Democratic Backsliding and the Balance Wheel Hypothesis: Partisanship and State Funding for Higher Education in the United States

Barrett J. Taylor[1] · Kelsey Kunkle[1] · Kimberly Watts[1]

Abstract

The balance wheel hypothesis—a classic tenet of USA state-level policy analysis that suggests state funding for higher education varies in response to macroeconomic cycles—has held up to scrutiny over time. However, new social conditions within the Republican Party, namely growing hostility toward independent institutions, call for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between state budgets and higher education. Drawing on recent research in political science and political economy, we conceptualize declining state appropriations to higher education in Republican-dominated U.S. states as an instance of democratic backsliding. Using a panel of state-level data we found that political partisanship conditioned state appropriations to higher education during and after the Great Recession. Our finding that the balance wheel operated differently in states with and without unified Republican control not only suggests partisan hostility toward higher education is a potentially worrisome indicator of democratic backsliding, but also the importance of updating models to consider the extent to which they still hold as contexts change over time.

Keywords State appropriations · Political partisanship · Balance wheel hypothesis · United States · Institutional independence

✉ Kelsey Kunkle
  kelseykunkle1128@gmail.com

  Barrett J. Taylor
  barrett.taylor@unt.edu

  Kimberly Watts
  kimberlyclark2@my.unt.edu

[1] Department of Counseling and Higher Education, University of North Texas, 1155 Union Circle, No. 310829, Denton, TX 76203-5017, USA

🄰 Springer

Introduction

Democratic backsliding refers to the process by which a country retreats from the norms, practices, and institutional arrangements that support participatory governance (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021). In contemporary democracies, backsliding primarily occurs via democratic means. A party that is suspicious of, or even hostile to, democratic arrangements wins power and undermines democracy via official government channels (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018).

According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance ([IDEA] 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with more countries moving away from democratic systems than toward them. The United States, one of the world's oldest and largest democracies, witnessed a particularly large decline in the transparency and integrity of its elections. Freedom House concurred, stating in its annual report *Freedom in the World,* "the United States will need to work vigorously to strengthen its institutional safeguards, restore its civic norms, and uphold the promise of its core principles for all segments of society if it is to protect its venerable democracy and regain global credibility" (Repucci and Slipowitz, 2021, p. 3).

Democratic backsliding in the United States has been particularly concerning because both the country's governance and its institutions have fallen far short of democratic ideals. The curricula, governance arrangements, and financing of US higher education were established and developed in a society that openly embraced white supremacy and enslavement (Wilder, 2013). While contemporary campus officials have eagerly touted their commitments to racial equity—often with little support or guidance from state governments (Jones, 2014)—reality often falls far short of this rhetoric (Thomas, 2020). Democratic backsliding that moves away from even these partial commitments raises troubling questions about the future of US higher education and other central institutions of democracy.

In the United States, the Republican Party, often known as the "Grand Old Party" or "GOP," has been the primary agent of democratic backsliding (Abramowitz and McCoy, 2019). Growing numbers of Republican elites and voters have proven hostile to independent institutions such as the media, the judiciary, and education (Hacker and Pierson, 2020). In some cases, this hostility has escalated to the point of considering violence (Bartels, 2020). To be clear, hostility to institutions is far from a universally held position among Republican-identified individuals. However, the Republican coalition is highly united both by its demographics (Abramowitz, 2018; Grossman and Hopkins, 2016) and by hostility toward its political opponents (Abramowitz and Webster, 2018; Robin, 2018). As a result, Republican partisans often prioritize party unity over their own personal views (Lupton et al. 2017). These conditions may make the GOP as an organization hostile to independent institutions even if some of its members do not hold such positions. In this paper, we consider the consequences of democratic backsliding in the GOP for a key US social institution—higher education.

Public colleges and universities in the United States are funded primarily by state, not federal, governments. A classic tenet of state-level policy analysis known as "the balance wheel hypothesis" holds that state funding for higher education varies in

response to macroeconomic cycles: funding for higher education drops precipitously in bad times and recovers somewhat in boom times (Delaney and Doyle, 2007, 2011; Doyle and Delaney, 2009; Hovey, 1999). We posit that Republican hostility toward independent institutions might trouble the well-documented phenomenon of the balance wheel. Such hostility could lead to deep funding cuts in Republican-controlled states regardless of prevailing macroeconomic conditions. Because institutions require material resources to retain some independence from partisan politics (Oliver, 1992), observing such patterned hostility could be a worrisome indicator of democratic backsliding and an effort to deinstitutionalize public higher education (Taylor, 2022).

To provide empirical support for this argument, we analyze a panel of state-level data from 2008 to 2019. We use partisanship, the balance wheel hypothesis, and a variety of control characteristics to predict state funding for higher education. Results indicate that Republican-controlled state governments funded higher education at demonstrably different levels than did all other state governments. We conclude by considering other dimensions of higher education policy in the United States that might be shaped by democratic backsliding.

State Funding, the Balance Wheel, and Partisanship

For more than two decades, the balance wheel hypothesis has been a cornerstone of state higher education policy analysis in the United States. The concept is as intuitive as it has proven empirically robust. Practically all state governments have balanced budget requirements. States have many other demands on their coffers, including health care, K-12 education, corrections, and other entitlement programs (Dar and Lee, 2014; Klein, 2015; Tandberg, 2010). Under some conditions, such as Medicaid expansion attached to passage of the Affordable Care Act, additional state obligations may be paired with additional revenues—in this example, federal funds—that result in no meaningful change in spending on higher education (Singer et al. 2021). However, the majority of state programs cannot raise funds to offset declines in state support. Most state programs are therefore more dependent upon government than is higher education, which can—and does—replace vanishing state support with tuition income (Webber, 2017). For decades, these dynamics made spending on higher education the "balance wheel" of state budgets. State spending on higher education tended to rise when flush times provided ample tax receipts and fell when times were hard (Doyle and Delaney, 2009; Hovey, 1999).

The balance wheel hypothesis held up to robust empirical scrutiny over time (Delaney and Doyle, 2007, 2011). Even analyses that did not explicitly foreground the balance wheel account often found that variables corresponding to its hypotheses—such as statewide unemployment rate—proved meaningful predictors of state support for higher education (e.g., Weerts and Ronca, 2006, 2012). However, the results of one study with broader measures and a longer time span did not identify evidence of this pattern (Delaney and Doyle, 2018), suggesting that the balance wheel account may not hold indefinitely.

The declining state funding predicted by the balance wheel account began from a moderately high baseline. Throughout its expansion in the mid-twentieth century, US higher education was largely cast as a public good and supported by taxpayers (Goldin and Katz, 2008). Colleges and universities benefitted from state support that kept tuition prices relatively low (Kunkle et al. 2020). This expansion of funding for public higher education translated into growing enrollments, making the United States home to the world's first mass system of higher education (Cantwell, 2018; Goldin and Katz, 2008). Over time, state appropriations decreased sharply from these levels. Relative to personal income, overall state support of public colleges and universities fell by 30% between the late 1970s and the early 2000s (Archibald and Feldman, 2006).

