When White Goes Right:
The Old South in the 2008 Presidential Election

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For all the contemporary statistical data documenting regional convergence
and the physical evidence afforded by skyscrapers, suburban sprawl, and
gridlocked expressways, I have yet to encounter anyone who has moved into
or out of the South and did not sense that, for better or worse, living here
was different from living in other parts of the country.

James C. Cobb, *Away Down South* 2005

To speak of southern politics is, by necessity, to assert regional distinctiveness. There was a time when this was indisputable; scholars, politicians, and residents took it as a given that the South was different from the rest of America. However, due to the tremendous changes in the American South, from demographics to economics, the region's distinctiveness has been called into question. Do these unique Southern characteristics endure and do they continue to produce distinctly southern politics?

"Continuity and change" is a phrase that has long been the mantra of Southern political scholars and one that remains surprisingly relevant today. The results of the 2008 elections made it clear that the Solid Republican South had dissipated. Virginia and North Carolina joined Florida in unexpectedly turning blue. On the other hand, the remainder of the South stayed consistently red. Sometimes purplish Louisiana and Arkansas were becoming even redder. Southern change? Yes it can. Southern continuity? You betcha.

Ronald Reagan, rather than natives Strom Thurmond, George Wallace, or Jesse Helms in the end, brought Southern-friendly social issues to the forefront of the Republican agenda and thereby transformed the partisan face of the south. Unlike the racially tinged politics of trailblazing southern Republicans Thurmond and Helms, Reagan was able to forge a Republican message that was both embraced in the South and acceptable in the non-South. And he was enormously successful. Since 1980, only the all-southern Democratic ticket of Bill Clinton and Al Gore was able to even marginally

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pierce the rock solid eleven states of the Old Confederacy. The Republican-ization of the South was established.

Between 1980 and 2004, this Dixiecrat to Republican narrative became the conventional wisdom. In the 2004 bestseller, *What's the Matter With Kansas?*, Thomas Frank expanded the same narrative beyond the south, arguing that working class whites in the Midwest behaved similarly. How-ever, Larry Bartels (2006) slapped back with a fairly convincing argument in his review of the book called "What's the Matter with *What's the Matter with Kansas*."

He points out that the white working class conversion from Democratic to Republican was almost exclusively a Southern phenomenon and implies that this social conservativism had clear racial underpinnings: "Low-income whites have become less Democratic in their partisan identifications, but at a slower rate than more affluent whites—and that trend is entirely confined to the South, where Democratic identification was artificially inflated by the one-party system of the Jim Crow era" (201). He concludes, "To a good approximation, then, the decline in Democratic identification among poor whites over the past half-century is entirely attributable to the demise of the Solid South as a bastion of Democratic allegiance" (215-16).

This dramatic political realignment of white southern voters in a period of otherwise national dealignment prompted many to comment on southern distinctiveness. While much fruitful work has been done, our approach was to return to the earliest scholarly assessments of southern distinctiveness and try and develop empirical measures in the hopes of attaining both a longer and more nuanced understanding of the region. We concede that many of these historical explanations, such as sub-tropical climate, distinctively Celtic demographic patterns and the like, are difficult to empirically mea-sure. In many respects, this study is an effort to engage the scholarly com-munity as to the significance of such historical explanations as well as a first effort at developing empirical measures.

And a final note: we recognize that it is white southerners who normally makeup the southern stereotypes, as it was white southerners who lost the Civil War. Indeed, southern culture especially as understood outside the south is a white culture. Therefore, any attempt to characterize a south-ern culture must grapple with whether it includes both white and black races. This initial exploration will use indicators that account for both the notion that Southern culture is a biracial one and the possibility that white cultural dominance is central to the southern narrative.

Purpose of Study

Southern voting history since Reconstruction had been remarkably hegemonic except during the period of transition from Democratic domi-

nance to Republican dominance. In 2008, a more permanent break-up of the Solid South was becoming perceptible. While George Bush's 2000 and 2004 elections may have secured the Solid Republican South, recent voting and demographic trends would certainly indicate that future Republican candidates would not have as easy a time.

The 2008 Presidential Election had Democrats fielding a distinctly non-southern ticket with an African-American as the standard-bearer. Logically, "southern-ness" or, more precisely, the politics of a southern culture should summarily reject the ticket. However, the Southern reaction was by no means uniform. Virginia, the home of the capital of the Confederacy and North Carolina, the state that made Jesse Helms a southern conservative icon, embraced the ticket. While these may appear to be an anomaly, a closer analysis, like the one here, might suggest otherwise. While these parts of the South are clearly changing, other parts of the south appear to remain as southern, as ever.

