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Battleground States and Sectional Politics:
How Parties Transform in Response to Electoral College Incentives, 1832-2016

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

by

Lee Elton Dionne

Committee in charge:

Professor Zoltan L. Hajnal, Chair
Professor Samuel Kernell
Professor Steven P. Erie
Professor Mark Hendrickson
Professor Seth J. Hill
Professor Gary C. Jacobson

2020

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2020

For Morgan

Bearing in mind that about seventy years ago, two great political parties were first formed in this country, that Thomas Jefferson was the head of one of them, and Boston the head-quarters of the other, it is both curious and interesting that those supposed to descend politically from the party opposed to Jefferson should now be celebrating his birthday in their own original seat of empire, while those claiming political descent from him have nearly ceased to breathe his name everywhere.

Abraham Lincoln, *Letter to Henry L. Pierce & others* (1859)

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Dionne_01_Sectional_Politics_Issue_List.xls

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I am forever grateful to the members of my dissertation committee for their insights and feedback: Sam Kernell, Steve Erie, Mark Hendrickson, Seth Hill, Gary Jacobson and chair Zoltan Hajnal. I also want to thank Amy Bridges for commenting on drafts and thinking through the many issues with me. To the extent this dissertation sheds useful light on its subject, it is due to them. The errors in analysis are my own, however.

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Morgan not only helped with coding and research; she made all the sacrifices that a working spouse must make to support their partner in graduate studies. She never complained, even when we carted home a dozen Gilded Age tomes of Appleton's Cyclopedia from the library in a wheelbarrow.

My son, Gael, deserves a great deal of credit for providing the comic relief—as ever.

I thank my parents and grandparents for instilling in me a curiosity about history and its importance for the present.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Battleground States and Sectional Politics:
How Parties Transform in Response to Electoral College Incentives, 1832-2016

by

Lee Elton Dionne

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California San Diego, 2020

Professor Zoltan L. Hajnal, Chair

The Democratic Party, once the party of southern slavery and farmers, has become the progressive party of the northern coastal states, while the Republican Party, once the party of Lincoln and northern industry, has become the party of southern and western states in presidential elections. Understanding how this happened promises to tell us something fundamental about American party politics. James Rowe left clues for us in his famous memorandum advising Truman in 1947. Rowe told Truman to explicitly “ignore” the South and push for liberal New Deal policies and civil rights. His policy prescriptions followed

from studying the results of the 1944 election and determining that northern coastal states would hold the balance of power in 1948. Truman went on to win one the most improbable victories in history.

Give James Rowe his due for shrewd analysis, but even he acknowledged that it was "old-hat" at the time. He was referring not to the content of the policies he recommended, but to the strategy of crafting regionally appropriate policies for battleground states. More recently, Donald Trump's victory may have hinged on the appeal of economic nationalism in the Rust Belt, where manufacturing jobs have been hit hardest. As with Truman in 1948, Trump jettisoned longstanding party orthodoxy in order to win a majority in the Electoral College. The presidents and the policies are different, and so are the historical contexts. Nonetheless, the underlying strategy is the same. What Rowe called "old-hat" may in fact be a primary impetus for national party change.

Do Electoral College incentives (ECI) explain changes in party policies? This dissertation evaluates the relationship between ECI and party platforms to answer this question. It does so with unprecedented scope and rigor by considering all elections since 1832 and developing empirically valid approaches for identifying key states and translating them into policy signals for the parties to follow. Party platforms prove to be highly responsive to ECI in the statistical analysis. The results establish that ECI are a plausible driver of party change.

Chapter One:
Electoral College Incentives
and the Puzzle of Party Change

Executive Summary: The transformation of the Democratic and Republican parties is an enduring puzzle in the study of party development. It is not simply that the parties have changed in response to new interest groups or voters, or that their respective bases of support have shifted over time. The bases of the party swapped, at least in geographic terms, with the Democrats gravitating toward the northern states where the Republicans had once been strong, and the Republicans shifting south to states that were solidly Democratic for more than a century. Electoral College incentives (ECI) may help us better understand the changes that have occurred. The Electoral College encourages the parties to effectively trade support in safe states for critical support in battleground states. The unit rule makes large majorities within safe states irrelevant to the outcome, while adding to the weight of more closely-contested states. This structural incentive is sufficiently strong that it should regularly motivate party change. This idea will be tested against the record of national party platforms. National party platforms are strategic rhetoric in presidential elections, which makes them an ideal forum for ECI.

1.1 Introduction

The greatest and most important puzzle in the study of American Political Development is party change. The Democrats were the party of slavery and segregation for more than a hundred years– today they are the party of northern progressives and racial minorities. The Republican Party conquered the South under Abraham Lincoln, and oversaw its Reconstruction– today the Grand Old Party represents southern conservatives in national politics. These trajectories defy what we know, or think we know, about political parties. The contemporary understanding of parties is an intersection of interests linked by a common ideology and advocating on behalf of sincerely-held policy preferences (Cohen et al 2008). That sounds plausible, but it is not obvious how such a definition can square with the transformations we observe in the American party system. Southern conservatives and northern liberals have switched parties. This stylized fact is convincingly reflected in our presidential elections, which pit a solid Republican South against a solid Democratic North. To better understand party change we should examine forces that can pull a party away from its base, leading it to advocate for interests and voters outside the existing coalition.

Past efforts to unravel this Gordian Knot have tended to emphasize the potential for alternative policy dimensions to take hold of the national agenda and drive voter alignments and realignments (Key 1955; Burnham 1970; Sundquist 1983; Carmines and Stimson 1989). Dimensions touching on economics, foreign affairs, good government reform or race have stood out as likely candidates due to their historical relevance– regional or sectional alignments, also (Bateman and Lapinski 2016; Caughey and Schickler 2016; Lewis 2019). Taking this view of party change suggests that contemporary polarization may give way when these alternative policy dimensions once again take over the issue space– the politics of inequality, for example (see Oesch 2008; Pontusson and Rueda 2010; Walley 2017). That is plausible, particularly in light of possible overlap between blue collar supporters of Democratic-Socialist Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump (Walley 2017). But there is also reason for skepticism. Between 2000 and 2020, the United

States witnessed rising inequality, suffered major corruption scandals in government and business, waged two of its longest and least popular wars, and found its politics ever more clearly organized along an urban-rural divide (Kelly and Lobao 2019; Gimpel et al 2020).

The alternative dimensions that should spawn voter realignments are and have been politically relevant. Yet polarization between the parties on the liberal-conservative dimension persists, and no one would say that the Democratic Party is closer to being a conservative party in 2020 than in 2000, or that the Republican Party is closer to being a liberal party. That should have occurred if the reshuffling of liberal and conservative voters in response to these alternative policy dimensions was an important part of our political reality. Experience is teaching us that these dimensions are not independent of the liberal-conservative dimension, or not any longer (Abramowitz 2010; Jeong and Quirk 2019). Urban voters are systematically more liberal than rural ones (Kelly and Lobao 2019); supporters of good government reforms are more liberal than opponents (see Polsby 1983; Smith 1990; Masket 2016); and opponents of defense spending and military conflicts are more liberal than supporters of the same (Deudney and Ikenberry 2017). If the salience of these alternative dimensions motivated party realignments in the past, they do not seem to motivate any substantial change now. Maybe they never did. The central claims of realignment theory may not line up with the historical record very well (Mayhew 2002).

1.2 Coalition-Building and Policy Appeals

Perhaps coalition-building can cut through this knot better than emphasizing voter realignments on alternative issue dimensions. Taking this view, voters and interests with preferences that are unaligned in many issue areas may nonetheless find themselves sharing the same party label in response to the coalition-building efforts of political entrepreneurs (Aldrich 1995; Bensel 2000; Engstrom and Kernell 2014). These politicians and party insiders do not not necessarily draw from a new ideological dimension or articulate a common agenda that unites their supporters. More often, they build a winning

coalition by making strategic appeals to different voters and interest groups. Consider Donald Trump's appeal to labor with protectionist policies in 2016. Labor has traditionally been part of the liberal coalition. Pursuing labor came at the expense of established interests in the GOP favoring free trade, but it did not signal a liberal shift in the attitudes of most party members. Nor did this effort result in the abandonment of conservative positions on other issues in the platform. Protectionism was rewarded at the ballot box in critical Rust Belt states, and may become a lasting force in the party to the extent it provides a strategic advantage or in time becomes a part of the base.

Coalition-building allows for parties to make gradual and contingent changes from one election cycle to the next that can add up to substantial party change over time. It suggests that strategic appeals to voters and key interests outside the regular coalition may be common in the historical record, rather than rare. Burnham dismissed the possibility that incremental change could play a role in party development by assuming that change occurred principally in critical elections. This claim is not supported by the historical record (Gerring 1998; Mayhew 2002). Whereas Burnham studied change at the level of party systems, coalition-building suggests that better understanding the strategic context as it evolves from one election to the next will generate the most leverage over the puzzle. The strategic context constrains the political entrepreneur and limits the range of policy alternatives she is likely to articulate. There are two constraints that are unique to presidential elections in the United States. The first is the need to win a majority in the Electoral College, a factor which leads parties to strategically prioritize the median or decisive electoral vote rather than the median voter as in a district election.

The second unique constraint in presidential elections has to do with geography. States in the same region tend to break for the same candidate. In fact more than 80% of states within a region typically agree on their preferred presidential candidate, so it is natural for the parties to approach presidential elections in regional terms. A path to the presidency might well be expressed in terms of a party or candidate's projected strength in critical regions (see Marcus 1971; Cohen et al 2008). In the 2020 Democratic Party primaries, candidates Amy Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg repeatedly brandished their cre-

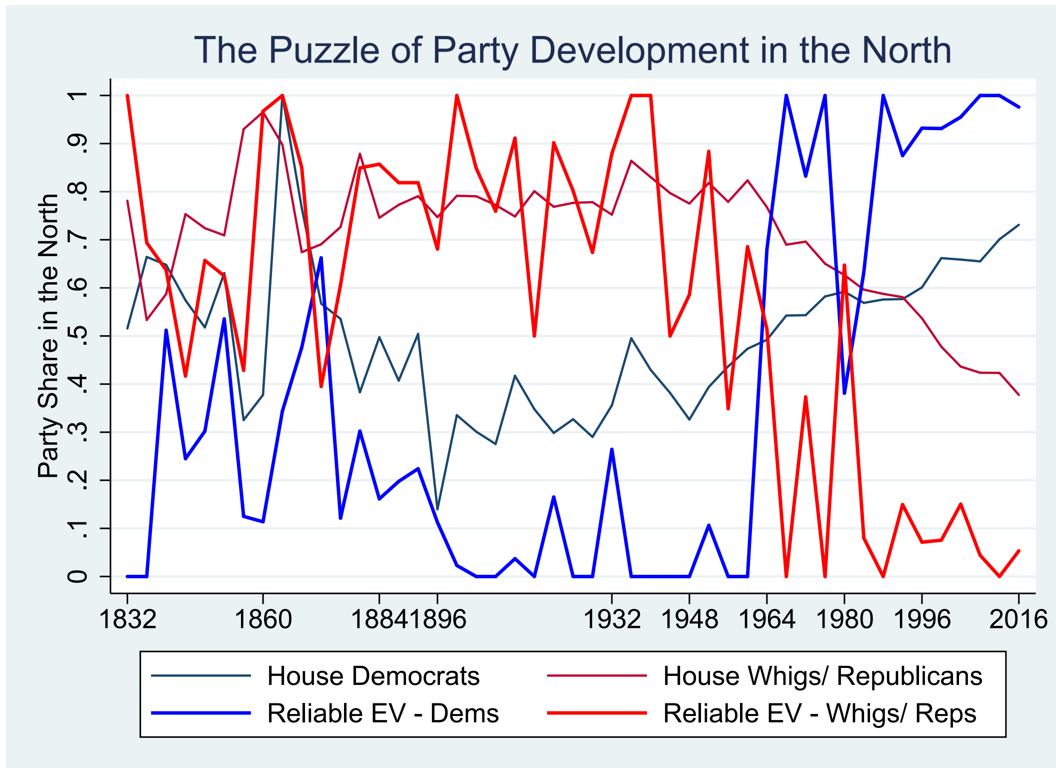

Figure 1.1: Party Resources in the North

dentials as representatives of the Rust Belt in making the case they were the most electable candidates. In the same primaries, Joe Biden won a large victory on Super Tuesday that reflected his strong base of regional support among Democrats in southern states. His subsequent victory in Michigan demonstrated an appeal to Rust Belt Democrats that all but ended the primary season. These geographic constraints are certainly nothing new for presidential aspirants. Catholic John Kennedy demonstrated his viability as a candidate by winning in Protestant West Virginia in 1960, which was taken to mean that Kennedy could win in the South (White 2009).

The enduring force of geography is evident in Figure 1, which shows the extent to which the Democratic Party and Republican Party have drawn strength from northern coastal and Great Lakes states (the "North") in congressional and presidential elections over time. Until the Civil Rights Movement, the Grand Old Party drew the bulk or all of its support from these states. The Democrats, in contrast, drew little or no reliable support in the region throughout the same period. This changed rapidly in the 1960s. The parties competed for control of the North over the next generation, a lopsided contest that

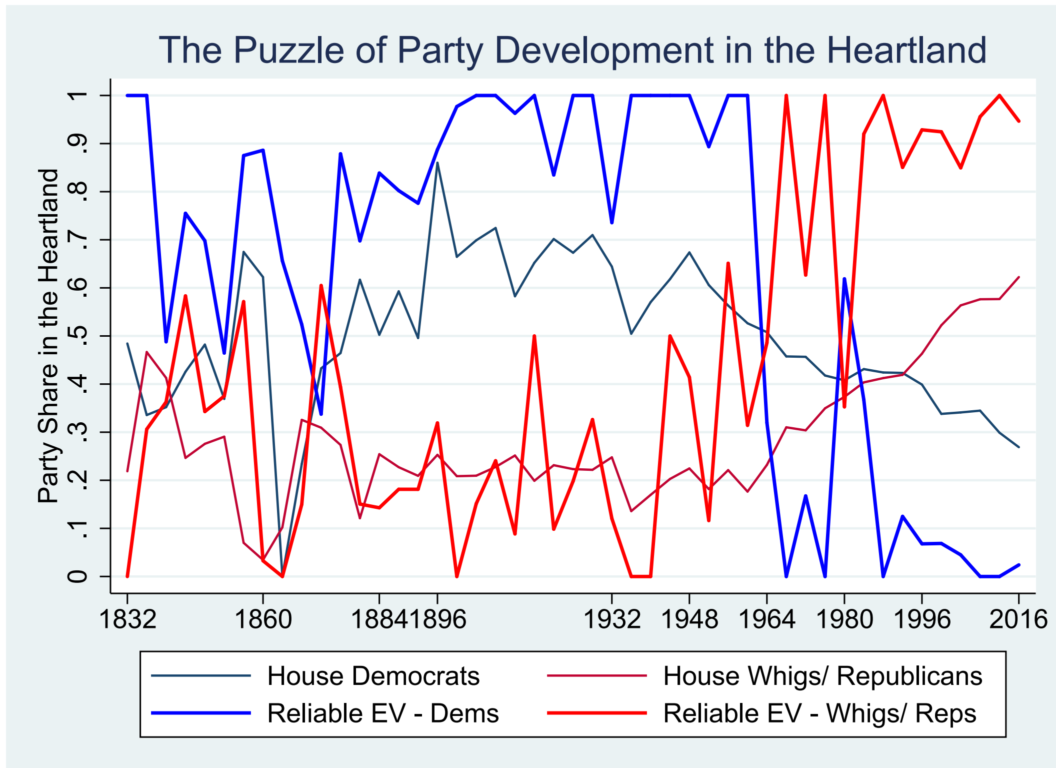

Figure 1.2: Party Resources in the Heartland

the Democrats conclusively won in the 1990s. Now the Democratic Party draws all or nearly all of its reliable support from the region in presidential elections. The vast bulk of its congressional seats now come from the region as well. The Democratic Party sits in command of the congressional and presidential resources of the North in a way that is comparable to the Republican Party of the Gilded Age and the early Progressive Era. This alignment with the most liberal region of the country is intimately connected to its emergence as the liberal national party. The Republicans underwent a similar transformation in the West and South, and became the conservative national party. Figure 2 depicts this transformation, treating the West and South together as the "Heartland".

A starting point for this investigation is the idea that national party strategy and sectional politics offer leverage over the question of party change. When the party wants to attract more support in the North, it offers corresponding policies that tend on the whole to be more liberal. When the target is the South or West (the Heartland), it offers policy appeals that further a set of interests that tend to be more conservative. The ideological makeup of the parties would then change as their appeals to different sections of the

country were successful and translated into political power. More specifically, this inquiry investigates whether policy appeals in party platforms respond to the incentives of the Electoral College (ECI) in presidential elections. Presidential elections command the attention and resources of the national parties every four years, and it is well known that a small set of battleground states take center stage in these elections. Parties can turn what they know about these states into policy signals, shifting North or Heartland as these sections respectively predominate among the battleground states. Evidence that they do so on a regular basis would justify this new understanding of party change.

This is hardly the first time that ECI have been linked to instances of party change. Both James (2000) and Ware (2006) make the case that the Democratic Party underwent significant changes in response to ECI that were important for its development. Neither scholar goes so far as to argue that ECI motivate party change on a regular basis, or that parties respond to them in a predictable way; nor do they apply their arguments to the Republican Party. These qualifications allow these scholars to present their findings in the proper light and avoid exaggeration. However, it is not clear why ECI would influence some elections but not others, or one major party but not the other. Both parties should always prefer winning the White House to losing it– we do not have a theory leading us to suspect otherwise. This is especially true for the presidential candidates and their individual supporters. Nor is there a theory explaining why one party should care about battleground states more than the other. Both parties have good reasons to build winning coalitions in presidential elections by appealing to voters and interests in battleground states. It follows that ECI should generally motivate change. This study will determine whether the parties systematically respond to them in their national party platforms.

Confirmation that the parties respond to ECI would not account for polarization, itself a much more recent phenomenon than the Electoral College. But it would establish an enduring motive for party change in connection with presidential elections, and evidence of their influence. This motive may lead the national parties to make policy appeals that cross the sectional divide in the future. If so, polarization may erode. Over a long enough period of time, the parties may even switch places in the American political econ-

omy again. Such an idea may seem far-fetched at the moment, but perhaps we tend to ignore the importance of strategic policy appeals at the time they are made. Bill Clinton ran in part on trade liberalization, a Republican issue since Ronald Reagan and a policy traditionally favored by the South and West. The impact of NAFTA and other trade pacts in retrospect does not appear unimportant– Trump won in Rust Belt states hit hardest by the loss of manufacturing jobs in unionized sectors (see Hakobyan and McLaren 2016; McQuarrie 2017). If this shift proves as enduring as the Democrat's support for trade liberalization since Clinton, it may prove equally important. Democrats may leverage their support for free trade to make inroads with farmers and agricultural interests hurt by protectionist policies– in the twenty-first just as in the nineteenth century.

1.3 Realignment Theory and Party Development

The longstanding account for party change linked dissatisfaction with the incumbent party to the emergence of new national issues. Walter Dean Burnham (1970) began by observing that party systems are characterized by stable voting patterns, such that the same party tends to win in most places. He went on to argue that victory makes parties insensitive to the policy preferences of rank-and-file members, who demand extraordinary change every thirty or forty years. This extraordinary demand for change creates an opening for the out-party to woo voters away from the incumbent, but only if they respond effectively. The out-party cannot respond effectively without changing itself fundamentally in critical elections, which prompts a massive realignment across the population as a whole (Key 1955). The resulting equilibrium represents a new party system that is also likely to endure for thirty or forty years. Burnham identified critical elections in 1832, 1860, 1896 and 1932, although he speculated that 1964 might warrant inclusion in time. A modern extension of this would lead us to ask whether 1996, 2000 or 2004 might be considered critical as well. Perhaps one of these elections is at least partially responsible for the acceleration of polarization witnessed since then.

The problem is that a case can be made for any of these as critical elections–

or for none of them. It is unclear whether contemporary polarization is the result of a single critical presidential election, but it seems unlikely. Polarization makes sense as an extension of trends that were well-established before the outcome of these elections (Hill and Tausanovitch 2017). Republicans had been losing congressional seats in the North for some time, and gaining them in the West and South (Aistrup 2015). Democrats had been moving in the opposite direction, at least since the Civil Rights Movement and arguably since the New Deal (Ware 2006). Similar problems arise when considering each of the critical elections Burnham identifies. The Republicans did not take a new position on slavery in 1860; they restated their position from 1856 and won (Whig/Republican Party Platforms). Even in the case of FDR in 1932, much of the same agenda had been espoused under Al Smith in 1928 (Democratic Party Platforms). The three biggest criticism of critical election theory are its inability to distinguish between critical and other elections without the crutch of thirty or forty year periods, its failure to foresee the emergence of novel issue positions, and inaccurate predictions about mass changes in partisanship in particular election years (Mayhew 2002).

There is no other general theory of party change. A general theory must: (1) identify the motive for change; (2) identify the mechanism or mechanisms by which parties change; (3) accurately describe changes observed in the short-term; and (4) be conformable with what is known about the development of the parties over the long-term. Realignment theory attempted to address each of these criteria, but it failed to satisfy any of them in the end. The motive is supposedly the growing and recurring divide between the preferences of ordinary party members and their political representatives, but it is not clear why parties should lack the motivation or be unable to make themselves accountable to their supporters– especially if the predictable outcome of failing to do so is the eventual loss of power. The mechanism is supposedly out-party politics every thirty or forty years, but what is so different about out-party politics in other elections? Burnham assumes a great deal of stability in the short-term, punctuated by significant and rapid change in critical elections. This is a clear prediction about the pattern we should observe in the historical record, but the prediction appears to be wrong.

Scholars after Burnham focused on better understanding change within particular issue areas, the importance of grassroots influences, the democratization of the South, coalition-building strategies at different levels of government, and the consequences of institutional reforms. Synthesizing the numerous advances across these subjects provides a clearer picture of the changes that have occurred and the interests they served along the way. The debate about why the Democratic Party took the lead on civil rights when it did has yielded particularly valuable insights. Carmines and Stimson (1989) argued that political entrepreneurs within the Democratic Party took the lead on civil rights in the 1960s, at a time when either party could have become its primary vehicle. The best reason to take this notion seriously is that the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act passed with the strong support of GOP senators from northern states. Feinstein and Schickler (2008) push back on this interpretation by showing that Democratic platforms in the North advanced civil rights more forcefully than their Republican counterparts after World War II.

Were Democratic Party leaders being strategic when they advanced civil rights at the national level in the 1960s, or were they responding to the grassroots? Probably both. A better way to frame this question might be to ask, why did national party leaders find it advantageous to respond to the demands of northern Democrats at this particular time? One answer that could synthesize these perspectives is that the North was well-represented among battleground states during the period in question. Party elites then would have had strategic reasons to privilege the grassroots preferences of Democrats from one section of the country over the other. As shown in the next chapter, northern coastal states like California, New York and Massachusetts in fact exerted more influence between 1948 and 1964 as battleground states than in all but a few periods of our history. Advancing civil rights was clearly the right thing to do, but it was also timely from the point of view of winning the support of northern liberals in these critical states. A famous memorandum from within the Truman campaign makes it clear that at least some party strategists were sensitive to these implications (Rowe Memorandum).

Another illuminating theme in the literature is the incomplete democratization of

the South, in both the present and periods past. Restrictions on suffrage and inhospitable voter registration practices tend to find a more fertile home in the South, and the reasons can be nuanced and difficult if not impossible to pin down (Key 1950; Kousser 1974; Schuit and Rogowski 2017; see discussion of voter ID laws in Hajnal et al 2017). It is rooted in, and yet not as simple as, excluding African-Americans, because many of the same or similar techniques were used to suppress voting by the poorest whites before the Voting Rights Act (Mickey 2015; Herron 2017). It is certainly true that party leaders dreaded an alliance between the freed people and poor whites, and segregation made such an alliance socially unacceptable and politically irrelevant. However, segregation was likely effective for so long because populist support among whites sustained it (Ibid.; Key 1950; Vickery 1974). The Voting Rights Act enfranchised many poor whites as well as southern blacks, and the result has not been political integration. Broadly speaking, African-Americans vote Democratic and whites vote Republican today in the South (see Brown 2013; Valentino and Zhirkov 2018). This is at least plausibly attributable to entrepreneurial efforts on the part of Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon to recruit southern whites in their presidential campaigns with racially conservative politics (Kessel 1968; Aldrich 1995). Ironically, the VRA may have given right wing populism a voice it formerly did not have (Fresh 2018).

Political entrepreneurship may also drive the institutional reforms we observe in party structure and organization. Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren created the Democratic Party for the purpose of winning the White House (Remini 1963/1968). Theodore Roosevelt pushed for presidential primaries to showcase his popular appeal and improve his chances of winning the 1912 Republican nomination (Cowan 2016). FDR achieved rule changes that weakened the hold of the South over the nominating convention (Bass 1988). McGovern contributed heavily to modern primary reforms after the 1968 election, and went on to win the first contest under its rules in 1972 (Polsby 1983; Bartels 1988). More recently, Bernie Sanders and his supporters pressured the DNC to change the voting rules that apply to superdelegates– precisely because they felt the superdelegates hurt their chances in 2016. Taking account of political entrepreneurship often

gives a very different interpretation to the same political developments. Rather than the triumph of good-government reformers over the party, institutional innovation generally furthers the interests of politicians and powerful interests with a more immediate stake in winning elections (Aldrich 1995; Ware 2002; Engstrom and Kernell 2014).

The imperative to build a winning coalition that balances the interests of different groups pervades these interpretations of political history. Since doing so is a prelude to holding elective office and exercising power, coalition-building tactics are a plausible driver of party change. David Karol (2009) explains the shifting behavior of Republicans and Democrats in Congress on such issues as civil rights, fiscal policy and trade in the 1960s and 1970s as forms of coalition-building behavior. One of the interesting things to note about these examples is that standard measures of member ideology, like DW Nominate, often obscure these position changes at the party level. DW Nominate is based on member roll call voting, so strategic shifts in policy positions are invisible to the extent they reflect common party behavior (see Lewis 2019). Karol argues that policy changes in response to coalition-building tactics are likely much more common than typically recognized. Coalition-building is probably the most profitable lens through which to approach the puzzle of party change because it can account for policy shifts at the party level without assuming that sincere preferences are fundamentally changing.

Coalition-building in presidential elections plays a central role in the most prominent accounts of party change in the APD literature. In 1884, the Democrats, although a southern party, nominated New York reformer Grover Cleveland and won their first election since 1856 (Skowronek 1982; James 2000; Ware 2006; Engstrom and Kernell 2014). He pushed the party to adopt a number of positions previously associated with Republicans, including support for the protective tariff, the gold standard, civil service reform and the national regulation of railroads (Ibid.). FDR's support for centralized regulation of the economy and expansion of federal authority similarly came at the expense of interests traditionally associated with the southern base (James 2000; Ware 2006; Dunn 2010). The "Southern Strategy" of Richard Nixon followed in the footsteps– some might say the wake– of Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign, which took the party to the right (Aistrup

2015). This tactic is especially surprising since there were so few Republicans from the South in Congress at the time. Perhaps more surprising still was its success, as disaffected southern conservatives began voting Republican for president in large numbers for the first time and never turned back, although it took a generation for their behavior in congressional elections to catch up (Black and Black 2003). Does building a winning coalition in presidential elections motivate the national party to change in general?

1.4 Electoral College Incentives

This book offers and empirically evaluates a theory of party change rooted in responsiveness to Electoral College incentives (ECI). ECI should be the chief suspect in the puzzle of party change because they encourage the party to emphasize voters and interest groups in battleground states over party members in safe states. This is a result of the unit rule, one of the unintended consequences of the Electoral College. The unit rule awards all state electoral votes to the plurality winner of the state. States employ the unit rule to maintain their relevance in presidential elections (see Alexander 2019). Without the unit rule, a state like California would be more likely to deliver a net advantage to the winner of ten electoral votes instead of fifty-five. Unless other states were compelled to abandon the unit rule as well, California would lose substantial influence in presidential elections. The catch is that California is dominated by one party, at least in presidential elections (Meyerson 2020; see Kousser 2009). The Democratic candidate for president can trade support in California for support in battleground states without a serious prospect of losing any electoral votes in California. Winning an even larger majority in California provides no benefit for this candidate, so making the trade is the only move that makes sense.

This strategic logic is the same for both candidates and parties: trade votes in safe states for votes in battleground states. It has been said that 100,000 votes across three or four states made the difference in 2016 (see, e.g., Meko et al 2016; Nguyen 2016; McCormack 2016). Hillary Clinton won California by 4,000,000 votes; her campaign arguably could have traded votes in California for the Rust Belt at 40:1 and improved its odds of

winning the election. The difference between the value of a vote in a safe state and a vote in a battleground state is sufficiently great that parties are likely to respond. Moreover, the premium enjoyed by voters and interests in battleground states is a well-known and regular feature of presidential elections. Credible efforts to build a winning coalition within either party must confront this reality and demonstrate a path to victory that includes the relevant battleground states (Marcus 1971; Aldrich 1980; Cohen et al 2008). Party members revisit this task every four years, as they have done for centuries now. Both in terms of collective memory and the living experience of current party members, coalition-building in high-stakes presidential elections is familiar behavior. Campaign insiders know what they are doing (Kamarck 2015).

The best reason to link ECI to party change may be a memorandum written for Harry Truman by one such insider, James Rowe. Rowe drafted his memorandum in 1947, more than a year before the 1948 election. The Democrats had won the previous four elections under FDR, but looked vulnerable. FDR passed away in office and his new Vice President had been chosen to replace progressive Henry Wallace in 1944 as a conciliatory gesture to the South and West (CQ 2005). The war that had galvanized so much support and sustained national unity was over. The postwar economy was still unstable. Republicans won a majority in the House of Representatives in 1946 for the first time since the New Deal. The communist triumph in China was a disaster in foreign affairs, and relations with the Soviets worsened in connection with crises in Iran and Turkey. President Truman's chances of reelection in 1948 were slim to none. Rowe was skeptical that anything could be done to change the eventual outcome. He submitted his strategic memorandum with a cover letter to Budget Director Jim Webb, which Rowe signed off by observing (p. 128): "I do not know whether Mr. Truman would be elected if everything in this memo were done to perfection. But I <u>do</u> <u>know</u> [emphasis in the original] that if no attempt is made to do the major suggestions, us Democrats ain't got a chance in hell!"

The major suggestions in the memorandum were to advance a significantly more liberal agenda on civil rights, immigration and New Deal policies, along with maintaining price supports and credit programs for farmers. The racial liberalism Rowe advocated is

especially surprising in light of the party's southern base. 1947 preceded the Civil Rights Movement and the Voting Rights Act. The Democratic Party controlled almost every congressional district and state government in the South, and its southern wing defended the system of segregation. None of this was lost on Rowe, who recognized that the strength of the southern base in Congress did not extend to presidential elections because the southern states were not expected to be battleground states. In fact, large coastal states like California, Massachusetts and New York were expected to decide the election. The presumptive Republican nominee, Thomas Dewey, recognized the same thing and was advocating for fair employment committees to address racial discrimination. Rowe observed that the election dynamics were such that the South could not possibly defect and vote for Dewey (p. 130): "It is inconceivable that any policies initiated by the Truman Administration no matter how 'liberal' could so alienate the South in the next year that it would revolt. As always, the South can be considered safely Democratic. And in formulating national policy it can be safely ignored."

Truman went on to advance the most liberal civil rights policies in the Democratic Party to that point and achieve a stunning upset. Rowe's memorandum has been credited with paving the path to the most improbable win in presidential election history. But Rowe himself denied that the memorandum contained any original analysis (p. 128): "There is nothing new; it is old-hat." This cryptic note cannot mean that advocating liberal civil rights policies in presidential elections was "old-hat"– it had not been done before, at least in the Democratic Party. Rowe meant that the strategy of targeting policy appeals to key voters and interests in battleground states was "old-hat." This suggests we may find evidence of similar strategies in other elections, perhaps on a regular basis. What may have been "old-hat" for James Rowe could be an important theory of party change that has been missing from our understanding of American political development. This is an exciting possibility because change in response to ECI can explain why parties might adopt positions on behalf of new constituents without assuming that the underlying preferences of party members have changed.

1.5 ECI Stress and Negative Responsiveness

Responding effectively to ECI should be stressful for the party to the extent it implies abandoning established positions or privileged interests. In particular, this stress should be greatest when ECI point to a section or region of the country where the party is particularly weak. If, as was common between 1948 and 1964, the expected battleground states going into 2020 were California, New York and Massachusetts, ECI would create more stress for the Republican Party than the Democratic Party. In this alternative universe, the Democrats would profit from a liberal agenda, while the Republicans would struggle to accommodate ECI on a host of issues, ranging from abortion and gun policy to immigration and LGBTQ rights and redistribution. It is probably unrealistic to expect the GOP to converge on the positions of the Democratic Party in this instance, but that is not the only form of responsiveness we should anticipate. Negative responsiveness, by which parties take especially controversial policies off of the agenda in line with ECI, is perhaps more likely here. We would then expect the Republicans in our scenario to reduce the emphasis of policy positions that are especially at odds with ECI– pro-life and other conservative positions, for example.

Two studies of state party platforms indicate that negative responsiveness is a common response to sectional stress of this kind, or was in the past. Bensel (2000) and Engstrom and Kernell (2014) separately analyzed nineteenth century state party platforms in connection with party development in the Gilded Age. This was a time when the Republican Party represented northern interests, including those associated with the protective tariff, the gold standard and the Civil War veterans pension (Skocpol 1995). The GOP clashed with the Democrats of the Solid South for the hearts and minds, and electoral votes, of interests and voters in the West. The Democrats tended to favor free trade, silver currency, and, at least in the South, oppose the veterans pension as an exorbitant expenditure– it did not help that veterans of the Confederate forces were ineligible, as were their dependents. Western constituencies had good reasons to support silver and free trade, not unlike their southern counterparts– silver promised to expand the money supply

and reduce the cost of repaying debt; and, free trade policies would make farm equipment less expensive and potentially open foreign markets to agricultural exports. On the other hand, many settlers in western states were Union veterans and pension recipients.

The parties responded to sectional politics in the West primarily by downplaying positions that conflicted with policies favored by special interests in the region, and only sometimes by affirmatively embracing a position associated with the other party. The GOP was more likely to remain silent on currency matters in western party platforms than it was to fully embrace silver, although there were instances of this as well. The Democrats, in contrast, said little about their opposition to Civil War pensions– a position that often fell short of endorsing expansion of the incipient welfare state. In New York, the undisputed center of the commercial universe at the time, the Democrats went against their party and explicitly supported the gold standard. Elsewhere in the North, the Democrats either softened their support for silver or omitted it from their platforms entirely. Engstrom and Kernell conclude that negative responsiveness was much more common in Gilded Age platforms than affirmative responsiveness. This is consistent with the idea that the parties care about policy as well as responding effectively to electoral signals.

Conceptually, negative responsiveness should temper any naive expectation that the parties will converge on policy in response to ECI. The parties may respond to the same incentive in different ways, depending on the sectional strength of the party in relation to ECI. The party of the North should have a comparatively easier time advocating for policies that advance a pluralistic welfare state than the party of the Heartland, which in turn should have an easier time adopting positions that privilege agriculture, extraction industries and religious institutions (Bensel 1984). When ECI points to the other section of the country, the parties should generally be prepared to soften their positions, but not necessarily to abandon them for the positions affiliated with the other party. Evidence that they did would suggest that parties are not motivated by sincere policy concerns, or at least that they have not always been so. Existing analyses of party rhetoric, including Gerring's (1998) analysis of national party platforms through 1996, largely preclude

this possibility. Without taking account of negative responsiveness, we might miss the primary avenue through which ECI influence party positions.

