



The Rational Southerner
*Black Mobilization, Republican Growth,
and the Partisan Transformation of the
American South*

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PREFACE

This book has its roots in a research agenda born out of a mutual interest in Southern politics that began over a decade ago. We have always been captivated by the question of political change, and the South is among the most fascinating places in American politics in which to study that phenomenon. Our initial work looked at the changing ideological orientation of Southern Democratic senators. In that early work (published in 1999 in the *American Journal of Political Science*), we identified the forces – black voters and the Republican Party – affecting the roll call voting behavior of Southern Democrats that subsequently came to play distinct roles in the *theory of relative advantage*.

We explored the relative influence of these two forces on the specific issue of roll call voting on civil rights in a follow-up study (published in 2001 in *Legislative Studies Quarterly*) and then proposed the theory of relative advantage in a study examining the rise of the Republican Party in the South between 1960 and 2000 (first published in 2003 in *American Political Research* with a follow-up study published in the 5th edition of *Controversies in Voting Behavior*). To implement an even more rigorous test of our theory, we searched for a more robust methodology. We turned to Granger causality testing for panel data and implemented this approach to examine the transformation of the post-World War II party system in the South (published in 2008 in *Political Analysis*).

To date, we have produced various pieces to the puzzle of the dramatic and transformative political change in the American South. What was needed, however, was a concerted effort to put all these pieces together to form a single coherent and comprehensive explanation. This book, then, is

intended to present a comprehensive description, explanation, and analysis of our theory of political change in the region over the last half century. While Southern politics is our central focus, we also explain how the theory of relative advantage provides insight into partisan dynamics, racial/ethnic politics, and political transformations more generally

The Rational Southerner

CHAPTER I Introduction

SOME YEARS AGO, a friend of one of the authors took a job at a small state school in Oklahoma. Having spent little time in Oklahoma, the author asked the friend whether he thought Oklahoma was in the Midwest, the South, or the Southwest. The friend simply replied "Yes."

Obviously, some states have a regional identity that is far easier to determine and agree upon. There is little question that New Hampshire is in New England or that Arizona is in the Southwest. But is Pennsylvania a Midwestern state? And where does Kentucky fit? And just how many regions does the United States include? The U.S. Census Bureau divides the fifty states into four regions—the Northeast, the South, the Midwest, and the West—and nine subregions. The Federal Reserve System is divided into a dozen regions. Some would argue that certain states fit into more than one region. Although Philadelphia clearly seems to be a Mid-Atlantic city, Pittsburgh is much more like Midwestern cities such as Chicago, Nagogoches, and so on. Is almost certainly a Southern town, but how could El Paso not be in the Southwest?

Despite all the arguments and discussion over the number of regions, the placement of states in the regions, and the substantive significance of both, there is one American region that has a very clear historical identity—the South, defined as the eleven states of the former Confederacy. For most of the century and a half following the Civil War, the uniqueness of Southern politics was taken for granted. The long Democratic domination of what was known as the "Solid South" simply had no analogue anywhere else in the United States.

Until the late 1940s to the present day, the South has undergone the most dramatic, political transformation of any region in the country. The most significant structural change during this time period was the passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), and there is little doubt that the VRA made

the subsequent mobilization of African Americans possible. With this mobilization came a unique partisan transformation as well. An area that was once solidly Democratic (i.e., with very few Republican officeholders of any type and no state-level GOP officials) is now largely dominated by the Republican Party. In a region where it was once all but impossible to win public office of any type—local to statewide—running as a Republican, the GOP now controls far more Senate seats, House seats, gubernatorial mansions, and state legislatures than the Democrats.¹

One of the most interesting aspects of this transformation is the wide variation in the pace and extent of change across and within various geographic units. Some Southern states have held substantial numbers of Republican supporters since the publication of Key's seminal *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949). For example, Republicans were particularly prominent in the more mountainous areas of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia—thus Key's apt descriptor “mountain Republicans.” The absence of a long history of limited Republicanism did not, however, prevent a dramatic shift of partisan power among conservative whites once the GOP gained a toehold in other states (i.e., Mississippi and South Carolina). As we seek to understand the transformation of the Southern party system, we must remain cognizant of these significant variations. A compelling explanation must not only tell us why the South became more Republican, it must also explain why some Southern states (and areas within states) became more Republican at varying rates.

Scholars have suggested numerous explanations for the regionwide partisan shift. It is difficult to imagine the growth and development of the GOP in the South without the leftward shift of the national Democratic Party, particularly on the issue of civil rights, begun during the Roosevelt administration and extended during the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations. Roosevelt cultivated support among African Americans, and they comprised a significant segment of his electoral constituency. Truman integrated the U.S. military, created the Federal Employment Board to promote fair hiring practices in the federal government, and created the Committee on Government Contract Compliance to fight employment discrimination by private military contractors. Although Kennedy was not personally responsible for any significant civil rights legislation, his legacy of support for civil rights paved the way for the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and the Fair Housing Act during the Johnson administration.

The frustration of conservative Southern Democrats with increasing support for civil rights by the national Democratic Party was in evidence by 1948 when Strom Thurmond ran for the presidency on the Dixiecrat ticket, and

this frustration clearly grew over the next two decades. But this “top-down” explanation—dissatisfaction with the national party leading first to the repudiation of national Democrats (presidential candidates) and then over time leading to the rejection of state and local Democrats, and then the party itself—obviously provides no rationale for the wide variation in Republican growth across the region. If national-level dynamics are the central cause of Southern Republican growth, why did the GOP grow so much more quickly in some states (e.g., Virginia) than it did in others (e.g., Mississippi)? And why have the lagging states now surpassed the early growth states? National-level, top-down theories provide no answer.

To explain regional and subregional variations in Republican growth, we must find causal factors that also vary across these levels. Scholars searching for these causal factors have tended to focus on the demographic characteristics of the Southern population—particularly the white Southern population—during the time period of the partisan transformation.

In the recent literature on Southern politics, the role of class has attracted a great deal of attention. During the post-war era, the Southern economy underwent a dramatic transformation from a rural economy dominated by agriculture to a more industrialized economy driven increasingly by urban areas (Cobb 1999 and Sosna 1987). This economic transformation dramatically increased the standard of living of a large group of Southerners, particularly white Southerners. According to class-based explanations of Republican growth, as significant numbers of white Southerners moved from the working class to the middle class or from the middle class to the upper-middle or upper class, their policy preferences became more consistent with those of the national Republican Party.

More than half a century ago, Key (1949) suggested the possibility for this type of economic and political transformation when he discussed what he referred to as the *diffusion* of the South's agriculturally dominated rural economy. For Key, an obvious implication of the shift away from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy would be an increased attachment to the Republican Party. A significant segment of the most recent research on the growth of the Republican Party in the South identifies economic development as the driving engine behind partisan change (see, for example, Tublin 2004 and Shafer and Johnston 2001, 2006). Although there is no doubt that both Southern Republicanism and the Southern economy have grown since the early 1950s, it has been difficult to demonstrate a relationship between the variation in economic growth across the states and the fortunes of the South and the growth of the GOP in these same areas. For example, according to census data, the Southern states with the largest per

capita income growth from 1960 to 1980 were (in order) Virginia, Florida, and Texas. The states with the largest GOP growth during the same time period were (in order) Mississippi, South Carolina, and Georgia. Ironically, Mississippi realized the smallest increase in per capita income during this time period. At the most basic level, there are obvious problems with a class-based explanation.

Another prominent explanation for Southern partisan change is migration patterns—both white in-migration and African American out-migration. A significant body of research suggests that the growth of Southern Republicanism is primarily a result of the influx of Republican-minded migrants from other regions of the country (Bass and De Vries 1976). This research contends that the bulk of Southern in-migrants during much of the past forty years were white and middle class and that these migrants have become integral components of the Southern GOP (Schor 1997). We might reasonably infer that in-migration is specifically white in-migration) has had some impact on the relative strength of the two major political parties in the South, but the significance of this effect—and whether or not it remains a significant source of GOP growth—is controversial.

Some opponents argue that the impact of in-migration on Southern partisanship has waned recently, particularly since the mid-1980s, a time period in which the party loyalties of Southerners differed little (and were actually somewhat more Republican) than the party loyalties of Americans in other regions of the country (Stanley and Castle 1988). Others contend that cohort replacement and conversion of existing voters, as opposed to in-migration, explains the growing tendency among Southerners to identify as Republicans (Petracik 1987). Note that the in-migration thesis is based on the presumption that in-migrants were more Republican than the native population. In the context of recent migratory trends—particularly the dramatic influx of Hispanics into the South—this presumption is questionable. The mechanism by which recent white in-migration—at a time during which such in-migrants were not necessarily more Republican than native white Southerners—may have led to Republican Party growth remains unexplained.⁶

Students of religion and politics propose an additional demographic explanation for the growth of Southern Republicanism among conservative whites. They note that evangelicalism has grown dramatically over the past fifty years, and white evangelical Protestants have become increasingly more likely to identify with, and vote for, the Republican Party (see Kellstedt 1989; Green et al. 1996; and Green et al. 1998). White evangelicals are more likely than those of other religious traditions to hold conservative views, especially in regard to social issues (Wilcox 2000). During the time period

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of Republican growth in the South, evangelicals have become increasingly dominant in a Republican Party identified as the standard-bearer for social conservatism. The increase in Republican support among evangelicals is striking. Although white evangelicals comprised only half (50 percent) of the uncommitted vote for presidential contests in the 1990s (Keehn et al. 1998), nearly three-quarters of white evangelicals voted Republican during the 1994 Congressional elections. In the same year, white evangelicals comprised a plurality of the GOP, making up 50 percent of Republican Party whites in the nation-wide (Green et al. 1996).

We cannot ignore the obvious attachment of white evangelicals to the Republican Party; however, Southern religious culture has always included a prominent strain of evangelicalism—think of the *Phyllopy* issue in which presidential candidate Jimmy Carter discussed his status as a “born again” believer (1974). Explaining just how evangelicalism among Southern whites has driven the surge in Southern Republicanism is difficult, and the empirical relationship between evangelicalism and the growth of Republicanism, at a finer regional level or the subregional level, remains unestablished. Although one can make a plausible case for the role of evangelical ascendance in the growth of the Republican Party in the South, hard evidence of this relationship is surprisingly limited.

In the face of these varied explanations for the growth of Southern Republicanism, we argue that a complete understanding of Southern party politics requires a full appreciation for the role that race has played and continues to play in the region. Scholars have long contended that white conservatism was directly related to the size of the black population, arguing that as proximity to a large population of African Americans increased, the racial threat perception of whites also increased. What Key (1949) referred to as the “black-belt hypothesis” resulted in greater support for conservative candidates in areas with proportionately more blacks. Subsequent research in this vein uncovered support for Key’s hypothesis (see Alstrup 1996; Black 1996; Black 1998; Black 1997; Giles and Buckner 1993, 1996; Giles and Evans 1986; Giles and Hunt 1994; Glasser 1994; Matthews and Prothro 1966; and Wright 1977). As the Republican Party was increasingly viewed as the party of conservatism—the “oldly” racial conservatism—it became an increasingly desirable alternative to the Democratic Party. Some limited evidence indicates that black conservatism is directly related to growth in Republican partisanship (see, for example, Giles and Hertz 1994).

Support for Key’s hypothesis (that black conservatism is directly associated with white conservatism) and its extension to partisan politics (that black conservatism is associated with Republicanism), while strong, is not unequivocal

(see Coombs, Hibbing, and Welch 1984; Bullock 1985; Voss 1996; and Whitley 1985). From a theoretical standpoint, it is important to remember that Key's hypothesis of a black-context effect was not based solely on an electoral threat. At the time Key was writing (mid-to-late 1940s), African Americans were nearly two decades away from the beginning of effective enfranchisement in the South. Key's characterization of the relationship between black context and white conservatism during the time period about which he was writing—the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—depends, at least in part, on the presumption (by conservative whites) of a cultural or physical threat not fully captured by a potential electoral threat decades from materialization.

But in the six decades since Key wrote, the VRA (and subsequent judicial and legislative actions) led to the end of de jure disenfranchisement, and significantly curtailed de facto disenfranchisement, of Southern blacks. This mobilization of the African American electorate effectively transformed Southern political dynamics. In the new Southern polity, conservative whites might still view African Americans as a threat, but, as we argue below, that threat is far more likely to be viewed as one of an electoral nature than one of a physical nature. To the extent that this is the case, we enter by maintaining our preoccupation with racial context in our efforts to explain increasing white support for the Republican Party.

Some practical issues make the attribution of Republican growth to black racial context problematic. Although conservative white voters may have changed their allegiances and shifted from the Democratic to the Republican Party, blacks are still overwhelmingly strong supporters of the Democratic Party. So, in those areas where white "flight" to the Republican Party is most likely, the potential black Democratic base will be most numerous. In areas with large black populations, there is both a nearly tangible ceiling placed on potential Republican support and a very real floor placed on the basis of Democratic support. Similarly, the recent period of dramatic Republican growth has come during a time when the size of the black population in the South has decreased. How is it possible to attribute substantial Republican growth to black context when the relative size of the black population has not grown at all, and in some areas has experienced a relative decline?

For us, the political significance of the slight decline in the relative size of the black population in the South pales in comparison to the dramatic increase in the size of the mobilized black electorate in the region. Though the relative size of the black population in the South has not grown over the past half-century, the African American portion of the electorate (i.e., registered voters) has grown dramatically. It is the concomitance of black

substantiation and Republican growth that is so striking; yet the region-level failure of so much of the existing research on Southern politics has tended to obscure the interrelationship of these two trends, and to preclude the examination of these phenomena. Just as studies of the growth of Southern Republicanism have ignored the potential influence of the political mobilization of the black population, more traditional explanations for black mobilization—for example, the decrease in formal and informal physical discrimination and the rise of overt black political empowerment (as manifest in the increasing prevalence of black elected officials and viable black presidential candidates)—have yet to examine the potential effects of the political opportunities resulting from the eras of conservative whites from the Democratic Party.

Our working assumption is that the character of specific political opportunities—local strategic dynamics—played a decisive (and unexplored) role in the development of the Southern Republican Party and the mobilization of the black electorate. We will argue that conservative Southerners whites responded to black mobilization by moving into the Republican Party. As blacks moved into the electorate—and the Democratic Party—conservative whites faced increased challenges to their control of the party. As the GOP in the South gathered momentum—largely due to efforts of Republicans outside the region—local Republican Party organizations became increasingly viable mechanisms for exercising political influence and control. So, we argue, the attractiveness of the Republican Party for conservative whites—on the dual dimensions of control and mobility—was enhanced during this time period. Thus, conservative white Southerners took advantage of these strategic opportunities by becoming Republicans.

Blacks also faced new political opportunities, particularly in the Deep South, where their relative size was greatest. As conservative whites migrated to the Republican Party, blacks found new opportunities within the Democratic Party. Although party viability was not a problem for the Democrats, blacks were now in a position to play a prominent role in party leadership. In the Deep South, blacks were in a position to be the controlling element in the state Democratic Party. So, as conservative whites left the Democratic Party, the incentives for blacks to mobilize and join the Democratic Party increased, especially in those areas where the relative size of the black population could produce the greatest effects.

In this book, we describe the political transformation of the modern South and present our own perspective on this party system transformation. We begin by providing a broad overview of the transformation of the Southern political landscape—focusing specifically on the transformation of the

Democratic and Republican parties and the growth of the black electorate over the past sixty years. We then move beyond this qualitative and largely descriptive depiction of political transformation to the presentation of our own theoretical explanation for the primary dynamics of this partisan change—the theory of relative advantage.

The next chapter provides a detailed description of the Southern political transformation from the 1950s through the present day. We first look at the increasing success of the Republican Party in the region by tracking the success of GOP candidates at the national, state, and substate levels and by charting individual-level growth in identification with the Republican Party using longitudinal survey data. As has been noted by a number of existing studies, Southern whites were drawn to Republican Party candidates—particularly at the presidential level—before they viewed themselves (or identified) as Republicans.

We also describe the growth in black mobilization from the 1960s until the present. It is difficult to overestimate the enabling significance of the VRA for black electoral mobilization; however, post-1965 black mobilization followed a variety of trajectories within various geographies (i.e., states, counties, and parishes). In some areas, black mobilization rivaled or exceeded white mobilization quickly; in other areas, black mobilization continues to lag behind white mobilization to this day. Previous explanations for this growth (and somewhat less commonly, the variation in growth) have focused on factors relating to socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of blacks in the region, largely ignoring the political dynamics that have shaped these trends.

Finally, we combine individual-level survey data on race, party identification, and ideology with aggregate-level data on political party registration in the region to create an ideological profile of the Republican and Democratic Parties over time. We use these data to construct a series of graphical snapshots that reveal the racial composition, ideological position, and relative size of the parties in comparison to one another beginning in the late 1960s. Examination of these figures reveals an increasingly liberal and shrinking (in terms of total registrants) Democratic Party over time, contrasted with a sharply conservative and growing GOP. Over the last half-century, one can also note an increased reliance on black registrants to fill Democratic Party ranks in the South.

The political transformation of the modern South has been the focal point of a large and growing body of literature. What has been missing—and what has been needed for some time—is an examination of the strategic aspects of this transformation. Traditional explanations for Republican growth have

focused on demographic change (immigration or generational replacement) as the slow and apparently ineluctable movement of conservative land (the so-called whitey) white Southerners into the party they “should” have embraced long ago.

In chapter 3, we argue that both GOP growth and black mobilization represented significant strategic components that are largely ignored—or at the best, underemphasized—in the existing literature. We contend that GOP growth is a direct function of black mobilization, as conservative whites responded to a relative shift in the potential political benefits of Democratic Party versus Republican Party membership. From a political standpoint, the relative advantage of the Republican Party (compared to the Democratic Party) increased over this time period, but the extent of this relative advantage for the GOP varied considerably across, and within, the Southern states.

Although often spawned by the formation of societal cleavages, the idea of relative advantage encompasses more than the demographic fuel necessary for the fire. Some catalyst must also present itself, and such a spark often takes the form of policy orientations and/or ideological positions held by existing politicians and attributed to existing political orientations. Citizens identify with, and vote for, candidates of political parties for a variety of reasons. Among the factors that influence peoples’ decisions to support one party or the other are (a) the relative competitiveness of the party in a wide variety of political arenas (viability) and (b) the relative consistency of each party’s political objectives with a citizen’s own objectives (control). Evidence of viability would come in numerous forms, from the increasing competitiveness of Republican candidates to the increasing frequency of party switching on the part of prominent elected officials. The mobilization of the black population—an almost uniformly Democratic electorate—made it increasingly difficult for conservative whites to maintain control of the local Democratic Party machinery. As control of the local Democratic Party became tenuous, the party apparatus became less valuable to white conservatives.

This chapter also includes a discussion of the new strategic opportunities that African Americans enjoyed at this time. Viewed from the perspective of blacks in the region, the Democratic Party offered the best hope for exerting political influence. In the Deep South, which contained larger numbers of blacks, opportunities to exert leverage within the party were even greater than in the rest of the South. This result—that GOP growth spurs black mobilization in those states with relatively large black populations, but not in states with smaller numbers of blacks—is predicted by the theory of relative advantage.

Chapter 4 includes detailed case studies of the transformation of the party system in two Southern states, Georgia and Virginia, one representative of the Deep South and the other the Rim South. Using a variety of secondary sources (histories of the state and biographies of prominent state politicians and political leaders) and primary sources (newspapers, documents available from archives and libraries, and in-person interviews), we are able to show the theory of relative advantage “in action” and how it provides important insights into the political change in these two states from the pre-Civil Rights era to the present.

Following the case studies presented in chapter 4, we subject our explanation of Republican growth to a rigorous battery of quantitative tests in chapter 5. We begin by employing a panel Granger framework that indicates black mobilization causes GOP growth in a consistent manner across the eleven former states of the Confederacy. We expand upon this analysis by specifying a pooled-time series model covering the 1960–2008 period. In short, we find clear evidence that GOP substrate party competition and black mobilization are positively related to state-level Republican growth.

