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The Culture War and Partisan Polarization: State Political Parties, 1960–2018

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Research Article

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Abstract

Partisan polarization on "culture war" issues has become a defining feature of contemporary American politics. This was not always the case; for the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, social issues such as abortion and LGBTQ rights played no role in politics. Where and when did the partisan divide begin? Did the initiative come from state or national parties? Was there a critical moment, or was position change incremental? We have constructed an original database of nearly 2,000 state party platforms from 1960 to 2018. These platforms allow us to trace position-taking on these issues and generate estimates of platform ideology. By the time national parties took positions, we show, they lagged state-level position-taking. Contrary to long-held assumptions, we show that state party system polarization did not occur around any critical moment but rather was incremental.

1. Introduction

Partisan polarization on "culture war" issues has become a defining feature of contemporary American politics, with the Democratic Party embracing social liberalism and the Republican Party embracing social conservatism. This was not always the case; for the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, social issues such as abortion and LGBTQ rights played virtually no role in politics. As we will show, it appears that no major political party, at either the state or national level, took a position on either issue before 1968. Today, of course, these issues are central to partisan conflict. This transformation, despite its importance, is not well understood. In fact, there is little consensus among political scientists as to its timing, sequence, or causes.

Where and when did the partisan divide begin on abortion and LGBTQ rights? Which party moved first? Did the initiative come from state parties or from national parties? Was there a critical moment, or was position change incremental? Does position-taking on abortion and LGBTQ rights follow similar patterns? While it is possible that the rise of social issues took place entirely on the national stage, then later spread to state and local politics, we set out in this paper to explore the possibility that these debates took place first at the state level. This is entirely new terrain: existing research hews closely to national debates, presidential candidates, and countrywide controversies.

To address these questions, we have constructed an original database of state party platforms written from 1960 through 2018. This database—encompassing nearly 2,000 official state platforms—allows us, for the first time, to trace formal position-taking by state and national parties on these two issues over six decades. By coding these platforms for the specific policy positions they take on abortion and LGBTQ rights, we are also able to use this dataset, in conjunction with item response theory (IRT) models, to estimate the liberalness of state platforms on these issues and the extent of partisan polarization in each state. Until now, there has been almost no systematic analysis of formal party position-taking on these issues.

By the time national parties and elites took positions on social issues, we show, state parties were already leading the way. This was especially true for abortion, where large numbers of state Democratic parties took positions in advance of either national party. For LGBTQ issues, state parties also moved before their national counterparts, though in somewhat smaller numbers. In many ways, the groundwork for the partisan divide on these culture war issues was the product of years of fermentation at the state level. It was largely a bottom-up social revolution. Democratic parties, we find, began taking positions prior to Republican parties on both issues. And position-taking did not occur around any critical moment or election but rather was incremental: contrary to long-held assumptions, our data indicate that there was no critical juncture (in 1980, 1992, or any other year). States varied in the timing of position-taking and the overall liberalness of their platforms. We find rich variation, from state to state and over time, in the extent to which state party systems are polarized on abortion and LGBTQ rights.

2. Parties and polarization: National- and state-level actors

Many scholars emphasize that polarization has been driven by elites rather than by the mass public,[1] pointing to evidence that the average voter continues to gravitate to the political center.[2] Explaining the rise of partisan polarization in recent decades, other analysts have pointed to increases in income inequality,[3] party sorting,[4] the changing place of race, gender, and sexuality in American life,[5] and electoral parity between the two major political parties.[6] Understanding how parties change—specifically, how today's parties have polarized so sharply and dramatically—is a central concern for scholars, indeed for anyone concerned about American democracy. How did the bipartisan consensus of the mid-twentieth century come undone?

Since 1955, when V. O. Key introduced the concept of critical elections, political scientists have developed multiple approaches to explain shifts in party alignments. The first body of theory emphasized abrupt shifts that occurred at specific moments, whether a single election or over a small set of years.[7] Modifying this approach, Carmines and Stimson, drawing on the civil rights revolution, proposed a model of "issue evolution" with two key features.[8] The first is that most position change occurs at relatively brief critical moments, which then set in motion a period of slower, path-dependent change. The second is that national elites play the key role in deciding their party's position, and that voters ultimately take their cues from these elites. Adams, and also Carmines and Woods, utilize the "issue evolution" model to explain position-taking, by the two national parties, on abortion.[9] They argue that national elites drive partisan polarization on abortion, and that the mass public appears to respond, with a lag, to the new party positions.

Work growing out of the UCLA school of political parties also tends to view position-taking by parties as largely a top-down process, one that is driven by national party leaders and their interactions with the leaders of key interest groups. These groups can be members of the party's existing electoral coalition or they can be potential partners, valued for the resources that they could bring to electoral campaigns.[10] Scholars in this tradition have considered party evolution on abortion, though their work usually focuses on roll call voting in Congress or position-taking by national political figures, rather than official party positions contained in platforms. Karol, for example, emphasizes the ways in which presidential nominees worked to shape their party's position on abortion in order to gain electoral advantage,[11] and Schlozman explores the ways in which "New Right" brokers at the national level brought social conservatives into the Republican Party.[12] While the UCLA school's approach is somewhat agnostic as to the speed of new position-taking, both Karol and Schlozman show that the partisan divide among elites on the issue of abortion unfolded over many years, even decades.

Feinstein and Schickler present an alternative approach to party shifts.[13] Studying party positions on race and Black civil rights, they argue that the initiative came from state leaders, not national leaders, and that there is no critical moment in which party positions changed. Examining state party platforms, Feinstein and Schickler show that state and local parties drove the process, that national leaders were constrained by position-taking by Democratic parties in northern states, and that this transformation had occurred by the mid-1940s.[14] In a recent article, Hopkins, Schickler, and Azizi use topic modeling and another large database of state party platforms—1,783 platforms covering the period 1918–2017—to study the timing and mechanics of political polarization, finding that the process was driven by state parties.[15] They operationalize polarization not as parties taking opposite positions on a given set of issues, but rather as parties discussing different topics.

These competing arguments yield two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1A. *Parties first began to polarize over culture war issues at the national level, then national divisions percolated down to the states.*

Hypothesis 1B. *Parties in certain states initiated the process of polarizing over culture war issues, and only later did national parties adopt these positions.*

[1]Geoffrey C. Layman and Thomas M. Carsey, "Party Polarization and 'Conflict Extension' in the American Electorate," *American Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 4 (2002): 786–802; Matthew Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). But see also Neil A. O'Brian, "Before Reagan: The Development of Abortion's Partisan Divide," *Perspectives on Politics* 18, no. 4 (2020): 1031–47.

[2]Morris P. Fiorina, *Unstable Majorities: Polarization, Party Sorting, and Political Stalemate* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2017).

[3]Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016); Kevin M. Kruse and Julian E. Zelizer, *Fault Lines: A History of the United States since 1974* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019).

[4]Fiorina, *Unstable Majorities*; David A. Hopkins, *Red Fighting Blue: How Geography and Electoral Rules Polarize American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[5]Marjorie J. Spruill, *Divided We Stand: The Battle Over Women's Rights and Family Values that Polarized American Politics* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017); Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Kruse and Zelizer, *Fault Lines*.

[6]Kelsey L. Hinchliffe and Frances E. Lee, "Party Competition and Conflict in State Legislatures," *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (2016): 172–97; Frances E. Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[7]V. O. Key, Jr., "A Theory of Critical Elections," *The Journal of Politics* 17, no. 1 (1955): 3–18; V. O. Key, Jr., "Secular Realignment and the Party System," *The Journal of Politics* 21, no. 2 (1959): 198–210; Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970); James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States*, revised ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1983); David R. Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[8]Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[9]Greg D. Adams, "Abortion: Evidence of an Issue Evolution," *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 3 (1997): 718–37; Edward G. Carmines and James Woods, "The Role of Party Activists in the Evolution of the Abortion Issue," *Political Behavior* 24, no. 4 (2002): 361–77.

[10]Kathleen Bawn, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 3 (2012): 571–97.

[11]David Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[12]Daniel Schlozman, *When Movements Anchor Parties: Electoral Alignments in American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[13]Brian D. Feinstein and Eric Schickler, "Platforms and Partners: Civil Rights Realignment Reconsidered," *Studies in American Political Development* 22, no. 1 (2008): 1–31; Eric Schickler, *Racial Realignment: The Transformation of American Liberalism, 1932-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[14]Feinstein and Schickler, "Platforms and Partners," 15.

[15]Daniel J. Hopkins, Eric Schickler, and David L. Azizi, "From Many Divides, One? The Polarization and Nationalization of American State Party Platforms, 1918–2017," *Studies in American Political Development* 36, no. 1 (2022): 1–20.

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3. Culture war: Timing

Since Hunter's seminal book,[16] most scholarship on the culture war has focused on a small number of critical moments and decisions by national elites, including Ronald Reagan, Pat Buchanan, and Bill Clinton. Layman notes the importance of Reagan in bringing religious conservatives into the Republican Party in the late 1970s and early 1980s,[17] and Fetner argues that Clinton's presidency represented the crucial moment in party-positioning on LGBTQ rights.[18] In the literature generally, scholars focus on those two eras—the late 1970s and the 1990s—in their assessments of when the culture war emerged.

Some point to the ways in which parties began diverging on social issues in the late 1970s, in the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade*, the battle over the Equal Rights Amendment, the organization of the Moral Majority, and the opposing positions taken by Carter and Reagan in the 1980 election. Schlozman argues that it was in the late 1970s that the national Republican Party forged its alliance with white evangelical Christians and began to embrace a conservative social agenda.[19] By then, both national parties had staked out clear positions on abortion in their platforms, though partisan opinion at the mass level had not yet shifted.[20]

But others emphasize instead a dramatic shift in the early 1990s. Certainly by 1992, when Buchanan addressed the Republican National Convention—declaring, "There is a religious war going on in this country, a cultural war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America"[21]—the battle lines between the national parties were clearly drawn.[22] Only in that year did the two national parties adopt clear and opposing positions on LGBTQ rights.[23] Hopkins et al., studying polarization more broadly but not the culture war, also find that there was a critical juncture at this time, "a sudden discontinuous rise in polarization in the mid 1990s."[24] Text analyses of congressional floor speech also suggest that partisan polarization increased sharply in the early 1990s.[25]

Research on the culture war, and party change more generally, yield three hypotheses relating to the timing of polarization on these issues:

Hypothesis 2A. *The parties polarized sharply on culture war issues in the late 1970s.*

Hypothesis 2B. *The parties polarized sharply on culture war issues in the early 1990s.*

Hypothesis 2C. *Polarization on culture war issues was gradual. There was no critical moment of change.*

Until now, most of the literature on the culture war has focused on events at the national level or, at least, local or state events with national resonance—such as Anita Bryant's 1977 effort to roll back a gay rights ordinance in Florida's Dade County, the 2003 decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to recognize same-sex marriage rights, and subsequent debates over same-sex marriage. Karol and Thurston's 2020 study of abortion votes in the California State Assembly is a rare example of a state-level study.[26] Although the national evidence is only suggestive, it appears that Democrats and liberals initiated conflict on these issues, upsetting a status quo that limited abortion rights and rejected the legitimacy of homosexuality.[27]

Hypothesis 3. *Democrats and liberals, not Republicans and conservatives, took the lead in bringing the issues of abortion and LGBTQ rights into the partisan arena.*

4. State party platforms

Since at least the mid-nineteenth century, most state political parties have met in biennial conventions to endorse nominees for office and to write and adopt platforms. Platforms are typically authored by a committee of individuals, including state and county chairs, members of the state party's executive committee, state legislators and other state elected officials, and party activists.[28] As we examine the platform-writing process in many of these states, there is evidence that issue activists sometimes play a prominent role in shaping platform positions. But, in almost every case, platforms are debated, amended, and approved by delegates at state party conventions. While we are still in an early stage of studying the process of platform writing to understand the relative roles of party regulars, elected officials, and activists in this process, the platform itself carries the imprimatur of the party.

The average voter may not read state party platforms, but interest groups and issue activists care deeply about the positions the party takes. Platforms have consequences, sometimes immediate. When in 1970 the California Democratic Party for the first time adopted a plank in its platform supporting abortion rights, the backlash was swift and public. "More than 500 members of St. Barbara's Roman Catholic Church have announced that they have

[16]James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle To Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

[17]Geoffrey C. Layman, *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[18]Tina Fetner, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

[19]Schlozman, *When Movements Anchor Parties*. See also Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization, and American Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 65; Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Mark D. Brewer and Jeffrey M. Stonecash, *Split: Class and Cultural Divides in American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007), 96.

[20]Adams, "Abortion."

[21]Morris P. Fiorina with Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), 1.

[22]Layman, *The Great Divide*; Andrew Gelman with David Park, Boris Shor, Joseph Bafumi, and Jeronimo Cortina, *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[23]Noah Feldman, *Divided by God: America's Church-State Problem—and What We Should Do about It* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005); Jacob Jensen, Suresh Naidu, Ethan Kaplan, Laurence Wilse-Samson, David Gergen, Michael Zuckerman, and Arthur Spirling, "Political Polarization and the Dynamics of Political Language: Evidence from 130 Years of Partisan Speech," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* (Fall 2012), 1–81; Schlozman, *When Movements Anchor Parties*; Matthew Gentzkow, Jesse M. Shapiro, and Matt Taddy, "Measuring Polarization in High-Dimensional Data: Method and Application to Congressional Speech," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper (2017).

[24]Hopkins et al., "From Many Divides, One?" 3.

[25]Gentzkow et al., "Measuring Polarization in High-Dimensional Data"; Jensen et al., "Political Polarization and the Dynamics of Political Language".