1.6 Normative Implications of Studying the Electoral College

For many Americans, the Electoral College has come to represent the failure of the founders to give democracy its proper place in the constitutional order. Placing a screen of local elites between the popular vote and the White House is an odious way to dampen popular impulses, and worthy of immediate reform in the eyes of many (Edwards 2019; Burin 2017). For certain others, albeit a minority, the Electoral College stands for the wisdom of the founders in restraining demagoguery and the tyranny of the majority. A common refrain of theirs is that voters in New York and Los Angeles should not be allowed to pick the president year after year. These are both stylized interpretations of the Electoral College. There is a grain of truth in each viewpoint, but each also evinces serious misunderstandings about the origins and operation of the institution. The most serious misunderstanding they share in common is the idea that the Electoral College is faithful to some institutional ideal shared by the founders, such that it tells us something about their attitudes toward democracy and popular rule. But Madison's convention notes leave no doubt that the institution was a compromise between direct election of the president and legislative appointment as in a parliamentary system (Madison 1966; Johnson 2018).

Legislative appointment of the executive was the proposed rule in each of the Virginia and the New Jersey plans that framed the constitutional convention. However, James Wilson of Pennsylvania argued for popular election in the first days of the gathering in Philadelphia (Ibid.). Gouverneur Morris, also of Pennsylvania, supported popular election on the grounds that it would render the president "the guardian of the people, even the lower classes, agst. Legislative tyranny . . ." (Madison 1966, pp. 322-3). This and other proposals like state electors were consistently defeated at the convention until the Great Compromise was struck on July 16, under which states would enjoy (or suffer, as the case may be) equal representation in the Senate. Madison strenuously opposed the

compromise, stressing that it would impede the creation of a truly national government (Robertson 2003; Wirls 2003). Three days later, Madison declared his opposition to legislative appointment of the executive and gave his support for the first time to the idea of state electors. Although he preferred direct election of the president, Madison recognized that the South would never accept it because – on account of property qualifications and the disenfranchisement of enslaved people– the right to vote was much more widespread in the North (Madison 1966, p. 327):

> The people at large [directly electing the executive] was in his opinion the fittest in itself. It would be as likely as any that could be devised to produce an Executive Magistrate of distinguished Character . . . There was one difficulty however of a serious nature attending an immediate choice by the people. The right of suffrage was much more diffusive in the Northern than the Southern States; and the latter could have no influence in the election on the score of the Negroes. The substitution of electors obviated this difficulty and seemed on the whole to be liable to the fewest objections.

The creation of state electors under the control of state legislatures addressed this problem by tying state representation to the size of the congressional delegation rather than voter turnout, a rule that effectively extended the Three-Fifths Compromise to presidential elections, while allowing for democratic methods of appointment in northern states (Johnson 2018). The Electoral College was, in Madison's words, "liable to the fewest objections" rather than the first choice of any delegation. The effort to interpret the institution as a reflection of the founders' alleged mistrust of the people is fundamentally misplaced. The founders anticipated that popular elections for president would occur, even with state electors (Madison 1966, p. 365). On the other hand, the Electoral College is hardly redeemed as an institutional compromise intended to exaggerate the voting influence of southern white planters over and above every other group in America. The Electoral College probably cannot tell us much about the limits of the founders' support for democracy, but it plainly illustrates the constraining power of the sectional divide between North and South over the delegates at Philadelphia.

North and South already represented two different modes of economic, political

and social organization at the close of the eighteenth century. Property qualifications generally applied throughout the former colonies, but they were much less onerous in affluent northern states such that the majority of white men were eligible to vote in many areas (Keyssar 2000). A burgeoning partisan news industry kept these voters apprised of national events and the appropriate partisan responses to them (Pasely 2001). Most of the largest cities were already in the North, where technological innovations in manufacturing and transportation were fast becoming a regular feature of life. Moreover, immigrants congregated in the northern cities and often established themselves as important voting blocs that softened or made Yankee mono-culturalism politically impractical at a fairly early date (Fogleman 1996; Wilson 1998; Wood 2011; see nineteenth century discussion in Bridges 1984; Erie 1988; Anbinder 1992). Life in the agrarian South was very different. The planter ruling class dominated politics, and their wealth consisted of human beings rather than machines (Kay and Cary 1976; Isaac 1982). Cities were few, with relatively spartan features (Smith 1987; Haynes 2012). Immigrants were discouraged by the lack of a well-developed labor market (Abramitzky and Bouston 2017). Democracy was an aristocratic ideal for some, but they did not live in it (Isaac 1982).

Madison and other founders accepted state electors after protracted debate and deliberation because it was the only agreeable method that would allow different political orders to coexist within the same nation and share in the appointment of the executive. This is not the standard account of the Electoral College, but it comes from no less an authority than James Madison– his express rationale for supporting the Electoral College is to patch over sectional differences arising from slavery. The question we need to ask is why this institution has survived the end of slavery. The answer is not for lack of trying– the Electoral College has been the target of more proposed constitutional amendments than any other subject in our history (Bugh 2010; Alexander 2019). The answer is not popularity– solid majorities of the American public consistently favor abolishing the Electoral College and replacing it with direct election of the president (Alexander 2019). Nor is it the intransigence of state governments generally to centralizing reform, or else we would never have seen the direct election of U.S. Senators. Who benefits? More to

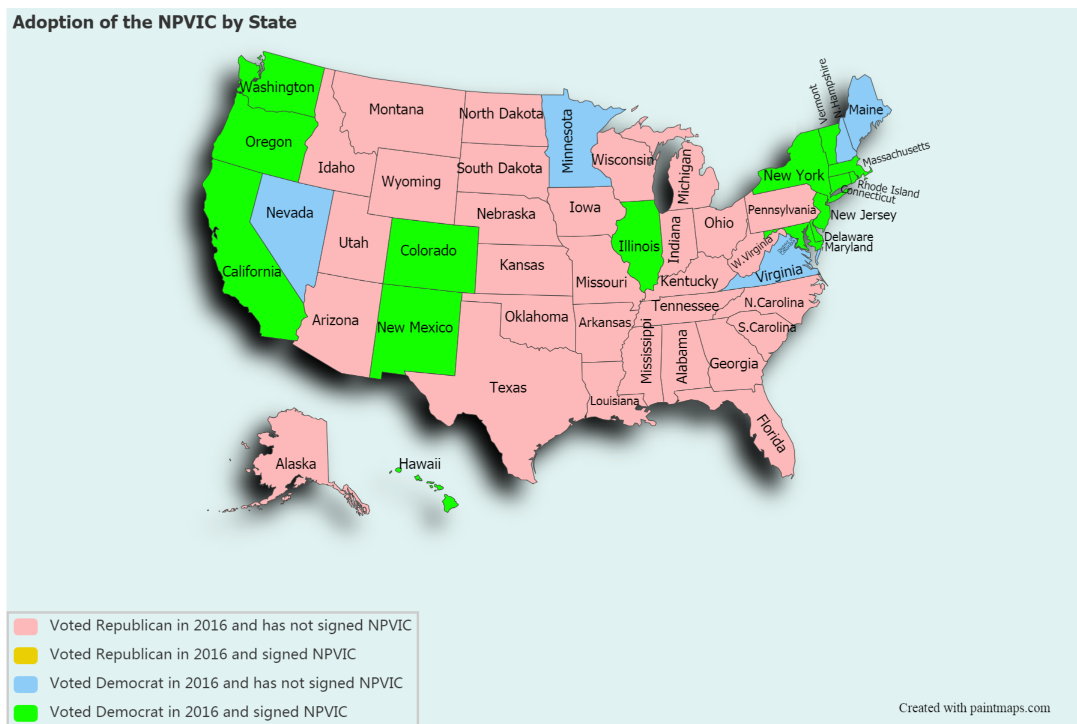

Figure 1.3: Adoption of the NPVIC and Presidential Vote in 2016

the point, who consistently benefits who is also strong enough to prevent reform?

The answer is not obvious, but we can learn something from current efforts to reform the Electoral College. The most prominent of these, and arguably the one with the greatest chance of success, is the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC). The NPVIC would obligate member states to assign their electoral votes to the candidate winning the most votes in the national election. What is so interesting about this proposal is that it would not require a constitutional amendment to enter force, at least in theory (Chang 2007). Its terms are conditional on ratification by states amounting to at least 270 electoral votes– the amount needed to win an outright majority and the presidency. The proposal has been sitting at 196 electoral votes since Oregon joined in June 2019. The states that have signed the NPVIC are highlighted in Figure 3. The regional variation it reveals is striking. 162 of the 196 electoral votes come from northern coastal states, and this represents about 95% of these states' combined strength. In sharp contrast, no southern state has agreed. Illinois is the only Great Lakes state to agree. Colorado and New Mexico are the only western signatories.

The politics of the NPVIC tell us that coastal states and other states strongly affiliated with the Democratic Party are likely to support Electoral College reform. At the same time, reform can expect headwinds in so-called ”flyover” states and other states affiliated with the Republican Party. Neither party has consistently stood for or against the Electoral College. Partisan attitudes toward reform have generally been consistent with partisan interests at different points in time. That leaves us to wrestle with the question of whether sectional differences are at the heart of the matter. Is it possible that the Electoral College endures because states in the South and West stand in the way of reform? Smaller states in these regions are not among those expected to benefit all that much from a popular vote rule. The experience of Nevada adds to the plausibility of this interpretation, where Democratic Governor Sisolak vetoed the state's NPVIC bill in 2019 because it "could diminish the role of smaller states like Nevada in national election contests" (Statement on Assembly Bill 186). He largely drew praise from Republicans and condemnation from fellow Democrats.

The Electoral College is a deviation from democracy, and deeply unpopular– yet it has its defenders. We have not understood who they are or their motivations because the institution itself is so poorly understood. Many scholars and pundits have criticized the institution for its lack of normative appeal, particularly in terms of the democratic deficit, to the exclusion of other inquiries. This haste to render judgment has made it more difficult to understand how the institution works in the first place. Our lack of understanding is reason enough to study the institution. But there are also reasons to believe that the institution may be critically important in understanding the puzzle of party development. The argument here is nothing less than that ECI generally motivate party change. The research design described below promises to render a clear verdict on the plausibility of this theory by evaluating the responsiveness of all national party platforms going back to 1844. Whether or not we observe responsiveness to ECI is important, regardless of one's personal views on the desirability of reforming the Electoral College.

1.7 Outline of the Book

Party platforms are the first place to look for evidence of responsiveness to ECI. Critics frequently point out that party platforms are strategic documents that fail to represent the sincere beliefs of rank-and-file members (see Reinhardt and Victor 2012; Fernandez-Vazquez 2014). That criticism makes sense because platforms are carefully negotiated statements that reflect the views of a select group of party members, special interests and professional politicians about how best to package the party brand for the upcoming general election campaign. Rank-and-file members do not participate directly in platform drafting, and the public in general is not the target audience. Platforms are technical documents aimed at the special interests with command of the resources required for the party to compete effectively. Although these factors weigh against substituting party platforms for public opinion polls, they make platforms an ideal place to look for evidence that party positions are sensitive to ECI. The central idea is that parties change as they make policy appeals in line with their strategic incentives in presidential elections. If we do not find evidence of this in party platforms, then ECI probably do not drive party change. If ECI do regularly influence the platform planks of the party, however, then ECI exert real pull on the party and the main idea must be taken seriously.

This study offers a falsifiable test of whether ECI influence the platform planks of the party, conditional on a number of assumptions. The first and most important of these is that ECI are accurately described. We have to know what we are looking for in order to make sense of platform content. Moreover, to ensure the integrity of the analysis, steps must be taken to avoid ad hoc rationalizations. Nothing can be falsifiable if the researcher is free to turn null findings into false positives. This has been a serious threat in the case studies motivating this inquiry. How do researchers distinguish the states that matter from the states that are less influential? How we do know that the policies in question go with the states that scholars assume are important? Addressing these problems is difficult, but it is impossible if different standards are applied to different elections. This study commits itself to a single, standard approach for every election since 1832, when the Democratic

Party held its first convention to renominate Andrew Jackson. The same approach is taken to identifying expected battleground states in 2016 as in 1832, and the same approach is taken to translate those battleground states into policy signals for the parties.

It is not sensible to argue that politics and place exist in some kind of fixed relation to one another, but it is also true that the development divide highlighted in the APD literature has in many ways characterized the American political economy throughout our history to date. That is not to deny that the political economy is changing in important ways. The scheme of sectional politics applied in this book may be invalid in a few short years, and it probably does not describe the present as well as the past. That weighs against applying it to make predictions about the trajectory of the parties in the future. The sectional scheme serves its purpose here simply by describing history well enough to allow a convincing test of the main idea– that ECI are a real force that can motivate party change. Applying this idea to future elections will involve grappling with new patterns of development or entirely new policy agendas linking states. Sectional groupings into North Coast, Great Lakes, West and South make sense for an analysis of the past because they track the development divide and vote cohesively in presidential elections. New groupings will very likely prove to be more relevant in the twenty-first century.

That said, taking a consistent approach across elections makes it very unlikely that this investigation will falsely conclude that platforms respond to ECI. Raising the bar to this level comes at a certain price– namely, the threat that this study will falsely conclude that party platforms do not respond to ECI. This false negative problem is in fact the much greater threat. The reader may not be surprised if my inflexible interpretation of ECI fails to predict policy shifts in the platforms. But what can the reader learn from such a failure? The answer depends on the extent to which the reader believes my inflexible interpretation of ECI. If the predicted policy shifts are unreasonable, then the reader will learn very little from null findings. A more reasonable approach to policy predictions might establish a significant link to ECI, but we would not know what form that more reasonable approach should take. But if the predicted policy shifts are reasonable and motivated by the historical record, then a null finding would establish that ECI cannot

contribute to our understanding of party change. It is therefore appropriate that much of this investigation seeks to establish the reasonableness of the underlying predictions.

Chapter 2 begins with the identification of expected battleground states. There is no common definition of what a battleground state is. Some scholars define battleground states as all states decided within a five point margin, while other approaches consider the proximity of the state to the median or decisive electoral vote. The emphasis on close voting margins makes sense in elections that are narrowly decided, but makes little sense in landslide elections. Approaches that emphasize proximity to the median or decisive electoral vote involve more relevant criteria because campaigns must win a majority in the Electoral College in order to win the election. However, the current measures of this type continue to emphasize the importance of closely-decided states beyond the median state. But these states lie beyond the incumbent's minimum winning coalition, meaning that they could turn against the incumbent party without changing the outcome. I argue that expected battleground states are the most vulnerable states in the incumbent's minimum winning coalition and show that this approach leads to the identification of states most likely to select the winner of the next election.

Chapter 3 proposes a sectional scheme of politics and validates it against the record of state party platforms. The inspiration for the scheme of sectional politics in this book is the development divide between northern states on the coasts and Great Lakes and states in the South and West. The APD literature returns to the development divide again and again in explaining critical inflection points: the coalition-building strategies of Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren, the rise of the Republican Party and the ensuing Civil War, Gilded Age politics about tariffs and currency issues, the Democratic Party's shift toward labor and civil rights, Nixon's "Southern Strategy", Clinton's embrace of trade liberalization in 1992, and so on. Seen in this light, the protectionism of the Trump Administration appears to be a familiar and time-tested way of winning critical support in the Great Lakes. The development divide predicts that northern states prefer a modern administrative welfare state with extensive protections for minorities, while states in the South and West prefer a decentralized agrarian state with strains of nativism and nation-

alism (Bensel 1984/2000). The record of state party platforms between 1920 and 2008 is surprisingly consistent with these expectations.

Chapter 4 asks whether the national party platforms reflect what we have learned about expected battleground states and sectional policy agendas. By this stage in the analysis, the most decisive states have been identified, as have the sectional policy agendas that distinguish similar states in their region over time. The parties should respond to these signals– at least, it would be in their interest to do so to the extent they care about winning the next presidential election. Strategy is unlikely to be the only consideration, but the argument here is that it is a sufficiently strong consideration that ECI should result in party change. The analysis of national party platforms will provide an unambiguous answer as to whether or not the positions of the party in the platform change in line with expectations over time. If they do, then the idea linking ECI to party change is entirely plausible and future work regarding the relationship to policy outcomes would be in order. If they do not, then ECI are likely irrelevant outside of the occasional campaign. We would have to look elsewhere to gain leverage over the puzzle of party change. This analysis will provide an answer one way or the other.

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Chapter Two:
Expected Battleground States
and Electoral College Incentives

Executive Summary: The theory that the Electoral College encourages the party to emphasize the concerns of sections or regions on the margins of the coalition– particularly those well-represented among battleground states– may well account for many of the changes observed in the parties over time. A falsifiable test of this theory requires that key states be identified in a systematic way that binds the hands of the researcher and engenders confidence that the states selected are especially likely to influence the outcome of the next election. This chapter accordingly introduces and validates the ECI framework for the classification of pivotal and battleground states. This approach improves upon five prominent alternatives in terms of theoretical precision, explanatory power and parsimony. The reliable identification of battleground states makes it possible to characterize the sectional incentives of the Electoral College in every election since 1832.

2.1 Introduction

In 2016, Donald Trump smashed the decades-long commitment of the GOP to free trade and replaced it with an economic nationalist agenda that appealed to workers concerned with the loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs. Doing so may have made the difference in Rust Belt battlegrounds like Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin (Bell 2017; Brownstein 2016; Cassidy 2016). Once in power, Trump led the Republicans out of the TPP, imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum producers abroad, and renegotiated NAFTA. Whether or not the Republican Party becomes the party of labor (see Jacobson 2015), the Trump administration's pursuit of working-class voters illustrates the power of presidential candidates and presidents to defy party orthodoxy when crafting a winning coalition– at least occasionally. But can this dynamic help us to better understand the puzzle of party development more generally? The best reason to think so may be the often overlooked Electoral College. The essential feature of the EC is the emphasis on battleground states that results from irrelevance of large electoral majorities within safe states. The EC encourages coalitions to favor battlegrounds at the expense of the base (see, e.g., Stromberg 2008; Kriner and Reeves 2015).

James Rowe made this intuition explicit in his celebrated memorandum advising Truman on campaign strategy in 1948 (the Rowe Memorandum). The Rowe Memorandum famously charted the course for one of the most improbable presidential victories in history. The Memorandum reads in part:

> It is inconceivable that any policies initiated by the Truman Administration no matter how 'liberal' could so alienate the South in the next year that it would revolt. As always, the South can be considered safely Democratic. And in formulating national policy, it can be safely ignored.

Instead of playing to the base, Rowe pointed to the anticipated importance of the West and progressive northern states. These were regions that Republican Dewey most nearly carried in 1944, and upon which Dewey was likely to rely for a winning coalition in 1948. The policies indicated by this sectional strategy included rural development programs for

farmers, legal protections for labor unions and civil rights for minorities. Civil rights were anathema in the South, but Rowe told Truman that it did not matter because Dixie could not go for Dewey. Truman followed Rowe's advice and defeated his opponent with the help of the most aggressive civil rights agenda since Reconstruction (Savage 1997; Gardner 2002; Lawson 2003; Taylor 2012). A Dixiecrat revolt peeled off four southern states, but Dixie did not go for Dewey (Ader 1953).

Harry Truman and Donald Trump represent two very different presidents, with very different policy agendas, separated by a great deal of time– and yet their regional coalition-building efforts are fundamentally similar. Both campaigns emphasized dramatic policy reversals that jettisoned established party interests in favor of key battleground interests. Nor are these isolated cases. The American Political Development (APD) literature offers many similar accounts, ranging from the Democrats' surprising embrace of civil service reform, the protective tariff, national railroad regulation and the gold standard under Grover Cleveland to the "Southern Strategy" of Richard Nixon and the Republican drift away from civil rights for racial and ethnic minorities (Skowronek 1982; Aldrich 1995; Graham 1996; James 2000; Ware 2006). Taken together, these cases suggest that Electoral College incentives (ECI) frequently lead parties to adopt positions with special appeal in the expected battleground states– even at the expense of established party interests. If true, then ECI might help us to better understand the path of party development, both from one election to the next and over time.

Regional or sectional politics pervade these and other prominent accounts of presidential elections and party development. Grover Cleveland and Harry Truman are cast as wrestling with southern insurrections as the price of making northern incursions. This same North and South dynamic is evident in the way many scholars, pundits and biographers assess the impact of the Goldwater movement, Nixon's "Southern Strategy" and the Reagan Revolution (Aldrich 1995; Frederickson 2001; Lowndes 2008; Aistrup 2015; Hoffman 2015). The root of this sectional division is often thought to be the tendency of the South to vote as a bloc in presidential elections. However, Table 1 shows that the South is anything but exceptional in this regard. The States in Majority column in Table

1 identifies the number of states agreeing with the presidential candidate preferred by a majority of the states in that part of the country over time, while the States in Minority column reports the number of states in opposition. Having two industrial regions (North Coast and Great Lakes) and two agricultural regions (West and South) more closely parallels the emphasis on the development divide in the APD literature than Census regions. [1] Historically, 80% of southern states have agreed on the same candidate. The South, while highly cohesive, actually has been less unified than the other regions. This pattern lends support for the idea that sectional politics should be highly relevant to coalition-building in presidential elections—much more so than if the South alone voted as a bloc.

Table 2.1: Cohesive Regions in Presidential Elections, 1832-2016

Region	States in Majority	States in Minority	Agree (%)
NORTH COAST	494	119	80.6
GREAT LAKES	265	52	83.6
WEST	422	80	84.1
SOUTH	489	119	80.4
USA	1409	631	69.1

North Coast: ca ct dc de hi nj ny ma md me nh or ri vt wa
Great Lakes: il in mi mn oh pa wi
West: ak az co id ks mn mo mt nd ne nm nv sd ut wy
South: al ar fl ga ky la ms nc ok sc tn tx wv va

Cohesive regions help to simplify presidential election strategy, reducing upwards of 50 independent contests into a competition to win sufficient support from several different regions of the country. This may explain why regions matter to presidential elections, but it cannot account for the changes in the strategic importance of regions over time. Instead, this may be the role of the Electoral College and the small number of battleground states it underscores relative to the nation as a whole. If battleground states drive critical campaign strategy, then changes in the regional or sectional composition of these states

[1]The Census combines industrial states with agricultural states in its Midwest and West regions. As a result, census regions do a poorer job of tracking the development divide in the political economy. Census regions are also less cohesive.

could be an important motivation for changes in the policy appeals of the parties. The Rowe Memorandum makes this point when it connects newly important states like Massachusetts and New York to the timeliness of liberal policy appeals in 1948. Of course, battleground states need not be from the same region. But the cohesiveness of regional voting patterns in presidential elections promises that many of the closest and most important states will often come from the same part of the country. The parties may use their knowledge of the battleground states to identify which regions to emphasize in the party's platform and campaign pledges.

A sectional framework can provide a theoretical lens through which to interpret ECI and evaluate their importance to party development. When the Electoral College points to greater or less influence for a region of the country, do the policy positions advocated by the major parties change in corresponding ways? For example, do the parties emphasize farming and ranching to a greater degree when landlocked states in the West exert unusual influence over the outcome? Or, labor and protectionist concerns when the Great Lakes states rise to the fore? These and other sectional relationships will be evaluated in future research. But none of this analysis is possible without first identifying the states expected to be decisive in each election and translating them into sectional signals for parties to follow in the first place. These are the goals of this chapter. This task begins with the identification of the expected battleground states in the next election. The results strongly support the conclusion that the states most likely to influence the outcome of the next election are the most vulnerable states in the incumbent's minimum winning coalition. The chapter concludes with a description of regional incentives in every election since 1832.

2.2 Existing Strategies to Identify Key States Are Problematic

No consensus regarding the classification of key states under the Electoral College exists, but two general approaches fairly represent the way political scientists proceed. The first of these defines battleground states as the most closely decided states, usually

those within a five-point margin. This discussion addresses three prominent variations on the "close states" standard. One key assumption they share is that the most closely-decided states are the most hotly contested states. The second general approach is to identify key states within some distance of the median or winning Electoral Vote. This discussion introduces the reader to two such measures. In both, the winning Electoral Vote is identified at the outset by ranking states according to their two-party presidential margins. States within some range of the winning Electoral Vote are deemed those most critical for a winning presidential effort.

Close States

The first and perhaps most common approach emphasizes a class of close states decided within five points (see, e.g., Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; James and Lawson 1999; Reeves 2011; Kriner and Reeves 2012). The intuition motivating this measure of influence equates the narrowness of the vote margin with the degree of competition between the national parties. Sometimes this intuition is correct, as with Florida in the 2000 election. But the Electoral College elevates the importance of states likely to decide the outcome, not close states as such. Many times, close states are simply not relevant to the result. In a landslide victory, for example, the close states will generally be extraneous to the minimum winning coalition. Consider that New Hampshire was the only close state in FDR's 1936 landslide election; see Figure 1. New Hampshire is located so far from the decisive or median Electoral Vote that it could not have determined FDR's fate.

Historical Era Close States

Second, the APD literature tends to employ a "close state" standard that averages margins across a sequence of elections linked together by party system or some other historical demarcation. James and Lawson (1999) take this approach in their inquiry into voter fraud prosecutions and the deployment of election supervisors and special deputy marshals between 1872 and 1888. They find that California, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, New York, Indiana and Connecticut were close states, on average, during this period. Since presidential elections are close on average, and this was a period of especially

close elections, this measure succeeds in identifying a set of states that were marginally more likely to select the winner than the average state (68.6% to 63.0%) during the relevant period. Leveraging history in this way offers some improvement over application of the close state standard to a single election. With that said, it comes at the cost of assuming the underlying elections are fundamentally similar. This was arguably not the case between 1872 and 1888, given that the first two elections in this sequence occurred during Reconstruction when southern states were temporarily in play for Republicans.

Close Last 3 States

A third related method is to average presidential election margins over the previous three elections, and deem all states decided within the five-point margin as especially competitive or key (Reeves 2011; Kriner and Reeves 2012). This approach is the only one of the five existing measures that avoids an ex post classification problem by relying exclusively on previous presidential elections to make an ex ante determination of state status. This is an important strength. However, this close state standard remains problematic. It fails to identify any influential states in fifteen of forty-seven elections. It is also difficult to substantively interpret a close state standard averaged over three elections. Such a standard would include a state that was narrowly decided in the first two cycles, but that went for the incumbent by a double-digit margin in the third. It would also exclude states narrowly decided in the preceding two elections if decided by a large enough margin in the first. The arbitrariness of considering three elections– as opposed to four or two, for example– is a real concern with this measure.

Plus or Minus 100 Electoral Votes from Median (100EVM)

The fourth approach is a plus or minus 100 Electoral Votes of the median standard, or 100EVM (Gerber et al 2009). The range of relevant states is identified in three steps: (1) the states are ranked by presidential vote margin at the end of the election; (2) Electoral Votes are tallied from the winning side to the losing side; and (3) states within 100 Electoral Votes of the median Electoral Vote are deemed key. To facilitate a comparison with the "close state" standard in Figure 1, Figure 2 similarly applies this categorization

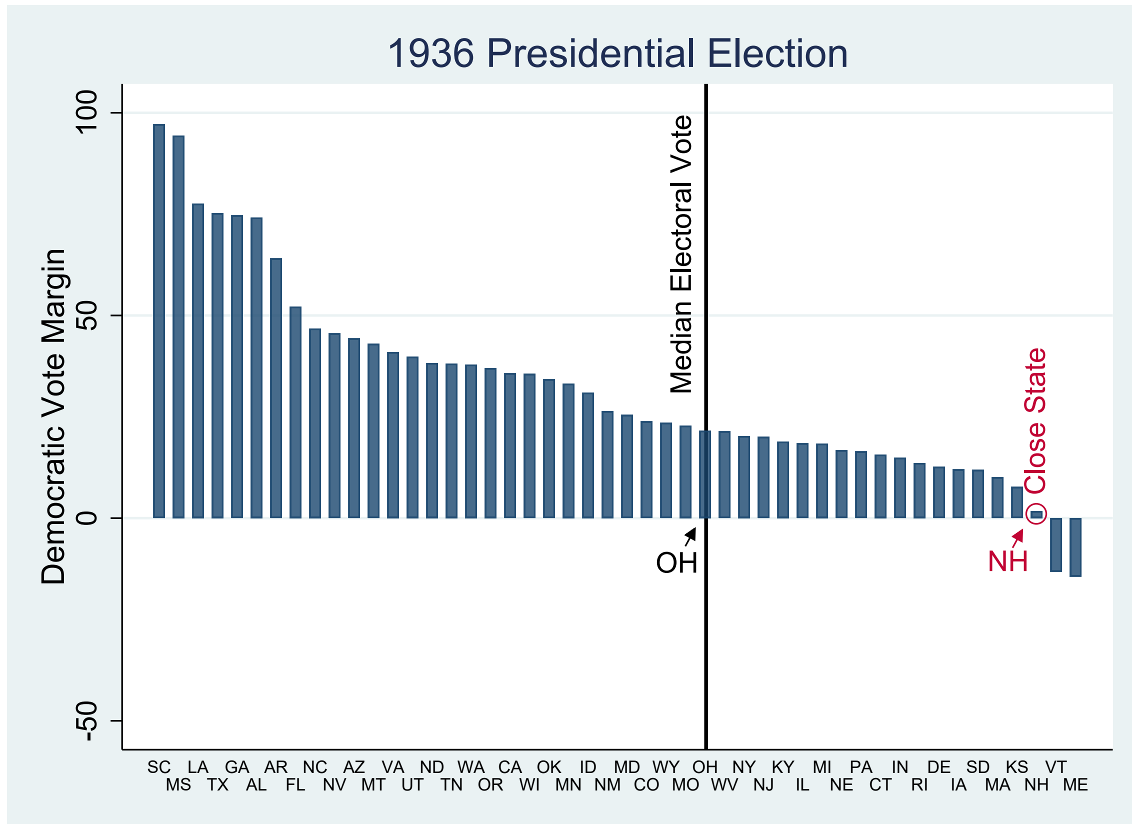

Figure 2.1: Application of Close State Standard to 1936 Election Results

scheme to the 1936 election. The results are very different. Instead of pointing toward a single state, New Hampshire, the 100EVM standard highlights sixteen states of special relevance– and New Hampshire is not among them. Whereas the "close state" standard fails in the event of landslide elections, the 100EVM standard largely fails in the event of close elections by highlighting many states outside the minimum winning coalition. These states could have gone against the winner without changing the outcome, calling into question the logic that they were the decisive states.

Tipping-Point States

The fifth and final measure approximates the "Tipping-Point" framework of Nate Silver (Silver 2008). The objective is to identify the set of closely-contested states that would reverse the outcome in the last election, enabling the actual loser to become the actual winner. Like the 100EVM standard, the identification of Tipping-Points begins with the ranking of states by ex post presidential vote margins. The winning EV is then identified. The state with the winning EV and every other state in the winner's column decided by

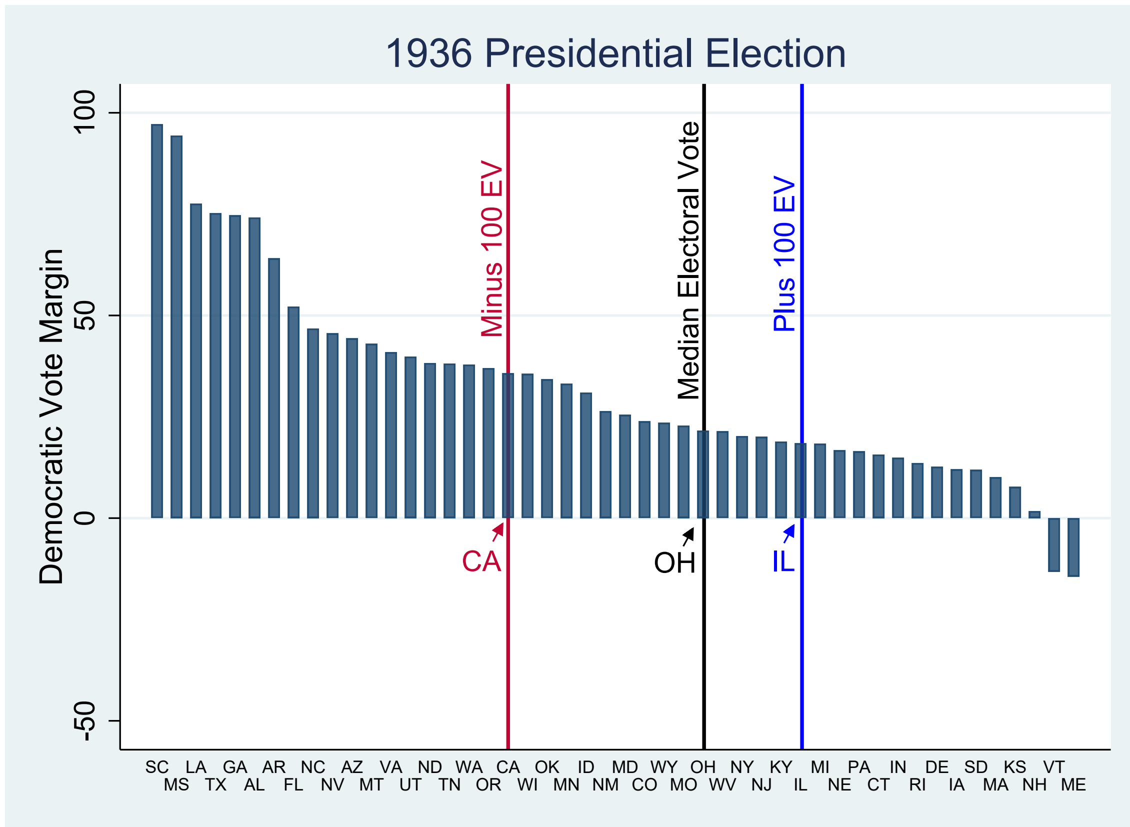

Figure 2.2: Application of 100EVM Standard to 1936 Election Results

a narrower margin are the Tipping-Points. The effort is crafted to construct the smallest alternative minimum winning coalition available to the losing party given the states it won in fact. Note that this analytical framework is both retrospective and entirely hypothetical by design. It is nonetheless tempting to apply Tipping-Points as a prospective framework, under the interpretation that these states illuminate the challenger's most efficient path back to the White House. Such a minimalist move, however, assumes that the challenger can expect to win every battleground state it targets.

The following section introduces the ECI framework. Note that the framework is based on an analysis of the results in the previous election. This mirrors the approach reflected in the Rowe Memorandum, which relied on the results of the 1944 to forecast the relevant fault lines in 1948. Truman had replaced FDR in that time, but Rowe continued to look to the previous results for information about the strengths and weaknesses of the incumbent. In contrast, the competing measures described above rely on final election results to identify battleground states. The most plausible rationale for so doing is the as-

sumption that campaigns possess private information about the decisiveness of different states. This private information presumably reflects evolving circumstances better than old information like the results of the previous presidential election. Armed with more current knowledge, the campaigns can adjust their strategies and focus on the states indicated by facts on the ground. This line of reasoning has led many scholars to consider the final election results when identifying battleground states.

This conclusion is appropriate in the context of studying presidential campaigns in the weeks and months leading up to the general election. Decisions about candidate appearances and ad buys in different states likely do reflect what the campaign knows internally about current polling trends (Shaw 1999a/1999b; Gimpel et al 2007; Stromberg 2008; Charnock et al 2009; Gerber 2009; Chen and Reeves 2011). If for no other reason than proximity in time, the final election results should more closely parallel this internal information than the results of four years ago. Reliance on ex post measurement can therefore be justified when the subject of study is the strategic response of presidential campaigns to emerging information about the electorate. Even better would be the actual internal information used by campaigns—but this information is generally unavailable to researchers. It is in the absence of this primary information that scholars must resort to the use of final election results to identify decisive states. Therefore, the propriety of doing so is entirely contingent on the proximity in time of the campaign activity to the final election (Wlezien and Erikson 2002; Erikson and Wlezien 2008/2012; Campbell 2008).

But this is not a study of presidential campaigns in the weeks and months before the election. This is an examination of party coordination on presidential candidates and policy positions in response to the incentives of the Electoral College. While an ex post identification strategy may make sense in the study of general election campaigns, it makes much less sense in a study of party coordination in presidential elections. There are several reasons for this. First, parties must coordinate on presidential candidates and platform positions before the general election season begins (Marcus 1971; Cohen et al 2008; see Haynes 2012/2015). Candidates jockey for position within the party a year or more in advance of the general election, even when the public fails to notice. The incumbent party

has had four years to position itself propitiously for the next election cycle. These activities occur at times too remote from the general election for private information about the future election results to exist. Until the parties nominate their candidates, the voting public does not even know what choice it will be asked to make on election day. The last election, in contrast, reliably reveals where the incumbent party drew support.

