Although a compositional transfer of votes across states could be sufficient to sway general election outcomes, the magnitude of our IV estimates are consistent with each Southern white migrant causing more than one additional vote for conservatives in the twenty-first century. In the extreme case where 100% of Southern whites vote Republican and no one else does, the mechanical effect of Southern white migration would be a one-for-one change in Republican votes (i.e., a coefficient equal to one). In practice, the partisan differential between Southern and non-Southern whites is not so extreme. Thus, in our voting regressions, while a coefficient of one would be an upper bound for a mechanical composition effect, the available data on partisan gaps between Southern and Northern voters points to smaller thresholds, likely below 0.5.²² Looking across [Tables II–IV](#), the IV magnitudes suggest more-than-compositional effects with some large enough to reject the null that $\beta \leq 1$ (e.g., p -value = .08 in [Table II](#), column (6)).

3. *Nonlinear Effects.* These more-than-compositional long-run estimates are consistent with nonlinearities in diaspora influence. We use two distinct but complementary methods to

in their Southern home states. Insofar as these movers were, on average, less conservative than those who stayed, their votes could have made the South less Republican but would not have been pivotal there given the wide Republican margins in the region.

22. To illustrate why 0.5 may be a more realistic upper bound than 1, note that according to the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) in 2017, white voters were 50 percentage points more likely to vote for Trump in 2016 in Louisiana than in Massachusetts—two states with the most extreme two-party vote differential across the North–South divide. Other data might suggest an even lower threshold. For example, prior to 1970, whites living in the South were 20 percentage points more conservative than those outside the South, according to the mean of religious, racial, and economic conservatism proxies in [Table I](#).

characterize outsized effects of Southern white migrants once they reach a critical threshold in the county's population.

First, we allow the effect of Southern white migrants in equation (1) to take unknown form, $f(\cdot)$, which we estimate semi-parametrically using the [Robinson \(1988\)](#) partially linear, double-residual framework. [Figure III](#) reports $f(\% \text{Southern Whites}_{c,1940})$ for the Republican vote share from 2000 to 2020. Panel A shows the OLS estimate based on [Robinson \(1988\)](#), and Panel B shows the IV estimate based on a control function approach proposed in [Su and Ullah \(2008\)](#), operationalized in [Henderson and Parmeter \(2015, 271–78\)](#), and detailed in the figure notes.²³ The estimates in [Figure III](#) point to significant nonlinearities across the distribution of local diaspora size. Both the OLS and IV figures suggest that the voting effects are driven by counties with above-mean Southern white shares (2.9%). Below that threshold, the diaspora community is perhaps too small to influence local culture and institutions dominated by non-Southern voters. Above that threshold, we see suggestive evidence of tipping points where small increases in diaspora size lead to much larger increases in Republican vote shares.

Second, we use a more formal approach to identify these potential tipping points. Following a procedure detailed in [Advani and Reich \(2015\)](#), we find statistically significant tipping when Southern whites reach 14% of the population, beyond which the Republican Party vote share jumps by 4.7 percentage points, continuing to grow thereafter.²⁴ Stanislaus County, California, is closest to this threshold and is in some ways emblematic

23. See [Online Appendix](#) Figure F.1 for robustness to alternative bandwidth and definition of Southern migrants. The [Hardle and Mammen \(1993\)](#) test rejects that the curve in [Figure III](#) is linear ($p = .04$) or quadratic ($p = .09$).

24. This is based on a series of OLS regressions that allow the effect of $\% \text{Southern Whites}_{c,1940}$ to vary above and below some threshold τ . We vary τ in increments of 0.5 across the distribution of Southern white shares, test for the joint significance on the threshold dummy and Southern white shares above that threshold, and then identify the value of τ with the largest F -statistic. Appealing to Table 1 in [Andrews \(1993\)](#) (with critical values for multiple hypothesis testing in changepoint regressions), we find that the associated F -statistic of 3.12 at $\tau = 14\%$ exceeds the critical value for significance at the 10% level. Note that this method is not amenable to IV estimation, hence our focus on the OLS estimates.

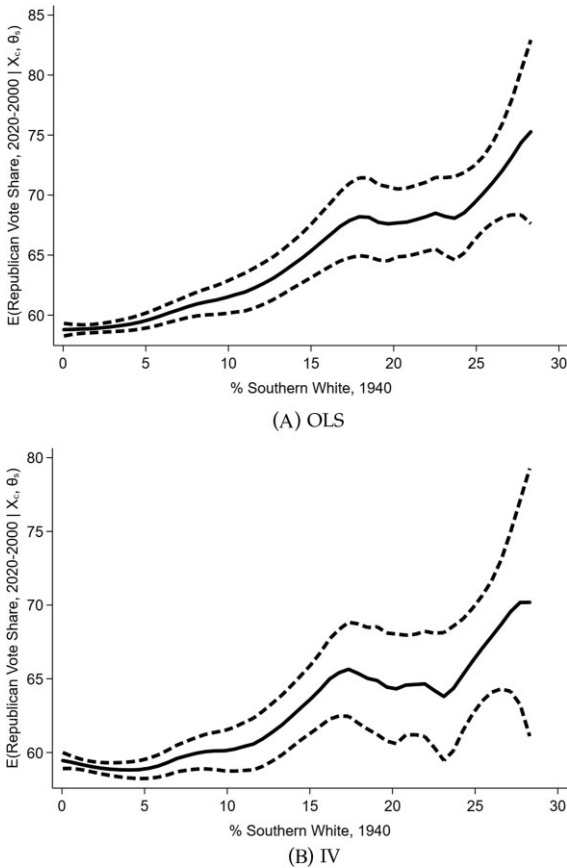


FIGURE III

Semiparametric Estimates: Average Republican Vote Share, 2000–2020

This figure reports semiparametric estimates of [equation \(1\)](#) using the [Robinson \(1988\)](#) partially linear estimator. The graphs show the resulting regression curve and 95% confidence intervals based on a local linear regression. In Panel A, the OLS specification is based on a local linear estimator with an Epanechnikov kernel and optimal bandwidth. In Panel B, the IV specification is based on a semiparametric IV procedure developed in [Su and Ullah \(2008\)](#) and operationalized as a control function estimator by [Henderson and Parmeter \(2015\)](#). (i) We estimate a first-stage [Robinson \(1988\)](#) regression based on a local cubic estimator, (ii) we include the residual Southern white share from that first-stage estimator and include that as a regressor in the second stage, (iii) we estimate the second-stage [Robinson \(1988\)](#) regression with a local linear estimator, Epanechnikov kernel, and an optimal bandwidth. In both panels, we include the full set of covariates used in [Table II](#), column (5), and in the IV Panel B, we include the Southern white migrant share in 1900 as in [Table II](#), column (7). While all counties are included in the estimation, for presentational purposes, the graphs only report those with less than 30% Southern white share in 1940.

of large-diaspora counties in the Western United States.²⁵ [Figure III](#), Panel A hints at another tipping point around 25% Southern white, but we are underpowered to detect such tipping in our baseline, where less than 2% of counties have more than 20% Southern white shares. However, when expanding Southern whites to include migrants from border states as in [Table III](#) (rows 3 and 4), we find clearer visual evidence of tipping around 25% (see [Online Appendix](#) Figure F.1, Panels C and F).

The results suggest that Southern white migrants had disproportionate influence on long-run voting behavior in communities where they reached a critical size. Some of this influence may arise from intergenerational diaspora growth through differential fertility and chain migration. Other effects may have been amplified through transmission from those in the diaspora to their non-Southern neighbors. Before exploring these channels in [Section VI](#), we first investigate how Southern white migrants shaped the trajectory of conservative politics through the twentieth century.

V. FORGING THE NEW RIGHT

Having established the impact of historical Southern white migration on conservative politics in the twenty-first century, we now work backward to understand the origins and evolution of this legacy. We identify such influence fairly early, with a critical turning point in the 1960s. The scale and geographic scope of the diaspora helped make the Republican Party's all-encompassing rightward turn an effective electoral strategy at this time. These migrants brought racial and religious conservatism to new regions, creating fresh opportunities for a powerful alliance with economic conservatives, a perennial Republican constituency. This New Right coalition coalesced over time, first as racial conservatives defected from the Democratic Party in the 1950s and 1960s, and later as evangelical Protestants mobilized around religious issues taken up by the Republican Party in the 1970s. Shared ambition to limit federal government intervention unified these groups. As economic conservatives pushed back against New Deal welfare programs, racial conservatives opposed

25. Like other Western counties, Stanislaus saw a large influx of migrants in the 1930s hailing from Dust Bowl-affected areas of Oklahoma, Texas, which, together with Arkansas, made up 84% of its Southern white population by 1940.

federally mandated integration, and religious conservatives opposed top-down schooling initiatives and gay rights.

This section examines how Southern white migrants shaped this reconfiguration of conservative politics. First, we show gradual dealignment from the Democratic Party among Southern whites in the diaspora, which in turn hastened realignment nationally in the latter half of the twentieth century. Second, we characterize the policy dimensions underlying this reconfiguration. Finally, we link the diaspora to the supply of this policy bundle and to its consolidation in the Republican Party since the 1940s.