Other parts did so even more emphatically than they had when New Englander John Kerry headed the ticket in the previous election. Our goal is to explore what characteristics make certain parts of the south more southern than others. Today, electoral studies typically lump all of the similar voting states of the Old Confederacy into one theoretical construct. The south is normally a control variable, usually a dummy variable in the model. Given the voting behavior of the South, the practice is not without merit and certainly not without theoretical underpinnings. As Bartels suggests, the pre-eminence of the race issue, is the implicit reason. The south is a place where racial concerns in a culture defined by race, have consistently trumped economic concerns in a place marred by economic vulnerability. W.J. Cash's (1941) "Proto-Dorian Bond" had a profound political and distinctly electoral effect. Poor whites, preferring to identify themselves with white aristocrats rather than their black economic counterparts, came to define southern politics in the Dixiecrat era. Thus, the white elite was successful in convincing the newly politically empowered white lower classes to identity with the whiteness that they had in common rather than the economic hierarchy, thereby successfully subjugating blacks.

Even though race politics may be a core explanation for southern political cultural distinctiveness, it isn't the only one—unless a cottage industry of scholars of southern culture is not worth taking seriously. For most of America's history, southern distinctiveness was not subject to debate. A distinct southern identity was stressed even prior to the American Revolution and scholars and statesmen alike offered up wide ranging explanations—from climate and disease to Celtic demographics and the War. Race relations and/or the 'peculiar institution' has always been center stage, but other explanations were always prevalent. We think empirical assessments of

these other explanations worthwhile. It may not be. But components of southern distinctiveness that complement the notion of the centrality of race are certainly worth considering. In this paper, we begin to develop a widely construed index of southern political culture, derived from the work of scholars in the field. The main focus of the paper is to present a fairly thorough review of the southern culture scholarly literature, emphasizing potentially measurable concepts that explain southern uniqueness. We will then suggest a range of possible derivative measures. Finally, we will show how these measures are correlated with one logically related electoral outcome and offer a multivariate regression analysis of the variables of key importance.

Defining the American South

The awareness of the otherness of the American South has old roots, predating the American Revolution. In 1765, Dr. John Fothergill's London pamphlet wrote that "[t]he inhabitants of the northern Part live like our lower English Farmers. . . . Their Summers are hot, their Winters severe, and their Lives are passed with the like Labour and Toil . . . as the little Farmers in England." In contrast, the inhabitants of the South were likened to those in West Indies, complete with all of the ruinous traits of "Sexuality, Selfishness, and Despotism" (Greene 1991, 11). Yet it was not just outsiders who saw differences. Indeed, perhaps the most famous quotation describing the distinct regional cultures and norms in America comes from Thomas Jefferson, who wrote that "In the North, they are cool; sober; laborious; independent; jealous of their own liberties; and just to the liberties of others; interested; chicaning; superstitious and hypocritical in their religion. In the South they are fiery; voluptuary; indolent; unsteady; zealous for their own liberties, but trampling on those of others; generous; candid; without attachment or pretentions to any religion but that of the heart" (Jefferson, 1785 online collection).

There have been numerous explanations for the origins and endurance of southern distinctiveness. So much so that one scholar noted "historians of the American South have devoted so much effort and attention to the quest for a 'central theme' explaining the essence of southern distinctiveness that there is little need and inadequate space to review the discussion here" (Koeniger 1988, 25). The literature, of course, has not gotten any more manageable in the twenty plus years. What follows, however, is a brief discussion of the most common and/or persuasive arguments for the origins of southern cultural distinctiveness. This review of the literature is not exhaustive but rather designed to cull out possible variables demonstrating the continued existence of southern culture that can be empirically tested.

Plantation Economy: Rural Life and Poverty

The earliest explanation for southern distinctiveness focused on the subtropical climate of the region. This climatic explanation for southern distinctiveness shaped the discussion, influencing the most renowned early scholars of the South. Commentators ranging from U.B. Phillips to W.J. Cash, argued that climate was of central importance, not least of which because of its role in the development of the plantation economy, which in turn resulted in a virulent strain of white supremacy. V.O. Key (1984) followed a similar vein in his landmark work, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, pointing out that racial tensions were what distinguished southern politics—"the politics of the South revolves around the position of the Negro." More recent scholarship examines how climate resulted in specific structural forces that in turn shaped southern culture. For example, Peter A. Colcanis and David L. Carlton have done important work detailing the initial and long-range influences of the plantation economy as a determining factor of southern distinctiveness. "For all their feudal trappings, plantations must be understood not as landed estates affording steady, unearned income to rentier [sic] . . . but as large-scale business enterprises. . . . Indeed, as late as 1860 plantations were the most numerous large-scale business enterprises in the United States." They go on to argue, using path dependency theories and other structural social science methods, that southern commitment to large-scale agriculture resulted in "niggardly institutional development" (Carlton and Colcanis 2003, 6). The plantation legacy is one factor explaining the underdevelopment of southern institutions as well as perspectives of the utility and responsibility of government. These structural and attitudinal characteristics were reinforced by subsequent developments, such as the growth of the defense industry in the South.