2.3 The ECI Framework

Four assumptions guide the ECI framework. First, presidential vote margins demonstrate the affinity or spatial proximity of different states relative to the party's base support. A reliable state that went for its favored candidate by thirty points would be a very costly target for the opposition, whereas closely decided states present easier targets. Thus, it makes sense to organize the results of the previous election by the extent to which each state favored the winning party in its presidential vote margin, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 above. This method of organizing the results invites substantive interpretation, indicating the relative cost of targeting new states for the existing coalition. Such costs are certainly lower in the center regions of the distribution, where the presidential vote margins approach zero for the winning coalition. These can be interpreted to be the states that would be the easiest for the challenger to win and reverse the outcome of the previous election. Conversely, states more distant from the party base represent the toughest targets. Every measurement system surveyed above begins with the assumption that presidential vote margins capture state partisan leanings.

Second, the decisive states under the Electoral College are a subset of states containing the median Electoral Vote. Ranking the states by presidential vote margins makes it possible to identify the location of the expected median Electoral Vote in ECI, as in the 100EVM and Tipping-Points approaches. The median Electoral Vote represents the threshold for victory. The incumbent party can expect to stay over the threshold if it wins the state containing the median Electoral Vote (the "median state") and every state it won by a wider margin in the last election. The challenger party can get over the line if it wins

the median state and every state it either won or lost by a narrower margin than the median state. Both parties should target the median state in their election strategies. ECI shares this assumption in common with the 100EVM and Tipping-Points standards. All three expect the Electoral College to follow a logic of "median states" (James 2000). The close state standards do not share this assumption, however, since they emphasize the narrowest contests regardless of their proximity to the decisive Electoral Vote.

Third, the magnitude of the incumbent party's margin of victory in the Electoral College determines the boundaries of the decisive set of states. Both parties have good reasons to target the median state, but they also have reasons to look wider. The assumption that the median state guarantees victory in every state to its right or left for either party is unrealistic. Rather, parties hope to win by augmenting their cohort of reliable states or its equivalent with a majority of Electoral Votes in some decisive range that includes the median state. 100EVM is consistent with this idea, but it assumes that the decisive range is fixed at 200 Electoral Votes from one election to the next. The decisive range should reflect changes in the size and strength of the incumbent coalition to better account for context. Tipping-Points allows for this variability by highlighting a range of states beginning with the most-closely decided state in the winning coalition. ECI follows Tipping-Points this far. The two methods of classification differ with respect to the definition of the left boundary of the decisive range of states.

Both systems begin by counting Electoral Votes backwards from the closest state won by the incumbent. Tipping-Points stops counting back at the median Electoral Vote. Note that the challenger cannot hope to win by augmenting its reliable support with a majority of Tipping-Points EV– it must win all of them. But the intuition articulated above is that parties hope to augment reliable support with the majority of a decisive range. ECI accomplishes this by considering twice as many EVs as Tipping-Points, equivalent in number to the Electoral Vote gap between the parties. Doing so results in the identification of a range of states to the left of the median equivalent in Electoral Votes to the Tipping-Points range on the right side. The median state in this range is the same as in the national election. Reliable states populate the regions to the left and right of this pivotal range of

states. Both parties can expect to amass a winning coalition by augmenting their support in reliable states with a majority of the Electoral Votes in the pivotal range. The system here draws from the best features of 100EVM and Tipping-Points to define a decisive zone that is sensitive to campaign context and organized around the median state.

Fourth, the expected battleground states are the median state and all pivotal states to its left. These are the pivotal states that contributed to the minimum winning coalition. Rowe guides us away from the pivotal states to the right of the median when he expresses little interest in winning the closest states won by Roosevelt in 1944. He reasoned that these states were unnecessary to build a winning coalition. The spatial organization of election results in 100EVM, Tipping-Points and ECI suggests that the pivotal states including and to the left of the median are more fundamental for the incumbent because they favored the incumbent party by a wider margin. That the incumbent is not indifferent between states in the pivotal range should go far in simplifying election strategy for both parties. Were the incumbent indifferent among which pivotal states to emphasize, presidential elections could resemble a Colonel Blotto game in which the parties must allocate resources to different battleground states without knowing which states the other party will emphasize (see Owen 1995). The incumbent's preference for the pivotal states that favored it by a wider margin and that were part of its minimum winning coalition removes this uncertainty. The challenger knows where the incumbent must stand its ground to win.

This framework is best illustrated with another set of presidential vote margins. Figure 3 presents the results from the 2012 election. The argument is that the distribution of vote margins in 2012 conveyed a very strong signal about which states were likely to select the winner in 2016. Figure 4 enhances the states expected to be battlegrounds in 2016 by the 2012 election results: Colorado, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire and three Great Lakes states, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The expected median state was Pennsylvania, leaving otherwise pivotal states like Florida, Ohio and Virginia out of the Democratic Party's minimum winning coalition. The Republicans could have flipped these states, but the Democrats would have won if they maintained equivalent support

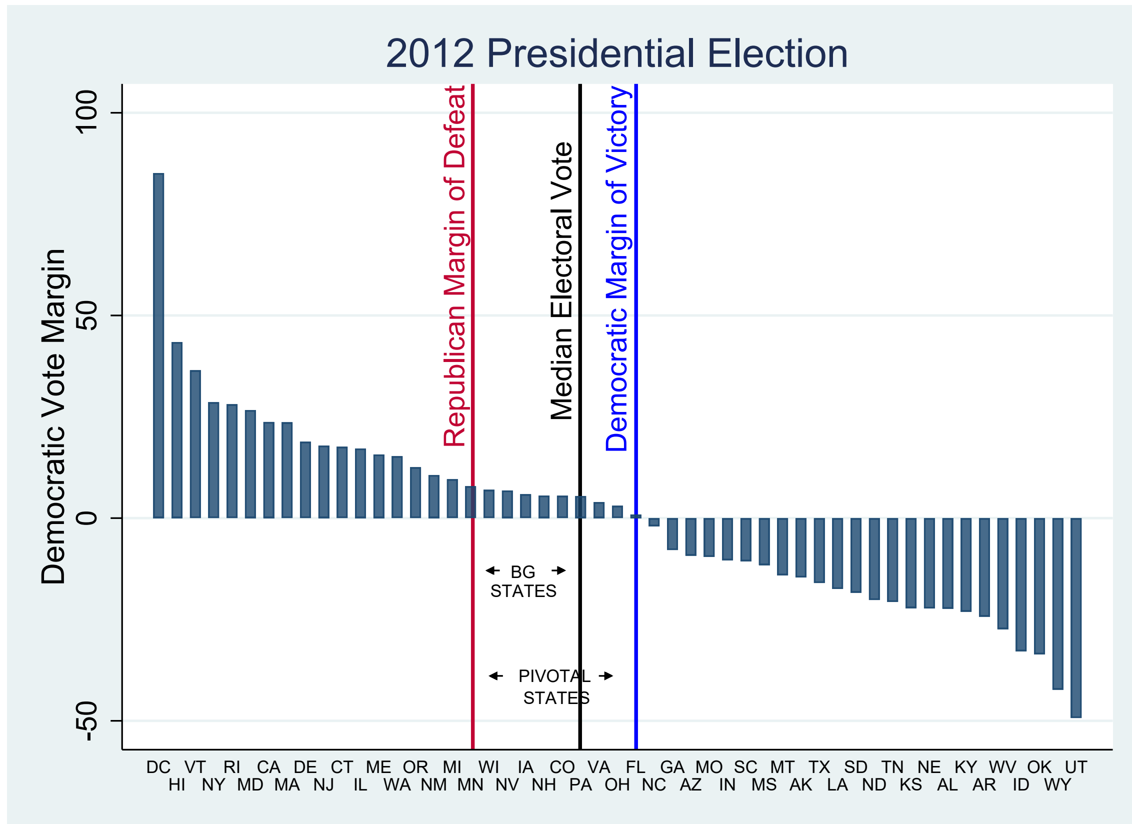

Figure 2.3: Application of ECI Framework to the 2012 Election Results

elsewhere in 2016 as in 2012. All other states in this range, including Pennsylvania as the expected median state, were expected battleground states in 2016. The importance of the Great Lakes in 2016 was foreseeable from the night of Barack Obama's reelection in 2012. Donald Trump won most of these Electoral Votes on his way to becoming president in 2016– including Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The scatterplots in Figures 5, 6 and 7 illustrate the extent to which ECI succeeds in highlighting a decisive range of pivotal and battleground states across historical contexts. Figure 5 shows a relatively weak relationship between performance among reliable states and national election outcomes. On the one hand, the national parties have not done well when they fail to win a majority of their reliable states. Only twice has a party prevailed in the national result when failing to corral a majority of their reliable states– the Democrats in 1836 and the Republicans in 1968. On the other hand, note that the parties generally win a large majority of their reliable EVs and that this hardly guarantees victory. Outcomes are evenly distributed above and below the winning national threshold

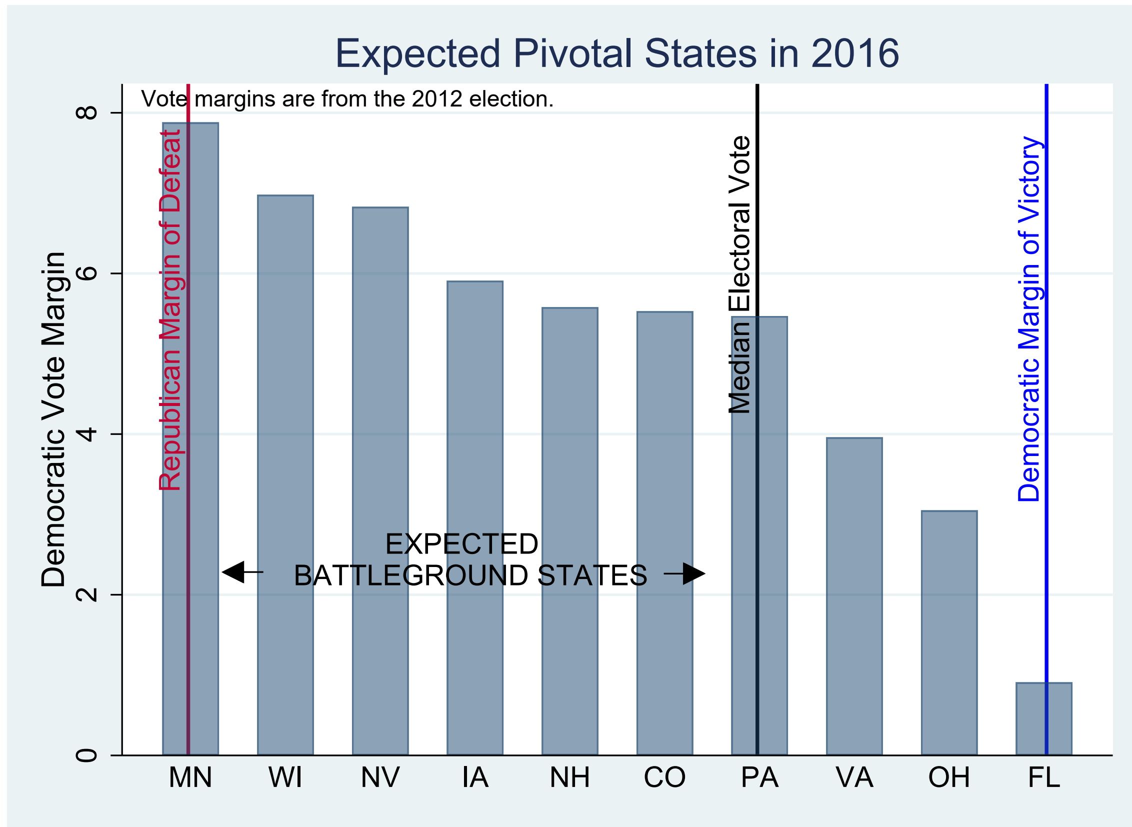

Figure 2.4: 2012 Results Signal Pivotal States in 2016

indicated by the horizontal reference line at .5. The trend lines reveal that parties have to win at least 75 to 80 percent of their reliable states to expect an even shot of winning the White House. Figure 5 confirms the popular intuition that safe states do not control the result.

A very different picture emerges when we consider the relationship between party performance in the ECI pivotal range and the national election results in Figure 6. The upper right quadrant shows parties that won both a majority of the expected pivotal range and the national election overall. The lower left shows those parties that both lost in the battleground range and in the national election. If the pivotal range approximates the decisive range of states, then every party winning a majority of the pivotal range would be in the upper right quadrant, and every party losing the pivotal range would appear in the lower left. Nearly every historical observation fits neatly into one of these two quadrants as expected. There are three exceptions– 1876, 1916 and 2000. 1876 and 2000 are two of the closest and most controversial presidential elections in American history. The 1916

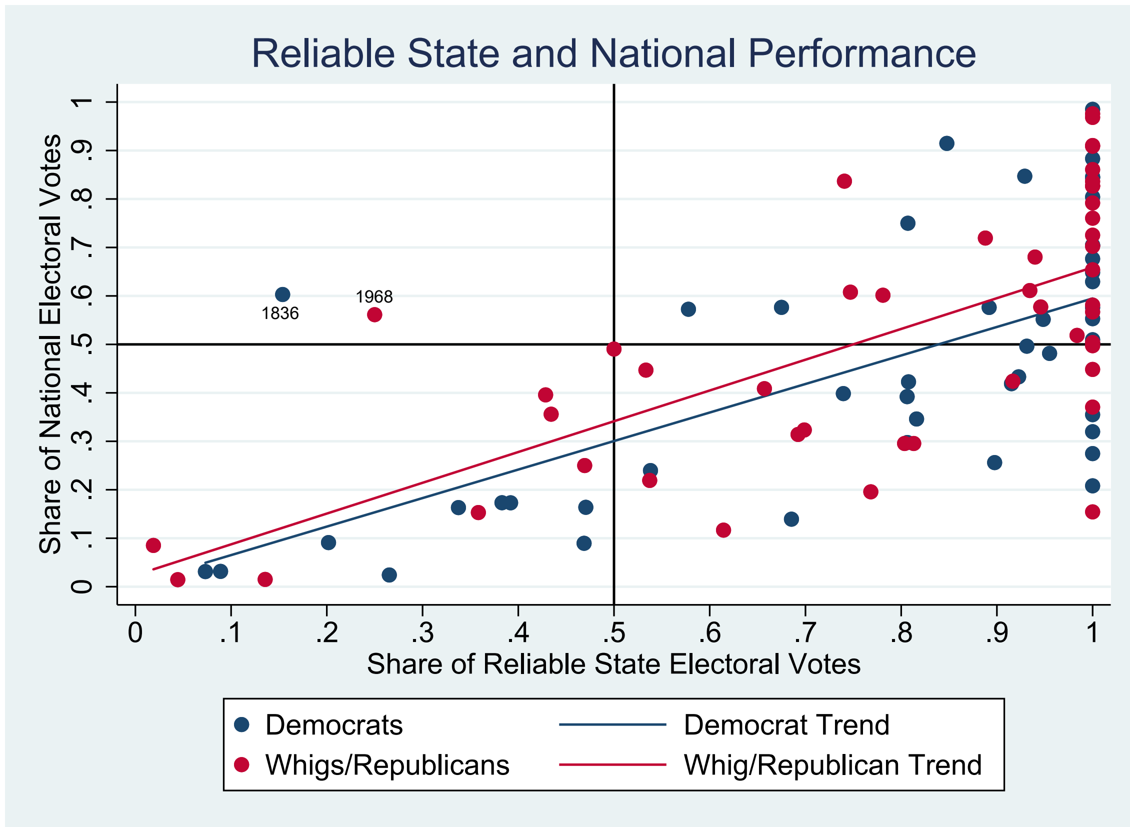

Figure 2.5: National Parties Generally Win Reliable States

election occurred in the context of World War I, itself an extraordinary circumstance. The trend line for both parties comes close to passing through the .50-50 intercept of the reference lines, suggesting that a majority among the pivotal range is expected to translate into a national majority.

Figure 6 shows that the ECI pivotal range includes the states most relevant to the overall outcome. But what about the expected battleground range? These are the most important states in the ECI framework, and success or failure among these states should be strongly related to the final election result. The scatterplot in Figure 7 confirms that this is the case. Just as with the pivotal states, there are only three occasions in history when the winner of the expected battleground states failed to win the election: 1844, 1968 and 2000. Battleground states represent a little more than half of the pivotal range in the ECI framework, and yet they reveal a road to victory that is just as reliable. Parties should emphasize the battleground states for the simple reason that they predict the result just as well using less information. Considering a smaller range of decisive states should tend to

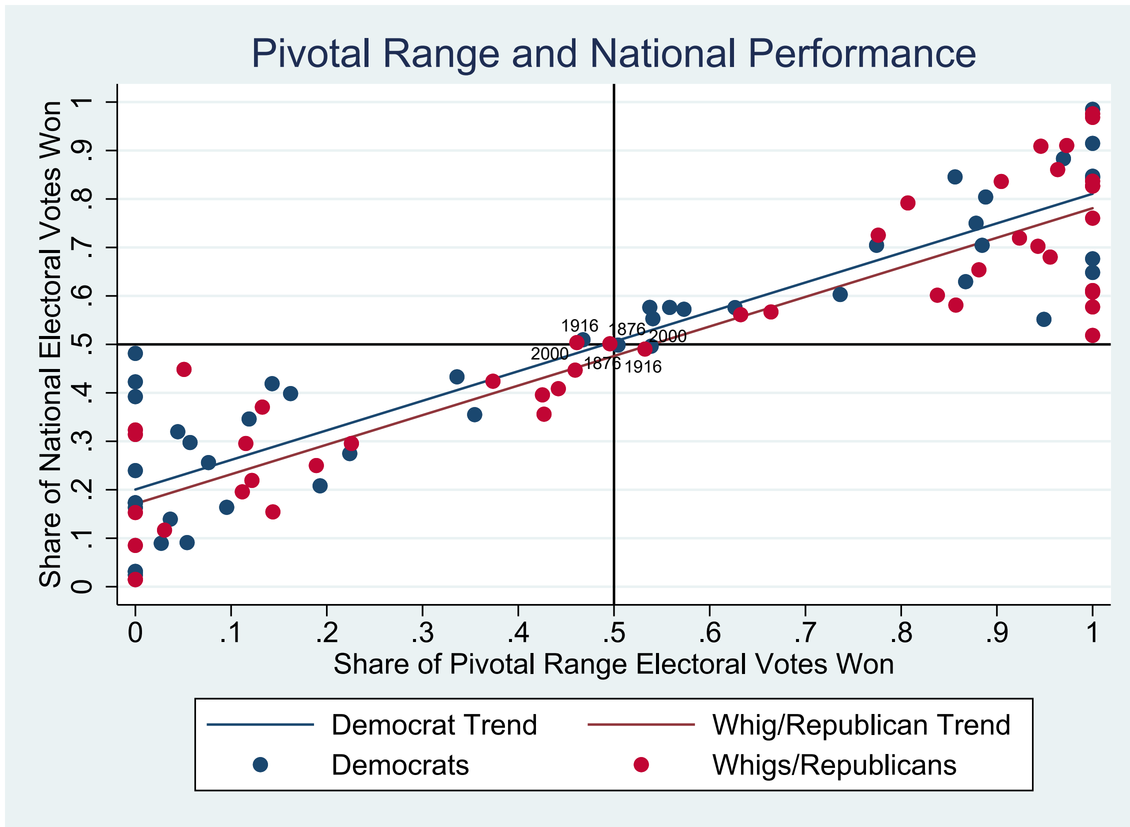

Figure 2.6: Performance Across the Pivotal Range

simplify the resource allocation problems confronting presidential campaigns.

The breakdown of Electoral Votes by state classification under ECI is displayed in Table 2. A majority of the Electoral Votes cast down through the years fail to qualify as pivotal; the fourth column confirms that such states run a below-average chance of selecting the winner of the next election. 46 percent of Electoral Votes are deemed pivotal. Three in four pivotal states outside the battleground range select the winner of the next election. A little more than a quarter of all Electoral Votes belong to expected battleground states. These states select the winner a little more than four times in five. An even better indication of their influence is the fact that the party winning most Electoral Votes in the battleground range wins the election outright more than nine times in ten. ECI succeeds in delineating the terrain of the "election within the election". The next section applies a more rigorous empirical analysis to confirm that ECI does a better job of identifying influential states.

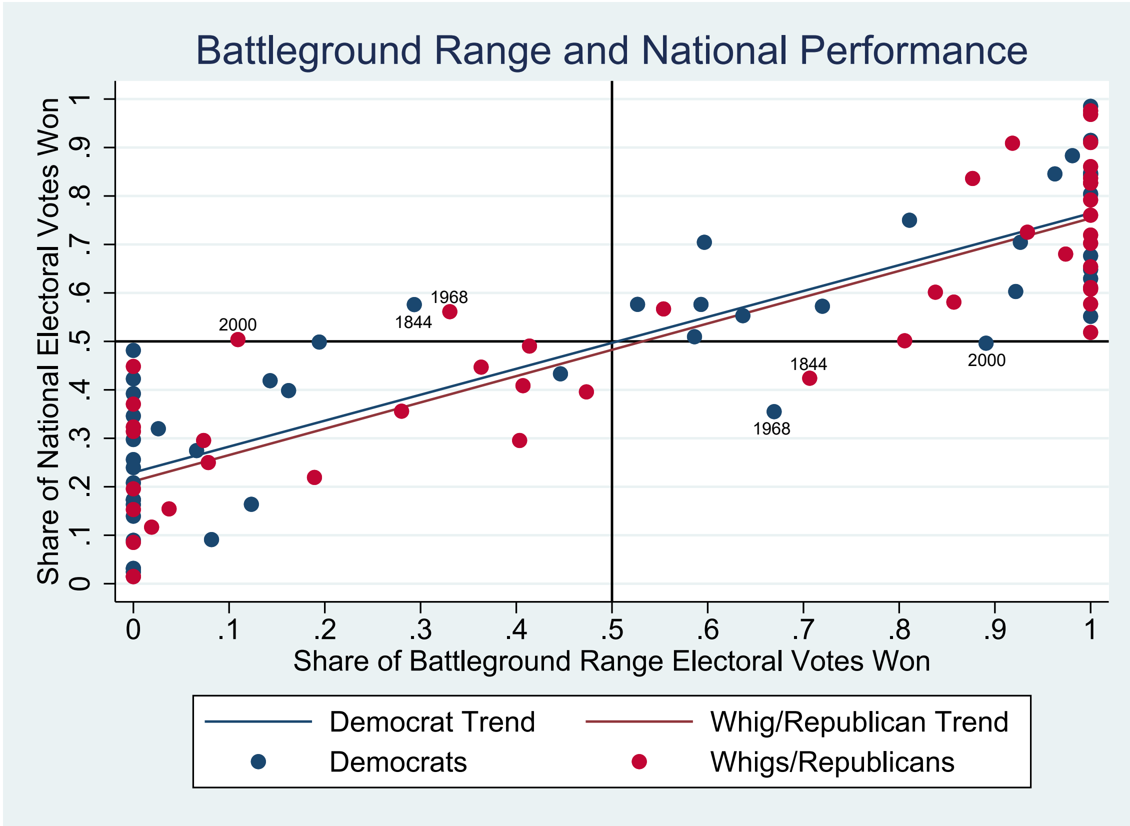

Figure 2.7: Performance in the Battleground Range

Table 2.2: Electoral College Breakdown by State Classification

Classification	States	EV	EV %	Selecting Winner%
Not Pivotal	1,191	11,608	54.43	62.55
Pivotal But Not BG	329	4,217	19.77	74.77
Battleground	482	5,503	25.80	81.95
USA	2,002	21,328	100	69.23

2.4 Testing the ECI Framework

Does the ECI framework succeed in identifying a set of states especially likely to influence the outcome of the next election? Moreover, does it do so better than the alternative measures applied ex ante? These measures have been criticized here for their ex post character, but what happens if they are applied to the previous election results to make predictions about the next? ECI should still outperform these repackaged measures if the theoretical underpinnings of the framework capture Electoral College dynamics with greater fidelity. Such a finding would validate the insight that the most vulnerable

states in the minimum winning coalition are the most decisive states. When comparing the different systems for classifying states, the most important criteria must necessarily be explanatory power. Thus, among these alternative measures, the expected battleground states of ECI should constitute the set of states most likely to select the winner. With these considerations in mind, the most relevant empirical hypotheses follow:

H1: States in the expected pivotal range are significantly more likely than states outside this range to select the winner of the next election.

H2: States in the expected battleground range are significantly more likely than states outside this range to select the winner of the next election.

H3: States in the expected battleground range are more likely to select the winner of the next election than states indicated by competing measures.

H4: The ECI framework classifies states according to their probability of selecting the winner of the next election more accurately than competing measures.

The proper dependent variable for this analysis is whether a given state voted for the winner of the next election (see Wright 2009). The states mattering most under the Electoral College are those most likely to be part of the next winning coalition. Presidential coalitions should expect to need these states, or as many of them as possible, to win. This dependent variable calls for data organized at the level of individual states for every presidential campaign year under examination. State-level election results were accordingly obtained from the American Presidency Project website for all elections since 1832. The election of 1832 is a natural starting point for this analysis because scholars concur that the election strategy of Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren created the Democratic Party in 1828 (Remini 1968; Aldrich 1995; Cohen et al 2008; Parsons 2009). The results of that election make it possible to apply ECI as far back as 1832. The early decades of the 19th century did not feature robust two-party competition in presidential elections after Jefferson defeated Adams. But the late 1820s saw the confluence of universal white male suffrage and the popular vote in almost every state (see, e.g., Deskins et al 2010).

The primary independent variables of interest are expected pivotal state and expected battleground state, which are measured categorically at the state level. The analysis leverages several control variables available at the election, state and national levels. Table 3 summarizes these.[2] Election level controls include the vote margin in the last election, and dichotomous variables indicating whether a sitting president runs, or the election occurs after the expansion of suffrage to women (Suffrage) or the Voting Rights Act of 1964 (VRA). State-level controls include population, urbanization, urbanization relative to other states that election cycle (Relurb), African American population share (Black Pop), as well as political variables including the partisanship (Gov IP) or change in partisanship of the governor (Delta Gov P), and the incumbent presidential party's share of state congressional delegations after the previous midterm election (IPS State Del). National variables to note include divided government, macroeconomic conditions and dichotomous indicators for the different party and nomination systems in operation over time. It will also be important to see whether the results hold after controlling for the admission of new states (New States Added, New States EV) and the reapportionment of electoral votes after the decennial census (Reapportioned EV).

[2]See the appendix for descriptive statistics associated with these variables.

Table 2.3: Variable Descriptions

Variable	Description	Relevant Source
SELECT WINNER	State voting for winning party	Woolley & Peters 2019
PIVOTAL	State in pivotal range	Author
ECI (BASIC)	Basic ECI framework	Author
NON-PIVOTAL	State in non-pivotal range	
PIVOTAL NON-BG	State in pivotal range only (N1)	
BATTLEGROUND	State in battleground range	
ECI (FULL)	Full ECI framework	Author
NON-PIVOTAL	Non-pivotal state	
BG NON-MEDIAN	Battleground state, not median	
BG MEDIAN	Battleground state, median	
PIVOTAL NON-BG	State in pivotal range only (N1)	
CLOSE STATE	State 2 party margin within 5pts	Abram. & Saun. 2008
CLOSE STATE PS	State close on avg over party system	James & Lawson 1999
CLOSE LAST 3	State close on avg last 3 elections	Kriner & Reeves 2012
100EVM	State within 100ev of median ev	Gerber et al 2009
TIPPING-POINT	Pivotal Non-BG plus BG Median	Silver 2008
CLOSE LAST 2	State close last 2 elections	Author
CLOSE LAST 4	State close last 4 elections	Author
REELECTION	Sitting president renominated	Burd. & Hill. 2009
NEW STATES ADDED	States absent from prev. election	Woolley & Peters 2019
NEW STATES EV	State EV absent from prev. election	Ibid.
SUFFRAGE	Post- 19th Amendment election	compiled by Author
VRA	Post- Voting Rights Act election	compiled by Author
RECONSTRUCTION	Reconstruction post Civil War	compiled by Author
DIVIDED GOVT	Divided government	compiled by Author
GDPPC GROWTH	Per capita gdp growth	Maddison 2019
NOMSYS	Party Nomination system	compiled by Author
PARTYSYS	Applicable party system (II-VI)	see Burnham 1970
PAST MARGIN	State 2 party margin in last election	Woolley & Peters 2019
TOTAL VOTES	State votes cast	Woolley & Peters 2019
REAPPORTIONED EV	State gain or loss in EV	Ibid.
3RD PARTY PVOTE	State 3rd party pres. vote share	Ibid.
POPULATION	National/ State population levels	U.S. Census
URBANIZATION	National/ State urbanization levels	Ibid.
RELURB	State relative urbanization	Ibid.
BLACK POP	State black population share	Ibid.
GOV IP	State governor in incumbent party	compiled by Author
DELTA GOV P	Gub. party change since last election	compiled by Author
IPS STATE DEL	Post-midterm incumbent party share	compiled by Author

(N1) Equivalent to Tipping-Point States ex ante, minus the median state.

These time-series cross-section data are organized at the state-year level, with a dichotomous dependent variable indicating whether the state selected the winner of the next election. The expected relationships will be estimated accordingly in a logit regression with two-way fixed effects for state and year. The coefficients returned in the logit can be translated into shifts in predicted probability that facilitate substantive interpretation. It will be possible to say that a change in the status of a state produces a corresponding shift in its likelihood of selecting the winner. Two-way fixed effects for state and year will allow each state and campaign year to serve as its own control, thereby addressing the possibility that time-invariant variables like the region or political culture of a state or that individual campaign effects might drive the statistical results. This research design will permit the best possible estimation of the change in signal strength, if any, that a state can expect when it becomes an expected pivotal or battleground state.

2.5 Findings

The results confirm the hypotheses. Consider the first two predictions, that states in the expected pivotal and battleground ranges will more likely select the winner of the next election. These predictions hold across the six model specifications presented in Table 4. The first column begins with a parsimonious model that distinguishes only between states within and without the pivotal range. States within the pivotal range are more likely to select the winner than states outside this range. The statistical significance and magnitude of the effect persists even after the inclusion of election, state and national variables in the second and third columns. The last three columns of Table 4 draw a further distinction between pivotal states within and without the expected battleground range. Consistent with ECI, states within the expected battleground range are especially likely to select the winner of the next election. The effect of battleground status is large, significant at the .001 level or better, and robust to the more complex model specifications in columns five and six. The results in Table 4 constitute very strong evidence for the first two hypotheses.

The third hypothesis is that ECI battleground states are more likely to select the winner

Table 2.4: The State Selectorate, 1832-2016

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
PIVOTAL	.93***	.93***	.85***			
PIVOTAL NON-BG (N1)				.59*	.59*	.47
BATTLEGROUND				1.19***	1.19***	1.08***
REELECTION		-.34	-.02		-.33	-.04
NEW STATES ADDED		2.57	-18.71		1.63	-18.06
NEW STATES EV		-.51	4.34		-,30	4.19
SUFFRAGE		-1.25	11.20		-.77	10.85
VRA		.03	-13.54		-.55	-12.97
DIVIDED GOVT		-.65	.65		-.60	.61
GDPPC GROWTH		-.03	.45*		-.02	.44*
PAST MARGIN			.00			-.00
STATE POP			.00			-.00
REAPPORTIONED EV			-.00			-.01
3RD PARTY PVOTE			-4.93***			-4.74***
RELURB			.12			.12
BLACK POP			-.01			-.01
SOUTHERN X BLACK POP			-.02			-.01
SOUTHERN X BLACK POP X VRA			.03*			.02
GOV IP			.12			.11
DELTA GUB P			-.09			-.10
IPS STATE DEL			.06			.05
State Fixed-Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year Fixed-Effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jackknife S.E.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Quadratic T.T.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	2,002	2,002	1,978	2,002	2,002	1,978
Groups	51	51	50	51	51	50
Log Likelihood	-966.3	-966.3	-913.6	-961.3	-961.3	-908.9

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

(N1) Equivalent to Tipping-Point States ex ante, minus the median state.

Results reflect conditional fixed-effects logistic regression analysis. The DV is SELECT WINNER, a dichotomous variable that is equal to one when a state votes for the winning party in the next election. Omitted national variables in columns (2), (3), (5), (6) include NOMINATION SYSTEM, PARTY SYSTEM, NATIONAL POPULATION/ URBANIZATION, NATIONAL EV and RECONSTRUCTION.

than the key states identified by other measures. The effect of falling within the expected battleground range should should be larger than the estimated effect for other measures. In addition, the effect should retain its magnitude and statistical significance when tested against the five competing measures in the same model. Table 5 contains the pertinent findings. The first five specifications omit the ECI measures, giving the alternatives a chance to demonstrate their value. Only two of these competitors appear to identify states especially likely to select the winner of the next election—Close Last 3 and 100EVM. Note, however, that Close Last 2 and Close Last 4 substitute effectively for Close Last 3 in columns two and three. Moreover, the statistically significant effect of Close Last 3 dissipates entirely with the inclusion of Close Last 2 and Close Last 4. This confirms the arbitrariness of using three elections to identify a set of states that are closely-decided within five points on average. This arbitrariness only compounds the faults of a measure that fails to identify any influential states in one-third of elections. In any event, the ECI battleground measure outperforms Close Last 3 in precision and predictive power.

The 100EVM measure, in contrast, performs rather well across the first five columns of Table 5. The effect of falling within this range in these columns is associated with a consistent and statistically-significant coefficient lying somewhere between .4 and .5. This finding is consistent with the basic expectation that the Electoral College reflects a logic of median states. After all, the ECI framework begins with a similar assumption. But the significant effect of 100EVM status should not survive the introduction of ECI if the latter more faithfully represents the institutional logic of the Electoral College. The sixth column in Table 5 confirms this expectation. The effect of falling within the expected battleground range is no weaker or less significant than in Table 4, and yet 100EVM loses all statistical significance. The lack of statistical significance associated with Tipping-Point status in Table 5 bolsters the interpretation that these states are essentially extraneous to the incumbent's coalition. The weak performance of Tipping-Point states provides another reason to believe that the ECI framework more properly captures the logic of the Electoral College than competing measures.

Table 2.5: Competing Interpretations of the Electoral College

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
BG NON-MEDIAN						1.04***
BG MEDIAN						.86
PIVOTAL NON-BG (N1)						.34
CLOSE STATE	.26	.18	.34*	.15	.14	.30
PARTY SYSTEM BG	-.41	-.49	-.35	-.44	-.82	-.80
CLOSE LAST 3	1.03*			.75	.76	.71
100EVM	.48***	.54***	.54***	.52***	.49***	.09
TIPPING-POINT	-.15	-.20	-.15	-.17	-.17	N1
CLOSE LAST 2		.63**		.37	.32	.38
CLOSE LAST 4			.66	.03	-.02	-.17
REELECTION				-.34	.06	.03
NEW STATES ADDED				7.11	-20.11	-20.96
NEW STATES EV				-1.42	4.75	4.91
SUFFRAGE				-3.07	12.39	12.86*
VRA				4.45	-13.22	-14.49
GDPPC GROWTH				.00	.59**	.55**
STATE POP					-.00	-.00
REAPPORTIONED EV					-.03	-.05
3RD PARTY PVOTE					-5.95***	-5.71***
BLACK POP					.01	.01
SOUTHERN X BLACK POP					-.06	-.06
SOUTHERN X BLACK POP X VRA					.03*	.03*
GOV IP					.10	.02
DELTA GUB P					-.07	-.07
IPS STATE DEL					-.02	-.02
Observations	1,869	1,930	1,808	1,808	1,798	1,798
Groups	51	51	51	51	50	50
Log Likelihood	-890.8	-932.4	-860.9	-856.7	-813.1	-801.5

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

(N1) Equivalent to Tipping-Point States ex ante, minus the median state.