V.A. *Southern White Migrants and Partisan Realignment in the Twentieth Century*

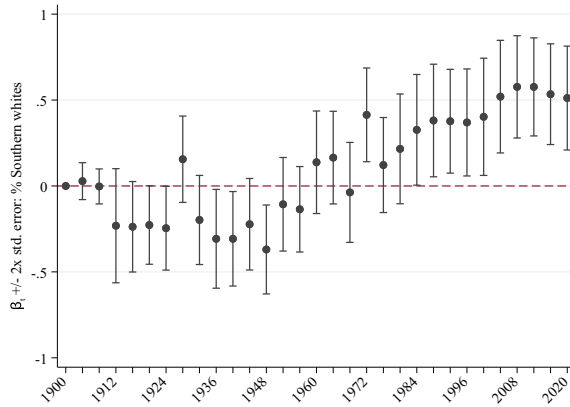
We begin by estimating the trajectory of diaspora influence on elections from 1900 to 2020:

$$(5) \quad \% \text{ Republican}_{ct} = \sum_{t \neq 1900}^{2020} \beta_t [\% \text{ Southern Whites}_{c,1940} \times I(\text{election} = t)] + \alpha_c + \phi_{st} + \varepsilon_{ct},$$

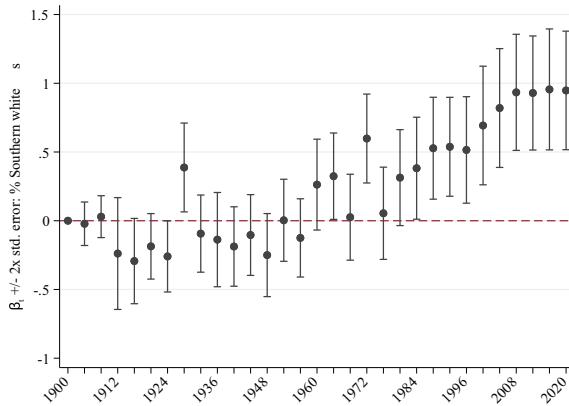
where α_c and ϕ_{st} are county and state \times election-year fixed effects, respectively, and the Southern white share in 1940 is interacted with election-year fixed effects (with 1900 as the reference). [Figure IV](#) reports OLS and SSIV estimates of β_t , which reveal a strong positive relationship beginning in the 1960s.²⁶ Prior to that, and beginning in the early 1900s as the Great Migration gained momentum, the diaspora was instead associated with lower Republican vote shares—similar to their brethren in the South.²⁷ These long-run electoral dynamics are not driven by

26. Note that the β_t coefficients before 1940 should not be interpreted as a preperiod in the difference-in-differences sense given that the stock of Southern white migrants in 1940 reflects many years of prior migration flows, which may have dynamically changed the voting outcomes from 1900 to 1940. See [Online Appendix Figure A.5](#) for comparable estimates in pre-1940 elections based on contemporaneous variation in Southern white shares.

27. The 1928 election of Herbert Hoover was an important exception, rooted in Democrat Al Smith's Catholicism and opposition to Prohibition. See [Online Appendix E.5](#) for a related discussion of the diaspora influence on the Progressive movement in the early twentieth century. The elections of 1976 and 1980 also break the overall trend somewhat, which may be due to the Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter's Southern origin and especially his evangelical Southern Baptist religious



(A) Panel OLS estimates



(B) Panel IV estimates

FIGURE IV

Southern White Migrants in 1940 and Republican Presidential Vote Share, 1900–2020

The coefficients are from panel OLS and IV regressions of vote share for the Republican candidate in 31 U.S. presidential elections between 1900 and 2020 on the share of Southern white migrants in 1940 in all non-Southern counties. Data on presidential-election outcomes come from [MIT Election Data and Science Lab \(2018\)](#), the presidential-election atlas for years after 1912 ([Leip 2021](#)), and the election data set compiled by [Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale \(2006\)](#) for 1912 and earlier. Excluded Southern counties are those belonging to states of the former Confederacy and Oklahoma. The regression includes county and state \times election year fixed effects, based on [equation \(5\)](#). The coefficients from these share effects are expressed relative to the base year 1900. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered at the level of 60×60 mile grid cells following the approach of [Bester, Conley, and Hansen \(2011\)](#), where the median cell contains seven non-Southern counties. For estimates based on contemporaneous variation in Southern white shares for pre-1940 elections, see [Online Appendix Figure A.5](#). See [Online Appendix Table A.8](#) for an alternative, more parsimonious approach to the analysis that controls for 1900 controls and 1900 Southern white shares.

changes in voter turnout ([Online Appendix](#) Figure E.5) or by latent voting differentials before 1900 ([Online Appendix](#) Table A.7).

Alongside this gradual move toward the Republican Party in white-diaspora communities was a similarly large and opposing move in Black-diaspora communities. [Figure V](#) traces that differential partisan shift over time by augmenting [equation \(5\)](#) to include an analogously instrumented term for Southern Black migrants. By the mid-twentieth century, counties with a large Southern Black migrant population had begun to swing away from the Republican Party, and this persisted in the twenty-first century as discussed in [Section IV.A](#). Together, these results suggest that the Great Migration of Southern Blacks and whites jointly galvanized long-run changes in the geography of partisanship across America.

1. *George Wallace and Democratic Dealignment.* The 1960s were a turning point for right-wing politics in the United States, and the influence of Southern white migrants during this period may have been a harbinger of change to come. A critical juncture came in 1968 with George Wallace's third-party presidential run. After running in the Democratic primary in 1964, the segregationist governor of Alabama split with the party following their leftward turn on civil rights. His politics resonated with whites across the South, where he won five states in 1968, and in diaspora communities; he won nearly 10% of votes in the average county outside the South (see [Online Appendix](#) Figure E.4).

[Table V](#) uncovers a significant diaspora imprint on one of the strongest third-party performances in American history. In the IV specification in column (3), moving from zero to the mean Southern white share increases the Wallace vote by 1.7 percentage points relative to a mean of 9.4 percentage points. Wallace ostensibly captured some of the votes that would have otherwise gone to Richard Nixon, the Republican candidate in 1968 (note in [Figure IV](#) the drop in β_t from 1964 to 1968). While Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate in 1964, also ran a racially conservative campaign, he lacked the folksy, blue-collar appeal of Wallace, who attracted some economic moderates. The strong

affiliation. See [Online Appendix](#) Table A.8 for a tabular version summarizing some of the key periods in the figure.

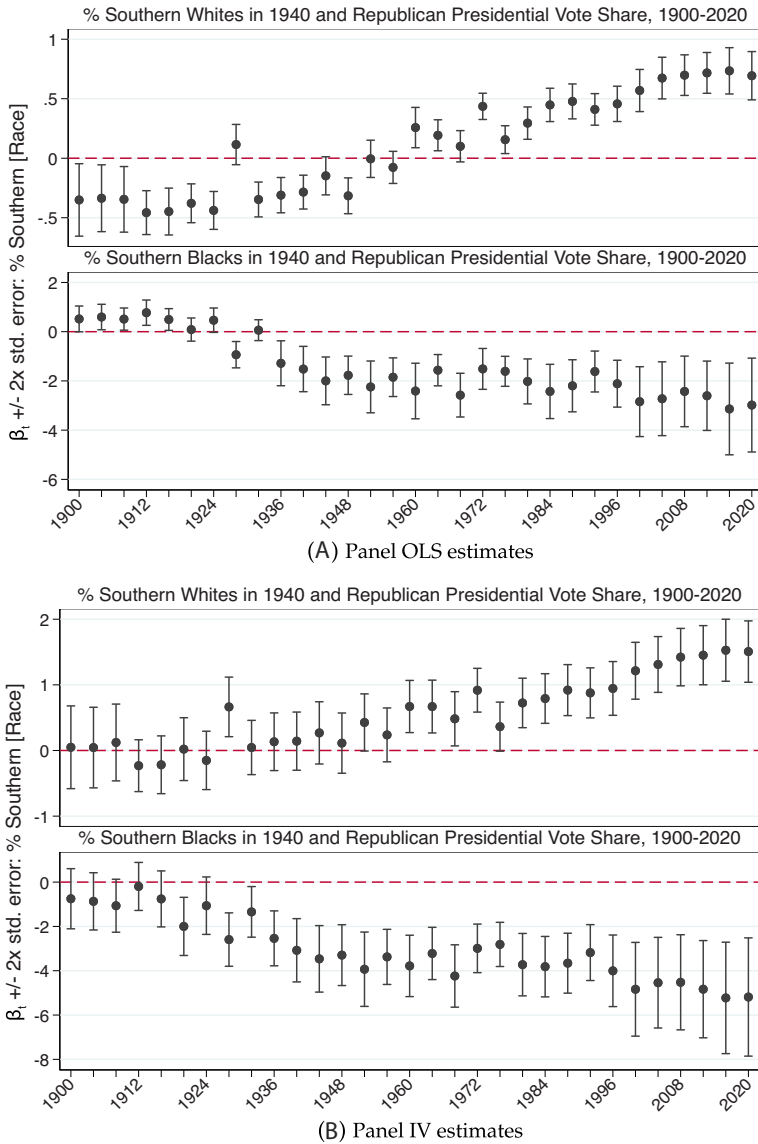


FIGURE V

Southern Blacks and Whites and Republican Presidential Vote Share

Coefficients from pooled OLS and IV regressions of vote share for the Republican candidate in 31 U.S. presidential elections between 1900 and 2020 on the shares of Southern white migrants and Southern Black migrants in all non-Southern counties. All regressions include state×election year fixed effects. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered using the grid cell approach of [Bester, Conley, and Hansen \(2011\)](#).