[26]David Karol and Chloe N. Thurston, "From Personal to Partisan: Abortion, Party, and Religion among California State Legislators," *Studies in American Political Development* 34, no. 1 (2020): 91–109.

[27]Layman, *The Great Divide*.

[28]Joel Paddock, *State and National Parties and American Democracy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Feinstein and Schickler, "Platforms and Partners"; Schickler, *Racial Realignment*.

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changed their voter registration from Democratic to Republican because of the California Democrats' platform's position on abortion," the *Sacramento Bee* reported.[29] "'I'm a Democrat and I'm leading the van,' said the pastor, the Rev. Michael Collins."

Party platforms represent the party's official issue positions. Of course, there are other ways to measure where a party stands on an issue, such as roll call votes and position-taking by its elected officials and candidates as well as the opinions held by a party's voters. In other work, we are developing and analyzing new data sets that allow us to consider these other dimensions of where a party stands on a given issue. But only the platform represents the official positions of the party.

In comparative politics, scholars have regularly drawn upon national party platforms to study politics. The most noteworthy of these endeavors is the Comparative Manifestos Project. This effort, which began in 1979, has compiled a database of national party platforms from fifty countries covering all free elections since 1945. These data have generated a wealth of empirical results as well as numerous new insights about party competition and policy-making.[30] This project has also spurred innovations in computer-assisted techniques for coding and interpreting political texts.[31]

There have been fewer efforts to study political platforms in the context of the United States, though that is quickly changing. Gerring uses national party platforms to qualitatively trace the evolving ideologies of America's national political parties,[32] while Levendusky uses national platforms to document increased polarization of the Democratic and Republican parties in recent decades.[33] A number of scholars have also now begun studying state party platforms. Paddock collected and analyzed platforms from eleven states to study the transformation of state party organizations; in documenting the nationalization of American politics, Hopkins undertook content analysis on a large collection of state party platforms.[34] Most relevant to our own work is the scholarship by Hopkins et al. using state party platforms to study partisan polarization in the 1918–2017 period and the work on race and Black civil rights in the article by Feinstein and Schickler and in the book by Schickler.[35]

5. Locating state party platforms, 1960–2018

The archive that we have constructed contains Democratic and Republican state party platforms written from 1960 through 2018. While other recent studies, above all Hopkins et al., draw on comparable numbers of platforms,[36] our collection for this particular time period is considerably larger than any that has previously been assembled. By collecting all platforms since 1960, we ensure that our data begin prior to party position-taking on either abortion or LGBTQ rights. When we started this project, we benefited greatly from the generosity and research of other scholars, who shared with us all of the state party platforms that they had discovered in their own research.[37] We subsequently proceeded to locate hundreds of additional state platforms scattered among historical societies, manuscript holdings in archives and special collections libraries, state parties, and party activists. The fruit of several years of intensive research, this archive now contains 1,771 unique state party platforms, along with newspaper summaries of another 206 platforms.

Collecting historic party platforms presents several challenges. Chief among these is that, unlike many other types of historic documents, state governments do not archive platforms. While we found two states that published party platforms in serial publications—Wisconsin and, for some years, Kansas—as a rule, state party platforms have not been systematically preserved. To find these platforms is to seek buried treasure—state by state, party by party, year by year—through a quest where no map exists as a guide and where, in many cases, much of the treasure lies forgotten or has been permanently lost or destroyed.

The state party offices themselves, which we initially thought might be among the best repositories of their own party history, almost never maintain any significant archives. As we came to learn, state parties are forward-looking organizations, focused on winning the next election rather than keeping records of past actions. There are, to be sure, encouraging exceptions. For instance, the attic of the Montana Democratic Party offices contains several old platforms, and the South Carolina Republicans maintain a shed that serves as an informal archive of old party documents (including platforms). Most state parties, however, have small staffs with limited record keeping or—and perhaps even more regrettable—excellent record keeping marked by periodic, wholesale purges. (We were told by one party that, just a year or two before we had reached out to them, they had discarded decades' worth of platforms and documentation related to the platform-making process.) Some parties seem, in retrospect, to regret having disposed of these records: the Hawaii Democratic Party, for example, upon learning of our archival effort, requested that we send them copies of their old platforms.

Due to the general lack of preservation by the state parties, we largely turned to other sources. State platforms are rarely given a call number and put on a library shelf, but a small fraction of them are, and we obtained these through interlibrary loan. Many states have historical societies, a handful of which maintain historical state platforms in designated folders. For instance, we obtained several documents from the "platform folders" at the Iowa Historical Society. Very few libraries, however, maintain platforms as discrete, stand-alone collections.

Our most plentiful sources of platforms have been special collections libraries and archives. Every state has at least one major library (often attached to a university) that preserves the papers of past political figures (e.g., governors, members of Congress,

[29]"Church Members Switch Politics over Abortion Issue," *Sacramento Bee*, August 31, 1970, 3.

[30]David Baron, "A Spatial Bargaining Theory of Government Formation in Parliamentary Systems," *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991): 137–64; James F. Adams, Samuel Merrill III, and Bernard Grofman, *A Unified Theory of Party Competition: A Cross-National Analysis Integrating Spatial and Behavioral Factors* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[31]Ian Budge, "Validating Party Policy Placements," *British Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 1 (2001): 211–23; Michael Laver, Kenneth Benoit, and John Gary, "Extracting Policy Positions from Political Texts Using Words as Data," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 2 (2003): 311–31; Daniel Hopkins and Gary King, "A Method of Automated Nonparametric Content Analysis for Social Science," *American Journal of Political Science* 54, no. 1 (2010): 229–47.

[32]John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[33]Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*.

[34]Paddock, *State and National Parties and American Democracy*; Daniel Hopkins, *The Increasingly United States: How and Why American Political Behavior Nationalized* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 142–68.

[35]Hopkins et al., "From Many Divides, One?"; Feinstein and Schickler, "Platforms and Partners"; Schickler, *Racial Realignment*.

[36]Hopkins et al., "From Many Divides, One?".

[37]We are deeply grateful to Dan Coffey, Dan Galvin, John Henderson, Dan Hopkins, Eric Schickler, and especially Joel Paddock.

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state legislators, and nonelected activists) and—when we are particularly lucky—the state parties themselves. For many prominent politicians, often over 100 feet of documents will comprise their collection; we have found many platforms scattered across scores of such collections. The specificity of the collection's finding aid determines how efficiently we can locate these documents. Many collections at the Marriott Library at the University of Utah, for instance, have document-level descriptions of the contents, allowing us to locate and request state platforms with relative ease. For many other libraries, however, the finding aid lacks such specificity, and boxes with generic headings such as "state party" and "campaign literature" must be searched with the hope that they contain missing platforms. In total, a member of our research team visited sixty-five archives across thirty states, with every visit in person.[38] We list these archives in Appendix Figure A1.

Finally, we contacted present and former party leaders and activists and, in some cases, their surviving children, to inquire whether they had kept old platforms themselves. This proved successful in our quest to acquire a complete set of Vermont Republican platforms. After over a year of searching, we had obtained most of the party's platforms, but became progressively convinced that the few we were missing were lost to history. Then, in one of our more exciting adventures, we made contact with a party activist who had decades-old state platforms in his barn in rural Vermont, which allowed us to complete our collection of Vermont Republican platforms. Two other historic platforms—in this case, what appear to be the only surviving copies of the 1964 and 1968 Virginia Democratic platforms—were shared with us by a long-time party activist in Virginia, who was given the platforms for safekeeping by a former cochair of the state party soon before the cochair passed away.

The likelihood of our finding a platform is mediated, in part, by how many copies were produced and distributed in the first place. The Connecticut platforms of the 1960s and 1970s were made by a professional advertising company and appear to have been widely shared. The Iowa Republican platforms of the 1980s direct that the document be mailed to all Republican state convention delegates, officeholders, and candidates as well as all Iowa government teachers and news media. Most platforms, unfortunately, were not so assiduously dispersed, and we fear that some are permanently lost. Many appear to be unique copies, typed out on sheets of paper or, literally, carbon copies with handwritten marginal notes reflecting changes made at the convention.

As Appendix Table A2 shows, we discovered in our research that two-thirds of all state parties were consistent platform writers. These parties, at least since 1960, have written and adopted a new platform every two years, almost without exception. A small number, including the Illinois Republican Party since 1996 and both West Virginia parties, have consistently written platforms, but only during presidential election years. Beyond this core group, an additional 12 percent of state parties wrote platforms throughout the entire period of study, but did so intermittently: the Virginia Republicans, for instance, adopted between one and three platforms during each of the past six decades. Another 14 percent of parties consistently wrote platforms at the start of our time series, but eventually stopped. Of those parties that stopped writing platforms, half did so after 1992, well after abortion and (to a lesser extent) LGBTQ rights had emerged as salient partisan political issues. In total, only eight state parties—both parties in Kentucky, Maryland, and Tennessee, and only the Democrats in Alabama and Louisiana—either never or almost never wrote platforms during the time period of our analysis.

When we could not locate any copy of a particular platform, we searched newspaper archives for coverage of the state party convention. This was a time-consuming process. In total, our efforts yielded quality summaries for 206 of our missing platforms. These summaries allow us to determine whether the party in question took positions on abortion and LGBTQ rights. If newspaper summaries did not mention either issue, we assume that the party took no official position. Given the controversial nature of abortion and LGBTQ rights throughout this entire period, it is unlikely that any news article would fail to note positions taken on these matters. Indeed, both abortion and LGBTQ rights tend to be featured prominently in these articles.

Adjusting the denominator for instances where we know, from a credible source, that no platform had been written, we are confident that we have obtained either a copy or a thorough newspaper summary of at least 85 percent of all state party platforms in the 1960–2018 period, with even distribution between the two parties. This is a conservative estimate. If we were to remove cases where we suspect, but cannot prove, that no platform was written, our success rate would be considerably higher.

Figure 1 presents, by year, a count of the total number of platforms. This times series ranges from a high of 88 in 1962 to a low of 55 in 1998. (Since there were eight state parties that never, or nearly never, wrote a platform, the maximum number possible, in a normal year, would be 92.) The biennial mean is 70. Despite the challenges in obtaining historical platforms, our efforts have yielded a large number of platforms for each election cycle. Perhaps surprisingly, we were able to locate a large number of platforms from the earliest years in our time series; indeed, the years for which we found the largest number of platforms were 1960 through 1970.

Figure 2 shows, by state party, the share of bienniums (election cycles) for which we have either a copy of the adopted platform or a newspaper summary.[39] The top map is for Democratic parties, and the bottom map is for Republicans. As the figure suggests, most states in both maps are darkly shaded, indicating that we have a great deal of coverage. The figure also reveals a key pattern: the same states tend to be darkly or lightly shaded in both maps. This reflects the empirical reality that, if one party in a state writes a platform, its competitor party is also very likely to do so.[40] Finally, these maps reveal some regional differences. The states for which we have the lowest levels of platform coverage tend to be a combination of southern and mid-Atlantic states that constitute (or border) the Appalachian region.

6. Coding platforms

We hand-coded every platform in this study. We recognize that this was an unusual decision: it was tremendously time- and labor-intensive. Indeed, for all practical purposes, this approach would be impossible to employ for a study looking at every position and issue in a platform. Hopkins et al., for example, employed an approach that relies heavily on automated topic modeling; this allowed them to include every significant issue in their platforms,

[38] The great majority of these visits were done by Matthew Carr.

[39] In the appendix, we present more information about our final data archive.

[40] Indeed, our data show that if a state's Democratic party wrote a platform, there is a 92 percent probability that the state's Republican party wrote one as well.

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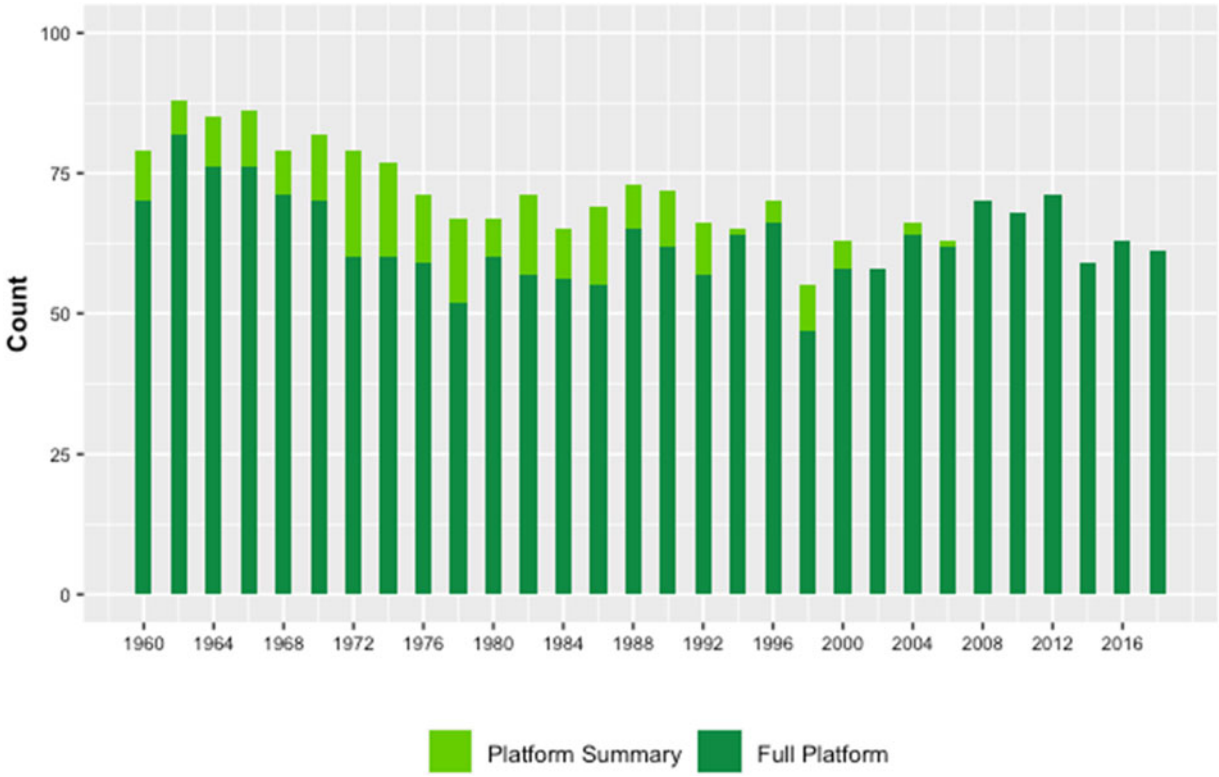

Figure 1. Number of Platforms Collected by Year.

but not to analyze what positions were taken on these issues.[41] But our questions and hypotheses necessitated a different approach. In limiting our focus to abortion and LGBTQ rights, we were able to use hand-coding to identify and analyze the details of every pertinent position articulated in these 1,977 platforms. Following the method laid out in this section, we determined what general positions each platform took on each issue, then utilized IRT models to take full advantage of the seventy-four specific policy positions that we identified as pertaining to LGBTQ rights and abortion.

