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## The Political Development of Central Florida's I-4 Corridor from 1944 to 2016

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THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL FLORIDA'S  
I-4 CORRIDOR FROM 1944 TO 2016:

by

ETHAN MICHAEL CONKWRIGHT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major program in Political Science  
in the College of Sciences  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Dr. Jonathan Knuckey

## **ABSTRACT**

The intent of this thesis is to analyze the political development of the six counties comprising the I-4 Corridor from 1944 to 2016. The literature review will develop an understanding of realignment theory and its application to Southern and Florida politics. The data analysis will analyze Presidential, Gubernatorial and Senate Election Results from the six counties, compared with census data for each of the six counties to show voting trends at a county-level basis. U.S. Census Data from 1940 to 2010 will also be used to analyze population and population density of the region at-large, and at a countywide level, in our attempt to examine variance in countywide election results across decades.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this Thesis to the memory of my grandfather, John Frederick Hall (1943-2007). My grandfather was an ardent supporter of the value of a college education, pushing my father to finish his own college education. In turn, my father (and mother) would impress upon me the importance of a college education. While eleven years have passed since you were with us, you will never be forgotten.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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I would like to acknowledge Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections, where most of the data in this project was sourced from, for their efforts in providing Election Results and U.S. Census Bureau Population Data for Elections at a county-level across the 50 states, dating back several decades.

I would like to thank my family for their support. Thank you to my parents, Jeffrey Paul Conkwright II and Christina Hope Hall Conkwright for their endless support and encouragement during this process. Thank you to my brother, Jarod Conkwright. Thank you to my living grandparents: Jeffrey Paul Conkwright I and Sherry Conkwright, Stephen Wickline and Susan Adams Wickline and Sharon Hallock Hall for their lifelong support.

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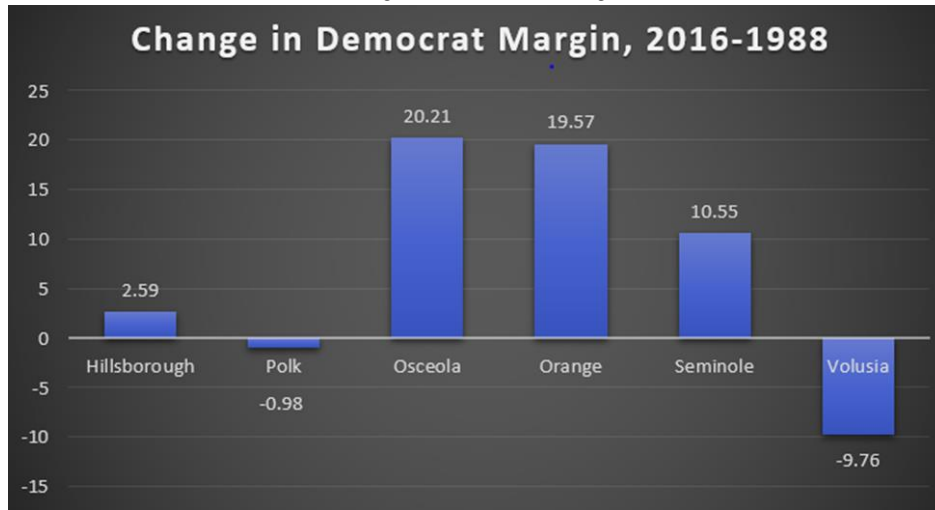
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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“The American South provides fertile soil for the development of realignment theory; the study of southern realignment must not be left to columnists and historians” (Stanley and Castle 1988, 252). This thesis aims to develop an understanding of scholarly work regarding realignment theory, and realignment theory applied to the South and Florida. Once a solid understanding of realignment theory has been reached, we will undertake an analysis of the development of politics in Central Florida’s pivotal I-4 Corridor, from 1944 to 2016. The importance of the Central Florida region to Florida politics is well established in literature. Florida’s partisan breakdown has been described as follows: Republicans largely reside in non-metro counties and total less than one-third of the electorate, whereas the Metropolitan surrounding Miami is Democratic and totals more than one-third of the electorate (Woodard 2013, 278). “A final third of the counties change their allegiance. The battleground is in the central part of the state along what is known as the I-4 Corridor. This highway extends from Tampa, through Orlando, to Daytona Beach in Central Florida” (Woodard 2013, 278). Political power in Florida is shifting to developing counties along Interstate-Four in the middle of the state, the region being critical to both Bush’s 2004 and Obama’s 2008 victories in Florida (Woodard 2013, 89). The region had been identified in 1999 as “The Linchpin” by Alexander Lamis, who declared that “The fast-growing counties of the Interstate 4 corridor, is the most volatile region politically, with registration almost equally divided between Democrats and Republicans” (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 345).