While state funding for higher education has generally been in decline for decades, this downward trend was not linear. Although patterns were not always evident (Delaney and Doyle, 2011), state higher education funding often seemed to rise and fall in response to macroeconomic cycles (Doyle and Delaney, 2009). The ebb and flow continued into the twenty-first century, with each post-recession period lengthening (Doyle and Delaney, 2011). Appropriations decreased after the recession in the early 2000s and began to recover by the end of that decade before plummeting further after the Great Recession of 2008–2009 (Douglass, 2010; Taylor and Cantwell, 2016). In the years immediately following the Great Recession state funding for higher education fell by more than 20% (State Higher Education Executive Officers Association [SHEEO], 2019). Declines in the 2010s appeared to be driven by economic factors and political factors, not by federal policies such as healthcare expansion (Singer et al. 2021). These are the classic trajectories of the balance wheel account, in which state spending on higher education seemed to be increased and cut disproportionately relative to other state services.

In addition to variation linked to macroeconomic cycles, there has also been considerable between-state variation in higher education spending. Republican-dominated states have tended to provide lower levels of state support than did Democratic or divided governments (McLendon et al. 2014). Further, in Republican states lower levels of spending often appeared to target certain communities or institutional missions. Relative to their Democratic counterparts, states with Republican governors tended to provide less generous funding to colleges and universities that drew a large share of their enrollments from racially minoritized communities (Hill and Jones, 2017; Ortega, 2020), a pattern that also held at the state level (Taylor et al. 2020). Republicans also tended to cut funding for research universities relative to other institutional types (Weerts and Ronca, 2006).

Taken together, these sources indicated three important patterns in state-level funding for higher education in the United States. First, state support has declined over time in almost all contexts. Second, these declines have not been linear, but instead have tended to follow macroeconomic cycles. These two patterns are broadly but not perfectly consistent with the balance wheel hypothesis. Third, the low levels of state funding observed in Republican-controlled states—especially for particular universities and/or student groups—suggests

that partisan political control may disrupt these general tendencies. Republicans may prefer lower levels of higher education funding for reasons related to the party's hostility to independent institutions such as higher education. We build upon this suggestion by conceptualizing ways in which state funding for higher education might be linked to partisan control of state government.

Democratic Backsliding and State Support for Higher Education

Although higher education had achieved mass enrollment and become a central institution of US society by the late twentieth century (Cantwell, 2018; Loss, 2012), the country's political conditions changed dramatically within a few decades. Much of this change occurred within the Republican Party. Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act in the 1960s, the Republican Party has increasingly been the electoral home for voters who were angered by the country's halting steps toward racial equity (Lowndes, 2008). Over time, the Republican Party became demographically whiter than the country as a whole and politically more likely to tout policies that explicitly advantaged white people (Jardina, 2019). Partisan sorting along the lines of race and ethnicity therefore made the GOP into a fairly homogenous coalition (Abramowitz, 2018; Grossman and Hopkins, 2016). This homogeneity meant that partisan identification often overlapped with other identities such as race and gender, making partisanship a defining characteristic of how many Republican-leaning voters understood themselves (Abramowitz and McCoy, 2019; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016; Cohen, 2019; Cramer, 2016; Mason, 2018).

One result of this alignment of partisan identity with other social identities has been the intensification of partisan hostilities. Contemporary political differences in the United States often have little to do with differing ideas for governing. Instead, partisan identification has tended to yield an "us" versus "them" division (Mason, 2018). It is difficult to forge consensus and compromise when one faction denies the legitimacy of the other group (Olson, 2004, 2008). Political anger, especially among white voters, became widespread (Anderson, 2016; Phoenix, 2019). As these tendencies intensified in the 1990s, US politics became increasingly bare-knuckled, with political actors on the Right seeking to secure power by any means necessary (Zelizer, 2020). The "Tea Party Revolt" and 2010 mid-term election through which the Republican Party gained control of many state governments accelerated these changes (Mettler, 2011; Skocpol and Williamson, 2012; Williamson et al. 2011). The result has been a hyper-partisan context in which Republican coalitions tended to focus on attacking their opponents rather than constructing new governing arrangements (Abramowitz and Webster, 2018; Robin, 2018).

Many, though by no means all, of these opponents were independent social institutions such as the media, the judiciary, or higher education (Abramowitz, 2018; Abramowitz and McCoy, 2019; Cramer, 2016; Mason, 2018; Sides et al. 2018; Tope et al. 2015). Undermining independent institutions in order to clear the way for consolidated political authority is characteristic of democratic backsliding (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021). Partisan anger at institutions also serves the electoral goal of keeping voters engaged, thereby increasing the chances of getting a coalition into power

in the first place (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Indeed, anger and opposition are powerful motives for many Right-leaning voters (Robin, 2018). Political scientists often refer to these attitudes as "negative partisanship" (Abramowitz and McCoy, 2019; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016, 2018) or "affective polarization" (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Iyengar et al. 2019), two terms roughly indicating that party loyalty is tied to disdain for political opponents, including independent institutions.

Among the many independent institutions against which Right-leaning voters could marshal their rage, higher education might be a particularly appealing target. As the GOP increasingly became the party of backlash (Abramowitz, 2018; Lowndes, 2008), its candidates for office increasingly expressed hostility toward "undeserving" social groups and the social programs and institutions perceived to be sympathetic to those groups (Abramowitz and McCoy, 2019; Cohen, 2019). In doing so, Right-leaning politicians leveraged racism and deep-seated racist stereotypes to reinforce their constituents' focus on the deservingness of racialized social groups (Hacker and Pierson, 2020). At the same time, student bodies became more racially diverse (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019) and curricula and student life activities—although belatedly and inadequately (Ray, 2019)—started to become less dominated by the norms of whiteness (Bradley, 2018; Rojas, 2007). In other words, at the precise moment that Republican officials became even more reliant on angry white voters who were skeptical of independent institutions (Hacker and Pierson, 2020; Mutz, 2018), higher education became somewhat less dominated by white people and their practices.

Because higher education officials often take an active hand in shaping state policy (Gándara, 2019), leadership from the sector also may have contributed to antagonism with the GOP. For example, higher education officials have often opposed the kind of managerial technologies typically favored by Republican partisans (Dougherty et al. 2013; McLendon et al. 2009). What is more, the majority of faculty members identify as political liberals who support expansive definitions of human rights and democratic participation (Gross, 2013). This liberalism does not necessarily make colleges and universities into Democratic institutions, especially in states where trustees are appointed and/or confirmed by Republican partisans (Taylor, 2022). Nonetheless, hostilities could be heightened by the large share of scholars who are affiliated with Republicans' political rivals.