To code the platforms in our archive, we used OCR (optical character recognition) software to transform each platform into a machine-readable text. We then uploaded every platform into NVivo, a software package that is designed for qualitative data analysis. NVivo enables researchers to manually code and classify the text of uploaded documents.

We coded platforms in NVivo using two approaches. First, we carefully read over 900 platforms, representing twenty-three states, from start to finish. Using this manual approach, we identified every reference to abortion or LGBTQ rights, then highlighted the text and assigned it to a "node" based upon whether it was supportive, opposed, or, in rare cases, ambivalent. We next used this text to construct extensive data dictionaries of relevant words and phrases. The abortion and LGBTQ rights dictionaries, created based on our manual reading of platforms, each contains around 150 words and phrases. We then used these dictionaries to conduct automated searches of the remaining platforms. These searches directed us to the locations in every platform in which a dictionary word or phrase appears. Upon locating this potentially relevant text, we then reverted back to the first method—we read the plank, determined whether it in fact addresses abortion or LGBTQ rights, and, if so, we highlighted the text and assigned it a node based on whether it was in support, opposition, or neutral.

After completing this initial review, we carefully read through the text placed in each of the NVivo nodes, identifying the full set of abortion and LGBTQ-related policies that were addressed in state platforms. In total, we identified forty-three unique abortion policies. These include policies such as abortion legalization, parental and spousal consent, public funding of abortions for low-income women, and judicial and candidate litmus tests. For LGBTQ rights, we identified thirty-one distinct policies. Examples of these are the legalization of consensual sodomy, the extension of traditional civil rights protections to LGBTQ individuals, the inclusion of sexual orientation in hate crimes laws, marriage equality, and ensuring access to desired and necessary medical care for transgender individuals. Among our set of LGBTQ policies we have included ten that broadly pertain to HIV/AIDS. For each of the seventy-four identified policies, we assigned the platform a $+1$ for taking the liberal position, a zero for taking no position, or a -1 for taking the conservative position, assigning values of $+1$ or -1 only if the position was explicitly stated.[42] We list all 43 abortion policies in Appendix Table B1 and the 31 LGBTQ policies in Appendix Table B2.[43]

While most policies are coded across the full six decades of our analysis, a handful are not. One of these is abortion "liberalization." Efforts to liberalize state-level bans on abortion during the 1960s and early 1970s called for exceptions to be written into state penal

[41] Hopkins et al., "From Many Divides, One?".

[42] Missing platforms are assigned values of N/A for each policy.

[43] The vast majority of these policies appear in multiple platforms. In this study, we do not include policies that are only mentioned in a single platform.

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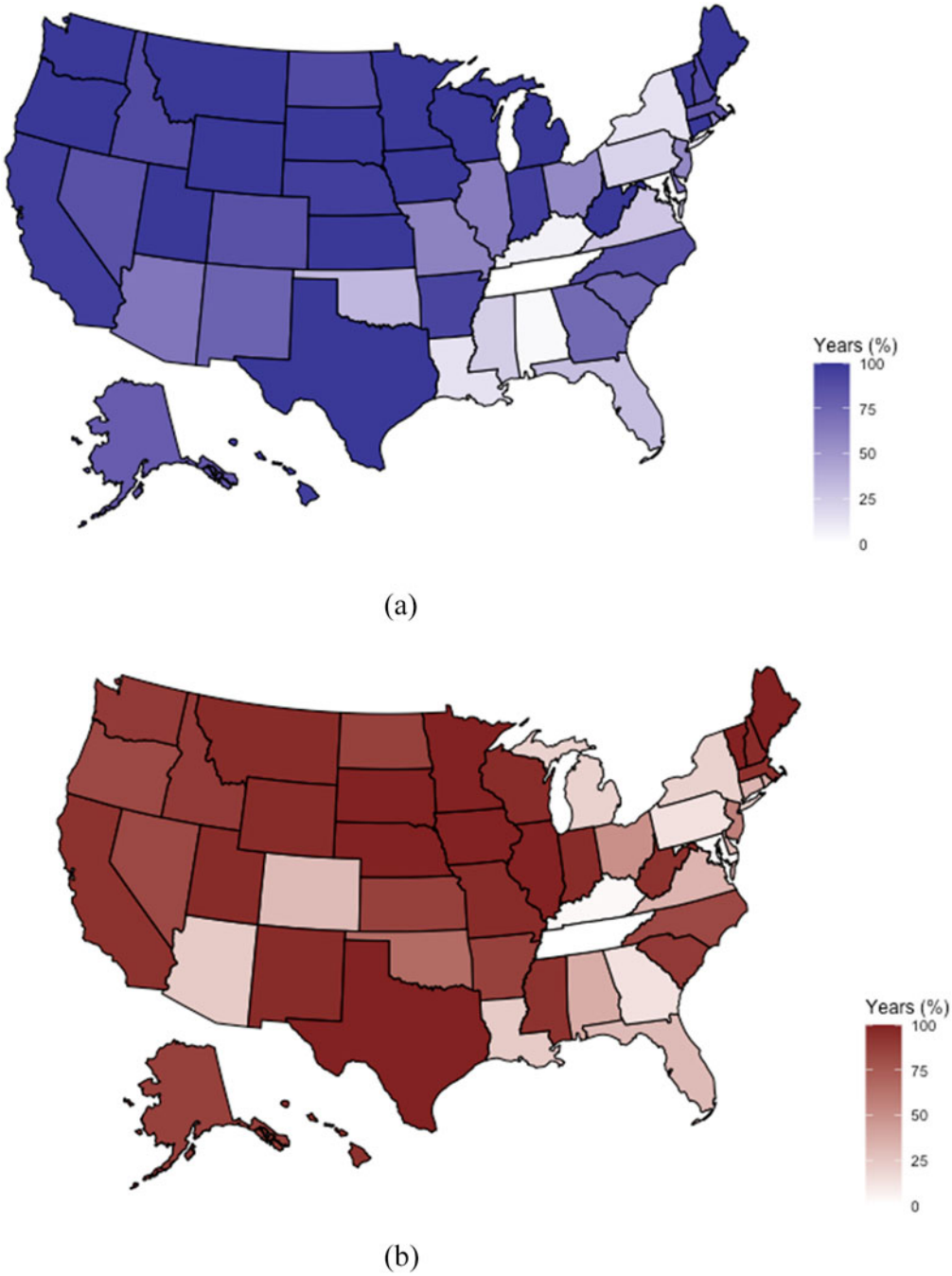

Figure 2. Share of Bienniums Covered by a Platform, 1960–2018.
(a) Democrats. (b) Republicans.

codes, allowing abortions but only when certain conditions were met—such as if the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest or if a team of doctors certified that the mother's physical or mental health was at risk. Abortion liberalization disappeared as an issue after the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, though we recognize that this is returning as an issue in the post-*Dobbs* era. For this reason, we only code abortion liberalization from 1960 through 1972. Similarly, all of the HIV/AIDS policies are coded starting in 1984, when the issue first appears in a state party platform, through 1996. We stop coding HIV/AIDS policies after 1996, the year in which highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) became the standard of care. HAART dramatically reduced the number of AIDS-related deaths in the United States and thereby the political salience of HIV/AIDS in U.S. domestic politics.[44] After 1996, the number of references to HIV/AIDS in state party platforms falls dramatically.

7. Measures of party policy positions

We use our dataset of coded platforms to create two measures of state party position-taking on abortion and LGBTQ rights. The first measure is discrete and straightforward: whether a platform

[44]Notably, the advent of HAART did not end the AIDS crisis. This is particularly true in communities of color in the United States and in the Global South.

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is supportive, opposed, or silent for each issue. The second measure is continuous and more nuanced, taking full advantage of the seventy-four distinct policy areas that we have identified. For this second measure, we employ IRT models to estimate a platform's "liberalness" in each of the two issue realms.

7.1. Discrete measure: Basic position-taking

To be coded as supporting abortion, a platform must either expressly state its support for legalized abortion or for some other policy that implies support for abortion legalization, such as calling for public funding of abortions for low-income women. Correspondingly, to be coded as opposing abortion, a platform must either expressly state opposition to legalized abortion or express support for some other policy that implies opposition to abortion legalization, such as calling for the adoption of a Human Life Amendment to the Constitution, advocating for the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, or opposing even modest liberalization of an existing abortion ban. Platforms that do not take a clear position opposing or supporting legalized abortion are coded as being silent on the issue. Silence can mean that the issue was not particularly salient (this seems most likely early in our time series), that the party could not reach an agreement, or that the party very consciously decided against taking an explicit position, potentially to avoid controversy.

To be coded as supporting LGBTQ rights, a platform must support one or more policies that expressly aim to protect or extend the rights of LGBTQ individuals. Common examples include adding sexual orientation and/or gender identity as a protected class in nondiscrimination laws, advocating for the decriminalization of consensual sodomy, supporting marriage equality, and allowing LGBTQ individuals to serve openly in the U.S. military. To be coded as opposing LGBTQ rights, a platform must expressly state opposition to extending some rights to individuals on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity or support a policy that excludes LGBTQ individuals from institutions or legal protections. Examples include opposition to adding sexual orientation and/or gender identity as a protected class in nondiscrimination laws or supporting the Federal Marriage Amendment to the Constitution. Again, platforms that do not take a clear position on LGBTQ rights are coded as being silent.

These categorizations, while somewhat blunt, do capture fundamental differences in support for abortion and LGBTQ rights across platforms and over time. In this way, they facilitate our study of the emergence of these issues into partisan political conflict and the polarization of state party systems. This measure is especially valuable in tracking change over time. In classifying platforms according to their support, broadly, for abortion or LGBTQ rights, we can easily compare platforms across time and, at any given point of time, across states. Where these categorizations fall short is in their inability to distinguish varying degrees of support for—or opposition to—abortion or LGBTQ rights. There is no subtlety in this measure. In this sense, it does not take full advantage of our detailed coding work.

7.2. Continuous measure: Estimating platform "liberalness"

To measure the more nuanced differences in position-taking between platforms, we employ Bayesian IRT models. IRTs have become a common measurement method for ideal point estimation in political science.[45] The approach we take here is similar to Treier and Jackman[46]; using our hand-coded state party platform data as inputs, we estimate a latent variable of *platform liberalness* in each year for which we obtained a platform. These are conceptually, though not procedurally, similar to DW-NOMINATE scores.

More formally, for each state s, party p, and year t, we model the latent "liberalness" of the platform's planks in a given policy domain (θ_{spt}). Our model is a static IRT using an ordered logit link function. We assume that each party decides to address (or not address) each issue j in their platform by taking the conservative position ($Y_{sptj} = -1$), taking the liberal position ($Y_{sptj} = 1$), or stating no position ($Y_{sptj} = 0$). We assume that a party will take a given position, according to the following decision rule:

$$Y_{sptj} = \begin{cases} -1 & \text{if } z_{sptj} \leq \kappa_1, \\ 0 & \text{if } \kappa_1 < z_{sptj} \leq \kappa_2, \\ 1 & \text{if } \kappa_2 < z_{sptj} \end{cases}$$

where z_{sptj} is the product of the latent variable θ_{spt} and a discrimination parameter β_j for each policy, and $\mathbf{k}$ is a vector of cutpoints to be used in the ordered logistic distribution. We model these parameters with the following priors:

$$\begin{aligned} \theta_{spt} &\sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1) \\ \beta_j &\sim \mathcal{N}_{[0,\infty)}(0, 3) \\ \kappa_j &\sim \mathcal{N}(0, 3). \end{aligned}$$

The discrimination parameter takes a half-normal distribution because we have manually coded the platform planks such that a higher value (+1) is always the more liberal policy. This avoids any "switching" problems and means that the β_j term only affects the *magnitude* of the relationship between the latent variable and expressed policy for each issue, not the *directionality* of that relationship. Because of the ordered nature of the underlying, hand-coded data, we can also assume that $\kappa_1 < \kappa_2$.

We chose a static model, rather than a dynamic one that explicitly models trends over time, because our goal was to capture the expressed positions of parties within the platform documents themselves. Dynamic models are useful to capture latent variables when the results in time t are a function of those in the previous period.[47] However, in our case, dynamic modeling has the effect of flattening dramatic changes in parties' stated policy positions. To the extent that party platforms are a function of those that came before, this should be reflected within the documents themselves, not as a result of a modeling choice by the researchers.

