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Southern Electoral Strategy: The Strategic integration of Religious Values into The Republican Party Platform

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ABSTRACT

SOUTHERN ELECTORAL STRATEGY: THE STRATEGIC INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS VALUES INTO THE REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM

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There has been substantial literature concerning the effect the Republican southern strategy had on the Southern voting realignment following the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This literature has singularly focused on the role of race issues as a wedge disrupting the Southern Democratic majority. During the early stages of this process race did play an integral role, but closer to modernity, the emergence of religious issues serves as a better causal mechanism that has been largely overlooked. Meaning that as racial issues became less salient and palatable in nationwide presidential elections, the Republican Party strategically incorporated social issues with strong religious connotations into their party platform to pander to former Southern Democrats. This maneuver allowed the Republican Party to maintain their newly formed Southern coalition without alienating the rest of their voting base. The emphasis on these highly salient religious issues also provides a possible narrative for why poor voters in the South appear to vote against their own economic interest by instead voting based on their religious identity which is so integral in Southern culture. In order to determine this relationship, a list of religiously charged terms was constructed and their occurrences were counted within the 1952-2016 presidential platforms for both the Democratic and Republican Party. The key explanatory variable is the difference between Republican and Democratic religious terms for each of these election year party platforms. This Republican Religious Differential was measured in relation to the Republican Presidential vote share during each corresponding election in the eleven former states of the Confederacy to provide empirical evidence for this historical analysis.

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SOUTHERN ELECTORAL STRATEGY: THE STRATEGIC INTEGRATION OF
RELIGIOUS VALUES INTO THE REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM

BY

LEVI WALKER RATTLIFF
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Chapter 1. Introduction and Foundational Research

The objective of this research is to test a theory that can help us understand the Republican Party's initial Southern electoral strategy, dating to the 1960s, and the party's electoral success in the region into the contemporary period. This will be followed by a test of the specific effects this strategy has had on presidential election outcomes since 1952. The theory will comprise of the canonical articulations of previous research on the topic while also proposing a new and pivotal role for the stoking of a partisan religious identity that has been largely overlooked by previous researchers. Ultimately, the thesis finds that the assimilation of religious issues into the Republican Party platform allowed the Party to solidify and maintain their coalition of Southern support that has proven crucial in recent presidential elections.

The Southern partisan realignment, in the 1960s and 1970s, wherein the region switches from majority Democrat to majority Republican is a well-documented chapter in modern American history. The change is largely attributed to the immergence of civil rights as a salient political issue (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Edsall and Edsall 1991; Petrocik 1987; Valentino and Sears 2005). Generally, Southern realignment research proposes that racial issues, which took center stage during the Civil Rights Era of the 1960's ultimately led to the partisan shift in Southern voter's allegiance. This research holds that these previous conceptualizations, however, are incomplete. More specifically, this thesis will seek to redefine the realignment as part and parcel the result of a Republican Southern strategy that was conceived during the Civil Rights

era but needed to move beyond race as a core justification for attracting Southern votes. The party began with the integration of civil rights issues but ultimately this strategy evolved during the 1976 presidential campaign, and was perfected in the 1980 and 1984 campaigns, to include religious topics and concerns. It is important that the role of religion, and voter identification with these issues, is not overlooked as an explanation for Southern realignment and the aggregate level voting calculi. While most conceptualizations of voting behavior are derived from economic considerations, this research will attempt to articulate that social considerations based on religious preferences presents a more complete argument. Ultimately, the research proposes that the Republican Party strategically incorporated and emphasized social issues, based in religious doctrine, as a successful maneuver to recruit former Democratic Party voters in the South while not alienating their base in other regions of the country.

An appropriate lens to view Southern realignment comes from Miller and Schofield (2003) who use an analysis that embraces partisanship as two-dimensional; one economic and the other social. Using this conceptualization partisanship is defined across two separate spectrums creating four inherent macro-political positions (Populist, Conservative, Cosmopolitan, and Liberal) that party operatives can attempt to draw from. A two-dimensional framework better illustrates the rationale behind the Republican Party's shift toward social issues such as race and religion in order to garner the support of disaffected members of the Democratic Party's New Deal coalition, which was built on economic issues percolating throughout the Great Depression of the 1930s and subsequent years into the 1960s and 1970s. Race issues were the Republican Party's gateway to attract former Southern Democrats, but it was the introduction and evolution of religious values into political discourse that solidified a new party identification for Republicans (Carmines and Wagner 2006; Olson 2008). Religiously based social issues

established new issue publics (Popkin 1994) that the Republican Party could then maneuver into their coalition, particularly in the South.

In a broader sense this illustrates that the social divisions within society did not spontaneously appear. They have, arguably, always existed but following the economic crisis of the Great Depression it was economic divisions that defined party allegiances. These social divisions became more apparent over time, especially within the Democratic Party as the Northern and Southern factions began to distinguish themselves on the issue of civil rights.

This historical account has led to a dense literature on the polarization of American society following the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Carmines and Wagner 2006; Miller and Schofield 2003). What these studies overstate, or fail to recognize however, is that there was no fundamental shift in regional ideology. The Republican Party were not the lucky recipient of a mass baptism of conservatism, they actively and strategically recruited these Southern free agent voters based on preferences that had always existed but had never been brought to the surface (Carmines and Wagner 2016; Olson 2008). This thesis will argue that the Republican Party did not have the capacity to recruit poor Southerners based on conservative economic policies, so they instead boosted the saliency of social issues grounded in religious philosophy to highlight the differences between Northern and Southern Democrats. This allowed the Republican Party to recruit and retain Southern voters. By emphasizing salient social issues, the vitality of conservative economic positions largely became secondary concerns for realigning Southern voters. Similar research has proposed that the Republican party was able to shift the nation's macroeconomic functionality using social issues, but these propositions believe that the social issues that allowed for this transformation were based on race (Inwood 2015) or culture (Frank 2005).

The Republican Party's modern effort has been focused on consolidating Southern Christians by slowly conforming social and party identity into a singularity through their increased emphasis on religious issues. This identity has consequently become ingrained and there is ample evidence that the attachment to the superstructures of religion and political party are now consolidated in at least some regions of the country, particularly the South. These assumptions fall in line with Green, Palmquist, and Schickler's (2002) analysis, which finds party identification is based on voter's own conceptualizations of the social groups that make up a particular political party. This predisposition then works as a lens to distort reality for the social norms within these groups.

The significance of this particular development should not be understated. In no small way it may help us understand why some individuals defined by religious zeal also experience intense poverty. The pro-business and *laissez faire* economic agenda of the Republican Party seems to stand in stark contrast with the wellbeing of poor Southern whites. Yet, many of these voters seem wholly unaware of the ideological incongruence which produces a phenomenon wherein the states with the highest populations of Christians are also some of the states with the highest poverty rates in the nation (Ranjith and Rupasingha 2012). The primary research question then becomes, how can a political party consolidate a new coalition while largely overlooking the economic needs of this group? This question is all the more relevant as it raises the issue of the influential power of political and religious institutions on voting preferences and ultimately election outcomes.

I will argue that as the Republican Party encompassed religion into their party platform the shared identity of the party has evolved in a manner that one's loyalty to religion and party have become joined. This loyalty may have caused many of its members to be unwilling to align

themselves with the pro-labor policies that may work to alleviate their own economic distress if it means deviating from the “Christian Party.” This thesis will attempt to demonstrate that as the Republican Party strategically inserted religion into its party platform it was able to expand its coalition to encompass Southern Christians . Moreover, the increased electoral power has allowed the Party to promote, and ultimately implement, policies that ignore the economic interest of a significant portion of its voting bloc. In essence, the political institution that is the Republican Party effectively uses the religious institution of Christianity to not only expand their base, but to avoid resistance to their economic policies, from the very people who are affected negatively by their implementation.