In chapter 6, we examine the implications of the theory of relative advantage in the context of substrate political dynamics. Using parishes in Louisiana and counties in North Carolina as the units of analysis, we analyze the relationship between partisanship (voter registration) and race (voter registration). In a pooled-time series framework from 1966 through 2008, Chapter 7 includes individual-level analyses designed to probe the effects of black mobilization at both the mass and elite levels. Using survey data of GOP party activists from 1991 and 2000, we examine the propensity of these individuals to have switched parties based on the degree of black mobilization at the county level. We then make use of the two longitudinal datasets (the American National Election Studies, 1972–2008 and the Southern Focus Polls, 1992–2001) to draw inferences about mass partisan identification in relation to black political mobilization. The prevalence of support for the theory of relative advantage at each of the three levels of analysis—the state, substrate, and individual levels—is striking.

In chapter 8, we assess the extent to which the implications of relative advantage theory for black mobilization are supported by the empirical record. Again, using a panel Granger framework, we are able to demonstrate that Republican growth causes black mobilization in the five Southern states with the largest black populations, or those located in the Deep South. We incorporate this information into a pooled-time series model (1960–2008), where we find clear evidence that GOP growth is positively related to black mobilization in the Deep South (though not in the Rim South), even after

taking into account a variety of other potential explanations. This chapter includes analysis similar to that undertaken in chapter 6 at the substrate level. Again, using parishes in Louisiana and counties in North Carolina, we analyze the relationship between partisanship (voter registration) and race (voter registration) in a pooled-time series framework from 1966 through 2008. In addition to the case of GOP growth, we find strong evidence in support of the implications of relative advantage theory for understanding the dynamics of black mobilization during the last half-century in the South.

We conclude with a discussion of the broader implications of the theory of relative advantage for the future of Southern Republicanism and the mobilization of Southern blacks. We re-emphasize the significance of race in Southern (and national) politics. We caution that those who ignore these racial dynamics do so at their own risk. We also offer some conjectures about the future role of Hispanics in Southern politics and discuss the role of these “new” ethnic political dynamics in the future of national politics.

CHAPTER 2 A Half-Century of Political Change in the South

IN ADDITION TO WINNING the state of Florida in the presidential election of 2008, Barack Obama also won the states of North Carolina and Virginia—something a Democratic presidential candidate had not done since 1964 (Virginia) and 1976 (North Carolina). It was a big deal, but it was also a reminder about how much the South has changed in the last half-century from a solidly Democratic region to a region so solidly Republican that when a Democratic candidate for president won these two Rim South states, it counted as a major electoral victory. In this chapter, we describe the Southern political transformation from the 1950s through the first decade of the twenty-first century. We first look at the increasing success of the Republican Party in the region by tracking the electoral victories of GOP candidates at the national, state, and substate levels. We also chart individual-level growth in identification with the Republican Party using longitudinal survey data. As has been noted by a number of existing studies, Southern whites were drawn to Republican Party candidates—particularly at the presidential level—even before they viewed themselves (or identified) as Republicans.

We also describe the growth in black mobilization from the 1960s until the present. While it is clear beyond question that the Voting Rights Act (VRA) significantly enabled black electoral mobilization, post-1965 black mobilization followed a variety of trajectories both between and within the Southern states. In some areas, black mobilization rivaled or exceeded white mobilization; in other areas, black mobilization continues to lag behind white mobilization to this day. Explanations for this growth (and somewhat less commonly, the variation in growth) have focused on factors relating to socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of blacks in the region, largely ignoring the political dynamics that have shaped these trends.

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Finally, we combine individual-level survey data on race, party identification, and ideology with aggregate-level data on political party registrations in the region to create an across-time ideological profile of the Republican and Democratic Parties in North Carolina and Louisiana. We use this data to construct a series of graphical snapshots that reveal the racial composition, ideological position, and relative size of the parties in comparison to one another beginning in the late 1950s. Examination of the figures reveals an increasingly liberal and shrinking (in terms of total registration) Democratic Party over time, contrasted with a starkly conservative and growing GOP. Over the last half-century, one can also hear an increased reliance on black registrants to fill Democratic Party ranks in the South.

A Half-Century of Growth in Southern Republicanism

In *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Key describes one kind of Southern Republican—the presidential Republican—as a type of political schism. “The votes in Democratic primaries to have a voice in state and local matters, but when the presidential election rolls around he casts a ballot for the Republican presidential nominee. Locally he is a Democrat, nationally a Republican” (1949, 278). What Key saw in 1949 as schismatic political behavior we might today see as perfectly rational political behavior.

The transformation of the South from an overwhelmingly Democratic region to a solidly Republican region has its roots in the political behavior of the white-identical Republicans. Between 1900 and 1952 there were only two elections in which any Southern state gave a majority of their votes to a Republican presidential candidate: 1930 and 1938. In the presidential election of 1930, Warren G. Harding managed to win the Rim South state of Tennessee with 9 percent of the vote. Tennessee had a long history of Republicanism and again went for the Republican presidential candidate Herbert Hoover in 1938, along with four other Rim South states: Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, and Texas. Hoover’s success in these Southern states in 1938 was clearly the result of Democratic nominee Al Smith’s New York Catholicism and his opposition to Prohibition (Key 1949, 308).

From 1938 to 1952, no Southern state went Republican in a presidential election. In fact, none even came close, although regional variations in support for the Republican Party were evident. In most of the Rim South states, Republicans managed to win a plurality of votes. A third of Tennessee voters consistently cast their ballots for Republicans between 1938 and 1948. In

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1948, Virginia gave 41 percent of its votes to Thomas Dewey, the highest percentage of votes won by a Republican presidential candidate in any Southern state between 1928 and 1948.

The election of 1952 marked the return of Republican Party success at the presidential level in the South, a trend that within a generation would become regional domination. However, Republican presidential victories varied across the region, showing up first and most evidently in Southern states that were not part of the Deep South. In both 1952 and 1956, the contest was between the popular war hero General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson. Eisenhower was personally popular in the South, having grown up in Texas and Kansas, and captured Virginia, Texas, Tennessee, and Florida in 1952. He came close to capturing South Carolina with 49 percent of the vote and Louisiana with 47 percent of the vote. In 1956, he again won Virginia, Texas, Tennessee, and Florida, but also added Louisiana to the Republican column.

The elections of 1960 through 1968 marked a period of political soul-searching and electoral calculus for Southern voters at the presidential level. In 1960, Southerners were not especially attracted to Richard Nixon, but they were also wary of the Boston Catholic John F. Kennedy. While three Rim South states—Virginia, Tennessee, and Florida—went Republican, two others, including one Deep South state nearly did so: Texas, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Kennedy beat Nixon in the South by just under 500,000 votes out of nearly ten million votes cast. In 1964, the regional variations switched: Five Deep South states attracted to the states' rights message of Senator Barry Goldwater and weary of Lyndon Johnson's support for civil rights, went Republican. Although only the Deep South states went Republican, all Southern states except Texas gave over 40 percent of their votes to the Republican ticket. The 1968 presidential election was tumultuous. The Southern states divided their support largely between the Republican Party (Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, and South Carolina) and George Wallace's populist American Independent Party (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas). Only Texas went Democratic.

What is clear about the 1960s is that Southern voters were consistent only in the inconsistency of their presidential party voting patterns. While there was steady growth in support for the Republican Party, there was significant subregional variation in terms of where that growth was taking place: Rim South states went for the Republican Party in 1960, Deep South states went for the Republican Party in 1964, and in 1968, Rim South states went mainly for the Republican Party while Deep South states went mainly for Wallace's American Independent Party. The 1970s, however, marked the arrival of the Republican

Party at the presidential level in the South. In the 1972 presidential elections from 1972 to 2008, the Republican Party captured all eleven Southern states five times. Four of the five elections in which the Republican ticket did not capture all eleven Southern states (1976, 1980, 1992, and 1996) were elections with a Southern Democrat on the ballot, helping the Democratic nominee capture three states in the region. The 2008 election saw a surging African American turnout with Barack Obama on the ballot. At the presidential level, the Republican Party gained dominance in the early 1970s and that dominance has waned little since.

The rise of Southern Republicanism at the presidential level was followed a decade later at the senatorial level. Nearly ten years after Eisenhower won the first Southern state for a Republican presidential candidate in decades, John Tower won a special election in Texas in 1961 to replace Lyndon Johnson in the U.S. Senate. Tower's victory with 50.6 percent of the vote marked the first time a Republican had won a U.S. Senate seat in a Southern state in the twentieth century.

Tower spent two years as the lone Southern Republican Senator before Strom Thurmond switched parties in 1964 and joined him. Howard Baker became the second Republican Senator elected from the South in the twentieth century, winning the 1966 Tennessee election against former Governor Frank Clement with nearly 50 percent of the vote. Within a decade of Tower's win, Republicans held a quarter of all Southern Senate seats and within two decades, the GOP had captured half of them. By the mid-1970s, support for Republican senatorial candidates in the South had reached levels where Republicans were considered to be approaching a competitive status, and by the mid-1980s, they had reached competitive parity with Democrats (Black and Black 1987). In 2005, Republicans held a three-to-one advantage over Democrats.

Republican Party success at the senatorial level, like success at the presidential level, varied across the region. The Rim South states of Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Virginia, and North Carolina were where Republicans won initially. Mississippi was the first state in the Deep South to elect a Republican when Thad Cochran won a three-way race in 1978 with 45 percent of the vote. Most Republican Party successes in the Deep South came in the mid-1980s and mid-1990s.

Republican successes at the congressional level lagged behind presidential and senatorial Republicanism by several decades. As Figure 2.1 shows, Republican presidential candidates won handsily in the South from 1952 on, and if not for George Wallace running on the American Independent ticket in 1968, Republican wins in the South would date to that year. The only

exceptions to this trend were 1976, when the Watergate scandal and a Southern Democrat on the ticket helped the Democrats, and 1993 and 1996, when two Southern Democrats were again on the ticket. Yet, as Lamin (2009) notes, even though Bill Clinton thoroughly understood his party's presidential weakness in the South, the Clinton-Gore ticket was able to capture only four Southern states each time.

As Figure 2.2 shows, Republican sectional victories surged in the mid-1980s, retreated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and then surged again in the mid-1990s. This second surge in the mid-1990s was accompanied by remarkable gains in the region at the congressional level. In the 1996 election, Republicans won nearly 60 percent of the South's U.S. House seats. But these gains were not uniform across the region.

Figure 2.3 shows the congressional balance of power in each of the eleven Southern states included in our study from 1951 to 2009. Negative numbers indicate a balance in favor of the Democratic Party, and positive numbers indicate a balance in favor of the Republican Party. In all eleven states except Texas, Florida, and Georgia, a noticeable shift in the Republican direction happened in the 1960 and 1968 elections. The most dramatic shift occurred in Virginia, where the congressional delegation favored the Democratic Party by six seats in 1964, was evenly split in 1968, and by 1972 favored the



FIGURE 2.2 Support for Republican Presidential Candidates in Southern States, 1951-2008

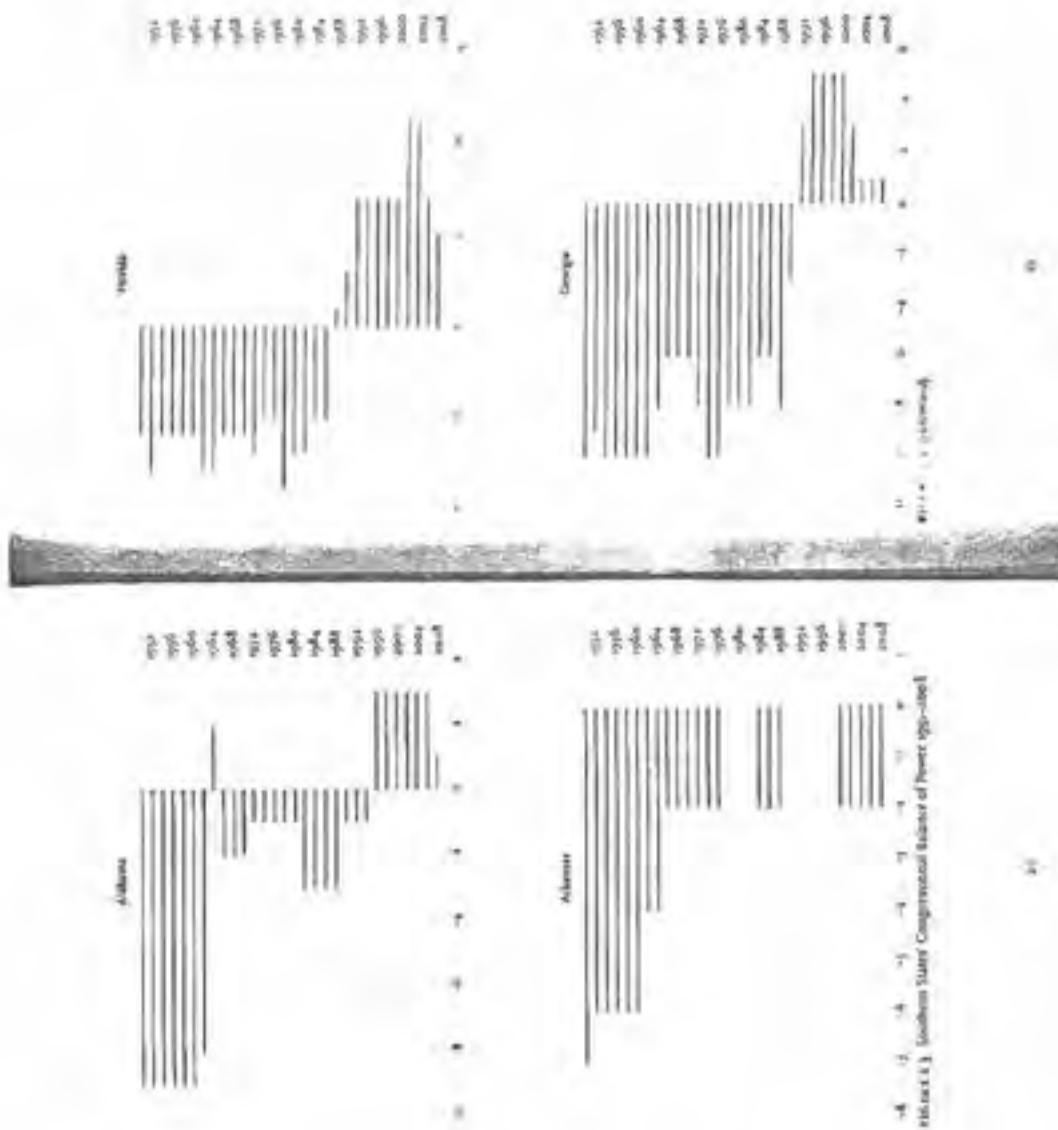
Republican Party by four seats. Republicans in Virginia grew their majority as high as plus-seven over the Democrats throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s before giving Democrats back a majority throughout the 1990s, and then taking it back again at the turn of the century.

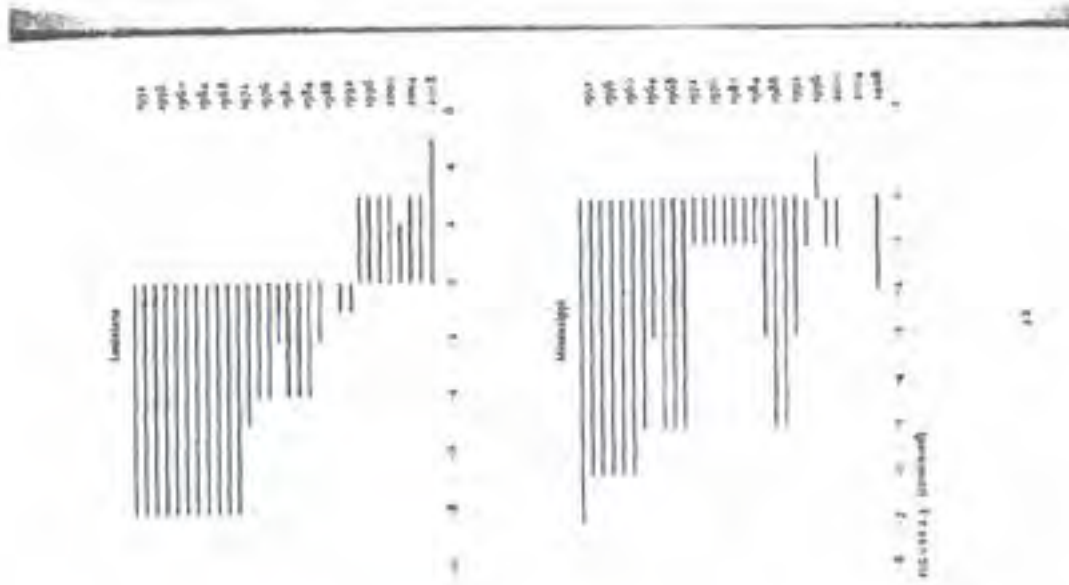
Arkansas has been the most difficult Southern state for congressional Republicans, where they have done no better than to split the delegation with Democrats. During most of the period between 1960 and 2008, however, Republicans have held only one of the state's four congressional seats.⁴ In Florida and Georgia, Democrats held a relatively stable advantage over Republicans until the mid-1980s, when Republicans took a majority of congressional seats and have since held an advantage. In Texas, Republicans made steady gains on Democrats over time, finally taking a majority in 2004.

The remaining states, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee, follow a similar pattern. Republicans gained in the 1960s and 1970s were followed by retreats in the 1980s and early 1990s, and then gained again from the mid-1990s to the present. This pattern varied, with Republicans gaining decisive majorities in the congressional balance in the mid-1990s in Alabama and South Carolina, but gaining less decisive control in Mississippi and actually retreating in North Carolina and Tennessee. Regardless of the regional variation in growth, Republicans dominated the Southern congressional delegation by 2008.