We fit three versions of the model in Stan using three sets of policies: abortion issues, LGBTQ issues, and all issues across both domains.[48] In each case, we included all coded platform planks in

[45]Joshua Clinton, Simon Jackman, and Douglas Rivers, "The Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Data," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (2004): 355–70; Shawn Treier and Simon Jackman, "Democracy as a Latent Variable," *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 1 (2008): 201–17; Andrew D. Martin and Kevin M. Quinn, "Dynamic Ideal Point Estimation via Markov Chain Monte Carlo for the U.S. Supreme Court, 1953–1999," *Political Analysis* 10, no. 2 (2002): 134–53; Devin Caughey and Christopher Warshaw, "Dynamic Estimation of Latent Opinion Using a Hierarchical Group-Level IRT Model," *Political Analysis* 23, no. 2 (2015): 197–211.

[46]Treier and Jackman, "Democracy as a Latent Variable."

[47]Kevin Reuning, Michael R. Kenwick, and Christopher Fariss, "Exploring the Dynamics of Latent Variable Models," *Political Analysis* 27, no. 4 (2019): 503–17.

[48]We fit each model in Stan using six chains of 5,000 iterations each (2,500 warm-up and 2,500 sampling). Across all specifications, the $R - hat$ statistics for our models are less than 1.01 for all variables, indicating that the Bayesian models have converged well.

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the relevant domain. The main output of interest for each model is a platform liberalness score, θ_{spt}. This score can be interpreted as a summary of the relative liberalness of a given state party's explicit platform positions on abortion, LGBTQ rights, or across both domains in a given year.[49]

The great advantage of these platform liberalness scores is obvious: these scores allow us to utilize fully the detailed coding of a wide array of policy positions, giving us the ability to discern differences among state parties that receive the same score on the discrete measure. While a large number of state parties express opposition to abortion, for example, each of these parties expresses a distinctive mix of positions that separates it from other parties on the same side of the policy divide. These scores allow us to distinguish between the liberalness of two platforms that both oppose abortion and to track the ways in which platforms continue to evolve even after they take their initial positions for or against abortion and for or against LGBTQ rights.

No method is flawless, however. In working with the IRT models, we are sensitive to the fact that our measures reflect (in part) the number of positions a platform takes. That has two implications. First, longer platforms have more space to take more positions. Consequently, our platform liberalness scores are a function, at least in part, of a platform's length.[50] Second, we recognize that many positions related to LGBTQ rights—marriage equality, for example, or the rights of trans people—did not exist in mainstream political discourse in earlier decades. Consequently, recent platforms, in taking positions on more issues than older platforms, will, for that reason, seem more extreme by this measure than platforms from the first decades in our series. This is primarily a concern in the LGBTQ realm, where the number and variety of issues has expanded over time. It is much less of a concern in the abortion realm, where the primary issues have remained stable. For this reason, we need to be somewhat cautious in comparing IRT scores from one period of time to those from another period of time, especially in the LGBTQ realm. But IRT scores are very effective in comparing contemporaneous platforms from different states.

One way to validate the IRT scores of platform liberalness is to compare them to the basic, discrete measures of whether a platform is supportive, opposed, or silent on abortion and LGBTQ issues. Table 1 reports the correlation between our IRT models and the discrete measures. The high correlations confirm that the modeled liberalism scores are consistent with the latent concept we seek to measure, even as they introduce greater variance by accounting for the relative importance of diverse policy positions on the parties' social liberalness. Taken together, these two measures give us greater confidence than either measure on its own.

Table 1. Validating IRT Scores

	Correlation with Discrete Measure	
Continuous (IRT) Measure	Support Abortion Rights	Support LGBTQ Rights
Combined policies	0.73	0.72
Abortion	0.70	0.61
LGBTQ rights	0.70	0.78

8. Position-taking: Abortion and LGBTQ rights, 1960–2018

Drawing on our discrete measure, we can now examine the timing and speed with which state parties began taking positions on abortion and LGBTQ rights. Figure 3 plots, by year, the percentage of state party platforms that support or oppose abortion (the solid line) and that support or oppose LGBTQ rights (the dashed line). At the beginning of the time series, no state political parties took positions on these issues: abortion does not appear in any state party platform until 1968 (when four state parties adopted planks supporting the liberalization, but not the outright repeal, of abortion bans) and LGBTQ rights do not appear until 1970 (when two state parties called for the repeal of laws restricting consensual sexual activity, likely a reference to sodomy bans). Remarkably, there is no critical moment in which large numbers of parties suddenly took sides in these debates—not in the 1970s, following the *Roe v. Wade* decision; not with Reagan's election in 1980; not in 1992, during the "culture war" battles in the Clinton–Bush campaign. Rather, as Figure 3 shows, the process by which state parties staked out positions was incremental and unfolded gradually over four decades. Only in 2016 did all written platforms take positions on both issues. Figure 3 also makes it clear that state parties were slower to take positions on LGBTQ rights than they were on abortion. The rates of position-taking on these issues were not equal until 2004, but have remained roughly equivalent since then.

But what positions did the parties take? Figure 4 shows position-taking on abortion, and Figure 5 shows position-taking on LGBTQ issues. In each figure, the top panel illustrates the discrete measure and the bottom panel the continuous measure derived from the IRT models. Here we draw on the richness of our entire database of 1,977 state party platforms to document how each issue exploded into the partisan world. The vertical lines in each of the two upper panels represent the years in which the national party platforms first took a position on these issues; we code the national platforms by the same criteria we use to code all of the state party platforms.

In the upper panel of Figure 4, we display the proportion of platforms, by party and year, that support and oppose legalized abortion. The percentage that support abortion are shown above zero on the y-axis, while the percentage that oppose abortion are displayed below zero. As we can see in the figure, Democratic state parties began taking positions first, with approximately 25 percent of the state Democratic parties staking out pro-choice positions in both 1970 and 1972. In the four years following *Roe v. Wade* (1973), however, the share of platforms supporting abortion fell—probably due both to the emergence of a more vocal antiabortion movement and the abrupt recognition of abortion rights by the Supreme Court, which obviated the need to call for legalized abortion. Beginning in 1978, explicit Democratic support for abortion rights began steadily to increase. By the early 1990s, over 75 percent of Democratic platforms expressly supported abortion, and by 2016 this figure had risen to 100 percent.

The rate of Republican parties adopting the antiabortion position looks similar, though somewhat delayed relative to the Democratic side. In 1972, when 25 percent of Democratic parties

[49]We note that our IRT models do not necessarily produce a liberalism score of 0 for platforms taking no relevant positions. On average, platforms with no relevant positions have scores of 0.065 for the abortion model, –0.1 for the LGBTQ rights model, and –0.014 for the combined policies model. Allowing for this variation ensures our scores better capture the noise inherent to the IRT modeling approach than would a model that strictly enforced scores of 0 for platforms taking no policies.

[50]The correlation between the absolute value of "platform liberalness" and total word count is 0.30, which shows that the correlation exists but that platform length is not a major factor in explaining how extreme platforms are.

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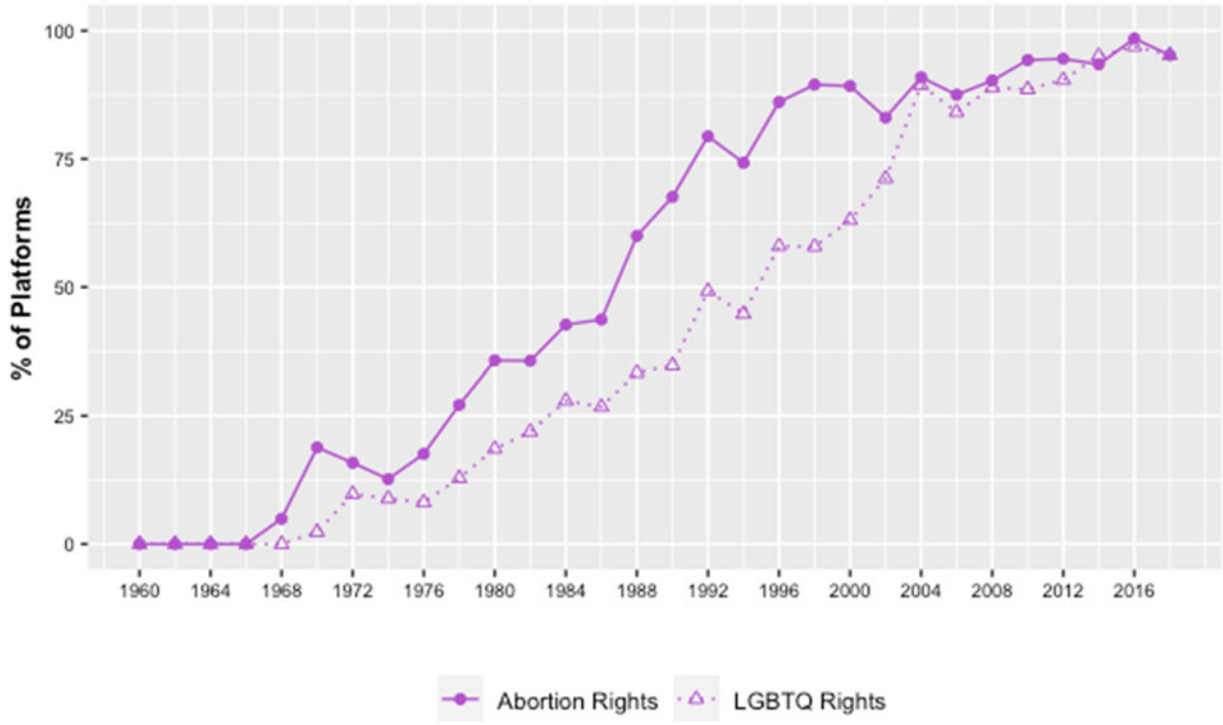

Figure 3. Position-Taking by Issue and Year.

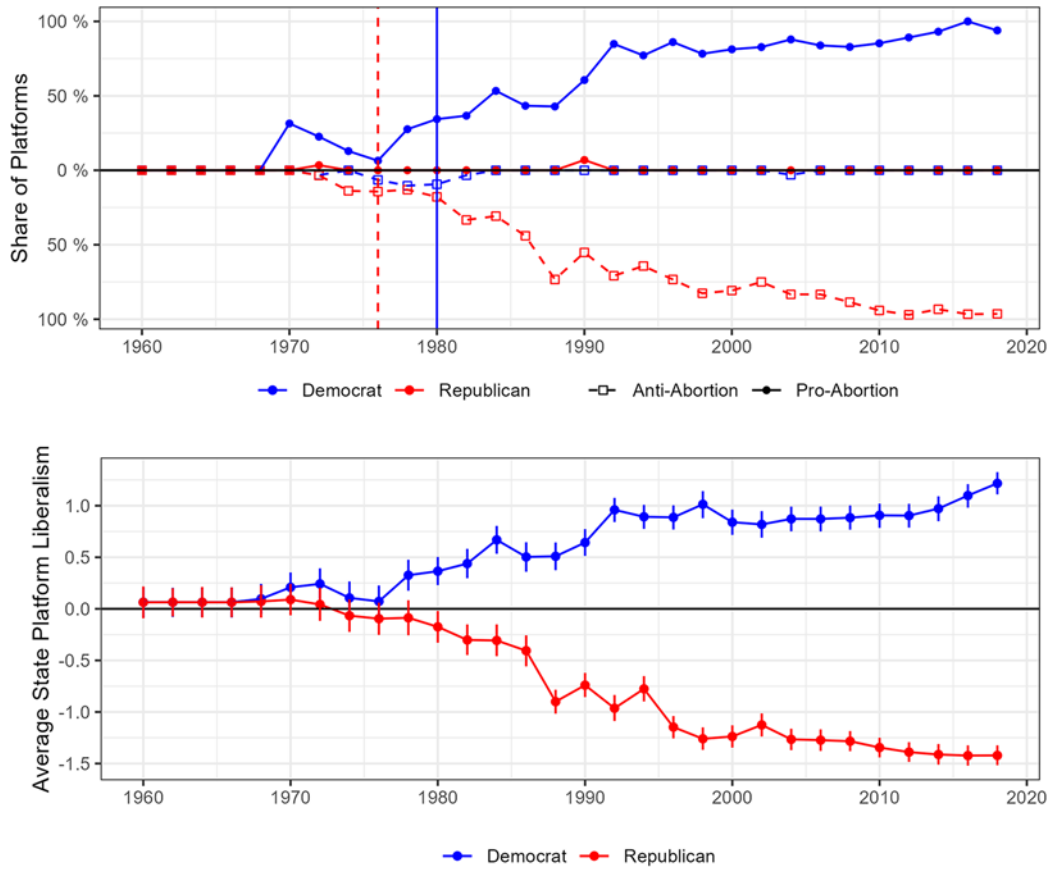

Figure 4. Abortion Rights Positioning by Party.