It is vital to understand the historical context of this issue evolution in order to properly conceive of this development as a tactical response by the Republican Party in a dynamic partisan political environment. The incorporation of religious values into the Republican philosophy was a necessary approach in order to stay competitive in nationwide presidential elections which may also have profound implications for state and local elections, as well. The historical background of this era helps to illustrate that the Southern realignment was not a natural occurrence of regional ideological shift but was in fact a strategic recruitment ploy implemented to combat electoral losses. Once the historical context is understood this article will delve into the research design which will ultimately expose the empirical relationship between the use of religious terms in the Republican Party platform and party’s electoral support in Southern states during corresponding presidential elections. The following sections of this thesis present and analyze the results of the regression models introduced in the research design section and conclude with a discussion of the implications of these results for contemporary politics. The thesis will end with a discussion of future research opportunities.

Chapter 2. Historical Analysis

Considerable research has looked into the shift of American political party coalitions, particularly after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This literature tends to focus on the role of race. Specifically, how this legislation passed under Democratic President Johnson broke apart his Party's voting coalition in the South. This voting bloc then began to consolidate within the Republican Party. This research fully appreciates that race was the catalyst that initially pushed Southern white voters toward the Republican Party (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Edsall and Edsall 1991; Petrocik 1987; Valentino and Sears 2005). It is recognized that the beginning of this shift can be traced to the Democratic Party's implementation of legislation promoting racial equality, but this only explains the breakage of party allegiance, not the preservation of a new alliance.

The consolidation effort started with Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) and his candidacy for president in 1964. Carmines and Stimson (1989) believe his major contribution in this regard was his populist's stances against the welfare state and the rising threat of communism. Goldwater was able to energize a group of Southern whites that had been locked up by Democrats since the inception of the New Deal during the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration. Goldwater used a strong foreign policy platform and an unpolished delivery to connect with white Southerners who were disillusioned with the Democrat's willingness to delve into civil rights issues. This approach ultimately failed as Johnson won the election handily, but it

provided a future game plan for political elites within the Republican Party (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Lublin 2004). These elites would improve upon this Southern strategy through the Richard Nixon Administration until it began to finally bear fruit in the Ronald Reagan presidency (1981-89).

The basis for this Southern strategy was that white voters in the South were now available because of the wedge that had been driven between Northern and Southern members of the Democratic Party by new social issues. This provided the opportunity for the Republicans to promote themselves as the party for the white man (Aistrup 1996, p.29). Accomplishing this task took a nuanced approach in which terms like “state’s rights” became monikers for reprisals against civil rights. The Republican Party dramatically shifted their target audience under Goldwater and used the issue of civil rights to form a clear dichotomy of who the party stood with. The welfare state also became a common critique in this new approach, the viewpoint of the time was that means-tested welfare programs helped blacks more than whites and was utilized to further develop the clear divide between the two dominant political parties (Aistrup 1996). Goldwater was able to gain traction in the Deep South winning Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina, states that had up to that point been loyal to the Democratic Party for many years. These results provided electoral hope for the future of the Republican Party.

After Goldwater, George Wallace, in 1968, campaigned as an independent building upon this Southern Strategy by tugging at the issue of race, however he was able to conform race and government intervention into a singular issue (Edsall and Edsall 1991). Wallace portrayed government intervention as the work of elites attempting to push liberal propaganda and values on to Americans, especially in regard to race policies. Wallace’s nuanced approach provided an

opportunity to further establish this Southern base by portraying civil rights as a zero-sum game. Benefits provided to blacks could only occur by taking from whites and it was through the vestibule of centralized government that these takings would occur. The converging of these perspectives into a platform presents the outline of the New Right (Edsall and Edsall 1991). Nixon, Wallace's Republican opponent, continued to mold this platform by establishing hard stances on affirmative action and school busing. Moreover, Nixon had to present these ideas in a manner that upheld the legality of civil rights legislation but critiqued the scope of its implementation. In the end, Nixon portrayed civil rights measures as attempts by the government to overstep its boundaries, again combining the issues of race and government power (Aistrup 1996).

All of these innovations in political maneuvering came to fruition during the Reagan presidency under the guide of conservative elite strategists like Lee Atwater and William Brock, when they were able to take this budding coalition and modified platform to solidify the New Right (Inwood 2015). The New Right would stand for limited government, tax cuts, and a strong national defense (Aistrup 1996), effectively dismantling not only the New Deal welfare state but the New Deal coalition within the Democratic Party. All of these policies have been proven winners for white Southern votes since Goldwater initiated this populist platform in 1964. It required a strategic and patient approach, but the Republican Party was able to use race issues to break the Democratic stranglehold on the white Southern vote. This analysis is consistent with the conclusions of most research into the realignment of the Republican Party in this era (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Edsall and Edsall 1991; Petrocik 1987; Valentino and Sears 2005). This thesis concludes that Republican elites, like Goldwater and Atwater, strategically used racial tensions in the South to establish a new party coalition by intertwining a platform

based on limited government and negative attitudes toward civil rights legislation (Carmines and Stimson 1989). This conceptualization may be incomplete, however, as it relates to the consolidation and perpetuation of the New Right coalition. It is not flawed in its conclusions, as race was paramount in the destabilization of the Democratic coalition and played a key strategical role in the Republican's Southern Strategy. The research is incomplete, however, because it fails to recognize the subsequent focus of the New Right platform on religious values in the contemporary era (Aistrup 1996).

The New Right promoted limited government, tax cuts, and a strong national defense (Inwood 2015), but also began to incorporate "family values" and religiously based social issue positions to effectively dismantle the New Deal welfare state and the New Deal coalition of the Democratic Party. All of these policies have been proven winners for white Southern votes since Goldwater first proposed many of these populist positions in 1964. It required a meticulous and patient approach and the Republican Party was able to consolidate the Democratic stranglehold on the white Southern voters with the introduction of a new wedge issue: Christian "traditional and cultural values (Harvey 2005 p, 40)."

The Reagan Administration further developed the Republican Party Southern Strategy by creating new divisible lines based on religious or family value issues. These issues included, most specifically, school prayer and abortion. Aistrup (1996) notes this new emphasis helped to solidify Southern Protestants within the New Right. It was not only Reagan's racially veiled positions promoting state's rights and criminal justice that helped to consolidate Southern white voters (Inwood 2015). It was his promise to move America back toward its "Christian Roots" (Aistrup 1996, p.49) that deeply resonated with white Christians in the Deep South. Reagan promoted a return to traditional family values, which holds deeply religious connotations that

create clear stances on social issues that resonate with Southerners. This is the most significant modification to the Southern Strategy post-Goldwater. Race was the catalyst for the destabilization of the Southern voting bloc, but as time passed race became a less salient issue and more difficult to pose dichotomously. Race was no longer the major legislative issue of the day and attempting to emphasize these issues came with new electoral ramifications.

Republican elites realized that race would create problematic issue stances in nationwide elections, to account for this they merged a new religious aspect into their platform. Subtle racial stances were no longer publicly viable especially after David Duke gave a peek into the Republican's strategy on race with his visibly racist positions when he ran for president in 1992. This was a publicity nightmare for Republican strategists (Aistrup 1996). An overtly racist candidate would intensify public scrutiny on race issues and nullify their ability to propagate more nuanced positions in the future. The Republican Party had successfully recruited Southern voters with political stances on race, but as race became less prevalent in legislative strategies and more difficult to frame in a manner that would receive widespread public support, they were able to adapt a game plan that could make them more competitive in the region going forward by focusing on religious issues. This perspective deviates from not only the widely accepted role of race but also from other proposed narratives on the Southern realignment like economics (Lublin 2004) and culture (Olson 2008; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2004; Frank 2004; Kellstedt et al. 1994).

Lublin (2004) believes that the role of race has been overstated and that social issues have been overlooked, but ultimately concludes that economic issues are the key explanatory factor in the contemporary Republican alignment. Olson (2008) presents white *ressentiment* as a facet of a broader culture war (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2004) that has allowed Republicans to

frame Democrats as intellectuals disconnected from the average American, but he too overlooks the strategic use of religion. Frank (2004) also purports the role of culture as the causal mechanism that Republican Party elites used to manipulate Southerners to vote against their economic interest by focusing on value issues. However, this also overlooks the fact that these values are deeply grounded in Southern voters' religious identity. Kellstedt et al. (1994) and Aistrup (1996) acknowledge the significance of religion in the development of the Southern Strategy under Reagan and George H.W. Bush but there lacks research on how this strategy has continued to evolve into modernity and how successful it has become.

