Growth, Demographics, Slavery, and Voting in U.S. Gubernatorial Elections, 1840-1860[1]

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Abstract:

While scholars have given extensive study to the role of slavery as part of America's political development, less attention has been given to how the institution affected subnational elections in the nineteenth century. More generally, little systematic work has been done on gubernatorial voting patterns in the antebellum period, and particularly on how the slavery positions of the parties mattered relative to other factors influencing gubernatorial vote share. In this paper we examine gubernatorial voting patterns in the antebellum period of 1840-1860, modeling vote shares for each election. We find that pro-slavery views matter second only to incumbency in predicting gubernatorial vote share. Results give quantitative heft to the degree to which slavery was a central organizing issue in nineteenth century political life, show how slavery was not only an issue that dominated federal but also state politics, and suggest that gubernatorial candidates sought labels communicating their slavery bonafides as a path to electoral success.

Introduction

In the twenty years preceding the Civil War, the United States faced widespread economic and demographic changes, accompanied by – of course – significant questions about support for slavery. While considerable attention has been devoted to analyzing slavery in the antebellum United States, empirical work has largely operationalized the institution as a dependent variable (for example, questions about how territorial expansion impacted the institution of slavery or about how industrialization impacted the viability of slavery as an industry) or a derivative of a dependent variable (for example, O'Connell et al 2020), and has in many ways focused on its federal-level support and operationalization (Baker 2012). These efforts have been valuable, but suffer potential drawbacks: First, they sit uncomfortably against the fact that the federal government was extremely weak during this period, suggesting that we should turn our focus to the states as the more relevant political actors during this era. Second, this state power and heterogeneity in state conditions needs to be squared with the party dynamics of the era. Third, we contend that slavery as a right-hand-side variable could influence electoral outcomes within states and if so, could demonstrate how slavery (and views about it) was perhaps *the* defining issue in state politics prior to the Civil War (this is in potential tension to the view that it was only one important issue among many in the U.S. states during the antebellum period). One open question concerns *how much* slavery may have influenced electoral outcomes within states; determining the *how much* is both theoretically and empirically important as it would help us establish a baseline measure of the degree to which slavery mattered in gubernatorial contests in the lead up to the Civil War.

Thus, in this paper we systematically examine whether support for slavery among gubernatorial candidates impacted vote shares in gubernatorial electoral contests between 1840 and 1860. A major objective of the paper is to evaluate the importance of slavery to then guide future research to examine ways in which slavery was context-conditional to other factors influencing

gubernatorial vote share. While making an empirical contribution to the study of 19th century subnational elections, we connect with two vast literatures in American political economy: voting and federalism. In the analyses that follow, we evaluate how candidate support for slavery influenced mass behavior with respect to voting in gubernatorial elections and consider this factor alongside economic changes (industrialization within the states) and demographic changes (population growth and changes in immigration). At the same time, with our state-level approach, we shed light on the capacity of governors. Governors are often thought of as pragmatic managers rather than passionate and committed ideologues, but did this apply in the antebellum era? Engstrom and Kernell (2014: 167) suggest perhaps not, but note that it remains an empirical question:

> In helping design electoral rules, dispensing state patronage, and providing coattails to state legislatures – who would go on to draw congressional districts and elect U.S. senators – governors played a critical role in state and national party fortunes. Despite this significance, very little is known about nineteenth century gubernatorial elections.

Scholarship on the development of the federal state would also suggest not, as we would perhaps expect governors to be ideologues in an era when the state (rather than the national government) was the primary location of policymaking, suggesting that state policymaking was higher stakes than it arguably became in an era of more centralized federal policymaking (e.g. the twentieth and twenty-first centuries).

We begin by discussing the politics of the period from 1840-1860, noting its defining features and major dynamics as we focus on the twin pillars of voting (elections) and federalism. We then put the focus on our empirical approach, describing the opportunities and challenges in modeling gubernatorial elections of the era. After detailing the data we cleaned and compiled in the

service of our questions, we provide our modeling strategy and present the results. We close by working through the importance of our findings and providing an agenda for further research.

Background and Motivation: 1840-1860 America

The antebellum period was a time of dramatic change for the young United States – an era fraught with significant economic, cultural, and political shifts that all influenced voting behavior. It is characterized by high turnout electoral contests and distinctly ideological parties with important cultural, religious, and demographic characteristics (Silbey, 1991). In particular, major influences included economic changes and industrialization within the states (Taylor, 1951; Goodrich, 1960; North, 1966; Ashworth, 1995), along with demographic changes through population growth and immigration (Gienapp, 1985; Foner, 1995; Cohn, 2000). Candidate support for slavery also played an important role in shaping mass voting, though the extent to which this mattered in subnational elections is more speculative than established – empirical work has largely focused on voting behavior at the federal level. Given the relative weakness of the federal government during this period, along with the tendency of most individuals to construct their political preferences around local and personal dynamics (Silbey, 1985), electoral candidates in state races would seem to be the more relevant political actors. But were local and state politicians truly buffered from national political forces?

Party Dynamics of the Period: An Overview

So-called "sectional explanations" contend that conflict between the North and the South was the critical driving force behind political life and that the parties simply mirrored this divide. Of course, while there were some clear dividing lines, simple sectional explanations fail to account for the parties' influence in the myriad economic and cultural issues that informed voting behavior (Silbey, 1985; Feller, 1995; Foner, 1995). Nascent national political parties were central in organizing and shaping antebellum politics, and there were clear ideological distinctions among the parties (Silbey, 1985;

Ashworth, 1987; Feller, 1995). While some contend the parties did not contain unique platforms (Hofstadter, 1969), there were distinct differences between the Democrats and the Whigs (Ashworth, 1987). The Whigs were originally a heterogenous, anti-Jackson coalition and were divided on the issue of slavery (Poage, 1936; Cooper, 1978). Southern Whigs, in particular, recognized the significance of slavery as an electoral issue and – along with Southern Democrats – sought a Southern-led resolution (Cooper, 1978). The Democratic party was characterized by a strong desire for states' rights and protecting the institution of slavery (Cooper, 1978). The Republican party was primarily concerned with the issue of slavery, and perceptions of slavery as a moral issue and anti-Southern sentiments were central to Republicanism (Foner, 1995).

To what extent did local and state party dynamics differ from national/regional ones? Engstrom and Kernell (2014) contend that during the nineteenth century local and state politics were actually – and perhaps counter-intuitively – tightly linked to national dynamics due to the prevalence of party balloting. Of course, the quasi-national argument of Engstrom and Kernell (2014) perhaps runs against the view that politics in the antebellum era were primarily state-driven. While the introduction of the Australian ballot would subsequently cut into coattails, most of this electoral institutional change did not happen until the later 1800s. Of course, other forces that would produce an expectation of more state-level heterogeneity in terms of electoral outcomes – frequent and non-coinciding gubernatorial elections – were also characteristics of this time.