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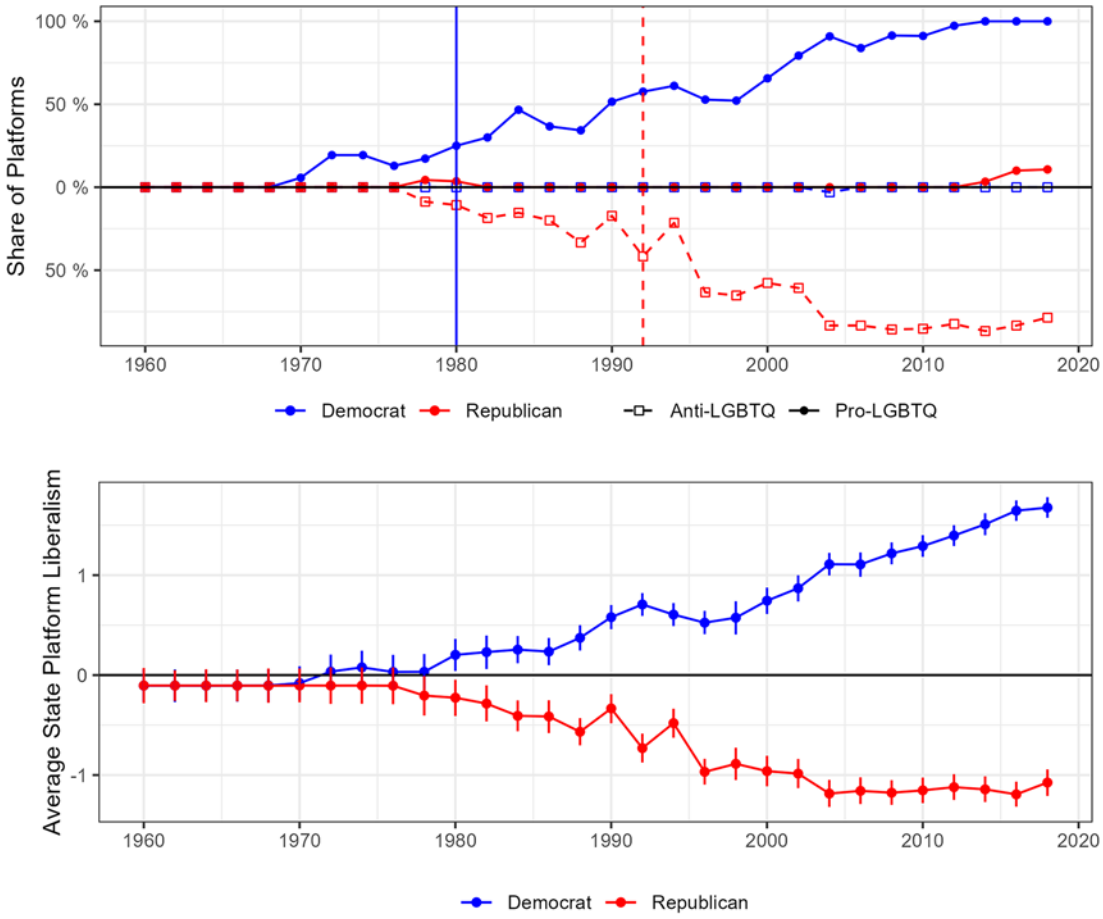

Figure 5. LGBTQ Rights Positioning by Party.

went on the record as pro-choice, only the Utah Republican Party opposed abortion. Indeed, in 1972 there were the same number of antiabortion Democratic state parties—one (the Massachusetts Democrats)—as there were antiabortion Republican parties. But, two years later, in the wake of *Roe v. Wade*, increasing numbers of Republican state parties began to articulate opposition to abortion. In 1974, 10 percent of Republican platforms adopted pro-life planks. The number continued to grow slowly: only in 1982 did a full 25 percent of Republican parties take the pro-life position. Despite this initial delay, support for the antiabortion position on the Republican side increased steadily, reaching 75 percent by the end of the 1980s and 100 percent by 2012.

The upper panel of Figure 4 also shows a phenomenon that occurred in the early part of the time series—a small number of parties staking out what today we would see as unorthodox partisan stances. This occurred more frequently among Democrats. At various times during the 1970s, the state Democratic parties in Massachusetts, Missouri, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Utah all adopted platforms opposed to abortion rights. While on the other side only the Iowa Republican Party (in 1972) embraced a full pro-choice position, state Republican parties in Hawaii, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, and New York adopted platforms in the late 1960s or early 1970s (like a handful of Democratic parties in those same years) that called for the liberalization of existing abortion bans. However, because none of these platforms called for the repeal of such bans, we do not code them as supporting abortion. Later in the time series, the Maine (1990), New York (1990), and Hawaii (2000) Republican parties all briefly adopted platforms supporting abortion rights.

Turning next to the bottom panel of Figure 4, we see our continuous measure of platform liberalism, drawing on the forty-three distinct issue positions related to abortion. The y-axis here is the liberalism score. Platforms that adopt a strong set of pro-choice positions score high on this liberalism score, platforms that embrace a wide range of pro-life positions score low, and platforms that take no position score zero. What we see in this figure are averages across all Democratic parties and all Republican parties, so some details, such as the rogue abortion platforms of the 1970s, are obscured. But what is revealed, in high relief, is a general trend that mirrors that in the upper panel. The two parties, measured by their state platforms, are indistinguishable in the 1960s. They begin to separate in 1970, and by 1978 the differences in the average platform liberalness score between the two parties become statistically meaningful. Since then, those differences have grown incrementally into a wide gulf. As both panels in Figure 4 show, the change over time, in both parties, has been steady but inexorable. The state parties are more divided today on abortion than at any other time in history.

Figure 5 displays similar data regarding position-taking on LGBTQ rights. In the upper panel, drawing on the discrete measure, the percentage of platforms that support LGBTQ rights are shown above zero on the y-axis, while the percentage that oppose them are displayed below zero. In the lower panel, we graph the liberalism score, derived from the IRT models. This liberalism

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score shows that the two parties became meaningfully different on LGBTQ issues in 1980, just two years after the same had happened on abortion. In both the abortion and LGBTQ realms, as shown in Figures 4 and 5, this separation in 1978–80 appears to be driven largely by Democratic, not Republican, position-taking.

Democratic parties moved first when it came to taking positions on LGBTQ rights, just as they did with abortion. As both figures show, Democratic platforms began taking pro-LGBTQ positions in the 1970s and, as the upper panel shows, by 1980, a full 25 percent of state Democratic parties had adopted a platform that favored LGBTQ individuals. By 2000, nearly 75 percent of Democratic platforms had planks supporting LGBTQ rights, and by 2012 this figure had risen to 100 percent. As with the issue of abortion, the share of Democratic parties supporting LGBTQ rights increased incrementally and gradually over time: that is evident in the first panel. There was no critical moment of change. But, as the lower panel shows, the substance of Democratic support for LGBTQ rights did undergo a dramatic shift beginning soon after 2000. While the number of state parties supporting LGBTQ rights grew steadily over time, the number of positions embraced by these parties has expanded sharply over the last twenty years. Democrats, in short, have grown much more liberal in the range of policies they endorse. What began as a simple affirmation of gay and lesbian rights has, over time, become for state Democrats, a broad assertion of support for multiple issue positions favoring the LGBTQ community, above all robust and widespread advocacy for the rights of transgender individuals and for same-gender marriage.

The earliest Republican platforms to discuss homosexuality did not do so until 1978, and the share of Republican platforms expressing clear opposition to LGBTQ rights grew modestly for the next decade. As late as 1986, in dramatic contrast to the Democrats, just 15 percent of Republican platforms had taken a position on the issue. Between 1988 and 1994, the number fluctuated between 18 and 39 percent. Then, in 1996, the share of Republican platforms opposing LGBTQ rights jumped to 63 percent and remained at that level until 2004, when it increased to 84 percent. Since 2004, as the upper panel of Figure 5 demonstrates, opposition to LGBTQ rights in Republican platforms has remained constant. Notably, since 2014 a small number of Republican platforms have begun taking positions in support of LGBTQ rights, calling for sexual orientation to be added to the traditional list of attributes (e.g., race, sex, and religion) that cannot be the basis of discrimination. The only Democratic platforms to ever take an anti-LGBTQ position were a handful from the early 2000s that opposed same-sex marriage.

As the lower panel of Figure 5 suggests, illustrating the liberalness score derived from the IRT model, the mix of positions adopted by state Republicans closely mirrored the proportion of their platforms supporting or opposing LGBTQ rights. According to this continuous measure, Republican platforms became much more hostile to LGBTQ rights between 1980 and 1996. This was a function of Republican state parties taking positions on new issues, like same-gender marriage, as well as more expansive language addressing older issues, like the right of LGBTQ adults to adopt children, LGBTQ civil rights protections (or "special privileges"), and restrictions on what can be taught in schools relating to LGBTQ issues. Note that, by this measure, a party looks more extreme if it takes ideologically consistent positions on a larger range of issues, which is the case here. After 2004, by this measure, Republican platforms did not grow any more conservative. On the continuous, liberalism score, Republican platforms stayed constant between 2004 and 2018—though we speculate that the increasing prominence of issues relating to trans rights may lead to a new conservative shift in Republican platforms in the 2020s, as they begin taking positions on this set of issues.

8.1. National party position-taking

But who moved first, state parties or the national parties? In addition to finding that state Democratic parties moved earlier and faster than state Republican parties on both LGBTQ and abortion position-taking, we discover that many state parties moved before the two national parties.

The national Democratic Party first referenced abortion in its 1976 platform but did not express a clear position on legalization. "We fully recognize the religious and ethical nature of the concerns which many Americans have on the subject of abortion," the platform reads. "We feel, however, that it is undesirable to attempt to amend the U.S. Constitution to overturn the Supreme Court decision in this area." Respecting the diverse views of Americans and sharp divisions within the Democratic Party, the national party in 1976 neither explicitly endorsed the *Roe v. Wade* decision nor took a position on the question of abortion itself. While blocking a constitutional amendment would have the effect of leaving abortion rights intact, the national party failed to embrace abortion rights directly—or even to oppose a constitutional amendment, noting only that it felt that such a move would be "undesirable." In 1980, in contrast, the national platform supported *Roe v. Wade* and opposed all efforts to overturn the decision: "The Democratic Party supports the 1973 Supreme Court decision on abortion rights as the law of the land and opposes any constitutional amendment to restrict or overturn that decision." Using the standards we have applied consistently to every state platform, we code only the 1980 Democratic national platform as supporting a fundamental right to abortion.[51]

Here is a case, however we choose to code the 1976 national platform, where state parties moved earlier and much more aggressively than the national party. Between 1970 and the summer of 1976, when the Democratic national platform temporized on the issue of abortion rights, twenty state Democratic parties had called for abortion legalization—nineteen of them having already taken this position by 1974. Four years later, by August 1980, when the Democratic National Convention adopted its first-ever pro-abortion platform, twenty-four state parties had included abortion rights planks in at least one of their platforms.

While Richard Nixon took some limited antiabortion positions in the 1972 presidential campaign, the first reference to abortion in a Republican national platform was in 1976. Emulating the Democratic platform's language referring to the controversial nature of the issue, the Republican platform that year adopted an antiabortion position. "The Republican Party favors a continuance of the public dialogue on abortion," the 1976 platform reads, "and supports the efforts of those who seek enactment of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children." Since the platform places the Republican Party on the side of those favoring an antiabortion amendment, even if it does

[51]We note, too, that there was a heated battle at the 1972 Democratic National Convention over the question of including a pro-abortion plank in that year's national platform, culminating in a floor vote. Since we code only the texts of adopted planks, we do not include that platform in our analysis, since the abortion plank was defeated. In a new paper, we examine that platform fight in detail, along with the large number of Democratic state party platforms that did adopt pro-abortion language in 1970 and 1972, all in the period preceding the national convention.

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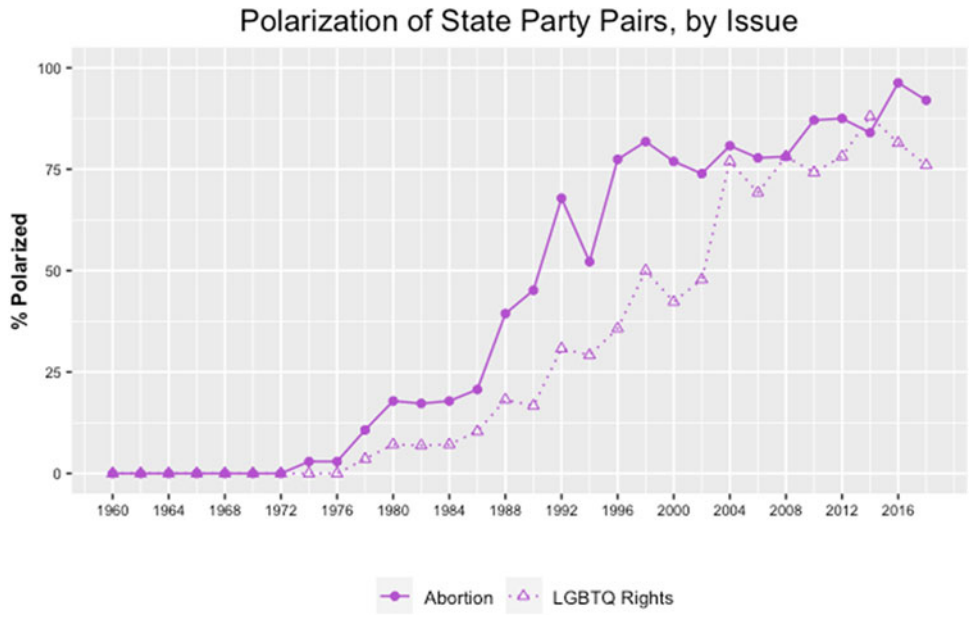

Figure 6. Polarization of State Party Pairs.

not say bluntly that the party itself seeks this amendment, we code this platform as antiabortion—recognizing that the Republican language in 1976 is only slightly more explicit than the Democratic language that same year. By 1980, the Republican national party, like the Democratic Party, took an unambiguous position. "There can be no doubt that the question of abortion, despite the complex nature of its various issues, is ultimately concerned with equality of rights under the law," the platform reads in 1980. "While we recognize differing views on this question among Americans in general—and in our own Party—we affirm our support of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children."