Results reflect conditional fixed-effects logistic regression analysis. The DV is SELECT WINNER, a dichotomous variable that is equal to one when a state votes for the winning party in the next election. Omitted national variables in columns (2), (3), (5), (6) include NOMINATION SYSTEM, PARTY SYSTEM, NATIONAL POPULATION/ URBANIZATION, NATIONAL EV and RECONSTRUCTION. Omitted state variables in columns (3) and (6) include PAST MARGIN, and RELURB,

These logit coefficients can be translated into changes in the predicted probability that states will select the winning party. Table 6 reports the predicted change in the probability

of selecting the winner of the next election when a state shifts from non-pivotal to (1) pivotal and (2) battleground status. Observe the large double-digit effect of falling within the expected battleground range of states. More than 60% of non-pivotal states vote for the winner of presidential elections, historically. Placed in this perspective, the effect of battleground status represents an enormous reduction in the likelihood that these states will fail to select the winner. With the ECI measures in hand, it is possible to identify a set of key states especially likely to influence the outcome of the election– and to do so without the crutch of ex post measurements. This is an important step, but it does not ultimately speak to whether ECI better accounts for the record of states selecting winners than models employing the competing measures.

Table 2.6: Predicted Probabilities of Selecting Winner

Variable	**Comparison**	**Select Winner**
PIVOTAL RANGE	non-pivotal to pivotal, incl. bg	increase 19.4%
PIVOTAL, NON-BG	non-pivotal to pivotal, non-bg	increase 11.5%
BATTLEGROUND RANGE	non-pivotal to battleground	increase 25.7%
100EVM	outside to within 100EVM	increase 13.9%
CLOSE STATE	outside to within 5pts	increase 2.3%

Note: The results for PIVOTAL RANGE, PIVOTAL, NON-BG and BATTLEGROUND RANGE are derived from the specifications in Columns 1 and 4 of **Table 4**. The predicted probabilities for 100EVM and CLOSE STATE were estimated separately in parallel models to facilitate a comparison of predictive power.

Investigating the fourth hypothesis requires a comparison of the explanatory power of models employing the ECI framework with models that employ the competing measures. Likelihood-Ratio tests can evaluate the fit of competing models, provided that the models are nested. This restriction does not permit the evaluation of non-nested models. It follows that Likelihood-Ratio tests can only determine whether the ECI framework improves on the competing measures when the measures are included in the same model, as in Column 6 of Table 5– but not separately.[3] However, the analysis of Bayesian Information Criterion

[3]A Likelihood-Ratio test confirmed that the model including ECI measures in Column 6 is preferred to the model lacking ECI measures in Column 5. See the 7th row of Table 7, which reaches the same result using BIC.

approximation (BIC) statistics does allow the comparison of non-nested models (Raferty 1995/1986). The BIC test favors the model with the smallest BIC statistic, such that the subtraction of the BIC statistic of the weaker model from the BIC of the stronger will always result in a negative number. The absolute value of this negative number is the BIC test statistic. By convention, the stronger model is favored if the BIC test statistic is greater than 6, or strongly favored if the test statistic is greater than 10.

Table 7 sets the different models in competition with ECI and reports the BIC test statistic for each. The first five rows compare ECI without any control variables, as reported in Column 4 of Table 4, to similarly sparse models that include each of the competing measures. The sixth row compares ECI to a model that includes every competing measure. The seventh row compares the nested models in Columns 5 and 6 of Table 5. In every case, the results strongly favor ECI. These findings leave little doubt that ECI outperforms its competitors in identifying a set of states especially likely to select the winner in the next election. Yet the question of interpretation remains. What does the composition of expected battleground states tell the parties? Or, at least, what does it tell the researcher to expect from the parties in the event they care about ECI? The next part builds on the sectional emphasis of the APD literature to characterize ECI since 1832.

Table 2.7: Evaluating Explanatory Power

Preferred Model	Comparison	BIC Test
ECI (BASIC)	CLOSE STATE	39.7
ECI (BASIC)	PARTY SYSTEM BG	43.6
ECI (BASIC)	CLOSE LAST 3	32.5
ECI (BASIC)	100EVM	26.5
ECI (BASIC)	TIPPING POINT	47.9
ECI (BASIC)	Table 6, Column 1	30.7
ECI (FULL)	Table 6, Column 5	23.2

Note: ECI (Basic) for first six rows estimated using specification in Column 4 of Table 4. The comparison models in the first five rows were estimated in parallel models to facilitate the evaluation of model performance. ECI (Full) in the seventh row estimating using specification in Column 6 of Table 5.

2.6 The Sectional Composition of Battleground States

Over time, the ECI framework identifies a set of expected battleground states roughly representative of the different regions of the United States. This aggregate truth masks a great deal of year to year variation. Figure 8 depicts the changing regional composition of the battleground states over time under a division of the country into North, Great Lakes, West and South. The vertical axis reports the share of expected battleground EVs attributable to each region. This regional partitioning is useful because it can be linked to persistent differences in the level of demographic diversity and complex economic activity found within states (see Bensel 1984/2000; James 2000; Ware 2006; Engstrom and Kernell 2014; Bridges 2015). For example, the North and Great Lakes have been the hubs of urban development, immigration and business innovation since the antebellum period. The South and Midwest beyond the Great Lakes, in contrast, durably represent the agricultural sectors of the economy, while the Mountain states do the same for ranching, mining, lumber and other industries of extraction. Changes in the sectional or regional composition of expected battleground states therefore implicate different pressure groups and policy concerns.

Consider the 1948 election. Figure 9 reveals the declining influence of the South among battlegrounds between 1944 and 1948. What might be called the "Deep South" could expect to exert almost no influence whatsoever over the party– at least, not by way of the Electoral College. Truman's executive orders and party directive to include civil rights in the platform partly reflect the fading pull on the party of the region most attached to racial discrimination. But the most dramatic shift in Figure 9 is the rising influence of the wealthy, liberal and cosmopolitan North Coast. Going into the 1948 election cycle, the North Coast could expect to exert more influence than the South within the battleground range of states for the first time since 1932. The North Coast had not been so well positioned to influence presidential strategy since before the Great Depression. Such a strategy implied something different by the end of World War II because the Great Migration had transformed northern electorates (Schickler 2016; Wilkerson 2011; Lawson 2014; Tolnay

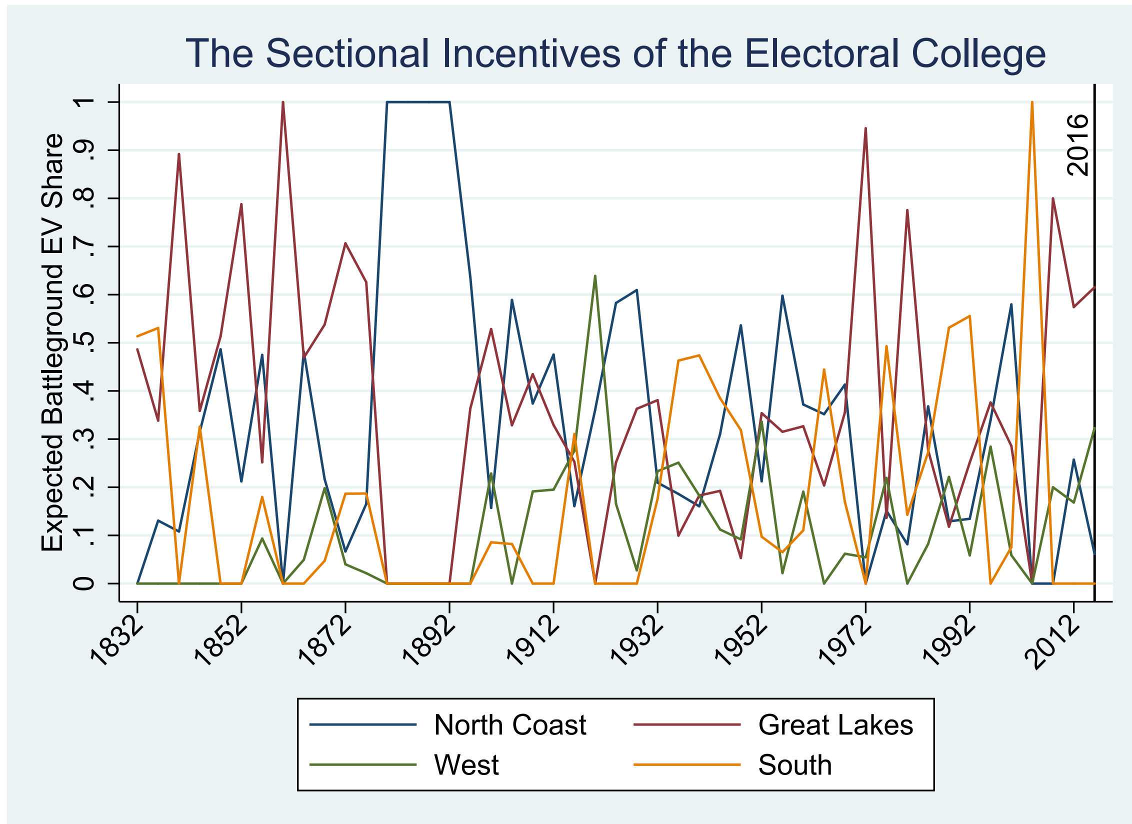

Figure 2.8: ECI, 1832-2016

2003; Trotter 1991; Grossman 1989; Hendrickson 2013). With most African-Americans living in northern states, an appeal to the North Coast increasingly implicated civil rights issues (Feinstein and Schickler 2008).

The Democratic Party's resort to New York Governor Cleveland is also consistent with ECI. Figure 10 enhances the relevant time frame. Again, observe the rising influence of the North Coast during the 1880s. Scholars from Bensel to Ware have characterized the Democratic Party of the Gilded-Age as an alliance of immigrants, western farmers and southern planters. Cleveland was none of those things, but he was a good government advocate who could appeal to other northerners disaffected with the GOP machines of state party bosses like Tom Pratt (see Marcus 1971). Nominating Cleveland was a strategic adaptation designed to improve the party's performance in Republican-leaning territory—namely, the North Coast. Scholars note that the Cleveland administrations transformed the Democratic Party, particularly with respect to civil service reform and national regulation of the economy (Skowronek 1982; James 2000). The period in question stands

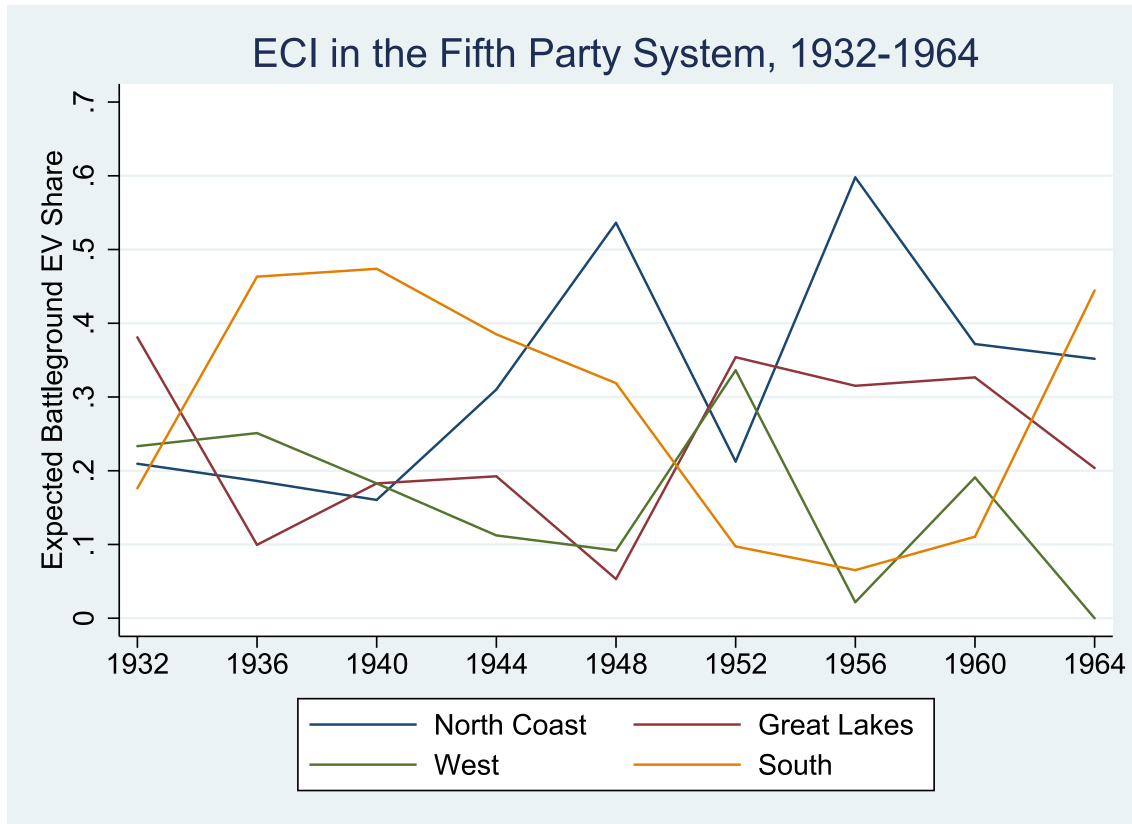

Figure 2.9: ECI, 1932-1964

out as one of the most studied in the political development literature; and, it is reassuring in no small way that the ECI framework underscores the importance of New York and other coastal states like Connecticut in these elections.

2.7 Conclusion

Knowing the identity of the expected battleground states makes it possible to reliably measure the sectional incentives of the Electoral College. The reader can be confident that the states identified as pivotal or battleground states are the class of states that should exert the greatest influence on party strategy leading up to the next election. Whether or not the parties respond effectively to ECI, and under what conditions, is a question for later scholarship. But that analysis depends on an effective and empirically valid system for classifying states under the logic of the Electoral College. Without such a system, the theory of party change considered here is not truly falsifiable. But with such a system, it becomes possible to generate testable hypotheses about their effects on party

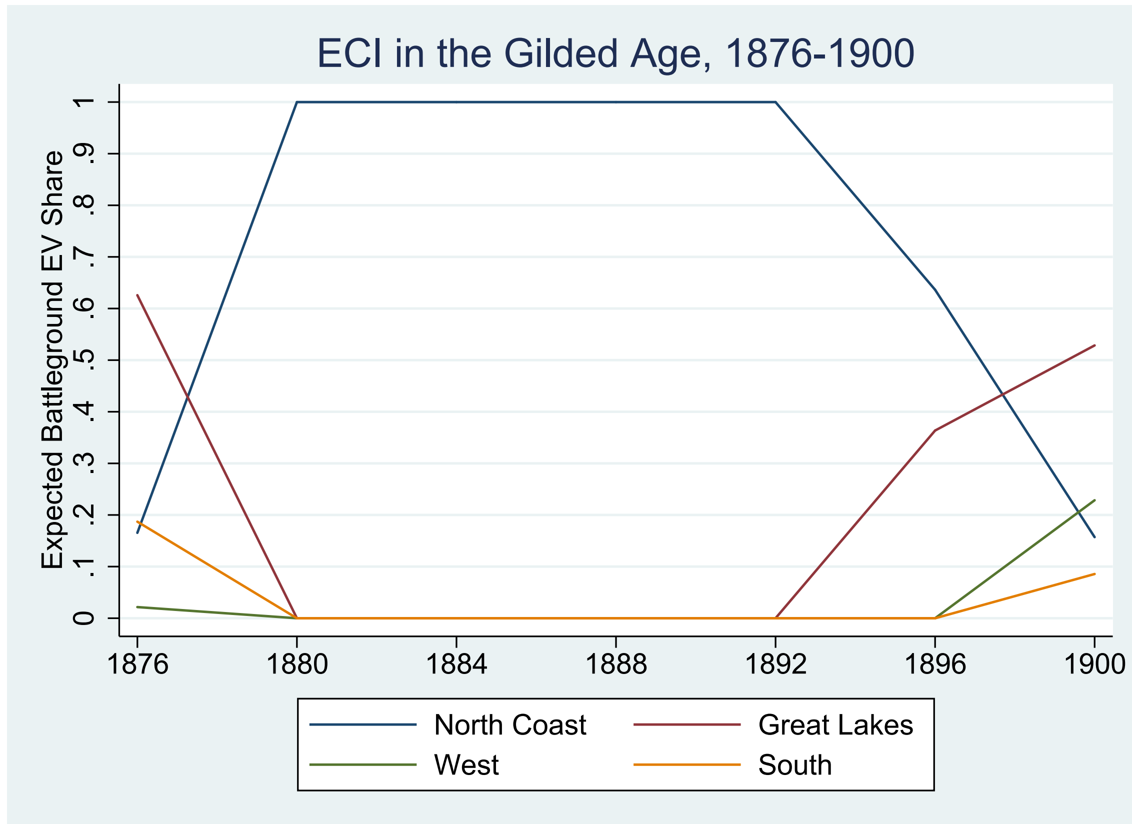

Figure 2.10: ECI, 1876-1900

behavior. Whether and the extent to which that behavior reflects ECI is an empirical question (Brams and Kilgour 2017; Cervas and Grofman 2017; Panagopolous 2016). Knowing the answer to that rather specific and narrow question is the key to knowing the answer to a much bigger question– do ECI systematically motivate many of the changes we observe in the American party system?

ECI also shed light on contemporary politics by telling us which pivotal states are especially critical for the incumbent coalition. Going into 2020, the pivotal range includes four states– Florida, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan. The Rust Belt is once again very well represented. However, Figure 11 shows that Pennsylvania and Michigan were not part of Trump's minimum winning coalition in 2016. The Republicans could have lost both states and they still would have won. Instead, the states most critical for Trump's election were Florida and Wisconsin. Since Florida has more electoral votes than Wisconsin, ECI says that the winner of Florida in 2020 can expect to win the presidency in the usual course of events. What does this mean for the trajectory of the major par-

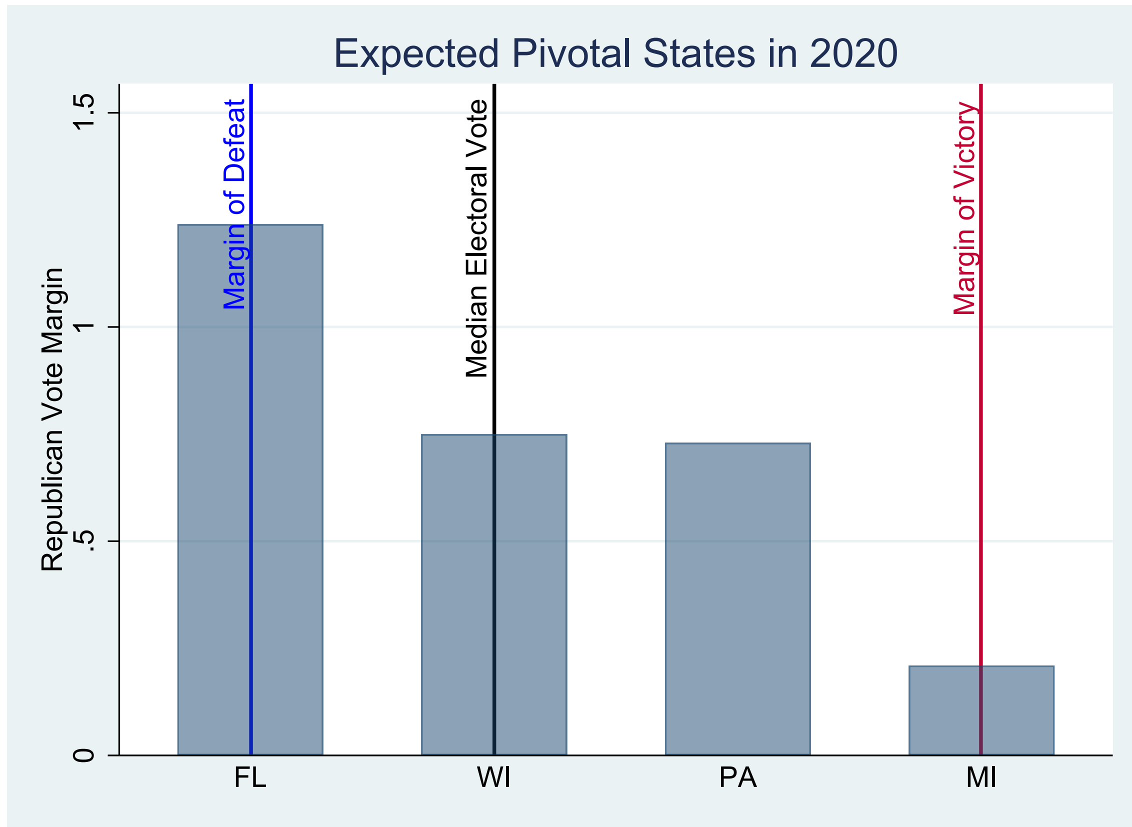

Figure 2.11: 2016 Results Signal Pivotal States in 2020

ties in 2020? If history is a reliable guide, then the importance of a southern state like Florida might point to more conservative policies. Yet, the rapid demographic and social changes occurring throughout the South may call this interpretation into doubt. The last time Florida dominated the battleground zone was 2004. Whether we see evidence for continuity or change in the behavior of the major parties will speak to the ways they perceive Florida. This is only one of the ways ECI can create a conversation between past and present election cycles.

Appendix

Table 2.8: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Description	Obs	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
SELECT WINNER	vote winner	2,040	.691	.46	0	1
PIVOTAL	id pivotal	2,002	.405	.491	0	1
BATTLEGROUND	id battleground	2,002	.241	.248	0	1
ECI (BASIC)	three-part measure	2,002	.646	.843	0	2
ECI (FULL)	four-part measure	2,002	.863	1.212	0	3
CLOSE STATE	within 5pts	2,001	.194	.395	0	1
CLOSE STATE PS	close in partysys	2,035	.023	.150	0	1
CLOSE LAST 3	close last 3 elections	1,879	.065	.246	0	1
100EVM	+/-100ev of median	2,002	.436	.496	0	1
TIPPING-POINT	tipping-point states	2,002	.188	.391	0	1
REELECTION	sitting president	47	.511	.505	0	1
NEW STATES ADDED	New states	47	.553	1.212	0	6
NEW STATES EV	New states' EV	47	1.936	4.219	0	20
SUFFRAGE	women vote	47	.532	0.504	0	1
VRA	voting rights act	47	.277	.452	0	1
RECONSTRUCTION	reconstruction	47	.064	.247	0	1
DIVIDED GOVT	divided government	47	0.574	0.500	0	1
GDPPC GROWTH	per capita growth	47	1.860	4.692	-15.105	12.224
NOMSYS	nomination system	47			1	3
PARTYSYS	party systems II-VI	47			2	6
PAST MARGIN	prior margin	2,001	22.376	22.499	0	100
CLOSE LAST 2	close last 2 elections	1,940	.105	.306	0	1
CLOSE LAST 4	close last 4 elections	1,818	.046	.209	0	1
REAPPORTIONED EV	EV gained or lost	2,002	.093	0.866	-6	9
3RD PARTY PVOTE	3rd party vote share	2,001	.063	.123	0	1
POPULATION S	state population	2,039	2.8M	3.9M	0.0M	37.3M
URBANIZATION S	state urbanization	2,039	.461	.269	0	1
RELURB	relative urban.	2,039	1.00	.574	0	4.73
BLACK POP	black population%	2,039	11.606	15.295	0	71.1
GOV IP	inc. party governor	2,040	.483	.500	0	1
DELTA GOV P	gub. party change	2,025	.331	.471	0	1
IPS STATE DEL	IP delegation share	2,026	.487	.370	0	1

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Chapter Three:

A Valid Scheme of Sectional Politics

Executive Summary: How should parties tailor their policy positions to the expected battleground states identified in the previous chapter? The political history and APD literature suggests that a profound development divide separates the rich and diverse states of the Great Lakes and North Coast from the rural states of the South and West. States in the more developed North are associated with the centralized administrative state, while those in the developing Heartland are linked to a rural decentralized state. Scholarship also suggests that regional differences divide the North from the Great Lakes, and the South from the West. This suggests a scheme of sectional and regional politics by which to interpret the signals expected battleground states send to the parties. But do these sweeping characterizations have any basis in fact? The analysis of 20th and 21st century state party platforms offers us an unprecedented opportunity to evaluate the importance of the development divide for political rhetoric. The findings demonstrate that sectional and regional policy variation in state platforms follows theoretical expectations to a surprising degree.

3.1 Introduction

The ECI framework from Chapter 2 makes it possible to identify expected battleground states in every election since 1832. What new or different policies should the party adopt in response to these states in an election? This is a difficult question to answer, but this study must provide a convincing and valid response or abandon the investigation altogether. It is not possible to test the theory that ECI drive party change without a valid idea of the policies the parties should advocate when different states are decisive. To do this properly, we need to have a good idea of the policies that go with different states for the past two hundred years. Upon first consideration, the possibilities are limitless. Each state has its unique history and qualities, and it could be that these translate into purely parochial policy agendas that differentiate every state in every election year. Translating decisive states into policy implications might require exhaustive case studies involving many teams of researchers to complete. Moreover, national party platforms, to the degree they reflected ECI, would then be laundry lists of local concerns and simply uninteresting for students of national policy.

It is fortunate that the Rowe Memorandum and APD literature (Skowronek 1982; Bensel 1984/2000; Aldrich 1995; Bridges 1997/2015; James 2000; Ware 2006; Engstrom and Kernell 2014) instead highlight the political implications of the development divide between states in the advanced "North" and states in the agrarian "Heartland". This theoretical approach trades precision with respect to the policies of time and place for a general expectation that parties will shift toward the centralized administrative state and pluralism when targeting states in the North, and toward decentralized agrarian society and tradition when targeting states in the Heartland. This theory's bifurcation of the country comes with an additional benefit– by definition, most of the expected battleground states must always be either North or Heartland. As a result, a division of states on the basis of the development divide promises to make a clear prediction about the trajectory of party policies in every election. These are appealing strengths. But the lack of available alternative theories is admittedly unnerving. If the development divide were unable to serve as the

backbone of a valid scheme of sectional politics over time, the next candidate is far from obvious. But we cannot afford to assume that the influence of the development divide is real out of complacency or desperation. That is precisely why empirical validation is so important.

This chapter features a comprehensive analysis of state party platforms collected by Brian Feinstein and Eric Shickler for the period 1920-1970, and by Dan Coffey for the 2000-2008 period. State party platforms are evidence of the positions espoused by state party organizations. They are one degree removed from national politics, although it would be a mistake to treat them as purely grassroots documents. Studies of 19th Century state platforms (Bensel 2000; Engstrom and Kernell 2014) conclude that the state parties were largely focused on matters of national import and their positions often matched those of the national party. Where the policies of state parties came into explicit or tacit conflict with the national party generally concerned the interests of conflicting regions. For example, western Republicans might propound inflationary silver even as the national party stood for the gold standard. Democrats in the Northeast were similarly predisposed to gold even as their party pushed for silver under William Jennings Bryan "at 16:1." The best way to understand regional politics in the state platforms is to hold party constant and compare the policy positions across different groups of states. Persistent policy differences at this level are especially interesting. Do they track the development divide?

Regional differences that generate divisions within each of the advanced and developing states are also interesting. One story of 2016 is that several advanced states in the Great Lakes– Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin– broke away from the consensus choice of the coastal states to vote for the candidate of the "flyover" states. The greater appeal of economic nationalism in the Rust Belt may account for Trump's stronger performance in the part of the country hit hardest by "de-industrialization." This would be consistent with the GOP's advocacy of the protective tariff to build a viable northern coalition in the Gilded Age more than a century ago (Bensel 2000). The policy amounted to subsidized industrialization in the Great Lakes, which developed rapidly to an extent

never paralleled in the South and West. Nonetheless, we shall see that the Great Lakes has always lagged the northern coastal states in development. This relative variation in development within the otherwise advanced North may go far in explaining the greater appeal of economic nationalism. The examination of state platforms in this chapter will tell us whether economic nationalist goals appear with greater consistency in the Great Lakes.

It will also tell us whether states in the West and South consistently stake different positions with respect to progressive farming and racial conservatism, respectively. These differences, should they exist, probably reflect a blend of demographic, developmental, geographic and historical forces. The landlocked western states were initially settled by northerners and northern immigrants after the Civil War, however sparsely (*Ibid.*; Ware 2006; Frymer 2017). They depended on eastern credit to invest in their farms, government-furnished soldiers to fight the Indian Wars and government-sponsored railroads to reach distant markets. Viable agriculture in the West implied a different relationship between producers, financial institutions and the national government than it did in the South. Tenant farming in the former Confederacy predated the railroad and grew up alongside navigable waterways like the Mississippi and seaports dotting the Gulf and the South Atlantic (Black and Allen 1937; Higgs 1973; Alston 1981). Farmers in the South borrowed not from banks but from landlords who also tended to constitute the ruling class (Ransom and Sutch 1972). The landlords held onto power with a scheme of disenfranchisement that found its justification in racial exclusion (Key 1950; Kousser 1974; Mickey 2015). These feudal roots may have fueled the racial conservatism and insistence on local prerogative that make the South distinct from other regions, including the agrarian West (Bridges 2015).

Table 1 synthesizes these themes into a general scheme of sectional politics that will guide this inquiry. To settle on convenient terminology, we shall deem North and Heartland to be "sections" while using the term "regions" to refer to the Great Lakes[1] ,

[1]il, in, mi, mn, oh, pa, wi

Table 3.1: A General Scheme of Sectional Politics

Section	Region	Policy Agenda
North		centralized administrative state
	Great Lakes	economic nationalism
	North Coast	inclusive and cosmopolitan
Heartland		decentralized rural state
	South	racial conservatism
	West	farming and extraction industries

North Coast[2], South[3] and West[4]. The Great Lakes and North Coast together add up to the North section; the South and West similarly aggregate into the Heartland section. The next part of this chapter provides additional context and justification for this scheme. Part four lists and explains the significance of the empirical hypotheses. The fifth part introduces the 20th and 21st century state platforms. This is the first study to assemble these artifacts for analysis across a comprehensive range of political issues. This section also includes a description of the coding process and the measures taken to address its reliability across coders. These include demonstrations of similar coding, but rely primarily on the consistency of statistical results in separate analyses of each coder's stratified random sample of platforms to demonstrate reliability. This approach ensures that findings are not driven by the idiosyncrasies of individual coders. The results appear in the sixth part. The extent to which party platform content varies across states in line with these expectations is surprising. Part seven concludes that the scheme of sectional and regional politics advanced here is valid for historical analysis.

3.2 Toward a Valid Sectional Framework

One cannot raise any notion of sectional politics in the United States and escape the legacy of the Civil War. So it is with the development divide. Southern leaders like Henry Clay and John Calhoun were aware of the growing cities and industry of northern states and the absence of the same developments in their section of the country (Brands

[2]ca, ct, de, hi, ma, md, me, nh, nj, ny, or, ri, vt, wa

[3]al, ar, fl, ga, ky, la, ms, nc, ok, sc, tn, tx, va, wv

[4]ak, az, co, ia, id, ks, mo, mt, nd, ne, nm, nv, sd, ut, wy

2018). The Kentuckian Clay attributed the gap to the lack of infrastructure on the frontier and hoped to close the gap in time with federally-financed projects of "internal improvement". He was willing to accept a protective tariff to finance these developments, even though it resulted in higher consumer prices for farmers. Calhoun of South Carolina blamed any gap in development on the protective tariff and the corruption of the federal government by stockjobbers in Boston, New York and Philadelphia. He developed the discredited doctrine of state nullification in response to the tariff, which would outlive him to provide inspiration for secessionists in 1860 and 1861 (Holt 1978/1992/2017). For Calhoun and many other southerners, the rapid industrialization of the North was proof that the federal government was being used to exploit the South. It certainly was not evidence that the northern way of life was superior. That idea was anathema among the planter ruling class. Endorsing it had consequences.

John Sherman of Ohio rose quickly in the upstart Republican Party, and he was a favorite to become Speaker of the House in 1859. The contest promised to be unique in that the 1858 midterms did not deliver a majority for any party. The GOP was the plurality party, but it needed to caucus with the Know-Nothings to control the chamber (Anbinder 1992). Sherman finished second on the first ballot and his supporters had high hopes that a firm opponent of slavery would lead the House. But then it came to light that Sherman had endorsed a controversial book on the campaign trail called *The Impending Crisis of the South* (Helper 1857). The furor that erupted doomed Sherman for Speaker (Holt 2017). The book itself was written by a southerner named Hinton Rowan Helper, who pressed the case that the institution of slavery itself caused the development divide. Helper argued that slavery impoverished southern whites and precluded the virtuous cycle of social mobility and capitalist investment that generated growth. These ideas percolated among Free Soilers and other slavery opponents before Helper, but he supported his claims with the analysis of census statistics– particularly those addressing the value of agricultural and manufacturing products in the different states. These data revealed the chasm that had evolved between North and South since 1790.

What do these same statistics say about the development divide since the Civil

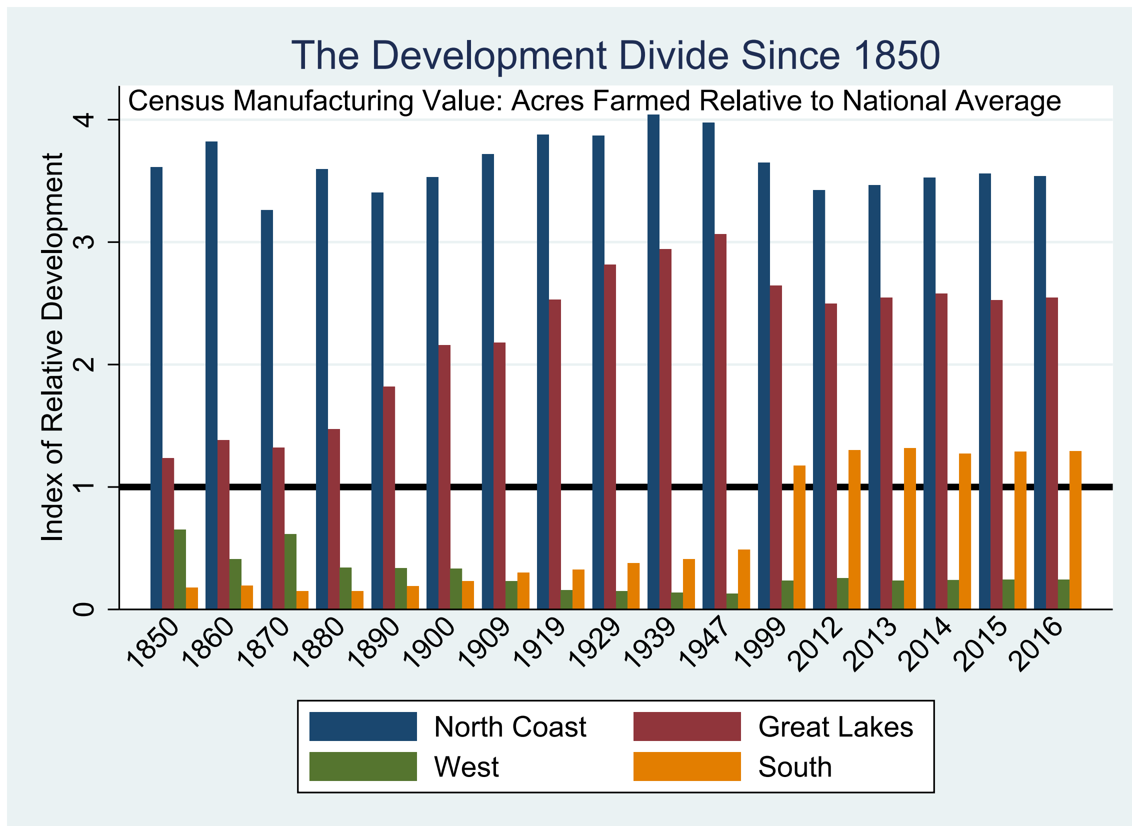

Figure 3.1: Census Statistics and the Development Divide

War? Figure 1 shows the ratio of manufacturing value to acres farmed for each region since 1850 relative to the national average. This ratio is a good index of economic development because it reflects the extent to which the state economy places greater emphasis on industry or farming. In 1850, the North Coast was between three and four times more developed than the national average. The North Coast was still three or four times more developed than the national average in 2016. The Great Lakes was the only other region with an above-average development index in 1850, and Figure 1 confirms that the Great Lakes remained the second-most developed region in 2016. The Great Lakes has been between two and three times more developed than the national average since about 1900. The South and West have always been the least developed regions by this metric. The only change in relative development we observe is the rising industrialization of the South, which still falls well short of the North but exceeds that of the West. The northern victory in the Civil War ushered in the end of slavery, but it did not end sectional patterns of development. The development divide is alive and well. It is therefore all the more

plausible that it shapes politics today.