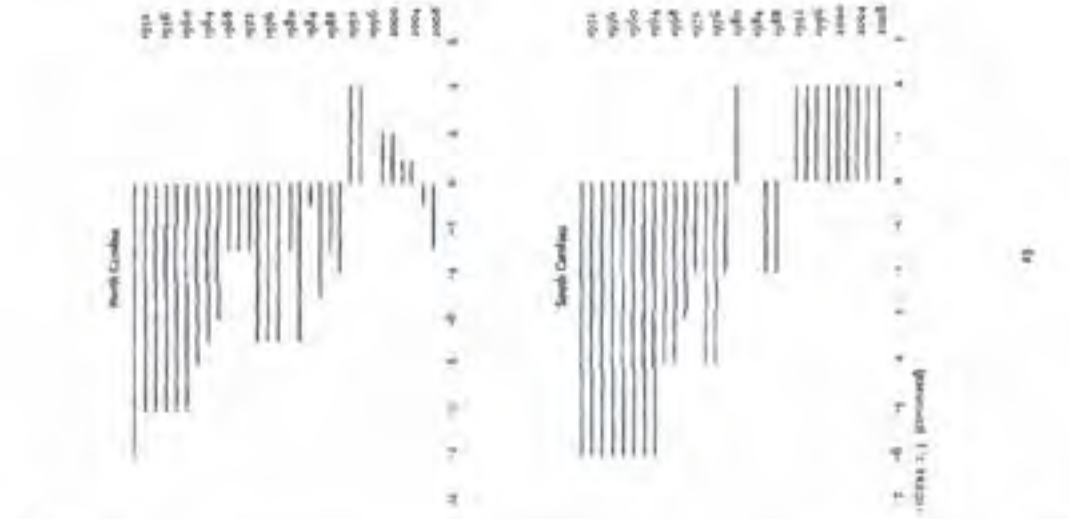


FIGURE 2.3 Southern Senate Seats Held by Republicans, 1954-2008

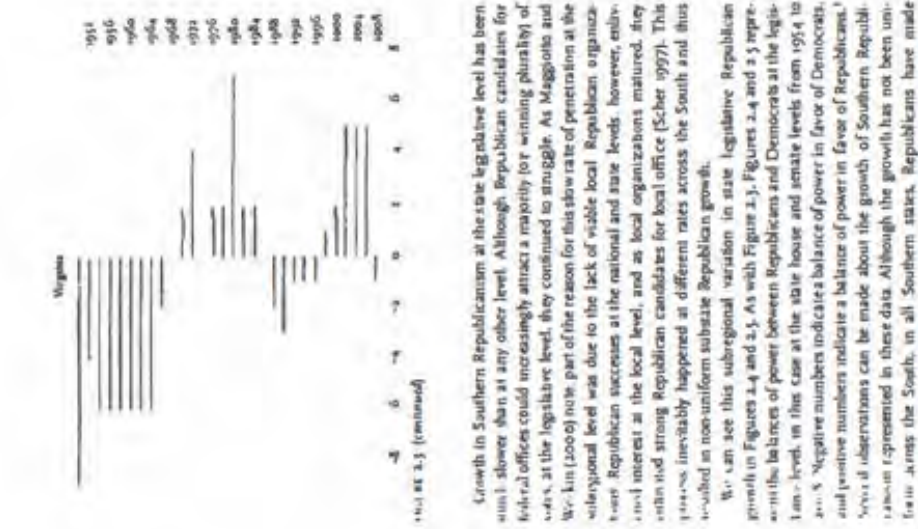
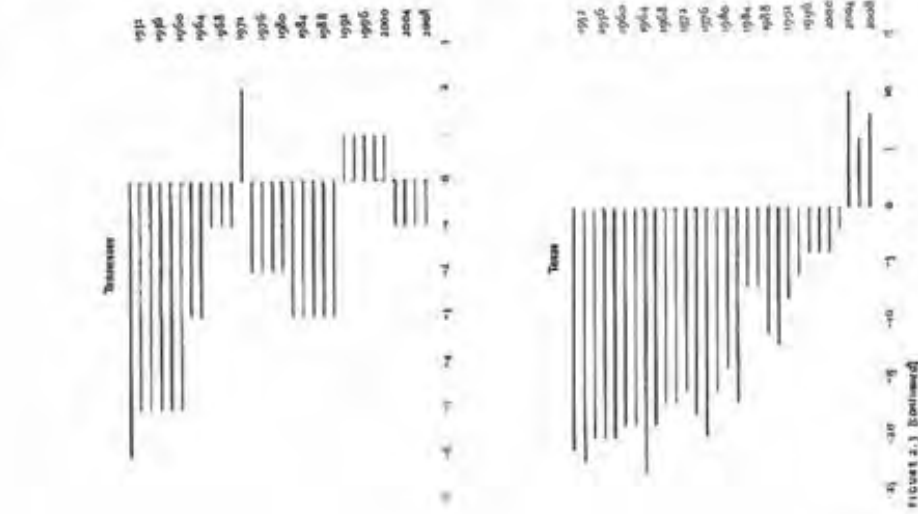




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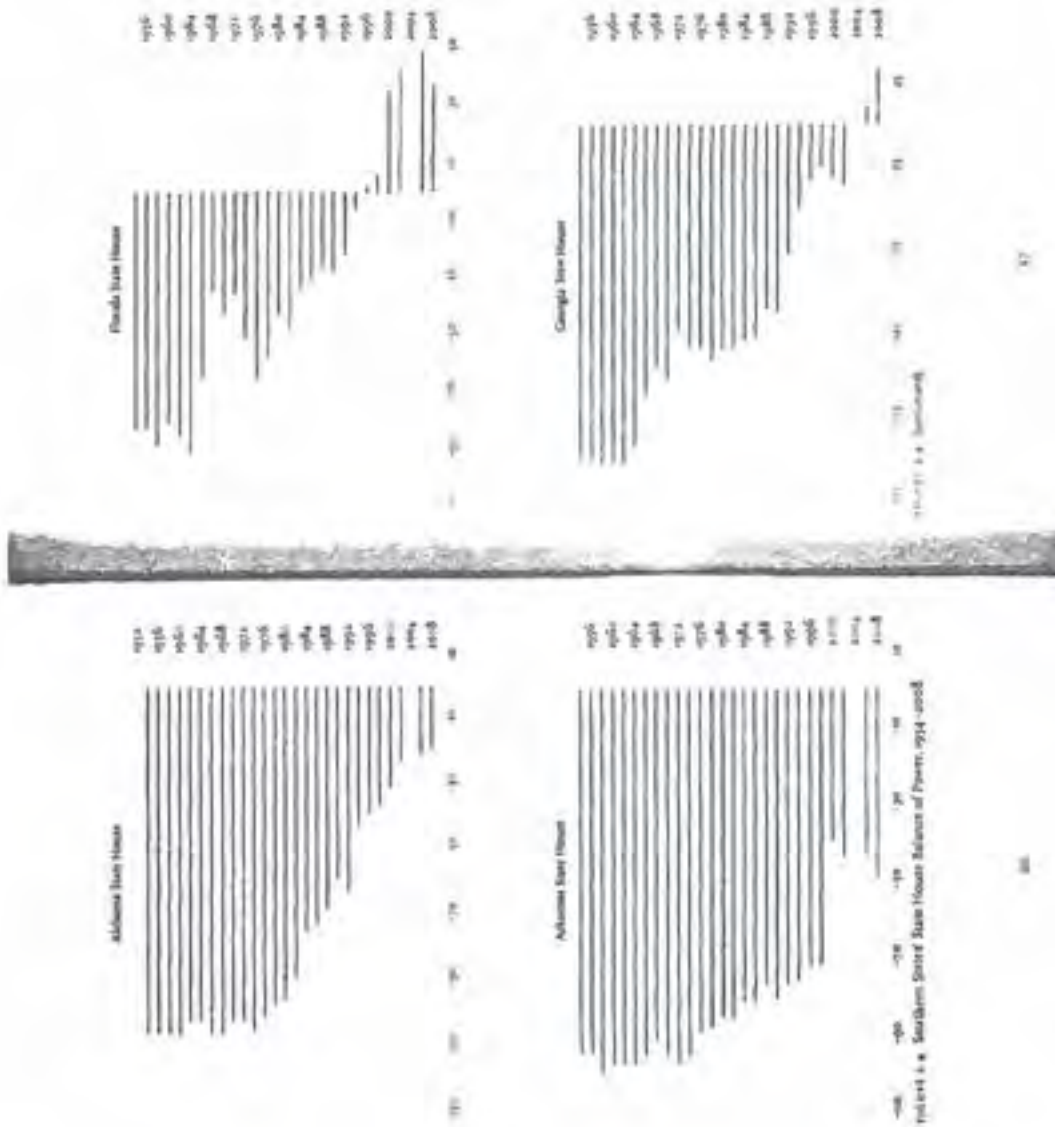


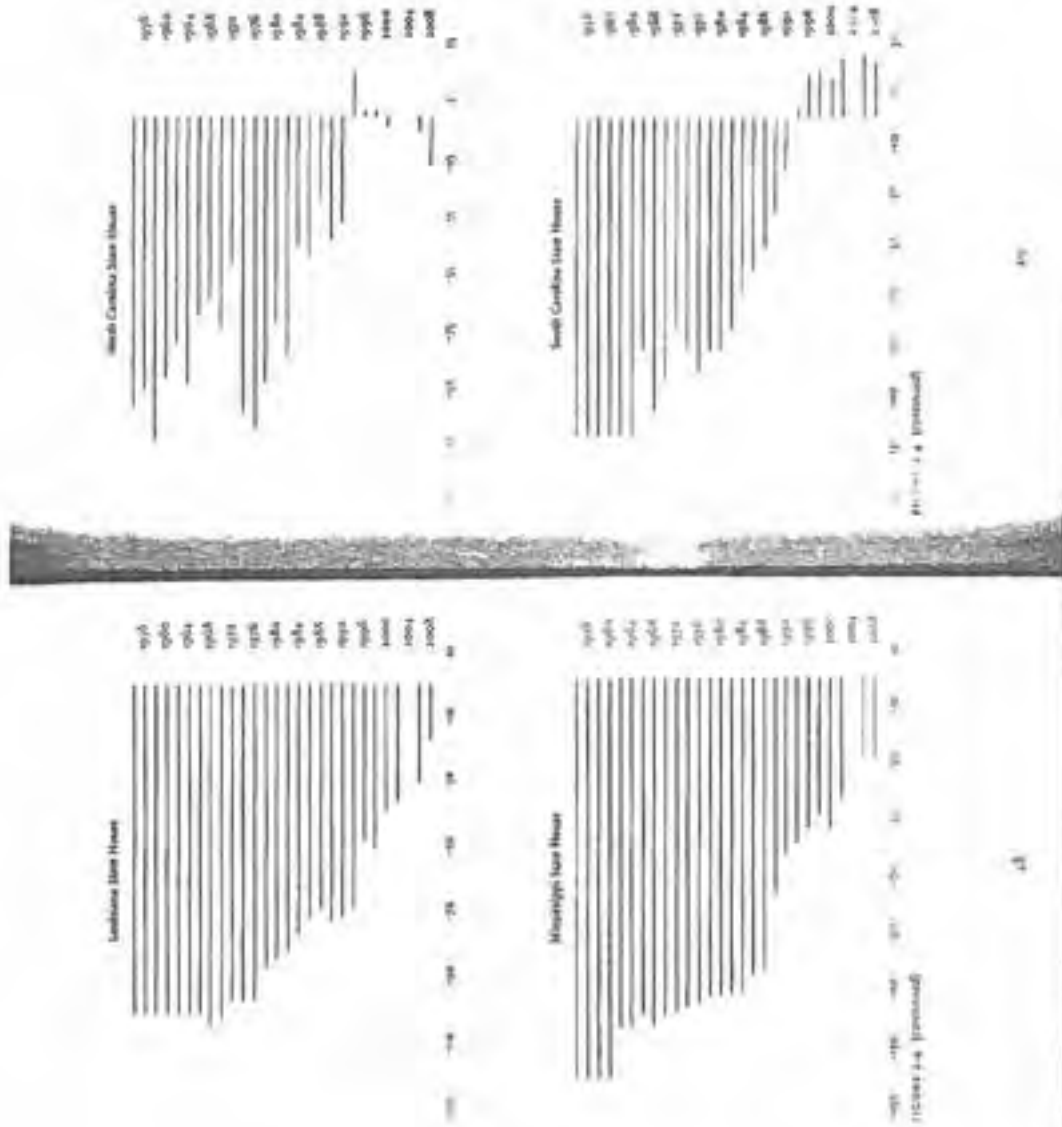
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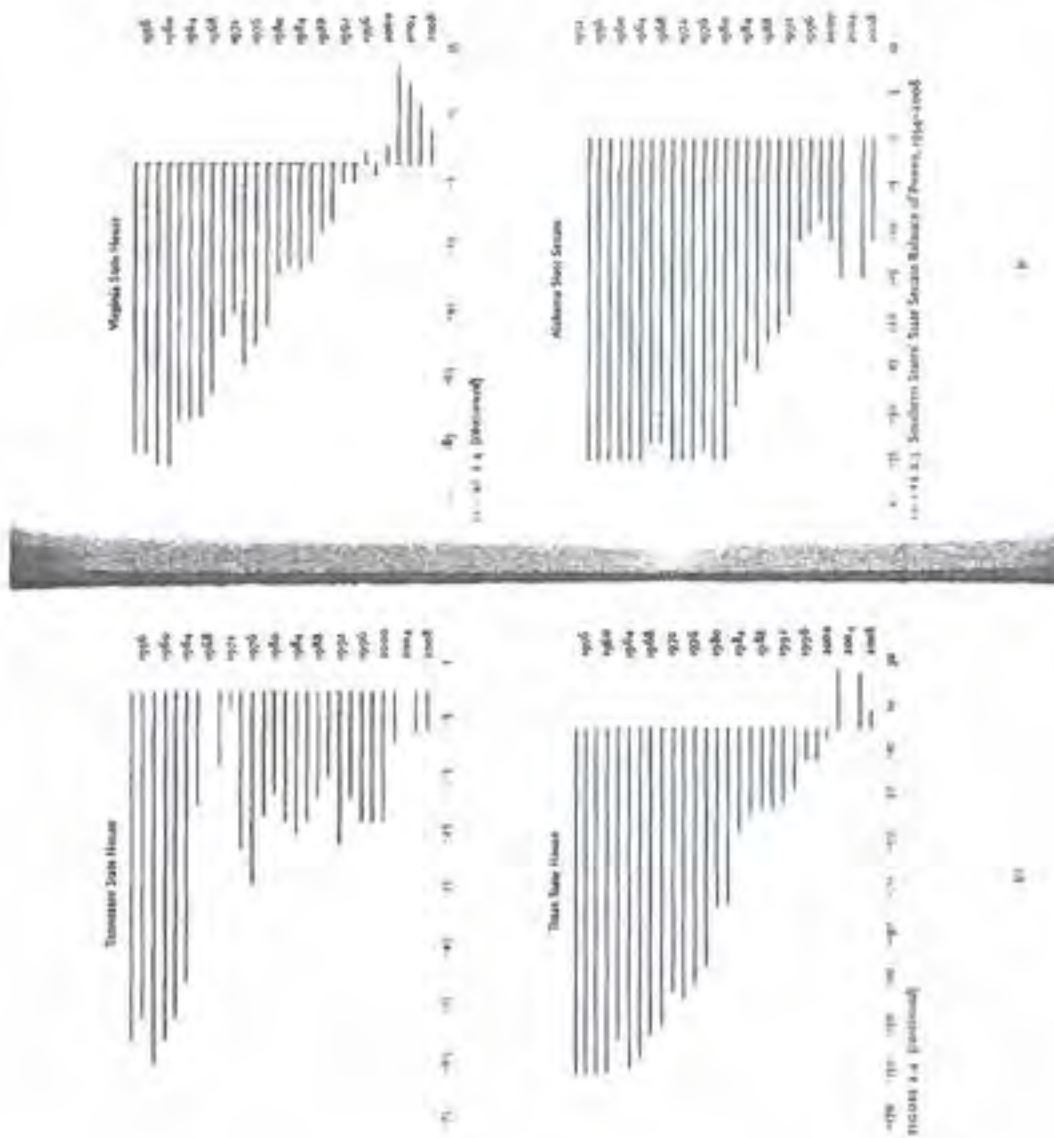


Growth in Southern Republicanism at the state legislative level has been much slower than at any other level. Although Republican candidates for federal offices could increasingly attract a majority (or winning plurality) of votes, at the legislative level, they continued to struggle. As Maggipoli and Watkins (2000) note, part of the reason for this slow rate of penetration at the subregional level was due to the lack of viable local Republican organizations. Republican successes at the national and state levels, however, enhanced interest at the local level, and as local organizations matured, they often had strong Republican candidates for local office (Scher 1997). This process inevitably happened at different rates across the South and thus resulted in nonuniform substate Republican growth.

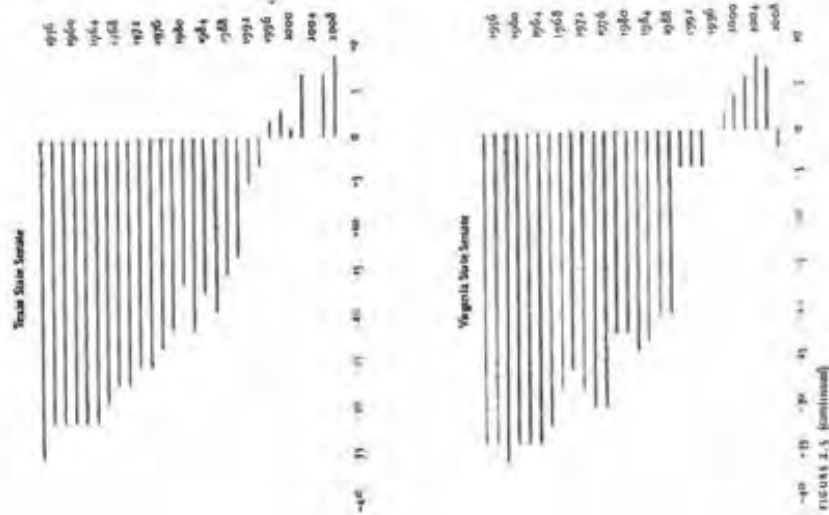
We can see this subregional variation in state legislative Republican growth in Figures 2.4 and 2.5. As with Figure 2.3, Figures 2.4 and 2.5 represent the balances of power between Republicans and Democrats at the legislative level, in this case at the state house and senate levels from 1954 to 2008. Negative numbers indicate a balance of power in favor of Democrats, and positive numbers indicate a balance of power in favor of Republicans. These observations can be made about the growth of Southern Republicanism represented in these data. Although the growth has not been uniform across the South, in all Southern states, Republicans have made substantial electoral progress in the last half century at the state legislative level. This progress was much slower in the Deep South states of Alabama,







Mississippi State Senate		North Carolina State Senate	
1978	1979	1978	1979
1980	1981	1980	1981
1982	1983	1982	1983
1984	1985	1984	1985
1986	1987	1986	1987
1988	1989	1988	1989
1990	1991	1990	1991
1992	1993	1992	1993
1994	1995	1994	1995
1996	1997	1996	1997
1998	1999	1998	1999
2000	2001	2000	2001
2002	2003	2002	2003
2004	2005	2004	2005
2006	2007	2006	2007
2008	2009	2008	2009
2010	2011	2010	2011
2012	2013	2012	2013
2014	2015	2014	2015
2016	2017	2016	2017
2018	2019	2018	2019
2020	2021	2020	2021
2022	2023	2022	2023
2024	2025	2024	2025
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2034	2035	2034	2035
2036	2037	2036	2037
2038	2039	2038	2039
2040	2041	2040	2041
2042	2043	2042	2043
2044	2045	2044	2045
2046	2047	2046	2047
2048	2049	2048	2049
2050	2051	2050	2051
2052	2053	2052	2053
2054	2055	2054	2055
2056	2057	2056	2057
2058	2059	2058	2059
2060	2061	2060	2061
2062	2063	2062	2063
2064	2065	2064	2065
2066	2067	2066	2067
2068	2069	2068	2069
2070	2071	2070	2071
2072	2073	2072	2073
2074	2075	2074	2075
2076	2077	2076	2077
2078	2079	2078	2079
2080	2081	2080	2081
2082	2083	2082	2083
2084	2085	2084	2085
2086	2087	2086	2087
2088	2089	2088	2089
2090	2091	2090	2091
2092	2093	2092	2093
2094	2095	2094	2095
2096	2097	2096	2097
2098	2099	2098	2099
2100	2101	2100	2101
2102	2103	2102	2103
2104	2105	2104	2105
2106	2107	2106	2107
2108	2109	2108	2109
2110	2111	2110	2111
2112	2113	2112	2113
2114	2115	2114	2115
2116	2117	2116	2117
2118	2119	2118	2119
2120	2121	2120	2121
2122	2123	2122	2123
2124	2125	2124	2125
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2134	2135	2134	2135
2136	2137	2136	2137
2138	2139	2138	2139
2140	2141	2140	2141
2142	2143	2142	2143
2144	2145	2144	2145
2146	2147	2146	2147
2148	2149	2148	2149
2150	2151	2150	2151
2152	2153	2152	2153
2154	2155	2154	2155
2156	2157	2156	2157
2158	2159	2158	2159
2160	2161	2160	2161
2162	2163	2162	2163
2164	2165	2164	2165
2166	2167	2166	2167
2168	2169	2168	2169
2170	2171	2170	2171
2172	2173	2172	2173
2174	2175	2174	2175
2176	2177	2176	2177
2178	2179	2178	2179
2180	2181	2180	2181
2182	2183	2182	2183
2184	2185	2184	2185
2186	2187	2186	2187
2188	2189	2188	2189
2190	2191	2190	2191
2192	2193	2192	2193
2194	2195	2194	2195
2196	2197	2196	2197
2198	2199	2198	2199
2200	2201	2200	2201
2202	2203	2202	2203
2204	2205	2204	2205
2206	2207	2206	2207
2208	2209	2208	2209
2210	2211	2210	2211
2212	2213	2212	2213
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2240	2241	2240	2241
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2246	2247	2246	2247
2248	2249	2248	2249
2250	2251	2250	2251
2252	2253	2252	2253
2254	2255	2254	2255
2256	2257	2256	2257
2258	2259	2258	2259
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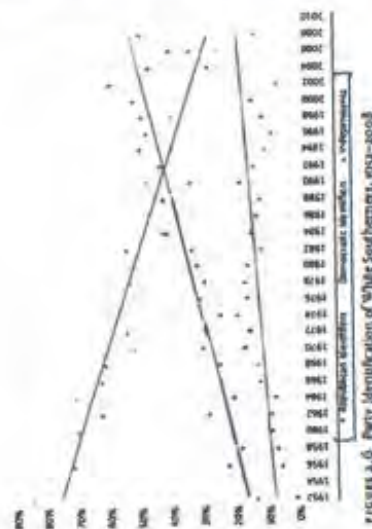


Louisiana, Mississippi, and the Rim South state of Arkansas than it was in the other states. In Florida, Texas, Virginia, and South Carolina, Republicans gained majorities in both the state house and senate chambers in the 1990s.⁴ North Carolina and Virginia have emerged as the most competitive states in the region. Republicans in North Carolina took control of the House in 1995, gave it back to Democrats in 2000, and then took it back again in 2006. A similar pattern exists for Republicans in the Virginia Senate, where they achieved parity with Democrats in 1995 and held the chamber for a decade, they gave control back to Democrats in 2007. Republicans gained control of the Texas Senate in the mid-1990s and the House at the turn of the century and, while giving up seats in both chambers to Democrats in subsequent elections, have managed to hold their losses to at least parity with Democrats.