Together, these trajectories appear to have produced a collision between the GOP and higher education. Angry Republican voters often express hostility toward higher education as "too liberal," a result consistently found in public polling (Fingerhut, 2017; Gallup, 2017) and academic research (Johnson and Peifer, 2017). As Gándara and Jones (2020) have shown, framing beneficiaries as "deserving" or "undeserving" is a key lever for higher education policy formation and enactment—or for opposing such policies. Such approaches to governing do not appear to make sense in a context where participation in higher education is widespread, even on the political Right (Cantwell and Taylor, 2020). In the context of democratic backsliding, however, Republican hostility toward higher education is less surprising. Higher education is a central institution in democratic society (Cantwell et al. 2018; Schofer and Meyer, 2005; Schofer et al. 2021). Attacking or destabilizing higher education is therefore one way to foster democratic backsliding by undercutting an institution

that could serve as a counter-power to partisan attempts to hold power (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021).

These shifting political conditions might change state support for higher education. Rather than macroeconomic conditions, state funding for higher education could reflect deep partisan hostility to all public programs and independent institutions (Bartels, 2020; Hacker and Pierson, 2020), and especially to programs and institutions that might benefit racially minoritized people (Grogan and Park, 2017). In this context, we posit that the balance wheel account of state funding might be conditioned by partisan control of state government. We expect the balance wheel account to hold in states with Democratic or divided governance. Where Republicans control state government, hostility toward independent institutions—a key component of democratic backsliding—might prompt funding cuts regardless of prevailing economic conditions.

Data and Method

We used a panel of state-level data to test our conceptual model of partisanship, democratic backsliding, and public funding for higher education. Our sample includes the 49 states with partisan legislatures for the years 2008–2019. Nebraska was omitted from our sample due to its distinctive design of a nonpartisan, unicameral legislature (McLendon et al. 2009). We drew data from several different sources. Information on state funding for higher education came from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), whose annual survey of State Higher Education Funding (SHEF) stretches back into the twentieth century. Data on political control of state governments were compiled from the National Governors Association (NGA) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). Additional state-level data including state population, per capita income, educational attainment, health insurance, and unemployment rate were obtained from the American Community Survey (ACS) of the US Census Bureau.

Data on health insurance did not become available until 2008. This limitation provided a temporal anchor for our study, which began in 2008 and extended until 2019, the most recent year for which data were available. Our temporal sample thus began with the Great Recession, allowing our data to span years during and after this period of economic disruption. We therefore could explore variations in funding as macroeconomic conditions changed, and so test the linkage between state support for higher education and the business cycle. The period 2008–2019 also coincided with changes in the Republican Party that we posit may be correlated with democratic backsliding, as manifested in deep funding cuts for higher education.

Variable Selection

Delaney and Doyle (2011) conducted a robust test of the balance wheel account that demonstrated the model's power to explain state funding for higher education. We primarily follow the path that they outlined. For example, we similarly used state

appropriations as our dependent variable. However, we operationalized this variable in a slightly different way. In our preferred model, we allocated appropriations per FTE to control for changes in the scale of state systems. Enrollments grew notably during the Great Recession (SHEEO, 2019), as is common during periods of economic contraction (Hillman and Orians, 2013). Enrollment growth meant that total appropriations had to support more people than they did just a few years earlier. In supplementary analyses, we also analyzed total appropriations, as did Delaney and Doyle (2011).

Independent variables corresponded with our conceptual model. Some of our independent variables of interest proxied the balance wheel. As Delaney and Doyle (2011) noted, the simplest quantitative representation of the balance wheel is a cubic function. We therefore operationalized each year of our study using three variables: a linear time trend *t, t-squared* and *t-cubed*. If the balance wheel model helped to explain state appropriations per FTE, we would expect the three variables to be jointly significant (Brambor et al. 2006) and to produce an "up, down, up" pattern as states emerged from the Great Recession.

Another independent variable of interest measured partisan control of state government. We chose to measure Republican influence as unified control of a governorship and legislature because, as Li (2017) has demonstrated, unified governments of either party are especially likely to oversee volatile spending for higher education. This variable was coded as one if the Republican Party controlled both the governorship and the legislature for a state-year observation. All other governing configurations were coded as zero. We interacted this variable with the three time variables to estimate whether the balance wheel operated differently in states with unified Republican control of state government.

Variables that measured time, partisan control and their interaction allowed us to test the primary elements of our conceptual model. We estimated the relationship between these measures and the dependent variable net of a series of control variables that might also explain state spending on higher education.

- Per capita income, total population, and unemployment rate estimated a state's capacity to sustain a public higher education system. We expected more generous support for higher education in states with more income per person, larger total populations, and a lower percentage of the workforce out of a job because these variables indicated increased capacity to fund state operations (Weerts and Ronca, 2006, 2012).
- The percentage of a state's population identified as white measured racial demographics, an important predictor of state funding for higher education (Grogan and Park, 2017).
- The percentage of a state's population with health insurance measured the possibility that the fate of one social institution, higher education, was linked to another, health care (Singer et al. 2021).
- Educational attainment—measured as the percentage of residents aged 25 and up who held at least a baccalaureate degree—accounted for the extent of higher education's enmeshment with the aspirations and lives of people in the state (Cantwell et al. 2018).

Analytic Techniques

To account for the panel nature of our dataset, we controlled all finance figures for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, as compiled by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Descriptive analyses revealed meaningful trends over time. Description also provided context within which to interpret regression results (Loeb et al. 2017).

The results of a Hausman specification test indicated no preference for "fixed effects" or "random effects" analyses ($p \approx 0.0539$). Given that not all states changed partisan control during the study period—meaning that there was limited within-unit variance for these states—we preferred the random effects approach. However, we present regression results that de-meaned observed data by state and analyzed within-unit variance—a "fixed-effects" model (Cameron and Trivedi, 2010)—as a robustness check. In all regression models, we "led" the dependent variable by two years to account for the slow pace of policy implementation. Funding decisions made by a state government would be observed in future funding cycles. We also logged all count figures to address diminishing returns to scale.

In a second set of regression analyses, we interacted our balance wheel measures with the partisan control measure that we used in that particular analysis. Tests for joint significance of these interacted variables indicated whether the balance wheel hypothesis held across all partisan contexts (Brambor et al. 2006). In other words, our interaction models explored whether unified Republican control interrupted the balance wheel model, yielding a higher education policy agenda characterized by democratic backsliding rather than the economic cycle.

Limitations and Robustness Checks

While our analysis is empirically robust, it is not causal. We posit a conceptually causal account to motivate the study, and so sometimes use causal language to outline the paper's narrative. Our findings add empirical texture to this account but cannot prove its veracity. As a result, we offer a conceptual argument with some empirical support, meaning that our account needs to be refined by future studies. Only analyses of individual-level data, especially those related to particular government officials, could approximate a causal account of democratic backsliding and higher education policymaking in the United States.