TABLE V
SOUTHERN WHITE MIGRANTS IN 1940, WALLACE IN 1968, AND PARTISAN REALIGNMENT

Dependent variable:	Third-party vote for George Wallace in 1968			Change in vote share from Democrat to Republican, 1948–2000			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
% Southern whites, 1940	0.248*** (0.050)	0.358*** (0.086)	0.570** (0.272)	0.741*** (0.064)	0.839*** (0.160)	1.318*** (0.471)	
% Wallace voters, 1968							0.722*** (0.077)
Estimator	OLS	IV	IV	OLS	IV	IV	OLS
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1900 share control			Yes		Yes	Yes	
Observations	1,883	1,883	1,883	1,882	1,882	1,882	1,882
Outcome mean	9.4	9.4	9.4	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8
Adj. R^2	0.68			0.64			0.64
F -statistic		115.2	10.3		117.1	10.6	
Anderson-Rubin, p -val.		.000	.006		.000	.007	
KP underident., p -val.		.000	.011		.000	.010	

Notes. Regressions of the third-party vote share for George Wallace of the American Independent Party in the 1968 presidential election (columns 1)–(3) and of the change in vote share from Democrat to Republican between 1948 and 2000, that is, Republican vote share in 2000 minus (100 – Democratic vote share in 1948) (columns 4)–(7) on the share of Southern-born whites in 1940 (columns 1)–(6) or on the share of votes for George Wallace in 1968 (column 7) in non-Southern counties. Columns (2), (3), (5), and (6) instrument the share of Southern-born whites using a shift-share instrument based on the 1900 cross-sectional distribution of Southern-born whites and the predicted aggregate change in the Southern white population living outside the South from 1900 to 1940. The latter is generated via a set of flexible LASSO regressions, as shown in equation (3). See the notes to Table II for the list of baseline controls. Columns (3) and (6) control for the share of Southern-born whites in 1900. All regressions include state fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered using the grid cell approach of [Bester, Conley, and Hansen \(2011\)](#). * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Wallace performance may have foreshadowed the looming mass departure of Southern whites from the Democratic Party.²⁸

Just as whites in the South increasingly left the Democratic Party, so did those in the diaspora. [Kuziemko and Washington \(2018\)](#) show that after 1964, whites in the South were significantly less likely to identify with the Democratic Party compared with whites in the non-South. In [Online Appendix Table E.1](#), we provide analogous evidence of dealignment from the Democratic Party among Southern whites in the diaspora. After 1964, Southern white migrants were 7.5–8.5 percentage points less likely to identify as Democrats compared with their neighbors without Southern heritage living in the same county (columns (1)–(3)).

Returning to [Table V](#), columns (4)–(7) suggest that the Republican Party was able to capitalize on this disaffection among formerly Democratic voters in the diaspora. Moving from zero to the mean Southern white share is associated with a 3.8 percentage point swing from Democrat to Republican between 1948 and 2000 (column (6)).²⁹ This effect size is on par with the 1948–2000 partisan swing predicted by the Wallace vote share in 1968 (column (7)).³⁰ In other words, the diaspora may have been among the bellwether demographics, along with their brethren in

28. In his biography of Wallace, [Carter \(1995, 12\)](#) notes that “the genius of George Wallace lay in his ability to link traditional conservatism to an earthy language that voiced powerful cultural beliefs and symbols with a much broader appeal to millions of Americans: the sanctity of the traditional family, the centrality of overt religious beliefs, the importance of hard work and self-restraint, the celebration of the autonomy of the local community.” Carter describes the impact that Wallace had on the Nixon campaign in 1968 and its reelection strategy in 1972. There was a concerted effort by Republican strategists to identify and capture Wallace voters through deliberate messaging.

29. This result holds with (i) the matching exercises described above ([Online Appendix Tables A.4, A.5, and A.6](#)), (ii) the alternative IV strategy ([Online Appendix Table B.2](#)), and (iii) various county weights ([Online Appendix Table C.1](#)). Moreover, [Online Appendix Figure F.2](#) reveals similar nonlinear threshold effects for this partisan swing from 1948 to 2000 as seen for the twenty-first-century Republican vote share in [Figure III](#). Note that we choose 2000 as the endpoint for two reasons. First, it was a competitive election with significant regional variation in party preferences, whereas the landslide elections of the 1970s–90s saw nationwide partisan swings. Second, although Nixon and Reagan consolidated much of the Southern white vote, these elections were punctuated by Carter’s and Clinton’s (two Southern white Democratic candidates) in which that electorate remained splintered.

30. It is also sufficient to explain the flip from Democrat to Republican in many Western states from 1948 to 2000.

the South, in leading the shift of conservative whites toward the Republican Party in the second half of the twentieth century. If Wallace had been the political “weathervane in the America of the 1960s and 1970s” (Carter 1995, 12), the Southern white diaspora was a key constituency driving changes across the North–South divide.

In fact, Southern white migrants appear to have been distinctive in contributing to the success of Wallace and the trajectory of partisan realignment outside the South. While Northern white migrants also contributed to the emerging New Right coalition, they did not affect partisan realignment to the same extent. [Online Appendix Table D.2](#) explores these two migrant populations’ respective influences in Western states to which both groups migrated in large numbers by 1940. Conditional on migrating to the West, an additional Southerner in 1940 is associated with a larger effect on the 2016 Trump vote share than an additional Northerner (columns (1) and (2)). Yet unlike Southern white migrants, those from the North reduced support for Wallace in 1968 (columns (3) and (4)) and had more limited effects on the partisan swing from 1948 to 2000 (columns (5) and (6)).

Economic conservatism helps explain this distinctive pattern. Long a mainstay of the Republican Party, such preferences were more pervasive among Northern white migrants than Southern white migrants, who instead brought a novel, or least amplified, religious and racial conservatism to the West (see [Online Appendix Table D.3](#)).³¹ These different economic preferences clarify why Northern white migrants reduced support for Wallace, who advocated for (white) working-class rights and populist economic policies. As we show in the next section, it was after this election that the Republican Party began to forge a cohesive New Right movement that bridged the apparent divide between economic conservatives on the one hand and racial and religious conservatives on the other.

Together with the analysis in [Kuziemko and Washington \(2018\)](#), our results offer a new perspective on the scope of partisan realignment beginning in the 1960s. Just as Democrats lost the South, they also lost communities home to Southern-born whites outside the South. Ultimately, these Southern white migrants

31. One potential explanation for the economic conservatism of late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century Northern white migrants is that they brought to the West a culture of rugged individualism opposed to taxation and redistribution (see [Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilas 2020](#)).

helped solidify a new conservative white voting bloc that cut across large swaths of the country and reshaped partisan politics over the long run. We turn now to a deeper exploration of the political processes driving the formation of this new voting bloc.

V.B. Characterizing the New Right Policy Bundle

Before identifying how Southern white migrants shaped the New Right, we need to characterize the emergence of this novel alliance of economic, racial, and religious conservatives. At the vanguard of this process was George Wallace, an “alchemist of the new social conservatism as he compounded racial fear, anticommunism, cultural nostalgia, and traditional right-wing economics into a movement that laid the foundation for the conservative counterrevolution that reshaped American politics in the 1970s and 1980s” (Carter 1995, 13). Wallace’s strong showing outside the South in 1968 may have signaled the viability, on a national scale, of Nixon’s Southern Strategy campaign for racial conservatives and Reagan’s subsequent Moral Majority campaign for religious conservatives.

This section uses congressional voting and speech data to show how these three strands of conservatism came together over time in the New Right. We measure economic conservatism using the first dimension of DW-Nominate indices (Lewis et al. 2021) and racial conservatism using the Bateman, Clinton, and Lapinski (2017) index. Both are based on House representatives’ “ideal points” according to their voting record and capture ideology on a left-to-right continuum centered on zero.³² We measure religious conservatism using an original religious rhetoric index (RRI). For a given legislator, we sum words with biblical roots (God, Christ, lord, almighty, amen) and divide by all words spoken (see Online Appendix H).

Online Appendix Figure E.1 shows how the elements of the New Right bundle intensified and coalesced among Republican legislators. Using congressional-district-level regressions, we plot the evolution of the average difference between Republican and Democratic legislators in levels (Panels A and B) and relative

32. Note that congressional ideal points are defined relative to the average representative in a given year. For instance, although favoring segregation was a racially conservative albeit mainstream position in the 1960s, such a view would be extreme today.

to a base year of 1940 (Panels C and D). Estimates confirm the long-standing economic conservatism of the Republican Party. They also show an increase in relative conservatism among Republicans, as measured by a composite index (Panels E and F). This is explained by increasing concentrations of religious and especially racial conservatism among Republicans. Prior to the 1960s, Democrats had been slightly more likely to employ religious rhetoric.³³ Meanwhile, racial conservatives had been split between parties as Democrats moved left on race after the 1930s in urban areas while maintaining prosegregation platforms in rural areas and in the South (Feinstein and Schickler 2008; Schickler 2016).

By the 1960s, as Democrats expanded their national, preredistribution platform to be more racially inclusive, Republicans courted disaffected racial conservatives. Nixon's Southern strategy deployed rhetoric on crime and welfare that increased Republican appeal among conservative whites across America (Carter 1999; Maxwell and Shields 2019). By 1990, the average House Republican was two standard deviations more racially conservative than the average Democrat, in and outside the South.