This four-part division into Great Lakes, North Coast, South and West does not follow the common practice of assigning states to Census regions. Census regions are rooted exclusively in geography, while the central cleavage that animates this discussion has to do with relative development. Assigning states on the basis of geography results in "Midwest" and "West" Census regions that combine advanced northern states with many developing western states. California and Hawaii share the same Census region with Idaho and Wyoming, just as Illinois and Ohio cavort with North and South Dakota in the Census Midwest. If the central cleavage is relative economic development, then grouping states by geography will only obscure the importance of sectional politics. Figure 2 depicts the relationship between Census regions and the development index shown in Figure 1. Saddling the well-developed Great Lakes and Pacific Coast states with so many western states results in Census regions that appear completely undeveloped relative to the Northeast. Figure 2 confirms this. After the Northeast, the most developed region in relative terms is the West in 1850 and 1860. This paradoxical finding makes sense because the only western states admitted were California and Oregon on the relatively well-developed Pacific Coast. The development index for the West thereafter plummets with the addition of the western states.

To better track the development divide, the assignment of states to sections must begin with the recognition that to date there have only been three well-developed regions of the country. These are the Northeast, the Great Lakes and the Pacific Coast. The designation "North Coast" combines the Northeast with the Pacific Coast because both regions share a legacy of diversity and progressive politics that is not generally associated with the Great Lakes (Jackson 1968; Foner 1970; Fox 2011; Meyers and Meyers Walker 2018). There may be a lasting and distinct flavor of Pacific Coast politics, but it is not obvious what this would be on the basis of the APD or historical literature. Investigations of city politics in the Pacific region uncover political movements that generally resemble reform and developmental agendas playing out back East (Erie 1990; Bridges 1997; Trounstine 2008). The epithet today "liberal coastal elite" draws on the common understanding that

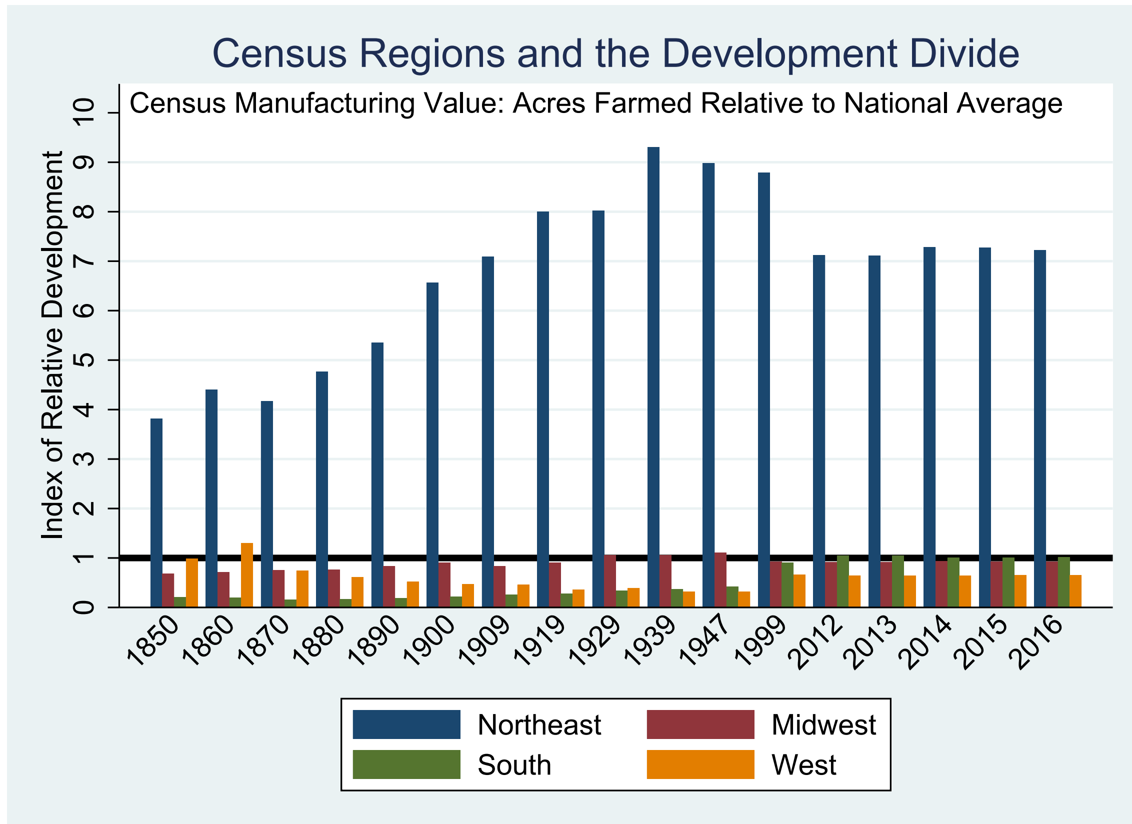

Figure 3.2: Census Categories and the Development Divide

the Northeast and Pacific Coast are both more progressive and more developed than other parts of the country, and that many of its most influential citizens adopt similar positions. The phrase also explicitly excludes citizens from the Great Lakes states, probably because of their legacy of industrial worker politics. Contrasting the factory floor with the Manhattan boardroom is natural enough in the lyrics of Bruce Springsteen or the ruminations of sportscasters whenever the Steelers play the Giants.

As different as New York City and Pittsburgh may be, the opposite of a megalopolis with towering skyscrapers is not really a smaller city with fewer and smaller skyscrapers. The opposite of life in the city is life on the farm or in a rural town. It is true that the proportion of the national population living in these areas continues to dwindle (Dimitri, Effland and Conklin 2005). Very few Americans any longer farm in the traditional sense. Yet, agriculture remains one of the largest industries in most states. In western and southern states, agriculture and energy extraction rival or outstrip all other industries (USDA). Mechanization and economies of scale have displaced field hands and led to the

consolidation of large farms, but agriculture is still at the heart of how a large proportion of America survives. Those who did not move to the city or suburbs agglomerated in rural towns where they started businesses or found jobs in available industries like the railroads or trucking. Agricultural operations, the businesses they support and the taxes they generate for local and state government are indispensable in rural communities (Swinnen 1994). The future of farming states like Kansas or Nebraska is intertwined with the future of American agriculture to a degree that would be difficult to associate with any one industry in the North (Vilsack 2016).

This is important for politics because the interests of rural communities and large cities often differ. The same tariff that promotes manufacturing employment and props up industrial wages leads to higher prices for farming equipment (Paschal 2019). Import policies that lower food prices in urban markets impoverish marginal farmers and lead to bank foreclosures (Carro-Figueroa 2002). The hard money policies that benefit old-age pensioners and bankers make it more difficult for indebted farmers to pay back their loans and realize a profit (Bensel 2000). These are just the economic issues–the rift between the city and the farm with respect to cultural and religious matters is at least as large (see Badger 2019; Griswold 2018). The culture wars of this country can be well understood as conflicts between opposing majorities in the large cities and the countryside, whether with respect to temperance and religious freedom in the 19th Century or abortion and GLBTQ rights in the 20th and 21st. These differences apply within as well as across states; Eastern California is much more conservative on these and other issues than coastal California, just as New Orleans is more liberal than the rest of the state of Louisiana. It is the preponderance of one or the other set of interests within each state that must justify its characterization as developed or developing for political purposes.

This is a strange view of politics because it strips away so much of what matters in politics to create a static categorization of states. The specific story of each state abounds with political entrepreneurs of varying abilities and contingent events were it not for which the political history of the state would be much different. But, then again, this is the viewpoint reflected in much of the best work in American Political Development, and it

is the viewpoint reflected in the famous memorandum James Rowe drafted for Truman in connection with the 1948 election. There are two reasons to believe that this abstract level of politics is relevant to presidential politics in particular. First, the winner-take-all rule that generally holds for Electoral Vote allocation produces a relentless focus on majority coalitions within states– and there is little reason to believe that such coalitions will undergo radical change from one presidential election to the next. The stability of the development divide weighs against it. Second, states in the same region tend to vote for the same party in presidential elections– much more uniformly than in state government. This invites presidential campaigns in particular to abstract away much of the detail and substance of American politics to adopt a "space-shuttle" perspective on the country.

Thinking in "space-shuttle" terms makes sense under the rules of the Electoral College because the objective is to win states instead of voters. This may be one of the most important consequences of the Electoral College. Consider that state boundaries would be irrelevant under a popular vote rule to the elect the president. The presidential campaigns would care about maximizing votes regardless of where they were cast. The most common rationale for a popular vote rule is its fidelity to the principle of one-person, one-vote. Does this mean that parties would care equally about all voters? No, the parties would focus more of their efforts on base supporters who are relatively cheaper to mobilize and whose enthusiasm on election day would frequently prove decisive. It is true that both parties would care about winning the national median voter, so one would not expect base mobilization to be the exclusive strategy. Nonetheless, consider the implications of targeting the median voter in a nation where the majority of the population lives in the nine most populous states. A popular vote rule would not give California and New York control over both parties, but it would encourage parties to employ their base mobilization and national median voter strategies in well-populated areas. And these areas do not change much.

By shifting the focus to states instead of voters, the Electoral College makes regional politics relevant to presidential elections in a way that it is not in other elections. From the "space-shuttle" perspective of a presidential campaign, the links between vot-

ers in New Orleans and San Francisco become invisible, just as the links between small farmers in Massachusetts and Iowa disappear. They are replaced by state-level characterizations of political culture and economic development that allow campaigns to draw politically-relevant connections between groups of states. This is not unlike the astronaut in space who relies on mountain ranges, rivers and other geographical features to organize her vision of the country and approximate her hometown. In campaign terms, the Great Lakes is not the green space between the Mississippi River and the Appalachian Mountains– it is a stretch of states similarly organized around domestic industry, with politically-active unions and a structural dependence on the coasts for access to global markets. Similarly, the South appears not as a coastal plain but as a collection of states with a common legacy of resistance to federal authority and racial conservatism. This perspective is the product of the Electoral College, which can account for why regional politics is comparatively obscure in other political arenas.

3.3 A Scheme of Sectional Politics

The purpose of this section is to advance a scheme of sectional politics with testable policy implications. These implications will later be evaluated against the record of 20th and 21st century state party platforms to determine whether they have any basis in fact. One challenge in developing such a scheme is that no one has attempted to comprehensively map policies onto sections, much less in a way that applies across historical periods. The case study approach common in APD allowed these works to focus on issues like national railroad regulation or civil service reform that have been especially salient at one time or another. Scholars applied the insights of the development divide to identify the constituents that could expect to benefit from different positions on these issues. They could then map these positions onto different regions of the country where these constituents were most prevalent or influential. For example, financial institutions, progressive activists, professional bureaucrats, and new immigrants are more prevalent in northern developed states– even if none would amount to a majority– and scholars have

therefore anticipated policies more favorable to these constituents in the North.[5] The same approach has led scholars to associate policies benefiting debtors, evangelicals, farmers and nativists with the developing Heartland.

This approach suggests that it is possible to develop a scheme of sectional politics that should be valid over the last two centuries. The reason is the stability and endurance of the development divide, which could justify an ongoing expectation that policies favoring, say, financial institutions redound to the benefit of the North, while policies favoring poor farmers target Heartland states. The best reason to be skeptical about this idea is two centuries of development and urbanization in the Heartland; these forces may have made the regional associations of the past obsolete. It may not make sense to expect policies favoring farmers in the Heartland when so few people farm. When it comes to the development divide, should the focus be on indicators of relative development or absolute development? This study of state party platforms will speak to this question, but there is good reason to believe that relative development continues to be important for national politics. The greater orientation of the Heartland states toward agriculture and extraction industries, as well as religious organizations, implicates a different set of dominant special interests that can come into conflict with those of the North. Policies that protect workers from overseas competition continue to imply higher prices and trade barriers for farmers that hit hardest where farming is most important– the Heartland.

A scheme of sectional politics that identifies the key special interest groups or constituencies within each section and tracks their policy preferences over time would be consistent with the development divide and the approach of existing scholarship. Table 2 adds constituent labels to give definition to the general scheme of sectional politics in Table 1. Constituents of the North include Capitalists, Creditors, Immigrants, Internation-

[5]This does not necessarily imply an absence of opposition or hostility to these interests within each section. Know-Nothings represented nativist sentiment in northern developed states before the Civil War. Nonetheless, the story of the Know-Nothings is their defeat at the hands of pro-immigrant Republicans like William Seward in their effort to build a viable northern coalition (Anbinder 1992).

alists, Laborers, the Poor, Professionals, Racial and Ethnic Minorities, Working Families, Environmentalists, the LGBTQ+ Community, Political Radicals, Reformers, Secularists, Seniors and the Disabled, Veterans and Women. The expectation going forward will be that policies attractive to these constituents will attract greater attention in the state platforms of both parties in North states, regardless of historical context. This framework also permits the investigation of regional differences between the Great Lakes and North Coast having to do with economic nationalism. In particular, we should expect states in the Great Lakes to emphasize Capitalists and Laborers. The progressive reputation of the North Coast would be consistent with systematically more inclusive policy positions on issues of race, culture and international cooperation.

An entirely different set of constituents advance Heartland causes in Table 2. Among the Heartland's key constituents are Boosters, Consumers and Debtors, Farmers, Foresters, Nationalists, Nativists, Oilers, and Rural Labor. Boosters advocate for infrastructure in rural America, including airports, hospitals, roads and schools. Consumers propound strict liability for defective products and resist tort reform. Debtors want easy credit and other forms of inflationary money. Farmers, as described previously, benefit from crop price supports, land reclamation projects and access to foreign markets for their agricultural products. Foresters and Oilers represent extraction industries that profit from access to protected federal lands and environmental deregulation. Nationalists want more defense spending, an expanding military and an aggressive foreign policy. Nativists are associated with racial conservatism and exclusion. Rural Labor includes truckers and railroaders in the transportation industries, as well as miners and farm workers that advocate for labor protections in their respective fields. Other important constituents of the Heartland include Budget Hawks, Evangelicals, the Law Enforcement Community, Strict Constructionists, the Sober, and Traditionalists. These constituents generally belong to the conservative side of politics. In addition, regional differences between the South and West should be reflected in the respective attention given to Nativists and Farmers.

These labels are intended to be self-explanatory for the most part; the online appendix provides a greater discussion of each, along with detailed training materials for

Table 3.2: Policy Constituents by Section and Region

SECTIONAL AGENDAS	CONSTITUENTS
Heartland	Budget Hawks, Boosters, Consumers, Debtors, Evangelicals and the Devout, Farmers, Foresters, Hunters, the Law Enforcement Community, Nationalists, Nativists, Oilers, Rural Labor, the Sober, Strict Constructionists, and Traditionalists
North	Capitalists, Creditors, Environmentalists, the GLBTQ Community, Immigrants, Internationalists, Laborers, Political Radicals, the Poor, Professionals, Racial and Ethnic Minorities, Reformers, Secularists, Seniors and Disabled Individuals, Women and Children, Working Families, and Veterans
REGIONAL AGENDAS	CONSTITUENTS
South	Nativists, (-) Immigrants, (-) Racial and Ethnic Minorities
West	Farmers, Foresters, Oilers, and Rural Labor
Great Lakes	Capitalists, Laborers, and Nationalists
North Coast	Immigrants, Internationalists, Racial and Ethnic Minorities

See online appendix for additional information.

anyone wishing to replicate the coding or apply it to a novel set of documents. This scheme of sectional politics is admittedly too complex to simply assume a basis in fact exists for it. Scholarly skepticism is completely appropriate– there may be more reasons to expect that such a scheme will fail to reflect the real world than there are reasons recommending it. And yet there is the enduring development divide and the scholarship underscoring its importance. Moreover, there is the promise that such a scheme holds for the investigation of party development in response to the incentives of the Electoral College. A valid scheme would make it possible to determine whether and the extent to which the record of party development is consistent with theoretical expectations since 1832. We would then be in a position to evaluate the importance of ECI in a systematic manner for the first time. The absence of alternative theories to try is an additional factor– the literature supports a scheme of sectional politics that is consistent with the development divide, but it does not suggest another. In short, the only way to proceed is to try to validate this scheme, or one fundamentally like it.

The analysis of state platforms in this chapter will tell us whether this scheme of sectional politics can find support in state platforms published between 1920 and 1970,

and between 2000 and 2008. If the state parties of both major parties systematically tailor their messages in ways that are consistent with the development divide, then the scheme is valid. We can be confident that tailored messages aim to enhance the sectional or regional appeal of the parties. For example, if the Heartland platforms emphasize Heartland issues more than the North consistently over time, this would be evidence that the association between this policy agenda and Heartland states is valid. We could then study the correspondence between Heartland influence in the Electoral College and Heartland policies in the national party platforms and other party outputs. Skeptics can rest assured that a scheme of sectional politics will not be validated against the record of state party platforms if it does not accurately reflect enduring differences between regions of the country. This makes state party platforms an ideal test of whether sectional politics has any validity. The next section describes the most important empirical hypotheses for the analysis of state platforms that follow from this discussion.

3.4 Hypotheses

The scheme of sectional politics developed in the preceding section suggests that states in each section and region should place additional emphasis on the constituents indicated in Table 2. The strongest evidence for the relevance of the development divide would be that both parties tailor their messages to section as expected. If both Democrats and Republicans pursue a North Agenda in the North and a more Heartland Agenda in the Heartland, then we can be confident that the development divide is sufficiently consistent with the data to be a good framework. Similar expectations apply at the regional level. Evidence that policies vary in line with these expectations would validate an enduring account of sectional and regional politics in America for the first time.

Sectional Agendas

H1: The North Agenda attracts a greater proportion of policy appeals in North state platforms, just as the Heartland Agenda draws more emphasis in Heart-

land state platforms.

It is a strong claim that the development divide contributes to the fundamental structure of political conflict in the United States. If this insight is correct, then identifying systematic differences between platforms on either side of the sectional divide should not be difficult. This is the most important hypothesis because the development divide is the backbone of the APD approach to understanding sectional conflict. If North and Heartland states do not differ consistently in line with the development divide, then the concept lacks support in the historical record. It would then be a conjectural theory about what preferences should look like, were the development divide as important as some scholars have imagined it to be. Even if national platforms and policies changed in line with theoretical expectations, it would be difficult to attribute these changes to expected battleground states if state platforms contradict this basic expectation.

The South Regional Agenda

H2: The South Regional Agenda attracts more emphasis in South platforms than in West platforms.

H2A: Support for Nativists attracts more emphasis in South platforms than in West platforms.

H2B: Support for Immigrants attracts less emphasis in South platforms than in West platforms.

H2C: Support for Racial and Ethnic Minorities attracts less emphasis in South platforms than in West platforms.

These ask whether the South's reputation for racial conservatism is evident in the record of state platforms. Given the attention to racial conservatism that scholarship about the South shares in common, these effectively test whether state platforms accurately reflect well-known regional variations. This is a tough test of this concept because state parties may have reasons to downplay attitudes that attract condemnation in other parts of

the country, including racial conservatism. If state platforms reflect trivial regional variations that sell well in other regions, then state platforms would not be good evidence of the regional agendas that interest us. As shown in Table 2, the South Regional Agenda is positively associated with Nativists and negatively associated with Immigrants and Racial and Ethnic Minorities. As detailed in the online appendix, the Nativist agenda includes opposition to international cooperation, barriers for immigrants, and opposition to desegregation efforts. Lack of support for Immigrants would be reflected in lower levels of support for reducing immigration barriers, protecting immigrant rights, and accommodating languages other than English. Similarly, the lack of support for Racial and Ethnic Minorities would be found in a smaller proportion of policies devoted to desegregation and the civil rights of minorities.

H2 evaluates whether the South is distinct from the West on a policy agenda that aggregates policies targeting these constituents. H2A, H2B and H2C split out the individual Constituent groups. Doing so provides a more nuanced picture of regional policy variation, and it also allows the reader to see how each Constituent contributes to the aggregate regional relationship. A similar approach is taken with respect to each of the regional agendas described below.

The West Regional Agenda

H3: The West Regional Agenda attracts more emphasis in West platforms than in South platforms.

H3A: Support for Farmers attracts more emphasis in West platforms than in South platforms.

H3B: Support for Foresters attracts more emphasis in West platforms than in South platforms.

H3C: Support for Oilers attracts more emphasis in West platforms than in South platforms.

H3D: Support for Rural Labor attracts more emphasis in West platforms than in South platforms.

This third set of hypotheses evaluates party platforms for evidence that West states are predisposed to farmers, extraction industries and rural labor. The policy agenda of Farmers includes agricultural infrastructure, price supports and special credit facilities, foreign market access, and soil and land reclamation, including irrigation and water projects. Foresters and Oilers seek access to timber and mineral resources on federal lands, protection from foreign competition and industry deregulation. Rural Labor represents the efforts of farm workers, miners, railroad workers and truckers to achieve the gains of organized labor for themselves– the right to organize, better working conditions and higher wages.

The North Coast Regional Agenda

H4: The North Coast Regional Agenda attracts more emphasis in North Coast platforms than in Great Lakes platforms.

H4A: Support for Immigrants attracts more emphasis in North Coast platforms than in Great Lakes platforms.

H4B: Support for Internationalists attracts more emphasis in North Coast platforms than in Great Lakes platforms.

H4C: Support for Racial and Ethnic Minorities attracts more emphasis in North Coast platforms than in Great Lakes platforms.

The North Coast has long been home to a majority of African Americans living outside the South, and it has always been home to a majority of new immigrants to America (U.S. Census; Wilkerson 2011). Its great port cities– Boston, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco – connect foreign markets to inland transportation networks that supply the interior. The United Nations first gathered in San Francisco and is currently headquartered in New York. The diversity of America and its connections to the rest of the world feature most prominently in this part of the country. These associations should translate into greater lasting support for Immigrants, Racial and Ethnic Minorities, and Interna-

tionalists. This includes support for lowering barriers to immigration and naturalization, respecting immigrant civil and cultural rights, minority civil rights, desegregation efforts, as well as working with other countries and supporting international institutions.

The Great Lakes Regional Agenda

H5: The Great Lakes Regional Agenda attracts a greater proportion of policy appeals in Great Lakes platforms than in North Coast platforms.

H5A: Support for Capitalists attracts a greater proportion of policy appeals in Great Lakes platforms than in North Coast platforms.

H5B: Support for Laborers attracts a greater proportion of policy appeals in Great Lakes platforms than in North Coast platforms.

The final set of hypotheses test the expectation that economic nationalism characterizes the Great Lakes region more than the North Coast. The Capitalist agenda includes support for tariffs, small business preferences, and the rights and interests of corporations and other forms of limited liability enterprise. That of Laborers includes the right to organize, better wages and benefits, and health and safety regulations.

3.5 State Party Platform Data

State party platforms are similar to national party platforms. These documents list the policy proposals of the party, praise party leaders for their achievements and excoriate the opposition for corruption. Like national platforms, state platforms are the product of party conventions and subject to the majority approval of convention delegates. The convention generally tasks a committee of approved members to draft the platform language. Governors, candidates for office, various factions within the party, special interests and other pressure groups wrangle for control and influence of the convention and the published policies of the party (Feinstein and Schickler 2008; Coffey 2014). Platforms are not written with a general audience in mind; they are geared toward insiders of this sort. Party

interests whose stars are rising will expect to see their objectives reflected in a greater proportion of the party's agenda, while those with diminished influence can expect to settle for a smaller share. They can be thought of as special interest scorecards (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Grossman and Helpman 1996). These scorecards can tell us whether interests associated with different sectional or regional agendas control a greater share of the party's policies. The table below provides some illustrative examples of platform language from different regions and time periods.

These admittedly select quotes are broadly consistent with the scheme of sectional politics outlined in this chapter. Note the openly nativist and racist sentiments in excerpts from the 1948 Texas Democrats and 1920 South Dakota Republicans. We expect these sentiments to appear more regularly in the platforms of Heartland states like Texas and South Dakota. It is interesting that the 1944 Illinois Republicans criticize the New Deal Democrats for failing to address segregation in the South. This harks back to an earlier time when the party of Lincoln was still associated with civil rights, and it is also consistent with the expectation that the North is more liberal than the Heartland. The 2008 Idaho Republicans want to abolish the Federal Reserve and return control over currency to Congress. Again, this fits with a picture of the Heartland as hostile to the centralized administrative state. Observe that the Michigan Democrats attack the Electoral College for deviating from democratic principles. This, too, fits our understanding of the North's premium on liberal democracy.

Some of the best evidence for sectional variation in line with the development divide comes from the analyses of 19th Century state party platforms (Bensel 2000; Engstrom and Kernell). These scholars find that the northern GOP changed or softened its tune on Heartland issues like tariff reform and silver currency when competing in western states. Similarly, the Democrats became more supportive of protective tariffs and the gold standard and less supportive of free trade and silver currency in the northern states. In the 20th Century, Schickler and Feinstein (2008) collected and analyzed a set of state party platforms between 1920 and 1970, finding that northern Democrats beat both northern Republicans and their southern brethren in taking the lead on civil rights (a finding con-

Table 3.3: Excerpts from State Party Platforms

State Platform	Year	Policy
Idaho Republicans	2008	We believe the Federal Reserve Bank should be abolished and the issuing power restored to the people through their representatives in the U.S. Congress with the stipulation that the U.S. dollar be backed by gold and silver.
Michigan Democrats	2008	Abolish the Electoral College. We support abolishing or reforming the undemocratic Electoral College and electing our President by direct popular vote.
Montana Republicans	1968	Such new taxation must be designed to: (A) Include tourists traveling in our state; (B) Include out-of-state corporations operating in Montana . . .
Massachusetts Democrats	1964	Universal registration of voters by which election officials are charged with the responsibility to seek out persons eligible to vote.
Texas Democrats	1948	We adhere to the wise and time-tested policy of segregation and pledge the party to a continued support of the Constitutional provision for separate schools.
Illinois Republicans	1944	[The New Deal] did nothing to attain the basic right of suffrage for thousands of American citizens in certain states of our nation . . . the doctrine of equality is an integral part of American political life.
New York Democrats	1928	We pledge ourselves to the restoration of direct primaries for all elective offices in the state, to the limiting of campaign expenditures in all elections . . .
South Dakota Republicans	1920	We insist that in all the schools of the land the English language shall, as already provided by law in South Dakota, be the one vehicle of instruction.

firmed in this study). Dan Coffey (2014) similarly gathered and analyzed 21st Century state party platforms. He finds strong evidence of polarization between the parties on some issues, but not much by way of significant regional variation (using census regions). Gerald Gamm is building on the Shickler and Feinstein and Coffey data to assemble a set from 1960 to present day, but this set is currently not available for outside researchers to study.

Schickler & Feinstein and Coffey generously agreed to share their platform data with me. We therefore have coverage from 1920 to 1968, and from 2000 to 2012 (although we coded only through 2008 due to time and resource constraints). This body of evidence offers the best chance possible to validate or refute a broad theory of sectional politics. Translating this evidence into a consistent set of measures that would allow the test of that notion remained an enormous obstacle. I was determined to apply my sectional framework to these documents to see whether parties tailor their messages in different regions in expected ways. I was just as intent on doing so in a way that would be reliable and engender confidence among a skeptical scholarly audience. The lack of reliability between coders has dogged attempts to measure platform content at a fine level of substantive detail. The quest for reliability has led many researchers to employ automated tools and measures to evaluate written materials. Such an approach is unlikely to succeed for my purposes in light of the complexity of the sectional framework being validated. To test this framework, it is necessary to rely on natural language processing that can adapt to rhetorical nuance, different party organizations in different states, and different historical contexts. But that does not relieve this analysis of the obligation to present reliable measures. The following steps have been employed to demonstrate reliability:

Multiple Coders:

Although resource constrains require that I as researcher code the documents, this can be addressed by demonstrating reliability with others coding the same or similar documents. My wife, Morgan, a physical therapist by training, agreed to divide primary responsibility for coding the documents with me (out of incredible kindness and some

small amount of self-interest). Consistent results across different coders is the benchmark of reliability. As long as different coders come to similar conclusions, the reader can be confident that the peculiarities of individual coders are not driving the results.

Random Sample:

Morgan and I coded a random sample of state platforms in common. This sample was stratified by region and period– "Prewar" (1920-1940), "Postwar" (1944-1968) and "Contemporary" (2000-2008). Our descriptions of the platforms sampled should be substantively similar, even allowing for inevitable discrepancies between coders. Figure 3 demonstrates that this is the case. The boxplots summarize each coder's findings across the random sample using a four-part distinction between economic, cultural, social and foreign issue dimensions, Visual inspection confirms that they are highly similar. Each of us would tell a similar story about the policy agenda of the platforms we randomly sampled.

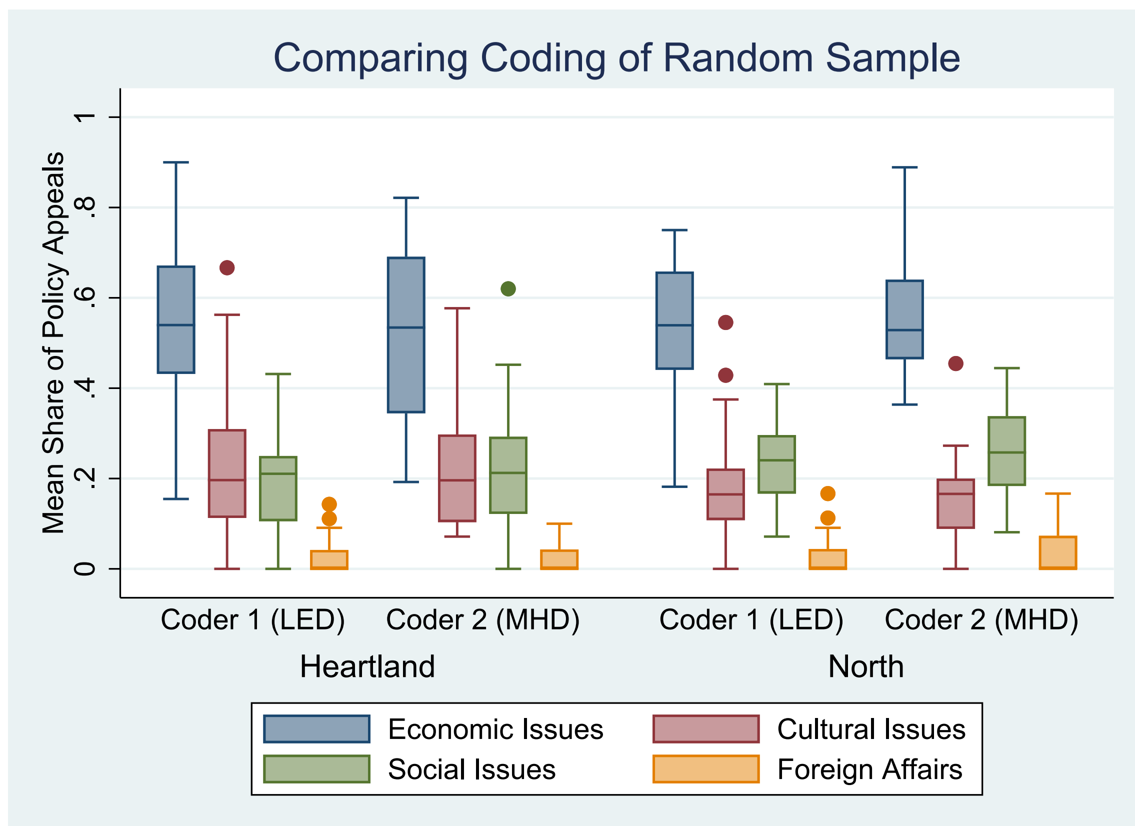

Figure 3.3: Boxplots Reflecting Coding of Stratified Random Sample

Random Assignment:

Morgan and I divided primary responsibility for the party platforms through a process of random assignment (stratified by region and period). This essentially built a replication study into the research design. Our findings should be substantively similar. The boxplots in the Figure below provide visual confirmation that our policy coding is similar in the aggregate. The results section will feature separate statistical analyses of each coder's set of platforms. If the statistical results hold regardless of who coded the platforms, the result cannot be explained by the peculiarities of different coders and is reliable. The best reason for a skeptic to believe the results of this analysis is that they are consistent across both studies, regardless of coder.

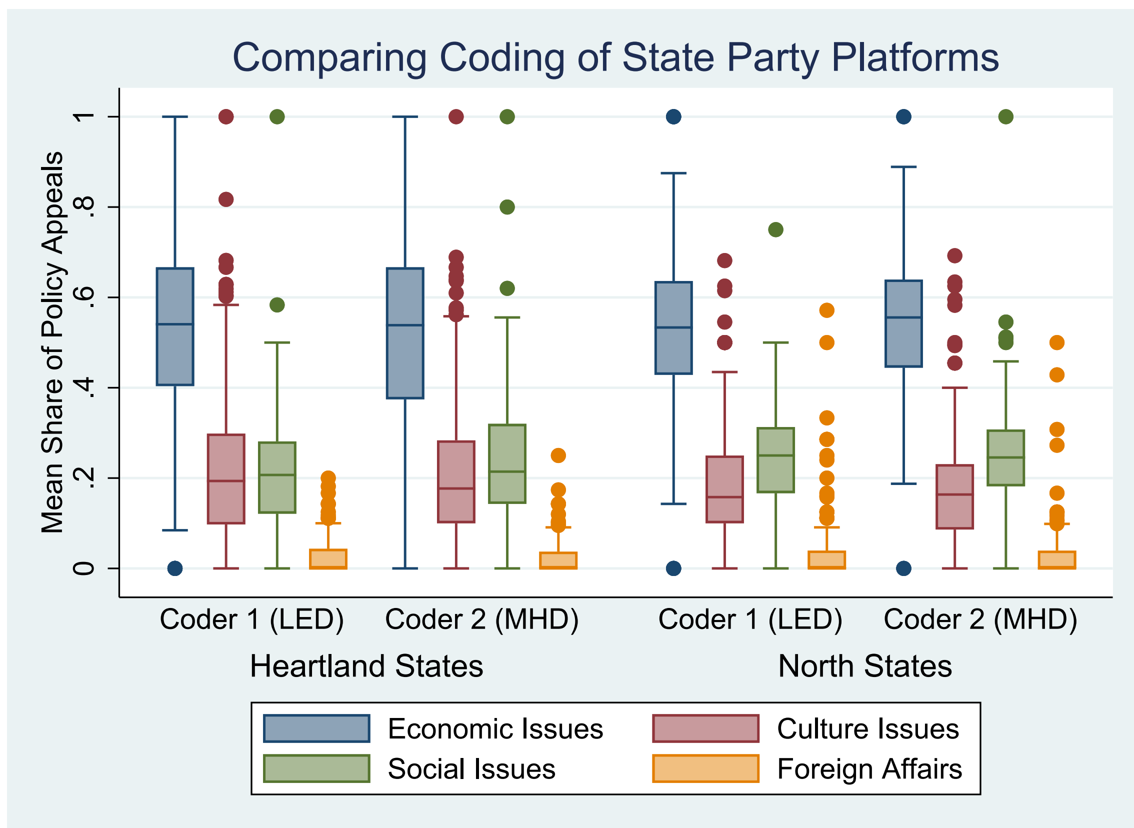

Figure 3.4: Boxplots Reflecting Coding of Assigned Portions

Descriptive statistics suggest that our coding unearthed a large policy cleavage that tracks well onto the development divide. The boxplots below provide visual confirmation that both parties emphasize the North Agenda in the North and the Heartland Agenda in the Heartland. The first panel shows all of the platforms pooled together. The

boxplots on the left summarize the mean share of policies targeting North constituents in Democratic Party platforms; the Republican boxplots are on the right. Both parties advocate for a greater share of North policies in the North. The second through fourth panels confirm the same pattern in each time period. These figures also instill confidence in the coding and sectional scheme because they both reflect much of what is known about party development since the years before World War II.