The Political Economy of Slavery in Antebellum America

Addressing the role of slavery as a social and economic institution in the U.S is central to understanding the political economy of voting in the antebellum period. Southern politics, in particular, revolved around the issue of slavery (Cooper, 1978), so candidate support for slavery would have been crucial to electoral success. Though some scholars have noted that the South was economically and institutionally weaker than the North in the years leading up to the U.S. Civil War

(Genovese, 1965; Dillon, 1990; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2008), others assert that, beyond its obvious political implications, the economic impact of slavery in a multitude of fields and industries shows that it cannot be overlooked.[2]

For example, Starobin (1970) argues that slavery's role in industry is often overlooked, even if it was a small percentage of the entire slave economy. In the mining, transportation, and processing of other natural resources beyond traditional agriculture, slaves played key roles and were valued by owners of industry; insurance policies of the period, for example, underscored the importance of slaves as an investment for business owners (Starobin, 1970).

Rising slave prices may have contributed to the growing value of the slave economy in the South during the 1850s, making it somewhat difficult for the average white southerner to purchase slaves (Wright, 1978). However, quantitative analysis from Gavin Wright (1978) also shows that the concentration of agricultural wealth in the South may have been overstated. Though Fogel and Engerman (1974) assert that slavery was an economy of scale, and that agriculture production in the South was considerably more efficient than Northern agriculture production, Wright (1978) argues that there were not widespread disparities between plantations and small farms in the South – at least when considering the scale of operations between the two different styles of production.

Outside of the South, Pessen (1973) shows that Tocqueville's argument that Americans lived under equal economic conditions during the Antebellum period did not hold. Rather, using data from the mid-1820s-1850, Pessen (1973) shows that wealth was becoming concentrated in the hands of families who were able to maintain such wealth across generations – upper class families in the Northeast were wielding great political power as well. The embeddedness of slavery in these different industries, its effects on individuals across a range of occupations, and its overall contributions to the economy all signal that slavery may also have been a prime consideration in the eyes of voters in this

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[2] We might add that slavery also impacted economic outcomes in the North, so it is not only a South-specific issue.

period. Further, regional differences in political culture of slavery (Phillips, 1929) throughout the Antebellum period suggest that we ought to consider the ways in which positions on slavery contributed to electoral outcomes at the *state* level. While political parties staked out positions on *the* question of the era, how the institution mattered and was experienced in everyday life differed greatly at the subnational level.

Economic Development: Railways and Industrialization

Taylor (1951) argues that a transportation boom was the defining feature of growth in the American economy in the immediate Antebellum era (i.e., 1840-1860). During this period, economic centers of major Northeastern cities were moving from ports to railroad stations; they began shifting their focus toward industrial purposes, both foreign and domestic. Subsequent scholarship on American railways, including work by Stover (1961) and Chandler (1965), underscores the importance of the rail system for the American economy – and by extension, electoral politics – during this period. Public funds certainly facilitated the transportation boom and economic growth in the U.S. during this time (Goodrich, 1960). But who was rewarded for these developments? There existed a multitude of principals in the production of rail and other transportation modes for goods and people in the 19th century U.S. – these included public actors at both the state and federal levels, as well as private actors (projects often had mixed backing from these different sources). Decisions on projects were often left up to individuals, so decisions were made quickly and perhaps hastily. Thus, we consider the extent to which industrial factors - particularly, the growth of railways – mattered for how voters rewarded (or punished) economic performance.

Empirical Strategy: Data Sources and Choices

To conduct our historical analysis of antebellum gubernatorial contest, we had to construct a data set from various sources, making numerous choices along the way. In this section we discuss the

key components of our empirical strategy. Figure 1 shows the states in our data – by North/South – that had gubernatorial elections between 1840-1849, between 1850-59, and in 1860, respectively. Three points are worth remembering about gubernatorial elections during this period: 1) States were being added to the country during these decades, so gubernatorial contests get added into our data set over time. 2) Not all states had gubernatorial elections (e.g., South Carolina), and in some states, the legislature appointed the governor under certain conditions. 3) States varied in terms of how frequently they conducted gubernatorial elections (e.g., Massachusetts had yearly elections), and in when these elections were held relative to presidential and congressional elections.

<INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE>

Dependent Variable: Gubernatorial Vote Share

Like others (e.g., Engstrom and Kernell 2014, Ch. 7), we model vote share as our dependent variable. In our case, the dependent variable and unit of analysis is a gubernatorial candidate's vote share as a percentage in a given election; this is coded from Michael Dubin's (2003) *United States Gubernatorial Elections, 1776-1860*. In addition to vote share, we also created variables for the year of an election and the candidates' state. Together, state and year indicators become fixed effects in our models, a move to counter any potential concerns about omitted variables.

Figure 2 displays vote share for candidates – in elections between 1840 and 1860 – by whether the candidate held a pro- or anti-slavery position. Most gubernatorial candidates during this period received vote shares somewhere between 40 and 60 percent (as we might expect). One notable exception comes in the number of anti-slavery candidates who pulled very little of the vote during elections in this period.

<INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE>

Key Independent Variable: Candidate Slavery Positions

Our main independent variable of interest is the slavery stances of Gubernatorial candidates in this period. We gauge these using candidates' recorded partisanship (also noted in Dubin's (2003) *United States Gubernatorial Elections, 1776-1860*), and information on candidates' home states. Specifically, candidates were coded as pro-slavery if they belonged to the:

- Democratic Party from both northern and southern states
- American (Know Nothing) Party if they were from the southern states
- Whig, and Whig/American (Know Nothing) Parties if they were from southern states

Candidates were coded as anti-slavery if they belonged to the:

- Free Soil Party
- Free Soil/Democratic Party
- Liberty Party
- Republican Party
- Republican/American (Know Nothing) Party
- Whig/Free Soil Party
- Whig/Republican Party from both northern and southern states
- American (Know Nothing) Party, Whig Party, and Whig/American (Know Nothing) Party from northern states.

While it is admittedly true that there was some degree of diversity on attitudes about slavery within party (for example, there was such a thing as an anti-slavery Democrat, we believe that the coalescence of the Democratic Party into a party that was largely accepting of the institution of slavery (even accounting for Northern Democrats, who by-and-large valued compromise on slavery as a means of preserving territorial integrity of the United States) qualifies them as pro-slavery compared to Republicans (who generally were more likely to hold anti-slavery views than Democrats) and even Northern Whigs, who to a not insubstantial amount migrated to the Republican Party over internal inconsistencies in the Whig platform over the issue of slavery. In cases where a candidate has a joint ticket with another party besides the Republican Party (e.g., being on a unified ticket with the Whig *and* Republican parties), that candidate is coded as being anti-slavery. Importantly, a candidate does need to believe that slavery is evil for them to be coded as anti-slavery. Many candidates of the Free Soil party opposed slavery on economic competition and not humanitarian grounds; even though

these candidates are not humanitarian in their opposition to slavery, they are still coded as being anti-slavery. Candidates from all other parties (88 of 800 observations) were not coded as either pro or anti-slavery candidates. Figure 3 displays the frequency of pro-slavery gubernatorial candidates by decade/year – that is, for the period between 1840-49, 1850-59, and then 1860. Across these data, the number of pro- and anti-slavery candidates was pretty evenly split, but the number of pro-slavery candidates outpaced the number of anti-slavery ones (consistent with multiple candidates running as pro-slavery in Southern states – see Figure 4-A in the appendix).

<div align="center"><INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE></div>

Our Definition of Northern States

We use the Mason-Dixon line as our decision-rule for North vs. South. Accordingly, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia were coded as Southern states. Meanwhile, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin were all coded as Northern states.[3] Use of the Mason-Dixon line is imperfect, as Delaware was a slave state; however, the line (along with the Ohio River if one moves westward) has been recognized as the traditional dividing point between North and South.