Other scholars emphasize that climate and culture resulted in very different living standards in the South, leading to a region racked by poverty and disease. David Potter's work is well known, pointing out that the South developed a thorough going provincialism because of its poor economy. More generally, the South's legacy of poverty was ingrained into our national consciousness by Franklin Roosevelt's declaration, in the midst of our greatest economic calamity, that the "South is our nation's number one economic problem." The power of economics to shape society and culture has many supporters and we will, of course, rely on SES data in our empirical observations. Therefore, one clear set of indicators of southern culture should be rural life and lower living standards. We can define these areas by lower income, higher poverty and a rural setting.

Plantation Economy: An Aversion to "Yankee" Education

Less attention has been given to how climatic and economic factors in the plantation economy shaped public health. The South's reputation for ill health was well known in the antebellum period. Insurance companies charged considerably higher premiums for coverage of southerners and New Orleans was popularly known as "the graveyard of the Southwest"—mortality rates were almost three times higher in the Crescent City than Philadelphia or New York. Moreover, outbreaks provoked flight and fear of dramatic proportions. Yellow fever was especially startling, largely because it struck urban centers and "the erratic and unpredictable spread of the pestilence, its awful symptoms, the lack of effective therapy, and the high mortality rate during epidemics inspired considerable private terror and public panic" (Carrigan 1988, 58). In fact, one can make the case that the languid southern archetype was, in actuality, simply ill. This illness was caused only in part by the climate. The lack of modern medical treatments certainly exacerbated it.

One of the more intriguing essays, written by Young, points out that the South developed a distinctive medical tradition, resulting in a thriving patent medicine business. Sectional sentiments were so strident they shaped the region's medical profession, resulting in what came to be known as States-Rights Medicine or the belief that northern medical thinking, education, and treatments, were ineffective in the South. Southern resistance to scientific advancements is well known, especially as it concerns hot-button topics such as evolution. However, regional resistance to science was never isolated to abstractions, as the development of quasi-professional organizations bent on stressing regional remedies to disease during this period demonstrates. Quite literally, southern medical professionals rejected universal scientific explanations of diseases—ranging from malaria to yellow fever.

This scholarship suggests why there may be a contemporary Southern aversion to and reservations about the Northern bias in advanced education. Continuity of these antebellum suspicions about universities would thrive in parts of the South where higher education is less prevalent. In these counties, a more traditional Southern political culture should exist. Possible measurements of this variable include the number of higher education institutions in and around a county or the proportion of a county's population who have obtained a college education. The latter measurement will be included in this analysis.

Plantation Economy: Violence

Another argument concerning southern identity also attributed to climatic differences, centers on high levels of and proclivity for violence.

Edward L. Ayers' (1984) *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South* and Bertram Wyatt-Brown's (1982) *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* are the best-known examples. Wyatt-Brown argued that the North was shaped by a Puritan sensibility, a conscience guided by individual morality, responsibility, and guilt. The southern mind, in contrast, was informed by a more primal sensibility, where one's reputation or status in the eyes of others was what dictated behavior. This difference, although hard to measure, is what accounts for the violent South. Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen's *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* is a more recent example of scholarship focusing on violence, which utilizes social science techniques to make their case. The authors point out that "cultures of honor have been independently invented by many of the world's societies," and the South shared conditions—economic vulnerability and a weak state—that promote cultures of violence (Nisbett and Cohen 1996, 4). The scholars maintain that the demographic and economic conditions of the South, herding Celts and their descendents and decentralized government, formed a 'culture of honor.' They support their argument by chronicling differences in homicide rates, attitudes concerning the appropriateness of violence, regional differences in social and legal policies, as well as conducting an experiment to measure responses to insults, focusing on anger levels and aggression. The violent South is not simply subjective or a derogatory slight, the empirical evidence supports regional distinctiveness. Therefore an index of southern political culture would, ideally, include a indicator of white violent crime. Homicide or violent crime rates at the county level are appropriate measures of this variable. An issue arises when attempting to obtain reliable data, though. Especially the absence of race-specific violent crime data makes assessing this element of Southern culture a difficult task.