This research proposes that the Republican Party was able to consolidate and preserve the Southern coalition by tactically adopting the religious values of these free-agent voters as a staple of their party platform. The shift to a party platform based on religious value issues was a strategic reaction to cultural and historical changes that left the original Southern strategy obsolete. An economic slowdown in the Carter Administration, the culmination of the Cold War, and the public campaigning of David Duke in 1992 forced Republican elites to shift their focus from race to religion (Aistrup 1996). The continued emphasis of religious issues and values as a staple of Republican Party ideology constituted their idealization as the Christian Party. This conceptualization of the Republican Party creates a clear partition with the Democratic Party on the social issues that deeply resonate in the South. It is imperative to acknowledge the dichotomous nature of the Southern realignment, between the Republican elites' "Southern Strategy" and the Southern voters being recruited through the consolidation of their political and religious identities. On the institutional level the Republican Party has used religious identity and culture to recruit a Southern base that's culture and values are deeply connected to their religion.

A platform based on Cold War national defense, and veiled racial issues would no longer be viable in nationwide elections, therefore the focus shifted to value issues. In particular value issues deeply connected to fundamentalist Christian theology such as school prayer, abortion, and later gay marriage. These issues connected the South on an issue outside of racial attitudes and allowed the Republican Party to maintain their newly formed coalition by effectively combining church and party. This research is imperative to conceptualizing the merging of party and religious identity into a singularity. The amalgamation of these identities allows conservative candidates to maintain coalitions under the veil of religious devotion, while pursuing economic policies that work to the betterment of the business. Ultimately, this historical analysis looks to contextualize the process in which the Republican Party was able to fuse religious values with conservative economic standards. This will provide a workable framework and narrative for empirical testing in the subsequent quantitative analysis, which is presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3. Quantitative Analysis

The previous historical analysis presents a narrative that explains how the Republican Party electoral strategy progressed over time and the subsequent evolution of voting in the South. Because this narrative suggests what is a generalizable and testable proposition it should be tested quantitatively to provide a more falsifiable foundation. In order to quantifiably examine the theory a concise research design will be proffered. The fundamental idea of this design is to measure religiosity in the Republican Party over time and compare this to the vote share that the Republican Party's presidential candidates garner in the South. Put differently, this research will test for a positive relationship between the Republican Party's use of religious terminology in its party platform and the subsequent Republican Party presidential vote share in Southern states. The testing provides an analysis of the temporal development of both religiosity within the Republican Party and the Party's electoral competitiveness in the South.

Dependent Variables

In order to test the relationship between the integration of religious terminology and the Republican Party's electoral competitiveness in the South, I measure both the raw *Republican Party Vote* percentage and the *Republican Two-Party Vote Share* percentage in Southern states

in every presidential election between 1952-2016.¹ The two-party vote share standardizes Republican Party strength relative to the Democrats by accounting for and removing third party voting from the consideration of Republican Party electoral strength. Southern states are operationalized using the eleven former states of the confederacy, this conceptualization is a widely accepted representative sample for the Southern coalition (Black 1978; Bullock, Hoffman, and Gaddie 2006). Ultimately, these vote share tabulations will be measured in order to determine the relationship between the use of religious terminology and electoral success in the south.²

Figure 1 presents the relationship between the Republican Party presidential vote percentages in the South with that of the Republican national level vote percentage. The Southern level vote percentage is calculated by the average of the eleven Southern states' Republican vote percentage during each presidential election cycle. These distributions show both measures move in a similar fashion over time, however the Southern states Republican vote percentage remains persistently higher into the contemporary period. As the nation waxes and wanes on Republican presidential voting so does the South, however a larger percentage of the South appear to remain loyal to the party regardless of the changing context, since the 1980 election cycle. From the first Reagan election, the South has voted Republican at a higher rate than the nation as a whole in every election. The initial surge of Southern vote percentage can be seen in the 1964 election in the context of the Civil Rights movement. The Southern Republican vote's advantage in comparison to the national Republican two party vote share begins to

¹ See Appendix A for Data for the state party vote totals obtained from the American National Election Studies (<https://electionstudies.org/> last accessed December 1, 2019)

² Importantly the results that follow are not particularly sensitive to the definition of "South." However, it can be noted that the Virginia tends to attenuate the effects of religiosity on Republican Party electoral support. In addition, the state of Kentucky is not included, yet its culture and voting evolution mirrors that of many "Southern" states.

diminish as civil rights issues lose saliency, until the Reagan elections of the 1980's. These elections mark the inception of the Republican Party emphasis on religious issues like school prayer and abortion. Effectively symbolizing the introduction of the New Right identity along with the prelude to the Republican Party's contemporary Southern coalition.

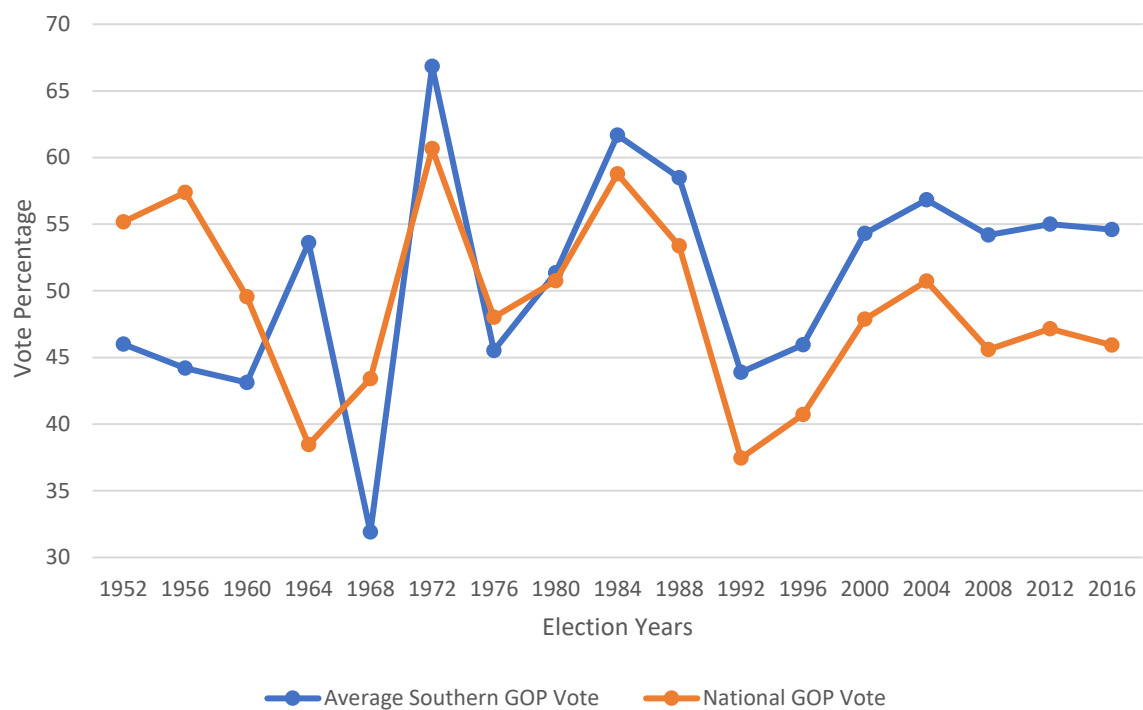


Figure 1. Southern GOP Party vote share compared to national GOP vote share.

Figure 2 presents the relationship between the Republicans average Southern state two-party vote percentage and the national Republican two-party vote percentage. This is done to account for third party voting, which could affect the raw Republican vote percentage. The main

deviation from Figure 1 appears in the 1968 election which marks a pivotal moment in Southern realignment history. This election marks the South’s departure from the Democratic Party but not their immediate integration into the Republican Party. In the 1968 election American Independent Candidate George Wallace won five of the eleven Southern states while promoting segregation. This explains the dramatic Republican vote drop off during the 1968 election cycle we see in Figure 1 and helps illustrate the development of a more complete party realignment. Interestingly, the modern Southern alignment did not really solidify until the 2000 election. The initial dichotomy appeared earlier in the 1984 and 1988 elections, but the outlier 1992 and 1996 elections present a break in the Republican Party’s modern stranglehold on the South. The next section on key explanatory variables will cover why these elections were outliers.