Other Information: Incumbency and Institutional Features

Beyond our key "proslavery" indicator, and our dependent variable of vote share, we collected several other pieces of information about candidates from Dubin's (2003) book on gubernatorial elections through the antebellum period. For example, we created an indicator noting whether or not the candidate was the incumbent governor at the time. This reflects the possibility that incumbency

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[3] We expand on the work of Engstrom and Kernell (2014) by modeling 1840-1860 gubernatorial elections across both Northern *and* Southern states.

(Mayhew 1974) could account for gubernatorial electoral vote share. Additionally, we coded whether or not an election was settled by a legislative decision – a feature of some states at the time, when gubernatorial candidates did not receive a majority of the vote.[4] In our analyses, we evaluate whether our results are robust to the exclusion of elections that were settled by the legislature (121 of 800 observations).

Other Information: State Legislative Composition

The party composition of state legislatures was obtained via Dubin's (2007) *Party Affiliations in the State Legislatures: A Year by Year Summary, 1796-2006.* Party composition is recorded as the percentage of the party in the Senate and House for each state, per legislative session. Data on party composition was collected for the Democratic,[5] Republican, and Whig[6] parties. Party composition of state legislatures is estimated as the proportion of Whig and Republican candidates in the House and Senate for a given year. We include legislative party composition to account for whether gubernatorial vote share is a function of party composition outcomes in the legislative branch.

Incorporating Political Economic Information

We created several measures from the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Censuses of the United States to capture information about state populations, immigration, and education. Total population is the total number of persons residing in a state, including slave and non-slave populations. Slave population is representative of the number of slaves per state, and is estimated as the proportion of slaves in the total population per state. Pro-slavery gubernatorial candidates may receive higher vote shares in states that have higher slave populations.

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[4] This existed in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont (Engstrom and Kernell 2014: 176).

[5] The Democratic party from 1830-1835 in some states was called the Jacksonians or the Jacksonian Democrats. These party labels were interchangeable during the period represented in this sample (Dubin, 2007, pp. 6).

[6] The Anti-Mason and Whig parties often supported the same candidate, and were occasionally indistinguishable from one another. The Pennsylvania candidates in 1835 are listed as Anti-Mason and Whig, and were coded as Whig in our data.

All data for immigration were obtained via census records from the Sixth and Seventh U.S. Censuses only.[7] Immigration in the sixth and seventh censuses is represented by a total count of the foreign population per state, and the breakdown of the countries of origin of the foreign population. Immigration variables are estimated as the proportion of immigrants in the total population per state, and the proportion of immigrants from their countries of origin in the total population per state. From these data on immigration, we created a measure that is a percentage of residents who are native to Protestant countries (immigration from these countries was considered to be more favorable at the time). Specifically, we took the percentage of individuals within a state who were native to either England, Scotland, Wales, Germany, Holland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, or Prussia. For the period between 1850-1859, we use nativity data from the 1850 Census; for 1860 we use nativity data from the 1860 Census. Protestantism in a state's immigration pool represents a measure of religious and racial demographic similarity and could influence gubernatorial electoral vote share.

Despite the formatting changes made to Census questions between 1840 and 1860, we were able to construct empirical measures to address factors that could have potentially influenced elections in this period. To account for education-related explanations, we collected data on the number of public schools[8] and number of pupils in these schools across the states. Observations between 1840-1849 were coded using data from the 1840 Census. Those that occurred between 1850 and 1859 were coded with data from the 1850 Census, and observations from 1860 were coded with data from the 1860 Census. Finally, we incorporate economic production based on the amount of miles of railroad in each state. That is, we created a railroad mileage measure from data reported in Henry V. Poor's

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[7] The fifth census did not include information on immigration and is subsequently excluded from this analysis.

[8] The precise language in these censuses changes between the 1840 and 1860 releases. In 1840, states were asked to report the "total number of primary and common schools" and the "total number of scholars in common schools". In both the 1850 and 1860 censuses, the label was changed to the "number of" and "pupils" in "public schools."

Manual of the Railroads in the United States. In some cases where Poor's *Manual* had missing data, we were able to use estimates from the *Pacific Railway* Report compiled by James Kirkwood.[9] [10]

Modeling Approach

We estimate models using ordinary least squares regression, clustering our observations by state to adjust our standard errors. Our dependent variable is a gubernatorial candidate's vote share in a given election between 1840 and 1860. Fixed effects for year and state are included in all specifications.

In our bivariate model, we have 602 observations. In our full model – with a host of controls – we have 272 observations due to various missing data issues. A contributing factor to this missingness is data from the 1840 Census (we have 505 observations when we do not include 1840 Census information). Descriptive statistics for all variables used in our analyses can be found in appendix tables 1-A and 2-A.

Results

We begin with the estimates of our main set of models presented in Table 1 (having removed observations where the state legislature decided the election). After discussing these findings, in Table 2 we present robustness checks, estimating models that include elections where

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[9] Maryland and the District of Columbia were listed together in these reports (1840, 1850, *and* 1860).

[10] For the 1840 report, we relied on the Pacific Railway Report for data on Florida, Mississippi, Indiana, Illinois due to missingness in *Poor's* Manual. Further, data for Vermont, Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Wisconsin, California, and Oregon were missing from both reports for 1840. In the 1850 report, we relied on the Pacific Railway Report for Missouri's railway mileage due to missingness in *Poor's* Manual, and Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, Iowa, California, Minnesota, Oregon, New Mexico, and Utah were missing in both reports. Finally, Oregon, Kansas, Minnesota, Colorado, Dakota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Washington were all missing observations in both reports for 1860.

state legislatures decided the outcome of the gubernatorial contest. Our unit of analysis is the gubernatorial candidate's vote share in a given election-state-year (as a percentage out of one hundred). Thus, our findings can be interpreted in terms of the percentage of the vote share that was gained or lost for gubernatorial candidates.

<TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>

Pro-Slavery Views Predict an Increase in Vote Share for Gubernatorial Candidates

In evaluating the role of candidate-specific, state-specific, and economic factors, we find robust support the idea that pro-slavery views predicted an increased share of the vote in U.S. state gubernatorial elections between 1840 and 1860 ($p<.01$). As a starting point, our bivariate model predicts a nearly 15% increase in vote share for candidates who represented a party with pro-slavery views during this period – this effect does not rely on specification/suppression effects (Lenz et al. 2021). When we account for a multitude of other explanatory factors in our "full model" – including whether or not the candidate was an incumbent, the amount of public schools operating in a state, the percentage of slaves in a state based on its total population, the percentage of Democrats, Republicans, and Whigs in a state's legislature leading up to the election, and the amount of miles of railroad lines in a given state – we find that the significance of our finding on pro-slavery views remains stable, though we see a modest drop in effect size (from about 15 percentage points in our bivariate model, to just under 10 percentage points).

Beyond our main findings, our results jell what others have shown repeatedly in more contemporary settings: incumbency was a significant and positive factor in determining electoral vote shares for candidates in elections in this time period (Carson and Sievert 2018). It is worth noting that these findings are also robust to the inclusion of our fixed effects (i.e., the state and year of the election). In our final specification in Table 1 - our full model with the addition of our nativity variable - we find that our main effect remains similarly signed, but drops from conventional levels

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of significance. However, it is worth remembering that this specification loses nearly half our observations - from 505 to 272 observations – as state-by-state information regarding the nativity of inhabitants was not included in all censuses.