Emigration Patterns: Celtic Heritage, Protestantism, and Nativism

Nisbett and Cohen's work was, in large part, building off previous scholarship, such as Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald's (1989) arguments concerning Celtic heritage, that points to demographics. Immigration patterns reveal that English or Anglo-Saxon northerners moved into the Midwest while Celtic descendents made spread west and south into Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. McWhiney's *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South* is the most sustained argument for this thesis, but subsequent scholarship has been quite critical, pointing out substantial problems. The huge in-migration of Irish into northern cities is not addressed nor is the very real fact that many of the planter class were of English ancestry.

Other scholars point out that ancestral roots are not the chief difference but rather that the South experienced very different demographic patterns. Largely insulated from the mass migrations of eastern and southern Europeans, Catholic Irish fleeing the famine, as well as Asian and Hispanic until well after World War II, the South had a relatively stable population. Thus, the demographic distinctiveness in the South was less its particular inhabitants and more is enduring homogeneity or, put differently, the South remained a bifurcated society of African-Americans and White "Anglo-Saxon" Protestants. This demographic stasis became most noticeable precisely as America was becoming a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. Picking up on the rising anti-immigrant sentiment, several southern states loudly declared the region to be the last bastion of "Anglo-Saxon" Protestant heritage. Even though the South is currently experiencing tremendous demographic changes, its relatively recent homogeneity suggests that one way to measure southern identity is to compare native to non-native residents.

This part of the literature would suggest two obvious measure of southern culture—southern nativism and Protestant religiosity. McWhiney's "Cracker culture" certainly suggests the importance of Celtic ethnicity, especially relative to English heritage and we will explore that possibility. However southerners adopted the mantle of "Anglo-Saxon," as distinctly non-African heritage, we suspect that Celtic continuity is overwhelmed by "white" exceptionalism. To test this element of Southern culture, the proportion of native southerners, Celtic identifiers, and Southern Baptists at the county-level are included in our model.

The Civil War and the Ubiquitous Race Factor

The focus on the Civil War as the distinguishing southern characteristic is the most traditional explanation of Southern culture and has prominent supporters, including such luminaries as C. Vann Woodward. In the influential essay, "The Search for Southern Identity," he argues that what distinguishes the South from the North does not derive from below the Mason Dixon line but rather has its roots in the mythologies associated with 'American Exceptionalism.' The 'American Way of Life' is profoundly optimistic and untroubled; rooted in its abundance of resources and opportunities, America sees itself as a 'people of plenty,' in David Potter's phrase. Moreover, America has (or had) the unique experience of always being successful, and the "absence of these Old World ills in America, as well as the freedom from much of the injustice and oppression associated with them, encouraged a singular moral complacency in the American mind. The self-image implanted in Americans was one of innocence. . . . They were a chose people and their land a Utopia on the make" (Woodward 1970, 20).

Southern history, in contrast, has to confront failure, militarily, economically, and, in many ways, morally. Southern experience is shaped by tragedy, embarrassment, and humiliation—profoundly anti-American sentiments— and the Civil War is the most startling example.

Others argue that the Civil War had a more direct influence in that the South factionalized American politics by introducing and adhering to a virulent and irrational form of sectionalism. But, as Peter Onuf's work demonstrates, sectional identity struggles can be traced to the formation of the country. His analysis demonstrates that sectionalism was "integral to the original conception and construction of the federal system" and points out that the first strident sectionalists were from New England (Ayers et al. 1996, 12). This is not to dismiss the powerful influence of the Civil War but to understand how the South is often portrayed as the culprit despite more complicated historical realities. Put differently, the idealized South misleads more than just southerners. Indeed, James Cobb suggests that it is precisely the legacy of the Civil War that explains why so "many historians have [mistakenly] blamed white southerners for introducing the virus of sectionalism into the American body politic and praised their northern adversaries for their selfless devotion to the Union" (Cobb 2005, 17). Winners write history, as the saying goes, and in the struggle to define events such as the Civil War and modern civil rights, the South has not been portrayed favorably.

A more complicated question of the building blocks of a southern culture is the degree to which the co-existence of whites and blacks heightens or depresses it. In counties with larger white majorities, southern culture may wane, since so much of it is based on the conflicts between the races, where whites strive to keep their place in the social hierarchy. In counties where both races remain in fairly constant contact, we may see continuity in old south ways. While this is a point of some debate (see Giles and Hurtz 1994 and Voss 1996), our general hypothesis is that the greater proportion of a racial minority, especially African-Americans, the more southern the culture.