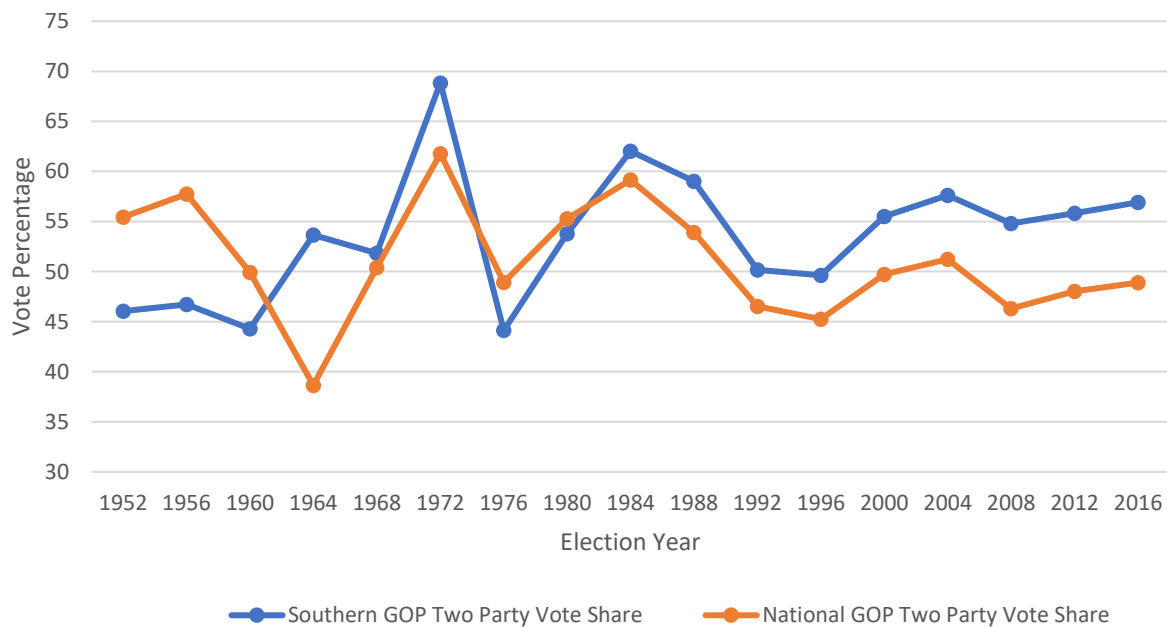


Figure 2. Southern GOP two-party vote share compared to national GOP two-party vote share.

Key Independent Variable

The key independent variable for this research is Republican Party references to religion in the party's quadrennial party platform. It is difficult to measure a concept like religiosity (Hill and Woods 1999). Consequently, this consideration is operationalized three different ways. First, I take the absolute value of the difference between Republican religious references and the Democratic Party's use of these same terms in each party platform, in each election cycle, to create a Republican religious differential. I use two additional measures of Republican Party focus on religious issues. One accounts for the possibility that my first measure inaccurately assigns religiosity when using terms that are only peripherally related to the concept. This second measure counts only exclusively religious terms. A third indicator accounts for the varying length of party platforms over time and within each political party. I use these alternative measures as a robustness check on the findings obtained in the regression models which follow. To be certain, my use of party platforms as an indicator of religiosity is not foolproof. Yet, scholars routinely analyze party platforms or manifestos for a variety of academic purposes (Simas and Evans 2011; Erickson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Meguid 2005), primary among them is the use of party platforms as an indicator of base ideology (Erickson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002). This same methodology arguably can be utilized effectively to capture the level of religiosity, or at minimum, a party's commitment to the use of religious terminology.

It is important to note that this methodology does not propose that a significant portion of voters read the platforms but that the platforms are representative of the party's beliefs and therefore useful in calculating the party's broader sentiments. The platform as a literal document is meant to provide a summation of party positions. Therefore, political parties emphasize the

issues that are important to them in each election, so increased use of religious terminology would, arguably, represent a larger role for religion in the party's governing philosophy.

Using the platforms provided by the American Presidency Project ³ a count of religious terms is calculated to represent each party's level of commitment to religious terminology in each election cycle from 1952 through 2016. This time period was selected as it includes pre-realignment election cycles, encapsulates the beginning of the Southern realignment, and takes one through the most recent presidential election. To effectively account for religious terminology, it is imperative to properly define which terms have strong religious connotations. An initial list of commonly used religious terms used by politicians was established. In the end, I settle on eleven terms, which have at least some religious connotations (God, Pray, Sex, Abortion, Faith, Values, Christian, Bible, Church, Creed, Religion or Religious). These terms were selected because they are inherently adjacent to religiosity when used in political discussions, terms with more tertiary connections to religion were dismissed as to not bias the sample with less relevant considerations. The terms needed to be widely accepted as being religious, or tied to religion, or the entire enterprise of measuring religiosity is corrupted.

The second measurement of the key explanatory variable only accounts for exclusively religious terms creates an even stricter threshold for the terms counted. Political terms that are associated with religious issues are excluded to create a more conservative measurement. This operationalization helps remove terms that could be more culturally based and instead creates a count that is narrowly focused on religious terms. This strategy creates a stricter list of terms that should lead to even more direct test of the relationship between religiosity and partisan Southern

³ See Appendix A for presidential platforms obtained from the American Presidency Project (<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/people/other/republican-party-platforms> (last accessed December 1, 2019)).

voting, which cannot be tainted by politicized terms that could hold political or cultural meaning rather than religious. Specifically, the terms include: God, Christian, Prayer, Bible, and Church. Each mention was carefully scrutinized and coded to only account the terms usage that capture Christian ethos.

The third measure maintains the original 11 religious terms, but accounts for the varying lengths of party platforms across the two political parties and overtime. The original count of religious terms is then divided by the platforms total word count to create a variable that is the percentage of the platform devoted to religious terminology for each party. This figure is then subtracted in the same manner as the previous explanatory variables. This measurement is necessary to account for the possibility that variation in platform length determines the Republicans surplus of religious terms. Party platforms have generally gotten longer overtime but there have been inconsistencies in the rate at which each party's platform grows. These inconsistencies lead to instances where one party's platform is exceptionally longer than the others and this difference could account for variations in religious terminology. Therefore, this variable normalizes the religious terms as a percentage of the overall platform length to control for these variances.

Any occurrence for each set of terms was examined in the platforms context to ensure that they were properly accounted. In the example of "values", this term has multiple applications so references to economic values or home values were not counted. The counted terms are all meant to be attached to deeply held religious beliefs and attempt to provide unambiguous numerical counts that represent the platforms level of religiosity. The use of each term was meticulously analyzed within the text to ensure the validity of their inclusion as a term with a religious connotation. I am confident that replications of this process using the same

guidelines would produce very close to identical results. I expect that these platforms are in fact proper encapsulations of the party's actual proposed beliefs and are therefore solid representations for studying the party's integration of religion.

All of these terms were then coded in a manner in which they were only counted when their mentions were grounded in Christian religious beliefs. This point is very integral in illustrating that the Republican's strategy was not to promote a broad pluralist view on religion but promoted singularly, Christianity. This conservative emphasis on the traditional religion of the country, especially in the Southern states, is conceptualized in the carefully selected religious terms. In practice this means that references to conservative views based solely in Christianity are counted so any religious references that promote separate religions or acceptance of multiple religions would not count. Also, important to understand is that issues like abortion, sexuality, and school prayer are only counted as religious terms when the mentions are grounded in Christian theology. If the mentions are based on secular grounds, they are not counted. This is to say that mentions of expanding rights to same sex couples would not be counted as a religious term but mentions of limiting rights to same sex couples would be counted, as this perspective is grounded in religious philosophy⁴.