Although we cannot claim the "gold standard" of causality, we have taken several steps to address other common empirical problems. First, as is common in panel data studies, Drukker's test revealed that serial correlation was present in the data ($p \approx 0.0002$). Accordingly, we clustered standard errors in estimation "one unit up" in social ordering (Angrist and Pischke, 2009). We used the regional higher education compact to which a state belonged as the unit for clustering. US higher education regional compacts consist of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education (WICHE). We included the three bordering states that did not belong to a regional

compact—New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania—with the most geographically proximate compact, NEBHE (Li, 2017).

Second, while we have presented rationales for all modeling decisions, defensible decisions are not necessarily perfect choices. Accordingly, we present alternative regression models that operationalize core constructs in different ways (Table 3). As mentioned, the first includes fixed state-level effects. Others employ different dependent variables. Although we prefer to allocate state appropriations per student for reasons outlined above, we tested supplemental models in which we predicted variation in total state spending. We also measured political partisanship in a different way, contrasting unified Republican states only against unified Democratic states and excluding all other partisan arrangements from the analysis (see Li, 2017). While our results are not causal, we believe that broad consistency across these models lends deeper support to our conceptual model than would a single set of results.

Findings

Descriptive Analyses

Table 1 reports sample averages, standard deviations, and the same measures for the first and last years of our temporal sample. This table implies a balance wheel model for state appropriations. Our description of the dependent variable begins in 2010

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for entire sample, first year, and last year

Variables	(1) Sample average	(2) 2008 (2010 for dependent variable)	(2) 2017 (2019 for dependent variable)
State appropriations per FTE	$7,851.52 (3,437.71)	$7,851.57 (3,320.10)	$8,459.50 (3,900.19)
Unified Republican control of state government	0.38 (0.48)	0.18 (0.39)	0.49 (0.51)
Average income	$48,693.28 (7,991.10)	$47,667.25 (7,434.40)	$52,147.20 (8,300.25)
Unemployment rate	6.5% (2.2)	5.4% (1.2)	4.2% (0.88)
Total state population	6,379,984 (7,023,031)	6,156,826 (6,789,813)	6,593,982 (7,391,279)
Percent of state population identified as white	70.4% (15.5)	72.7% (15.3)	68.5% (15.9)
Percent of state population with health insurance	88.1% (4.6)	85.9% (4.3)	91.8% (3.1)
Percent of state population aged 25 and up holding a baccalaureate degree	28.7% (5.1)	26.9% (4.8)	31.1% (5.3)
Observations	490	49	49

due to the two-year lag employed in our regression models. This marked the low ebb of state funding for public higher education in the wake of the Great Recession (Taylor and Cantwell, 2016). Sure enough, the average state's level of support recovered over the next decade. By 2019, the average state spent a little more than $600 more in constant dollars per student than it had in 2010.

Several other factors also merit comment. Unemployment rate and per capita income, two indicators of the business cycle, moved almost in tandem with state appropriations per FTE. The average state's educational attainment also rose, as was consistent with national (e.g., not state-by-state averages) patterns (Alonzo, 2020). These economic and social variations were accompanied by political changes. The percentage of states with unified Republican control of government shot upward over the study period with Republicans controlling almost half of the sampled states by 2017, the last year for independent variables in our regressions due to our use of a two-year lag.

Given our conceptual model, we are especially interested in the relationship between partisan control of state government and direct state support for higher education. Accordingly, we disaggregated state appropriations by partisan control in Fig. 1. As this figure illustrates, Republican states differed notably from other states early in the study period. As more states came under Republican control (Table 1)—bringing with them their traditions for funding public higher education—the two groups of states became similar. This similarity lasted only a short time, however, before Republican controlled states began to divest from public higher education. Gaps between Republican states and all others widened from 2014 to 2018 before narrowing in 2019. Figure 1 suggests that partisanship helps to explain variations in state support for higher education. However, this suggestion requires robust empirical refinement before it can be posited with much confidence.
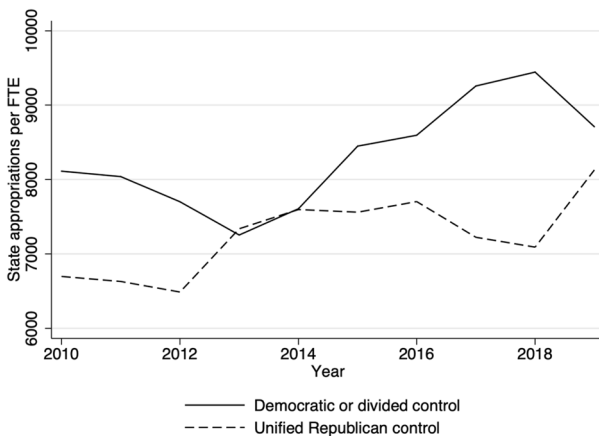
Fig. 1 Average state appropriations per FTE, disaggregated by whether a state is under unified republican control

Table 2 Random Effects Regressions Predicting State Appropriations per FTE, 2008–2019.

Variables	(1)	(2)
	Main effects	Interaction effect
Unified Republican control of state government	−247.3	−103.3
	(140.0)	(418.3)
Linear time trend	−735.9**	−695.8**
	(186.3)	(254.9)
Squared time trend	163.5**	146.5**
	(42.13)	(56.46)
Cubed time trend	−9.231**	−7.565**
	(2.174)	(2.853)
Unified Republican Control X time trend	–	−92.15
	–	(264.5)
Unified Republican Control X squared time trend	–	36.58
	–	(50.38)
Unified Republican Control X cubed time trend	–	−3.383
	–	(2.935)
Logged average income	9544**	9179**
	(2448)	(2444)
Unemployment rate	−28.55	−30.59
	(80.48)	(84.09)
Logged total population	−1,065	−981.2
	(805.7)	(762.5)
Percent of state population identified as white	−67.03**	−60.34**
	(18.68)	(17.43)
Percent of state population with health insurance	−104.6**	−110.2**
	(16.60)	(25.09)
Percent of state population aged 25 and up holding a bac-calaureate degree	−74.97	−74.82
	(54.94)	(63.61)
Constant	−61,950**	−59,339**
	(15,072)	(14,307)
Observations	490	490
Number of states	49	49

Robust standard errors (clustered by regional compact) in parentheses

**$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$

Regression Analyses

Results from our regression analyses appear in Table 2. Column 1 reports "main effects" results, in which the balance wheel variables (linear time trend, square of time trend, cube of time trend) are not interacted with unified Republican control. The second column interacts those three variables with our measure of political

partisanship to assess whether conditioning the balance wheel on Republican control of state government strengthened inferences.