The Changing South

This denigration of the South is not a new phenomenon. Several recent scholars note that many of the early descriptions of southern identity, including Fothergill and other Europeans, portrayed southerners as having more in common with the lazy Caribbean than the sturdy and reliable Yankee. This presentation of the South as the "American tropics" was neither accidental nor benign, argues scholar Jennifer Rae Greeson (1999). Working from a post-colonial tradition, she points out that "the new vocabulary of nationhood engineered by early national writers involved not simply

replacing the colonial tropes previously used to figure the New World colonies in general, but also displacing those tropes onto the south of the newly forming U.S." (Greeson 1999, 209).

Examinations of the literary record, from fictional works such as Crevoecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* and Tyler's *The Algerian Captive* to Martin Bruckner's innovative work on school textbooks used during the period, reveal that the formation of early American identity was achieved by denigrating the South. Given the North's preeminence in letters and publishing, it is hardly surprising which cultural model or, in Benedict Anderson's phrase, which "imagined community," was promoted. This work is important, at least historically, in that it demonstrates that the initial definitions or descriptions of the South were not the work of native southerners. Not all depictions of southern culture are negative, of course, but are important to understand what elements of distinctiveness remain.

So what do we mean when we say 'the South?' We begin from the assumption that in order to have endured the tremendous changes throughout its turbulent history it must be something that transcends the individual and is bigger or more inclusive than geography or demographics. Southern identity is rooted in a specific culture but rather than merely ascribing distinctiveness to an amorphous concept, we think empirical measures can test this hypothesis. From John Shelton Reed's work to Larry Griffin and Ashley Thompson more recent efforts, previous efforts to empirically identify southern culture rely on survey data, asking individuals to respond to specific questions about violence, heritage, race, public policy, and most notably, whether they are willing to self identify themselves to this or that region. This is important research but it has certain unavoidable limitations because culture is not an individual level construct. Culture is or can be influenced by individual actors, but culture is better measured by aggregate level data. In addition county level analysis affords almost perfectly reliable measurements of a variety of characteristics found only in official sources, like census data and actual voting returns.

Hypotheses

We hypothesize that southern political culture plays a crucial role in the story of southern realignment. More specifically, we hypothesize that white voters in counties that strongly exhibit characteristics associated with traditional southern culture are less likely to vote for Barack Obama than white voters in counties that don't exhibit these characteristics. The 2008 presidential election presents an ideal opportunity to study the effects of white southern culture on vote because Barack Obama, more than any candidate in the history of the United States, represents the anti-thesis of most traditional

southern culture values—a non-Southerner, a liberal progressive and not a member of the dominant race. In addition, his almost uniform support from African-Americans allows us to measure the white vote in ways not available before this election.

Deriving Measurements of Southern Culture

Our goal, then, is not to predict voting results, but to create a measure of southern culture, analyzing where it exists to a greater or lesser extent. Our analysis below will explore how this variation relates to voting behavior in the 2008 Presidential Election, but the emphasis, again is not only explaining this dependent variable, but rather on creating the independent variable. The voting measure is a way to help examine whether the southern index has some utility.

We use county level data in our analysis for reasons of both validity and reliability. Since culture is more than an individual level characteristic, aggregate measures, such as county level data, are more valid. County level data has some limitations, but it has three important characteristics—it is aggregate; reasonably small; and can be reliably measured. Moreover, given the apparent evidence of a "Bradley effect" among white voters in these states, actual voter returns are more reliable than survey data.

As noted above, southern political culture can be conceived as either one that crosses racial lines or as solely the dominant white culture. Since there are reasonable arguments for both and often the literature is unclear, we leave that question open and explore both empirically. Where practicable we will present both the characteristics of the entire county and of only the white population.

Three Deep South states—Louisiana, Alabama and South Carolina—were selected and analyzed. These states were selected mainly because of their readily available racial data. These three states should allow for some ability to generalize across the region.

First, we examine an array of measures associated with the characteristics described above and present some descriptive statistics to illustrate the variation in them across the counties in the three states. We then test the relationship between them and a 2008 Presidential election measure to see which measures appear to have some political relevance in the manner expected.

We expect poorer and less well educated counties to have stronger southern cultures. We use county demographic measures from the 2000 United States Census and are measured both as a characteristic of the entire population and of only the white population. Poverty is the percentage of

households in the county under the poverty line. Median income is the average household median income.

College education is not a characteristic of Southern culture. The college measure is the proportion of the population holding a baccalaureate degree or higher degree, again from the 2000 Census.

Rural counties should exhibit stronger southern cultures than urban ones. The 2000 United States Census designates rural areas as those outside urban areas or clusters.

Protestant religiosity is another measure of southern culture. It's most prominent manifestation in the twentieth century is Southern Baptist Christianity. The data is taken from the Association of Religion Data Archives and is measured as the number of Southern Baptist adherents as of the year 2000. More religious counties should exhibit more southern characteristics.