When counting religious terms both parties were calculated in order to construct a party differential that will be labeled *Republican Religious Differential*, which will be the Republican religious mentions minus Democratic religious mentions. These measurements will be the actionable independent variables. Using the surplus better encapsulates the difference between the parties and accounts for the possibility of strategic use of religion by the Democratic Party as

⁴ See Appendix B for a more detailed description with specific examples of how both lists of religious terms were chosen, and the concise methods used in discerning whether each occurrence of these terms was religious in nature and should therefore be counted.

well. Both parties were also measured in order to present the strategic intent by the Republican Party in comparison to the temporal changes of the Democratic Party platform. If both parties had continued to expand at the same rate, then it would be illogical to assume any strategic intent by the Republican Party and would instead conclude that it was a homogenous change. The surplus provides the explanatory power as it marks the delineation of perceived religiosity between the parties.

Figures 3-5 present the historical evolution of both the Republican and Democratic Party’s use of religious terminology in their presidential platforms since the 1952 election. The three figures present the three separate measurements of the *Republican Religious Differential* in order to visualize their relative consistency. All of these figures appear to follow in line with the historical analysis that depicts that shortly after the saliency of civil rights issues declined the Republican Party shifted their focus to emphasizing social issues based in Christian philosophy.

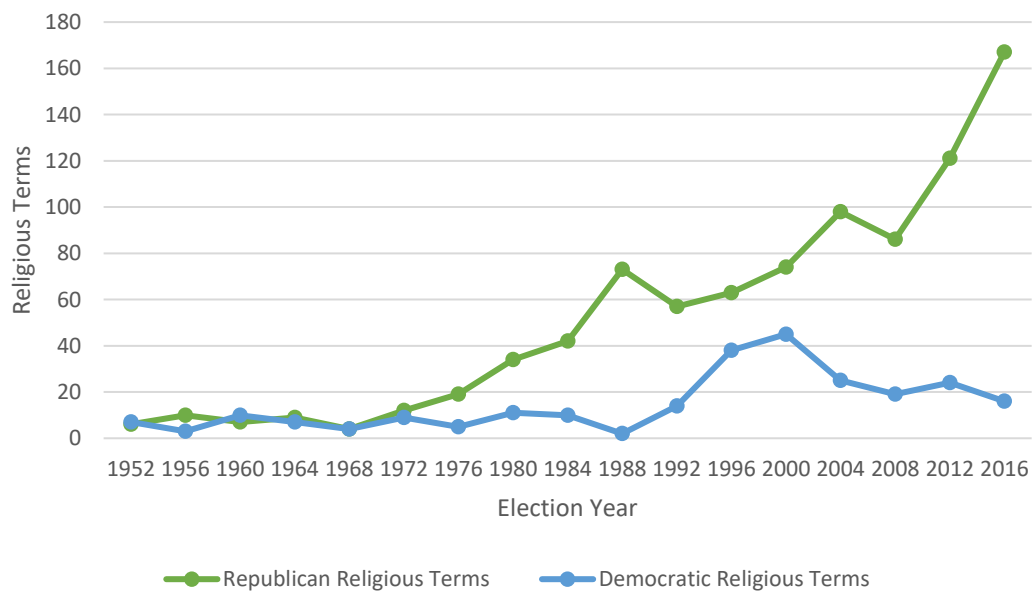


Figure 3. Republican and Democratic usage of religious terms since 1952.

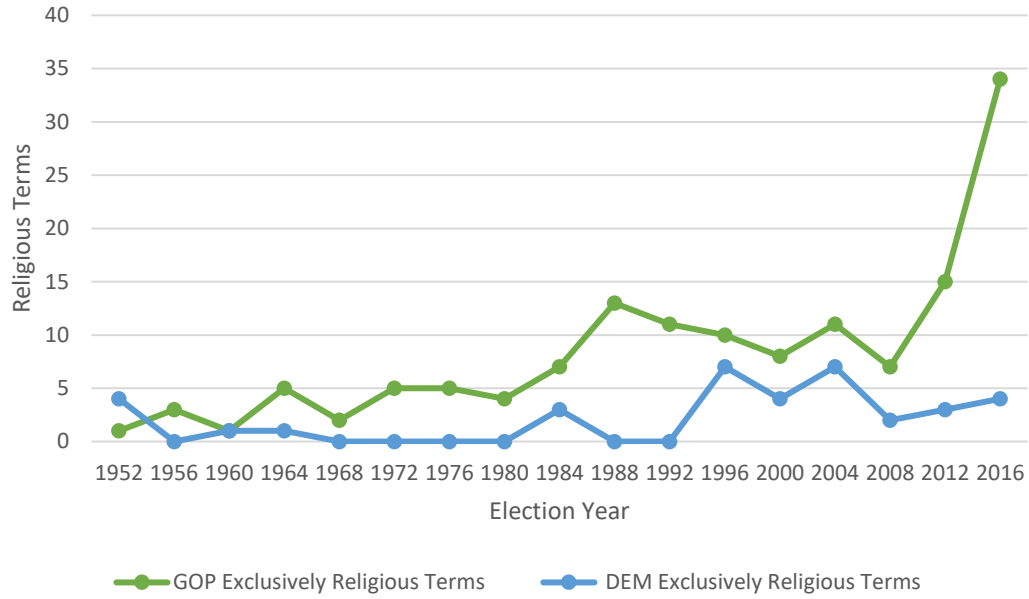


Figure 4. Republican and Democratic usage of exclusively religious terms since 1952.

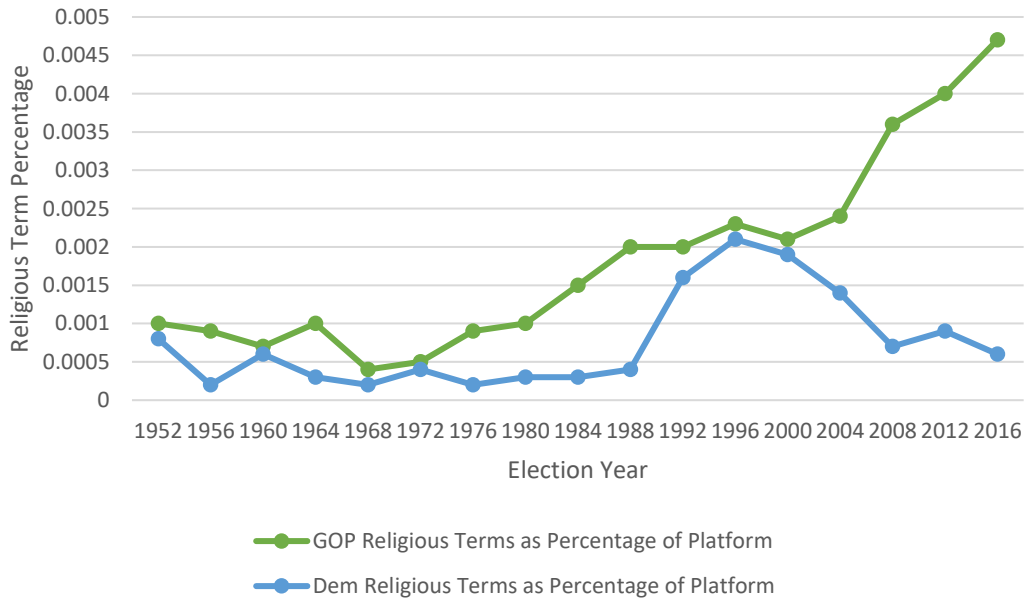


Figure 5. Republican and Democratic usage of religious terms since 1952 (word count).