Religious rhetoric follows a similar but smaller shift, with a 0.5 standard deviation swing in RRI from Democrats to Republicans over the period of study. From the mid-1980s, Republicans were consistently associated with more religious rhetoric in the House, reflecting the political mobilization of evangelicalism during the Reagan era (Kruse 2015; Balmer 2021). Together, the patterns in Online Appendix Figure E.1 are consistent with Lowndes's (2009) argument that racial factors were a driving force behind the emergence of the New Right and partisan realignment (see also Online Appendix Table E.4).

The bundling of different strands of conservative ideology was an integral part of the pathway to polarization. Online Appendix Figure E.2 demonstrates this connection by plotting the distribution of our composite index across representatives in the U.S. House in 1940 and again in 1990. The shift from a single-peaked distribution in 1940 to a bimodal one in 1990 reflects the increased coincidence of the three dimensions within members on both the left and right of the ideological spectrum.

33. Religion had been more salient among the political left through the 1960s (see Online Appendix E.2 for background).

The same dynamic bundling patterns can also be found on the political demand side, among voters in the ANES. After 1964, identification with the Republican Party is increasingly associated with evangelicalism and opposition to civil rights ([Online Appendix Table E.2](#)). While Republican voters' greater opposition to government intervention in the economy is more stable across time, the reasons for such opposition broadened with the mass entry of racial conservatives into the party. The Wallace-to-Nixon voters in [Online Appendix Table E.3](#) illustrate this shift: among Nixon voters in 1972, those who voted for Wallace in 1968 express stronger opposition to advancing civil rights but no less opposition to government intervention unless that intervention supports Blacks. These voters are emblematic of those disillusioned with the Democratic Party as it shifted toward more racially inclusive approaches to redistribution. Wallace's campaign in 1968 showed Republican political strategists how to capture these alienated voters and drive a wedge between class- and race-based identity.

V.C. Southern White Migrants and New Right Representation

Having established the emergence of a New Right policy bundle under the Republican Party umbrella, we show how Southern white migrants influenced the consolidation of these policy dimensions and the path of conservative political representation in the twentieth century. We link the diaspora to increases in the supply of conservative ideology among federal legislators and state-level political parties, mirroring the increased demand for conservative policy among local voters over the long run.

1. *Congressional Ideology.* [Figure VI](#) reports OLS and IV estimates of a congressional-district-level specification analogous to [equation \(5\)](#) but with state and congress-year fixed effects.³⁴ We focus on the period of partisan realignment from 1940 to 1990 with outcomes being representatives' party affiliation (Panel A)

34. Because district boundaries change frequently, harmonization may not result in stable, meaningful units of analysis (see [Online Appendix H](#) for details). We therefore treat district-years as units and include state-level fixed effects to capture time-invariant unobservables. While boundary changes may be endogenous to the political changes we study, such is not the case with state boundaries, which constitute the scope of our analysis of local party platforms. We also do not control for the 1900 Southern white share in these figures given power limitations. Instead, we include that control in [Online Appendix Table E.5](#), which reports estimates from analogous but more parsimonious specifications.

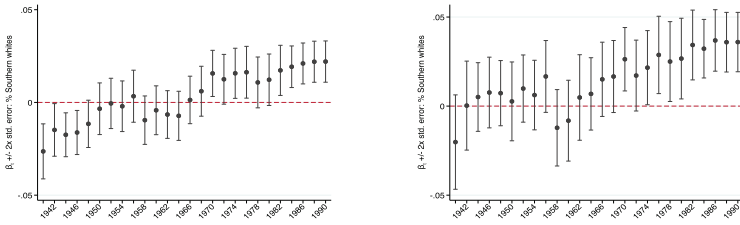
and proxies for their racial (Panel B), economic (Panel C), and religious ideology (Panel D).

The dynamic path of coefficients further corroborates the influence of Southern whites on partisan realignment and the corresponding evolution of the New Right. First, Southern white migrants are associated with greater Democratic representation in the 1940s but shifted significantly toward the Republican Party by the 1970s (Panel A). Second, although Democrats were already shifting to the left on racial issues in the 1940s, even then the representatives with which Southern white migrants associated were more racially conservative (Panel B).³⁵ This association deepened after the 1960s. Third, large-diaspora districts preferred economically moderate Democrats in the 1940s only to shift toward more fiscally conservative Republicans in the 1990s (Panel C), to the extent they were similarly racially conservative. This process is consistent with a “long Southern strategy”: by equating welfare policy with pro-Black redistribution, Republican strategists forged a marriage of convenience between racial and economic conservatives that proved central to the New Right coalition (Maxwell and Shields 2019). We saw in Section V.A how this alliance attracted new voters to the Republican Party. Figure VI provides a window into the legislative dynamics behind this realignment. Finally, we see a related diaspora effect on representatives’ religious rhetoric, the timing of which aligns with the growing politicization of the evangelical movement after the 1960s (see Online Appendix E.2).

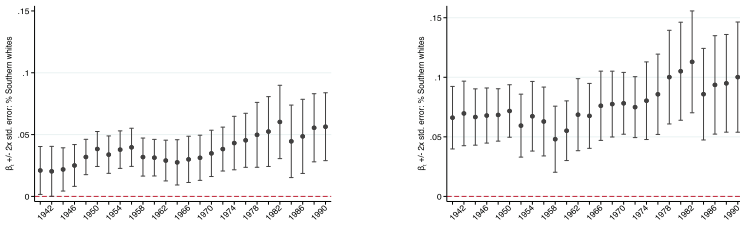
To better understand the ideological shifts among representatives, Online Appendix Figure E.3 relates the Southern white diaspora to 13 landmark votes in the House of Representatives, spanning economic, racial, and religious issues since the late 1940s.³⁶ To benchmark one salient example, moving from zero to

35. Political scientists and economists have linked the Democrats’ shifting racial platform to the incorporation of Blacks in the growing urban North (Schickler 2016; Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini 2023). In line with this change, we observe earlier shifts toward the Republican Party in white-diaspora districts with large Black shares and dense populations (see Online Appendix Figure D.1).

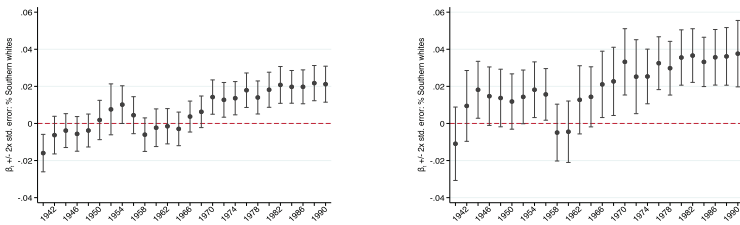
36. These include (by year) the Taft-Hartley Union Ban Act (1947); Refugee Relief Act (1953); Civil Rights Act (1964); Social Security Amendments (1965), which created Medicare and Medicaid; Voting Rights Act (1965); Equal Rights Amendment vote (1971); Equal Employment Opportunity Act (1972); Economic Recovery Tax Act (1981), that is, the Reagan tax cuts; Deficit Control Act (1985), which formally constrained the federal budget; the Brady Handgun Violence



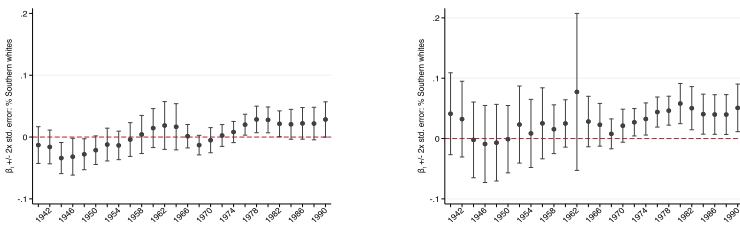
(A) Republican Party Affiliation: OLS (left) and IV (right) estimates



(B) Racial Conservatism Index: OLS (left) and IV (right) estimates



(C) Economic Conservatism Index: OLS (left) and IV (right) estimates



(D) Religious Rhetoric Index: OLS (left) and IV (right) estimates

FIGURE VI

Southern White Migrants in 1940 and Congressional Ideology, 1940–1990

FIGURE VI

(Continued)

The coefficients are from pooled OLS (left) and IV (right) regressions, respectively, of (Panel A) an indicator for legislator party affiliation (Republican = 1) in the U.S. House; (Panel B) congressional ideal points from [Bateman, Clinton, and Lapinski \(2017\)](#), based on racial and civil rights voting patterns; (Panel C) congressional ideal points from the time-varying DW-Nominate score (dimension 1) by [Lewis et al. \(2021\)](#), covering economic issues; and (Panel D) our relative religious rhetoric (RRI) scores on the share of Southern white migrants in 1940. RRI scores are calculated from congressional speech by totaling a legislator's words with biblical roots—God, Christ, lord, almighty, amen—and dividing by total words spoken. All regressions include Congress and state fixed effects. The Southern white migrant share in 1940 is interacted with the Congress fixed effect. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are robust to heteroskedasticity. See [Online Appendix Table E.5](#) for an alternative, more parsimonious approach to the congressional ideology analysis that controls for 1900 Southern white shares.

the mean migrant share is associated with a 5 percentage point increase in the likelihood that the representative voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (relative to a 10% mean outside the South). We find a similar effect size in 2021 when many Republican legislators objected to certifying President Joe Biden's victory.