We expect counties with a larger proportion of Native Southerners to have stronger southern cultures. We combine those born in the state with those born in the census designated South which includes the eleven states of the Old Confederacy plus Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and the District of Columbia. This is an imperfect measure because of the slightly broader definition of the South, but a reasonably good one nonetheless. It is exactly this type of broad based measure, which used by many, that we are hoping to improve upon with this study.

The Southern culture literature suggests that a Celtic population is a fundamental part of the Southern tradition. Although Celtic consciousness is a difficult concept to measure, we attempt it with two measures. First, is a simple measure of the proportion of the total population that identifies a Celtic heritage (Irish, Scotch, Scotch-Irish, or Welsh). Second is a variable that measures Celtic heritage relative to English heritage.

Finally, we use the 2000 census measure of African-American proportion of the population. We expect that the higher the proportion, the greater the southern culture. Unfortunately, we are not yet convinced any of the available measures of white violence are complete enough to use in our study. We introduced this concept because it is a significant part of the southern culture literature, but it is the one that we have to omit because of inadequate measures.

One Measure of Electoral Impact

We constructed a measure of the non-black county level vote for Obama because the hypothesis is derived from strictly racial rather than ethnic divisions in the traditional southern culture. Specifically the electoral variable is percent vote for Democratic Presidential candidate Obama in 2008, beyond what is predicted by black voter registration immediately after

the election. This is a measure of the vote for President Obama that allows us to ascertain support in the county beyond his rock solid black constituency.

Findings

The mean and standard deviations for each of the variables for each of the three states are presented in Tables 1 and 2. South Carolina counties are more prosperous and more highly educated both in total populations and in white only populations. Alabama and Louisiana are similar on most of these measures. Louisiana and Alabama contain larger proportions of native southerners in both populations (around 93% and 91% respectively), while South Carolina has fewer (roughly 85%). South Carolina and Alabama have similar and somewhat higher Celtic populations. Louisiana stands out as the least rural of the three states.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics
for Southern Culture Components for Total Population

	Alabama		Louisiana		South Carolina	
	Mean (StdDev)	Minimum Maximum	Mean (StdDev)	Minimum Maximum	Mean (StdDev)	Minimum Maximum
Median Income	30152 (6380)	16646 55440	30091 (6370)	19799 47883	33597 (5757)	20898 46992
Poverty	.19 (.072)	.063 .399	.22 (.063)	.097 .405	.17 (.054)	.090 .345
College	.13 (.063)	.071 .368	.13 (.056)	.074 .318	.16 (.062)	.083 .332
Native South	.91 (.044)	.768 .965	.93 (.043)	.717 .984	.86 (.078)	.548 .946
Celtic	.13 (.043)	.025 .209	.10 (.043)	.017 .195	.12 (.048)	.041 .221
Rural	.70 (.258)	.107 1.000	.52 (.286)	.007 1.000	.57 (.221)	.128 1.000
Percent Black*	.28 (.221)	.003 .842	.31 (.146)	.035 .671	.37 (.163)	.067 .706
Southern Baptist*	.33 (.114)	.064 .582	.25 (.175)	.015 .754	.23 (.105)	.087 .494

Alabama N=67   Louisiana N=64   South Carolina N=46
*Total Only

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics
for Southern Culture Components for White Population**

	Alabama		Louisiana		South Carolina	
	Mean (StdDev)	Minimum Maximum	Mean (StdDev)	Minimum Maximum	Mean (StdDev)	Minimum Maximum
Medium Income	17165 (4398)	11582 33946	17914 (4429)	9569 27534	21082 (4522)	14807 35866
Poverty	0.12 (0.03)	0.05 0.20	0.13 (0.03)	0.06 0.21	0.09 (0.02)	0.05 0.15
College	0.16 (0.07)	0.07 0.38	0.16 (0.07)	0.08 0.47	0.19 (0.07)	0.10 0.43
Native South	0.91 (0.04)	0.77 0.97	0.93 (0.05)	0.75 0.98	0.85 (0.095)	0.48 0.96
Celtic/ English	0.71 (0.24)	0.29 1.47	0.60 (0.35)	0.23 1.87	0.52 (0.17)	0.25 0.93
Rural	0.50 (0.23)	0.07 0.94	0.38 (0.21)	0.01 0.92	0.34 (0.14)	0.07 0.66

Alabama N=67   Louisiana N=64   South Carolina N=46

Our correlation findings are presented in Tables 3 and 4. The tables show the Obama vote measure in relation to white-only characteristics of the county and characteristics of the entire population of the county. We expect that counties that exhibit stronger southern culture characteristics would have lower rates of voting for Barack Obama, when black registration is taken into account. Therefore, we expect a negative relationship to our Obama measure from counties with higher native south populations, higher Southern Baptist populations, counties that are more rural, counties with stronger Celtic influence, and those with lower socio-economic status.