In most Deep South states, Republicans have lagged behind their Rim South colleagues. In Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, Republicans have narrowed the Democratic majorities in both the state House and Senate, but have been unable to secure majorities of their own. However, Republicans have found the going no more difficult than in the Rim South state of Arkansas. After substantial losses to Republicans throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Democrats still hold a sizable majority in both the state House and Senate. These data on Republican electoral growth at the national, state, and sub-state level than the increased success of the Republican Party since the 1990s in the South, but they also demonstrate the extent to which Republican growth varied not only regionally, but also subregionally and across the different offices.

This last point is made about Southern Republicanism since the 1990s can be seen in Figure 2.6. Drawing on data from the American National Election Studies and the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Studies, researchers are able to track self-identification with the Republican and Democratic parties (and Independents) by white Southerners longitudinally from 1952 to 2004.

As white Southerners moved away from identifying with the Democratic Party they had two alternatives: identify with the Republican Party or take what had long been an independent route. Over time, it was clear that white Southerners came to identify more and more as Republicans, but this shift did not happen quickly. To be sure, many white Southerners tried on Independent clothing, such as in 1968 with George Wallace's American Independent Party. But, finding the Independent route to lack political viability, they turned to the more politically viable (and increasingly electorally successful) Republican Party. By the early 1990s, after a couple decades of Republican



presidential success in the South and increasing GOP success at the U.S. Senate and U.S. House level, more white Southerners self-identified as Republicans than as Democrats.

A Half-Century of Growth in Black Mobilization

Being registered to vote is a gateway to other forms of political activity and, as a result, group voter registration rates are a strong indicator of the real and potential electoral and political strength of any group. Measurements of black voter registration rates in the South place African Americans into the context of the existing regional and state rates. This is a much more precise method of estimating the potential mobilizing influence of blacks as an electoral presence than alternative methods for instance, using the size of the black voting age population as a proxy. Figure 2.7 charts black registration rates for the South as a region and for each individual state from 1950 to 2008. Information on black voter registration was collected from the VEP Now and census publications, specifically the Statistical Abstracts of the U.S. and Current Population Reports: P-20 Series on Voting and Registration.⁴

There are several points to be made about these data. First, there is considerable variation in registration rates at the beginning and end of the period under analysis. The regional average in 1950 was just under 18 percent, but it varied from a low of 2.3 percent in Mississippi to a high of 35 percent

in Florida. Generally speaking, Deep South states had lower African American voter registration rates in the early 1950s than did Run South states. Among the lowest were Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Among the highest were Florida, Texas, and Tennessee. The 2008 regional average was just below 70 percent (68.4), but the level of variation was much smaller, with all states recording registration rates in the 70 percent range and only two (Arkansas and Florida) recording rates in the 50 percent range. Regionally and across the individual states, black mobilization as measured by voter registration rates has increased dramatically over the nearly sixty years under study.

Due to variations in state laws, the rate of growth for black voter registration from 1950 to 1960, and then from 1960 to 1970 and beyond varied considerably, even after many legal barriers to disenfranchisement were removed through federal action. Several states, such as Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee, saw considerable growth in black mobilization early on. Tennessee's black registration rates jumped from 2.6 percent in 1950 to 38.9 percent in 1960 and then remained relatively level, with an upward spike in 1971 and then another in 1984. Louisiana had a registration rate of 12.8 percent in 1950 and 10.9 percent by 1960, but Louisiana's rate continued to climb on a relatively linear slope until the early 1990s when it dropped off, having reached a peak of 84.3 percent in 1992. Black registration rates in North Carolina in 1950 were 16.4 percent and reached 38.1 percent by 1960, ultimately reaching a high of 70 percent in 1971 before dropping down to around 50 percent



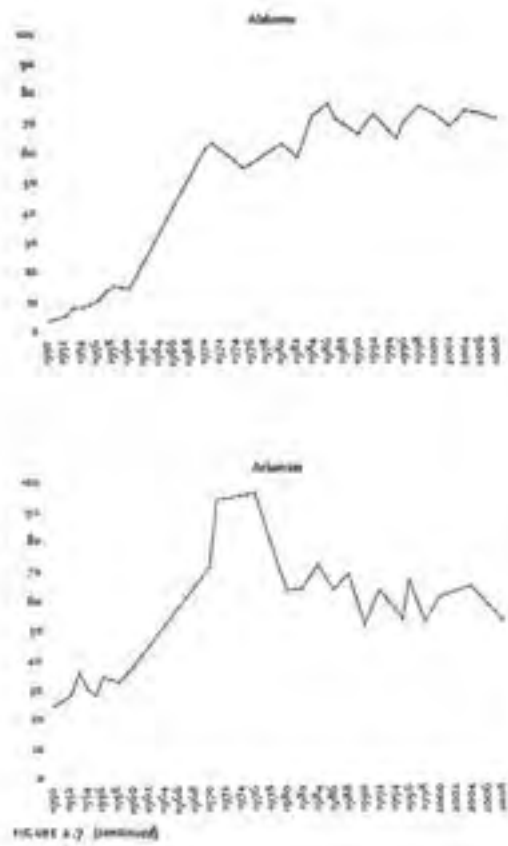




FIGURE 2.2 (continued)



FIGURE 2.7 (continued)

during the 1970s and then fluctuating between the 60 percent and 70 percent range from the mid-1980s to 2008. Most other states saw minimal growth between 1950 and 1960, but saw considerable growth during the mid-1960s.

The level of mobilization varied considerably across the region as well. The highest level of mobilization recorded in the fifty-eight-year period under analysis is 95.4 percent in Arkansas in 1976. Black registration rates in Arkansas for the first half of the 1970s hovered in the mid-90 percent range before dropping and fluctuating between the 50 percent and 70 percent range. Several states, including Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, saw spikes in levels of mobilization in the mid-to-late 1960s, probably resulting from the presidential campaigns of Jesse L. Jackson in 1964 and 1968 (Walters 2003). Additionally, several states, including Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, saw spikes for all-time highs for North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia in 2008, most likely the result of the Obama candidacy of 2008. Several states also saw considerable drops in levels of mobilization in the 1970s. For instance, between 1975 and 1980, Arkansas saw a drop of 31.4 percent in Black registration rates. Georgia saw a drop of 20.8 percent between 1976 and 1983. Texas black voter registration rates dropped 19.8 percent between 1971 and 1980, while South Carolina's dropped 16.3 percent between 1971 and 1975.

A HALF-CENTURY OF POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE SOUTH | 45



FIGURE 2.7 (continued)



In sum, black mobilization rates have increased dramatically in Southern states over the last fifty eight years, but this growth displays some interesting characteristics. For one, registration rates varied considerably across the states, both at the starting and ending points of our data collection. In addition, levels of mobilization varied considerably over the time period of our analysis and across the region as well. Although there has clearly been dramatic growth in black mobilization, that growth has been far from uniform.

Ideological Profiles of the Democratic and Republican Parties

The leftward movement of the Democratic Party in the South is a staple observation of Southern politics. The Democratic Party's liberal shift has been credited to the mass disenfranchisement of African Americans beginning in the mid-1900s, adding a large block of liberal party adherents to the Southern Democratic Party rolls. Additionally, scholars have noted the mass exodus of white conservatives from the Democratic Party and movement into the Republican Party, leading to a secular realignment toward Republicanism (Black and Black 1987). Hood's (2004) study of the racial and ideological transformation of the Democratic Party in Louisiana showed that contemporary whites are actually more ideologically liberal than blacks, a sure indication that conservative whites and a large share of white moderates have abandoned their Democratic affiliation.

We are able to examine the nature and extent of the ideological change of both the Democratic and Republican Parties thanks to the availability of individual ideological self-identification data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) and the Comparative State Elections Project (CSEP). The ANES have collected this data biennially since 1972, but we can extend our analysis back in time with the CSEP data collected in 1968. We thus have ideological self-identification data for a sizeable sample of Southern residents from 1968 to 2008, allowing us to trace the transformation of both the Democratic and Republican Parties in the South over a forty-year period. Combining this individual-level survey data with aggregate-level registration data from Louisiana and North Carolina, we can also create specific ideological profiles of the Democratic and Republican Parties in these two Southern states over time.⁹

Table 1 displays a set of mean ideological scores for Southern Democrats (also separated by race) and Southern Republicans over seven successive time periods. Using the traditional seven-point ideological self-placement scale with a value of one representing respondents classifying themselves as extremely liberal and seven representing respondents classifying themselves

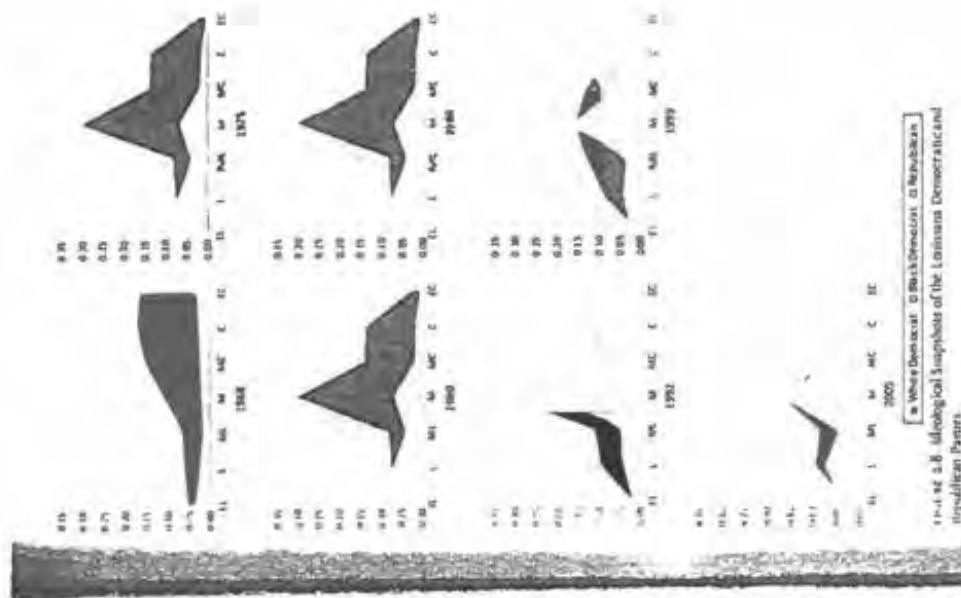
as extremely conservative, we are able to derive an ideological distribution of respondents by party (and race for Democrats).

Several important points can be drawn from these data. First, they clearly show that Southern Democrats have become increasingly liberal over time and Southern Republicans even more conservative over time. The mean Southern Democratic score in 1968 was 5.04 and had dropped to 3.89 by the 2002–2008 time frame, representing a net change in the liberal direction of three-quarters of a point. The mean Southern Republican score in 1968 was 4.79, dropped to 3.16 in the 1972–1977 period, and then steadily moved in the conservative direction, ending at 5.81 in the 2002–2008 period. This represents a net increase of one (1.02) point more conservative than in 1968.

TABLE 1.1 Southern Democrats and Republicans—Mean Ideological Scores and Standard Deviations

TIME PERIOD	DEMOCRATS		REPUBLICANS	
	ALL	WHITE	BLACK	
1968	4.64 (.61)	4.82 (.61)	4.06 (.53)	4.79 (.34)
1972–1977	4.07 (.60)	4.30 (.64)	3.26 (.50)	4.13 (.36)
1978–1983	3.94 (.60)	3.92 (.64)	3.83 (.54)	3.11 (.35)
1984–1989	3.60 (.61)	3.54 (.64)	3.86 (.54)	3.86 (.35)
1990–1995	3.59 (.60)	3.89 (.64)	3.91 (.54)	4.07 (.35)
1996–2001	3.50 (.60)	3.96 (.64)	3.10 (.54)	4.34 (.35)
2002–2008	3.89 (.61)	3.92 (.64)	5.81 (.54)	5.81 (.35)
Net Increase/ Average	-.75	-.90	1.75	1.02

Notes: Scores calculated based on the standard 7-point ideological self-placement scale: 1 = extremely liberal, 7 = extremely conservative. Mean scores in bold characters indicate the party of respondents in parentheses.



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When we decompose the Democratic changes by race, we see that white Democrats have become more liberal over time than black Democrats. The mean score in 1968 for white Democrats was 4.85 and by the 2009-2008 period had dropped to 3.92, a movement in the liberal direction of almost one point (1968). The mean score in 1968 for black Democrats was 4.05 and by the 2009-2008 period had dropped to 3.82, a movement in the liberal direction of about a quarter of a point. White Democrats in this latter time period then were actually more liberal than black Democrats by a bout a tenth of a point.

Knowing something about the ideological distribution of Southern Democrats and Republicans, as well as something about the partisan registration of voters in Louisiana and North Carolina (and racial divisions in Louisiana), we can combine these data to create a series of illustrations designed to depict the ideological transformation of the Democratic and Republican Parties in Louisiana and North Carolina during the preceding forty years. The first step in this process is to normalize the ideological distributions derived from the individual-level survey data to conform to the parameters of the Democratic and Republican Parties of Louisiana and North Carolina. This stage entails multiplying the actual number of party adherents (both white and black for Louisiana Democrats) in the states by the percentage derived from the ideological frequency distributions for Democratic (both white and black) and Republican Southerners. Once the party registration totals have been weighed to fit the accompanying ideological patterns, it is then possible to alter these distributions to account for the percentage of identifiers that each group contributed to each state's totals. This is accomplished by simply dividing the weighted distributions for Democratic (white and black in the case of Louisiana) and Republican registrants in each state for a given year.⁹

Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show seven panels, each representing the years 1968, 1975, 1980, 1986, 1992, 1999, and 2009, respectively. For Figure 2.8, the striped distribution represents the ideological distribution of blacks in the Louisiana Democratic Party while the darker shaded distribution represents the ideological distribution of whites. The gray shaded distribution represents the ideological distribution of the Republican Party. In Figure 2.9, the darker shaded distribution represents the ideological distribution of the North Carolina Democratic Party and the lighter shaded distribution represents the ideological distribution of the North Carolina Republican Party. All panels depict the same scale for easy comparison across time periods. The horizontal axis represents the same seven-point ideological scale, with the far left representing the percentage of extremely liberal (EL) and the far right

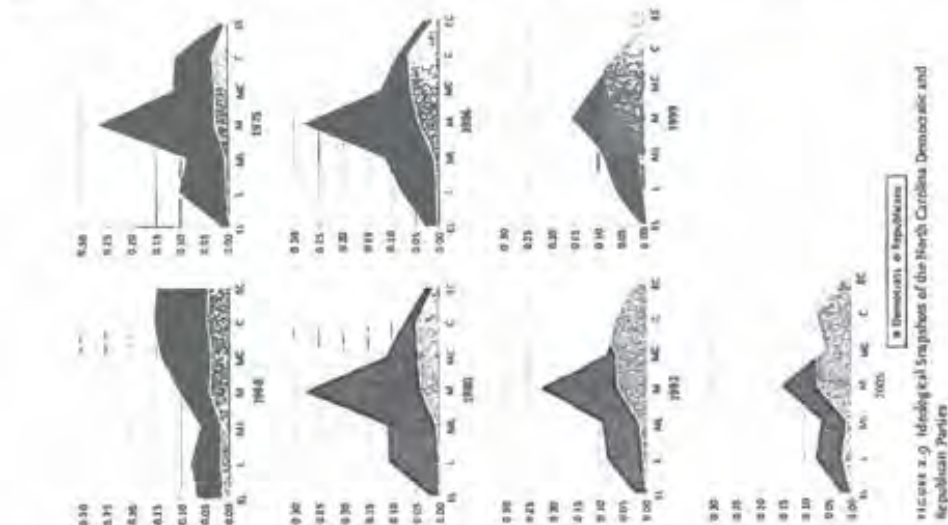


FIGURE 2.9 Ideological Snapshots of the North Carolina Democratic and Republican Parties

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the percentage of extremely conservative (EC) in each party. The vertical axis on the left indicates the percentage that each point on the distribution contributes to the overall makeup of the party. For example, in the 1973 panel for North Carolina (in Figure 2.9), Democratic moderates (high peak on Democratic distribution) constituted 27% percentage of the total Democratic Party identifiers for North Carolina.⁸

Describing Figure 2.8 first, the size of each distribution relative to one another depicts over time that blacks in Louisiana comprise an increasingly greater number of Democratic Party identifiers than do whites and that Republicans comprise an increasingly larger proportion of the total Louisiana electorate relative to Democrats. In terms of ideological transformation, black Louisiana Democrats begin with a pattern of equal distribution across categories in the 1968 panel with a slight skew left becoming even more positively skewed in the next time frame. This trend is interrupted in the 1980 and 1986 panels which are characterized by a pattern of moderation and finally a skew visibility to the right during the final two periods. The distribution for white Louisiana Democrats is characterized by an extreme right skew in the 1968 panel. A period of moderation then follows over the next three periods with a marked shift to the left in 1992, a return to moderation in 1999, and then a tilt to the left in 2005. The distribution for Louisiana Republicans begins with a pattern of equal distribution across categories in the 1968 panel with a slight skew right. This pattern is reversed in 1973 with a slight skew left. A period of growth in size and conservative skew begins in 1980 and continues through 2008. In 1968, while conservative Democrats dominated Louisiana's electoral landscape, with white and black Democrats occupying similar places on the ideological scale.

In North Carolina, as seen in Figure 2.9, the size of each distribution relative to one another depicts over time that Republicans comprise an equally sizeable proportion of the electorate to Democrats and become an increasingly more conservative party than the Democratic Party. In terms of ideological transformation, North Carolina Democrats begin with a strong skew right and then move into a period characterized by a normal distribution from 1973 if also a smaller portion of the electorate relative to North Carolina Republicans with a slight skew to the right in 1973 and 1980. By 1986, the right skew is nearly gone, and from 1992 through 2008, the distribution appears normal and the size of the Democratic electorate drops considerably. Thus, the ideological distribution of North Carolina Democrats is one characterized by normality and the size is considerably smaller in 2008 compared to 1968 relative to North Carolina Republicans.

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The ideological transformation of North Carolina Republicans begins with a pattern of somewhat equal distribution across categories with a slight skew right and then becomes even more positively (conservatively) skewed in all subsequent periods, ending in 2008 with a very pronounced right skew. The size of the North Carolina Republican electorate appears to grow independently of the North Carolina Democratic electorate during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s periods (Democratic size does not appear to shrink as Republican size grows), but by 1993 a Republican growth appears to coincide with Democratic shrinkage. This pattern continues into 1999 and 2008. The ideological transformation of the North Carolina Republican Party from 1968 to 2008 is one characterized by a sharp rightward skew and considerable growth.