2. State Party Platforms. Many of the same dynamics can be seen in state party platforms. Historically, these local party agendas often differed from those in national party platforms, and as such provide a unique lens on how the diaspora affected local politics. Our analysis relies on new data from [Hopkins, Schickler, and Azizi \(2022\)](#), from which we extract trigrams evoking support for civil rights, traditionalism, and small government (see [Online Appendix H](#)). These data suggest limited differences between Democratic and Republican state party platforms outside the South prior to 1964 ([Online Appendix Table E.6](#)). After 1964, platforms began to diverge, first on civil rights and later on traditionalism and small government, as Republicans became

Prevention Act of (1993), which established background checks and waiting periods for firearms sales; Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act (2003); Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act (2010); and the 2021 electoral college vote count, which saw widespread objections to states' certifications of the 2020 election by allies of President Trump, in an effort to overturn the majority vote in those states. Roll calls before 1990 come from [Swift et al. \(2009\)](#) and after 1990 from the [Clerk of the United States House of Representatives \(2021\)](#). For the electoral college vote, a representative voted "yea" if they objected to no state count.

more conservative and both parties cohered their national- and state-level agendas.

Mirroring the patterns for congressional politics, Southern white migrants helped fuel partisan divergence at the state level. Although Republican platforms became more supportive of civil rights after 1964, the diaspora pushed against this progressive change. [Online Appendix Table E.7](#) shows, using a state-level SSIV approach, that a 1 percentage point increase in Southern whites in 1940 is associated with a 4–8 percentage point decrease in the probability of pro-civil rights rhetoric among state Republican parties, relative to before 1964 (columns (1)–(3)). This suggests that diaspora whites were not merely swept up in or following a nationwide realignment of racial conservatives but helped move local Republican party politics in this direction. The diaspora played a similar role in pushing local Republican Parties rightward on religion (columns (4)–(6)) and the economy (columns (7)–(9)). In [Online Appendix E.2](#), we provide in-depth historical context for these platform changes and the role of Southern white migrants therein.

3. Local Policy Preferences. These local political supply-side responses to the Southern white diaspora are consistent with voter preferences in these areas. Using the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) since 2007, [Online Appendix Table E.9](#) shows that residents of large-diaspora counties exhibit more conservative attitudes along dimensions of the New Right bundle, including, among others, views about the size of government and the existence of systemic racism. These OLS results are restricted to the white population and, like the district-level analysis, hold across counties within states.

VI. CULTURAL TRANSMISSION AND CHANGE

The results thus far demonstrate how Southern white migrants hastened partisan realignment and helped consolidate the New Right during the twentieth century, ultimately leaving a sizable electoral imprint in the twenty-first century. In this final section, we explore several channels through which the initial diaspora could exert such a large and persistent influence on politics over the long run. We start by showing that, although important, population growth in the diaspora, through fertility and chain migration, cannot fully explain the magnitude of our

voting estimates. This points to the importance of horizontal and oblique cultural transmission, as our nonlinear estimates in [Section IV.B](#) suggested.

We provide several pieces of evidence consistent with such transmission. We show that intermarriage and residential integration between Southern and non-Southern whites may have increased the scope for Southern whites to influence voting behavior in their communities. Moreover, the diaspora built evangelical churches that outlived the initial migrants and grew faster in areas with greater integration between Southern and non-Southern whites. Conservative media complemented these brick-and-mortar institutions by entering markets with a larger diaspora and eventually reaching a wider non-Southern audience. We conclude with direct evidence of spillovers: neighborhood-level exposure to Southern white migrants induced non-Southern parents to give their children biblical names, consistent with a broader shift toward conservative cultural norms.

VI.A. Diaspora Growth and Intergenerational Transmission

One potential vehicle for persistent political influence lies in sustained growth of the diaspora. Even if some migrants shed their conservative attitudes or only partially transmitted those attitudes to second-generation kids, differential fertility and chain migration could have been sufficient to explain the more-than-compositional effects of Southern white migrants in 1940 on twenty-first-century voting outcomes. The evidence in this section suggests that such demographic changes, although important, are too small to explain the magnitude of our estimates in [Section IV](#).

In [Online Appendix](#) Table F.1, we find roughly one-for-one diaspora growth through both fertility and chain migration. Here, we estimate [equation \(1\)](#) for alternative outcomes measuring the population shares of second-generation Southern white children (columns (1)–(4)) and of Southern white migrants over the long run (columns (5)–(8)). For each Southern-born migrant in 1940, we observe 0.92–1.16 additional second-generation children as a share of kids outside the South (columns (2) and (4)). Conditional on the 1900 Southern white share, we cannot reject that $\beta \leq 1$, which implies limited scope for differential fertility to cause more than proportional growth of the population with Southern ancestry. Similarly, we cannot reject that $\beta \leq 1$ for Southern

white migrant population shares in 1970 (column (6)) or 2000 (column (8)). Chain migration was crucial in sustaining Southern culture in the diaspora, but it was not strong enough, in the average county, to create an even larger diaspora over the long run.

To better understand the legacy of vertical transmission, we augment %Southern White_{c,1940} in [equation \(1\)](#) to include children born to Southern white migrants by 1940 but after they left the South. [Table VI](#) relates this combined first- and second-generation diaspora to the Republican vote share in the 2000s. Using the original SSIV based on those born in the South, the LATE thus includes the fertility effects in [Online Appendix Table F.1](#). Across columns, the estimates are smaller than the baseline in [Table II](#), which suggests that the second-generation diaspora may have had more limited influence on long-run voting than their Southern-born parents. This is consistent with (i) the second generation having more limited tenure and hence scope for influencing non-Southerners in destination communities, and (ii) evidence on the partial intergenerational transmission of political attitudes within families (see [Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009](#)).

While second-generation diaspora whites and post-1940 chain migrants from the South shaped electoral outcomes, the magnitude of demographic change through these channels is too limited to explain the large and persistent effects of the migrants as of 1940.³⁷ Our estimates suggest that those initial movers catalyzed a long-run process of political change that exceeded their compositional share in the electorate. We turn to evidence on where and how that disproportionate effect materialized.

VI.B. Social Integration

The political influence of Southern whites varied depending on how much they interacted with non-Southerners. Cultural

37. Another potentially important demographic mechanism might stem from the role of Southern white migrants in crowding out minority, especially Black, populations from the county through exclusionary policies and racially biased institutions. We discuss evidence along these lines in an initial version of this article ([Bazzi et al. 2021](#)) as well as in [Bazzi et al. \(2023b\)](#). Given those minority groups lean strongly Democratic after realignment, such population changes might further contribute to the sizable effects of the Southern white diaspora on long-run Republican support. However, if these changes were large enough to explain our findings, we would have plausibly seen a bigger drop in the IV coefficient for Southern whites when accounting for the causal effects of Southern Black migration ([Figure V](#) and [Online Appendix Table D.1](#)).

TABLE VI
COMBINING THE FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION DIASPORA, EXTENDING TABLE II

Dependent variable:	Trump vote share, 2016		Republican vote share avg., 2000–2020			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
% South. whites (both gen.), 1940	0.445*** (0.055)	0.628*** (0.101)	0.569*** (0.137)	0.386*** (0.049)	0.542*** (0.088)	0.521*** (0.115)
Estimator	OLS	IV	IV	OLS	IV	IV
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1900 share control			Yes			Yes
Observations	1,883	1,883	1,883	1,882	1,882	1,882
Outcome mean	62.6	62.6	62.6	59.4	59.4	59.4
Adj. R^2	0.67			0.65		
F -statistic		147.1	42.4		147.7	42.4
Anderson-Rubin, p -val.		.000	.000		.000	.000
KP underident., p -val.		.000	.000		.000	.000

Notes. Regressions of (i) the vote share for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election and (ii) Republican vote share averages between 2000 and 2020 on the share of first- and second-generation Southern white migrants in 1940 in all non-Southern counties. A second-generation Southern white is defined as someone born outside the South with a Southern-born white father and/or mother. Excluded Southern counties are those belonging to states of the former Confederacy and Oklahoma. We instrument the share of first- and second-generation Southern-born whites using a shift-share instrument based on the 1900 cross-sectional distribution of Southern-born whites and the predicted aggregate change in the Southern white population living outside the South from 1900 to 1940. The latter is generated via a set of flexible LASSO regressions, as shown in equation (3). See the notes to Table II for details on all controls. All regressions include state fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered using the grid cell approach of [Bester, Conley, and Hansen \(2011\)](#). * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

transmission across groups can occur in many settings, including interactions between neighbors and mixing in the marriage market. If Southern whites lived in isolated enclaves, their opportunities to transmit conservative values to non-Southerners would have been limited. In [Table VII](#), we explore the role of social integration in amplifying horizontal and oblique transmission. Our analysis relies on two proxies for integration. The first captures the rate of intermarriage between Southern and non-Southern-born whites. The second captures residential integration, based on the [Logan and Parman \(2017\)](#) next-door-neighbor segregation measure. Both measures account for relative population shares and hence can be interpreted as integration beyond random matching.