Poorer counties generally and poorer white counties in particular are less likely to show support in our Obama vote measure. In addition, college education is significant and in the expected direction for both the total population and the white population in South Carolina. In Louisiana, college education is in the expected direction in both populations and mixed in Alabama. These findings suggest that lower rates of college education, lower income and higher poverty are all characteristics that might well belong in a Southern culture index, particularly as they are exhibited in the white population.

Table 3. Pearson Correlations Components with Obama Difference, Total Population

	Alabama	Louisiana	South Carolina
	Pearson Significance	Pearson Significance	Pearson Significance
Median Income	0.53 <0.0001	0.58 <0.0001	0.77 <0.0001
Poverty	-0.71 <0.0001	-0.64 <0.0001	-0.78 <0.0001
College	0.22 0.07	0.19 0.13	0.62 <0.0001
Native South	-0.44 0.0002	-0.27 0.03	-0.63 <0.0001
Celtic	0.05 0.67	-0.01 0.93	0.87 <0.0001
Rural	0.41 0.0006	-0.37 0.003	-0.56 <0.0001
Percent Black*	-0.79 <0.0001	-0.50 <0.0001	-0.84 <0.0001
Southern Baptist*	0.28 0.02	-0.62 <0.0001	0.24 0.11

Alabama N=67   Louisiana N=64   South Carolina N=46
*Total only

The correlations with native south populations are strong and consistent. In all three states, and in both total and white populations, the higher the proportion of native southerners, the lower the proportion of vote for Obama beyond what is expected from black voter registration. Clearly this demonstrates counties with more apparent Southern consciousness (by having more Southerners) are more averse to political change. The Southern Baptist variable results are mixed. Alabama's results show that the more Southern Baptists, the higher the vote for Obama, whereas Louisiana shows the opposite and is strongly significant.

Rural counties are negatively associated with our Obama vote measure. In all three states, this relationship is significant and in the expected direction when it characterizes the entire population. The white rural population is not a significantly related indicator. Racially diverse rural populations are

Table 4. Pearson Correlations Components with Obama Difference, White Population

	Alabama	Louisiana	South Carolina
	Pearson Significance	Pearson Significance	Pearson Significance
Median Income	-0.02 0.90	0.37 0.003	0.60 <0.0001
Poverty	0.20 0.12	-0.27 0.03	-0.43 0.003
College	-0.02 0.87	0.16 0.22	0.43 0.003
Native South	-0.30 0.01	-0.24 0.05	-0.57 <0.0001
Celtic/English	0.25 0.04	-0.27 0.03	0.19 0.21
Rural	0.34 0.005	-0.23 0.06	-0.003 0.98

Alabama N=67   Louisiana N=64   South Carolina N=46

a signature characteristic of the South. And, indeed, it is the rural character of the whole county, not just of the white population, that appears to be most related to southern cultural continuity.

The strongest negative correlate with our Obama vote measure is percent of the population that is African-American. There are some notable individual county exceptions where a high percentage of African-American population is associated with change. Those exceptions are more urban counties. For example, Louisiana, the most urban state, shows the weakest relationship underlines the point that the racial percentage relationship is rural centered. A quick glance at the counties themselves reveals that Orleans Parish, which is entirely composed of the city of New Orleans, scores highest on both the Obama measure and almost highest on the percentage of African-Americans. This contrary finding, which lowers the Pearson Correlation statistic, is undoubtedly attributable to the fact that it is an urban center.

Since only a handful of the counties in the three states are urban, it is understandable. This rural racial dynamic, again, is a hallmark southern characteristic. This study powerfully supports that conclusion. Of all of the

findings, this one suggests that the southern culture index should include some interactive measures.

Finally, in Louisiana and South Carolina there appears to be some relationship between the Celtic population and Southern continuity. In Alabama, and more demonstrably so, higher Celtic presence is related to political change, not continuity.

Multivariate Analysis: Race Trumps Everything

We performed a multivariate analysis and the results are presented in Table 5. As most of the literature in Southern politics would predict, in every state race trumps everything: the higher proportion of African-Americans in a county, the lower the proportion of white voters voting for Barack Obama. In Alabama, Louisiana, and South Carolina the relationship is significant and strong.