Two important observations can be made from our discussion of ideological transformation. First, the Democratic Party in the South has become decidedly more liberal over time. In the current time period, white Democrats are actually more liberal than black Democrats, one sign that white conservatives and some segment of white moderates now call the Republican Party home. Although it may appear that blacks are a moderating force on the contemporary Democratic Party in the South, it should be emphasized that the movement of blacks en masse into the Democratic Party precipitated a concomitant exit of whites, first conservatives and later moderates. Second, and perhaps most important for our purposes, the examination of the North Carolina and Louisiana electorates demonstrates the uneven nature of the ideological transformation both across time and across parties.

Conclusion

We demonstrated in this chapter the dramatic political transformation that occurred over the last half-century in the South. Republican Party candidates have become increasingly successful, first at the national level, then the state level, and more recently at the substate level. We then revealed how individual-level identification with the Republican Party has grown over time although at different rates across the region. In addition, we described the growth in black mobilization from the 1960s until the present, demonstrating how this mobilization varied across the region. Finally, we combined individual-level survey data on race, party identification, and ideology with aggregate-level data on political party registration in the region to create an ideological profile of the Republican and Democratic parties in North Carolina and Louisiana over time. A series of graphical snapshots were presented

that revealed the racial composition, ideological position, and relative size of the parties in comparison to one another beginning in the late 1960s, showing an increasingly liberal and shrinking (in terms of total registrants) Democratic Party over time, contrasted with a steadily conservative and growing GOP. We turn now to an examination of the strategic aspects and political implications of this transformation.

CHAPTER 3 | The Strategic Dynamics of Southern Political Change

A REGION ONCE CHARACTERIZED as the “Solid South” because of its consistent and overwhelming support for Democrats at all levels of government has now become the epicenter of twenty-first-century Republicanism. As a unique laboratory for the examination of representation and electoral dynamics in twenty-first-century America, no region has undergone a more dramatic political transformation than the South. The single-party politics in the Democratic “Solid South” has been replaced by an intensely competitive two-party system. Republicans have become increasingly dominant in a region once ruled by Democrats, but this increasing dominance did not prevent Barack Obama from winning three Southern states in a region where blacks were denied the ballot not all that long ago.

The roots of this political transformation extend far deeper than the 1965 passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), but this legislation did signal the end of an era in Southern politics. As Black and Black again, the VRA “was the grand turning point in modern times for the reentry of blacks into Southern politics” (1987, 156). One of the most important suffrage documents in American history, the VRA provided the opportunity for disenfranchised black Southerners to return to the political fold from which they were banished at the end of Reconstruction. Similarly, the VRA was a milestone in the development of the Republican Party in the South. Prior to the passage of the VRA, the South had one post-Reconstruction Republican Senator (John Tower-TX). As is clear from the data presented in the previous chapter, Republicans now hold a majority of Southern Senate seats, House seats, and Governors’ mansions. Even at the mass level, the enormous Democratic advantage of sixty years ago—according to the American National Election Studies, Southern Democrats outnumbered their Republican counterparts by a margin of six to one in 1952—has all but disappeared

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As we saw in the previous chapter, growth in white support for the Republican Party did not occur in a vacuum. The region has also witnessed a dramatic and concomitant growth in black political mobilization. What caused the dramatic growth in Southern Republicanism? Why did growth rates for black mobilization vary so substantially across the region? Although these political dynamics share a regional context, the extant literature addressing these questions is distinctive and independent.

Explaining GOP Growth: Various Variables, Distinct Theories

What caused the dramatic growth in Southern Republicanism? The literature identifies a long list of possibilities. Unfortunately, there is little agreement on the relative importance of the various causal factors or the ways in which the effects of these factors might have interacted. In this regard, Stanley and Lydie’s assessment of the literature more than two decades ago is still apt:

one hallmark of scientific research, cumulative knowledge, has not characterized the study of Southern partisan change. Indeed, scholars disagree not only about the overall trends but also about the impact of the . . . processes capable of producing shifts in Southern partisanship (1988, 240).

Southern Republicanism has grown dramatically over the past sixty years, but this growth was not uniform over time. Early Republican strength was localized in the mountain areas (see Key 1949), where support for Republican presidential candidates predates the civil rights era. Other areas in the region did not see significant GOP development until the Reagan years (as we learned in chapter 2). This subregional variation is significant for our purposes, because theories focused on the rise of Southern Republicanism must address not only regionwide growth but also state-level variation in growth and, ideally, substate variation as well.

We do not dispute the contention that transformation of the Democratic Party at the national level—began during Franklin Roosevelt’s administration and culminating during the Johnson administration—played an important role in the drift of conservative white southerners to the Republican Party. The leadership role of conservative Southerners in the national Democratic Party waned during this period, and the demographics of the core Democratic constituency changed as well. The ideological transformation of the national-level Democratic Party does not explain, however, the dramatic variation in Republican growth across the South. If national-level effects are

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the primary determinant of Republican growth, why did the GOP grow so much more quickly in some states (Tennessee and Virginia) than it did in others (Alabama and Mississippi)? And why did these lagging states catch up (and surpass) the early-growth states by the end of the twentieth century? National-level explanations provide no leverage here.

The difficulty in explaining wide variation in the subregional (and sub-state) growth in Republicanism poses a significant dilemma for proponents of the national politics or "top-down" explanation of GOP development. One organizationally oriented alternative to the "top-down" perspective is the relatively newer "bottom-up" characterization of Republican growth (see Aldrich 2000). Those who contend that southern Republicanism grew from the bottom point to evidence that suggests consistent support for Republican candidates at the state and substate levels actually preceded consistent support for national-level Republicans. Although the evidence that proponents of the bottom-up perspective present is compelling, it is itself no explanation for the dynamic it represents. Even if we are willing to accept that Republican support did grow first from the state and substate levels rather than the national level, we still don't know why it did so. Later in this chapter, we provide an explanation for Republican growth, which, at least in part, rests on a bottom-up dynamic.

Explanations for both regionwide growth and subregional variation in growth in the existing literature have tended to focus on the demographic characteristics of white Southerners from the post-World War II era to the early twenty-first century. In most (but not all) cases, there is a significant demographic shift that favors the modern Republican Party. Still, whether these demographic shifts are of sufficient magnitude (and in the appropriate location) to explain both regional and subregional Republican growth remains an open question.

The demographic dynamic with the most straightforward theoretical impact on Southern Republicanism is white in-migration and black out-migration. Several studies have suggested that a driving force in the growth of the Republican Party in the South has been the influx of Republican-minded migrants from other regions of the country and the exit of Southern blacks—a consistently Democratic constituency (see Bass and De Vries 1976). The out-migration of blacks—particularly during the decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s—prevented the relative growth of the Southern black population and, thus, the growth of this component of the Democratic Party in the region. To the extent that this out-migration enabled Republican growth, it will be captured by the variables tapping black context and black mobilization. However, the in-migration of whites from other regions—and most

in-migrants have been white (see Scher 1997 and Stanley and Castle 1988)—requires further elaboration.

An increasingly large body of research indicates that the bulk of Southern in-migrants during the past fifty years were white and middle class and, further, these migrants have become integral components of the Southern GOP. Although it is difficult to argue with the contention that in-migration has had some impact on the relative strength of the two major political parties in the South, the magnitude and extent of this effect remains unclear. For example, some suggest that the impact of in-migration on Southern partisanship has ebbed in the last two decades, a period in which the party loyalties of Southerners differed little (and were actually somewhat more Republican) than the party loyalties of Americans in other regions of the country (Stanley 1988). Still others argue that cohort replacement and conversion of existing voters, as opposed to in-migration, explains the growing incoherence among Southerners to identify as Republicans (Petrovic 1987). Note that critics of the in-migration thesis were prevalent even during a time when it was still possible to imagine that in-migrants were more Republican than the native population. In the context of current demographic trends—especially the dramatic in-migration of Hispanics—⁸ is the presumption is difficult, if not impossible, to justify. More specifically, how the in-migration of whites in recent years played a role in increasing GOP identifiers remains unexplained. It is one thing to point to the in-migration of whites as a source of Republican growth during the days of the solidly Democratic South; it is quite another to suggest that a similar dynamic has played out during the last two decades—a period during which the South has been as Republican (if not more so) than the regions from which in-migrants have moved.

Other scholars point to alterations in the region's economy when explaining the increasing popularity of the Republican Party. Historians have long pointed to the transformation of the South's economy beginning in World War II as a watershed event for the region (see Cobb 1959 and Sears 1987 for a discussion of this event). Highlighting the potential political consequences of this economic transformation, proponents of this class-based explanation of Republican growth argue that it is (1) the growth in Southern wealth (particularly among whites) and (2) the opposition to social welfare programs among middle-class and working-class whites that have made the Republican Party increasingly attractive (Shaffer and Johnson 2006).

The potential for this type of transformation and its associated effect on party politics was noted by Key (1949). Key mentioned the possible political ramifications associated with what he termed as the diffusion of the region's agricultural economy. Key stated that a natural outgrowth of this economic

transformation would include "industrial and financial interests that have a fellow feeling with northern Republicanism" (1949: 674), thus creating a stronger, and in some ways, more natural linkage between Southerners and the GOP. More recently, Shafer and Johnston (2001, 2006) credit economic development as the driving engine behind partisan change in the Southern legislative delegations and among white southerners more generally. Proponents of the economic school argue:

Accordingly, if the white South still represents by far the larger share of Southern voters, as it does, and if it represents the entire population of those shifting to the Republican Party, given the monolithic partisan character of black Southerners, then it must be economic development and class politics that claim the lead role in transforming the political order of the South. (Shafer and Johnston 2006: 178, *emphasis added*)

There is little question that both support for the Republican Party in the region and major economic changes have occurred simultaneously over the past fifty years. The presence of these regionwide dynamics, however, obscures state-level patterns that are very difficult to reconcile with class-based explanations of two-party growth. Figure 3.1 is a scatterplot of the positions of each of the eleven Southern states based on (i) economic growth (in terms of per capita income) from 1960 to 2008 and (ii) growth in support for the Republican Party over the same period. Income is a crucial indicator of economic conditions for proponents of class-based explanations of Republican growth. According to Figure 3.1, there does not appear to be any evidence of a positive relationship between income and Republican growth during the time when such growth was the most prevalent. If anything, Republican growth was actually somewhat stronger in those states where income actually grew at a slower pace. Although one cannot with certainty rule out this causal linkage, it is apparently not a straightforward task to empirically demonstrate the relationship between economic factors and Republican strength.

Scholars studying the intersection of religion and politics provide an additional demographic explanation for the growth of southern Republicanism among conservative whites. They note that evangelicalism has grown dramatically over the past fifty years, and white evangelical Protestants have become increasingly more likely to identify with, and vote for, the GOP (see Kellstedt 1989; Green et al. 1996; and Green et al. 1998). Individual-level survey data indicate that white evangelicals are more likely than those of other religious traditions to hold conservative views, especially in regard to

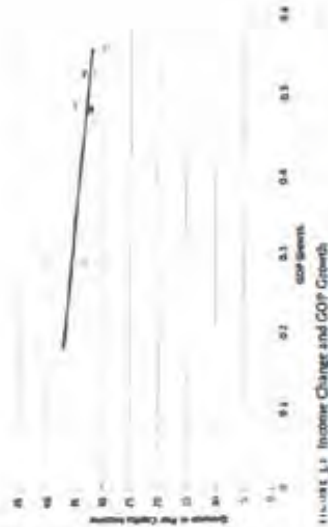


FIGURE 3.1 Income Change and GOP Growth

social issues (Wilcox 2000). Over the last several decades, evangelicals have become increasingly drawn to the Republican Party, identified as the standard-bearer for social conservatism. Specific evidence of this trend is plentiful. For example, white evangelicals comprised half (50 percent) of the re-elected Republican vote for Presidential contests in the 1990s (Green et al. 1998). In the pivotal 1994 congressional elections, three-quarters of this group (75 percent) voted Republican. In the same year, white evangelicals comprised a plurality of the GOP, making up 30 percent of Republican Party identifiers nationwide (Green et al. 1996).

The attachment of white evangelicals to the Republican Party, especially in the South, is difficult to ignore. However, the empirical connection between evangelicalism and the growth of Republicanism, at either the regional level or the subregional level, remains unclear. There is a plausible case for the role of evangelical attachment in the growth of the Republican Party in the South, but actual evidence of this relationship is, at best, quite limited.

Initially, a full understanding of party politics in the South depends upon an appreciation for the role that race has played and continues to play in the region. For many years, white conservatism was directly related to the size of the black population. As proximity to blacks increased, the racial threat perceived by whites increased. This dynamic, what Key (1949) called the "black-white hypothesis," resulted in greater support for conservative candidates in areas with proportionately more blacks. A number of subsequent analyses uncovered evidence that supports this hypothesis (see Axtrop 1996; Black 1991; Black 1978; Giles 1977; Giles and Buckner 1993, 1996; Giles and Evans

1986; Giles and Hertz 1994; Chaser 1994; Matthews and Prothro 1966; and Wright 1977). As the Republican Party was increasingly viewed as the party of conservatism—especially racial conservatism—it became an increasingly desirable alternative to the Democratic Party. Some limited evidence indicates that black contest is directly related to growth in Republican partisanship (see, for example, Giles and Hertz 1994), but support for the Key hypothesis, although substantial, is not unequivocal (see Combs, Hibbing, and Welch 1984; Bullock 1985; Voss 1996, and Whitley 1989).

In addition, a number of practical issues make the attribution of Republican growth to black racial contest problematic. First, though white voters may have stopped voting for Democrats in place of Republicans, blacks were overwhelmingly supportive of Democrats. In those areas where white “flight” is most likely, the black Democratic base will be most numerous. In these same areas then, there is both a very real ceiling placed on potential Republican support and a very real floor placed on the loss of Democratic support. It should be noted as well that GOP growth has come during a time when the size of the Southern black population has fallen. How is it possible then to attribute substantial Republican growth to black contest when the relative size of the black population has not increased and in some areas has experienced a relative decline? We return to these issues later in the chapter.

Understanding Black Mobilization

The South provides a unique laboratory for the examination of participation in early twenty-first-century democracy. A crucial component of the transformation of Southern politics is the mobilization of African Americans, a population long excluded from participation in electoral politics. In a place where they could not even vote little more than a generation ago, African Americans are becoming the cornerstone of Democratic electoral victories. Ironically, the party that for so many years prevented African Americans from playing any role in Southern politics now depends on African American votes for its success.

In 1868, the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment enfranchised African American males. During the Reconstruction years (which lasted less than a decade), African Americans played an integral role in Southern House and Senate elections. In fact, the very first African American representatives and senators were elected from Southern states during this time period, and these legislators were Republicans. But the end of Reconstruction, which followed the Hayes-Tilden election of 1876, devastated African American political

ambitions. Following Reconstruction, the Southern states quickly erected barriers to political mobilization—poll taxes, literacy and understanding tests, white primaries, and outright terrorism—and effectively disenfranchised much of the African American population until the passage of the VRA.¹

The 1965 passage of the VRA clearly marked the end of an era in Southern politics. The VRA was one of the most important anti-fraud documents in American history because it provided the opportunity for disenfranchised African American Southerners to return to the political fold from which they were banished at the end of Reconstruction. As Black and Black argue “The Voting Rights Act was the grand turning point in modern times for the reentry of blacks into Southern politics” (1987, 166).

We do not discount the impact of the passage of the VRA on African American registration rates, but it is obvious from the briefest examination of the raw data that the rates at which registration rolls grew varied greatly from state to state. One reason we see such distinctive growth patterns is that individual states have very different rules for determining who can register to vote, where they can register, and what they must do to register. Even after the elimination of nationwide obstacles to registration, such as poll taxes and literacy tests, some states have significantly more restrictive registration requirements than others. Important structural differences include residency requirements, the number of days prior to an election that an individual must register to vote, purging requirements, the number of official registration sites, and felony disenfranchisement to name a few. These types of structural factors influence the registration rates of the general population (see Keach 1993), and we expect to find similar types of influence for African American registration in the South.²

Although some evidence suggests that the growth trend in African American registration began prior to 1965 (see Tompore 1993), there is no doubt that the African American electorate in the South has grown exponentially since the passage of the VRA. However, both (a) the rate of growth and (a) the level of mobilization vary markedly among the Southern states. In a few Southern states—such as Virginia and North Carolina—a significant number of African Americans were registered to vote prior to the passage of the VRA. In others, the percentage of African Americans registered to vote was less than 50 percent. Today, African Americans in some Southern states have the highest registration rates of any racial/ethnic group. In other states, African American registration rates lag far behind.³

We know that registering to vote is one of the least costly forms of formal political activity and, not surprisingly, it is also one of the most common. To divest that voter registration is an entrée to more costly forms of political

activity, data on registration rates give us a reasonable indication of the upper bounds of the politically mobilized population within a state. Because poorly or inadequately mobilized populations are less likely to achieve their political goals than effectively mobilized populations, differences in political mobilization have important political implications (particularly for traditionally underrepresented populations), so it is important to understand what factors influence mobilization rates.

Individual-level models of political participation tend to focus on “resource-based” approaches to explaining registration and voting. Demographic factors such as age, education, income, and occupation—socioeconomic status (SES) variables—often correlate highly with registration and voting (see Verba and Nie 1972; Bennett and Bennett 1986; Conway 2000; and Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). The relationship between SES and voting also holds for African Americans (Tate 1993).¹ It is important to note that there is some disagreement about the specific causal relationship between SES and voting. Some argue that a direct relationship between SES and participation exists, whereas others contend that SES influences participation only indirectly, by influencing the extent to which citizens have “civic skills” (see Brady, Verba, and Scholman 1999 and Verba, Scholman, and Brady 1995 for a description of this debate). Nevertheless, no one seriously argues that SES does not play a role in the individual-level choice process regarding political participation.

Although standard mobilization models based on education, income, and political knowledge provide some leverage for explaining black mobilization, other group-oriented factors are equally, if not more, important (see, in particular, Leighley 2000 and Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2005). More specifically, there is evidence that African American turnout is influenced by black political empowerment and social isolation.²

Proponents of the empowerment thesis argue that demonstrable evidence of African American political influence will result in increased black mobilization (see Bobo and Gilliam 1990 and Browning, Marshall, and Tabo 1984). The standard indicator of African American political influence is the election of black officials, and there is evidence that the number of elected black officials is positively related to the level of political action in the African American community (Bobo and Gilliam 1990, Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2005; Leighley 2000; and Tate 1993).

Social isolation, on the other hand, tends to inhibit black political mobilization. Rather than focusing solely on individual circumstances (such as personal income or unemployment), social isolation theorists argue that negative economic and social circumstances within the African American community more broadly inhibit black political activity. Factors such as

rising income inequality in the black populace, rates of unemployment, and the extent to which the African American community is victimized by crime (in the aggregate) constrain black mobilization efforts after controlling for individual-level circumstances. As in the case of the empowerment hypothesis, there is also empirical support for the effect of social isolation on black mobilization (Cohen and Dawson 1991; Dawson 1994; Harris 1999; and Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2005).

Recent work by Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie (2005) suggests that both political empowerment and social isolation influence black mobilization, but they also note that the dynamics that drive black mobilization (and broader political participation) vary considerably across regions. In particular, the dynamics driving black mobilization in the South are distinct from those driving black mobilization in the rest of the country. While political empowerment tends to matter far more in the South, social isolation has a far larger impact in the remaining states (Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2005). The distinctiveness of these results leads us to wonder if the model of black mobilization in the South is incomplete.

We must also wonder about the extent to which empowerment, in particular, is a useful explanation for one of the (if not the) foundational components of political mobilization—voter registration. Growth in the number of African American elected officials might reasonably lead to an increase in African American voter registration turnout, and a variety of more demanding political activities. If the electoral manifestations of empowerment (in the form of black elected officials) produce an increased sense of efficacy, then greater political mobilization may well follow.

But then what explains the black mobilization that provided the constituency for the African American elected officials in the first place? Especially in the Southern context, the election of African Americans has depended upon the mobilization of African American voters. From that perspective, black voter registration must be viewed as a cause of the increase in the number of African American elected officials (and empowerment) rather than a by-product of this electoral success. Below, we consider the possibility that the dramatic growth in Southern Republicanism and black mobilization are independent phenomena.