Because we are interested in determining whether the balance wheel hypothesis is conditioned on partisan political control, we primarily interpret results in column 2 and refer to "main effects" results to assess the quality of fit of our preferred model. The "signs and significance" of the two models are identical, suggesting that the introduction of interaction terms does not unduly influence other relationships. Statistical evidence further indicated that the interaction term improved model fit. The coefficients attached to all four variables included in the multi-way interaction presented in column 2 must be interpreted jointly (Brambor et al. 2006). An F test indicated that the variables were jointly significant ($p \approx 0.0000$), suggesting that the model was improved by inclusion of interaction terms.

The joint significance of our interaction terms suggested that the balance wheel operated differently in states with and without unified Republican control. In order to illustrate these differences, we graphed predicted results in Fig. 2. This figure helped to determine whether the statistical differences found in our random effects regression were practically significant.

The left-hand panel of Fig. 2 shows the predicted 25th percentile, median, and 75th percentile of state appropriations per FTE in states with Democratic or divided partisan control. The right-hand panel displays the same predictions for states with unified Republican control. Given the two-year lag we employed, this figure begins in 2010 and extends its projections through the end of the study period in 2019.

Both panels in Fig. 2 sketch a balance wheel-like process. The period of steep divestment during and after the Great Recession is omitted due to the two-year lag. The decade that is depicted shows recovery followed by expected per-student divestment as enrollments swelled later in the 2010s. Beyond these general contours, however, the two panels differ starkly. The most striking differences between the two figures are their intercepts. In 2010, the median predicted level of appropriations
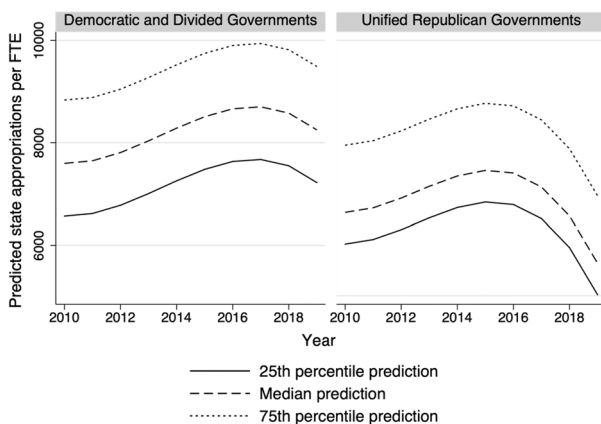
Fig. 2 Predicted year-to-year changes in state appropriations per FTE by partisan control of state government, 2010–2019

per student in GOP-controlled states was expected to be lower than the 25th percentile level of support in other states. There were also notable changes over time. The period of per-student divestment from 2016 to 2019 was gradual in Democratic and divided states. Republican-controlled states, by contrast, cut funding sharply. The median projection of appropriations per FTE in states with unified Republican control fell by almost one-quarter from 2014 to 2019. Declines were even steeper at the 25th percentile of projections.

In short, policymakers in Republican-controlled states continued to follow a balance wheel-type pattern, but proceeded from a lower starting point and made notably deeper cuts than did officials in other states. Given the strong relationship between state appropriations and tuition prices (Webber, 2017), this stark pattern of divestment likely had consequences for individual students. Certainly decreases in state funding were likely to undermine the institutional independence of colleges and universities in a state, as is consistent with the concept of democratic backsliding. As we discuss below, then, this pattern of Republican divestment from public higher education likely entailed real consequences for states and their residents.

A few control characteristics also merit comment. Net of other factors, a 1% increase in average income predicted a dramatic increase of a little more than $9,000 per FTE in the dependent variable. This enormous relationship far exceeded any changes in the dependent variable that were observed in the data. As such, the primary takeaway from this finding is that the relationship between average income and state appropriations per student was positive and statistically distinct from zero—as might be expected given the balance wheel account's emphasis on macroeconomic conditions.

A state's racial demographics also predicted variation in the dependent variable. Net of other factors, a one-percentage-point increase in the share of a state's population identified as white predicted a decline of $60.34 in appropriations per student. This finding is consistent with other research (e.g., Baker, 2019), showing that state higher education policymaking is responsive to a state's racial composition.

The percentage of a state's population with health insurance was negatively associated with the dependent variable. Net of other factors, a one-percentage-point increase in the share of the population that had health insurance was associated with a $110.20 reduction in state appropriations per student. This relationship suggested that higher education's status might not be positively associated with the status of other institutions.

Alternative Specifications

Estimating alternative specifications of our preferred model helps to illustrate the extent to which the results presented in Table 2 are model-dependent artifacts of our methodological decisions. Results presented in Table 3 reflect three alternate specifications. The first (columns one and two) employed fixed state-level effects and replicated the analyses presented in Table 2. Given Li's (2017) finding that states with unified control by either political party were likely to impose large budget cuts on higher education, a second pair of analyses defined unified Republican control in

Table 3 Supplemental Regressions, Individually Labeled.

Variables	(1) Fixed effects, main effects	(2) Fixed effects, interaction	(3) Total appropriations, unified control, main effects	(4) Total appropriations, unified control, interaction	(5) Total appropriations, main effects	(6) Total appropriations, interactions, interaction
Unified Republican control of state government	−227.8	359.7	−0.0543**	−0.00918	−0.0543**	−0.0607
	(103.7)	(545.6)	(0.0152)	(0.0653)	(0.0152)	(0.0409)
Linear time trend	−705.6**	−641.2	−0.0353	−0.0122	−0.0353	−0.0364
	(68.02)	(214.4)	(0.0534)	(0.0516)	(0.0534)	(0.0497)
Squared time trend	156.3*	141.9	0.00567	0.00272	0.00567	0.00551
	(26.95)	(53.75)	(0.0106)	(0.0116)	(0.0106)	(0.00973)
Cubed time trend	−8.799**	−7.104	−0.000378	−0.000179	−0.000378	−0.000336
	(1.270)	(2.441)	(0.000546)	(0.000651)	(0.000546)	(0.000508)
Unified Republican Control X time trend	–	−172.3	–	−0.0135	–	0.00512
	–	(277.0)	–	(0.0641)	–	(0.0414)
Unified Republican Control X squared time trend	–	36.16	–	0.00157	–	−0.000102
	–	(55.68)	–	(0.0144)	–	(0.00923)
Unified Republican Control X cubed time trend	–	−3.211	–	−0.000149	–	−5.63e−05
	–	(3.142)	–	(0.000850)	–	(0.000547)
Logged average income	7384*	6468*	0.698**	0.636**	0.698**	0.684**
	(1,520)	(1,426)	(0.243)	(0.196)	(0.243)	(0.253)
Unemployment rate	−48.53	−61.37	−0.0174*	−0.0175	−0.0174*	−0.0174*
	(61.19)	(58.21)	(0.00857)	(0.0101)	(0.00857)	(0.00846)
Logged total population	6,577	10,547	0.911**	0.885**	0.911**	0.914**
	(3,681)	(5,799)	(0.0617)	(0.0778)	(0.0617)	(0.0565)
Percent of state population identified as white	66.56	141.9	−0.00762	−0.00790	−0.00762	−0.00739
	(101.4)	(142.8)	(0.00464)	(0.00521)	(0.00464)	(0.00469)