It is important to recall that the key explanatory measure is not the increase in Republican terms but is the Republican surplus of religious terms in comparison to the Democratic terms. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that in the 1992, 1996, and 2000 elections there was a shrinking of the surplus, but this was largely not as a result of decreased Republican terms but in fact, an increase of Democratic terms beginning with Southern Democratic candidate Clinton. This appears to be an attempt by the Democratic Party to combat Southern losses suffered during the Reagan elections. This effort was able to garner the 1992 Democratic candidate with a victory in four Southern states the Democrats previously lost in the 1988 election. It is also important to point out that the relative success of the Independent third-party candidate Ross Perot could have assisted Clinton's victory. The Democratic Party attempted a similar usage of religious terms with candidate Al Gore but was unable to win any Southern states in the 2000 election. This marked the last attempt by The Democratic Party to fight Republicans for the mantle of the religious party. The Republican Party has continued to solidify themselves as the party of Christianity in modernity while the Democratic Party has largely abnegated from competition in the Southern states.

One other intriguing observation is that these results show that the 2016 Republican presidential platform continued to increase the use of religious terms at a dramatic rate. This may draw some confusion as the candidate Donald Trump does not share the same deeply religious background as past Republican candidates, but this in fact better encapsulates the intent by Republican elites to maintain the symbolic image of being the Christian party. The religious movement is not based on individual candidates' preferences but about the party as an institution. The Republican Party has strategically incorporated religiosity into their party identity, even without a religious candidate, the party identity persists and earns the votes

dependent on this identity. This evolution as presented by Carmines and Wagner (2006) is a long and methodical process catalyzed by political strategists. It is important to state that this does not mean that this religious identity is now eternalized, but that as long as it presents the Republican party with its best chance to win elections it is likely to persist.

Control Variables

To complete these regression models, I use a series of control variables to improve each model's validity. The models need to account for other possible explanations of presidential vote shares. Initially, there is a control for *Incumbency*. When the election is held, and the Republican Party candidate is running for re-election one might imagine Southern states would support the incumbent at a higher rate. Correspondingly, when there is a Republican Party incumbent presidential candidate running these cases are scored "1" for each of the 11 cases representing the Southern states. When the Republican Party does not have an incumbent running these cases are scored "0". This is a fairly intuitive consideration; one would predict that incumbency advantage would lead to a positive effect on presidential vote shares for the party in power.

Another possible explanation comes from economic conditions surrounding each election, so I control for the *Misery Index* which is the sum of the unemployment rate and inflation rate for each election year using data obtained from Quandl.⁵ This measurement is meant to represent basic economic conditions for average Americans who are hurt by either unemployment or loss of purchasing power from rising inflation rates at the time of each election cycle. The Misery Index is specifically coded in a manner to differentiate incumbent party

⁵ See Appendix A for Misery Index data obtained from Quandl (<https://www.quandl.com/data/USMISERY/INDEX-United-States-Misery-Index> last accessed Jan 20, 2020)

control of the presidency. When the sitting president during an election cycle is a Republican the misery index is coded as a negative value, when there is a sitting Democrat in the White House the figure is coded as positive. The common anticipation is that as the misery rate rises there will be reprisals for the party of the sitting president and *vice versa*. In other words, if the Misery Index is high while a Republican is in office at the time of the next presidential election, the Party's candidate will suffer electoral consequences. This is regardless of whether the sitting president is seeking reelection or not, the party will benefit or suffer as a collective from the negative economic context. If the incumbent is a Democrat and there is a higher Misery Index these negative economic conditions should produce higher Republican Party electoral support. Operationalized as such, a higher index value should produce a greater Republican vote percentage and I expect a positive coefficient in the regression modeling.

The final and, perhaps most important, control variable is the *National Republican Vote* percentage. This is simply the total vote percentage that the Republican Party candidate receives, nationally, in each presidential election. The function of this control is to test for partisan swings or the overall popularity of Republican Party presidential candidates, nationally. Obviously, when a Republican Party candidate is doing well across the country (i.e. Nixon in 1972 or Reagan in 1984) we would expect these candidates to do better in the South. Moreover, if my thesis that religious platform coverage will increase the vote for Republican Party presidential candidates in the South is to be put to a meaningful test it is imperative that I test for the variability of the Party's electoral strength, generally. This is, of course, key to our underlying theory that the assimilation of religious terminology was a key cog in the modern Southern realignment and that this shift was not the mirroring of a larger national swing in partisan voting.

Control variables aside, the primary hypothesis representing the key explanatory variable can be stated as:

Hypothesis 1: *As the Republican Party increases its emphasis on religion and religious issues there will be a subsequent increase of vote share in the Southern states during the corresponding presidential election year.*

This quantitative test will provide grounding for the qualitative analysis presented in Chapter 2.

The hypothesis representing the control variables can be stated as such:

Hypothesis 2: *The presence of a Republican presidential incumbent will have minimal or no effects on Republican vote shares in the Southern states. As they are loyal to the Christian identity of the Republican Party regardless of who is currently in office.*

Hypothesis 3: *Variations in the misery index will have minimal effects on Republican presidential vote shares in the Southern states. As they are loyal to the Christian identity of the Republican Party regardless of economic context.*

Hypothesis 4: *As the national level Republican vote percentage increases there will also be an increase in Republican vote shares in the Southern states.*

Modeling

There are six Generalized Least Squares models employed because I am using data that is arrayed over time (1952-2016) and across the 11 Southern states. Each model is intended to expose the relationship between Republican religious terminology and Republican vote shares in the South. Generalized Least Squares modeling is used to deal with the periodicity of the time series data and for within variation in each of the 11 Southern states. Because of the manner in which the data are arrayed, and because I am concerned with both within state variation over time and between state variations in any given election cycle, I used the Random Effects modeling assumption. Importantly, both Fixed Effects and Between Effects modeling assumptions do not disrupt the key finding in a statistically and substantively significant manner.

There are two dependent variables and three variations of the key explanatory variable. All of these alternative models are done in a scrupulous attempt to prove the research design's validity. A single model run can easily be incomplete, and the results can be a function of the particular sample that is employed. Six models are run as a robustness check to ensure the relationship uncovered accurately reflects the reality of electoral politics in the South. Table 1 below will provide descriptive statistics for all the variables included in the various model runs. The three key explanatory variables will initially be tested using state level Republican presidential vote percentages in Southern states as the dependent variable with the results being found in Table 2. The three explanatory variables will then be used to predict the Republican two-party vote share percentage in Southern states. These results are reported in Table 3.

Noted above, the first measurement of the independent variable is the simple surplus of total religious terms in the Republican Party platform and it will serve as the main model. I concern this the most important test because of the comprehensive manner in which it attempts to capture partisan religiosity. The results are reported across two Tables and are labeled Model 1 and Model 4. The second measure that accounts for exclusively religious terms is labeled as Model 2 and Model 5 and the final measurement of the key explanatory variable that accounts for the word length of the platforms is labeled as Model 3 and Model 6. The control variables remain consistent across all of these models, the only deviation is the three measurements of the explanatory variable and two separate measures of the dependent variable.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for all variables. The first measurement of the dependent variable is the raw Republican vote percentage for a given Southern state. The

minimum Republican vote percentage came in Mississippi in the 1968 election while the maximum vote percentage appeared in Mississippi in the 1964 election. The second measurement of the dependent variable counts the Republican two-party vote percentage. The minimum result for this measurement appeared in Mississippi during the 1960 election while the maximum result occurred in Mississippi in the 1964 election. These results make more sense when contextualized, Mississippi had been consistently Democratic until the 1964 Civil Rights Bill was passed with Democratic Party support. Mississippi then voted Republican in 1964 for Barry Goldwater's segregation promise. However, Mississippi voters did not remain with the Republican Party in 1968 as they had no loyalty to the party, Mississippi voted emphatically for third party candidate George Wallace who also supported segregation. This third-party support, by definition, reduces both party's relative support. This is precisely why I develop the second measure of Republican Party support as a percentage of the two major party's support irrespective of third-party support.