The Theory of Relative Advantage

Existing research fails to address a number of substantive questions. In particular, there is an incomplete understanding of the extent to which the mobilization of Southern blacks (as Democrats)—and not just the

presence of large concentrations of blacks in the "black-belt" region (see Giles and Hertz 1994)—fostered an increase in Republican voting behavior. African American mobilization influenced roll-call voting patterns of both House and Senate members from the region (Hood and Morris 1998 and Hood, Kidd, and Morris 1999); did this mobilization also (albeit indirectly) bolster Republican ranks? What is lacking is a theory that provides an integrated, politically meaningful explanation of the two most dramatic and important changes in the Southern political landscape over the past half-century:

1. The growth of Southern Republicanism, and
2. The mobilization of the African American electorate.

Crucially, neither of these growth dynamics has occurred uniformly across the South; not only has there been considerable state-level variation in the growth of each of these populations, but there has also been considerable variation in the substrate growth. A useful theory should explain not only the growth in these populations—it should also explain the variation in the growth across the South. In the following section, we propose a theory that provides an explanation for the concomitant growth of each of these politically crucial factors. We begin by focusing on a novel explanation for Republican growth.

The Growth of Southern Republicanism

There is good reason to accept the contention that the increasingly liberal orientation of the national Democratic Party on the issue of civil rights clearly engendered the dissatisfaction of conservative white Southern Democrats within their own party. But while national party dynamics may have provided the initial impetus for the regionwide growth of Republican voting behavior (see Black and Black 1987, 2003 and Carmines and Simon 1986). It is also obvious that the rate of growth varied considerably among the states, and such variance cannot be explained by national party politics alone.

To explain subregional differences in Republican growth, previous work focused on a variety of disparate demographic and economic factors, such as in-migration, economic growth and transformation, the waning significance of agriculture, religious conservatism, and racial context among others.⁴ Although it is often necessary in social science research to employ demographic variables as proxies for political phenomena, we would argue that a

greater effort needs to be undertaken in Southern politics to incorporate more precise measures of theoretically salient political correlates. Continuing along this train of thought, we develop a set of models to directly test the proposition that the variation in Republican growth in the South is fundamentally a by-product of political change.

We argue that the engines of Southern Republican growth over the last sixty years were (1) the waning usefulness of the Democratic Party for the procurement of political and economic resources and the expression of white racial conservatism, and (2) the increasing electoral viability of GOP candidates in the South. In essence, Southern Republicanism grew because the differential change in the benefits of voting and identification with the Republican Party for whites, in comparison to Democratic affiliation, increased.⁵ So, from a political standpoint, the relative advantage of the Republican Party with respect to the Democratic Party increased over this time period.

The reader might reasonably suggest that this contention is nothing more than a tautology, of course the Republican Party grew because membership in that party was increasingly more valuable than membership in the Democratic Party. This would be an accurate criticism if we were unable to explain the shift in the relative attractiveness of the parties, but these explanations are, of course, key aspects of our theory. In their work *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) provide a useful framework for discussing social cleavages and a possible association with relative advantage theory. Especially relevant for the present study is the idea that various cleavage structures can lead to certain advantages for a specific party, relative to another party or parties (see, for example, Sundquist 1985). Although not all cleavages may relate to the concept of relative advantage, the racial dichotomy in the South certainly produced a context in which a defined Republican Party once again became a viable alternative in the wake of the political disaffection brought about by the enfranchisement of blacks in the South (Katz 2000).

The idea of relative advantage encompasses more than the notion of transformative partisan cleavages. Transformation also requires a catalyst, and this catalyst often takes the form of policy orientations and/or ideological positions related to existing political structures. Citizens identify with and vote for candidates of political parties for a variety of reasons. Among the factors that influence peoples' decisions to support one party or the other are (1) the relative competitiveness of the party in a wide variety of political arenas, and (2) the relative consistency of each party's political objectives with a citizen's own political objectives. In the Southern context, Republican

Party support (relative to Democratic Party support) became more valuable because

1. Republicans were fielding increasing numbers of candidates for political office at all levels, causing the traditional Democratic Party monopoly over party nominations to dissipate; and
2. The mobilization of the black population—what quickly became an almost uniformly Democratic electorate—made it increasingly difficult for Southern conservative whites to maintain control of the local Democratic Party machinery. As the local Democratic Party became more difficult to control, the party apparatus became less valuable.

A viable Republican Party is a relatively new aspect of Southern politics. One of Key's (1949) primary criticisms of the Southern party system of his time was the absence of active and significant two-party competition in the region. Key hypothesized that it was this decided lack of interparty competition that, in turn, stunted the development of viable party organizations in the region.⁴ During the last four decades, however, the Southern GOP has become an organizational equal of, and sometimes superior to, the Democratic Party in the region (see, for example, Maggioni and Wekkin 2000). During Key's time, the absence of party competition led to an elite-dominated political system, and Key is clear about the economic implications of this elite-dominated, one-party system: It favored the "haves" (Key 1949). So, for southern elites (especially the most conservative ones), the Democratic Party was not just the only game in town (or, more formally, the only viable political vehicle); it was also an efficient mechanism for translating political control into a stream of substantial economic resources.

From our perspective, the increasing viability of the Republican Party during the 1960s and early 1970s hastened the demise of Democratic dominance for two reasons. First, it provided an alternative political outlet. Second, two-party competition cut into the economic advantages enjoyed by Democratic elites during the era of one-party politics. The initial viability of Republican Party candidates alone is not likely to be a sufficient rationale for a wholesale shift away from the Democratic Party if white conservatives could maintain control of the Democratic Party. While conservatives could not, however, maintain control of the Democratic Party because of the strongly Democratic orientation of a large and newly mobilized population: African Americans.

We argue that white voters reacted not to black context, as during the pre-civil rights era, but instead to black mobilization. Since the passage of the

VRA, the mobilization of Southern African Americans has been extensive (Griffin, Griffin, and Glazer 1993), and there is evidence that this mobilization has had systemic political implications (Hood, Kidd, and Morris 1999). Initially, Southern conservatives opposed the development of the Republican Party. However, once disenfranchised black voters returned to the political arena, Southern conservatives shifted strategies and began to build a local Republican Party that would serve as an organized political alternative to the Democratic Party, which was increasingly the party of choice for African Americans (see Aldridge 1996; Aldridge and Griffin 2000; Maggioni and Wekkin 2000; and Rhodes 2000). As blacks moved into the Democratic Party in significant numbers, conservative white Southerners were forced to seek another vehicle for their political ambitions and objectives.

Some may view this hypothesized role of African American mobilization in Republican growth as a modern variant of Key's black-belt hypothesis. There are, however, important conceptual differences between Key's group-threat perspective and our relative advantage extension. First, even if we accept the "threat" perspective, the nature of the threat is dramatically different. Key was writing during a time when blacks were structurally excluded from participating in electoral politics, so he was not referring to an electoral threat. Key's black-belt hypothesis depended on the fear of violence and/or the loss of the existing social order (Jim Crow). Key also focused on a latent threat to the extent the mobilized black population was viewed as a threat, it was active. The black-belt hypothesis also provided no explanation for the hypothesized relationship between the viability of the Republican Party and the subsequent growth of the Republican Party. Our relative advantage perspective then is clearly different from Key's black-belt hypothesis.

Scholars have been preoccupied with the pattern of two-party emergence in the South for at least forty years. One prominent theory posits that two-party competition in the region began as a product of support for Republican presidential candidates (see Lariss 1988 or Aldridge 1996 for support of this theory of party change). Success at the presidential level then filtered down to state-wide offices (i.e., governor, U.S. senator), which, in turn, led to increased levels of voting for GOP congressional candidates. Finally, this top-down process culminated in GOP viability at the substate level (i.e., state legislative level). In *The Rise of Southern Republicans*, Black and Black (2002) highlight the importance of presidential campaigns, especially Reagan's, in producing a realignment at the congressional level in the region. Likewise, other research has uncovered a link between GOP state party election strategies and recruiting candidates to run in legislative districts with a tendency to favor Republican presidential candidates (Bullock and Shafer 1997).

Recently, however, Aldrich (2000) and Aldrich and Griffin (2000) have challenged the top-down theory of party change in the region. Using a series of Granger causality tests, these studies demonstrated that GOP electoral successes at the national level are a direct product of, or are caused by, prior victories at the state level. Likewise, success in state legislative races was a precursor to winning U.S. House elections, so there is evidence that state GOP party-building efforts were the result of a highly complex process operating at multiple levels.

As theorized, state-level Republican Party strength relative to that of the Democratic Party is in part associated with the ability of the GOP to offer an alternative platform for the nomination and election of candidates to pursue policy objectives. The mechanisms of interparty competition are paramount for explaining the rise of the GOP in the South. Given the prior emphasis on, and disagreement about, Republican Party formation in the postwar South, it is imperative that we properly model this political dynamic at work. The theory of relative advantage leads us to expect a strong positive relationship between GOP organizational strength in the South and subsequent GOP growth. In subsequent chapters, we test this hypothesis.

Black Political Mobilization

We can also extend our relative advantage perspective to the rise of black mobilization. Today, African American support for the Democratic Party, particularly in the South, is so overwhelming that we can provide little new insight into the choice between parties. However, as the conservatism of the traditional southern Democratic Party wanes, the value of mobilization in support of the Democratic Party increases. Let us assume, as we did for conservative whites, that the goals of African Americans are (i) maximizing the stream of economic benefits associated with party membership and (ii) the achievement of public policy goals. Given these goals, we expect mobilization in support of the Democratic Party to vary by the likelihood that African Americans will play a significant leadership role in the party. The extent to which African Americans are in a position to lead or control a state or local party is primarily a function of the relative size of (i) the actual black segment of the Democratic Party and (ii) the potential black component of the Democratic Party. If this is the case, then future African American mobilization should be a function of the following factors:

1. The relative size of the current black mobilized population.
2. The relative size of the black population, and
3. Recent Republican growth

Note that the effect of Republican growth should vary across states and subregions in the South. More specifically, Republican growth will have the greatest impact on black mobilization in those areas in which black concentrations are highest. The obvious question is "Why?" The relative advantage perspective suggests an answer: If black mobilization is a function of the potential political (and economic) benefits associated with group mobilization, then we would naturally expect black mobilization to be a function of black content.

All else being equal, African Americans are more likely to mobilize in states where they make up a third of the population (such as Mississippi) than in states where they make up less than 15 percent of the population (Tennessee). In the first case, a mobilized and cohesive African American voting bloc is in a position to control/dominant the Democratic Party once a sufficient number of conservative whites leave for the Republican Party. In the latter case, the relatively small size of the African American population makes it difficult to imagine a scenario in which a conservative Democratic Party would be dominated by an African American voting coalition. There is little reason in such a scenario then to expect a relationship between GOP growth and black mobilization. In the former case, one would clearly expect GOP growth to boost black mobilization. As conservative whites exit the Democratic Party African Americans come ever closer to solidifying control of it. Given this dynamic, relative advantage theory leads us to expect to find the following:

1. A significant, positive relationship between GOP growth and black mobilization in those states (and substate areas) in which the size of the black population is relatively large, and
2. No relationship between GOP growth and black mobilization in those states (and substate areas) in which the size of the black population is relatively small.

The key issue is, of course, the conceptualization and operationalization of large and small. Focusing solely on black/white content for the moment if we assume a 70/30 split (70 percent Republican/30 percent Democratic) for whites, a cohesive African American voting bloc that is 33 percent or more of the mobilized population would be sufficiently large to control the Democratic Party. If the split leans more toward the Republican Party, the percentage of African American voters required to dominate the Democratic Party declines. Note, however, if the white partisan split is too favorable to the Republican Party, the Democratic Party is no longer able to provide the opposition. Given a cut-point in the low 20 percent range, this suggests

that we should expect to see GOP growth affect black mobilization in a certain group of Southern states—the Deep South—and we should expect to see no state-level GOP effect on black mobilization in the Rim South (see Hood, Kidd, and Morris 2008 for a more detailed discussion of this derivation). Using this operationalization, we can test both these hypotheses, and we do so in chapter 8.

Conclusion

As we have seen in earlier research of the late twentieth-century South, political factors began political change well into the twenty-first century (Hood, Kidd, and Morris 2004). Although there is no doubt that regional in-migration and economic transformation were ongoing phenomena during the period of time under study, these factors—along with other demographic variables such as black contest and evangelicalism—do not appear to have a consistent effect on the growth of Southern Republicanism over the analyzed time period. We find no reason to believe that economic or demographic change alone, however profound, would have broken the long-held constant in Southern politics of one-party Democratic dominance, absent political changes. We have also provided a new explanation for the two most significant components of the modern transformation of Southern politics: (1) the growth of the GOP and (2) the political mobilization of African Americans. Without empirical verification, our theory remains just that. To what extent do the data support the theory of relative advantage as a means for providing an explanation for political changes in the South? Before answering this question, we undertake a detailed historical examination of the Virginia and Georgia Republican Parties during the pivotal period of the mid-twentieth century.

CHAPTER 8 Relative Advantage in a Post-VRA
World

Black Voter Registration in the Modern South

THE THEORY OF RELATIVE ADVANTAGE was originally developed to explain the growth of the Republican Party—and the variation in this growth across states and time—in the South. In the preceding chapters, we have outlined and explained the theory and examined the supporting evidence in various contexts including state, county, and individual levels. There is substantial evidence in support of the theory of relative advantage at the state level. Although not designed to explain substate and individual-level Republican growth, the logic of the theory does naturally extend to these contexts, so while the additional evidence for the theory manifest in the substate- and individual-level data is significant, it is not especially surprising.

According to the theory of relative advantage, the key determinant of GOP growth in the American South (along with substate party competitiveness) is black mobilization. Again, a significant amount of evidence at the state, substate, and individual levels indicates that as African Americans joined the electorate (and the Democratic Party), the ranks of the Southern GOP grew accordingly. At the individual level, we demonstrated that whites, in particular, responded to increased black mobilization by growing more attached to the Republican Party. A logical question then becomes: what drives black mobilization?

Relative advantage theory should be as equally useful in predicting the strategy pursued by Southern African Americans in response to changes in the political environment as it is for white conservatives in the region. The theory suggests that patterns of political activity will differ across the firm South and the Deep South (for the reasons suggested above). Relative advantage implies that in the Deep South—the subregion with the largest African American population and, prior to the growth of the Republican Party, the

most conservative Democratic partisans—black mobilization will be driven (at least in part) by the exodus of white conservatives from the Democratic Party. More specifically, in the Deep South, our theory suggests that the growth of the Republican Party will concomitantly drive black mobilization.

Explaining Black Mobilization in the South

Figure 8.1 presents a series of boxplots representing African American registration for the eleven Southern states from 1960 through 2008. In the Southern context, two facts about black mobilization (which we measure in terms of voter registration) are clear from even the most cursory study of the data. First, black mobilization has grown dramatically since the early 1960s. As evidenced in Figure 8.1, less than 30 percent of the African American population in the South was registered to vote in 1960, by 2008, nearly three-quarters of the African American population was registered to vote. Even if we focus solely on the post-VRA era, the increase in African Americans on the voting rolls is substantial. In 1966, less than half of Southern blacks were registered to vote.

Second, growth in black mobilization has varied dramatically by state. In Arkansas, the percentage of African Americans registered to vote has risen from 37.7 percent in 1960 to 33 percent in 2008. In Mississippi, the percentage

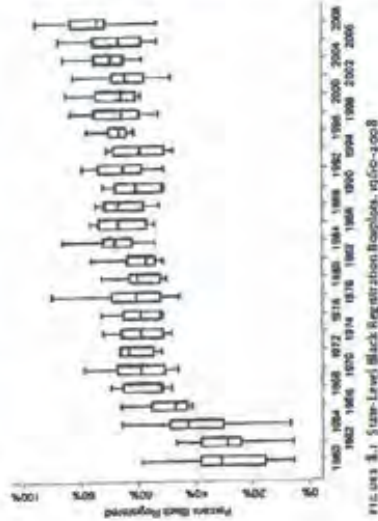


FIG. 8.1 | Black Mobilization

of registered blacks has risen from less than 6 percent to nearly 82 percent. More generally, it is relatively easy to see that the growth in the extent of African American mobilization varies significantly across subregions in the South. The Deep South has simply seen much greater political mobilization in its African American community than has the Rim South. In 1960, less than 30 percent of blacks in the Deep South were registered to vote, compared to 40 percent in the Rim South. By 2008, 70.3 percent of African Americans were registered to vote in the Rim South, but in the Deep South, nearly 80 percent of African Americans were registered to vote. While black registration was more than quadrupling in the Deep South, it was not even doubling in the Rim South.

Although the difference between the rates of mobilization in the Rim South and the Deep South are not as dramatic if we limit ourselves to the post VRA era, it is still significant. From 1966 to 2008, the voter registration rate of African Americans grew by more than 77 percent (from 44.8 percent to 79.6 percent). During the same time period, the registration growth rate in the Rim South was just over 30 percent (from 53.7 percent to 70.1 percent). Clearly, distinctive dynamics were driving black mobilization in the two subregions of the American South.

No standard treatments of mobilization (or any treatments focusing specifically on African American mobilization) provide an explanation for this dramatic subregional discrepancy. Resource-oriented models (see Conway 2000, Verba and Nie 1972, and Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980) suggest that variation in mobilization rates should mirror the variation in socioeconomic variables such as income or education.⁴ Among African Americans specifically, there is clear evidence that poverty depresses mobilization (see Harris, Sinden-Chapman, and McKenzie 2003) and those living in depressed areas tend to participate at significantly lower rates than blacks in more prosperous areas (Colten and Dawson 1993).

Given this literature, it is at least a little surprising that recent black registration rates are significantly higher in the Deep South than in the Rim South, even though blacks in the Rim South have higher income levels.⁵ Similarly, though the growth in African American mobilization in the Deep South has dwarfed the growth in the Rim South, the incomes of black households in the Rim South have risen more during the 1960–2008 time period (over \$23,000) than the incomes of black households in the Deep South (less than \$2,000 for the same time period). At first glance (at least), variation in resources does not explain the difference in political mobilization.⁶

A second important component of the literature on black mobilization—the employment thesis (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Browning, Marshall, and

Tabb 1984; Leighty 2000; and Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2005)—is not particularly well suited to explain the growth in black registration rates in the South. In their path-breaking work, Bobo and Gilliam provide an authoritative definition of “political empowerment” with the following:

By political empowerment—or political incorporation, as some have called it (Grossman, Marshall, and Tabb 1984)—we mean the extent to which a group has achieved significant representation and influence in political decision making (1990: 378).

Bobo and Gilliam (1990) go on to argue that it is just this type of political success that drives black mobilization:

We hypothesize that where blacks hold more positions of authority, wield political power, and have done so for longer periods of time, greater numbers of blacks should see value in sociopolitical involvement. We expect, then, that the greater the level of empowerment, the more likely it is that blacks will become politically involved (1990: 379).

There is considerable evidence that empowerment plays an important role in the extent to which African Americans participate in a variety of political acts and activities. These range from donating money to political campaigns and attending campaign meetings to contacting local officials and participating in various community activities (see Bobo and Gilliam 1990 and Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2005). But when the focal activity is registering to vote, it is difficult to see how empowerment can precede—in a causal sense—the focal mobilization activity. This is particularly true in the American South. If empowerment is understood as “significant representation and influence in political decision making” (Bobo and Gilliam 1990: 378), and it is measured by the prevalence of black elected officials (particularly mayors, state legislators, and members of Congress), then the manifestation of black empowerment cannot logically precede the presence of a significant number of registered black voters. When mobilization is viewed in terms of voter registration, then the mobilization itself must precede (or have historically preceded) empowerment.

If theories focused on resources—or “economic distress” (Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2005: 145)—or empowerment provide little or no leverage on the question of subregional black mobilization in the South, then how do we understand this rather puzzling empirical fact? What if African Americans responded to the potential political opportunities created by an exodus of conservative white Southerners from the Democratic Party

in much the same way conservative white Southerners responded to the political pressures created by the mobilization of African Americans?