[Table VII](#) shows that Southern white migrants in 1940 are associated with more Republican voting over the long run in counties where they lived closer to and intermarried more frequently with non-Southerners. Greater mixing in housing and marriage markets is associated with greater support for the Republican Party (columns (1), (2), (5), and (6)). A one standard deviation increase in intermarriage (adjusted for random matching) is associated with around 2 percentage points more Republican votes, and a similar magnitude holds for residential integration. Moreover, such mixing is associated with greater diaspora influence (columns (3), (4), (7), and (8)). Southern whites have a roughly 20% larger association with Republican vote shares in counties with one standard deviation greater intermarriage and a roughly 10% larger association in counties with one standard deviation greater residential integration.

Of course, both integration proxies may be jointly determined with political outcomes. For example, non-Southern whites may be more likely to intermarry Southern white migrants if they share similar political preferences. Yet if horizontal and oblique transmission are important mechanisms, then we should observe the electoral influence of Southern whites being larger in places where they mix more frequently with non-Southerners. Even if such transmission is confounded by endogenous assortative matching, such matching has the potential to build a larger and more cohesive conservative voting bloc than would have emerged had Southern whites not migrated to the county in such large numbers.

Together, the results in [Table VII](#) are consistent with cultural spillovers between Southern and non-Southern populations

TABLE VII
INTERGROUP CONTACT, INTEGRATION, AND VOTING

Dependent variable:	Trump vote share, 2016			Republican vote share avg., 2000–2020				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
% Southern whites, 1940	2.087*** (0.659)	2.213*** (0.776)	2.301*** (0.677)	1.727*** (0.403)	1.892*** (0.592)	2.026*** (0.705)	2.108*** (0.602)	1.508*** (0.348)
Intermarriage index	2.272*** (0.487)		1.545*** (0.356)		1.951*** (0.430)		1.220*** (0.327)	
Residential integration index		2.189** (0.872)		0.976** (0.434)		1.976** (0.813)		0.682* (0.399)
% Southern whites × intermarriage			0.437** (0.219)				0.440** (0.199)	
% Southern whites × integration				0.133* (0.069)				0.142** (0.060)
Estimator	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1900 share control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,886	1,883	1,886	1,883	1,885	1,882	1,885	1,882
Outcome mean	62.6	62.6	62.6	62.6	59.4	59.4	59.4	59.4
F-statistic	8.6	6.8	7.2	42.1	8.6	6.8	7.2	42.0
KP underident., p-val.	.017	.021	.003	.000	.017	.021	.003	.000

Notes. Regressions in all columns are on the indexes of intermarriage between Southern whites and non-Southern whites and residential segregation from Southern whites, both as of 1940. The intermarriage index divides the actual intermarriage rate between Southern and non-Southern whites by the theoretical matching rate implied by the population share of marriage-age individuals in the two groups. This ratio therefore answers how much intermarriage exists relative to what would be expected without any directed search in the marriage market (see Bazzi et al. 2019 for a related approach). Once standardized, this index spans –4.5 to a sample max of 4.6. The segregation index is a measure based on next-door neighbor integration from Southern whites, based on the segregation measure in Logan and Parman (2017). Once standardized, this index spans –6.8 to 1.3. Evangelical measures here include all such groups in the 2010 religious census from The Association of Religious Data Archives (2021). Excluded Southern counties are those belonging to states of the former Confederacy and Oklahoma. See the notes to Table II for a full description of controls. Standard errors are clustered using the grid cell approach of Bester, Conley, and Hansen (2011). * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

mixing in neighborhoods and households. Although suggestive, these results do not yet clarify which institutions may facilitate such mixing or the direction of those spillovers. We offer direct evidence on these important questions.

VI.C. Churches and Media

In this section, we show that Southern whites provided the leadership and congregant foundations for evangelical expansion outside the South. First, we find sizable diaspora effects on evangelical church formation. Second, we identify a complementary effect on the diffusion of conservative media, which have long been a key mouthpiece for the religious right. Together with the micro-level evidence of exposure effects in [Section VI.D](#), these results offer clear evidence that Southern white migrants helped spread religious traditionalism and expand the conservative vote beyond the diaspora.

1. *Evangelical Institution Building.* Evangelical churches, like many others, can be a focal point of social life and key vehicle for cultural transmission outside the home. We begin by connecting Southern white migrants to the spread of these churches. We use Censuses of Churches from the [Association of Religious Data Archives \(2021\)](#) and follow [Steensland et al. \(2000\)](#) in defining evangelical denominations, the most prominent being Southern Baptists. [Table VIII](#) shows that a 1 percentage point increase in the Southern white share in 1940 is associated with 0.8–1.2 percentage points, or 10%, greater evangelical affiliation in 2010 (columns (1) and (2)). As with the voting outcomes in [Section IV.A](#), these estimates could plausibly imply a more-than-one-for-one effect size, with Southern whites in the diaspora having both compositional and transmission effects on evangelicalism outside the South.³⁸ Indeed, we find similar evidence that Southern white integration with non-Southerners, through marital and

38. Evangelical affiliation among whites in the South (in the diaspora) is around 40 percentage points (20 percentage points) higher than non-Southern-born whites before 1970 according to the ANES data in [Online Appendix Figure G.4](#). This suggests that a reasonable benchmark for compositional effects lies somewhere in the 0.2–0.4 percentage point range. Of course, if all Southern whites in the diaspora identify as evangelical, then the testing benchmark could be as much as 1 percentage point, but that seems unduly extreme, just as it did for voting.

TABLE VIII
SOUTHERN WHITE MIGRANTS IN 1940 AND EVANGELICAL COMMUNITIES, 1952–2010

Dependent variable:	Evangelical churches (per 10,000 pop.)									
	2010		1952		1971		2010		2010	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
% Southern whites, 1940	0.788*** (0.173)	1.204** (0.572)	0.305*** (0.076)	0.637*** (0.253)	0.283*** (0.083)	0.538** (0.230)	0.241*** (0.076)	0.436* (0.246)		
Estimator	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1900 share control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,886	1,886	1,878	1,878	1,879	1,879	1,886	1,886	1,886	1,886
Outcome mean	9.8	9.8	4.6	4.6	5.7	5.7	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4
F-statistic	105.0	10.1	114.1	10.0	114.9	10.2	105.0	10.1	10.1	10.1
Anderson-Rubin, <i>p</i> -val.	.000	.010	.000	.002	.001	.020	.003	.003	.003	.069
KP underident., <i>p</i> -val.	.000	.011	.000	.012	.000	.011	.000	.000	.000	.011

Notes. Regressions of the number of evangelical Protestant Christian churches per 10,000 residents in 1952, 1971, and 2010 or of the share of the county population adhering to those evangelical denominations in 2010 on the share of Southern-born whites in 1940 in all non-Southern counties. Evangelical denominations in this table is based on Steensland et al. (2000), using denominations (including equivalent merger or splinter groups) measured across those three religious censuses from the Association of Religious Data Archives (2021). All columns instrument the share of Southern-born whites using a shift-share instrument based on the 1900 cross-sectional distribution of Southern-born whites and the predicted aggregate change in the Southern white population living outside the South from 1900 to 1940. The latter is generated via a set of flexible LASSO regressions, as shown in equation (3). See the notes to Table II for the list of baseline controls. Even columns control for the share of Southern-born whites in 1900. All regressions include state fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered using the grid cell approach of Bester, Conley, and Hansen (2011). * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

residential mixing, was important in spreading evangelicalism in large-diaspora counties ([Online Appendix Table F.2](#)).

Much of this church building took place during the Great Migration period. As early as 1952, we see sizable diaspora influence on evangelical church presences ([Table VIII](#), columns (3) and (4)). This finding complements descriptive evidence in [Section II](#) on the occupational overrepresentation of Southern white migrants in the religious sector in 1940. Together, these results are consistent with migrants playing a vanguard role in building novel evangelical institutions outside the South. This is especially true for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Once the church allowed formal congregations outside the South in the 1940s, the diaspora quickly mobilized to expand SBC infrastructure across America.³⁹

This early diaspora imprint on evangelical-church formation persists through the late 1900s ([Table VIII](#), columns (5)–(8)). To put these estimates in perspective, an increase of 150–200 Southern white migrants per 10,000 residents in 1940 is associated with approximately one new evangelical church per 10,000 residents. The stability of coefficients from 1952 to 2010 suggests that these institutions spread through the diaspora in the mid-twentieth century and survived long after the initial migrants had passed.

A large literature on American religion suggests that these evangelical churches could have been important conduits for conservative ideological transmission.⁴⁰ Churches are useful for disseminating not only religious values but also broader moral and political ones ([Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988](#)). Evangelicals became increasingly politicized on the right in the second half of the twentieth century, espousing conservative stances on moral issues like gay marriage and abortion as well as the role of government in aiding the poor or promoting racial equity ([McKenzie and Rouse 2013](#); [Williams 2015](#)). Today, evangelical voters are

39. [Gregory \(2005, 209\)](#) recounts early SBC leaders in California beckoning, in 1942, for preachers in the South to head West to tend to the growing flock of “Southern Baptists ...sheep scattered abroad not having a shepherd.”

40. A theoretical literature in economics on religion can help explain the persistence of evangelical attitudes in churches across generations and their transmission in broader communities. By limiting members’ exposure to the “mainstream” (e.g., public education, secular media), churches regulate cultural transmission as well as cultivate investment by members in the production of religious services ([Carvalho 2016, 2019](#); [Iannaccone 1992, 1994](#)). For evangelicals, these include “evangelizing,” that is, efforts to preach the Christian gospel beyond the church.

significantly more likely to vote for right-wing candidates.⁴¹ Putting all this together suggests an important role for Southern white migration in the modern history of religious politics in America.