A few noticeable observations for the explanatory variables. The minimum values for the Republican religious differential are negative in the 1952 and 1960 elections. This tells us that in these election cycles the Democratic Party actually had a clearer focus on religion, but it is worth noting early on there was very little usage of religious language by either party. It is also negative when only counting exclusively religious terms in 1952 while the minimum for the differential accounting for the platforms' word counts occurs in the 1960 election. The word count value is infinitesimal because it deals with the percentage of the entire platform's words that are religious in nature. These values are minuscule fractions of the entire platform's words and therefore the differential is even more diminutive in scale. All of the explanatory variables' minimum results occurred prior to the inception of the Southern realignment. The maximum for

Table 1.**Descriptive Statistics: All Variables**

<i>Dependent Variables</i>	<i>Obs</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Min. Value</i>	<i>Max. Value</i>
<i>Republican Vote Percentage</i>	187	50.91058	10.8391	13.52403	87.13956
<i>Republican Two-Party vote Percentage</i>	187	53.58455	9.244021	24.67074	87.13956
<i>Explanatory Variables</i>					
<i>Republican Religious Differential</i>	187	37.23529	41.15181	-3	151
<i>Republican Religious Differential (Exclusive Religious Terms)</i>	187	6.235294	7.127731	-3	30
<i>Republican Religious Differential (Word Count)</i>	187	.0010591	.0011637	.000034	.004095
<i>Control Variables</i>					
<i>National Republican Vote Percentage</i>	187	48.88294	6.596394	37.45	60.67
<i>Misery Index</i>	187	-.73	9.908157	-13.45	20.76
<i>Republican Incumbent</i>	187	.3529412	.4791675	0	1

all of these explanatory variables occurred in the most recent election in 2016. The maximum has increased for all of the variables in the last three presidential elections. The Republican religious differential has continually climbed since the 1976 election besides for the outlier Clinton elections of the 1990's which implemented their own expanded use of religious terminology which cut down the value of the differential. The Republican Party has consistently added religious terminology since the 1976 election, the differential only decreased in the 1992 and 1996 election because of the increased use of religious terms by Democrats.

The minimum national Republican vote percentage is found during the Clinton 1992 election but there was also a dramatic impact from Ross Perot's successful third-party candidacy. The maximum national Republican vote percentage occurred in Nixon's 1972 reelection prior to the Watergate and Pentagon Paper scandals. The maximum and minimum Misery index's need some clarification as when there is Republican incumbency the misery index is coded as negative while Democratic incumbency is coded as positive. Therefore, both the maximum and minimum values actually denote the separate party's highest misery index. With the Republicans coming in 1976 with Gerald Ford seeking reelection, while the Democrat's maximum occurred in the subsequent 1980 election cycle with Jimmy Carter seeking reelection.

Chapter 4 Results

The results for the initial 3 models can be found in Table 2. As hypothesized the Republican religious differential is a highly statistically significant predictor of electoral votes in the South in Model 1, which utilizes the raw Republican vote percentage. The surplus has a substantial positive relationship with the Southern vote shares. As the Republican religious differential increases by 1 the Southern vote shares subsequently increases .089 percent. This figure may seem insignificant but using the mean Republican differential of 37 religious terms this equates to a 3.29 vote percentage increase in the South under average circumstances. In a first past-the-post presidential electoral system these deviations can sway the allocation of a state's winner and the awarding of their Electoral College votes. This model appears to indicate that there is in fact a strong relationship between religiosity and the Southern vote share at least in the case of modern presidential elections. Models 2 and 3 change the measurement of the explanatory variable as a robustness check but the positive and statistically significant relationship remains intact. Model 2 presents the variable for depoliticized religious terms to express the relationship between purely religious terms and Southern vote shares. This model still shows a strong positive statistical relationship at the .001 level when only accounting for purely religious terms. Using the mean of 6 for the exclusively religious Republican differential, the Southern Vote increase is still 2.7 percent, on average, all else being equal. This result portends that the results from previous models were not dependent on politicized or cultural terms with assumed religious connections.

Table 2.**The Republican Vote Percent in the South: 1952-2016***Model: Generalized Least Squares, Random Effects*

	Model 1. Coefficient (s.e.)	Model 2. Coefficient (s.e.)	Model 3. Coefficient (s.e.)
<i>Key Explanatory Variables</i>			
Republican Religious Differential	.089 *** (.017)		
Republican Religious Differential (Subset) ^a		.440 *** (.102)	
Republican Religious Differential (Word Count)			2905 *** (640)
<i>Key Control Variable</i>			
National Republican Vote	.623*** (.115)	.651*** (.119)	.557*** (.116)
<i>Other Controls</i>			
Republican Incumbent	.494 (2.07)	-.615 (2.09)	1.72 (2.16)
Misery Index	-.034 (.096)	-.062 (.098)	-.007 (.098)
Wald Chi ²	55.39	46.17	48.78
R-Squared (overall)	.23	.20	.21
n	187	187	187

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$ ^a The subset includes the terms that are exclusively religious in nature. (God, Christian, Prayer, Bible, and Church)

Model 3 use the explanatory variable that has been normalized to account for the variance of word count length across the party platforms. When considering the length of the party platforms, and Model 3, the coefficient takes on a rather large nonsensical value. However, this can be easily converted, and it can be noted that a one standard deviation increase in the use of religious words (as a percent of the entire party platform) will increase the Republican vote percentage by 3.8 percent, on average. The mean Republican religious differential for this

variable is .00105 (as a percent of the entire party platform) which correlates with a 2.9 percent increase in Republican Southern voting for comparison with the two previous explanatory variables. The results are comparable as the Republican Religious differential is still strongly significant in a positive direction that further supports my hypothesis. This model just presents an opportunity to control for the effects of varying word counts across presidential platforms. The results presented are consistent enough that the effects of word counts appear to be limited, meaning the varying lengths of party platforms did not bias the underlying results in regard to the influence of religious terminology on Southern vote shares.

The main control variable, the National Republican Vote percentage is statistically significant, but this comes as no surprise as the Southern vote totals make up a substantial portion of the national level vote, therefore, their interconnectivity is unavoidable. Neither the institutional nor the economic controls put into place had a significant effect on the Southern vote totals as previously hypothesized. This research proposes that these conditions are largely secondary considerations for Southern voters who are more reliant on their party's religious identity, rather than incumbent positioning or economic success.

Table 3 presents the results of the replicated models (model 4, 5, and 6) that maintain the three explanatory variables but instead measures their relationship to the Republican Party two-party vote share in the Southern states instead of the raw Republican vote percentage. Shifting the measurement of the dependent variable appears to have had minimal effects on the results. The key explanatory variables continue to be significant predictors of Southern vote shares regardless of the electoral measurement, with slightly lower coefficients that degrade the substantial effect on Southern voting. While the only control variable that is a significant predictor of Southern voting remains the National level Republican vote percentage, which we

anticipated. The major variation that emerges from changing the measurement of the dependent variable is a shrinkage in the R-Squared values for models 4-6. Meaning that the models lose some explanatory power when they only account for two party-vote shares.

Table 3.**The Republican Two-Party Vote Share in the South: 1952-2016***Model: Generalized Least Squares, Random Effects*

	Model 4. Coefficient (s.e.)	Model 5. Coefficient (s.e.)	Model 6. Coefficient (s.e.)
<i>Key Explanatory Variables</i>			
Republican Religious Differential	.063 *** (.015)		
Republican Religious Differential (Subset) ^a		.361*** (.091)	
Republican Religious Differential (Word Count)			1926*** (578)
<i>Key Control Variable</i>			
National Republican Vote	.381*** (.104)	.411*** (.105)	.334** (.105)
<i>Other Controls</i>			
Republican Incumbent	1.97 (1.87)	1.23 (1.85)	2.72 (1.95)
Misery Index	.071 (.087)	.053 (.087)	.087 (.089)
Wald Chi ²	29.08	28.55	23.71
R-Squared (overall)	.13	.13	.11
n	187	187	187

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

^a The subset includes the terms that are exclusively religious in nature.(God, Christian, Prayer, Bible, and Church)

These results in their entirety seem to support my hypothesis that the integration of religious terminology by the Republican Party impacted their competitiveness in the Southern states and may have directly influenced the broader Southern realignment. No modeling is impervious to conceptual lapses, but this configuration accounts for other explanations of presidential voting, while also accounting for the national level Republican vote percentage to determine the robustness of the effect in the South. The modeling also presents two measurements of the dependent variable and three variations of the explanatory variable in an attempt to work out any inherent biases in sampling. As a result of this meticulous modeling I believe these results are permissible and ultimately indicative of the broader relationship I have theorized.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

It is important to point out the limitations of these results as they do not account for the competing explanation of race in the Southern realignment. Future research should look at the use of racial terms in presidential platforms in order to attain a better understanding of how religion and race have evolved over time. I predict that racial language peaked around the Civil Rights era, and as racial issues became less salient moving forward, the use of these terms decreased in the Republican Party's platform. Ultimately, these race issues were replaced by an emphasis on religious issues that were more conducive to electoral gains because race issues and divisive racial language were no longer perceived as advantageous in nationwide elections. This is not to say that emphasizing race issues would have ceased to resonate in the Southern states altogether, but that this emphasis would have negative electoral consequences in the Republican Party's non-Southern voting bloc.