In some of our early empirical assessments of the theory of relative advantage, we were concerned about the possibility of a feedback loop between GOP growth and black mobilization. Using a specially designed Granger test of causality for TSCS data, we were able to empirically test for such a possibility.⁸ The evidence for the presence of a feedback loop—black mobilization producing GOP growth, which in turn boosted black mobilization—was present, but limited to the Southern states with the highest percentage of African Americans in the population (the Deep South along with North Carolina). Previously, we could not explain the presence of the effect—why did GOP growth have an impact on black mobilization?—or the limited manifestation of the effect—why is the effect limited to the Deep South? It was not until we considered an extension of the theory of relative advantage to this relationship that we were able to explain both phenomena: (1) the presence of a GOP growth effect on black mobilization and (2) its presence only in the Southern states with the highest percentages of African Americans.

Why might we expect to see GOP growth driving—at least in part—black mobilization in the Deep South but not in the Rim South? Two significant distinctions between the Deep South and the Rim South are important here. First, the states of the Deep South have historically had significantly larger African American populations (in relative terms) than the states of the Rim South. Over the 1960–2008 time period, African Americans made up slightly less than 7 percent of the population in the Rim South states. In the Deep South, African Americans made up more than 10 percent of the population. In fact, every single state in the Deep South during this time period had a larger African American population than the Rim South state with the largest African American population (North Carolina). This demographic disparity between the Deep South and the Rim South is easily seen in Figure 11.1, which plots the average black population by state from 1960 through 2000.

Second, Democrats and the Democratic Parties in the states of the Deep South were traditionally more racially conservative than Democrats and the Democratic Parties in the states of the Rim South. Students of Southern politics have long argued that black conservatism is directly associated with white conservatism (Black 1978; Black and Black 1987; Key 1943; and Keech 1968), the most famous characterization of this relationship being Key’s “black belt hypothesis” (1943). So, in just those situations in which a mobilized black population would likely have the most impact on electoral outcomes (because of the relative size of their voting bloc), they would be joining state-level

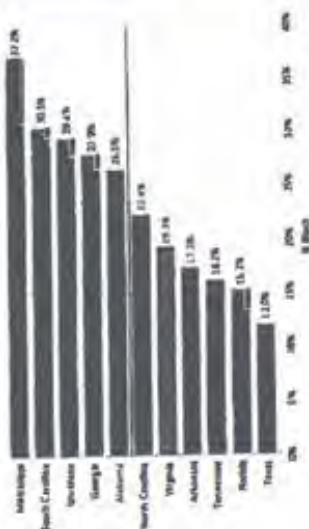


FIGURE 8. Mean Black Population by State 1960-2012

parties—at least in the early part of our time period—that are most conservative on racial issues.³

When examining GOP growth with the theory of relative advantage, we are trying to understand what would lead a Democrat to become a Republican. When examining black mobilization, the issue is what would lead an African American to register to vote—the first significant step toward political mobilization. To bring the theory of relative advantage to bear on this question, we also assume that the decision to mobilize is a decision to become a Democrat. This is not a trivial assumption. Theoretically, we might look at the decision about whether or not to register/mobilize as one with three basic options: remain unregistered and unmobilized, register to vote and identify as a Democrat, or register to vote and identify as a Republican. During the post-Reconstruction era, however, the Republican Party was rarely thought of as a significant and viable option for African Americans.

All else being equal, the incentive to register (and subsequently to vote) for African Americans is directly related to the potential size of the politically active African American population in a state. In places where the African American population is, at least potentially, a sizeable voting bloc, returns for participation are greater than in those places where the relative size of the African American population is significantly smaller. But if white Democrats in areas with the largest black populations are also the most racially conservative Democrats, then all is not equal. The inherent advantage of a larger potential voting bloc is thwarted by the ideological extremism of the dominant voting bloc in the party. Simply put, it would take a larger number of

black voters to form a dominant voting bloc in a conservative Democratic Party (e.g., Deep South) than in a moderate Democratic Party (e.g., Rim South).

Given these dynamics, the theory of relative advantage applied to the phenomenon of black mobilization (specifically registration) in the South suggests that patterns of political activity will differ across the Rim South and the Deep South (for the reasons described above). Our theory also suggests that in the Deep South—the subregion with the largest black population and prior to the growth of the Republican Party, the most conservative Democratic perimeters—black mobilization will be driven (at least in part) by the exodus of white conservatives from the Democratic Party. In the Deep South, our theory suggests that the growth of the Republican Party will drive black mobilization. More specifically, we hypothesize:

H₁: The relative size of the black population is directly related to the extent of black mobilization.

H₂: The impact of the relative size of the black population on black mobilization will be greater in the Rim South than in the Deep South.

H₃: GOP growth will foster increased black mobilization in the Deep South. It will have little or no effect in the Rim South.

In the next section, we discuss alternative explanations for black mobilization in the South. This is followed by a description of our empirical analysis. We then report results from two separate analyses—one focusing on the state level and another on the substate level in Louisiana and North Carolina—that provide clear evidence for the contention that Republican growth has spurred increases in black registration in the Deep South but not in the Rim South—just as the theory of relative advantage would lead us to expect.

As we noted above, individual-level models of political participation tend to focus on resource-based approaches to explaining registration and voting. Demographic factors such as age, education, income, and occupation—the socioeconomic status or SES variable—often correlate highly with registration and voting (see Verba and Nie 1972; Bennett and Bennett 1986; Conway 2000; and Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). The relationship between SES and voting also holds for African Americans (Tate 1991).⁴ It is important to note that there is some disagreement about the specific causal relationship between SES and voting. Some argue that a direct relationship exists between SES and participation, whereas others contend that SES influences participation only indirectly by influencing the extent to which citizens have “civic skills” (see Brady Verba, and Schlozman 1999 and Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995 for a description of this debate). Nonetheless, no one seriously

argues that SES plays no role in the individual-level choice process regarding political participation.

For our study, in which the cross-sectional unit of analysis is a state, income is the most meaningful SES variable. Studies focusing on African Americans, however, often find either a weak relationship between income and voting or voter registration or no relationship at all (Cohen and Dawson 1991 and Tate 1991, 1993). Likewise, these studies show that the relationship between family income and political participation is generally quite weak (if it exists at all) (Cohen and Dawson 1993 and Tate 1991, 1993). Given these conflicting strains of literature, we do not have an a priori expectation regarding the existence of a relationship between income and black registration, but we do include income in our model and expect that, if a relationship does exist, it would be positive.

The political context in which elections occur is also likely to influence registration rates. As elections generate greater interest among the general population, or as the outcome of the election takes on greater importance, we would expect registration rates to increase. From previous research, we know that presidential elections tend to generate significantly greater public interest than off-year elections, and that this increased interest results in a boost in turnout. We should find the same dynamic at work in our sample, so we expect registration rates to be higher during presidential election years than in years when voters are not selecting a president.

H_1 : Black mobilization will be greater in years in which a presidential election is held than in other years.

Previous research also suggests that the presence of a prominent African American candidate on the ballot tends to contribute to higher registration and turnout rates among African Americans. The archetypal case is Jesse Jackson's first run for the White House in 1984. President Obama's election year is also likely to fit into this category. There is little doubt that the Jackson candidacy led to an increase in African American registration nationwide (see Tate 1991, 1993 and Walton 1997). Although the specific reasons for this increase are not fully clear—extensive organizational efforts to register voters is one likely explanation—the evidence strongly supports the presence of an effect at the national level and in the Southern states.¹

H_1 : The Jackson campaign in 1984 will be positively associated with black mobilization.

H_2 : The Obama campaign in 2008 will be positively associated with black mobilization.

We now move to a discussion of the data and methods used to test our hypotheses.

Data and Methods

Two of the variables used for the state-level analysis—*Republican Strength* and *Percent Black*—were used in previous analyses and are described in detail in chapter 5. At the county/parish level, we use actual registration data as in chapter 6, to operationalize GOP strength. For the substantive analyses, *Republican Strength* is measured as the number of registered Republicans as a percentage of total registrants for each county or parish. *Black Income* is taken directly from census data and is measured as black median family income adjusted for inflation.² Jackson 1984 and Obama 2008 are simply dummy variables for these relevant election years. *Presidential Election Year* is a dummy variable coded one for each presidential election year (1968, 1972, . . . , 2008). With the exception of our measure of *Republican Strength*, the variables utilized for the state- and the county-level analyses are identically measured.

A significant deviation from our previous analysis is our treatment of black registration. In models of GOP growth, we included the variable *Black Electoral Strength*, which is defined as the percentage of African Americans among all registered voters. Note that this variable taps not only the extent to which the black population is mobilized, but also the relative size of the African American component of the voting age population. Obviously, efforts to boost black mobilization—regardless of their effectiveness—will have little or no impact on the relative size of the African American component of the population. In this chapter, therefore, we focus on the percentage of the African American voting age population that is registered to vote. We refer to this variable as *Black Mobilization*, which is measured specifically as

Black Registration/Black Voting Age Population.

As in chapter 5, we estimate a dynamic time series cross-sectional model, with the state serving as the unit of analysis. Beginning with the first post-VRA election (1966), this produces a total of eleven cross sections over a forty-three-year period—from 1966 through 2008.³ Again, we utilize one of the more commonly accepted techniques in political science to model TSCS data with a continuous dependent variable. As suggested by Beck and Katz (1995, 1996), we generate parameter estimates of black mobilization using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with the inclusion of a lagged dependent variable in the model to help ameliorate issues related to autocorrelation.⁴

The county-level analysis is based, as in chapter 6, on data from Louisiana and North Carolina, the only two Southern states for which we have voter registration data by party and race from the mid-1960s to the present. The time period of the analysis is the same as for the state-level analysis. Obviously, the number of cross sections varies across states. While there are one hundred counties in North Carolina, there are only sixty-four parishes in Louisiana. We have complete data for all of the county/parish variables with the exception of black income.¹¹ For this reason, the models that include a measure of black income are based on a sample that is slightly smaller for both Louisiana and North Carolina.

For both the state and substate analyses, we include fixed effects in order to deal with the possibility that these geographic units have distinctive—and unobserved—characteristics that influence the baseline level of black mobilization. To further address the inferential complications generated by the potential presence of heteroskedasticity, we also make use of robust standard errors clustered by state, county, or parish, given the circumstances.

In addition to helping ameliorate the statistical issue of serial correlation, the inclusion of a lagged dependent variable within the TSCS setup can also play a substantive role (see chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion on this topic). Using such an approach allows us to statistically derive the extent to which black mobilization is dependent upon previous levels of black mobilization. Given the fact that election roles are not purged on an annual basis, the inclusion of a lagged dependent variable in this particular context is substantively crucial.

Finally, because we are unable to reject the possibility of the presence of autocorrelation in our fixed-effects estimates, we estimate a GMM instrumental variable model with fixed effects (IV-FE) again with clustered standard errors.¹² The results at the state and substate level are robust across both types of model specifications (see also endnote 13). A detailed description of data sources and variable operationalizations are located in Appendices A and B respectively.

Findings

State-Level Analysis

The results from our FE and IV-FE models are presented in Table 8.1. Note that, although we were unable to rule out the possibility of non-trivial autocorrelation in the FE models,¹³ the substantive and, to a large extent, the statistical results are comparable across these various model specifications. The

first finding to note indicates that prior GOP growth is strongly and positively related to black mobilization, but only in the Deep South. There is no evidence of a relationship between prior GOP growth and black mobilization in the Rim South.

Second, note that the size of the black population—the potential mobilized population—is positively associated with black mobilization in five of the six models. We can also see that the effect of population size on mobilization is significantly greater (from a substantive and a statistical standpoint) in the Rim South than in the Deep South. These results are also consistent with our hypothesized expectations.

The effects of GOP growth on black mobilization in the Deep South are more than statistically significant; they are substantively significant as well. Figure 8.3 highlights the substantive effect of GOP growth on black mobilization, and we can see that it is dramatic.¹⁴ The figure indicates black mobilization rates increasing monotonically over time from 9.6 percent in 1966 to 22.5 percent by 2008. The effect related to GOP strength then accounts for nearly a quarter of black mobilization by the end of our time frame. Though we have no empirical evidence to suggest that GOP growth has affected black mobilization outside the Deep South, the substantive impact of the effects in the Deep South is quite dramatic.

Consistent with previous research on black mobilization rates, we also see evidence of a “political context” effect. Registration rates are consistently higher in presidential election years, and we see that black mobilization was higher during the first Jackson candidacy (1984) and the year President Obama was elected (2008). Somewhat surprisingly, we find no evidence of an income effect on black mobilization. It is worth noting the consistency of each of these results across the Rim South and the Deep South. Where relative advantage theory suggests distinctive results in the Rim South and the Deep South, we find them. When no distinction is expected, one does not materialize.

Given the size of the coefficients for contextual effects associated with presidential elections and the Jackson and Obama campaigns, the effect of GOP growth clearly dwarfs the substantial impacts of these other factors. In the Deep South, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the primary impetus to black mobilization was the growth of the Republican Party. Is the same dynamic obviously at work at the substate level? We turn to that question in the next section.

Substate-Level Analysis

Although relative advantage theory provides a rationale for state-level effects in the South, that does not preclude the possibility of local context effects throughout the South. Given the wide variation in the size of the black populations in

TABLE 8.1. Expanding Black Mobilization in the South, 1965-2008

Site	Variable	Unit	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Site 1	Constant		-2.45	1.40	-4.00	-1.00
	Reproductive Success	Individuals	4.15	1.80	2.00	6.00
	% Black	%	5.80	1.20	4.00	7.00
	Black Income	Thousands	1.20	0.40	0.80	1.60
Site 2	Constant		-2.45	1.40	-4.00	-1.00
	Reproductive Success	Individuals	4.15	1.80	2.00	6.00
	% Black	%	5.80	1.20	4.00	7.00
	Black Income	Thousands	1.20	0.40	0.80	1.60
Site 3	Constant		-2.45	1.40	-4.00	-1.00
	Reproductive Success	Individuals	4.15	1.80	2.00	6.00
	% Black	%	5.80	1.20	4.00	7.00
	Black Income	Thousands	1.20	0.40	0.80	1.60
Site 4	Constant		-2.45	1.40	-4.00	-1.00
	Reproductive Success	Individuals	4.15	1.80	2.00	6.00
	% Black	%	5.80	1.20	4.00	7.00
	Black Income	Thousands	1.20	0.40	0.80	1.60

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FIGURE 8.3 The Effect of GDP Growth on Black Mobilization in the Deep South, 1956-2008



countries within each of the Southern states, there is at least some reason to think (and relative advantage theory suggests that county-level GOP growth might well be influenced by the level of black mobilization—especially in those counties with larger black populations. Unfortunately, county-level data on black mobilization (percentage of blacks registered to vote) and Republican strength across the time period of our analysis for any reasonably comparable time period is very limited. In fact, only two states collect sufficient data for a feasible analysis of the impact of GOP growth on black mobilization—North Carolina and Louisiana, a Rim South state (albeit one with a historically high African American population) and a Deep South state. Using the only satisfactory county-level data available to us, we investigate the localized impact of GOP growth on black mobilization in Louisiana and North Carolina.

First, we note that in both Louisiana and North Carolina, not only has the average level of black mobilization increased dramatically since the passage of the VRA, but the variation among counties in both states has *decreased* dramatically (see Figures 8.4 and 8.5). Notice that while at least some counties in Louisiana and North Carolina had very high rates of black mobilization since the mid-1960s, the floor of black mobilization has risen consistently since that time.

The substate level results for Louisiana and North Carolina presented in Table 8.2 are strikingly similar to the state level results for the Deep South.²⁰

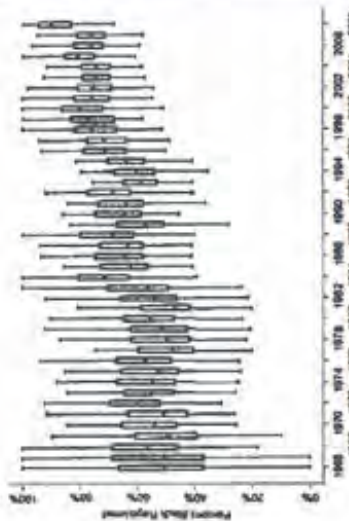


FIGURE 8.4 North Carolina Black Registration County Boxplots, 1966-2008

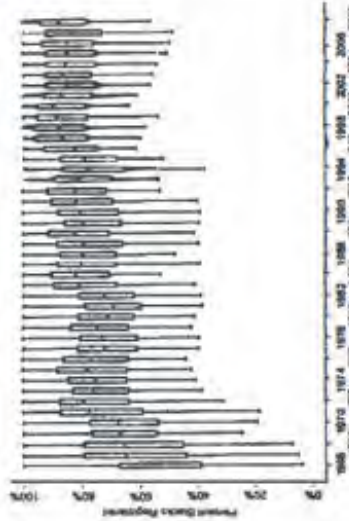


FIGURE 8.5 Louisiana Black Registration Parish Boxplots, 1966-2008

GOP growth clearly has a substantively and statistically significant effect on black mobilization. As the Republican Party grew in each of these states, the levels of black political mobilization—measured in terms of the percentage of voting age African Americans registered to vote—grew as well. We also see, as expected, presidential election years boosting black

mobilization, as did the candidacies of Jesse Jackson (in 1984) and President Obama. Somewhat surprisingly, we find a significant, but negative, income effect. At this point, we unfortunately have no explanation for this counterintuitive result.

To more clearly demonstrate the substantive effect of GOP growth on black mobilization, we have selected one representative county from North Carolina (Wake) and one representative parish from Louisiana (Caddo) and graphed the estimated effect of Republican growth on black mobilization based on the coefficient estimates from our subsample models. In each case, we chose a relatively large county/parish from a population “standpoint” and one that had neither an especially large nor an especially small African American population. These effects are presented in Figure 8.6.

In both Caddo Parish and Wake County, the trajectory of the substantive impact of GOP growth on black mobilization mirrors the state-level effect we see in the Deep South. While the effect was relatively small in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was quite substantial during the last two decades. Though the effect is somewhat larger in Wake County, it is still clear that in both Wake County and Caddo Parish, the driving force behind black mobilization is Republican growth.

Discussion and Conclusion

The impetus for the development of relative advantage theory arose out of the absence of a compelling explanation for the growth of Southern Republicanism over the past half-century. Yet the implications of the strategic behavior that underlies the theory of relative advantage are not limited to the behavior of white Southern conservatives: relative advantage suggests at least a partial explanation for African American political behavior, particularly in regard to electoral mobilization. Clearly, just as white conservatives strategically viewed the Republican Party as a mechanism to regain political influence following the enfranchisement of blacks into the electorate, African Americans also responded strategically to increases in Republican strength through heightened mobilization on their own part in an effort to counter GOP advances. To the extent that African Americans acted on a perceived “linked fate” (Dawson 1994), this strategic behavior is likely to be even more prevalent.

In this chapter, we assess the extent to which the implications of relative advantage theory manifest itself in the behavior of African Americans at the state and subsample levels in Louisiana and North Carolina. We find strong

TABLE 8.3 Explaining County-Level Black Mobilization in Louisiana and North Carolina, 1966–2008

	LOUISIANA	LOUISIANA	NORTH CAROLINA	NORTH CAROLINA
Republican Strength ¹¹	.0683*** (.0153)	.1055*** (.0193)	.3794*** (.0167)	.415*** (.0160)
Black Mobilization ¹⁴	.8196*** (.0191)	.8140*** (.0211)	.7211*** (.0207)	.781*** (.0144)
% Black	.0432*** (.0015)	.0510*** (.0011)	.1413*** (.0045)	.1844*** (.0041)
Black Income (in thousands)	.00154*** (.0003)	.0014*** (.0003)	.0014*** (.0003)	.0014*** (.0003)
Jackson 1984	.0070*** (.0013)	.0070*** (.0013)	.0070*** (.0013)	.0070*** (.0013)
Presidential Election Year	.0019*** (.0004)	.0019*** (.0004)	.0019*** (.0004)	.0019*** (.0004)
Obama 2008	.0019*** (.0004)	.0019*** (.0004)	.0019*** (.0004)	.0019*** (.0004)
Enslavement Procedure	WFE .81	WFE .81	WFE .75	WFE .75
N	2,614	2,485	4,000	3,673

Notes: ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05, two-tailed tests.