Table 5. OLS Regressions Predicting the Estimated White Vote for Obama, Unstandardized Parameter Estimates

	Alabama	Louisiana	South Carolina	*White Respondents*
Intercept	0.197 (.144)	0.318 (.097)**	0.253 (.115)*	-1.77 (.90)* -0.019 (.89)
White Median Income	-0.0000014 (.0000015)	-0.00000025 (.00000095)	0.0000015 (.0000023)	-0.08 (.09)
White College Educated	0.15 (.104)	0.114 (.057)*	0.055 (.099)	-0.01 (.007)
White Native South	0.19 (.153)	-0.187 (.091)*	-0.108 (.087)	—
Rural	-0.089 (.024)**	0.019 (.013)	-0.017 (.027)	0.32 (.24)
Black	-0.328 (.028)**	-0.169 (.02)**	-0.247 (.04)**	0.06 (.06)
Southern Baptist	-0.245 (.051)**	-0.164 (.021)**	0.021 (.061)	
N	67	64	46	
R^2	0.779	0.749	0.808	

**p < .01, *p < .05, ^p < .10 (two-tailed test). Standard error in parentheses.

Even after racial make-up is taken into account, some characteristics remain significant in two of the states. In Alabama, the results indicate that the more rural the county, the lower the white vote for Obama. Also, the more Southern Baptists in an Alabama county, the lower the white vote for Obama. In Louisiana, counties with more white college educated people have a higher white vote for Obama. Louisiana counties with more white native southerners or more Southern Baptists tend to have a lower white vote for Obama. The R^2 in each model indicates that quite a bit of the variance in white vote for Obama can be explained by our southern culture model.

Since racial proportion so thoroughly dominates our model, we ran a model without it in order to discover if the remaining variables were significant when controlling for each other (table not shown). Indeed some are in two of the states. In Alabama, more rural counties and counties with higher proportion of native southerners, have higher white Obama vote percentages. In South Carolina, where black percentage of a county had the most overwhelming effect, the more rural counties in this model were significant. The only significant relationship than ran counter to the hypothesized direction was education in Alabama counties, where lower college education levels were significantly related to higher white vote for Obama.

The bivariate analysis generally supported the hypothesis the lower SES, more rural counties and counties with a higher percentage of African-Americans were those least likely to have white support for Barack Obama. The multivariate analysis, however, pointed more clearly to the racial threat effect, where higher proportions of African-Americans lead to lower white support for the African American candidate. To a somewhat lesser extent, the multivariate analysis also supported the notion of a rural racial dynamic in old South counties.

Conclusions

In this analysis we have attempted an initial definition of a southern culture. Utilizing characteristics of "southern-ness" derived from the southern culture scholarship, we have shown that certain factors can define southern tendencies. Where past research has attempted to define the south loosely, we hope to fill the gaps where southern uniqueness truly exists and doesn't. The strongest and clearest relationships were found in South Carolina, where there is more variation in southern-ness across counties. As we move away from the Deep South states, we may find that these measures have even more explanatory utility.

Poverty, income, and higher education should be included in a southern culture index. The proportion of native southerners in a county should certainly be part of the same index. This study also suggests the more rural the

county, the more southern, and that characteristic deserves consideration in any index of southern political culture. The results were less clear on Celtic heritage. The scholarship is mixed on its importance and we found no compelling reason to include it. While we can't comfortably suggest an appropriate measure of white violence, we remain convinced that one should be found. Finally, race should be a fundamental part of the analysis, either by presenting race specific and total populations or including race variables as part of the broader explanation.

Therefore, an initial index of southern political culture would contain theoretically derived, convincingly reliable measures of concepts that have show at least some value in explaining political phenomena. Southern political culture is characterized by lower income and higher poverty rates, lower rates of attaining a college degree, are more rural, more racially bifurcated and certainly have higher proportions of native southerners.

How is such an index utilized? First, in a purely utilitarian sense, candidates for office, no matter where they lie on the political spectrum, will have a better sense of how to frame their messages in various parts of the south. Similarly, advocates of particular issues might want to target local ordinances and referenda first in areas (either old south or new) where they can find a more receptive audience.

Perhaps more significantly, the areas of "continuity" are those most often left behind both economically and politically. Once it is clearly recognized which locales are likely to exhibit a more traditional social structure, often even reflecting pre civil rights era societal norms, adaptive strategies can be formulated. These areas would require a different approach to community building and economic development.

This can be accomplished either by addressing the old structures head on and trying to change them or by working within them. Either way, the reality of the continuity of the culture of Old South must not be ignored.

Even though there is a tendency to generalize about the South, a uniform political culture no longer permeates the region. This is not new; to paraphrase V.O. Key's observation that while northerners see the South as one giant Mississippi, southerners with their eye for distinction, realize that Mississippi is in a class of its own (Key 1984, 229). We contend that there are empirical measures of a stubborn southern political culture, even if it is often within driving distance of a more or less homogenized America.

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