Robustness Check: Observations Where Elections Were Decided by Legislative Decision

As a robustness check, we estimated the same models and included observations of elections that were decided by the state legislature. These results are reported in Table 2. Across our models, we find that our initial results are actually strengthened by the inclusion of these elections settled by the legislature. Further, the inclusion of these observations in our dataset brings us close to conventional levels of significance for the pro-slavery views finding (p=.16) in the specification that adds nativity and loses many cases (column 3).

<TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE>

Ultimately, across the models we estimated, listed in Tables 1 and 2, we find an overarching pattern of support for the idea that pro-slavery views from candidates and parties at the state level led to greater vote shares for gubernatorial candidates in the Antebellum period. Robust to the inclusion of other demographic, social, and economic controls, as well as fixed state and year effects, we provide evidence that pro-slavery attitudes ought to be conceived of as a right hand side variable in our models of the political economy of the U.S. Antebellum period.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our paper represents an empirical attempt to quantify the degree to which candidate support for slavery influenced mass behavior in the form of voting returns for U.S. state gubernatorial contests. Understanding the degree to which views about slavery mattered in these elections helps us determine how central the institution (and issues surrounding that institution) of slavery was to

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American political life in the early nineteenth century. Moreover, understanding the role of slavery in gubernatorial elections—the states were arguably the preeminent organs of American governance at that time—helps contextualize the sheer magnitude of slavery's weight on electoral outcomes in the antebellum era. One finding that particularly stands out in the full models in tables 1 and 2 (and this finding is more pronounced in the specifications not including nativity data) is that pro-slavery support approaches 56.8% of incumbency's explanatory magnitude in table 1 and 63.9% of incumbency's explanatory magnitude in table 2. Given that incumbency is one of the core determinants of vote share in the voting literature (a Google Scholar search of the phrase "incumbency advantage" yields 103,000 results), the magnitude of the pro-slavery finding firmly (in our opinion) establishes support for slavery as a key predictor of electoral success in the antebellum U.S. states.

We might imagine that incumbency advantage mattered more in an era of localized and information-poor politics, suggesting that the importance of pro-slavery views as a catalyst of mass voting behavior is all the stronger.[11] Moreover, the fact that we see this finding in gubernatorial contests suggests that voters knew the salience of the issue and were rewarding or punishing candidates based on what candidate labels communicated regarding interest in preserving slavery. This in turns suggests that state gubernatorial politics of the era were potentially highly ideological and not necessarily couched in pragmatic language of managerial competence (see Wolak and Parinandi 2022; although we cannot rule out the possibility that candidates defended the institution of slavery using the language of managerial competence). In this paper, we establish and estimate a baseline level to which views about slavery mattered to gubernatorial vote share when considered

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[11] Search was performed on February 15, 2023.

alongside other factors. A natural extension would evaluate how views about slavery interacted with other factors to influence gubernatorial vote share.

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Figure 1: States, by North/South, with gubernatorial elections in 1840-49 (left), 1950-59 (middle), and 1860 (right)
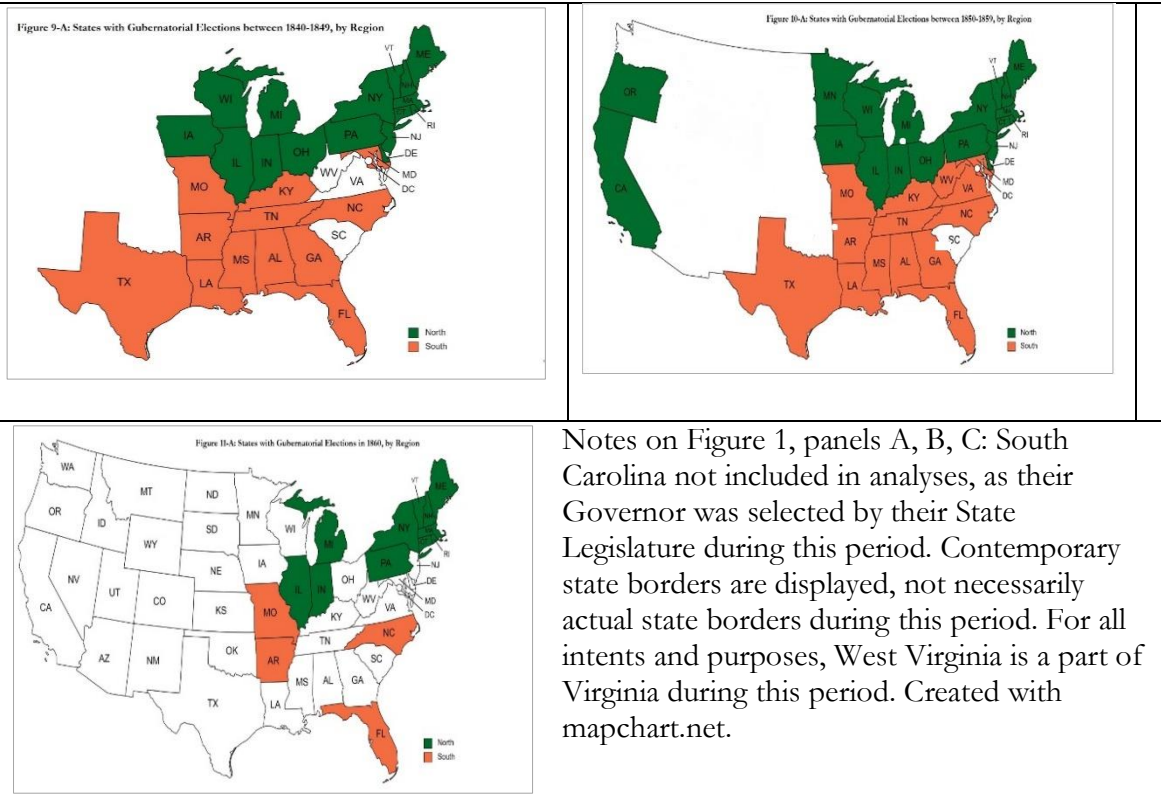

Figure 9-A: States with Gubernatorial Elections between 1840-1849, by Region

Figure 10-A: States with Gubernatorial Elections between 1850-1859, by Region

Figure 11-A: States with Gubernatorial Elections in 1860, by Region

Notes on Figure 1, panels A, B, C: South Carolina not included in analyses, as their Governor was selected by their State Legislature during this period. Contemporary state borders are displayed, not necessarily actual state borders during this period. For all intents and purposes, West Virginia is a part of Virginia during this period. Created with mapchart.net.