Table 3 (continued)

Variables	(1) Fixed effects, main effects	(2) Fixed effects, interaction	(3) Total appropriations, unified control, main effects	(4) Total appropriations, unified control, interaction	(5) Total appropriations, main effects	(6) Total appropriations, interaction
Percent of state population with health insurance	-110.2**	-126.8*	-0.00557	-0.00526	-0.00557	-0.00582
	(7.590)	(22.08)	(0.00650)	(0.00611)	(0.00650)	(0.00597)
Percent of state population aged 25 and up holding a baccalaureate degree	-6.664	-50.41	-0.00291	-0.00342	-0.00291	-0.00346
	(87.01)	(105.8)	(0.00487)	(0.00185)	(0.00487)	(0.00466)
Constant	-165,487	-218,680	0.704	1.731	0.704	0.841
	(59,113)	(87,871)	(2.650)	(1.673)	(2.650)	(2.739)
Observations	490	490	490	306	490	490
R-squared	0.360	0.393				
Number of states	49	49	49	47	49	49

Robust standard errors (clustered by regional compact) in parentheses

$**p<0.01$, $*p<0.05$

contrast to unified Democratic control rather than all other governance arrangements (columns 3 and 4). The interaction terms in these models confirmed the results presented in Table 2 ($p<0.01$).

A third alternative specification redefined the dependent variable as total appropriations rather than appropriations per FTE (columns 5 and 6). These results were intriguing because state policymakers often make decisions about aggregate levels of funding rather than funding per student. The constituent parts of the interaction term in this model were distinct from zero only at a relaxed level of confidence (~0.0884), which enjoined some caution on interpretation. Taken together, however, findings presented in Table 3 suggested that our preferred model was robust to alternative specifications.

Discussion

In this paper, we conceptualize declining state appropriations to higher education in Republican-controlled US states as an instance of democratic backsliding, meaning the process by which elected partisans seek to destabilize independent institutions in order to increase the likelihood that they remain in power. Drawing on recent research in political science, we conceptualize the Republican Party as the primary agent of democratic backsliding in the United States. Republicans have long funded higher education at lower levels than do Democratic, independent, or divided governments (McLendon et al. 2014). These long-standing trends may have been amplified in recent years. The Republican Party's growing hostility to higher education (Fingerhut, 2017; Johnson and Peifer, 2017) is consistent with broader trends in a coalition of voters defined by who and what they oppose (Robin, 2018). Republican voters increasingly oppose almost all independent institutions, including higher education, and their opposition often extends into the endorsement of violence to overthrow social arrangements (Bartels, 2020). Given these stark changes in the social conditions of partisanship, we posit that the balance wheel model may no longer hold in states under unified Republican control.

Quantitative results support and refine our conceptual model. The two curves presented in Fig. 2 suggest that the balance wheel continues to hold in states with Democratic or divided governments, where political inertia may allow macroeconomic conditions to continue driving funding allocations for higher education. By contrast, an exaggerated form of the balance wheel holds in states with unified Republican governments. These states started at lower average levels and then slashed funding for higher education deeply, even in the years after the recessionary environment had ended. Cuts in the second half of the 2010s were predicted to be especially deep at about one-fourth of prior per-student appropriations (see Figure 2).

The balance wheel model has long held that the business cycle drives funding for higher education. Politicians, in this account, are fundamentally passive: they spend what the tax base provides to them, net of minor adjustments for the rate of taxation and special allocations. We instead understand politicians and political parties as active agents who work to translate their preferences into policy. In this interpretation, the Great Recession may have provided an opportunity to impose the deep cuts

that at least some Republican officials had long prioritized. These cuts may then have continued as hostility toward independent institutions and democratic backsliding took root.

What is more, we understand these partisan preferences as dynamic rather than fixed. We find partisan differences where prior accounts did not because the GOP itself has changed. Over the 2000s and 2010s, the Republican Party became more hostile to independent institutions (Bartels, 2020; Hacker and Pierson, 2020), more reliant on white voters (Abramowitz, 2018; Mason, 2018), and more bare-knuckled in its political tactics (Zelizer, 2020), yielding conditions ripe for democratic backsliding. The resulting coalition continued some of its long-standing tenets, such as aversion to taxes and amplification of backlash politics (Lowndes, 2008), but these components tended to be rearranged in new ways that made higher education a target of Republican ire (Cantwell and Taylor, 2020). As a coalition, Republicans have likely become more hostile to higher education and other independent institutions than they were in the past. This is consistent with a broader agenda of democratic backsliding.

Further changes in political coalitions could be afoot. Journalistic accounts of the 2020 US presidential election noted the expansion of the Republican electoral coalition into Latinx communities (Patteson, 2022). Should it continue, this trend could weaken the tie between individuals' racial identities and their coalition's policy agenda, meaning measures such as the percentage of a state's population identified as white may be less important in future analyses than is the power of a political coalition that is devoted to normalizing and defending whiteness as a social construct (Cabrera, 2014). A second limitation of our findings stems from the nature of our study itself. Where foundational accounts of the balance wheel relied on decades of data (e.g., Delaney and Doyle, 2011), the shorter period of time that we study highlighted the particular dynamics of a hyper-partisan era and may not hold in the future.

Regardless of what the future brings, the patterns that we have documented are themselves cause for concern. It would be tempting to read our results as evidence that political partisanship must come even further to the fore when analyzing state higher education policy. We endorse such a view, yet we encourage an even deeper reading of our findings. Our results highlight not only the importance of partisanship, but also the social factors that drive partisanship. As state contexts change, so should the concepts we use to understand them. This does not mean we should dispense with existing conceptual models but does suggest we should update them by considering the extent to which they still hold across contexts that are dramatically different than what has come before.

It would be comforting to think that time-tested theoretical models continue to hold—and, indeed, we find much evidence that the balance wheel continues to turn. However, the way it turns has changed as the United States itself has changed. Early in our study period, the number of democracies in the world was growing rather than shrinking. By the end of the study period, that trend had reversed (IDEA, 2021). As phenomena such as democratic backsliding emerge, researchers must update their theoretical accounts so that we can more fully understand the dynamics of higher education policy in a rapidly changing world. In this way, our analysis fits alongside

recent studies that have emphasized the importance of states' racial demographics (Foster and Fowles, 2018; Taylor et al. 2020), admission selectivity of top universities (Baker, 2019), and mixture of nonprofit or advocacy organizations (Gándara et al. 2017; Hertel-Fernandez, 2019; Miller and Morphew, 2017) in shaping higher education policymaking in the US. General principles such as the balance wheel can guide inquiry, but models must be conditioned upon a rich understanding of local context in order to illuminate policy processes fully.