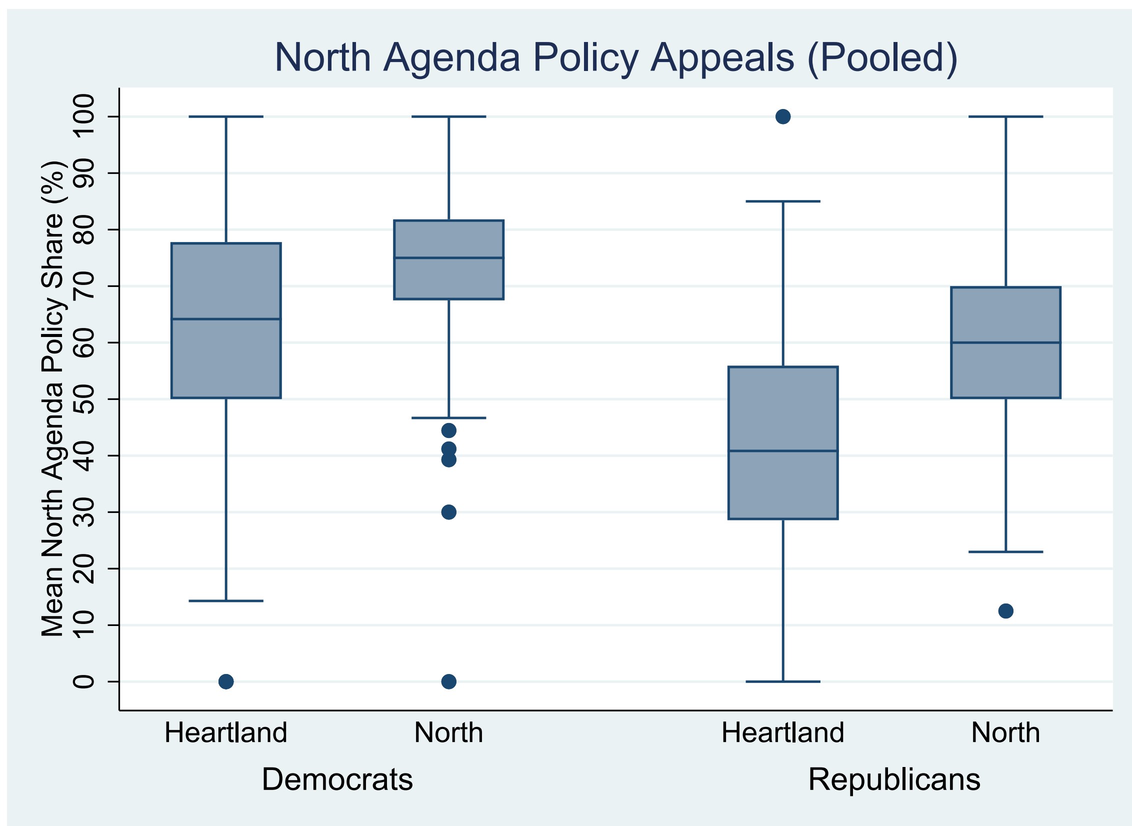

Figure 3.5: North Agenda - Pooled

For example, the northern Democrats were rising within the party in the prewar period (1920-1940). Al Smith of New York was the 1928 nominee and his campaign was a humble prelude to the New Deal coalition that took power in 1932. The Republicans retained their northern redoubts even as they lost elections in every other region at an unprecedented rate. Figure 6 shows that both parties tended to advocate for agendas in the North that favored North constituents to similar degrees, which is what we would expect to see in an era when the GOP was no longer the distinctively northern party. In fact, the Republicans favored the Heartland agenda more strongly than the Democrats in the

Heartland states during the prewar period. The idea of the Democrats as the party of rural America was also undergoing change after decades of Republican efforts to supplement their northern base with western states.

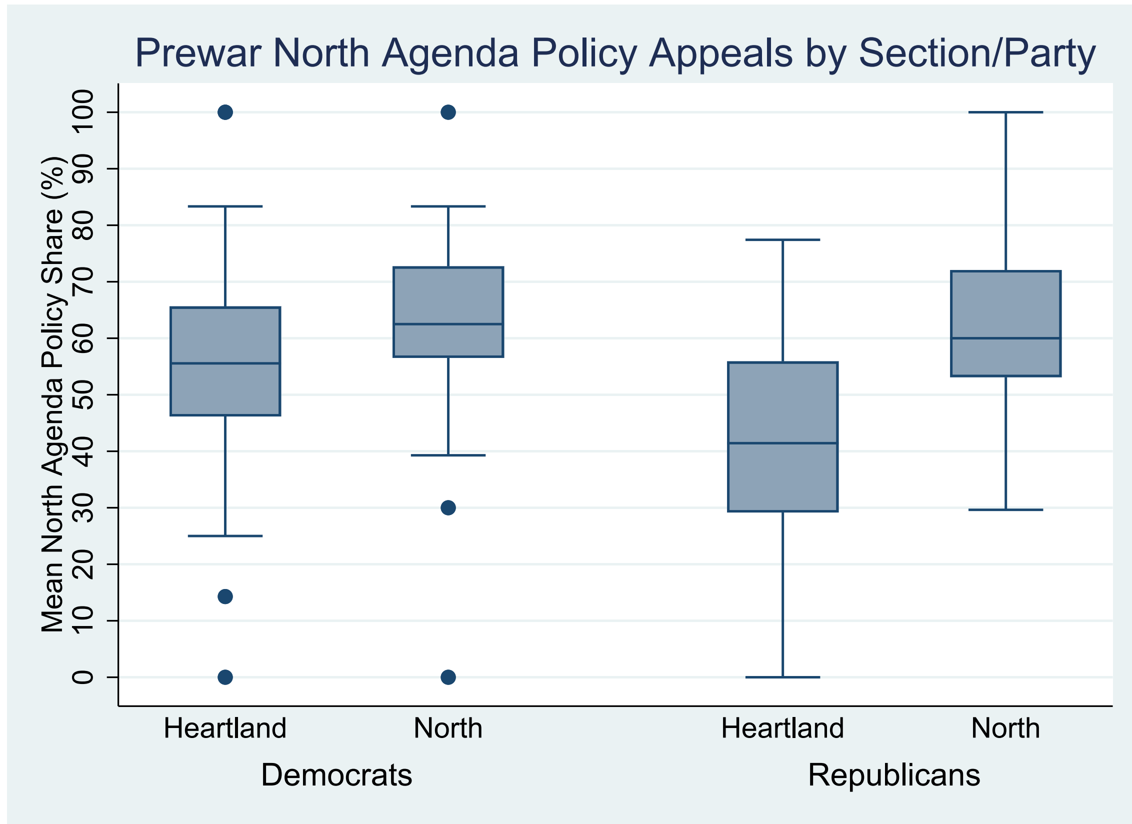

Figure 3.6: North Agenda - Prewar

The postwar period (1944-1968) in Figure 7 looks very similar to the prewar period. Once again, both parties propound the North agenda more forcefully in the North. The Republicans continue to emphasize the Heartland agenda more than the Democrats in the Heartland. However, the differences between Figure 7 and Figure 6 are worthy of attention. In particular, the share of North policies in both party's platforms increases in both the North and the Heartland. The Democrats in the North favor the North to the Heartland agenda by about sixty points– nearly double the prewar figure. Republicans in the North favor the North agenda more than in the prewar period as well, but they do not keep up with the Democrats any longer.

It would be fascinating to consider the platforms between 1968 and 2000 in this manner. Doing so would almost certainly help to better understand how the parties shifted

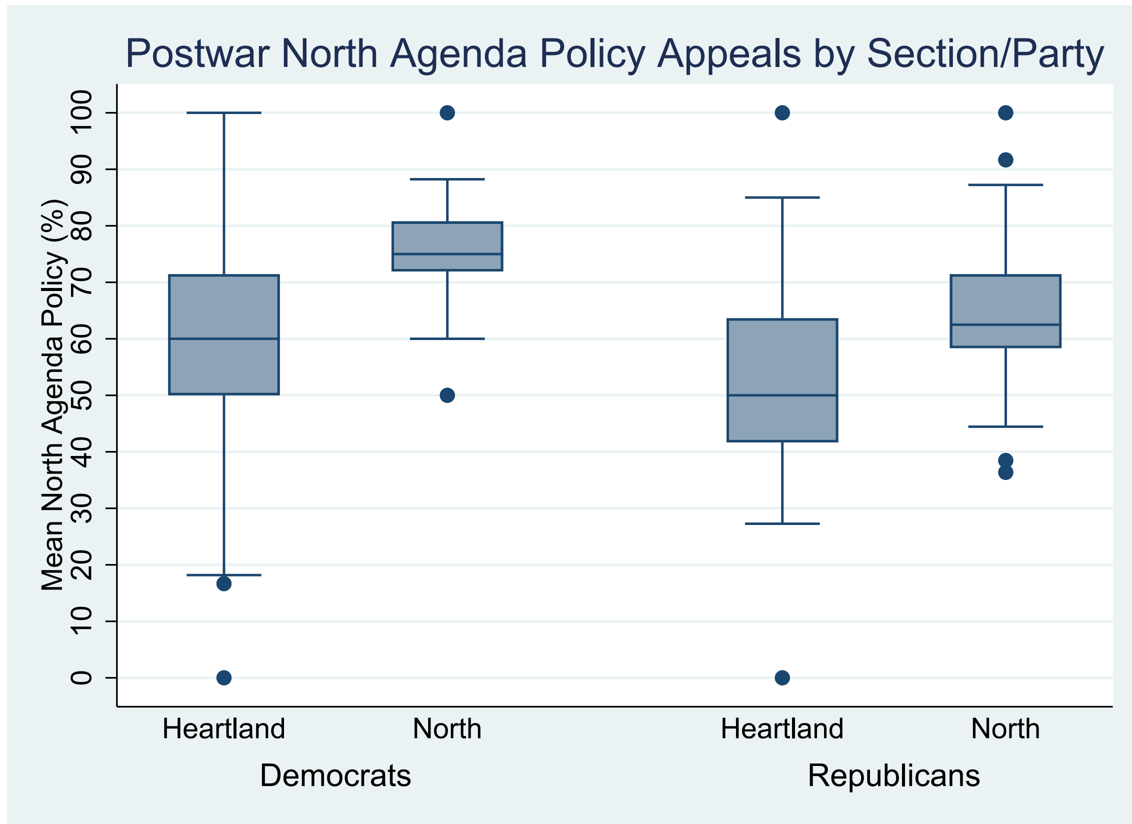

Figure 3.7: North Agenda - Postwar

from the dynamics of the postwar period to those of the contemporary period (2000-2008). I hope to include them in future iterations of this work. Nonetheless, what we see in Figure 8 is startling confirmation that our present polarized environment maps well onto the development divide– perhaps so well that the parties are talking past each other in a way that is more reminiscent of the 1850s than it is of the prewar and postwar periods (Holt 1978/1992/2017; Anbinder 1992; Morrison 1997). The one consistent theme is that both parties continue to tailor their policies to the development divide. However, the bigger point is that the terms of sectional conflict are now refracted almost entirely between the parties instead of within them. The Democrats are the party of the North. The Republicans are the party of the Heartland. The politics of the present may resemble the 1850s, but the sectional affiliations of the parties have reversed themselves.

The statistical analysis in the next section more robustly investigate these relationships. However, visual confirmation that both parties have consistently tailored their policy proposals in line with the development divide is a significant step toward validating

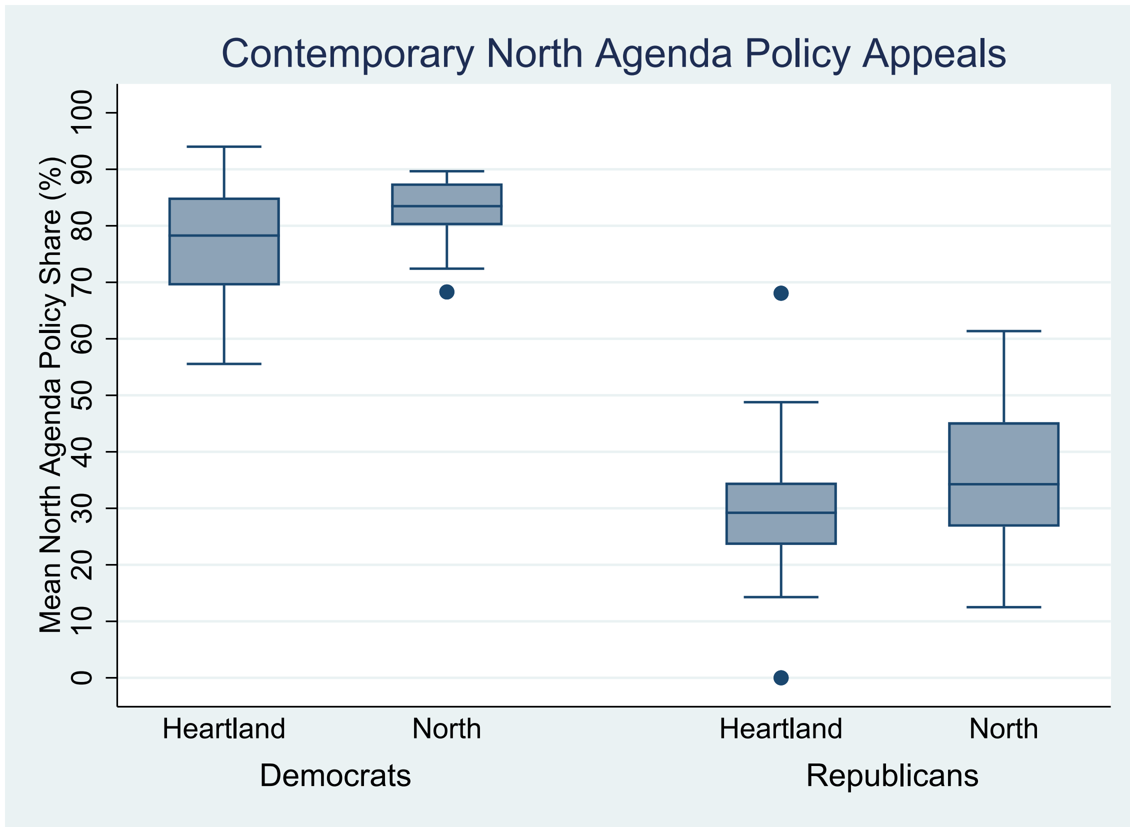

Figure 3.8: North Agenda - Contemporary

the scheme of sectional politics in this chapter. The data are analyzed going forward as time-series cross-section data with year fixed-effects and clustered standard errors. Year fixed-effects address the possibility that individual campaign year effects may distort the results. Most importantly, the same or consistent results should be present in separate analyses of the platforms coded by each coder. The stratified random assignment of platforms turns this into an invaluable replication study.

3.6 Results

We begin with the analysis of sectional policy agendas in Table 4. The dependent variable is the percentage of policy appeals targeting North constituents. The first two columns pool the work of both coders. Columns 3 and 4 include the analysis of the platforms Morgan coded, while 5 and 6 assess the platforms I coded. The independent variable of interest is North, which takes on a value of 1 for North states and 0 for Heartland states. As expected, North has a consistently large and significant effect, even when

controlling for party, era and the interaction of party and era. These regression results confirm that both parties emphasize the North Agenda in the North and the Heartland Agenda in the Heartland by roughly ten percentage points. This statistically significant finding is robust in the analysis of both coders. These results effectively replicate one another, and should instill a high degree of confidence in both the approach to coding and this main empirical finding. The development divide is a solid foundation for a scheme of sectional politics, after all. This discussion turns next to hypotheses regarding the regional policy agendas.

Table 3.4: Sectional Agendas

Variable	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**
NORTH	13.6***	10.2***	14.6***	12.1***	13.1***	8.6***
GOP	-20.5***	-7.7	-21.8***	-9.56**	-17.2***	-7.1
NORTH X GOP		3.0		2.7		5.6
PREWAR						
POSTWAR	7.5*	7.2*	9.2**	9.8*	2.0	2.9
CONTEMPORARY	1.3	18.6***	3.7	24.7***	0.3	12.1***
PREWAR X GOP						
POSTWAR X GOP		-3.2		-2.8		-5.0
CONTEMP X GOP		-39.5***		-39.4***		-39.9***
LEE	1.7	1.1				
MORGAN						
CONSTANT	63.0	58.0	59.6	53.0	63.3	62.6
Model	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Coders	Both	Both	Morgan	Morgan	Lee	Lee
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Clustered SE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	484	484	266	266	266	266
Groups	85	85	76	76	75	75
Wald	298.2	880.5	370.3	780.8	153.7	598.1
R-Squared	.4940	.6857	.3843	.5522	.3304	.4940

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

What of the reputation of the South for racial conservatism? Do appeals to Nativists and the lack of appeals to Immigrants and Racial and Ethnic Minorities distinguish the South from the West and other regions? Yes, according to the regression results in Table 5. This table is similar to Table 4, but it distinguishes between four regions (Great Lakes, North Coast, West and South) instead of North and Heartland, and it includes three

different dependent variables. The dependent variable in the first two columns is racial conservatism, which is calculated as Nativist appeals net of Immigrant and Racial and Ethnic Minority appeals. The dependent variable in columns (3) and (4) is the percentage of Nativist appeals, and the percentage of appeals to Racial and Ethnic Minorities in columns (5) and (6). Not only is the South different from the West, it is different from every other region of the country. These differences account for somewhere between four and eight percent of the platform. This is an important finding because it confirms what scholars of the South have told us, and it confirms that state platforms are a good source of information about regional policy variation– even when state parties may have reasons to downplay their differences for a national party audience.

Table 3.5: South Regional Agenda

Variable	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**
GL	-5.4***	-8.0**	-2.2*	-6.6**	2.9***	1.1**
NC	-4.5***	-7.9**	-3.0***	-5.6*	1.2**	1.7**
W	-4.7***	-7.6**	-2.7***	-5.5*	1.9***	1.9***
S						
GOP	1.6	0.3	1.6**	0.9	-0.0	0.6
PREWAR						
POSTWAR	-3.6	-5.4**	-0.7	-4.6**	2.6*	0.6
CONTEMPORARY	-2.1	-10.2***	0.9	-5.7**	1.7	3.4***
PREWAR X GOP						
POSTWAR X GOP	2.6*	-0.3	0.6	-2.1	-2.0**	-1.7*
CONTEMPORARY X GOP	9.1***	9.3***	5.2***	4.3*	-3.1***	-3.8***
CONSTANT	3.3	12.7	3.6	11.3	0.4	-1.2
Model	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Coder	Morgan	Lee	Morgan	Lee	Morgan	Lee
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Clustered SE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	266	266	266	266	266	266
Groups	76	75	76	75	76	75
Wald	227.8	105.96	80.8	56.0	133.1	149.9
R-Squared	.4024	.1886	.3635	.1290	.2444	.1694

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

DV in columns (1) and (2) is the South Agenda; in (3) and (4) is Nativists; and, in (5) and (6) is Racial and Ethnic Minorities.

Do states in the West appeal more to the West agenda of Farmers, Foresters, Oilers and Rural Labor? The results generally confirm these expectations. Table 6 is organized

similarly to Table 5, although now the West states are the base region instead of the South. Columns (1) and (2) consider the West agenda in the aggregate, while (3) and (4) examine appeals to Farmers and columns (5) and (6) analyze policies benefiting Oilers. These results suggest that parties tailor to the West agenda by between five and eight percentage points. Note in addition that the proportion of policies that respectively target Farmers and Oilers is especially high in the West relative to all other regions of the country. Foresters and Rural Labor (not shown here) do not attract significantly more policy appeals in West states than in other regions of the country. Nonetheless, differences between state platforms in the West and South regions generally conform to expectations.

Table 3.6: West Regional Agenda

Variable	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**
GL	-6.7***	-5.3***	-5.9***	-4.8***	-1.0*	-0.7**
NC	-6.5***	-5.6***	-5.3***	-4.9***	-1.2***	-0.7***
W						
S	-8.5***	-7.5***	-7.0***	-6.7***	-1.4***	-0.5*
GOP	0.4	-1.0	1.0	-1.2	-0.4	0.4
PREWAR						
POSTWAR	3.6	-1.7	3.6	-2.3	-0.1	0.2
CONTEMPORARY	-3.4	-1.9	-3.3	-2.4	-0.1	0.5**
PREWAR X GOP						
POSTWAR X GOP	-1.5	1.2	-1.5	1.2	-0.0	0.0
CONTEMPORARY X GOP	0.7	1.4	-1.0	0.8	1.4	0.3
CONSTANT	10.8	9.0	9.5	8.2	1.2	0.3
Model	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Coder	Morgan	Lee	Morgan	Lee	Morgan	Lee
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Clustered SE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	266	266	266	266	266	266
Groups	76	75	76	75	76	75
Wald	255.3	264.18	202.5	173.6	28.9	46.1
R-Squared	.2945	.2701	.2726	.2299	.1437	.1289

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$
DV in columns (1) and (2) is the West Agenda; in (3) and (4) is Farmers; and, in (5) and (6) is Oilers.

Policy differences between the Great Lakes and North Coast in Tables 7 and 8 are not as clear-cut as those between South and West. The North Coast agenda combines inclusive support for Immigrants and Racial and Ethnic Minorities with cosmopolitan sup-

port for Internationalists. The first two columns of Table 7 show that the only region that systematically differs from the North Coast on the North Coast agenda is the South. The difference between these two regions amounts to between five and ten percentage points. The regression results provide some evidence that North Coast platforms systematically include more policy appeals to Immigrants, but none at all that they systematically target Racial and Ethnic Minorities more than Great Lakes platforms. Internationalist policies (not shown here) appear with similar frequency in each region as well.

Table 3.7: North Coast Regional Agenda

Variable	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**
GL	0.9	-0.4	-0.0	-0.3*	1.7**	-0.6
NC						
W	-1.3	-1.8	-0.2*	-0.4*	0.6	0.2
S	-5.5***	-9.5**	-0.3	-0.5**	-1.2**	-1.7**
GOP	-3.7***	-1.6	-0.0	-0.0	-0.1	0.6
PREWAR						
POSTWAR	-2.0	-1.6	0.5**	0.1	2.6*	0.6
CONTEMPORARY	-1.5	-0.6*	1.3***	1.2***	1.7	3.4***
PREWAR X GOP						
POSTWAR X GOP	0.5	0.4	-0.0	-0.2	-2.0**	-1.7*
CONTEMP X GOP	-11.3***	-11.0***	-0.7**	-1.3***	-3.1***	-3.8***
CONSTANT	9.9	3.9	0.1	0.3	1.7	0.5
Model	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Coder	Morgan	Lee	Morgan	Lee	Morgan	Lee
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Clustered SE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	266	266	266	266	266	266
Groups	76	75	76	75	76	75
Wald	306.1	134.1	54.3	57.4	133.1	149.9
R-Squared	.3909	.2034	.2600	.2616	.2444	.1694

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$
DV in columns (1) and (2) is the North Coast Agenda; in (3) and (4) is Immigrants; and, in (5) and (6) is Racial and Ethnic Minorities.

Table 8 presents the Great Lakes regional analysis. The Great Lakes agenda is the dependent variable in columns (1) and (2); it is appeals to Immigrants in (3) and (4) and appeals to Racial and Ethnic Minorities in columns (5) and (6). The Great Lakes agenda receives no more emphasis in Great Lake states than North states– in anything, the regional coefficients suggest it may receive less. There is some evidence that Laborers

do better in the Great Lakes, which may represent the limit of regional differences in the North supported by these data. An index that combines appeals to Nationalists and Nativists (now shown here) does reveal the Great Lakes as more conservative than the North Coast, at least when we examine all the data together. This finding does not survive in each of our separate analyses, and cannot be regarded as definitive. The evidence does not warrant abandoning the idea linking the Great Lakes to economic nationalism, but it makes the concept speculative.

Table 3.8: Great Lakes Regional Agenda

Variable	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**
GL						
NC	2.4	-2.3	2.3	0.6	-0.1	-2.6*
W	-0.7	-1.5	-0.4	-0.2	-0.2	-0.7
S	-1.6	-5.2***	-0.2	-0.4	-2.6**	-4.1***
GOP	2.1	-0.3	3.6	2.8***	-1.9	-3.0**
PREWAR						
POSTWAR	1.6	-3.1	1.9	-0.2	0.1	-2.2
CONTEMPORARY	3.8	2.6	3.6**	2.6**	0.2	0.0
PREWAR X GOP						
POSTWAR X GOP	-5.6	-1.8	-4.5	-3.0***	-1.6	-0.7
CONTEMP X GOP	-9.0***	-5.0**	-5.6**	-4.5***	-4.3***	-3.2*
CONSTANT	5.4	9.4	-1.5	0.2	6.8	8.8
Model	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Coder	Morgan	Lee	Morgan	Lee	Morgan	Lee
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Clustered SE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	266	266	266	266	266	266
Groups	76	75	76	75	76	75
Wald	185.4	127.1	40.4	65.4	416.9	186.2
R-Squared	.1655	.1637	.1231	.1898	.2309	.2452

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

DV in columns (1) and (2) is the Great Lakes Agenda; in (3) and (4) is Capitalists; and, in (5) and (6) is Laborers.

The results presented above generally confirm the hypotheses. The most important finding is that the parties do systematically tailor their policy appeals in line with the expectations of the development divide. Democratic and Republican parties alike push harder for the North agenda in North states. The opposite is true in Heartland states. The South and West also feature regional policy agendas that fit expectations. In particular, the

Nativist agenda fares well in the South, while the agenda of Farmers and Oilers attracts special attention in the West. These sectional and regional results are robust to differences between coders, reflect much of what is known or suspected about regional politics, and can be considered reliable. The evidence is less clear with respect to supposed differences between the Great Lakes and North Coast. What evidence we found, however, is consistent with the expectation that the North Coast features more appeals to Immigrants and the Great Lakes tends to favor Laborers.

3.7 Conclusion

The scheme of sectional and regional politics advanced in this chapter is valid. The data are remarkably consistent with a profound development divide separating the North from the Heartland. The findings further establish a deep divide between the West and South on economic development and racial conservatism. The evidence is not as convincing with respect to a North divide between the Great Lakes and the North Coast; however, the available evidence is consistent with divisions with respect to support for Immigrants and Laborers. Not only do the results validate the scheme presented here, they also validate the theorizing about sectional and regional politics that animates much of the most persuasive work in American political history and development. Their work is the motivation for this approach to sectional and regional politics. This is the first study to propose an enduring scheme of sectional politics, and it also the first study to demonstrate that such a scheme has a basis in the historical record.

Chapter 3 will investigate whether national party platforms tailor their policy proposals to fit the sectional and regional composition of expected battleground states. This analysis instills confidence in the sectional framework and its ability to capture statistically meaningful differences between the policy appeals of both parties in each section over time. A bad sectional framework would never make it easier to identify statistically significant results in the analysis of national party platforms in the next chapter. However, a null finding with a bad sectional framework would tell us precious little– we would

not be in a position to persuasively reject the central thesis that ECI matter to party development. These findings reassure us that the sectional framework is good at reflecting sectional differences. A null result with a good sectional framework would allow us to convincingly reject the idea that ECI systematically influence party development. At the same time, a good sectional framework makes it more likely that this investigation will be in a position to identify a relationship between ECI and party development if there is one.

A cautionary point is in order. We must avoid geographic determinism, which would hold that the politics of the place flow naturally from the geography of the place. This study demonstrates that the record of party platforms is consistent with the proposed scheme of sectional and regional politics as far back as 1920. Analyses by Bensel and Engstrom and Kernell establish similar patterns in the 19th Century. We can be confident that the development divide and other regional policy agendas fit reasonably well for the last two hundred years. However, this does not establish any kind of political fate. The future may look very different from the past. Census statistics show that roughly one in three new immigrants to America now settles in the South. As the region both industrializes and diversifies, its character is likely to change and so are the signals it conveys to the parties. Similarly, deindustrialization may continue to plague the Great Lakes until its developmental advantage over regions like the South disappears. Nonetheless, the analysis of the next chapter will tell us whether we can expect such changes to influence the national parties through the Electoral College.

Appendix

My Sectional Assignment Fits Better than Census Regions or Elazar's Categories. Likelihood-ratio tests (not shown) confirm that the sectional assignment of states I employ better explains variation in the North Agenda than an assignment based on census regions or Elazar's categories. Taken in combination with the better fit to census-derived measures of development presented earlier, we can be confident that this is the proper sectional allocation for this investigation.

Robustness Checks. The regression results below confirm that the highlighted relationships disappear when states are randomly assigned to sections. These null results weigh against the findings of this analysis being due to random chance.

Table 3.9: Random Assignment of States to Sections

Variable	**(1)**	**(2)**	**(3)**
NC	5.5	5.1	7.1
GL			
W	10.2	9.4	8.1
S	9.9	7.3	6.8
NORTH X GOP			
NC X GOP			-3.2
GL X GOP			
W X GOP			-4.7
S X GOP			-4.3
PREWAR			
POSTWAR	8.0**	7.0*	6.9**
CONTEMPORARY	1.56	.5	18.3***
PREWAR X GOP			
POSTWAR X GOP			-3.3
CONTEMP X GOP			-40.5***
GOP		-21.3***	-2.9
LEE	1.6	1.5	.9
MORGAN			
CONSTANT	51.5	63.9	56.7
Model	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Clustered SE	Y	Y	Y
Observations	484	484	484
Groups	85	85	85
Wald	126.7	159.4	832.3
R-Squared	.0280	.3973	.6170

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

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Chapter Four:
Party Change in the Party Platforms

Executive Summary: Do the parties generally respond to ECI in their party platforms? We are now in a position to address this question in a falsifiable way. Chapter 2 identified the expected battleground states, and Chapter 3 validated the scheme of sectional politics that gives them meaning. The platforms either change in line with expectations or they do not. National party platform content is measured in this chapter using the same approach developed in the last chapter for state party platforms. Every party platform is coded back to 1844, the first year that both major parties issued platforms. The results are generally consistent with expectations. Both parties are responsive to ECI and ECI Stress, although Republican responsiveness to ECI is uniquely conditioned by ECI Stress. In addition, both parties are stubbornly non-responsive with respect to the the cultural agendas associated with each region, which include many of the most controversial issues concerning race and the culture wars. These policies appear to gain traction only as the regional share of the party in congress grows. ECI and sectional politics can account for many of the changes observed in the party platforms. ECI are a plausible driver of party change.

4.1 Introduction

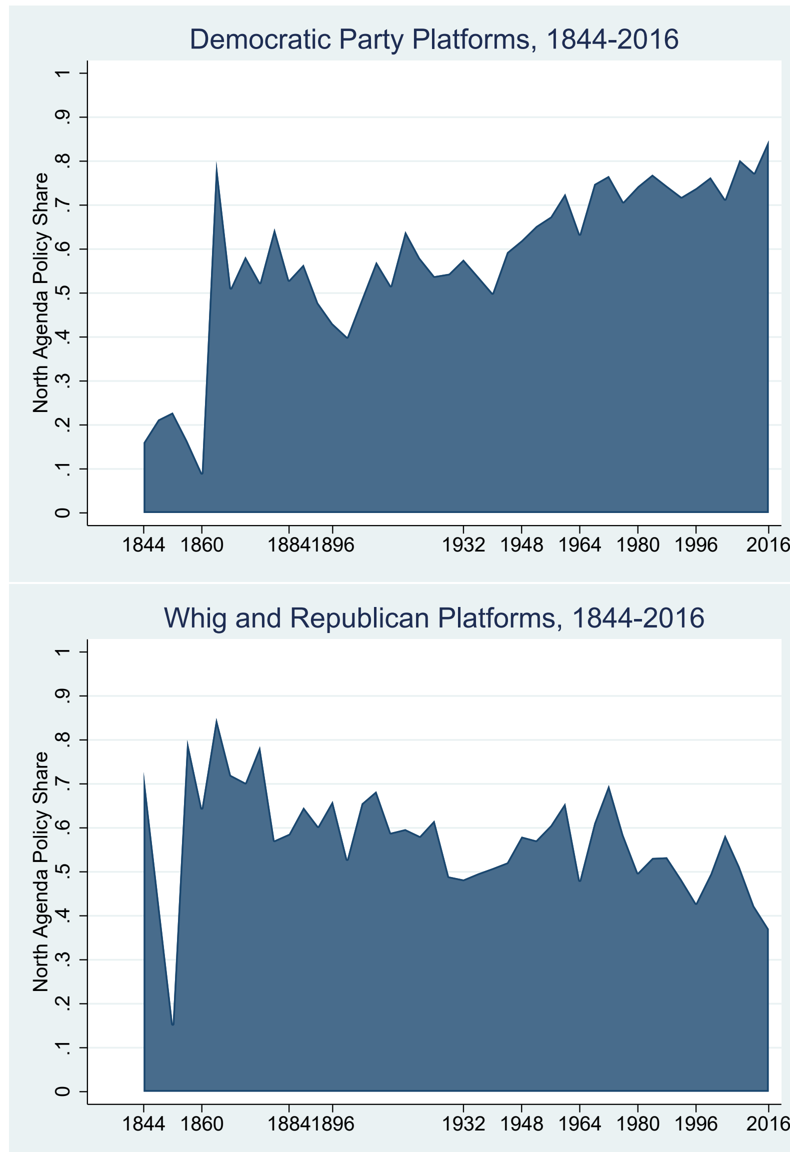
We turn next to the national party platforms to see whether they reflect the policy shifts that Electoral College Incentives lead us to expect. Party platforms are interesting documents well worthy of study, but not because they are widely read. In truth, platforms make for poor reading– they are dry, repetitive, sloganeering, hopelessly naive, intellectually thin and stylistically uninteresting. And modern platforms are long– tremendously long– droning on for quite literally hundreds of pages. They are drafted by committee, sometimes over months, with the result that the prose is disjointed and haphazardly strung together. The words do not sing, but neither is that their purpose. Platforms are not written for a general audience or even the party faithful, familiar as this group already is with their twist on the party line. Platforms are technical documents intended for a particular audience– the special interest groups with command of the votes and material resources the party will require to compete effectively in the general election (Fine 1994). Despite the fact that few people read them, major party platforms are interesting because of what they reveal about the balance of interests within the party at a particular time (Budge and Hofferbert 1990).

Platforms can be thought of as special interest scorecards that reflect the rising influence of some and declining influence of others (Grossman and Helpman 1996). Ascendant party interests can expect to see a greater extent of the policy agenda in the platform devoted to their respective causes. Those with waning influence can expect to see a weaker commitment to what may once have been shared party objectives. Those caught in between have good reasons to wonder what the rise and fall of other agendas means for them and their future in the party. Advocates of civil rights for African Americans within the Republican Party must have felt alarm at the reduced emphasis on racial equality in the 1964 platform (Whig/Republican Party Platforms). It signaled an appeal toward Heartland interests that, if enduring, would make activism on such a traditionally Northern issue much less likely. Goldwater lost, but the Democrats seized the initiative on civil rights that year and won a landslide victory in the North. The resulting alienation of con-

servative southern whites is what justified Nixon's "Southern Strategy" (Aistrup 2015). In the half-century since, the Republican Party has never regained its former position as the premier partisan vehicle for civil rights.

The transformation of the major parties, and the motivating puzzle for much of APD, is evident in Figure 1. In the beginning, the southern states were generally affiliated with the Democratic Party and the northern states were with the Whigs, forerunners of the Republicans. Note that the Democratic Party overwhelmingly favored Heartland issues at this early date– by no less a ratio than four to one. At the same time, the Whigs advocated a blend of issues that favored the North. The Whigs perished after leaning heavily toward the Heartland in a losing effort in 1852, and were replaced by a Republican Party that advocated more forcefully for policies associated with the North (Foner 1995; Holt 1978/1999; Gienapp 1987; Anbinder 1992; Morrison 1997). Competition between the Democrats of the Heartland and Republicans of the North defined national politics for a century and more. This state of affairs has completely reversed itself in the contemporary period. The Democrats now advocate for issues associated with the North over the Heartland by a ratio of about four to one. The Republican Party is more committed to the Heartland Agenda today than the Democratic Party was in the years before the New Deal, when it was the party of the bourbons. The platforms register these fundamental changes in the party systems over time (Gerring 1998).