Figure 2: Percent of vote share for Gubernatorial candidates by slavery preferences

■ Anti-slavery candidate   ■ Pro-slavery candidate

Figure 3:
Frequency of pro-slavery candidates by decade/year, 1840-1860
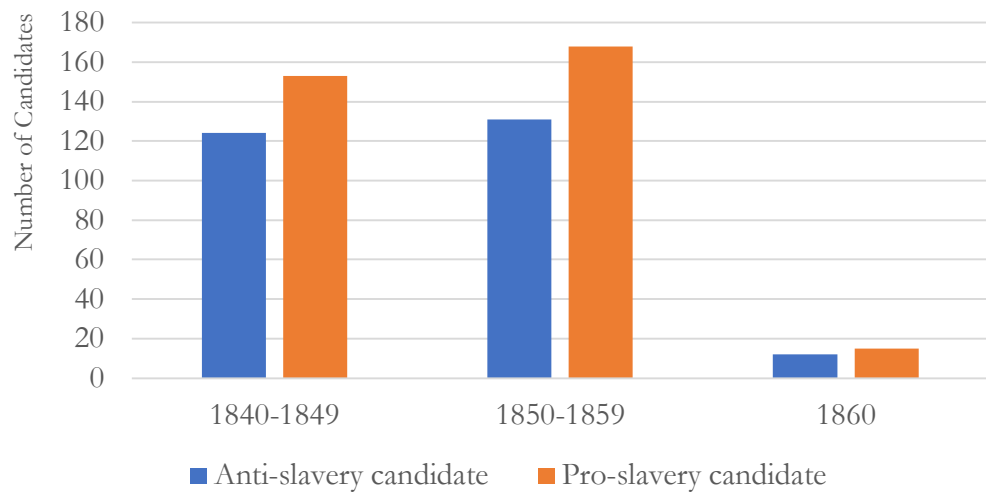
Table #1:			
Candidate specific traits predict electoral success for gubernatorial candidates, 1840-1860 (Elections settled by legislative decision removed)			
OLS slope coefficient (standard errors clustered on state)			

	% Vote share (by candidate) in Gubernatorial election (1840-1860)		
	Bivariate Model	*Full Model*	*Full Model (including nativity)*
Candidate-specific:			
Pro-slavery views	14.608 (2.591) ***	9.892 (3.305) ***	3.668 (4.170)
Incumbency		17.407 (2.453) ***	16.677 (2.589) ***
State-specific:			
Number of public schools		-0.001 (0.000)	0.002 (0.002)
Slaves, as a % of total population		0.573 (1.439)	5.016 (4.190)
% Republicans in state House		-0.103 (0.099)	-0.069 (0.120)
% Whigs in state House		-0.193 (0.071) **	-0.177 (0.109)
% Democrats in state House		0.010 (0.065)	0.054 (0.097)
% Republicans in state Senate		0.147 (0.102)	0.100 (0.120)
% Whigs in state Senate		0.109 (0.058) *	0.030 (0.089)
% Democrats in state Senate		0.011 (0.056)	-0.027 (0.089)
Economic:			
Railroad mileage		0.002 (0.002)	0.005 (0.005)
Nativity:			
% from Protestant countries			0.273 (0.274)
Fixed effects:			
State	-	+	+
Year	-	+	+
Summary statistics			
Constant	33.254 (1.889) ***	41.693 (4.444) ***	22.928 (20.609)
Adjusted R Squared	0.156	0.361	0.342
N	602	505	272

*** = p < 0.01, ** = p < 0.05, * = p < 0.1

Table #2:

Table #2:

Candidate specific traits predict electoral success for gubernatorial candidates, 1840-1860
(Elections settled by legislative decision included)

OLS slope coefficient (standard errors clustered on state)

	% Vote share (by candidate) in Gubernatorial election (1840-1860)		
	Bivariate Model	*Full Model*	*Full Model (including nativity)*
Candidate-specific:			
Pro-slavery views	14.897 (2.545) ***	10.707 (3.091) ***	5.684 (3.952) !
Incumbency		16.732 (2.120) ***	15.328 (2.253) ***
State-specific:			
Number of public schools		-0.000 (0.000)	0.002 (0.001)
Slaves, as a % of total population		0.403 (1.363)	4.237 (3.579)
% Republicans in state House		-0.111 (0.096)	-0.086 (0.132)
% Whigs in state House		-0.119 (0.065) *	-0.103 (0.100)
% Democrats in state House		-0.010 (0.052)	0.019 (0.081)
% Republicans in state Senate		0.170 (0.093) *	0.133 (0.121)
% Whigs in state Senate		0.083 (0.046) *	0.055 (0.070)
% Democrats in state Senate		0.037 (0.043)	-0.002 (0.063)
Economic:			
Railroad mileage		0.002 (0.001) *	0.005 (0.004)
Nativity:			
% from Protestant countries			0.279 (0.234)
Fixed effects:			
State	-	+	+
Year	-	+	+
Summary statistics			
Constant	32.167 (1.598) ***	39.789 (5.070) ***	22.652 (17.639)
Adjusted R Squared	0.164	0.360	0.336
N	711	593	323

*** = p < 0.01, ** = p < 0.05, * = p < 0.1   **! = p = 0.163**

Appendix

Table 1-A: Descriptive Statistics of Modeled Variables (Elections settled by legislative decision removed)						
Variable	**Mean**	**Median**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Number of Observations**	**Measurement**
Gubernatorial vote share (%)	39.95	47.5	0.20	98.2	677	Percentage
Pro-slavery Views	0.56	1	0	1	603	Dichotomous
Incumbent Governor	0.16	0	0	1	678	Dichotomous
Number of public schools	2,749.58	1,656	0	11,661	669	Count
Percent of population enslaved	10.21	0.00	0	51.97	669	Percentage
Percent of Republicans in State House	10.75	0	0	94.98	632	Percentage
Percent of Whigs in State House	33.82	39	0	81.57	632	Percentage
Percent of Democrats in State House	47.60	49	0	100	632	Percentage
Percent of Republicans in State Senate	11.35	0	0	100	632	Percentage
Percent of Whigs in State Senate	32.80	33.33	0	100	632	Percentage
Percent of Republicans in State Senate	48.80	52	0	100	632	Percentage
Railroad Mileage	339.53	185	4	2,790	570	Count
Percent of population from Protestant country	36.62	35.26	8.69	71.87	378	Percentage

Note: Descriptive statistics reflect information for all Gubernatorial elections between 1840-1860

Table 2-A: Descriptive Statistics of Modeled Variables
(Elections settled by legislative decision included)

Variable	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Number of Observations	Measurement
Gubernatorial vote share (%)	38.53	46.6	0.1	98.2	798	Percentage
Pro-slavery Views	0.52	1	0	1	712	Dichotomous
Incumbent Governor	0.16	0	0	1	799	Dichotomous
Number of public schools	2,747.23	2,127	0	11,661	790	Count
Percent of population enslaved	8.64	0.00	0	51.97	790	Percentage
Percent of Republicans in State House	9.02	0	0	94.98	753	Percentage
Percent of Whigs in State House	35.90	40.43	0	81.57	753	Percentage
Percent of Democrats in State House	45.75	47.68	0	100	753	Percentage
Percent of Republicans in State Senate	9.52	0	0	100	753	Percentage
Percent of Whigs in State Senate	36.14	35	0	100	753	Percentage
Percent of Republicans in State Senate	46.38	48	0	100	753	Percentage
Railroad Mileage	344.59	228	4	2,790	670	Count
Percent of population from Protestant country	33.82	32.50	8.69	71.87	437	Percentage

Note: Descriptive statistics reflect information for all Gubernatorial elections between 1840-1860