Republican state parties, like Democratic state parties, moved earlier than the national party, but in smaller numbers. When, in the summer of 1976, the Republican national platform offered its support to those working to amend the Constitution, seven state parties had already taken firm, unqualified antiabortion positions in their platforms. Four years later, by the summer of 1980, eleven state Republican parties had included antiabortion planks in at least one of their platforms in the preceding decade.

On LGBTQ rights, the pattern was the same. The national Democrats did not adopt a plank supporting gay and lesbian rights until 1980.[52] "All groups must be protected from discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, language, age, sex, or sexual orientation. This includes specifically the right of foreign citizens to enter this country," the 1980 national platform states. "Appropriate legislative and administrative actions to achieve these goals should be undertaken." As Figure 5 shows, by that year thirteen Democratic state platforms had already expressed support for LGBTQ rights.

Surprisingly, the national Republican platform did not include language openly opposing LGBTQ rights until 1992. In that year, national Republicans wrote, "We oppose efforts by the Democrat Party to include sexual preference as a protected minority receiving preferential status under civil rights statutes at the federal, State, and local level." The 1992 Republican national platform also included a plank opposing "any legislation or law which legally recognizes same-sex marriages and allows such couples to adopt children or provide foster care." In another section of its platform, Republicans in 1992 noted that, "unlike the Democrat Party and its candidate, we support the continued exclusion of homosexuals from the military as a matter of good order and discipline." In this case again, the national party proved to be a late mover. By 1992, fourteen Republican state parties had already taken explicit positions opposing LGBTQ rights.

On both policy fronts—abortion and LGBTQ rights—the national parties never moved first. In every case, at least some state parties took positions in advance of the national parties. And, in three of the four cases, more than thirteen of the state party platforms, representing over 25 percent of the states, adopted their positions before their respective national party. Party leadership on these issues came from the states.

9. Party polarization, 1960–2018

Next, in Figure 6, we consider the extent and speed with which state party systems have polarized. The units of analysis here are state-level party pairs (e.g., the California Democratic and Republican parties) in a given year. Using our discrete measure, we code a pair of parties as being polarized if they take opposing positions on an issue. As one can see, polarization of party pairs is virtually nonexistent in the 1960s and 1970s. From there, however, it increases in linear fashion across the full time series, from 1980 until the mid-2010s, when this measure approaches 100

[52]In 1972, the party rejected efforts to include a "Gay Liberation" plank in its platform, refusing even to endorse a statement condemning sodomy bans, but it did adopt language that did not explicitly refer to LGBTQ people: "Americans should be free to make their own choice of life-styles and private habits without being subject to discrimination or prosecution." While we can find substantial newspaper coverage of the battle over the "Gay Liberation" plank, we have located no evidence that the language appearing in the platform was intended to refer to gay and lesbian people.

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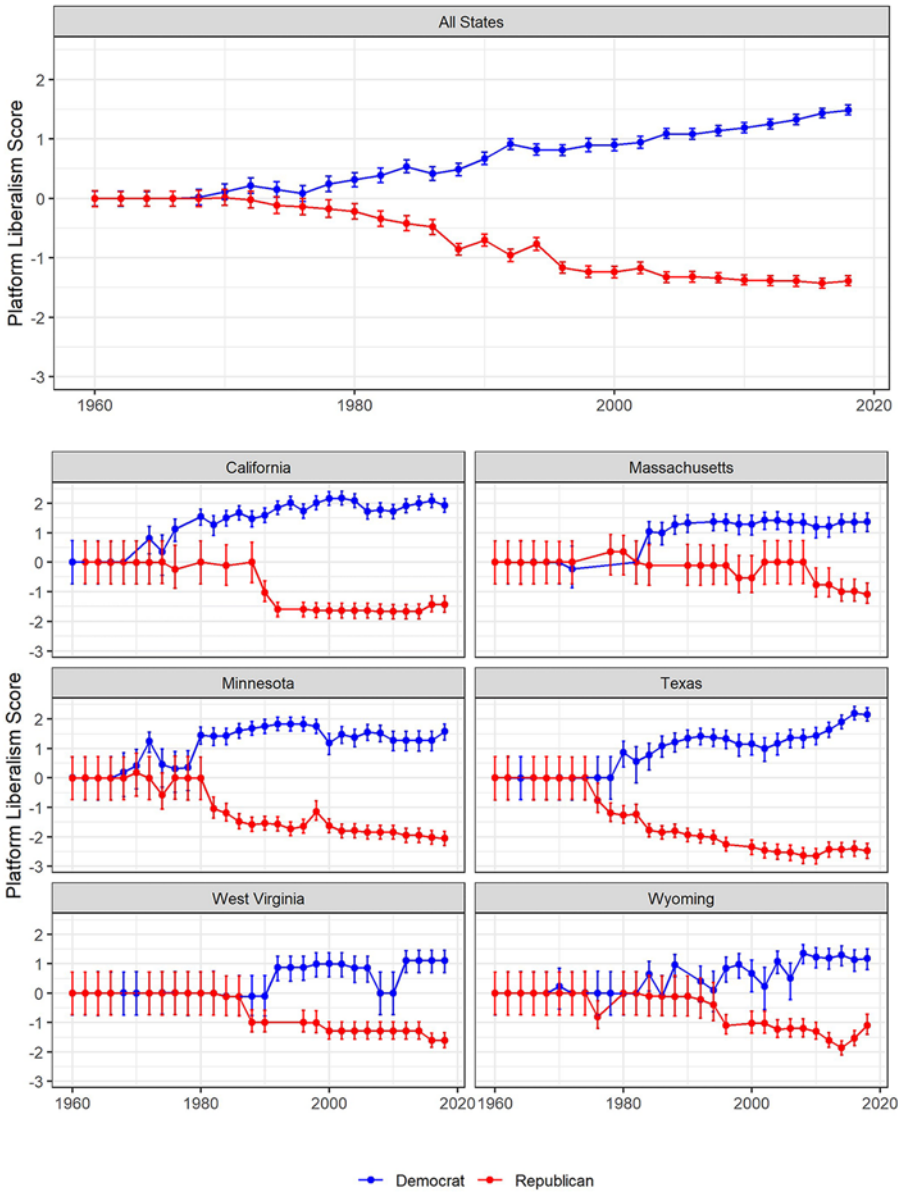

Figure 7. Combined Platform Liberalness Scores, 1960–2018.

percent. As we have observed previously, there does not appear to be a critical moment or election cycle that is driving this polarization; the sharpest sustained increase in the share of party systems that polarized occurred between 1986 and 1992. We also observe in Figure 6 that party pairs have been more frequently divided on the issue of abortion than LGBTQ rights. In fact, polarization on LGBTQ rights declined in the 2010s as some state Republican parties dropped hostile planks or, in a handful of cases, supported the inclusion of sexual orientation and/or gender identity in traditional civil rights protections.

With Figure 7, we present platform liberalness scores for a combined IRT model, using party positions across both issue areas, rather than continuing to report liberalness scores separately for LGBTQ and abortion positions. The top panel of Figure 7 tracks the average platform liberalness score among all state Democratic parties (the blue line) and the average score among all state Republican parties (the red line) across the full period 1960–2018. As the figure shows, and as we have already seen for the issues separately, there is no difference between the parties near the beginning of the time series. Consistent with our separate findings on abortion and LGBTQ positions, meaningful differences between the parties emerge only in 1978. Over subsequent years, Democratic platforms became increasingly liberal, while Republican platforms became increasingly conservative.

The bottom panel of Figure 7 tracks the platform liberalness scores of the Democratic and Republican parties in a sample of six states—California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Gaps in the time series for any state party mean that we are either missing the platform for that year or no platform was written. In general, the patterns in the individual states are similar to those observed across all fifty states. But there are noteworthy differences in the liberalism scores of individual parties and in the speed and timing of polarization across state party systems. In California, Minnesota, and Texas, the liberalness scores of the two parties become meaningfully different in 1976–80, mirroring patterns across the whole universe of states, and in these three states the distance between the parties becomes very large, indicating high levels of partisan polarization. The story diverges in the other three states. In Massachusetts, West Virginia, and Wyoming, the state parties grow notably

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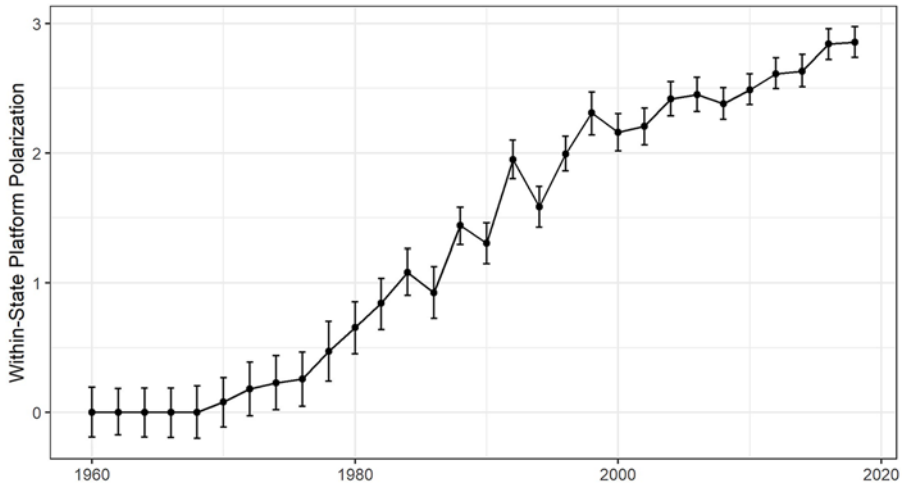

Figure 8. Platform Liberalism Polarization, 1960–2018.

distinct only in the 1980s and 1990s, and the parties in these states are less polarized, even today, than those in the first three states. The differences between the two parties' liberalism scores in the twenty-first century remain lower in Massachusetts, West Virginia, and Wyoming than in California, Minnesota, and Texas. In some cases, state parties remain relatively constant in their scores for long periods of time, and, in other cases, as the lower panel of Figure 7 suggests, there are periods when parties move toward greater liberalism or conservatism.

The differences between the blue and red lines represent the ideological polarization between the two parties on these issues. Figure 8 plots this difference for our entire data set, drawing on platforms from all states and all years. As one can see, there is a steady and steep increase in polarization from 1978 through 1998. After 1998, polarization continues to grow, but at a slower pace. Understanding the dynamics of this 1978–98 period is crucial to explaining the sources of contemporary partisan polarization. As Figure 8 shows, there are no dramatic inflection points in this era. Polarization instead grew steadily, ineluctably, from the late 1970s through the 1990s. As evidence from state party positioning on abortion and LGBTQ rights demonstrates, the American party system entered the twenty-first century utterly transformed.

10. Conclusion

In the summer of 2022, just days after the U.S. Supreme Court announced its decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the Texas Republican Party, at its convention in Houston, adopted a platform brimming with conservative positions on culture war issues. Delegates urged legislators to "abolish abortion" and demanded that the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of equal protection of the laws be applied to "all preborn children from the moment of fertilization." The platform also described homosexuality as "an abnormal lifestyle choice" and declared its opposition to "homosexual marriage" and to "all efforts to validate transgender identity." The platform adopted by the Democrats stands in stark contrast. The Texas Democratic Party in 2022 affirmed its commitment to "equal protections and rights for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other non-cis non-heterosexual or LGBTQIA+ people" and it also sought to "protect the constitutional right to an abortion."

The degree of partisan polarization in 2024 on abortion and LGBTQ rights is without historical precedent. Fifty years ago, party leaders in states across the nation were only beginning to take positions on social issues, and there were no meaningful differences in party positions. The changes over this half-century have been explosive. As we show in this paper, the culture war, which until the 1970s hardly existed, has now come to every state in the union. Astonishingly, every state party drafting a platform in the 2010s had staked out a clear position on abortion, and Democratic and Republican positions, in state after state, were sharply at odds.

The vast state party platform database that we have assembled, and which we draw on for the first time in this paper, allows us to test multiple hypotheses regarding the origins and development of the culture war—and, more broadly, the polarization of the nation's political parties. By hand-coding these platforms, then employing methods that yield discrete and continuous measures of issue positions, we find, contrary to nearly all preexisting scholarship, that polarization on the issues of abortion and LGBTQ rights occurred gradually. There was no sharp change in either the late 1970s or the 1990s—or at any other time. Rather, partisan polarization on culture war issues was gradual. While we find that the parties began to differ in meaningful ways on these issues in 1978–80, this was not a dramatic shift, but rather a point on a gentle slope.

State parties drove the process of polarization. By the time the national parties took positions on abortion and LGBTQ rights, parties in a significant number of the states had already acted. Democrats and liberals moved first. Given the strongly conservative status quo ante of the 1960s, when abortion and homosexuality were effectively outlawed in every state, it is not surprising to find that it was liberals who began to raise these issues in the political arena. But the extent to which the national culture war was rooted in state politics presents an important new perspective on the era. As was the case with race,[53] we show that the issues of abortion and LGBTQ rights first emerged in partisan political conflict at the state level before spreading to the national party agenda.

We live in an era defined by partisan polarization. The degree of polarization differs in intensity from state to state, with some

[53] Feinstein and Schickler, "Platforms and Partners"; Schickler, *Racial Realignment*.

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state party systems, like that in Texas, severely polarized, and others much less so. The politics of LGBTQ rights and abortion have never before been so central to our national political discourse and our private disagreements. Today's Americans inhabit a party universe that is entirely foreign from that of the 1960s and 1970s, and that universe took shape, through the work of activists and party leaders, in state party platforms.