The question for this chapter is whether the Electoral College incentives identified in the past two chapters can help us to better understand the changes we observe in the party platforms. Can we make effective predictions about policy shifts in upcoming platforms that follow from our awareness of the expected battleground states and the sectional orientations of the parties? If so, this would be very strong evidence that ECI motivate change on a regular basis, and it would further validate the scheme of sectional politics applied in this book. But there is also a strong possibility that other influences within the party drown out ECI. It is important to consider that parties may not respond to ECI at all, even in strategic platform rhetoric, in which case this study will have succeeded in eliminating a promising suspect in the puzzle of party development. Nonetheless, it could



The national party platforms were coded in twice in their entirety, once by each coder. These figures reflect the average of their platform scoring.

Figure 4.1: Party Platforms and the Puzzle of Party Change

be that responsiveness to ECI has been especially important in certain elections if not in general. This chapter revisits the important elections that have served as motivating case studies throughout this book to see if responsiveness to ECI played a plausible role in the outcome.

4.2 Credible Yet Strategic Rhetoric

This is not the first investigation of party change to examine party platforms for evidence of past and current policy positions (see, e.g., Gerring 1998; Bensel 2000; Engstrom and Kernell 2014). Few analyses have sought to reach across the entire historical record, but one exception is John Gerring's (1998) study of party ideology between 1828 and 1996. Although he acknowledges changes in the policies and views of the parties, Gerring emphasizes the substantial stability he uncovers in platforms and other forms of contemporary party rhetoric. The Democrats have been more hostile to wealthy business interests since Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren founded the party (Ibid.). Whigs and then Republicans have been more sympathetic to business in general, but also more willing to impose a protestant cultural creed on the rest of the country– particularly by supporting Sunday and other dry laws, or opposing the decriminalization of marijuana and other controlled substances (Ibid.). These continuities are an important part of the story of the American parties and should not be downplayed. Nor should they be exaggerated, however– Figure 1 confirms that fundamental change has occurred.

The platforms are interesting historical artifacts because they combine elements of continuity with elements of change. They invite study because political scientists and others are interested in both forces and the ways they interact over time. Platforms have a very long historical reach that makes them attractive for such inquiries. As fascinating as they are, however, platforms have limitations that researchers must bear in mind. The planks of the platform should not be mistaken for the sincere beliefs or consensus of the party faithful (Harrington 1992). Rank-and-file members of the party have no say in the drafting of the party platform. The only members who do are select participants in the

party nomination and convention processes (Polsby and Wildavsky 1963; Marcus 1971; CQ 2005; Haynes 2012/2015). The platform is elite rhetoric that cannot substitute for public opinion. The study of platforms is likely to yield insights into the way privileged party members understand their collective interests and seek to package or repackage their party program for targeted consumption. These elites are in a position to write the platform as well as benefit from effective rhetoric catering to critical audiences. If strategy will be reflected anywhere, it is here.

But are platforms just "cheap talk" if they are strategic documents that do not faithfully reflect the sincere preferences of party members? It is easy to believe that a major party might say one thing in an election and yet do another when in office. Nonetheless, existing research indicates that platform planks are in fact credible (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Fine 2003). The sheer number of veto points in the constitutional design of the national government make it a practical impossibility for any party to accomplish all of the goals enumerated in its platform (Krehbiel 1998). That said, parties do try to advance an agenda that fulfills policy pledges, and they rarely take affirmative actions that contradict their platform planks. Exceptions like George H.W. Bush's notorious reversal on tax increases easily come to mind. But that is the exception rather than the rule– Bush did go on to lose the election, after all, and it would be difficult to dismiss the damage he suffered in going back on his campaign pledge (see Walkowitz and Weiss 2017). It is undoubtedly the case that some efforts to satisfy party promises will consist of purely symbolic measures. But if those symbolic measures galvanize a meaningful constituency, future efforts will likely gain force.

The policy promises contained in party platforms are not ironclad oaths to move heaven and earth for a particular outcome. They are better understood as contingent promises to take actions consistent with their platforms planks and avoid inconsistent ones– so long as the intended constituency supports the party, the prospective coalition is viable, and fulfilling the promise does not come at the expense of more important party priorities. Platforms are not representative of the sincere beliefs or priorities of most party members; they are, however, heavily negotiated statements that reflect the party's com-

mitment to build a winning coalition in the upcoming election. The promises in platforms are rendered minimally credible by the party's desire to win election now and in the future, and its corresponding need to brandish an attractive and meaningful party brand. Observers frequently denigrate platforms as strategic rhetoric for these very reasons, but that is a strength in this study of responsiveness to Electoral College Incentives. The theory motivating this book is that strategic rhetoric– tailoring policy appeals to presidential election strategy– can make sense of party change.

4.3 ECI and Party Platform Planks

The idea behind ECI is that parties may change as they tailor their policy appeals to key interests and voters in expected battleground states. This proposed mechanism assumes that parties care about presidential election strategy when crafting their policy positions. Good reasons for skepticism exist on this point. The modern conception of a political party is a stable coalition of interest groups– of which professional politicians are only one– with strong policy preferences that are affiliated ideologically (Cohen et al 2008). This differs substantially from past understandings that equated parties with teams of professional politicians seeking power (see Downs 1957; Aldrich 1995). Frankly, the idea that parties tailor their positions in line with election strategy is more consistent with this older notion of parties as teams seeking power. That may mean that the theory of ECI relies on an out-modish understanding of parties, such that we are unlikely to observe any responsiveness to them in the platforms. Yet the transformation of the parties' platforms in Figure 1 is difficult to square with the contemporary notion of parties because the parties have switched places!

In switching places, the parties did not merely reflect the changing preferences of an otherwise stable coalition– the underlying interests predominant within each party changed. The Democrats swapped southern conservatives for northern liberals in becoming the party of civil rights, the environment and women. Republicans moved in the other direction as they inherited and organized support among the southern conservatives dis-

carded by the Democrats. The irony that the party of Lincoln has become the party of the former confederate states is not lost on contemporary observers (McKee 2010/2012)– nor that the party of slavery and segregation is now the party of northern states and civil rights (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Feinstein and Schickler 2008; Ware 2006; Schickler 2016). This transformation of the parties demonstrates a dynamism that is utterly inconsistent with any notion of stability. Were it merely the case that the bases of the major parties had shifted over time, rather than swapped, there would hardly be a puzzle to solve– the growth and expansion of the United States would likely account for the rise and fall of different interest groups. But that is not what happened– instead, the party of the North became the party of the Heartland, and the party of the Heartland became the party of the North.

ECI are promising because they can explain why a party might want to advocate policies that pull the party away from its base – to win critical support in the states likely to decide the presidential election. In light of the unit rule, the party's dominant strategy is to trade support in safe states for support in battleground states. This could well provide the motivation for many of the policy changes observed in the positions of the parties over time. Of course, winning presidential elections is not all that parties, or their constituents, care about. Policy matters, too. There should be a core set of issues on which the party is less willing to compromise or to adopt positions associated with its opponent. The issues on the regional agendas of the North Coast, Great Lakes, West and South are strong candidates in respect of the well-known political controversies surrounding issues of economic development (Bensel 1984/2000; Engstrom and Kernell 2014; Bridges 2015), constitutional doctrine (Foner 1995; Norton 1986; Smith 1997; Morrison 1997), racial attitudes (Key 1950; Kousser 1974; Feinstein and Schickler 2008; Mickey 2015; Foner 2015; Schickler 2016), gender and sexuality (Isenberg 1998; McConnaughy 2015; Faderman 2016; DuBois 2020) and temperance movements (Gusfield 1986; Bader 1986; Musto 1999). Evidence that the parties generally respond to ECI on sectional matters, but no on regional issues, would be consistent with the idea that these regional agendas are especially important for the party base.

Table 4.1: Scheme of Sectional Politics

Section	Agenda
North	Modern welfare state with a strong civil service and investments in education
Heartland	Decentralized state emphasizing extraction industries and rural development
Region	**Agenda**
North Coast	pro-minority and immigrant rights
Great Lakes	pro-labor and business
West	pro-farmers, oilers, and foresters
South	pro-nativists and nationalists

Responding to ECI may or may not be stressful for the party, depending on the sectional orientation of the party in Congress. When the stress between ECI and the sectional base in Congress is high, the party may more likely respond by reducing the emphasis on stressful positions than by affirmatively adopting the positions indicated by ECI. The hypothetical in the first chapter illustrated this concept by arguing that the Republicans today would more likely downplay their support for controversial issues like pro-life policies than adopt pro-choice ones in the event that coastal states like California, New York and Massachusetts were the expected battleground states. In reality, Chapter 2 established that Florida and Wisconsin will be the expected battleground states in 2020. This electoral vote combination, which is about 73% South and 27% Great Lakes, implies more stress for the Democratic Party than the Republican Party. In response to this stress, the Democrats will likely reduce the emphasis given to controversial issues favored in the North rather than affirmatively adopt strong positions affiliated with southern interests and constituents. This kind of negative responsiveness is probably more common than affirmative responsiveness (Engstrom and Kernell 2014).

We should find that parties systematically respond to ECI with respect to the North and Heartland agendas, while suppressing ECI with respect to the narrow agendas of the North Coast, Great Lakes, West and South. We may also uncover evidence that parties do not regularly tailor their positions in line with ECI. Adapting the party to ECI is a costly effort likely to place a great deal of strain on the established coalition. Such an adaptation

might well help the party win, but it might not be necessary if the other major party cannot do so easily either. Unless responsiveness to ECI is deemed important within the party, it is unlikely to motivate policy positions that come at the expense of longstanding party interests. The analysis of the historical record in this chapter would then reveal a consistent pattern all its own– that of ECI giving way to the party establishment. This would constitute strong evidence that ECI cannot account for party development. The central puzzle of why the Democrats and Republicans swapped places in the American political economy would remain, but this study would then have eliminated a serious contending explanation rooted in a well-established literature.

4.4 Nomination Rules

The case studies motivating this project illustrate the potential for parties to change in response to ECI, but they also underscore the stress that ECI can inflict on the party. Party revolts in 1912, 1948, 1960 and 1964 can largely be explained as efforts of the existing base to resist the rising influence of new interests attracted to the presidential coalition (Cowan 2016; Ader 1955; White 2009; Carter 2000). Established special interests with passionate policy preferences have good reason to insulate themselves and the party from policy responsiveness to ECI. Moreover, they often have the power and resources to shape party organization, including through rules that may make the party systematically less responsive to ECI. Doing so may come at the expense of viability in national elections, but some special interests – particularly parochial ones – may be less sensitive to this to the extent that their policy agendas can be satisfied by thwarting changes to the status quo. Before civil rights, losing presidential elections was probably not the most important thing for powerful Democrats and their supporters in the South– blocking intrusive measures from the North often outweighed electoral expediency (Key 1950; Kousser 1974; Mickey 2015; Herron 2017).

The Democratic Party instituted the Two-Thirds Rule at its first convention in 1832 (Bass 1988; CQ 2005). The Rule required the approval of two-thirds of duly appointed

delegates at the national convention to nominate a candidate for president. Since a supermajority of this magnitude was not possible without the support of the Democratic South, in practice this rule gave the southern wing of the party a veto over the nomination (Ibid.). A rule better designed to insulate the party from ECI is difficult to imagine. The Two-Thirds Rule prevented the nomination in 1844 of Martin Van Buren, a New Yorker whose opposition to the annexation of Texas put him at odds with party kingmakers (CQ 2005). Although this was the only time a candidate winning a majority on the first ballot was denied the nomination, a precedent of deference to the South was established and observed within the party. The Two-Thirds Rule may have served the interests of the South so long as it remained in the party, but it did not serve the electoral interests of the Democratic Party very well. Between 1860 and 1928, the Democrats won only four out of eighteen presidential elections.

FDR, the Democratic victor in 1932, was himself a northerner and keenly aware of the South's historic stranglehold over the party. FDR challenged the Two-Thirds Rule at the 1936 convention and succeeded where past challenges in 1844 and 1848 had failed (Bass 1988; CQ 2005). Once liberated from the Rule, the Democratic Party transformed itself in a very short amount of time and became a northern party by 1964 (Ware 2006). A century of continuity had been interrupted in a generation. The argument entertained here is that ending the Two-Thirds Rule made the Democratic Party more responsive to ECI, and that this played a fundamental role in the transformation of the party system. Although the Electoral College constitutes an institutional concession to the Heartland relative to a direct election rule, it by no means guarantees that the South or the Heartland in general will dominate ECI. If parties respond to ECI, all else equal, then the Electoral College will frequently lead the party away from the Heartland, historically the weaker section in terms of population and resources. An institutional device like the Two-Thirds Rule likely checked the ability of ECI to influence policy positions while it was in effect.

The convention system has undergone at least two other relevant rule changes since it was originally established in 1832: the institution of presidential primaries in 1912, and modern reform in 1972 (Polsby 1983; Bartels 1988; Aldrich 1995; Cowan

2016). These rule changes were initiated by one party but extended to both through legislative enactments concerning state primary elections (CQ 2005). The creation of presidential primaries allowed candidates to demonstrate strong appeal with the base (see Cowan 2016), or their ability to win in unexpected regions (see White 2009), ahead of the national convention. However, state party organizations retained control over most convention delegates. This changed with 1972 reforms awarding the bulk of convention delegates to primary and caucus winning candidates for the first time. Nelson Polsby and John Aldrich argued that the new rules transformed the major parties from confederations of state party organizations into centralized national parties without precedent in the United States. The historical influence of state party organizations has since been arrogated by presidential candidates, special interests and other pressure groups.

It is not entirely clear what these reforms mean for the responsiveness of the party to ECI. One thing that is clear is that the reforms instituted in 1912 and 1972 contributed to much longer party platforms. Beyond length, however, these reforms likely were important in conditioning the response of the party to ECI. But how? Scholars generally characterize these reforms as shifting the party in a more candidate-centered direction (Cowan 2016; Polsby 1983; Bartels 1988; Aldrich 1995). To the extent candidates care about winning office, which is certainly true of the candidates competing for the nomination, these reforms may have made the party more responsive to ECI over time. On the other hand, primary elections may empower voters and special interests with especially strong ideological viewpoints, in which case candidates may find that responsiveness to ECI is not in their interests (Hill 2015; Hill and Huber 2017). Responsiveness to ECI could be a creature of smoke-filled rooms, in which event responsiveness to ECI would have peaked in the past. It would be interesting if this proved false, since it would suggest that ECI continue to influence politics in the present.

4.5 Hypotheses

H1: The party includes more policy mentions of the issues indicated by ECI.

H2: The party includes fewer policy mentions of the issues indicated by ECI stress, measured as the difference between ECI and the sectional orientation of the party in Congress.

The most important empirical predictions that follow from the preceding analysis are that parties should include more policy promises in line with ECI, and fewer policy promises to the extent issues represent conflict between ECI and the sectional strength of the party in Congress, or ECI Stress. Both of these responses will result in a platform that better aligns with ECI. Evidence of these dynamics in the record of national party platforms would establish that ECI exert real effects and that parties respond to them largely as expected. An altogether different conclusion is justified in the event ECI and ECI Stress do not systematically influence the positions of the party– ECI probably do not motivate party change. Such a finding would leave open the possibility that particular campaigns had pursued ECI, or that particular election dynamics rewarded it. In that case, future work might profit by focusing on the elements of campaigns or election factors that could make sectional politics relevant from time to time.

H3: The party does not regularly respond to ECI with respect to the regional agendas of the North Coast, Great Lakes, West or South.

H4: The party responds more readily to ECI on economic issues than cultural and social issues.

The regional policy agendas include many of the most polarizing issues in American politics– issues touching on civil rights for minorities and immigrants, nativism and racism, temperance, and so on. These may well represent the cores beliefs or group affiliations of party members in ways that few other issues can rival (Green et al 2004; Engstrom and Kernell 2014). Party members may be unwilling to compromise as readily on policy positions so central to the party. For this reason, we may well find that the parties simply do not respond to ECI with respect to these topics. More generally, cultural and social is-

sues may be more important to the voting public and its identification with the party brand than economic issues (DeVries et al 2013; Liu et al 2014). If so, the established cultural and social positions of the party may prove to be more robust than economic attitudes and less susceptible to strategic influences– at least, in the short term. Changes in the sectional orientation of the party in Congress should be especially important for party change on these topics. Evidence that parties respond to ECI on economic issues more readily than other types of issues would be important evidence for the centrality of cultural and social issues.

4.6 National Party Platform Data

Two coders applied the approach from the previous chapter on state party platforms to score the content of every national platform for both major parties between 1844 and 2016 (Democratic Party Platforms; Whig and Republican Party Platforms). This process generated two complete sets of coding results, which makes it possible to compare the work of each coder and corroborate their findings. The interpretation of platforms is subjective and demanding, requiring at least a passing familiarity with the gamut of issues and the willingness to parse archaic language. It is sufficiently complex that two intelligent coders may reasonably disagree about the classification of a given policy, or whether it is a policy at all. They may reasonably disagree about the point at which aspiration or promises to further past achievements cross into the realm of concrete policy promises, and more. The threat that the interpretive style of an individual coder might drive the results is very real. Two sets of complete coding results address this threat because the elements they share in common cannot be the result of an individual's idiosyncratic approach to coding. The work of each coder effectively replicates the work of the other.

The coding approach is based on constituency service rather than ideology or policy particulars. Thus, we track investments in public schools as pro-public education regardless of whether the policy in question might be deemed liberal, conservative, or neither. [Footnote: We treat calls for school vouchers as efforts to expand the access of

religious institutions to public monies, similar to "faith-based initiatives"– a different category altogether.] Or, in the case of marriage equality, positions in favor of civil unions are deemed pro-LGBTQ before the Windsor decision in 2013 (570 U.S. 744). The same point carries for other issue areas like civil rights for minorities. Support for the Civil War amendments is deemed pro-civil rights, as is support for anti-lynching laws, in the years before the Civil Rights Movement (Brown 2000; Hill 2009; Aaronson 2014; Foner 2019). In this respect the method of this book differs sharply from that of the Comparative Manifesto Project and other approaches more concerned with classifying the types of ideas and ideologies represented in the platforms (see Manifesto Project Coding Instructions). The different emphasis is largely motivated by this project's concern with sectional politics. There are liberal and conservative ways to serve constituents in both the North and the Heartland, which inherently makes ideological approaches less attractive for an inquiry of this kind.

Figure 2 shows the extent to which the coders agreed on the North or Heartland tilt of the party platforms over time. Positive values indicate a party that favors the North, while negative values reveal a Heartland orientation. Note that both coders documented policy trajectories consistent with the idea that the parties have switched places in the American political economy. The coders are in particularly close agreement on the policy orientation of the Democratic Party. Changes in the extent to which the Democratic Party favors the North or Heartland in the aggregate correlate across the work of both coders at about .83. The comparable figure for the Republican platforms is lower, at .71, but it is not low. The coders tell us similar stories about the trajectory of policy promises in the platforms. Nonetheless, it is also clear that differences between coders exist. The threat that these differences could drive any statistical findings is substantial. The first line of defense against this threat is to ask whether the analysis of each coder's work produces substantially similar results. If so, idiosyncratic coding practices cannot explain the findings.

The likelihood– even certainty– that coders took systematically different approaches to coding at least some issues is best addressed by analyzing panel data organized at the is-

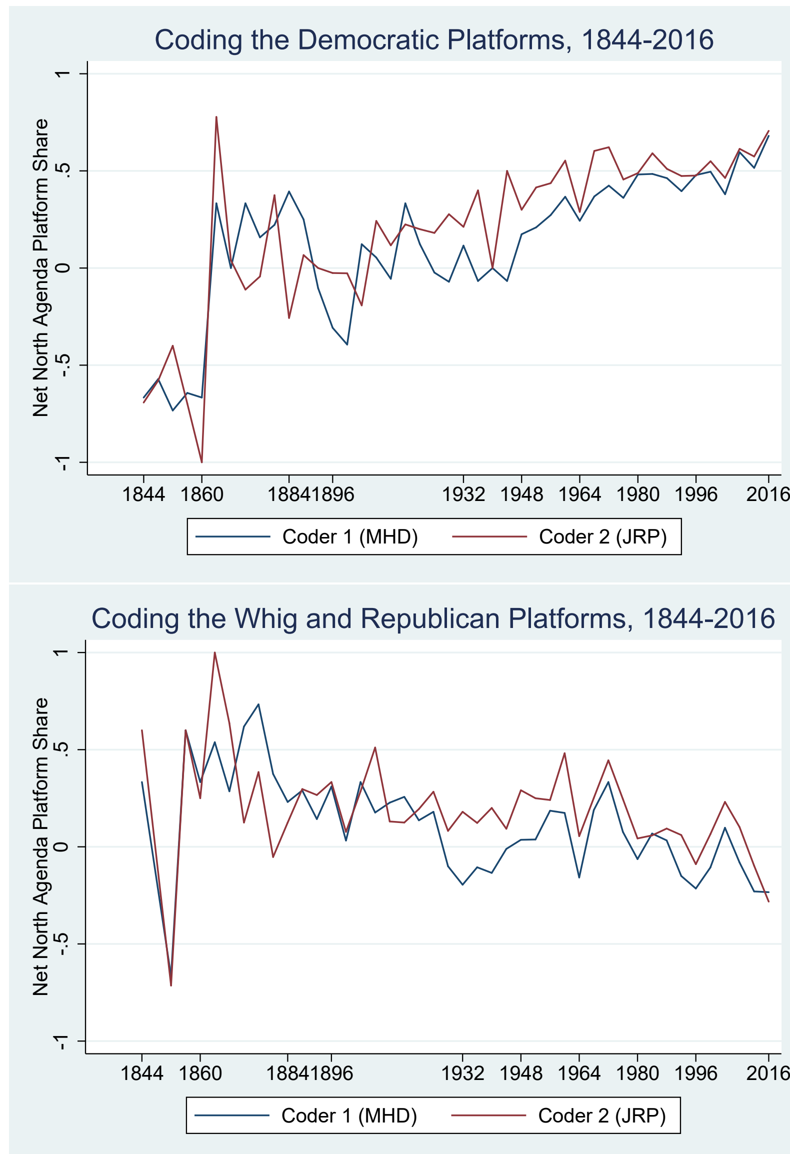
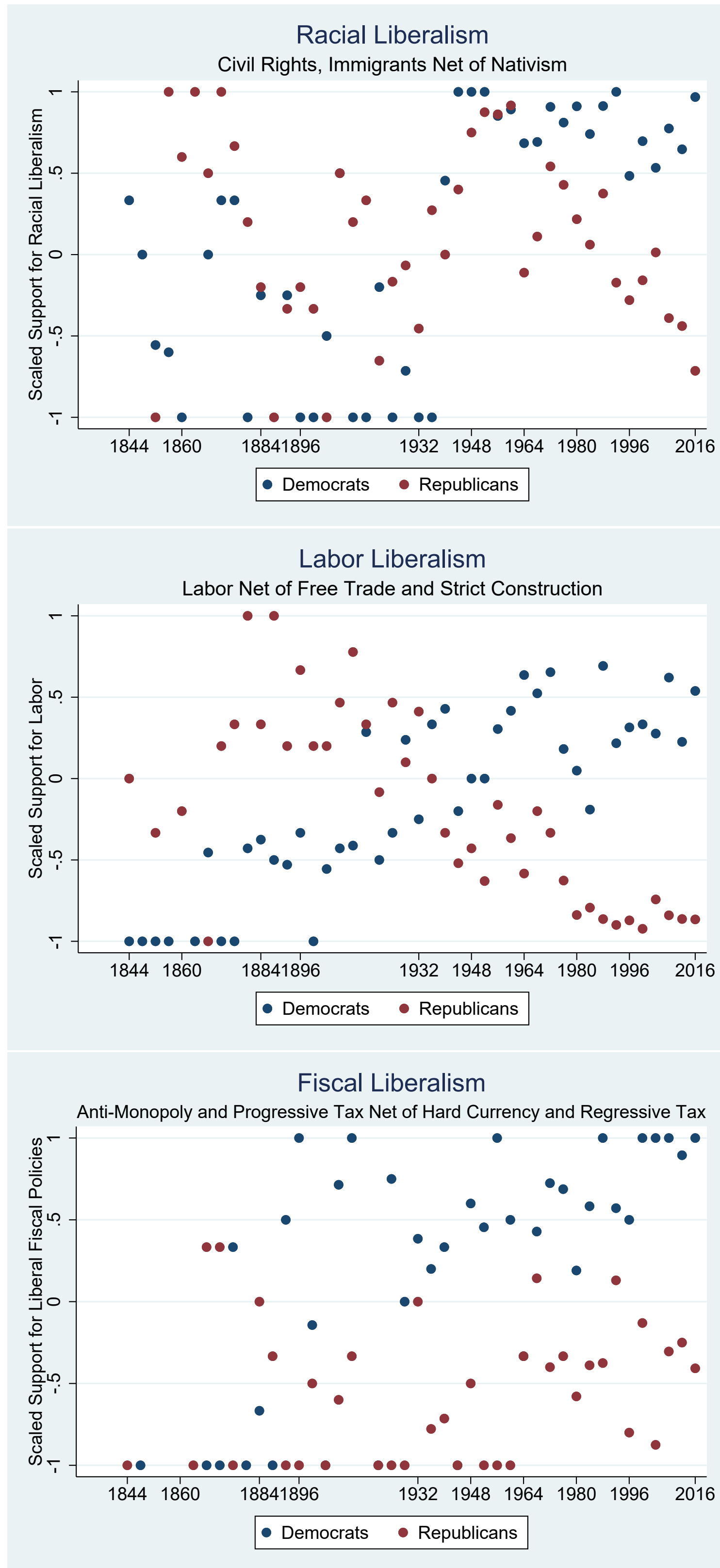


Figure 4.2: Coding Sectional Politics in the Party Platforms



These figures reflect the average scoring of the coders.

Figure 4.3: Important Cleavages in American Political History

sue – campaign year level. The data are organized accordingly here. Analysis at this level can employ issue fixed effects in addition to campaign fixed effects. Issue fixed effects effectively use each issue as its own control in the analysis of the data, a tool which can account for consistent differences between the coders in the treatment of certain issues. Moreover, this way of structuring the data makes it easy to isolate the parties' advocacy of various issues over time, inviting a number of comparisons that readers and researchers may find interesting. Figure 3 depicts the relative policy emphasis of the parties on notoriously polarizing issues. The top panel shows the party platforms across history on an index of racial liberalism, with higher values indicating more liberal racial policies and lower values approaching the preferences of nativists. The Republicans were generally more racially liberal until the middle of the 20th Century, when both parties briefly converged on a racially liberal trajectory before separating into their current manifestations.

The middle panel shows a similar if distinct trajectory on labor liberalism. The Republicans were friendlier to labor until the Great Depression. From that point forward, the Democrats take the lead as the party of labor. The top two panels document the dramatic transformations that have occurred as the parties have developed. The bottom panel cuts the other way, highlighting a stable difference between the parties on fiscal liberalism. The Democrats have consistently been more fiscally liberal in their platforms than the Republican Party. This is a traditional cleavage thought to divide Democrats from Republicans (Gerring 1998). Over and above being interesting, these patterns validate the coding system by telling us what we already know. Platforms contain elements of continuity and change, and it is important that the coding system be sensitive to both. The panels in Figure 3 also speak to the complexity of the platforms and the panoply of issues they contain. Accounting for these developments is difficult, which is why the puzzle of party change remains unanswered. It is time to find out whether ECI and sectional politics can help.

4.7 Research Design

The dependent variable is the number of times the party platform includes a promise to act on a given issue. The most important explanatory variables are ECI, as measured in Chapter Two, and ECI Stress– the absolute value of the difference between ECI and the sectional orientation of the party in Congress. ECI should bear a significant and positive relationship to the number of policy mentions, which would confirm that parties generally tailor their platforms to include more emphasis on Heartland or North issues in line with expectations. ECI Stress, on the other hand, should be negatively related to the number of policy mentions, indicating that parties place less emphasis on these agenda items– even when they would otherwise be indicated by ECI or the sectional orientation of the party in Congress. These are the variables that take center stage in the theory that ECI contribute to party change. Burnham's realignment theory is the only other approach to party change that lends itself to a clear prediction across the history of the party development– namely, that parties change a great deal in critical elections and very little otherwise. If ECI and sectional politics continue to drive change when controlling for critical elections, the central thesis of realignment theory cannot be correct.

There are good reasons to believe that nomination rules like the old Convention and the Two-Thirds Rule made the parties less responsive to ECI and thereby contributed to the sectional stability of earlier party systems. This is taken into account here by examining the interaction of nomination rules in earlier eras with ECI for a significant and negative statistical relationship. Such a finding would provide evidence for and demonstrate an important consequence of nomination rules. It is also important to take account of a number of historical changes in the institutional setting that largely concern democratization. The 19th Amendment recognizing woman suffrage and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 mark two other milestones in the advance toward democracy, and they are included in the analysis as well (McCool et al 2009; May 2014; McConnaughy 2015; Mickey 2015). Democratization empowers more of the electorate to participate in self-governance, and carries with it the power to alter the identity of the probable median voter. It is possi-

Table 4.2: Variable Descriptions

Variable	Description
POLICY MENTIONS	Number of mentions given to an issue in the platform
ECI	North/Heartland share of expected battleground EVs
ECI STRESS	Absolute value, ECI-Sectional Orientation
SECTIONAL ORIENTATION	North/Heartland share of party in the House
NOMINATION RULES	Two-Thirds Rule applied only to Democrats
1832 - 1908	Classic convention system, Two-Thirds Rule
1912 - 1932	Mixed convention system, Two-Thirds Rule
1936 - 1968	Mixed convention system
1972 - 2016	Modern primary system
REGIONAL ECI	NC/GL/W/S share of expected battleground EVs
REGIONAL ECI STRESS	Absolute value, Regional ECI-Regional Orientation
REGIONAL ORIENTATION	NC/GL/W/S share of party in the House
CRITICAL ELECTIONS	1832, 1860, 1896, 1932, 1964, 1996
INCUMBENT PARTY	Current party in the White House
DIVIDED GOVERNMENT	Divided party control of the executive and legislature
WOMAN SUFFRAGE	19th Amendment in effect
VOTING RIGHTS ACT	Voting Rights Act in effect
GFPPC GROWTH	Year-on-year growth in per capita income

ble that democracy has changed the political landscape such that electoral strategy has become less relevant. Table 1 describes these and other variables highlighted in the analysis.

The relationship between these variables and the number of issue mentions in these panel data is separately estimated for each coder in a time series negative binomial model. Both estimations similarly employ two-way fixed effects for issue and campaign year. Issue fixed effects make it possible to identify the significant drivers of general change across the issue space, and including them addresses the threat that systematic differences between coders accounts for the variation this study seeks to explain. Campaign fixed effects speak to the possibility that individual campaigns or unique historical election dynamics might explain the findings. The analysis will also include fixed effects for the assignment of issues to different policy dimensions as well as different sectional and regional agendas. It is an implicit party of this design that reliable findings will be evident in the analyses of the work of both coders, and with respect to both parties. Statistically significant findings that are inconsistent in the analysis of the same party's

platforms presumably indicate areas of coder disagreement. This design is calculated to provide a clear answer as to whether issue advocacy in the platforms shifts in line with ECI.

4.8 Results

Do ECI shed light on the transformation of the Democrats from the party of the Heartland to the party of the North? The results in Table 2 provide evidence that they do. The first three columns analyze the work of coder one, while the final three analyze that of coder two. The first and fourth columns reflect the most parsimonious specifications, including only ECI, ECI Stress, Sectional Orientation and Nomination Rules. Several consistent findings appear, the most important of which line up with expectations. First, ECI is significant and positively related to policy mentions. Second, ECI Stress is significant and negatively related to policy mentions. The magnitude of the coefficient dwarfs the other variables included in the analysis, including ECI, which is consistent with the idea that negative responsiveness plays the larger role in explaining platform content. Third, Sectional Orientation is significant and positively related to policy mentions. The connection to congressional representation is further evidence that the scheme of sectional politics is valid, at least for the historical period in question. The addition of Critical Elections in columns two and five does not change the results, nor does the inclusion of other control variables in columns three and six.

One secondary hypothesis is that older nomination rules may have made the parties less responsive to ECI. The results in Table 2 provide some support for this interpretation. The coefficient on the interaction of ECI and nomination rules in place between 1832 and 1936 is negative in every column. However, the finding falls somewhat short of significance at the .10 level in the analysis of coder 1 for the period before presidential primaries were instituted. Both coders do find a statistically significant and negative coefficient for the period 1912-1932, a period during which presidential primaries existed alongside the Two-Thirds Rule. Neither coder detected any difference in responsiveness

Table 4.3: Issue Advocacy in Democratic Platforms

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ECI	.24***	.24***	.24***	.29***	.29***	.29***
ECI Stress	-8.04***	-8.04***	-14.80***	-8.43***	-8.43***	-16.33***
Scetional Orient.	1.31***	1.31***	1.31***	.85**	.85**	.85**
Nom. Rules						
1832-1908	-3.14***	-3.14***	19.71***	-2.72***	-2.72***	23.08***
X ECI	-.59	-.60	-.60	-1.06***	-1.06***	-1.06***
1912-1932	-.43	.12	14.26***	-.76**	-.42	16.19***
X ECI	-.41*	-.41*	-.41*	-.44*	-.44*	-.44*
1936-1968	.54**	.54**	-4.59***	.50*	.50*	-5.18***
X ECI	.16	.16	.16	.26	.26	.26
1972-2016						
X ECI						
Critical Elections		-.54***	-1.58***		-.35***	-1.55***
Incumbent Party			2,88***			3.24***
Div. Gov.			-3.95***			-4.29***
Wom. Suff.			27.20***			30.82***
VRA			1.96***			2.22***
GDPPC			.81***			.94***
Constant	.62	.62	-24.88	.72	.72	-28.36
Dimension FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Agenda FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Issue FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Campaign FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jackknife SE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Coder	1	1	1	2	2	2
Obs.	4,664	4,664	4,664	4,444	4,444	4,444
Groups	106	106	106	101	101	101
Log Likelihood	-4393.4	-4393.4	-4393.4	-4371.9	-4371.9	-4371.9

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Results reflect negative binomial regression analysis. The DV in each column is the number of Policy Mentions given to a given issue in the platform.

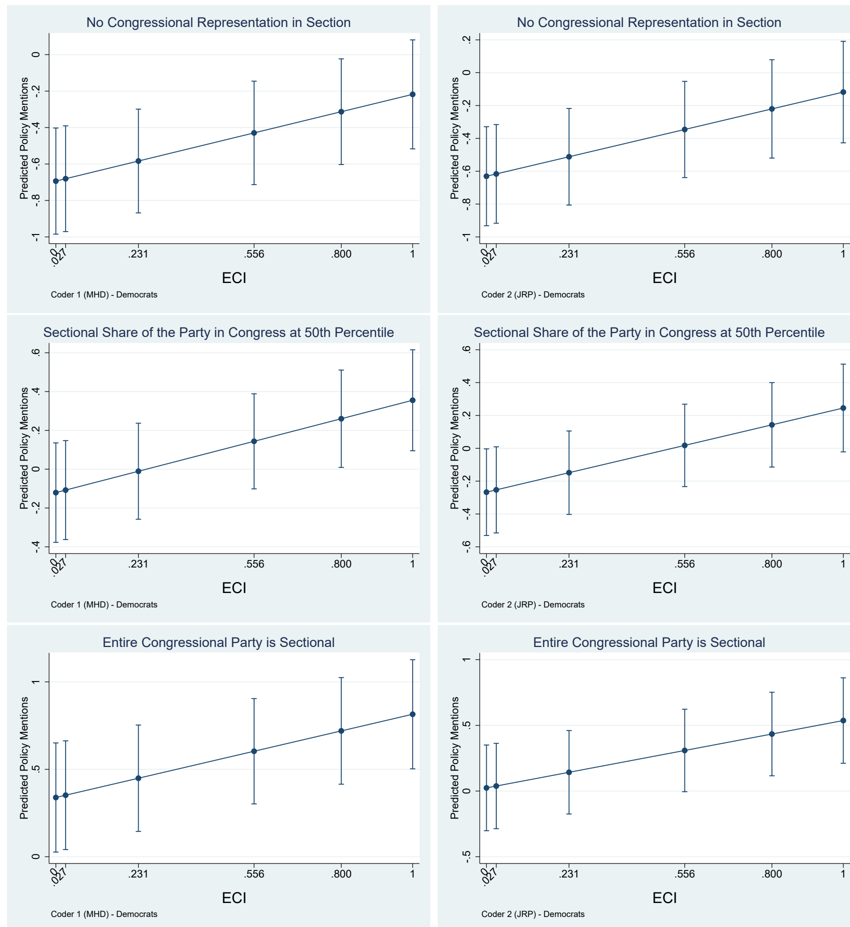


Figure 4.4: Responsiveness to ECI in Democratic Party Platforms

to ECI between the present and the period 1936-1968. This is an intriguing result because the parties are known to have undergone great changes during this time frame. The implication is that the same forces that motivated large-scale changes remain present in our political system today. Note that the significant and negative coefficient associated with Critical Elections appears in the analysis of both coders. This means that, all else equal, the Democrats feature a reduced number of policy mentions across the issue space in critical elections. Perhaps policy turnover is especially great in these elections, a hypothesis to explore in future work.