Figure 1-A: Percent of vote share for Gubernatorial candidates by slavery preferences
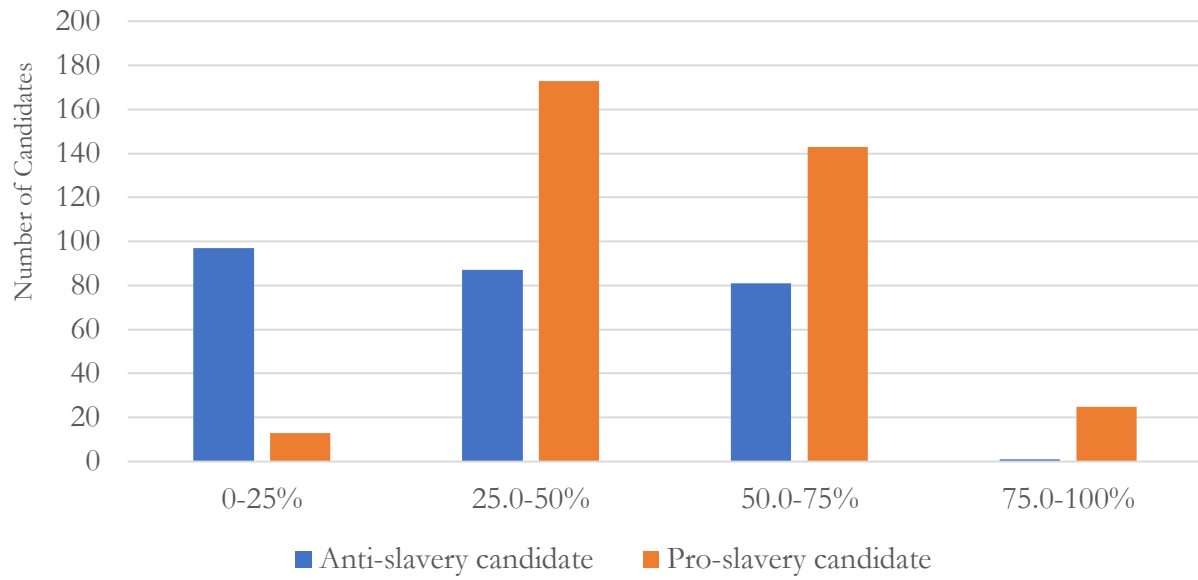
Figure 2-A:
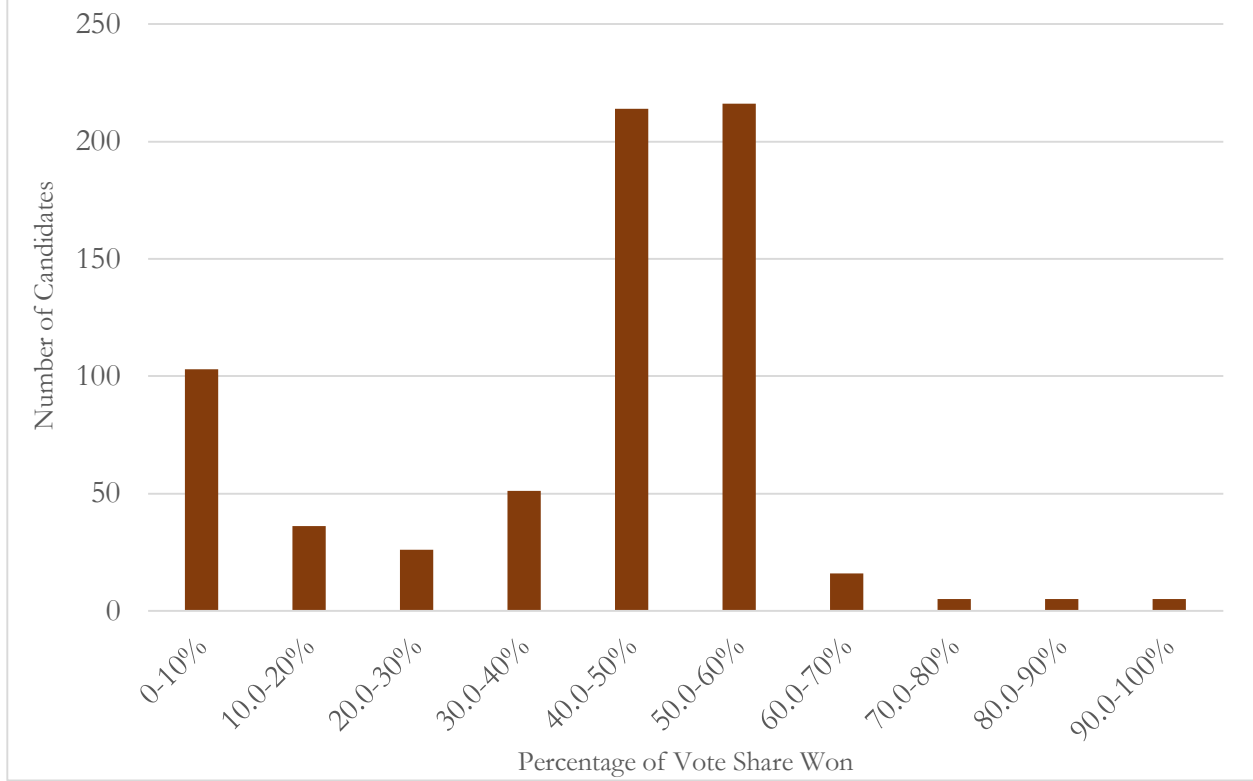**Percent of vote share for Gubernatorial candidates**

Figure 3-A:
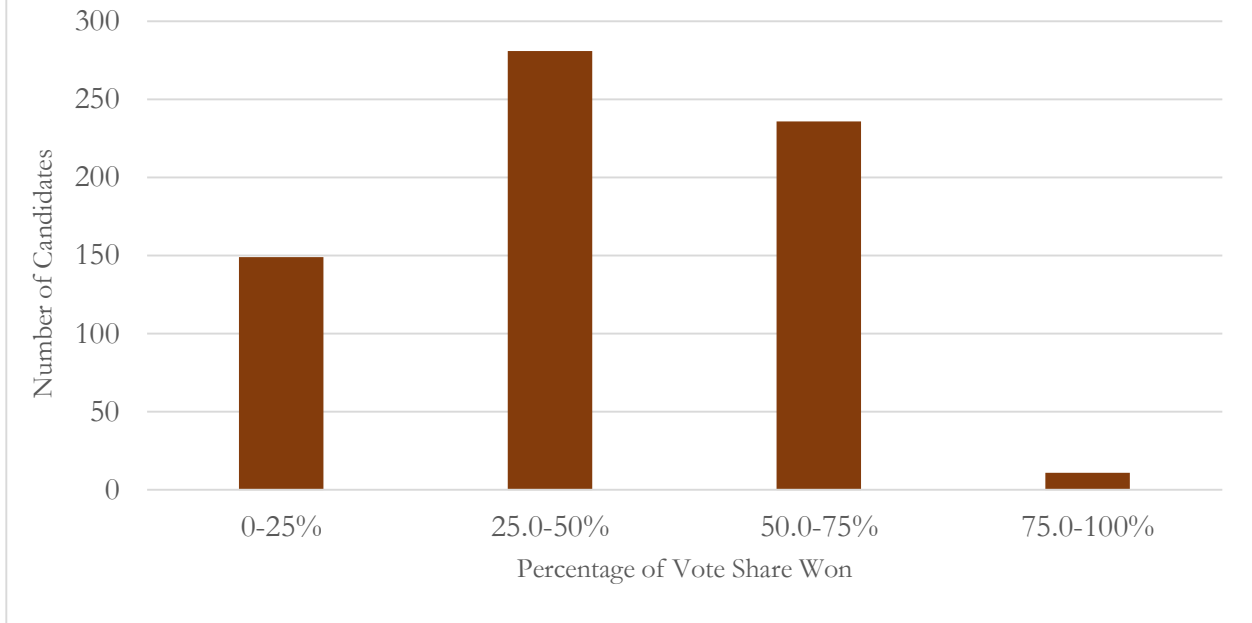**Percent of vote share for Gubernatorial candidates**