2. *Conservative Media.* A related channel through which Southern white migrants transmitted culture was via media. To the extent that Southern whites preferred radio programs prone to right-wing politics or religious sermonizing, diaspora communities would have increased demand for such media outside the South. Over time, this could result in greater exposure to novel, conservative voices among non-Southerners. We explore this mechanism by linking the diaspora to the geography of right-wing talk radio. Such media has long trumpeted New Right causes. However, its origins go back nearly a century, to conservative religious leaders such as Charles Coughlin and Carl McIntire, whose shows attracted audiences in the tens of millions (Matzko 2020; Wang 2021).

Our analysis in Table IX relates a county's share of Southern white migrants in 1940 to the presence of a radio station broadcasting Carl McIntire's *Twentieth Century Reformation Hour* talk radio show during its run from the late 1950s through the early 1970s and the *Rush Limbaugh Show* as of 2020. Both shows were broadcast from over 600 stations at their peak with McIntire directly broadcasting in 12% of counties and Limbaugh in 17%. The association with the Southern white diaspora is similar across both commentators. In the IV specifications, a 1 percentage point increase in the share of Southern white migrants implies a 2–5 percentage points increase in the probability that a county had access to McIntire's show half a century ago and Limbaugh's show in 2020 (columns (2) and (5)). This suggests a plausible connection between the diaspora and local media consumption outside the South. We find such a connection not only in radio but also in television: a 1 percentage point increase in the Southern white share as of 1940 is associated, albeit imprecisely, with a 0.5–0.7 percentage point increase in the share of CCES respondents stating that Fox News is the fairest and most balanced news channel (columns (7)–(9)).

41. Survey data confirm the link between evangelicalism and right-wing political participation. For instance, white evangelicals heavily favored Trump in 2016 (Pew Research Center 2016), and among white evangelicals, support for Trump's presidency increased with church attendance (Pew Research Center 2017).

TABLE IX
SOUTHERN WHITE MIGRANTS IN 1940 AND RIGHT-WING MEDIA

Dependent variable:	County has a radio station airing			Respondent believes					
	Carl McIntire program	Rush Limbaugh program	Fox News is the fairest media						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
% Southern whites, 1940	0.005** (0.002)	0.020*** (0.004)	0.057*** (0.018)	0.006** (0.002)	0.020*** (0.006)	0.045* (0.024)	0.008* (0.004)	0.007 (0.006)	0.005 (0.015)
Estimator	OLS	IV	IV	OLS	IV	IV	OLS	IV	IV
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baseline controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1900 share control		Yes	Yes			Yes			Yes
Observations	1,884	1,884	1,884	1,884	1,884	1,884	3,478	3,478	3,478
Outcome mean	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.347	0.347	0.347
Adj. R ²	0.14			0.20			0.04		
F-statistic		117.0	10.4		117.0	10.4		84.7	7.4
Anderson-Rubin, p-val.		.000	.000		.000	.010		.311	.761
KP underident., p-val.		.000	.010		.000	.010		.000	.033

Notes. Columns (1)–(6) are based on regressions of a dummy for whether a county has had a radio station that aired Carl McIntire’s *20th Century Reformation Hour* (in the 1950s–70s) or the *Rush Limbaugh Show* (in 2020) on the share of Southern-born whites in 1940. Columns (7)–(9) are based on a regression of a binary indicator for whether Fox News provides, among all television news channels, the most fair and balanced reporting. We take this question from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) in 2007 and restrict the analysis to whites living outside the South. Even columns instrument the share of Southern-born whites using a shift-share instrument based on the 1900 cross-sectional distribution of Southern-born whites and the predicted aggregate change in Southern white population living outside the South from 1900 to 1940. The latter is generated via a set of flexible LASSO regressions, as shown in [equation \(3\)](#). See the notes to [Table II](#) for the list of baseline controls. In columns (1)–(6), additional controls for elevation and ruggedness are included as important predictors of radio signal supply. Respondent controls in columns (7)–(9) include respondent age, age squared, and sex. Columns (3), (6), and (9) control for the share of Southern-born whites in 1900. All regressions include state fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered using the grid cell approach of [Bestler, Conley, and Hansen \(2011\)](#). * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

These results complement the descriptive findings in [Online Appendix Table G.1](#) on the occupational overrepresentation of Southern white migrants in print and broadcast media in the early twentieth century. Together, this evidence points to the diaspora playing an important role, as consumers and producers, in developing a novel conservative media infrastructure in communities outside the South.

VI.D. Micro Evidence of Exposure Effects

The results suggest that Southern white migrants shaped cultural and political attitudes of their non-Southern neighbors through the diffusion of evangelical churches and right-wing media.⁴² In this final subsection, we provide direct, individual-level evidence of cultural change induced by exposure to Southern white migrants. Our empirical strategy draws on recent innovations in the study of place-based exposure effects. We show that non-Southern parents are more likely to give their children biblical names after moving to locations with larger Southern white populations. Biblical name choices contain a strong signal of religiosity: as a validation check, [Online Appendix Table F.3](#) shows that children with fathers working in religious occupations are 6–9 percentage points more likely to have a biblical name relative to a mean of 15% for children with fathers in other occupations living in the same county.⁴³

We examine how non-Southern white parents name their children before and after moving, as a function of the Southern white diaspora at destination. Following the mover-based strategy in [Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse \(2020\)](#), we pool children born to white non-Southern parents across censuses in $\tau = \{1910, \dots, 1940\}$ (i.e., cohorts 1901–40). We then consider households with ≥ 2 children: ≥ 1 born in the state of residence at time τ and ≥ 1 born in a different state by time $\tau + 10$. To avoid double

42. [Online Appendix F.4](#) provides additional evidence that the diaspora helped diffuse country music and barbecue cuisine beyond the South. Although not instrumental for politics, such cultural markers provide another window into the process of Southernization.

43. We extract from behindthename.com a comprehensive list of names featured in the Bible. These names span common and uncommon names in the population. In 1940, for example, popular biblical names included John and Mary, while popular nonbiblical names included William and Charles. Among less popular names, biblical ones included Sarah and Ruth, while nonbiblical ones included Lillian and Frances (see [Ferrara and Testa forthcoming](#), table 6).

counting, we restrict to children aged zero to nine. We estimate the time of household move, $\tilde{\tau}$, as the midpoint between the birth years of the children born in different states, where child year of birth is defined as $\tilde{\tau} + j$ for possible $j = -9, \dots, 9$.⁴⁴ The final sample includes 2,491,260 children in 846,073 households.

We estimate the following equation, which relates the given name of child i to whether their household h had yet moved to non-Southern county c at their time of birth $\tilde{\tau} + j$, interacted with location ℓ 's Southern white share in the previous (premove) census period, $\tau - 1$:

$$(6) \quad \text{Biblical name}_{i h \ell \tau} = \theta_h + \beta \cdot \% \text{Southern Whites}_{\ell, \tau - 1} \\ \times \text{Born After Move}_i + \mathbf{X}'_{i \tau} \boldsymbol{\gamma} + \varepsilon_{i h \ell \tau},$$

where we consider the share of Southern Whites in the county ($\ell = c$) and in the local neighborhood ($\ell = n$) defined as the 20 households surrounding h with 10 on each side in the enumeration listing (following [Brown et al. 2021](#)).⁴⁵ The household fixed effects, θ_h , absorb origin Southern white shares and other characteristics of h 's destination county, as well as all time-invariant characteristics of h , including its cultural attitudes, its place of origin, and factors affecting destination choice. The $\mathbf{X}_{i \tau}$ vector includes the child's sex, birth order, birth period, and dummies for child birth year relative to the time of the move. Standard errors are clustered by the contemporaneous destination county.

In [Table X](#), Panel A, the baseline estimate in column (1) reveals that a 1 percentage point increase in Southern white migrant shares at the county level is associated with a 0.13 percentage point increase in the probability that parents give their children a biblical name, relative to a child born prior to the move. Going from zero to the mean Southern white share (3%) thus implies a 0.4 percentage point increase in the likelihood of religious name choices, relative to a mean of 15. Put differently, this effect

44. Consider, for example, a household on the Oregon coast in 1910 with four children: Lawrence born in 1901, Henrietta in 1903, John in 1907, and Marie in 1910. We see Lawrence and Henrietta are born in Minnesota and John and Marie in Oregon. Hence, we impute $\tilde{\tau} = 1905$ and $j = -4$ for Lawrence, -2 for Henrietta, $+2$ for John, and $+5$ for Marie.

45. When using neighborhood-level exposure, we measure the share of nearby households headed by Southern whites contemporaneously (i.e., in period τ) because we cannot measure Southern white presence in previous census periods at the neighborhood level (prior to h 's residing in the given location).