Furthermore, the results of this research only point toward nationwide presidential elections and their results cannot be extrapolated for lower level elections on the state and local level. Similar research could be performed on state and local elections in the Southern states to attempt to further generalize our results. Another way to further develop this study would be to present several case studies of important elections during this timeframe. Deep dives into these individual elections can better articulate how religion was being implemented through media and public speeches, outside of the party platform. These studies could be integrated with the

statistical analysis in order to provide depth and breadth to the temporal study of Southern realignment that statistical analysis cannot provide on its own.

Ultimately, this research presents a new narrative to explain Southern realignment that does not cast out the role of race, but instead integrates the significance of religion to the preexisting literature. It is imperative that preconceived views of historical analysis do not become stagnated by the existing status quo and instead, are continually dissected for gaps and lapses in their conceptualization. It has been long accepted that racial issues facilitated the eventual realignment of Southerners to the Republican party, and why this is not inherently incorrect it only illustrates a morsel of the full picture. These racial beliefs have long existed in the South, but so have predilections to other conservative social preferences based in a cultural landscape largely defined by religion (Olson 2008). Race was the first social issue that drove a wedge between the Southern voters, but it was only the beginning. The real Southern realignment did not truly solidify until the Reagan Revolution and the induction of the New Right that emphasized social preferences based in Christianity that deeply divided the nation.

The Civil Rights Era presented Republican strategists with the original game plan for recruiting disaffected Southern voters, who had previously identified as Democrats based on economic factors. Republican Party elites, however, knew that while the voting dichotomy was largely based on economic need, they would struggle to recruit the South with a pro-business strategy. Therefore, they had to reframe the conversation around social issues, and the best way to maximize Southern voters and stay competitive in nationwide elections in modernity was to derive these issues from Christian doctrine.

This development does not mean that Southern voters no longer hold strong beliefs on racial issues. Instead, I propose that while these racial beliefs largely still exist in the South,

advertising and embracing these issues are not conducive to nationwide electoral success.

Attempting to emphasize or frame racial issues long after the Civil Rights era has passed may alienate Republican voters outside of the South. Republican Party strategists adjusted to the evolving cultural landscape, and during the 1980's began replacing racial issues with religious issues, because these matters remain salient in the South, while also not alienating the rest of the Republican voting coalition. This strategic adjustment provided the Republican Party with the best game plan for remaining competitive in presidential elections by emphasizing a religious ideology that is far more politically correct in a national context.

I propose that Republican Party elite's modern Southern strategy has been successful in engaging Southern voters and has constructed a new social identity that merges Christianity and Republicanism. This identity has become so engrained in Southern society that as Frank (2004) points out, the working class has been influenced to vote against their own economic interest and instead focus on strategically formed social values. This research proposes that Republican Party elites have used religion to recruit voters whose social and political identity is integrally linked to their religion. Furthermore, they are able to maintain these voters without providing economic incentives. The implications of such a shift as previously proposed by Miller and Schofield (2003) presents a divergent conceptualization of voters' utility maximization, deviating from an economic calculus to a social one.

Ultimately, this research suggests that the Republican's modern success in the South and in a broader sense the Southern realignment as a whole is due in large part to their capacity to present themselves as the Christian party. This moniker holds exceptional weight, especially in the South where I propose that political and religious identities have been largely conjoined into a singular identity. Wherein a strong Christian equates to a strong Republican, the significance of

this political identity is that it is not dependent on perpetually evolving economic and political contexts. The mercurial nature of these conditions does not endanger the loyalty that comes from a shared religious identity. Changing positions on major political issues like free trade or military intervention are secondary concerns in comparison to maintaining the perception of being the Christian party. As long as this association persists the Republican Party will continue to maintain the intense loyalty of a significant sect of the Southern electorate regardless of changing contexts. This is in large part, because these voters perceive their votes as having religious justifications which far outweighs any economic or political reasonings that are dependent on an ephemeral political environment.

Future research needs to analyze how such a shift could affect the perception of social identities across the United States along with the divisions these identities create. Even more pertinent, there needs to be analyses of the subsequent ramifications of an electorate that no longer protects its own economic interest. Along with the electoral advantages that come from consolidating the religious identity of an electorate's largest religious sect. It is crucial that moving forward the role of religion is not overlooked in the Southern realignment. Nor can it be overlooked in the broader, contemporary voting calculi, especially as social identity continues to become more prevalent in modern American politics.

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APPENDIX A
DATA SOURCES

Presidential Platforms- Public Transcripts made available by The American Presidency Project/

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/people/other/republican-party-platforms> (last accessed December 1, 2019)

Voting Data - Provided by The American National Election Studies/

<https://electionstudies.org/> (last accessed December 1, 2019)

Misery Index- Data obtained from Quandl/

<https://www.quandl.com/data/USMISERY/INDEX-United-States-Misery-Index> (last accessed Jan 20, 2020)

APPENDIX B
RELIGIOUS TERMINOLOGY SELECTION PROCESS

In my attempt to measure the level of religiosity in a party's ideology using party platforms, it became apparent that thoughtfully selecting religious terms would be imperative to the research's reliability and validity. To begin with I laid out clearly religious terms like God, bible, church, Christian, pray, creed, faith, and religion or religious. After the initial list of clearly religious terms I chose political terms that have strong religious connotations in particular the issues pertaining to sex and abortion. The final term and ultimately one of the most important was values, this term began to emerge a lot in the Reagan era of the 1980's and this term held very strong religious connotations by pointing toward a shared value system largely based in Christian philosophy. This term has a few variations all with similar meanings like traditional values or family values, which calls back to America's Christian roots as Reagan promoted and the focus on these values has become a mainstay for Republicans since Reagan.

After selecting the terms each occurrence was checked in the context of the platform to ensure its meaning was religious and that it was a conservative mention based in Christianity not in a pluralist view of religion. To be certain, terms like values, faith, and sex have multiple uses. For instance, values appears in the 2008 platform as mentions of home values were pertinent during the housing crisis that was occurring, obviously these mentions were not counted. Faith has been used as having faith in the American people which was also not counted while sex can be a very generic dichotomous term with no religious connotations. The political terms surrounding sex and abortion issues were counted when mentions were based in conservative views on religion, these mentions were not relegated to only the Republican Party. Specifically, the Democrats have conservative religious mentions counted during Clinton's 1990 elections because the platform states a need to make abortions rare. Sex issues first appeared for Republicans during the George H.W. Bush presidency regarding gays in the military while these religious mentions continued to increase over time as same sex marriage became more emphasized. Democrats took a secular stance on this issue when they were willing to, so their mentions were not counted. Abortion is a similar story as Reagan promoted a strong conservative stance on abortion deeply tied to religion that has persisted for Republican candidates ever since. While largely, the Democratic Party has promoted more secular views outside of the Clinton elections.

It was important that both party's use of terminology was measured equally in order to ascertain their level of religiosity and therefore not taint the key explanatory variable which was the Republican religious differential in the use of religious terminology. It should be noted that my list was conservatively constructed as to not present terms that might have meanings outside of religion, this means however that there may have been religious terms that were not studied. However, if anything, I expect that these terms would have only enhanced my results as there was a near uniform increase in the Republican religious differential for all religious terms over time. So, any omitted terms that should have been counted would have likely increased the total Republican religious differential over time.