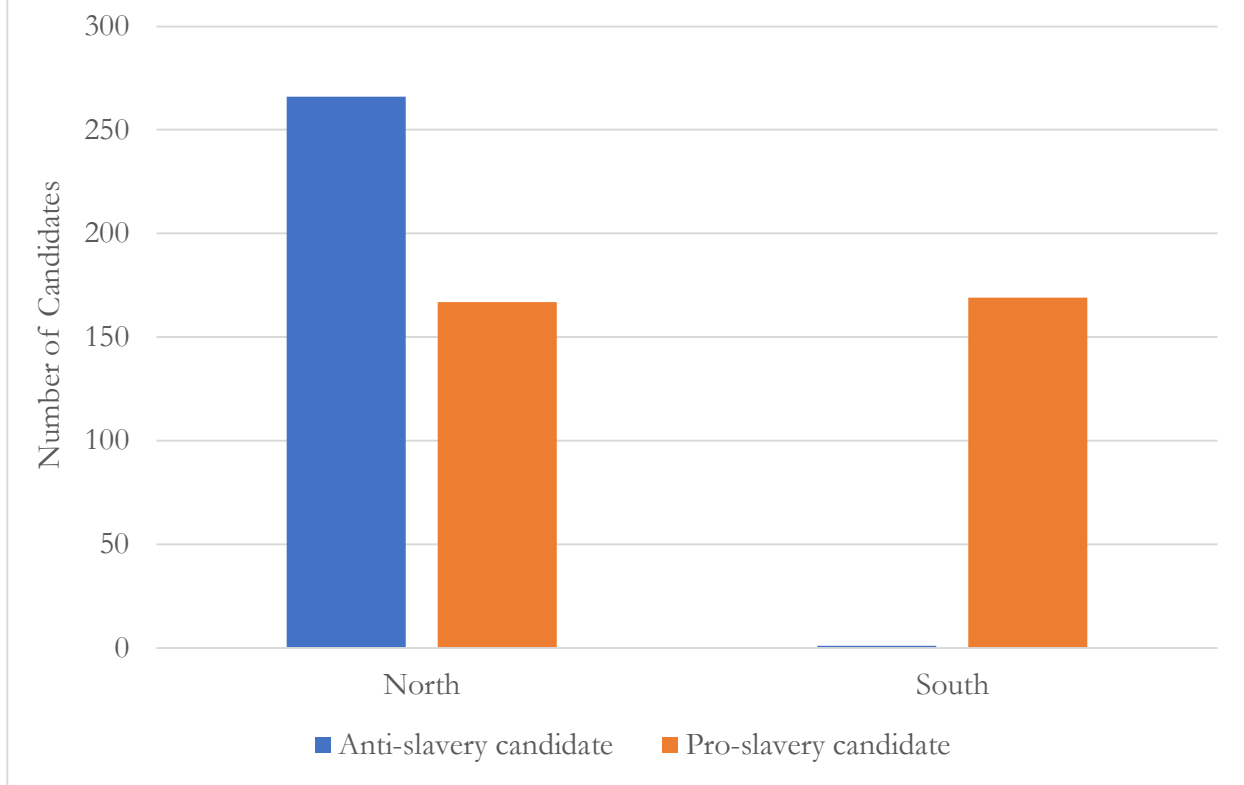**Figure 4-A: Frequency of pro-slavery candidates by sectional division, 1840-1860**

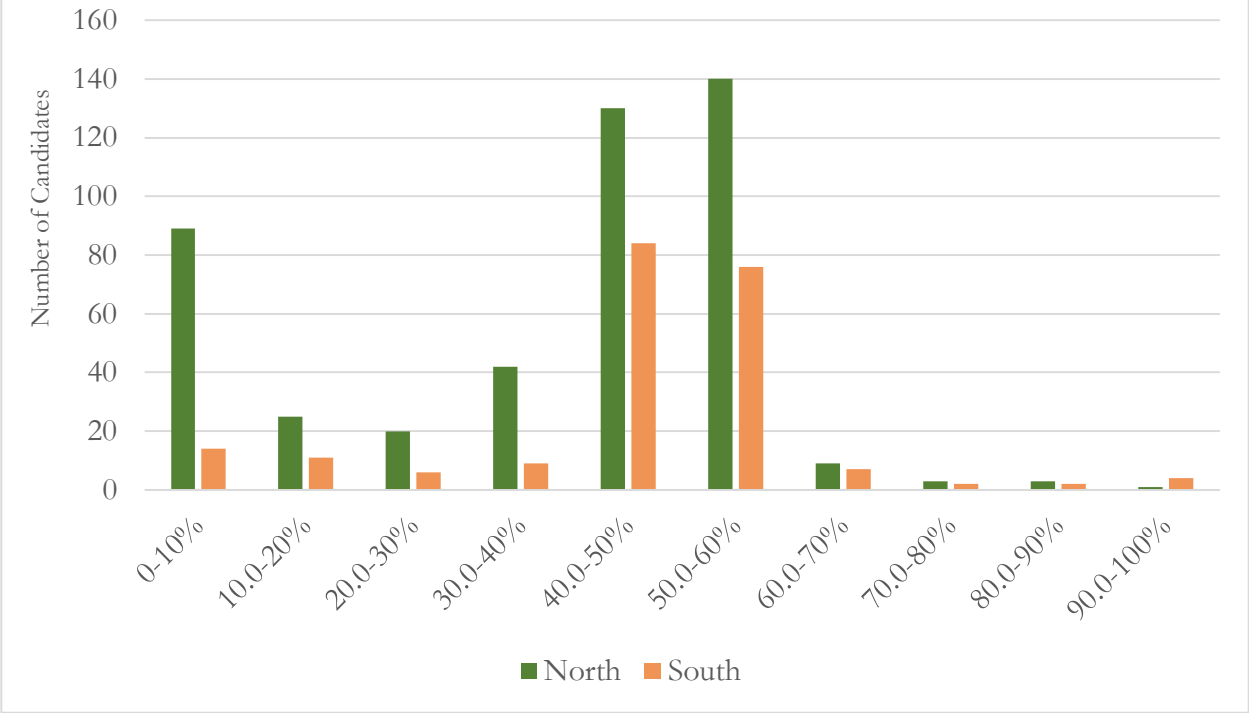**Figure 5-A: Percent of vote share for Gubernatorial candidates by sectional division**