TABLE X
EXPOSURE EFFECTS ON NON-SOUTHERNERS' RELIGIOUS NAMES

Dependent variable:	Child has biblical name				
	Base (1)	North origin to West dest. (2)	Δ Orig.-dest. % Southern whites (3)	Control for name freq. (4)	Birth 5-year FE (5)
Panel A: County-level exposure % Southern whites _{t-1} × born after move	0.128*** (0.022)	0.081** (0.034)	0.041** (0.017)	0.079*** (0.019)	0.107*** (0.020)
Observations	2,491,260	416,044	2,455,058	2,491,260	2,491,260
Panel B: Neighborhood-level exposure % Southern whites _t × born after move	0.064*** (0.009)	0.061*** (0.015)	0.047*** (0.009)	0.043*** (0.008)	0.056*** (0.009)
Observations	2,483,543	414,859	2,447,502	2,483,543	2,483,543
Household FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth year – Move year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth order FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth period FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outcome mean (premove)	15.4	14.0	15.4	15.4	15.4

Notes. Regressions of an indicator for whether the non-Southern-ancestry child has a biblical name ($\times 100$) on a dummy for whether that child in mover household h was born in its postmove county $c \times$ the share of Southern-born whites in location l . In Panel A, we define c as the county, and in Panel B as the neighborhood of 20 households around h , 10 on each side in the enumeration listing (following Brown et al. 2021). In Panel A, the Southern white share is measured at the county level in the prior census period $\tau - 1$; in Panel B, the Southern white share is measured in the contemporaneous period τ as we do not know the exact location of the given household residence in the prior census round. The full sample includes 2,491,260 white, U.S.-born children of non-Southern parents in 846,073 households with at least one child born before the move and at least one born after the move. The sample differs slightly in Panel B on account of missing roster information to identify neighbors. The full sample includes movers from all non-Southern origin states. All regressions include fixed effects for child sex, birth order, birth period (decade or five-year), and birth year minus household year of move. In columns (1), (3), (4), and (5), the sample includes those leaving all non-Southern states and settling in non-Southern destinations. In column (2), movers are restricted to those leaving all Northern states and settling in non-Southern and non-Northern destinations; we define the “North” as the territories of the Union during the Civil War, excluding the western parts (California, Oregon, Nevada). The latter is the same restriction used in Online Appendix Table D.2 to define Northern migrants. In column (3), the Southern white share captures the difference between origin state and destination county in census period $\tau - 1$. In Panel A, the mean (standard deviation) of the Southern white share measure is 1.8 (2.7) in columns (1), (4), and (5); 3.3 (3.6) in column (2); and 0.3 (3.0) in column (3). In Panel B, the mean (standard deviation) of the Southern white share measure is 2.8 (5.9) in columns (1), (4), and (5); 4.8 (7.6) in column (2); and 0.6 (5.8) in column (3). Column (4) includes 10 dummies for the decile of given-name frequency. In columns (1)–(4), the birth period fixed effects are decadal and in column (5) five-yearly. Standard errors are clustered by contemporaneous destination county. * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

explains 7% of the gap between children named by fathers working in religious occupations and those working in nonreligious occupations. This core result is robust to a subsample of households moving from Northern, Union territory to Western states (column (2)), accounting for correlation in the share of Southern whites between origin state and destination county (column (3)), addressing confounding effects on individualistic name choices (column (4)), and including more granular birth-period fixed effects (column (5)).

Moreover, we find similar estimates in [Table X](#), Panel B based on neighborhood-level exposure. One additional Southern white neighbor (out of 20) is associated with roughly a 0.2–0.3 percentage point increase in the likelihood that a non-Southern parent gives their child a biblical name. [Online Appendix Table F.4](#) shows that this is robust to the inclusion of county FE \times born-after-move, effectively leveraging variation in exposure to Southern whites across neighborhoods within counties.

A causal interpretation of $\hat{\beta}$ implies that greater exposure to Southern white migrants at destination induced a shift toward more religious names among whites without Southern heritage. The key identifying assumption is that within households, the likelihood of biblical name-giving would have followed parallel trends had the household not moved to a location with a large Southern white migrant population. One important concern lies in the possibility of confounding, time-varying shocks to household h that cause it to move to locations with a large Southern white diaspora and increase the parents' propensity to give their later-born children biblical names.

Using the following event-study specification, we illustrate the dynamics of religious name choices among movers and provide evidence in support of the identifying assumptions:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Biblical name}_{iht\tau} = & \theta_h + \sum_{j=-9}^9 \beta_j [\% \text{Southern Whites}_{\ell, \tau-1} \\ (7) \quad & \times 1(\text{born in } \tilde{\tau} + j)] + \mathbf{X}'_{i\tau} \boldsymbol{\gamma} + \varepsilon_{iht\tau}, \end{aligned}$$

which allows the β in [equation \(6\)](#) to vary with the child birth year relative to the household move, $j = -9, \dots, 9$. [Figure VII](#) reports estimates of β_j for relatively balanced event years, $j = -5, \dots, 5$.

The estimates point to a causal, exposure-based interpretation. We see limited evidence of pretrends in biblical naming

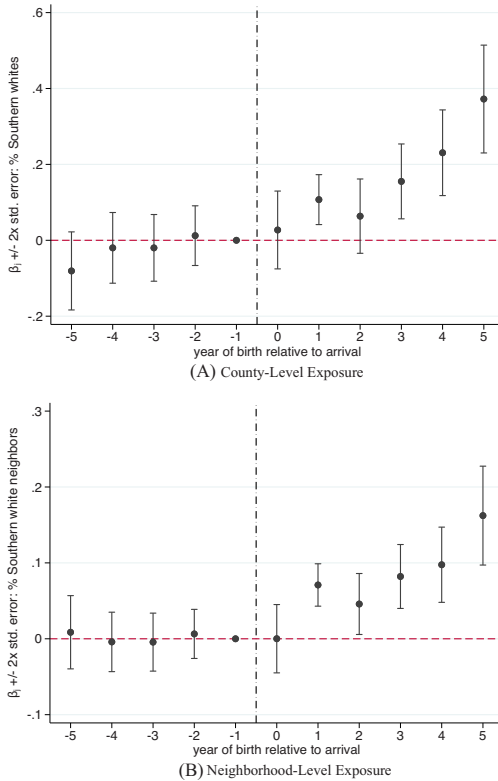


FIGURE VII

Cultural Transmission: Exposure to Southern Whites and Religious Child Names

This figure isolates within-household, cross-child variation in parental exposure to Southern white migrants in the destination county in Panel A and the neighborhood within the county in Panel B where the neighborhood for household h is defined as 20 households around h , 10 on each side in the enumeration listing (following Brown et al. 2021). Each graph reports estimates of β_j and 95% confidence intervals in equation (6) for $j = -5, \dots, 5$. Each β_j can be interpreted as the differential effect of exposure to Southern white migrants on the likelihood of a biblical name given to a child born j years before/after their non-Southern-born parents moved to the county, relative to a child born one year before the household move. The sample includes 2,491,260 white, U.S.-born children of non-Southern-born parents in 846,073 households with at least one child born before the move and at least one born after the move. The mean (standard deviation) of the Southern white share in Panel A is 1.8 (2.7) and in Panel B is 2.8 (5.9). Estimates control for household fixed effects as well as child sex, birth order, and birth decade fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by contemporaneous destination county.

patterns based on Southern white shares in the eventual destination county (Panel A) and neighborhood (Panel B; see [Online Appendix](#) Figure F.3 for a specification with county fixed effects \times born-after-move). Biblical name choices increase over time after non-Southern households move to locations with more Southern whites. Whereas a confounding shock at the time of moving would imply an immediate jump in biblical name choices, the gradually increasing $\beta_j \geq 1$ in [Figure VII](#) are consistent with exposure-based mechanisms as contact and interactions with Southern white neighbors expanded.

Together, these results suggest that Southern white migrants transmitted religious cultural norms to non-Southern populations outside the South. This individual-level evidence resonates both with the diffusion of evangelical Christianity across diaspora communities and the role of residential mixing in shaping the long-run political legacy of the diaspora. Having documented exposure effects in one important domain of diaspora culture, it seems plausible that other domains beyond religion could also have causally changed as a result of greater contact with Southern white migrants.

VII. CONCLUSION

Millions migrated out of the American South in the twentieth century. Scholars have written extensively about the Great Migration of Southern Blacks. Much less is known about the Great Migration of Southern whites. This article provides a systematic empirical account of how Southern white migrants transformed politics and culture across the United States. We provide descriptive and causal evidence on the role of the Southern white diaspora in facilitating cultural changes that redefined and reinvigorated the conservative movement. These migrants, dispersed and influential as they were, paved the way for a successful racially conservative politics on the right. Media and evangelical religion provided important later vehicles for diaspora effects, which, in turn, hastened partisan realignment and reshaped the political landscape along a pathway running through George Wallace to Donald Trump.

Our findings suggest that some of America's deep cultural divides and growing polarization may have roots in the Great Migration. In related work, we explore Southern white influence

on the geography of race and racism across America (Bazzi et al. 2023b), explicitly tracking the role of former slaveowners in shaping the institutional foundations of racial inequity outside the South. Together with the present study, we offer a new empirical take on the long-run process of Southernization noted by historians and popular observers. While Southern migrants were not necessarily the instigators of cultural change everywhere they settled, they undoubtedly affected its evolution locally and perhaps even national change. Our research agenda aims to elucidate this historical process and ultimately help inform public debate across a deep cultural divide in America.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

An Online Appendix for this article can be found at *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* online.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data underlying this article are available in the Harvard Dataverse, <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/KLIPEM> (Bazzi et al. 2023a).

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