Acknowledgements. We thank Samuel Ackerman, Margaret Anderle, Elizabeth Fallon, Andrew Klee, Matthew Lyskawa, and Ben Swanger for locating hundreds of state platforms and working with us to catalog them. We are also very grateful to Dan Coffey, Dan Galvin, John Henderson, Dan Hopkins, Eric Schickler, and especially Joel Paddock for their generosity in sharing with us the large numbers of state party platforms that they have located in their own research. We thank Alexander Hempel for the tedious hours he spent helping us code our platforms. Finally, we are grateful for all of the advice and code for estimating IRT models given to us by Christopher Fariss.

Appendix A. Archive of State Party Platforms

Here we detail important information about the unique archive of state party platforms that we have constructed. In particular, we focus on the platform collection process, the scope of the finished archive, and the approach we used for coding the issue positions in each platform. The final archive contains 1,771 unique state party platforms. In a small number of these cases, we treat a fairly extensive set of resolutions adopted by delegates at the state party convention as constituting a platform. In our experience, state parties will occasionally adopt a series of resolutions in the place of (or in addition to) a platform. Ultimately, whether a set of resolutions is encompassing enough to be similar to a platform is a qualitative judgment on our part. Fortunately, this is a judgment that we rarely had to make.

In compiling our archive, we benefited from the work of other scholars, and we want to recognize and note their contributions. Before we even began our efforts, Joel Paddock had assembled a collection of platforms from eleven states, written from 1956 through 2000. This collection formed the basis for his book, *State and National Parties and American Democracy*. Paddock generously shared his collection with us as well as numerous other teams of researchers. At various times during the platform collection phase of our project, we exchanged platforms with Dan Coffey, Dan Galvin, John Henderson, Dan Hopkins, and Eric Schickler. While each cache of platforms that we received from other researchers inevitably contained some that we had already found, these exchanges also netted us platforms that had eluded our efforts. Similarly, the platforms we found added to the data of others. However, because these exchanges stopped a while ago, the archive we have compiled here includes many platforms that have not yet been shared with other scholars. As detailed in the main body of our manuscript, we turned to state parties, serial publications, historical societies, the personal records of party activists, and special collections libraries and archives to locate platforms that we were not able to obtain from fellow researchers. In general, special collections libraries and archives were the most fruitful source for "undiscovered" platforms. Sometimes we were able to obtain copies of these documents from afar with the assistance of helpful librarians working at these institutions. Other times, however, a member of our research team had to make a personal visit to sift through boxes of documents. In total, we visited sixty-five archives, located in thirty states. Table A1 lists, by state, these archives.

Through our data collection efforts, we learned a great deal of information about the frequency with which each state Democratic and Republican party writes platforms. We summarize this knowledge in Table A2 by placing each state party into one of four categories. The first of these (Column 1) is for those that consistently wrote platforms throughout the entire period of our study.

Table A1. Archives Visited in Person

Alabama
Auburn University

Arkansas
University of Arkansas

Arizona
Arizona State Archives
Arizona State University
Northern Arizona University

California
GLBT Historical Society
Hoover Institution
Nixon Library
ONE Gay and Lesbian Archives
Reagan Presidential Library
University of California
University of Southern California

Colorado
University of Colorado
University of Denver

Connecticut
University of Connecticut

Florida
University of Florida

Georgia
Carter Presidential Library
Georgia College
University of Georgia

Illinois
Lake Forest College
Northern Illinois University
Southern Illinois University

Indiana
Indiana Historical Society
Indiana University
Purdue University

Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Society
Massachusetts State Archives
Suffolk University

Maryland
Johns Hopkins University
University of Maryland

Michigan
Ford Presidential Library
University of Michigan

Minnesota
Minnesota Historical Society
University of Minnesota

North Carolina
University of North Carolina
Wake Forest University

Mississippi
Mississippi State University
University of Mississippi

New Hampshire
Dartmouth College

New Mexico
New Mexico State Archives New
Mexico State University
University of New Mexico

New York
Columbia University
New York University
New York State Archives
State University of New York, Albany

Oklahoma
University of Oklahoma

Oregon
Oregon Historical Society

Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania State Archives
Pennsylvania State University

South Carolina
Clemson University
University of South Carolina

Texas
University of North Texas

Utah
University of Utah

Virginia
George Mason University

Vermont
University of Vermont
Vermont State Archives

Washington
University of Washington Western
Washington University

Wyoming
University of Wyoming
Wyoming State Archives

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Table A2. State Parties by Frequency of Platform Writing

Consistent		Intermittent	Stopped	(Almost) Never
Alaska (D)	New Mexico (D)	Alabama (R)	Connecticut (R), 1994	Alabama (D)
Alaska (R)	New Mexico (R)	Arizona (R)	Delaware (R), 1976	Kentucky (D)
Arkansas (D)	North Carolina (D)	Colorado (R)	Florida (R), 1994	Kentucky (R)
Arkansas (R)	North Carolina (R)	Delaware (D)	Illinois (D), 2002	Louisiana (D)
Arizona (D)	North Dakota (D)	Florida (D)	Michigan (R), 1972	Maryland (D)
California (D)	North Dakota (R)	Georgia (R)	Missouri (D), 1996	Maryland (R)
California (R)	Oklahoma (R)	Louisiana (R)	New Jersey (D), 1992	Tennessee (D)
Colorado (D)	Oregon (D)	Mississippi (D)	New Jersey (R), 1992	Tennessee (R)
Connecticut (D)	Oregon (R)	Oklahoma (D)	New York (D), 1972	
Georgia (D)	Rhode Island (D)	Rhode Island (R)	New York (R), 1978	
Hawaii (D)	South Carolina (D)	Virginia (D)	Ohio (D), 1994	
Hawaii (R)	South Carolina (R)	Virginia (R)	Ohio (R), 1988	
Idaho (D)	South Dakota (D)		Pennsylvania (D), 1974	
Idaho (R)	South Dakota (R)		Pennsylvania (R), 1974	
Illinois (R)	Texas (D)			
Indiana (D)	Texas (R)			
Indiana (R)	Utah (D)			
Iowa (D)	Utah (R)			
Iowa (R)	Vermont (D)			
Kansas (D)	Vermont (R)			
Kansas (R)	Washington (D)			
Maine (D)	Washington (R)			
Maine (R)	West Virginia (D)			
Massachusetts (D)	West Virginia (R)			
Massachusetts (R)	Wisconsin (D)			
Michigan (D)	Wisconsin (R)			
Minnesota (D)	Wyoming (D)			
Minnesota (R)	Wyoming (R)			
Mississippi (R)				
Missouri (R)				
Montana (D)				
Montana (R)				
Nebraska (D)				
Nebraska (R)				
Nevada (D)				
Nevada (R)				
New Hampshire (D)				
New Hampshire (R)				

A large supermajority—66 percent—of all state parties fall into this category. These parties contribute the bulk of the observations in our empirical analyses, and we can seamlessly trace the evolution of their position-taking on culture war issues. The "consistent" platform-writing group is balanced in terms of partisanship, includes states from all regions of the country, and includes states with electorates that lie across the full range of the ideological spectrum.

The second column identifies the 12 percent of state parties that intermittently wrote platforms across the full time period, while the third reports the 14 percent of state parties that wrote platforms at the beginning of the time series, but stopped well before 2018. For those states that stopped writing platforms, the table identifies the last year in which each adopted a platform. For example, both parties in New Jersey stopped writing platforms after 1992, while the New York Democrats stopped after 1972 and the New York Republicans after 1978. Importantly, over two-thirds of these state parties had already staked out positions on abortion and/or LGBTQ rights by the time they stopped adopting platforms. In this way, they still provide a great deal of useful data for our analyses.

The final column lists the state parties that either never or almost never adopted a platform during the sixty-year time period we study. Only 8 percent of state parties fit into this category, and most of these are from three states—Kentucky, Maryland, and Tennessee.

When we could not locate a platform, we used digital newspaper archives to search for media coverage of the state convention. We used these sources to first determine whether a platform was adopted, and, if one was, we then searched through the journalistic coverage to see if we could find a detailed summary of the policy positions that it contained. In total, we located articles that provided good summaries of 206 additional state party platforms.

Figure A1 reports the total number of unique platforms or detailed platform summaries that we collected by state. These range from a high of 60 for Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Texas, to a low of zero for the state of Tennessee. Note that 60 platforms is the highest possible value and means that not only did both state parties write a platform every two years, but that we have also located either a copy or a newspaper summary of each. The mean across all fifty states is slightly over forty-two platforms and summaries.

Figure A2 shows the share of the total number of platforms (by year) for which we have either obtained a copy of the platform or found a thorough summary. In creating this figure, we adjust the denominator to account for platforms that were never actually written or adopted. This figure further demonstrates that our data collection efforts have been successful across the full time series. In all but one biennium (1998), we collected over 75 percent of platforms adopted, and in nine bienniums we collected over 90 percent.

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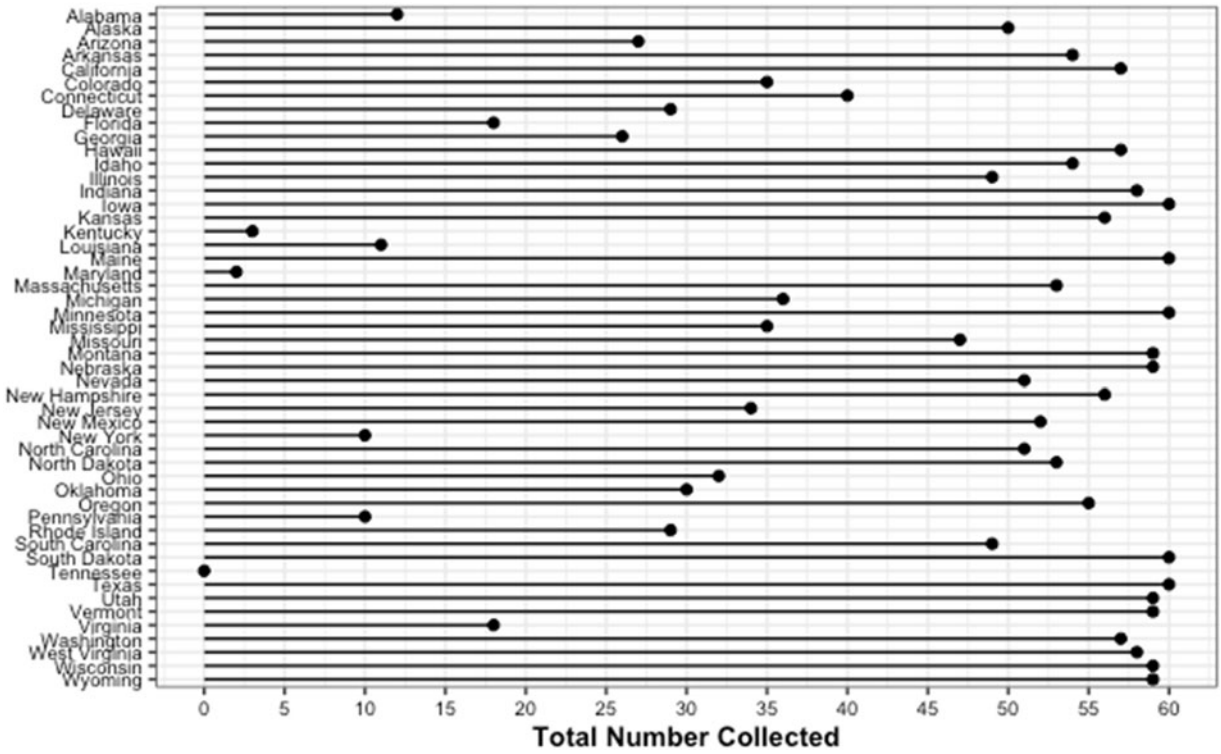

Figure A1. Total Platforms or Summaries Collected by State.

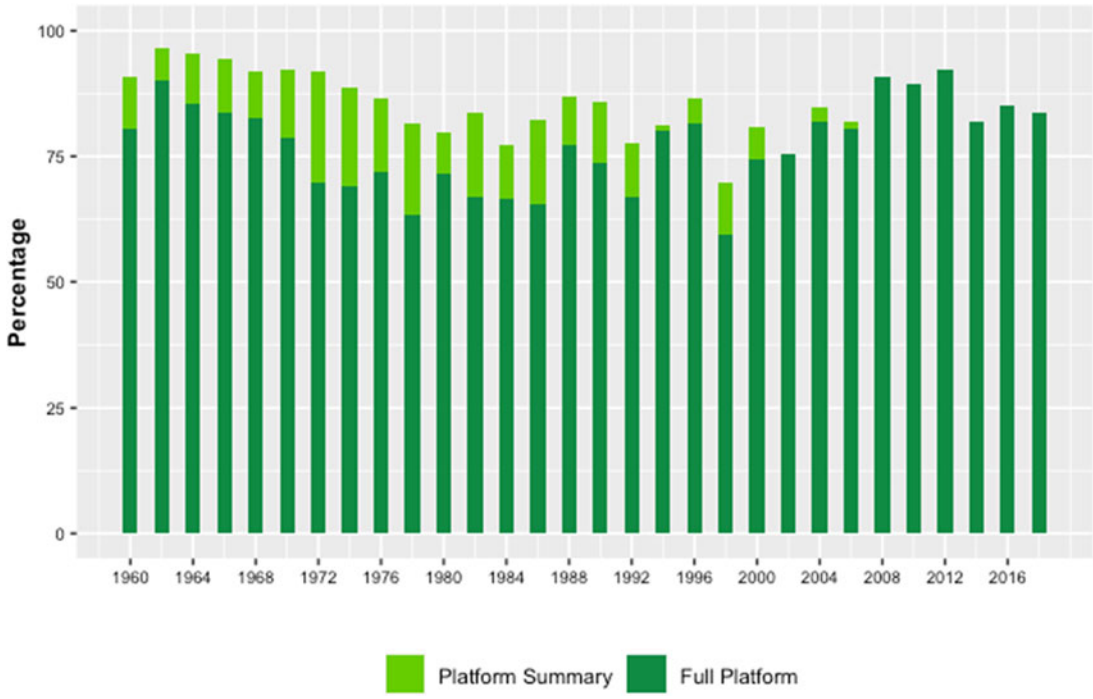

Figure A2. Share of Adopted Platforms Collected by Year.