Figure 4 shows change in the predicted number of policy mentions in the Democratic Party in response to ECI under three scenarios. In the first scenario, ECI point toward a section of the country where the party has no congressional representation whatsoever. This is reflected in the top panel of Figure 4. In the second scenario, ECI point toward a section of the country where the party enjoys typical support in Congress. This

corresponds to the middle panel of Figure 4. In the third scenario, ECI indicate policies favored by the section where the party draws all of its support; see the bottom panel of Figure 4. The x-axis in each case tracks the growing strength of ECI from the 5th percentile to the 90th percentile. The slope of the line tracks the change in predicted mentions; it is always positive, regardless of coder and regardless of the sectional orientation of the party. The Democratic Party is generally responsive to ECI. However, the results in Table 3 suggest that this general responsiveness is qualified in certain issues areas– particularly cultural issues on the regional agenda. These issues touch on the most sensitive subjects in American politics, and the party is unlikely to abandon them easily.

The first and fourth columns of Table 3 evaluate the responsiveness of the regional agendas to ECI. The initial expectation was that parties would be unresponsive with respect to regional agendas regardless of issue dimension, but the analysis does not confirm that hypothesis. Instead, the interaction of regional ECI and issue dimension indicates that the Democrats are systematically unresponsive with respect to cultural issues on the regional agendas in particular. Note, however, that the regional orientation of the party in Congress is positively related to policy mentions of regional agenda issues. This finding validates the regional policy scheme and lends substantive significance to the lack of responsiveness we observe with respect to this small but important set of cultural issues. Figure 5 depicts these relationships, highlighting the extent to which regional ECI and the regional orientation of the party in Congress work at cross-purposes. One consistent interpretation is that these issues are more central to the party and therefore more resistant to strategic influence. These are more likely to change as the regional composition of the party changes.

The second and fifth columns highlight the responsiveness of the party on social and cultural issues across the board– that is, regardless of whether they were assigned to a regional agenda. The party is responsive to ECI at this level, although the results indicate that ECI Stress is doing the real work. Nomination rules play an especially important role in the analysis of social and cultural issues. A consistent finding is that the Democrats were significantly less responsive on social and cultural issues between 1832 and 1932.

Table 4.4: Other Aspects of Issue Advocacy in Democratic Platforms

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Reg. ECI	-1.26***			-.88**		
X Foreign Issues	1.70**			1.21**		
X Economic Issues	1.46***			.69		
Regional ECI Stress	.62			.25		
Regional Orient.	2.06**			1.92**		
ECI		.33***	.13		.25*	.21*
ECI Stress		-12.19***	-4.15**		-10,51***	-6.67***
Sectional Orient,		.07	1.73***		.09	.84
Nom. Rules 1832-1908	2.30	-2.87***	-3.17***	1.20	-2.15***	-3.04***
X ECI		-1.45**	-.32		-2.19***	-.41
1912-1932	4.01	-.00	-.82**	3.35***	-.91	-.70
X ECI		-1.26***	-.20		-1.05**	-.30
1936-1968	4.48	.64	.22	3.97***	-.32	.62*
X ECI		.07	.40		1,05	.23
1972-2016						
X ECI						
Constant	-4.97	1.72	.54	-4.44	1.23	1.15
Dimension FE	Y	NA	Y	Y	NA	Y
Agenda FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Issue FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Campaign FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jackknife SE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Coder	1	1	1	2	2	2
Obs.	1,760	2,684	1,980	1,760	2,420	2,024
Groups	40	61	45	40	55	46
Log Likelihood	-1620.6	-2200.5	-2142.7	-1616.6	-2201.7	-2105.3

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Results reflect negative binomial regression analysis. The DV is the number of POLICY MENTIONS in the platform devoted to different types of policies: regional agenda items in columns (1) and (3); social & cultural issues in columns (2) and (5); and economic & foreign issues in columns (3) and (6).

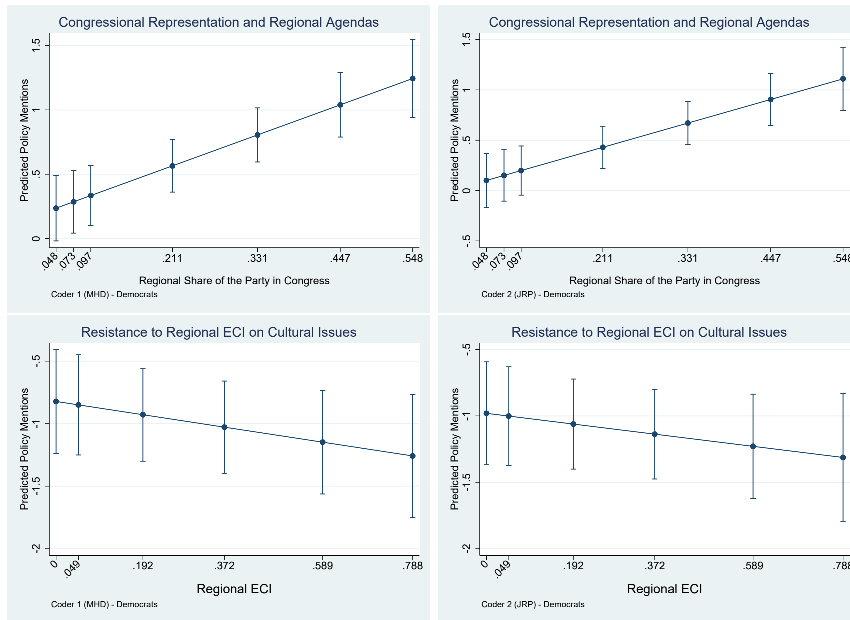


Figure 4.5: Regional Agendas in Democratic Party Platforms

However, no difference is detected between the present and the period 1936-1968. This underscores the importance of the Two-Thirds Rule and its repeal for the development of the Democratic Party. Columns three and six focus on economic and foreign issues. Once again, ECI Stress does the heavy lifting by reducing the emphasis given to policies indicated by both ECI and the sectional orientation of the party. Negative responsiveness does appear to be the typical response of the party, although the results provide some support for the positive influence of ECI and Sectional Orientation.

Do the same or substantially similar patterns appear in the analysis of Whig and Republican Party platforms? The results in Table 4 and Table 5 parallel the analysis of Democratic Party platforms in a number of important respects, but they also suggest differences in the ways the parties respond to ECI. The most important difference is that ECI Stress conditions Republican responsiveness to ECI, such that the party turns from highly responsive to stubbornly unresponsive as ECI Stress increases. This difference is reflected in the significant interaction of ECI and ECI Stress in Table 4. This interaction is not significant in the analysis of Democratic Party platforms. This difference between the parties is beyond the scope of this analysis, but the results are otherwise similar once we account for it. The main effect of ECI is positive, conditional on ECI Stress, and

Table 4.5: Issue Advocacy in Whig and Republican Platforms

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ECI	-.07	.67***	.67***	-.06	.43*	.43*
X ECI STRESS		-2.13***	-2.14***		-1.47**	-1.47**
ECI STRESS	-.78	.20	-.11	.16	.87	-.04
SECTIONAL ORIENT.	.74**	.60*	.60*	.73*	.60	.60
NOM, RULES						
1832-1908	-4.34***	-4.23***	-2.91***	-4.09***	-4.04***	-2.80***
1912-1968	-1.17***	-1.07***	-1.14***	-.89***	-.84***	-.75*
1972-2016						
CRITICAL ELECTIONS			-.49**			-.36*
INCUMBENT PARTY			-.03			.35
DIV. GOV.			.14			.74***
WOM. SUFF,			1.74***			2.63***
VRA			-.14			-.13
GDPPC			.05			.15**
CONSTANT	1.90	1.65	-.04	.97	.81	-2.28
Dimension FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Agenda FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Issue FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Campaign FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jackknife SE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Coder	1	1	1	2	2	2
Obs.	4,708	4,708	4,708	4,400	4,400	4,400
Groups	107	107	107	100	100	100
Log Likelihood	-4423.6	-4419.8	-4419.8	-4547.8	-4546.0	-4546.0

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Results reflect negative binomial regression analysis. The DV in each column is the number of POLICY MENTIONS given to a given issue in the platform.

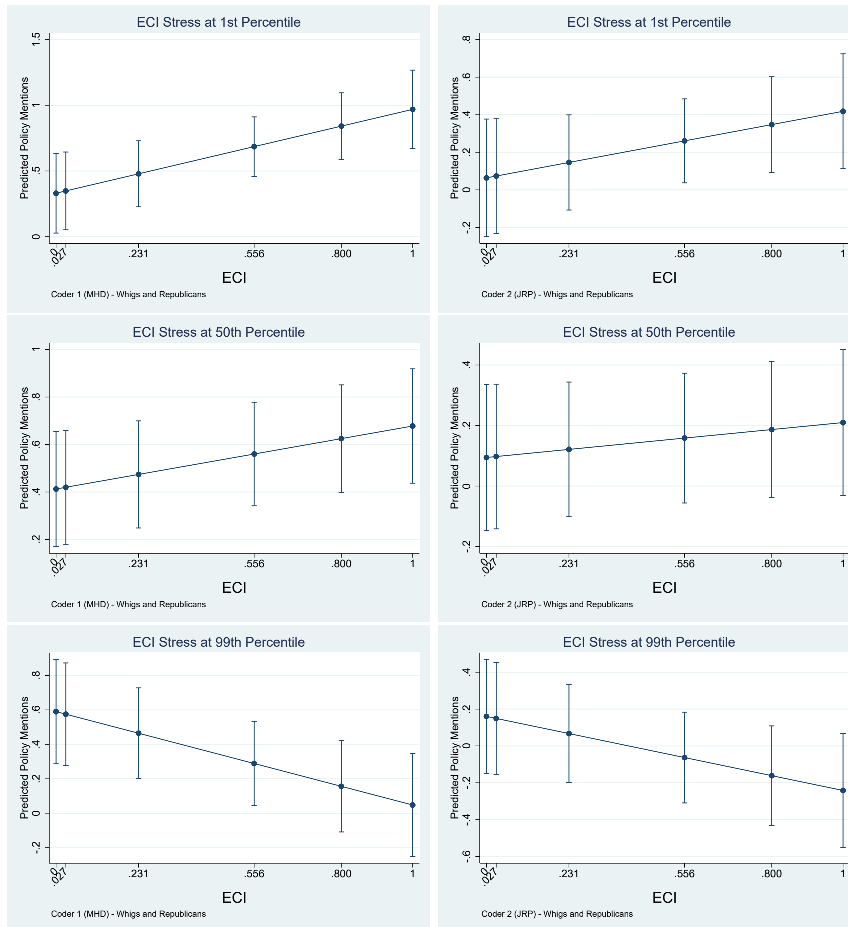


Figure 4.6: Responsiveness to ECI in Whig and Republican Party Platforms

high levels of ECI Stress are associated with weaker responsiveness– even stubborn non-responsiveness. One other striking difference (that is similarly beyond the scope of the present analysis) is that nomination rules do not appear to condition the party's responsiveness to ECI; these uninteresting interactions are omitted from the specifications shown in Table 4. As with the Democratic Party, the results are robust to the inclusion of critical elections and other control variables in the remaining columns.

Figure 6 illustrates the way ECI Stress conditions the historical responsiveness of the Republican Party to ECI. The top panel resembles the responsiveness of the Democratic Party in the various panels of Figure 4, all of which include a clearly positive slope indicating an increase in policy mentions as ECI increases. The middle panel is similar to the top panel, consistent with the expectation that the Republican Party is responsive to ECI at low to moderate levels of ECI Stress. The major difference between the Republican and Democratic responses to ECI is reflected in the lower panel of Figure 6.

This panel shows the predicted change in policy mentions in response to ECI when ECI Stress is extremely high, set in this case at the 99th percentile. Observe that there is now a clearly negative relationship between ECI and predicted policy mentions. Such stubborn non-responsiveness cannot be explained by ECI or sectional politics, but it is an interesting finding all the same. It suggests that the Republican Party might systematically resist change precisely when strategy would call for the most dramatic transformations, which could explain why it has appeared to lag the dynamism of its rival (James 2000; Ware 2006).

The similarities between the Republicans and the Democrats stand more than the differences when we delve into the regional agendas in the first and fourth columns of Table 5. The results confirm that the Grand Old Party has been just as stubbornly unresponsive on regional culture issues as the Democrats. Platform planks on regional issues better reflect the changing regional composition of the party in Congress in general– just as with the Democrats. This evidence again suggests that regional issues, particularly cultural ones, may be closer to the core of the program of the party at any given time and less subject to change. More clearly, it demonstrates patterns of responsiveness that vary across the issue space in ways that are consistent across parties. Important differences between the parties surface once we turn to cultural and social issues in columns two and five, and economic issues in columns three and six. In particular, the Republicans appear to be wholly unresponsive to ECI on social and cultural issues, responding instead to the sectional orientation of the party. On the other hand, the findings reveal a highly responsive Republican Party with respect to economic issues. This is consistent with its reputation as a party friendly to business and commercial interests (Gerring 1998; Bensel 2000).

The top panel of Figure 7 shows a positive relationship between regional agenda policy mentions as the regional orientation of the party in Congress shifts from the 5th to the 95th percentile. The lower panel of Figure 7 depicts a negative relationship between regional ECI and policy mentions of cultural issues on the regional agenda. The implication is that Republicans are likely to double down on this subset of cultural issues

Table 4.6: Other Aspects of Issue Advocacy in Whig and Republican Platforms

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Reg. ECI	-1.13***			-1,03***		
X Foreign Issues	1.01**			.87**		
X Economic Issues	1.58***			1,33***		
Regional ECI Stress	.19			.48		
Regional Orient.	2.14**			2.52***		
ECI		.05	.92**		-.11	.87**
X ECI Stress			-2.94**			-2.72**
ECI Stress			1.82			1.81
Sectional Orient.		.1.95***	-.07		1.75***	.00
Nom. Rules						
1832-1908	-4.41	-4.60****	-3.22***	-4.27	-4.38***	-3.46***
1912-1968	-.52**	-1.33***	-.21	-.58*	-1.25***	-.38
1972-2016						
Constant	1.60	1.53	1.34	1.06	.71	.77
Dimension FE	Y	NA	Y	Y	NA	Y
Agenda FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Issue FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Campaign FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jackknife SE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Coder	1	1	1	2	2	2
Obs.	1,672	2,640	1,760	1,628	2,420	1,672
Groups	38	60	40	37	55	38
Log Likelihood	-1607.4	-2181.6	-1696.5	-1709.0	-2247.8	-1741.1

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Results reflect negative binomial regression analysis. The DV is the number of Policy Mentions in the platform devoted to different types of policies: regional agenda items in columns (1) and (3); social & cultural issues in columns (2) and (5); and economic issues in columns (3) and (6).

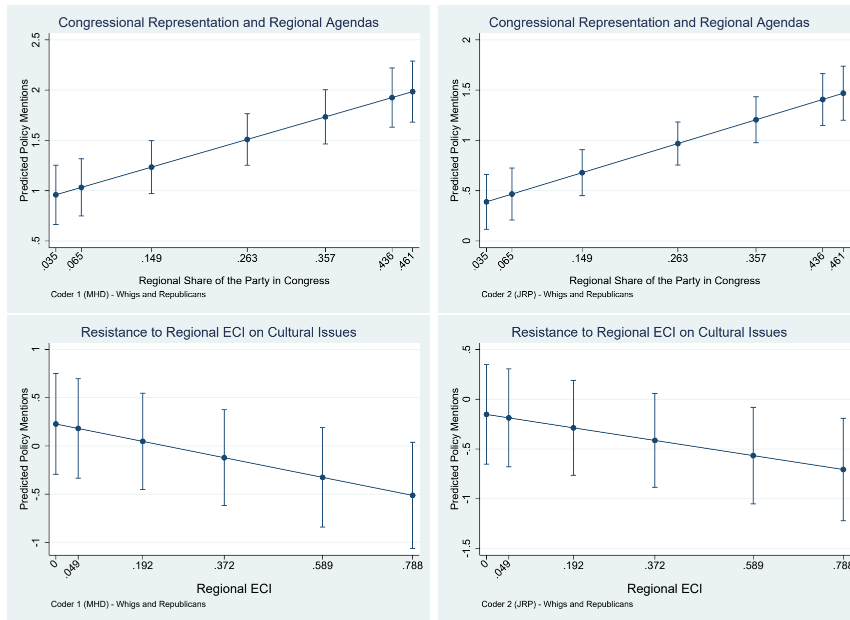


Figure 4.7: Regional Agendas in Whig and Republican Party Platforms

when ECI indicate that abandoning them could be advantageous. These patterns are consistent with those observed in Figure 5 for the Democratic Party. Relevant differences between the parties exist, but are well-accounted for by conditioning the influence of ECI on ECI Stress for the Republicans. Outside of cultural issues, ECI exert consistently significant effects on policy mentions when we account for the sectional orientation of the parties. This relationship is particularly evident in the analysis of economic issues, which is consistent with existing studies of party change suggesting that cultural issues may be especially resistant to change (Goren and Chapp 2017; Davis 2018). We should expect change on regional culture issues when the regional composition of the party changes, but not necessarily ECI.

These results underscore the general importance of ECI for the positions of the party– even if sometimes the response is the direct opposite of that indicated, as with cultural issues on the regional agendas. ECI are interesting precisely because of their potential to inflict stress on the existing coalition, so it is unsurprising that parties would resist them on certain issues or develop tools like the Two-Thirds Rule to blunt their pull on the party. The significant relationships between policy agendas and the sectional or regional orientation of the parties in Congress should be taken as additional validation for

the scheme of sectional politics employed throughout this book rather than mistaken for proof that this scheme will continue to constrain American politics in the future. Nonetheless, the successful application of this scheme to state party platforms and national party platforms does lend support to the idea that American political history to date can be well understood by positing an enduring development divide between the North and the Heartland (see Bensel 1984/2000). The next section turns to the important elections that motivated this project to determine whether our platform analysis is consistent with narrative accounts.

4.9 ECI in Critical and Noteworthy Elections

At first glance, there does not appear to be a strong relationship between ECI responsiveness and election outcomes. The more responsive party has won slightly less than half of all elections since 1844. ECI responsiveness is neither sufficient nor necessary to build a winning coalition, at least as a general rule. This is unsurprising– if it were necessary and sufficient, then the party systems would not be characterized by so much stability, and the importance of ECI would be so obvious to all that a book like this would be unnecessary. The motivation for this project is the idea that sectional responsiveness to ECI has made a great deal of difference in elections that have proved to be critical inflection points in the story of party change. The 11 qualifying elections in this discussion are derived from the conventional list of critical elections (1860, 1896, 1932, 1964), other important elections in the literature (1884, 1948, 1968, 1980), and three more recent elections (1992, 1996, 2016) included for their relevance to politics and polarization in the contemporary period (Nelson 2020). These elections have consistently provided the case studies for this study since the first chapter.

Table 7 lists these elections alongside the sectional incentives of the Electoral College, the responsive portion of the parties' respective platforms, the identity of the incumbent party and the outcome of the election. The party more responsive to ECI is 6-5 in these elections, an even division suggesting the relevance of other factors. Nonetheless,

Table 4.7: Party Responsiveness to ECI in Critical and Noteworthy Elections

Election Year	Sectional Incentive	Democratic Portion (%)	Whig/GOP Portion (%)	Responsive Winner?
1860	Great Lakes	0	6.5	Yes, Challenger
1884	North Coast	3,0	8.5	No, Challenger
1896	North Coast	1.3	14.7	Yes, Challenger
1932	North	58.2	49.6	Yes, Challenger
1948	North Coast	21.3	21.0	Yes, Incumbent
1964	North	63.3	47.4	Yes, Incumbent
1968	North	74.3	61.0	No, Challenger
1980	Great Lakes	5.0	4.7	No, Challenger
1992	South	4.4	6.8	No, Challenger
1996	North	73.9	42.4	Yes, Incumbent
2016	Great Lakes	5.2	2.0	No, Challenger

This table reflects the average scoring of the coders.

some interesting patterns emerge. First, both incumbents and challengers won critical and noteworthy elections more often when they are more responsive than the other party. Challengers were more responsive than incumbents in 1860, 1896 and 1932, winning in each case. Incumbents were more responsive than challengers in 1884 and every election since 1932, winning three of eight contests (1948, 1964 and 1996). Less responsive incumbents did not win any of these elections. This is not to say that the responsiveness in the platform caused these election outcomes. Rather, the responsiveness in the platform may be the mark of a competitive party organization.

Second, challengers have tended to win this class of elections, taking home eight victories in eleven attempts. Since these elections feature prominently in the story of national party change, this in unsurprising. All else equal, a victory for the challenger should result in a greater change to the political status quo. Third, ECI in these elections tends to point toward the North or one of its regions, the North Coast and Great Lakes. North ECI have predominated in ten of these eleven elections; the exception being 1992, when the South represented the most influential region. However, the Great Lakes or North Coast alone represented the majority of the expected battleground range in six of these ten elections. Note that the challenger won five contests. Truman's victory in 1948 is the only election on this list in which the incumbent successfully defended an election

characterized by regional ECI. In contrast, the incumbent party is 2-2 when ECI point North as a whole. This helps put Truman's remarkable victory in perspective, and it suggests that incumbents may struggle in elections calling for regional responsiveness.

Fourth, the Democrats have tended to be more responsive to ECI in important elections than the Republicans, particularly since 1932. The GOP was more responsive in 1860, 1884 and 1896, but the Democrats were more responsive in every other election except 1992. At first glance, this may appear to reinforce the idea that the party of the North tends to be more responsive. However, the Democrats were more responsive in 1932 and 1948, when the sectional orientation of the party still strongly favored the Heartland. This is consistent with the statistical finding that Democrats respond more effectively to ECI than Republicans in general. Sectional politics and responsiveness to ECI may not generally drive election outcomes, but they do appear to play a more decisive role in this subset of important elections. This may be especially true for incumbents, who have never won an important election when less responsive to ECI than the challenging party. Victory is hardly guaranteed, however, even when incumbents can deploy this strategy. But, then again, James Rowe did not guarantee victory in his famous memorandum– only that, absent an attempt to confront ECI, "us Democrats ain't got a chance in hell!"

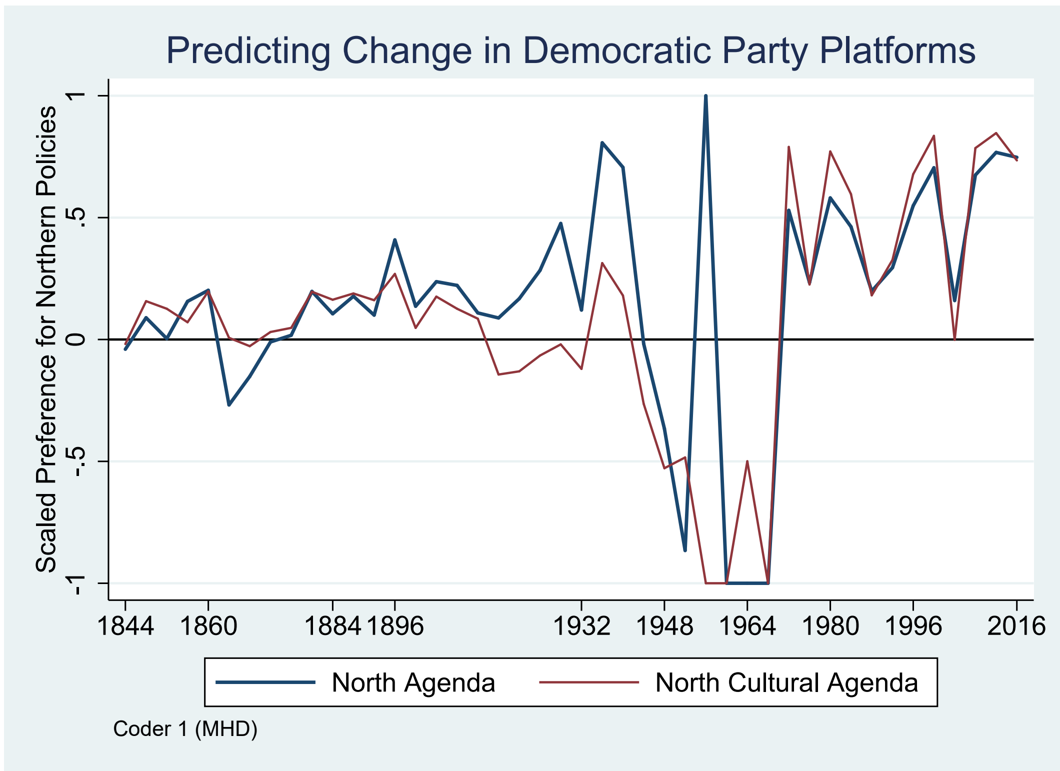
4.10 Conclusion

Figures 8 and 9 show the predicted path of party development along the North-Heartland divide in models that take account only of ECI variables, nomination rules and the scheme of sectional politics used throughout this book. The Democrats feature in Figure 8, while the Whigs and Republicans do the same in Figure 9. Predictions based on the analysis of coder 1 are shown in the top panel, while those based on coder 2 are shown in the bottom panel. Both panels of Figure 8 can be divided into three phases: first, a long period of relative stability until 1932; second, a great deal of instability between 1932 and 1972; and third, a return to relative stability since 1972. This fairly characterizes the trajectory of the Democratic Party as actually realized, suggesting that these variables

can account for many of the changes observed in the positions of the party. The predicted development of the Republican Party differs between the coders more than with respect to the Democrats. The analysis of both coders predicts relative stability until 1896, when both predict a gradual Heartland tilt. The analysis also predicts a gradual Heartland tilt after peaking in terms of its orientation toward the North in the Civil Rights Era. In between, the analysis makes different predictions about when the GOP was expected to undergo large-scale changes. Nonetheless, the analysis of both coders demonstrates that these variables are capable of motivating large and substantial shifts in the party system.

The policy trajectories in the party platforms are well explained by ECI and sectional politics. The evidence is particularly consistent with the idea that parties are generally responsive to ECI with respect to the North and Heartland agendas, but not with respect to the more narrow and controversial cultural agendas of different regions. Responsiveness to ECI may be especially important for the challenger party in critical and other important elections, but it also appears to be important for the incumbent party in these elections. Taken together, these findings reinforce the idea that ECI generally motivate party change. The responsiveness uncovered in the party platforms is evidence of their pull on the party. However, the evidence does not yet establish a link between ECI and the actual policies pursued and enacted by the party. That is the next step in the research linking ECI to party change. The objective of this analysis was to determine whether ECI are a plausible driver of party change and worthy of further investigation. The party platforms offered an ideal test of the underlying idea, which ECI passed. ECI exert real effects; they likely can contribute to our understanding of party change.

This finding is relevant to the present because it suggests that the party system remains fully capable of changing in the future. The parties generally respond to ECI more today than in the past, in fact. If change seems distant, this study suggests we should look to the sectional orientations of the parties to understand why. The sectional orientation of the parties is intimately related to polarization in the contemporary political environment. The concept of the development divide can only get us so far in understanding the sectional orientation of the parties. After all, it has been with us all this time and polarization



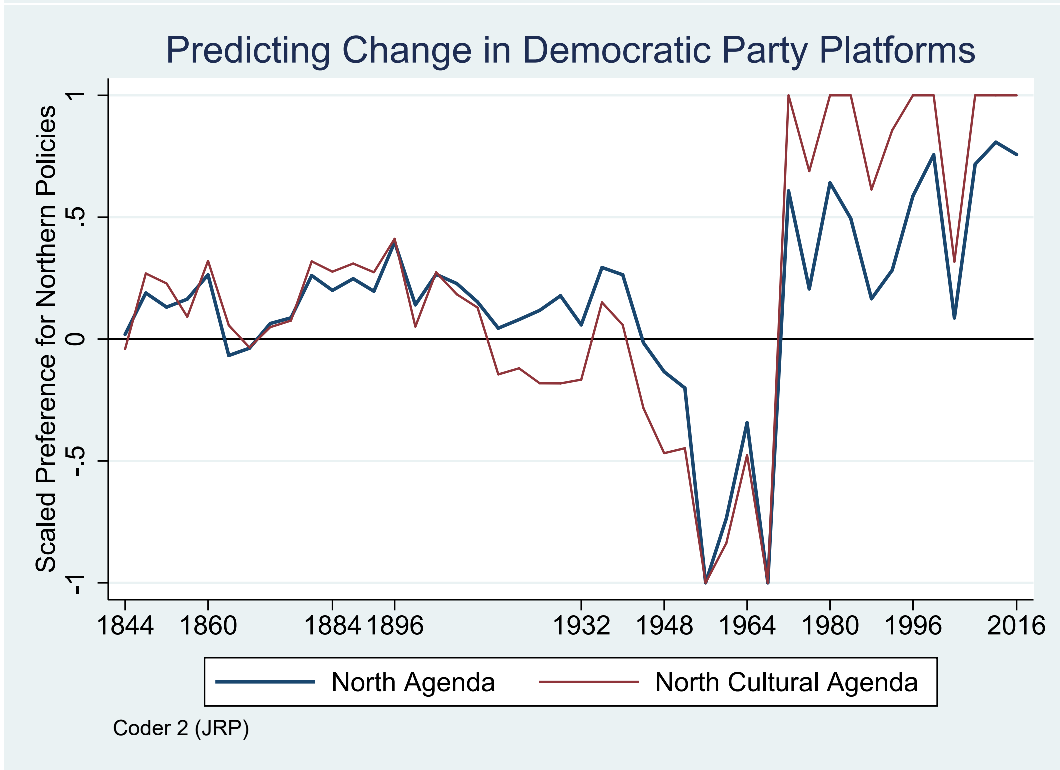
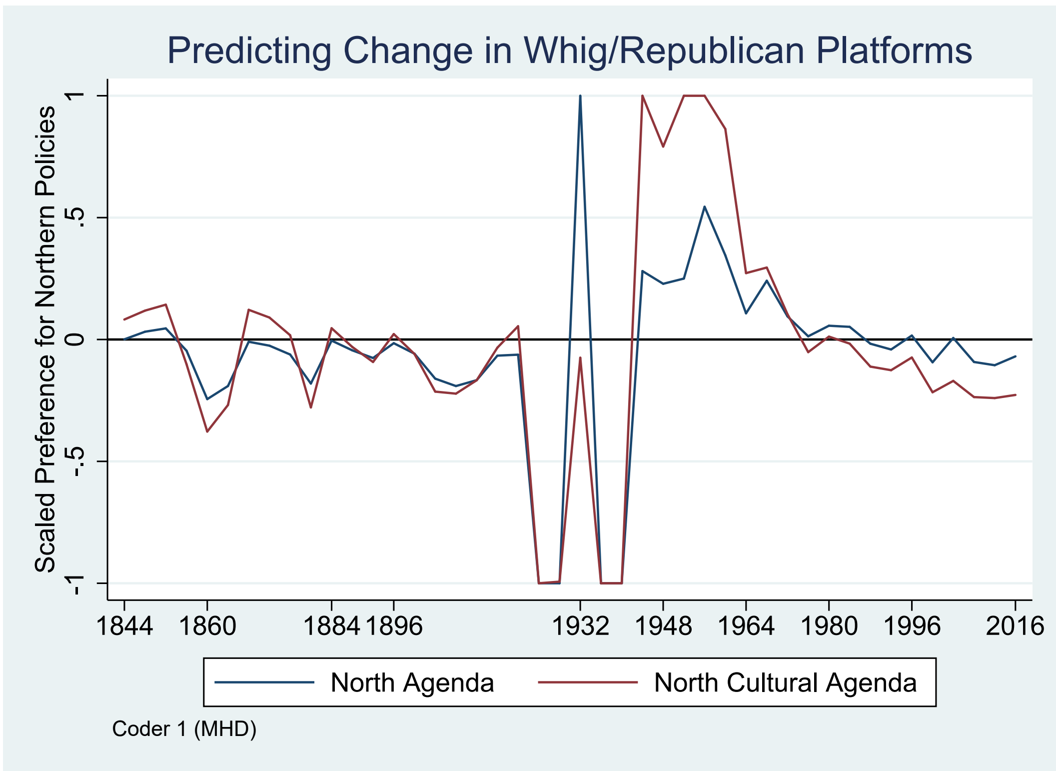


Figure 4.8: Predicting Change in Democratic Platforms



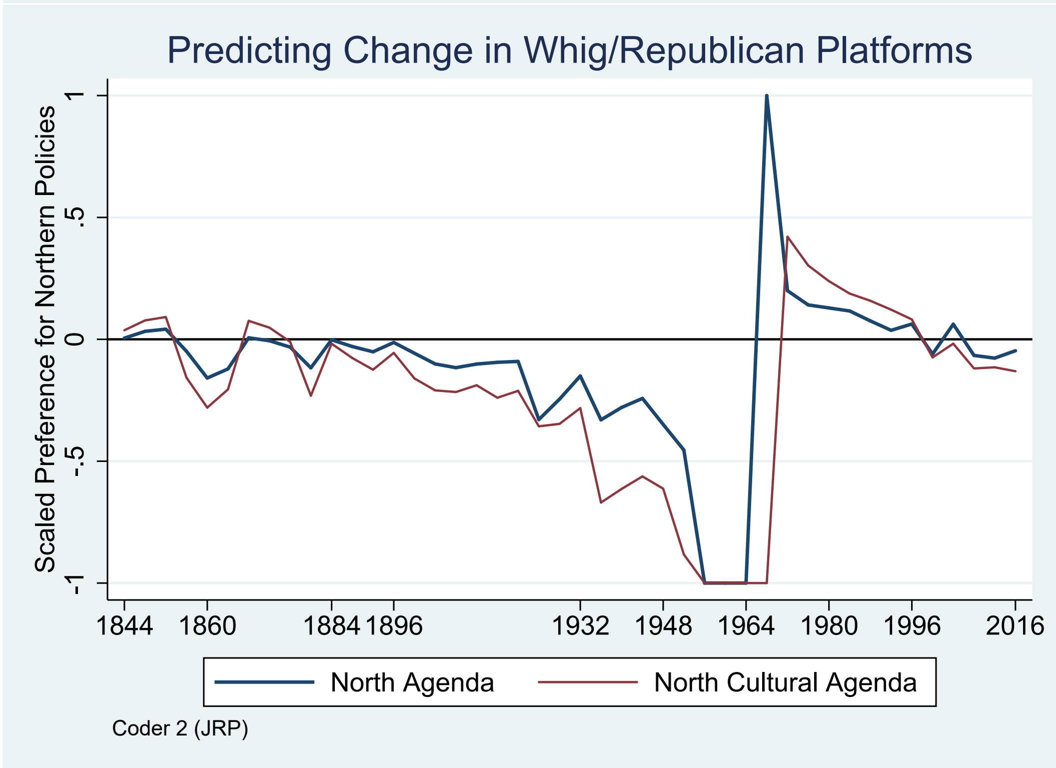


Figure 4.9: Predicting Change in Republican Platforms

is a fairly recent political phenomenon. Both parties have featured strong inter-sectional coalitions during their periods of greatest strength– the Gilded Age Republican Party of the North and West, for example, or the New Deal Democrats of the North and Heartland. ECI are an important part of the story of party change, but they are not the whole story by any means. The root causes of changes in the sectional and regional orientations of the party must also be understood. That is likely to be a profitable avenue of future research.

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