FIGURE 8.5 The Effect of GOP Growth on Black Mobilization

support—at both levels of analysis—for what is perhaps the most surprising aspect of relative advantage theory: the fact that GOP growth drove black mobilization in areas of the South where whites have traditionally been the most conservative and where African Americans have been most numerous (i.e., the Deep South states or counties/parishes located within black-belt regions within a particular state). What we now have is an integrated explanation of the two most significant aspects of the transformation of the Southern party system—an explanation that, at every turn, has passed empirical muster.

CHAPTER 9 Summary and Concluding Thoughts
Disintegration of the Solid South

IN THE WILKINS of the last century, during the congressional elections of 1950, not a single Southern Republican won a Senate race, and only two Southern Republicans won seats in the House of Representatives. The two Southern Republican victors were both from Tennessee: a Run South state. B. Carroll Reece won the election from the first congressional district with considerably less than 50 percent of the vote in a three-person race in which the Independent came in second. Reece's district was in upper east Tennessee and included the tri-cities area, a traditional stronghold of what Ray referred to as "mountain Republicans." The other Tennesseean was Howard Baker. The future senator and Ronald Reagan's chief of staff won a close election for the House seat in the second congressional district by less than 3,300 votes. Baker also served a district in east Tennessee. In an era of mass black disenfranchisement in the region, there were no African American members of Congress from the South during this period of time.

Some sixty years later, there are not only far more Republicans in the congressional delegations from the South, there are also far more African Americans. Following the 2020 elections, Democrats held fewer than 30 percent of the congressional seats in the Southern states. Of the twenty-two Senate seats in the South, only three are held by Democrats. A majority of Southern Democratic House members are African American or Hispanic, and only one House seat in the Deep South is held by a white Democrat (John Barrow—GA).

In chapter 2, we provided an extensive depiction of this transformation, showing, in particular, that GDP growth was both temporally and spatially not uniform across the region. In certain regions in some states, bands of Southern Republicans were politically active before 1930. Other areas had,

for all intents and purposes, no Republican Party at all until the 1990s. We also showed that by the beginning of the twenty-first century, Southern Republicanism was ubiquitous in every state in both the Rim South and the Deep South.

The growth in Southern Republicanism was matched by a similar growth in the mobilization of the black population. In 1960, fewer than 30 percent of voting age African Americans in the South had registered to vote. By 2008, nearly three-quarters of all voting-age African American Southerners had registered to vote. Although there is evidence that black mobilization was growing before the passage of the VRA in 1965 (see Timpane 1999), there is little question that the VRA provided the impetus for this broad and dramatic increase in voter registration.

The mobilization of the African American population was a regionwide phenomenon in the South over the past half-century, but as we showed in chapter 8, the extent of black mobilization was not uniform across states and counties. The data clearly indicate that some areas experienced significantly greater mobilization than others. It is also apparent that mobilization occurred more rapidly in some areas than in others. The areas with the largest increase in mobilization, however, were not often the same areas in which mobilization increased most rapidly.

As the existing literature would suggest, we see that black mobilization spiked with significant political events, such as the Jackson campaign in 1984 and the Obama campaign and election in 2008. But other patterns in black mobilization are not easily explained by existing research. In chapter 8, we highlighted the fact that we find no evidence of a positive relationship between income and black mobilization at either the state or the substate level. There is little reason to think that the particular type of political participation on which we focus—registering to vote—is likely to be primarily a function of black empowerment, another important aspect of the research on black political participation.

The theory of relative advantage outlined in chapter 5 helps us understand this dramatic Southern transformation. It also provides a logic that highlights the intersection of the two pillars of the disintegration of the “Solid South”—the mobilization of African Americans and the growth of the GOP. As African Americans flowed into the electorate (and overwhelmingly the Democratic Party), white conservatives bled for the Republican Party. Although the competitiveness of the Southern Republican and the organizational strength of the Republican Party in the South had an independent impact on subsequent GOP growth, we saw a strong relationship between black electoral strength and GOP growth even when accounting for variation

in the strength of other factors. In chapter 4, we illustrated the dynamics of relative advantage with detailed case studies and a wealth of archival data.

We saw this dynamic in patterns of GOP growth clearly and consistently at the state level (in chapter 3) and at the county-level level (in chapter 6). Sometimes surprisingly given the limitations of the data, we also found evidence of this dynamic at the individual level (although this effect was mediated). We also found that the mobilization of the African American electorate had a substantial effect on GOP growth in the face of controls for other traditional explanations, such as income growth, in-migration, and evangelicalism. Simply put, we found, as the theory of relative advantage predicted, that the growth of Southern Republicanism was primarily driven by racial dynamics, not class, demographic factors, or religion, as others have suggested. Though we are suggesting a distinctive dynamic, in this important respect our work mirrors Key’s (1949) seminal test on Southern politics. At the midpoint of the last century, according to Key, Southern politics revolved around the issue of race. Southern politics in the early twenty-first century still revolves around the issue of race.

Much of the recent research on Southern politics—Lublin (2004) and Shafer and Johnston (2001, 2006) are prominent examples—argues that the role of race in modern Southern politics has been overemphasized and that the key to understanding the postwar political transformation in the South is class conflict driven by economic growth. We are not arguing that the economic transformation of the South did not play a role in the development of the Republican Party in the region, but it is not the key aspect of—or the primary mover behind—the growth of the Southern wing of the GOP. To understand the temporal and spatial dynamics of GOP growth in the region, we would argue that one must understand the politics of race. Stated succinctly, the partisan and political transformation of the South over the past half-century has, most centrally, revolved around the issue of race.

But is it possible that this racial dynamic has played itself out? If we are correct about the political dynamics that have gotten us to this point, then we may be very near the high-water mark of Southern Republicanism. Based on our analysis, the primary impetus for the growth of the Southern wing of the GOP was the increasing electoral strength of the African American population. A significant increase in black electoral strength would require one of the following: (1) a sizeable jump in the mobilization rate of the existing African American population, (2) a large increase in the relative size of the African American population, or (3) some non-trivial increase in both mobilization rates and population among African Americans.

With the release of the 2010 census data, demographers have highlighted a number of important trends related to the black population. The first of these involves black migration patterns within the United States. Increasingly, blacks born outside the South are moving to the region, reversing a longtime trend begun with the Great Migration.¹ This pattern, in part, has also resulted in an increasing share of the nation's black population residing in the region. By 2010, half of the black population (49.8 percent) was again living in the eleven-state South, up from a low of 43.1 percent in 1970.² Neither of these trends, however, has significantly altered the share of the black population within the region relative to other racial/ethnic groups. Table 9.1 displays the racial/ethnic composition of the South by decade beginning in 1970. Since 1970, blacks have comprised between 20.3 percent (1970) and 19.3 percent (2010) of the total population of the region—a remarkably stable pattern. The larger demographic trend to note from Table 9.1 is the sizeable drop in the non-Hispanic white population in the region, from 72.6 percent in 1980 to 58.3 percent in 2010, and the concomitant rise in the share of the Hispanic population, up nearly 11 percent over the same period of time.

Based on current demographic patterns then, we are likely to see neither a significant increase in black mobilization rates (which, according to census data are slightly higher than white mobilization rates) nor an increase in the relative size of the African American population in the South. The dynamic that has driven the growth of the Southern GOP to this point is unlikely to produce substantial further growth—at least among whites.

This prediction of a high-water mark for GOP growth among Southern whites is an important distinguishing characteristic of the theory of relative advantage. If, as others have recently argued, Southern Republicanism is primarily driven by class dynamics, then, as income rises among whites, we

TABLE 9.1 Racial/Ethnic Composition of the American South, 1970-2010

YEAR	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
1970	73.1%	24.9%	—
1980	72.6%	22.7%	—
1990	70.5%	20.1%	—
2000	70.6%	19.4%	3.0%
2010	70.2%	19.0%	9.8%
2010	64.2%	19.3%	11.1%
2010	58.3%	19.3%	17.6%

SOURCE: Table 1 is the percentage of total population in the eleven-state South composed of each group. The Census Bureau did not release population data on Hispanic ethnicity until 1980. Source: Decennial U.S. Census data.

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should expect to see further Republican growth within this population segment, which factors will drive future party system change obviously remains to be seen.

But even granting that racial dynamics, more specifically the relationship between black and white Southerners, have driven Republican growth to this point, the future of the Southern Republican Party is unlikely to unfold solely in terms of black and white. At the time of the passage of the VRA, the census did not even keep track of the size of the Hispanic population. Until 1970, the demographic distinctions were "white" and "nonwhite." Today, the future of the Southern party system may well depend on the attitudes and mobilization of Southern Hispanics. We provide a brief discussion of some of the possibilities associated with the growing political significance of the Hispanic population in the next section.

The Growing Political Significance of Southern Hispanics

If the growth of Southern Republicanism and the mobilization of African Americans in the South are the two most significant political phenomena of the past half-century, then the most significant demographic phenomenon of the last twenty years is the widespread growth of the Hispanic population. In the early portion of the twenty-first century, the growth of the Southern Hispanic population is also shaping up to be one of the most important political dynamics as well (see again Table 9.1 for regional comparisons over time). While the South has had a small number of large, localized Hispanic communities for over a century (in Texas, for example), the dramatic region-wide growth of the Hispanic population is a late twentieth-century phenomenon. As Hispanics transform Southern demography, they have the potential to also transform Southern politics. To provide an idea of the potential for demographic and political change, consider the following: Texas is currently one of only four states where Anglos (non-Hispanic whites) do not represent the majority racial/ethnic group. By 2015, it is predicted that Hispanics will become a majority in Texas.³

Although Hispanics are not a monolithic group, in political or other terms, Hispanics not of Cuban origin tend to identify and vote Democratic more than a majority of the time.⁴ Given the growth in this segment of the population, this trend should be troubling to the Republican Party in the region. Hispanics tend to be relatively conservative on social issues but they are fairly liberal on economic matters. The former should benefit Republicans and the latter Democrats. So, unlike the black electorate, there does appear to be some maneuvering room for Republicans with this particular

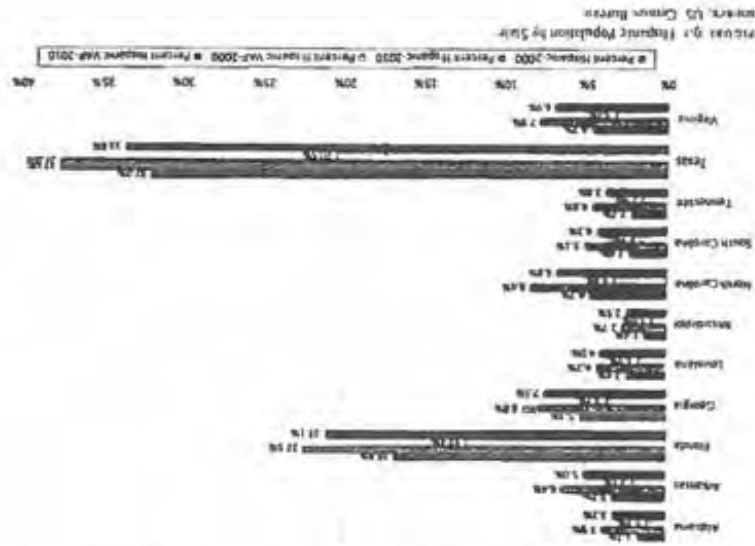
groups. However, the party's current stance on the immigration issue has proven to be a stumbling block in the GOP's effort to court Hispanics. For a population segment with comparatively higher degrees of poverty and lower levels of educational attainment, the draw from economic issues would also seem to benefit the Democratic Party. Party registration figures from North Carolina indicate that approximately 40 percent of Hispanics identify as Democrats, compared to 38 percent Republicans, and 31 percent with no party affiliation (Gullock and Hood 2006). In short, existing research provides little guidance on the issue of which camp a majority of Hispanics may choose in terms of partisan affiliation.

A number of factors will work to mislead the influence of Hispanics in the region for several decades into the future, even in Texas and Florida. Figure 9.1 presents the Hispanic share of the population for each Southern state along with the Hispanic voting-age population (VAP) using data from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. censuses. For every state except Texas, Florida, and Georgia, Hispanics comprised less than 5 percent of the total population in 2000. Note that even these small percentages represent substantial growth in a region where Hispanics were a negligible presence in many states before 1990. Total population estimates for 2010 show an increase in the number of states with a Hispanic population over 5 percent to six, all of which are located in the Sun South with the exception of Deep South Georgia. These 2010 estimates place the Hispanic population in Florida and Texas at 11.1 percent and 37.6 percent respectively.

Despite a growing presence throughout the region, recent research indicates that Hispanics will be slow to reshape the politics of the South. One recent study estimates that it could be the 2030s before growth in the Hispanic population alone would help Democrats reach parity with the GOP in Texas (Stanley 2008). A number of factors currently work to constrain the political influence of Hispanics in the region. One of these is the fact that the Hispanic population is, on average, currently younger than the non-Hispanic population. In Texas where Hispanics make up more than a third of the state's total population, this group comprises only about one-fifth of the VAP. Again, see Figure 9.1 for comparisons of the Hispanic VAP by state.

A second limiting factor relates to the issue of citizenship. A large percentage of Hispanics who have migrated to the South (with the exception of Florida and Texas) are not citizens and therefore cannot vote. Census estimates from the 2008 election cycle indicate that Hispanics comprised only 46 percent of the citizen VAP in Florida, compared to a 20.7 percent share of the VAP.

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The potential for Hispanic political influence is also limited by the fact that Hispanic citizens in the South register and vote at lower levels than do blacks or whites. For the 2008 election, the Census Bureau put Hispanic registration among citizens to be to be 54.3 percent in Texas, compared to 77.7 percent for blacks and 73.6 percent for whites. The same source indicates that 17.8 percent of Hispanic citizens voted in the 2008 general election, far below 64.9 percent and 64.7 percent for blacks and whites respectively.¹ In Georgia, where we do not have to rely on estimates, Hispanic turnout in the 2008 general election was 59.6 percent. Again, this figure is far below turnout rates for blacks at 75.8 percent and whites at 77.4 percent.² The bottom line is that until such disparities dissipate, Hispanics will not reach their full political potential in any Southern state, despite their growing population base.

Still, the potentially transforming effects of a substantial increase in Hispanic voters should not be ignored. As in the case of African Americans, standard models of mobilization (primarily designed for whites) do not fully capture the political activity of Hispanics (see Leighley and Vedlitz 1999 and Leighley 2000). As Jang notes:

The central finding of the literature is that the traditional models of political participation, based on individuals' socio-economic status and accompanying political resources (e.g., Verba and Nie 1979; Verba et al. 1978, 1995; and Wolfson and Rosenstone 1980), alone do not adequately explain the patterns in political participation among Latinos . . . (2009, 34).

The most recent work on Hispanic mobilization has tended to focus on the role of racial context in spurring or constraining Hispanic political activity. However, it has been difficult to establish (find evidence of) a relationship between Hispanic context and Hispanic mobilization or black/white context and Hispanic mobilization (see Jang 2009 and Masubayashi 2009). The most compelling recent evidence suggests that Hispanic mobilization is positively associated with the size of the Hispanic population and with the racial/ethnic heterogeneity of the geographic context (Jang 2009). There is also evidence of an income effect on mobilization (an increase in Hispanic income leads to an increase in mobilization) and interactive effects between group size and income or racial/ethnic heterogeneity (Jang 2009).

The extent to which these factors may influence mobilization in the South remains to be seen. We also wonder if there are explicit political dynamics involved in the mobilization of Hispanics in the South. That the Hispanic population lacks a strong partisan vector—a clear preference for

one party or the other—would suggest little change in the trend of Hispanic mobilization. However, if a strong partisan preference develops—that is, a large majority of mobilized Hispanics consistently demonstrates a preference for one party—then relative advantage suggests that Hispanic mobilization will increase accordingly. If Hispanic support coalesces around a single party, then we should see a significant increase in Hispanic mobilization. Why? Because the power of a cohesive Hispanic voting bloc coupled with an increase in mobilization is significantly greater than the value of mobilization for a bifurcated constituency. So, if the Hispanic population becomes more politically cohesive, we should also expect to see a concomitant increase in Hispanic mobilization.

Our earlier prediction that we are at (or very near) the high-water mark of Southern Republicanism is based on our understanding of black/white political dynamics. The future political development of the Hispanic population in the South could obviously have a significant impact on the subsequent trajectory of partisan politics. In fact, if the Hispanic population in the South coalesces around the Republican Party, we may be nowhere near the high-water mark of Southern Republicanism. If Hispanics coalesce within the Democratic Party, then we may have seen the zenith of the GOP in the American South.

Race, Class, and the Engine of American Party Politics

As students of Southern politics, we would argue that regional politics should be studied for its own sake. But Southern politics is not isolated from the broader arena of American politics. Certainly no other region has undergone the dramatic partisan transformation experienced by Southerners during the past half-century, but the political implications of this transformation go well beyond Southern borders.

First, the level of ideological polarization in the American party system is simply inconceivable in the absence of the disintegration of the Solid South and the partisan transformation of Southern politics. Although scholars will certainly argue about the extent of ideological polarization (see, for example, Abramowitz 2010; Fiorina et al. 2000; Levendusky 2009; and Poole and Rosenthal 2007), Southern political dynamics enabled the development of whatever ideological polarization exists in the modern party system. We believe that this distinctive Southern contribution to our national party system is not fully appreciated.

But beyond this, we find the misinterpretation of the Southern partisan transformation problematic because of what it then mistakenly implies

about the national party system. It is now commonplace to assume that the disintegration of the Solid South was the long overdue demise of a distinctive Southern politics. Basically, "the party system of the contemporary South has gradually come to resemble that of the country as a whole" (Bartels 2008, 94). From this perspective, the end of Democratic dominance resulted from (i) the waning significance of race, (ii) the economic transformation of the South, and (iii) the rise of a class-based politics. What is unclear, then, is why working- and middle-class Southern whites have shifted from their "natural" class home—the Democratic Party—to the Republican Party. Bartels also notes that the "decline in support for Democratic presidential candidates among white voters over the past half-century is entirely attributable to partisan change in the South" (2008, 78), a partisan change inconsistent with class-based explanations, at least for working- and middle-class whites.

Our theoretical and empirical focus here has been the South, and so we have no basis on which to decide whether the South is, in terms of partisan dynamics, indistinguishable from the rest of the United States. What we can say is that the Southern party system over the past half-century revolved around issues of race—not class. Much of the recent work on the American party system has clearly then underemphasized the crucial and distinctive role that race and racial dynamics have played.

Which leads us to what we consider the crucial question for the future of Southern politics (and possibly national politics): Whither Hispanics? The racial dynamics that produced the party system in the modern South are not likely to produce drastic changes any time soon. We do not expect a dramatic increase in the mobilization or the electoral strength of the African American population, and we should thus not expect a substantial increase in Republicanism among Southern whites. But if Hispanic Americans in the South coalesce around a single party—Democrat or Republican—the shift in the balance of power between the parties could well result in the development of a new party system. And if conjectures based on relative advantage theory are correct, once the transformation begins (when Hispanics begin a more-or-less permanent and consistent attachment to a single party), it could happen far more quickly than expected.

Although our focus is on the South and its politics, if the support of Southern Hispanics goes overwhelmingly to one party or the other, then spillover effects at the national level are all but unavoidable. Imagine the national-level ramifications of a Southern party system in which the Hispanic voting bloc could consistently deliver Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas—the four Southern states with the largest Hispanic populations—to their party's presidential candidate. How would the opposing candidate

effectively combat such an Electoral College windfall? Needless to say, it would be difficult.

We are not there yet, and it is unclear when (or if) we ever will be. Race has left an indelible imprint on the region, and it would certainly be a mistake to ignore the potential future role of racial dynamics in Southern politics and, by implication, national politics. Just as the Southern novelist William Faulkner wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