Figure A3 presents similar data, but by year and party. Here the y-axis is the percentage of all adopted platforms collected, and we plot separate lines for Democrats and Republicans. The figure demonstrates that we were about equally as successful in collecting platforms across both parties in each biennium. In some years, we were modestly more successful at locating platforms adopted by Democratic state parties.

Appendix B. Data Coding

Here we detail the specific policies that we code in each platform. In total, we code for positions on forty-three abortion policies and thirty-one LGBTQ rights policies (ten of which pertain broadly to HIV/AIDS). While most policies are coded across the full six decades of our analysis, a handful are not (such as

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policies related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic). Where pertinent, we note which policies were coded over an abbreviated time period.

Table B1 shows the forty-three policies we coded for abortion rights. The left column lists the variable names we employ, while the right column provides a more detailed description of each. For ease of explication, the policy descriptions are written to highlight the conservative position.

Table B2 shows the policies we coded for LGBTQ rights. Here the policy descriptions are written to highlight the liberal position. Anytime the "T" in the "LGBTQ" appears in parentheses it means that a platform is coded as taking a position on the policy even if it only refers to LGB individuals or sexual orientation (i.e., gender identity need not be mentioned for the platform to receive a liberal or conservative coding). In other instances, we have policy categories that require a clear reference to transgender individuals or gender identity. The ten policies we coded for HIV/AIDS are listed at the bottom of the table; these policies are only coded for 1984 through 1996.

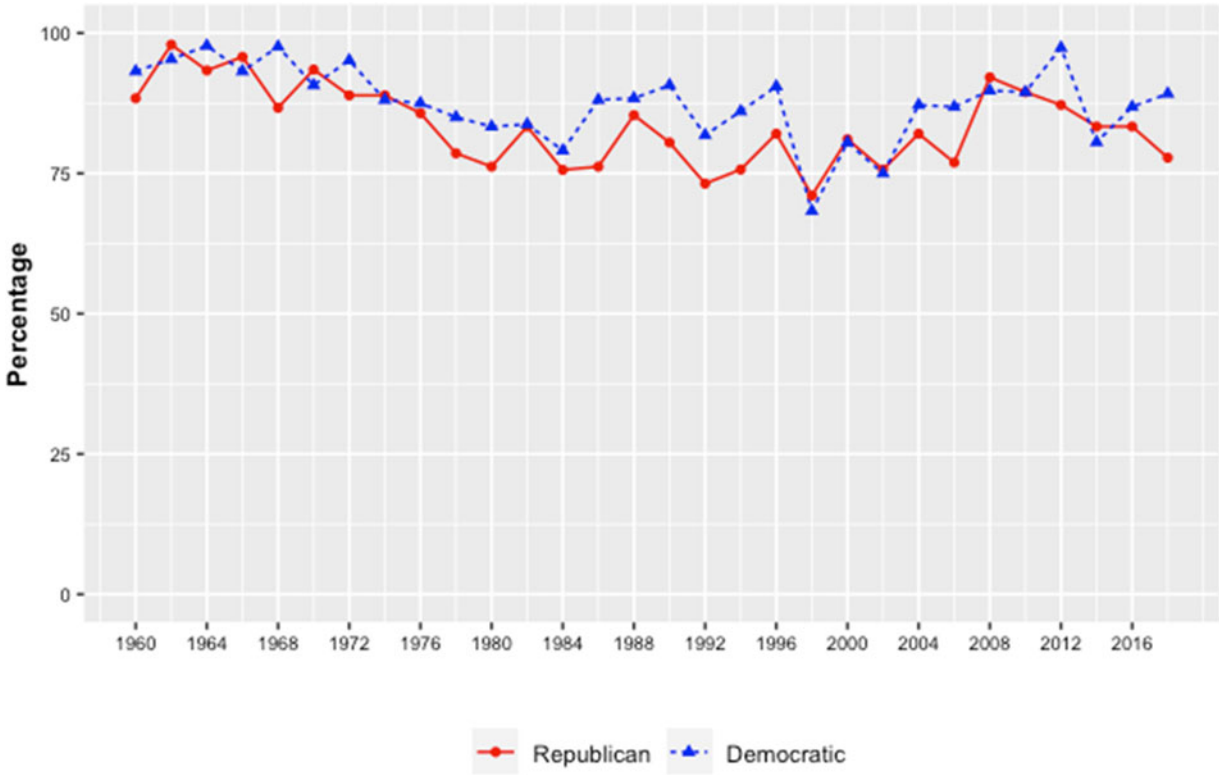

Figure A3. Share of Adopted Platforms Collected by Year and Party.

Table B1. Abortion Positions Coded

Variable Name	Description
Reform Abortion Laws	Oppose the liberalization of abortion bans (coded from 1960 through 1972 only).
Legalized Abortion: No Right	Oppose abortion legalization **without** reference to the rights of a fetus. (Liberal coding is to support abortion legalization **without** reference to abortion being a right.)
Legalized Abortion: Right	Oppose abortion legalization **with** reference to the rights of a fetus. (Liberal coding is to support abortion legalization **with** reference to abortion being a right.)
Human Life Amendment	Amend the U.S. Constitution to state that life begins at conception.
Fourteenth Amendment	Apply the protections of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution to a fetus.
Partial Birth Abortion	Ban "partial birth" abortions (i.e., dilation and extraction medical procedures).
Emergency Contraception	Oppose the study or use of emergency contraception (sometimes referred to as the "morning after pill" or RU-486).
Public Funding: Low-Income Women	Do not allow government money to be used to pay for abortions for low-income women.
Public Funding: Domestic Organizations	Prohibit government funding of organizations that advocate, support, and/or provide abortions.
Public Funding: International Organizations	Prohibit government funding of international organizations that provide abortions or abortion counseling.
Insurance Coverage of Abortion	Oppose efforts to include abortion coverage in private insurance.

(*Continued*)

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Table B1. (*Continued.*)

Variable Name	Description
Parental Consent	Require parental consent for a minor to obtain an abortion.
Other Parental Involvement	Require parental involvement for a minor to obtain an abortion. This involvement falls short of parental consent (e.g., parental notification).
Spousal Consent	Require spousal consent for a woman to obtain an abortion.
Other Spousal Involvement	Require spousal involvement for a woman to obtain an abortion. This involvement falls short of spousal consent (e.g., spousal notification).
Waiting Period	Require a woman considering an abortion to wait a certain period of time before obtaining one (usually anywhere from 24 hours to two weeks).
Abortion Counseling	Prohibit government entities or organizations that receive government funding from providing abortion counseling or referrals (often aimed at public schools).
Ultrasound Mandate	Require women to receive an ultrasound prior to an abortion.
Mandated Counseling	Women seeking an abortion must be given information about the biological development of the fetus, the availability of abortion alternatives, and the biological and emotional risks to the mother of an abortion (aimed at dissuading women from getting an abortion).
Protesting Clinics	Protect the ability of abortion opponents to protest at abortion clinics.
Clinic Regulations	Impose targeted restrictions against abortion providers (TRAP). These restrictions do not fit into other categories listed here and include things like requiring physicians who perform abortions to have hospital admitting privileges or mandated government inspection of clinics.
Conscience Clause: Abortion Specific	Doctors, pharmacists, etc., can refuse to participate in abortions or the dispensing of abortion-causing medications.
Conscience Clause: Generic	No person, business, or organization can be penalized for exercising its religious freedom by not providing services that violate its religious beliefs.
Court Jurisdiction	Remove abortion from the jurisdiction of federal courts.
Judicial Litmus Tests	Only appoint judges who oppose abortion.
Candidates Litmus Tests	Party should only fund and endorse candidates who oppose abortion.
Embryonic Stem Cell Research	Oppose embryonic stem cell research and/or the use of aborted fetuses for commercial or research purposes.
Fetal Homicide Laws	Support laws that allow criminal charges or civil claims against an individual who harms a fetus by assaulting or injuring a pregnant woman.
Military Bases	Oppose providing abortion services at U.S. military installations.
Late-Term Abortion	Ban abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy (or after the fetus can feel pain).
Sex Selection	Ban abortion for the purpose of sex selection.
Fetal Handicaps	Ban the use of abortion on fetuses with handicaps or genetic abnormalities.
Fetal Anesthetic	Require that anesthetic/pain relief be used on a fetus during abortion.
IVF Embryos	Support the preservation and adoption of embryos created via in vitro fertilization.
Medical Care	Require medical care to be given to any fetus that survives an abortion.
Culpability	Allow women civil and criminal redress against medical providers of abortions in instances of malpractice, malfeasance, or ethical violations.
Nullification	Ignore federal law and court rulings legalizing abortion.
Heartbeat	Ban abortion after a fetal heartbeat can be detected.
Doctor Homicide	Support laws allowing doctors who perform abortions to be charged with homicide.
Oppose All Restrictions	General statements opposing all restrictions on a woman's right to an abortion (only coded in the liberal direction).
Rape, Incest, & Health of the Mother Exemption	Include within abortion bans exemptions for instances of rape, incest, and the health of the mother (coded only for platforms that oppose legalized abortion).
Abortion Alternatives	Support and encourage alternatives to abortion (always coded in the conservative direction).
Sacred	Oppose legalized abortion while also making references to life as sacred or bestowed by God (only coded in the conservative direction).

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Table B2. LGBTQ Rights Positions Coded

Variable Name	Description
Civil Rights: Traditional	Support extending civil rights protections to LGB individuals. These protections include the class of items associated with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Black civil rights movement more broadly—equal treatment within public accommodations, public education, government programs, employment, criminal justice, and voting.
Sodomy	Sodomy should be legal or sexual activity between consenting adults should be decriminalized.
LGB Relationships & Families	Define family in ways that are inclusive of LGB relationships and families.
Civil Unions	Support civil unions or recognition of domestic partnerships.
Marriage Equality	Support allowing same-gender couples to marry.
Oppose Both the FMA & Marriage Equality	Oppose the Federal Marriage Amendment to the Constitution, while at the same time opposing marriage equality (coded only in the liberal direction).
Adoption	Allow adoption and foster parenting by LGB(T)Q individuals.
Curriculum	Calls to make education materials less biased toward LGB(T)Q individuals or to include materials about LGB(T)Q individuals within the curriculum.
Bullying: LGB(T)Q Specific	Call for the educational system to address bullying against LGB(T)Q individuals.
Bullying: Generic	Calls for the educational system to address bullying (no specific mention of LGBTQ individuals).
Hate Crimes: LGB(T)Q Specific	Support legislation and/or vigorous enforcement of existing hate crimes legislation. Anything coded here will specifically mention hate crimes against LGB(T)Q individuals.
Hate Crimes: Generic	Support legislation and/or vigorous enforcement of existing hate crimes legislation. Anything coded here will not mention hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals.
Conscience Clause: LGB(T)Q Specific	Oppose the use of freedom of religion or freedom of association as reason for denying services to or discriminating against LGB(T)Q individuals.
Conscience Clause: Generic	Oppose the use of freedom of religion or freedom of association as reason for denying services to or discriminating against any group. No mention of LGBTQ individuals.
Immigration	Make it easier for LGB(T)Q individuals and families to immigrate to or seek asylum in the United States.
Conversion Therapy	Ban medical or therapeutic treatments that aim to bring about sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression "conversions."
Military	Allow LGB(T)Q individuals to serve in the military and/or call for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."
Transgender Civil Rights: Traditional	Support extending civil rights protections to transgender individuals. These protections include the class of items associated with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Black civil rights movement more broadly—equal treatment within public accommodations, public education, government programs, employment, criminal justice, and voting.
Transgender Medical Care	Call for transgender individuals to have access to all desired/necessary medical treatments and often do so by calling for an end to insurance discrimination against transgender individuals.
Transgender Legal Documents	Government should make it easy for transgender individuals to change their gender on legal documents.
Restrooms	Transgender individuals should be able to use the facilities that are most consistent with their gender identity.
HIV/AIDS Research	Increase research into any aspect of HIV/AIDS, including the HIV virus, cures, transmission, treatment, etc.
Victim Services	Increase services for AIDS victims. This includes medical/treatment services, subsidized housing, hospice care, etc. It also includes classifying AIDS victims as disabled for the explicit purpose of allowing access to disability benefits.
Drug Approvals	Allow for the use of experimental AIDS treatments, expand clinical trials of HIV/AIDS treatments, and/or speed the approval of AIDS/HIV treatments.
Private Insurance Discrimination	Ban discrimination against individuals with HIV/AIDS by insurance companies and/or compel private insurers to cover individuals with HIV/AIDS.
Education & Prevention	Advocate adult-centric HIV/AIDS education, informational campaigns targeting certain demographics (e.g., IV drug users), and generic education efforts. Support for prevention programs and services belong in this category as well.
Legal Protections	Ban discrimination against HIV+ individuals in employment, housing, health insurance, education, military, immigration, etc.
Testing Optional & Confidential	HIV testing should be voluntary and/or confidential.
Criminalization	Oppose criminalization of HIV transmission.
Quarantine	Oppose the quarantining of those with HIV/AIDS.
Personal Responsibility	Emphasize the role of "personal responsibility" in halting the spread of AIDS. (Only coded in the conservative direction.)

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