One way to develop such understanding is to link a raft of studies on adjacent topics that will highlight the particular ways in which democratic backsliding plays out in specific contexts. In the United States, where partisan identification is closely linked to attitudes about racial changes in the country, state-level attempts to ban the teaching of critical race theory may intrude into the curriculum. Legal challenges to race-based affirmative action could interfere with the ability of colleges and universities to select their own students (Baker, 2019). Finally, challenges to the tenure system might destabilize the independence that allows faculty members to speak from expertise rather than political motivation. Any of these potential challenges would be daunting; all have precedents in the recent past (Taylor, 2022). The contours of democratic backsliding likely would be different in other countries, which have distinctive histories and social fissures. Only by bringing together many such accounts, each rooted in its own context, can scholars begin to understand the dramatic challenges facing higher education in a time of democratic backsliding.

References

Abramowitz, A. (2018) *The great alignment: Race, party transformation, and the rise of donald trump*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Abramowitz, A. and McCoy, J. (2019) 'United States: Racial resentment, negative partisanship, and polarization in trump's America.' *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science.* https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218811309

Abramowitz, A. and Webster, S. (2016) The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of U.S. elections in the 21st century. *Electoral Studies 41*: 12–22

Abramowitz, A. and Webster, S. (2018) Negative partisanship: Why Americans dislike partisanship but behave like rabid partisans. *Advances in Political Psychology 39*(1): 119–135

Alonzo, F. (2020) *U.S. Census Bureau Releases New Educational Attainment Data*. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/educational-attainment.html

Anderson, C. (2016) *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*, London: Bloomsbury.

Angrist, J.D. and Pischke, J. (2009) *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Archibald, R.B. and Feldman, D.H. (2006) State higher education spending and the tax revolt. *The Journal of Higher Education 77*(4): 618–644

Baker, D. (2019) Pathways to racial equity in higher education: Modeling the antecedents of state affirmative action bans. *American Educational Research Journal*. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219833918

Bartels, L. (2020) Ethnic antagonism erodes republican's commitment to democracy. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2007747117

Bradley, S.M. (2018) *Upending the ivory tower: Civil rights, black power and the ivy league*, New York: New York University Press.

Brambor, T., Clark, W.R. and Golder, M. (2006) Understanding interaction models: Improving empirical analyses. *Political Analysis 14*(1): 63–82

Cabrera, N.L. (2014) Exposing whiteness in higher education: White male college students minimizing racism, claiming victimization, and recreating white supremacy. *Race Ethnicity and Education* *17*(1): 30–55

Cameron, A.C. and Trivedi, P.K. (2010) *Microeconometrics Using Stata (revised edition)*, Stata Press.

Cantwell, B. (2018) 'Broad access and steep stratification in the first mass system: High participation in the United States of America', in B. Cantwell, S. Marginson and A. Smolentsiva (eds.) *High participation systems of higher education*Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 227–265.

Cantwell, B., Marginson, S. and Smolentsiva, A. (2018) 'Propositions About High Participation Systems of Higher Education', in B. Cantwell, S. Marginson, and A. Smolentsiva (eds). *High Participation Systems of Higher Education*, Oxford: Oxford University Press , pp. xxi-xxii.

Cantwell, B. and Taylor, B.J. (2020) Political rancor and educational inequality: Why building consensus is necessary to renew American higher education, *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* *52*(3): 68-72.

Cohen, J.L. (2019) Populism and the Politics of Resentment. *Jus Cogens*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42439-019-00009-7

Cramer, K.J. (2016) *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dar, L. and Lee, D.W. (2014) Partisanship, political polarization, and state higher education budget outcomes. *The Journal of Higher Education 85*(4): 469–498

Delaney, J.A. and Doyle, W.R. (2007) 'The Role of Higher Education in State Budgets', in K.M. Shaw and W.R. Doyle (eds). *State Postsecondary Education Research: New Methods to Inform Policy and Practice,* Sterling: Stylus, pp. 55–76.

Delaney, J.A. and Doyle, W.R. (2011) State spending on higher education: Testing the balance wheel over time. *Journal of Education Finance 36*: 343–368

Delaney, J.A. and Doyle, W.R. (2018) Patterns and volatility in state funding for higher education, 1951–2006. *Teachers College Record 120*(6): 1–42

Dougherty, K.J., Natow, R.S., Bork, R.H., Jones, S.M. and Vega, B.E. (2013) Accounting for higher education accountability: Political origins of state performance funding for higher education. *Teachers College Record 115*(1): 1–50

Douglass, J.A. (2010) *Higher education budgets and the global recession:*, Berkeley: Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California.

Doyle, W.R. and Delaney, J.A. (2009) Higher education funding: The new normal. *Change 41*(4): 60–62

Doyle, W.R. and Delaney, J.A. (2011) *Bouncebacks in higher education funding: Patterns in length of time to recovery following cuts in state appropriations* [Policy brief]. Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education (WISCAPE). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED524266.pdf

Fingerhut, H. (2017) *Republicans Skeptical of Colleges' Impact on U.S., but Most See Benefits for Workforce Preparation*. Washington, DC: Pew Fact Tank. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/20/republicans-skeptical-of-colleges-impact-on-u-s-but-most-see-benefits-for-workforce-preparation/

Foster, J.M. and Fowles, J. (2018) Ethnic heterogeneity, group affinity, and state higher education spending. *Research in Higher Education 59*(1): 1–28

Gallup. (2017) *Why are Republicans down on higher ed?*. Gallup.

Gándara, D. (2019) Does evidence matter? An analysis of evidence use in performance-funding policy design. *The Review of Higher Education 42*(3): 991–1022

Gándara, D. and Jones, S. (2020) Who deserves benefits in higher education? A policy discourse analysis of a process surrounding reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. *The Review of Higher Education 44*(1): 121–158

Gándara, D., Rippner, J.A. and Ness, E.C. (2017) Exploring the "how" in policy diffusion: National intermediary organizations' roles in facilitating the spread of performance-based funding policies in the states. *The Journal of Higher Education 88*(5): 701–725

Goldin, C. and Katz, L.F. (2008) *The Race Between Education and Technology*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Grogan, C.M. and Park, S. (2017) The racial divide in state Medicaid expansions. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law 42*(3): 539–572

Gross, N. (2013) *Why are professors liberal and why do conservatives care?*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Grossman, M. and Hopkins, D.A. (2016) *Asymmetric politics: Ideological republicans and group interest democrats*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hacker, J.S. and Pierson, P. (2020) *Let them eat tweets: How the right rules in an age of extreme inequality*, New York: Liveright Books.