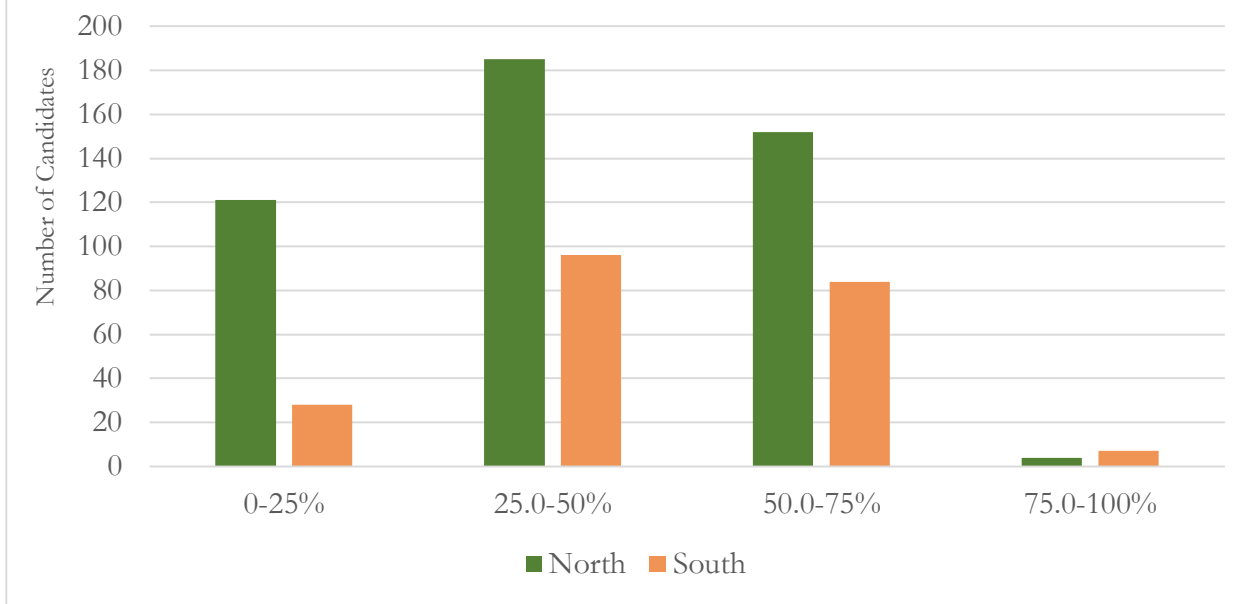**Figure 6-A: Percent of vote share for Gubernatorial candidates by sectional division**

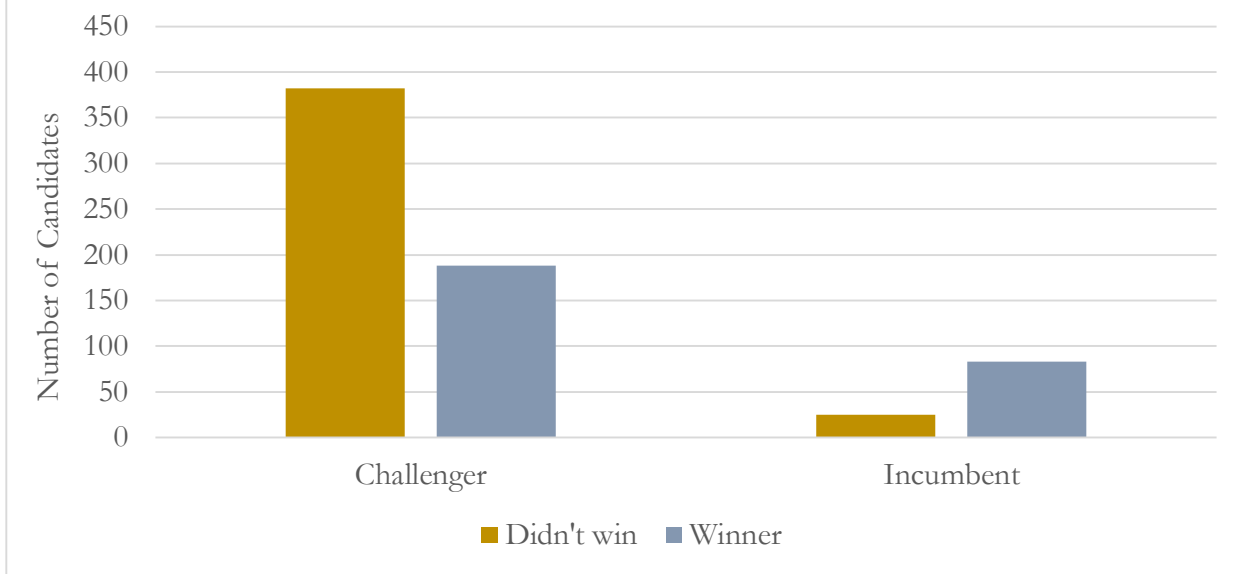**Figure 7-A: Electoral success for incumbents and challengers, 1840-1860**

Figure 8-A:
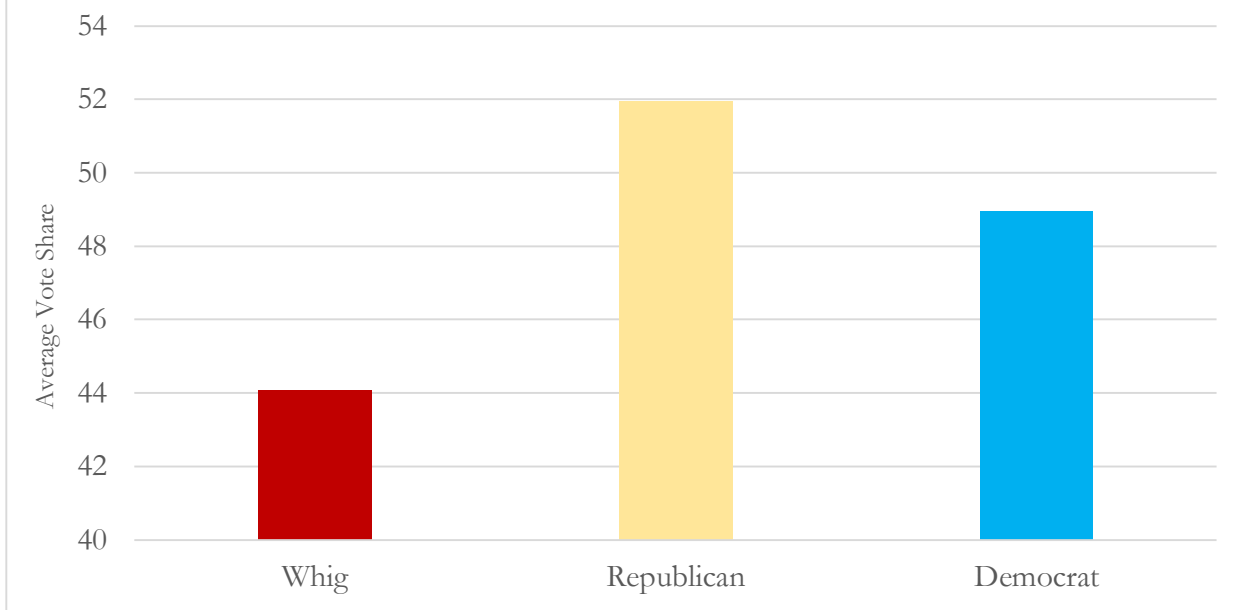**Average vote share in Gubernatorial contests by party, 1840-1860**

Figure 9-A:
Percent of Gubernatorial contests won by party, 1840-1860