Haggard, S. and Kaufman, R. (2021) *Backsliding: Democratic regress in the contemporary world*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hertel-Fernandez, A. (2019) *State capture: How conservative activists, big businesses and wealthy donors reshaped the american states – and the nation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hill, A.J. and Jones, D.B. (2017) 'Does partisan affiliation impact the distribution of spending? Evidence from State Governments Expenditures on Education. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization 143*: 58–77

Hillman, N. and Orians, E.L. (2013) Community colleges and labor market conditions: How does enrollment demand change relative to local unemployment rates? *Research in Higher Education 54*(7): 765–780

Hovey, H.A. (1999) *State Spending for Higher Education in the Next Decade*. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2021) *The Global State of Democracy 2021: Building Resilience in a Pandemic Era.* Stockholm. https://www.idea.int/gsod/sites/default/files/2021-11/the-global-state-of-democracy-2021_1.pdf

Iyengar, S. and Westwood, S.J. (2015) Fear and loathing across party lines: New evidence on group polarization. *American Journal of Political Science 59*(3): 690–707

Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N. and Westwood, S.J. (2019) The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science*. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051117-073034

Jardina, A. (2019) *White identity politics*, Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, D.R. and Peifer, J.L. (2017) How public confidence in higher education varies by social context. *The Journal of Higher Education 88*(4): 619–644

Jones, S.M. (2014) Diversity leadership under race-neutral policies in higher education. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: an International Journal 33*(8): 708–720

Klein, M.W. (2015) Settling a U.S. senatorial debate: Understanding declines in state higher education funding. *Journal of Education Finance 41*(1): 1–29

Kunkle, K., Taylor, B.J. and Watts, K. (2020) 'State funding for higher education', in M.E. David and M.J. Amey (eds.) *The SAGE encyclopedia of higher education* Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 1394–1397.

Levitsky, S. and Ziblatt, D. (2018) *How democracies die*, New York: Crown.

Li, A. (2017) Dramatic declines in higher education appropriations: State conditions for budget punctuations. *Research in Higher Education 58*(4): 395–429

Loeb, S., Dynarski, S., McFarland, D., Morris, P., Reardon, S. and Reber, S. (2017) *Descriptive Analysis in Education: A Guide for Researchers*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. NCEE Report 2017-4023.

Loss, C.P. (2012) *Between citizens and the State*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Lowndes, J.E. (2008) *From the new deal to the new right: race and the southern origins of modern conservatism*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Lupton, R.N., Myers, W.M. and Thornton, J.R. (2017) Party animals: Asymmetric ideological constraint among democratic and republican party activists. *Political Research Quarterly 70*(4): 889–904

Mason, L. (2018) *Uncivil agreement: how politics became our identity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McLendon, M.K., Hearn, J.C. and Mokher, C.G. (2009) Partisans, professionals, and power: The role of political factors in state higher education funding. *The Journal of Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.0.0075

McLendon, M.K., Tandberg, D.A. and Hillman, N.W. (2014) Financing college opportunity: Factors influencing state spending on student financial aid and campus appropriations, 1990 through 2010. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 655*: 143–162

Mettler, S. (2011) *The submerged state*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miller, G.N.S. and Morphew, C.C. (2017) Merchants of optimism: Agenda-setting organizations and the framing of performance based funding for higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education 88*(5): 754–784

Mutz, D.C. (2018) Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 Presidential vote. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 115*(19): E4330–E4339

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2019) *The Condition of Education*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cha.asp

Oliver, C. (1992) The antecedents of deinstitutionalization. *Organization Studies 13*(4): 563–588

Olson, J. (2004) *The abolition of white democracy*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Olson, J. (2008) Whiteness and the polarization of American politics. *Political Research Quarterly 61*(4): 704–718

Ortega, A. (2020) State partisanship and higher education. *Economics of Education Review 76*: 101977

Patteson, C. (2022, February 22). GOP makes gains among Hispanic voters since 2020 election: poll. *New York Post.* https://nypost.com/2022/02/22/gop-makes-gains-among-hispanic-voters-since-2020-election/

Phoenix, D.L. (2019) *The anger gap: How race shapes emotion in politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ray, V. (2019) A theory of racialized organizations. *American Sociological Review 84*(1): 26–53

Repucci, S. and Slipowitz, A. (2021) *Freedom in the World 2021: Democracy Under Siege*. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/FIW2021_World_02252021_FINAL-web-upload.pdf

Robin, C. (2018) *The reactionary mind: Conservatism from edmund Burke to Donald Trump*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rojas, F. (2007) *From black power to black studies: How a radical social movement became an academic discipline*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University.

Schofer, E. and Meyer, J.W. (2005) The worldwide expansion of higher education in the twentieth century. *American Sociological Review 70*(6): 898–920

Schofer, E., Ramirez, F.O. and Meyer, J.W. (2021) The societal consequences of higher education. *Sociology of Education 94*(1): 1–19

Sides, J., Tesler, M. and Vavreck, L. (2018) *Identity crisis: The 2016 presidential campaign and the battle for the meaning of america*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Singer, P.M., McNaughton, J. and Eicke, D. (2021) Higher education and Medicaid spending: An analysis of state budgetary trade-offs and the Affordable Care Act. *Higher Education Policy 32*: 789–811

Skocpol, T. and Williamson, V. (2012) *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO). 2019. *State Higher Education Funding*. SHEEO.

Tandberg, D.A. (2010) Politics, interest groups and state funding of public higher education. *Research in Higher Education 51*(5): 416–450

Taylor, B.J. (2022) *Wrecked: Deinstitutionalization and partial defenses in state higher education policy*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Taylor, B.J. and Cantwell, B. (2016) Research universities and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: Competition, resource concentration, and the "Great Recession" in the United States. *Higher Education Policy 29*: 199–217

Taylor, B.J., Cantwell, B., Watts, K. and Wood, O. (2020) Partisanship, white racial resentment, and state support for higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education.* https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2019.1706016

Thomas, J.M. (2020) *Diversity regimes: Why talk is not enough to fix racial inequality at universities*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Tope, D., Pickett, J.T. and Chiricos, T. (2015) Anti-minority attitudes and Tea Party movement membership. *Social Science Research 51*: 322–337

Webber, D.A. (2017) State divestment and tuition at public institutions. *Economics of Education Review 60*: 1–4

Weerts, D.J. and Ronca, J.M. (2006) Examining differences in state support for higher education: A comparative study of state appropriations for research I universities. *The Journal of Higher Education 77*(6): 935–967

Weerts, D.J. and Ronca, J.M. (2012) Understanding differences in state support for higher education across states, sectors, and institutions: A longitudinal study. *The Journal of Higher Education 83*(2): 155–185

Wilder, C.S. (2013) *Ebony and Ivy: Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's Universities*, New York: Bloomsbury Press.

Williamson, V., Skocpol, T. and Coggin, J. (2011) The Tea Party and the remaking of Republican conservatism. *Perspectives on Politics 9*(1): 25–43

Zelizer, J.E. (2020) *Burning down the house: Newt Gingrich, the fall of a speaker, and the rise of the New Republican Party*, New York: Penguin.