Considering the importance of Central Florida to Florida politics-at-large and the importance of Florida politics at a national level, I believe that a study of the development of Florida politics across the “I-4 corridor” would be beneficial. While there are more broad definitions of the “I-4 corridor” that include the entirety of the Tampa and Orlando media markets, this thesis will define the “I-4 Corridor” as consisting of the six counties that the interstate runs through, west to east: Hillsborough, Polk, Osceola, Orange, Seminole and Volusia. Those six counties voted for the winner of every Presidential election from 1996 to 2012, voting more Republican than the nation-at-large in 1992 and more Democratic than the nation-at-large in 2016. The chart below shows the fascinating transformation that the six counties have undergone in the twenty-eight-year period from 1988 to 2016, comparing the change in Democratic voting margins compared to the Florida state average. For example, Orange County is listed as trending Democrat by a 19.57% margin. This was achieved by the fact that Orange County voted 7.21 points less Democratic than the state average in 1988 and 12.36 points more Democratic than the state average in 2016.

FIGURE 1.1: Change in Democrat Margin, 2016-1988



Note: Election Result data is from: *Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*.

<http://uselectionatlas.org>.

I believe that this chart shows that there has been a realignment over the past twenty-eight years in Central Florida. Osceola, Orange and Seminole counties all voted substantially more Democratic in 2016 than they did in 1988. To a degree, there was a counter-realignment in Volusia, which voted substantially more republican in 2016 than 1988. Considering Central Florida's important role in Florida elections, I believe that this Central Florida political realignment over the past twenty-eight years merits a study of the political development of the Central Florida region. Such a study will explain the history of the region, the recent developments that lead to the realignment tracked in the chart above and could provide critical insight into the future of Florida's most important region for deciding election outcomes.

This thesis will analyze the political transformation of Central Florida, from 1944 to 2016. As has been noted, Central Florida is an important region in Florida politics. I believe that it is

important to understand the political history of the counties in Central Florida, as well the role they currently play in Florida politics. This thesis aims to track their development using multiple methods of analysis: election results, U.S. Census Bureau Data and Voter Registration Records. I intend on using election results from Gubernatorial, Senatorial and Presidential Elections in six Central Florida counties: Hillsborough, Polk, Osceola, Orange, Seminole and Volusia, from 1944 to 2016 to show the changes in each of the six counties over the 72-year period studied.

It is important to remember: “Political change has not come only through realignment, but also through migration” (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 345). Florida politics, especially Central Florida politics, cannot be fully understood simply by studying raw election data alone. A key centerpiece to this thesis will be comparing election results between elections. To better understand the population changes that have shaped the six counties and their effect on voting, I will comparatively analyze U.S. Census Data from the 1940 Census to the 2010 Census to account for political changes caused by population growth. While population growth has played a large role on Central Florida political development, this thesis also aims to track the effects of realignment over time by analyzing county-level voter registration data to show the changes in partisan affiliation over the 72-year period this thesis studies.

This thesis will also attempt to analyze the extent to which the urbanization of a county effects the county’s voting patterns. The effect of the “Urban-rural divide” on elections has long been well documented. In an article describing the effects of the “Urban-rural divide” on the 1896 Election, William Diamond stated, “Rural and Urban groups developed distinct and often

conflicting attitudes, points of views and interests”, “Such a conflict of interests was bound to have its reflection in the political arena” (Diamond 1941, 281). In Thomas R. Dye and Susan A. MacManus’ text “*Politics in States and Communities*”, we are provided with a decent analysis of cities, suburbs and exurbs. From Figure 12.1, we find that every county covered in our analysis is considered a member of a “Metropolitan Statistical Area” (MSA, core urban area of 50,000 or more residents) (Dye &McManus 2015, 354). In this thesis, we will attempt to label each of the six counties studied as either urban, suburban or exurban for purposes of analysis.

Dr. Aubrey Jewett, Associate Professor of Political Science at University of Central Florida, shared with me his methodology of classifying counties. Jewett’s system contains five classifications: Mega-urban, urban, suburban, exurban and rural. Jewett’s system takes into consideration factors of county population and population density compared to state population and population density. Analyzing U.S. Census data from each census, 1940 to 2010, we will classify each of the six counties on a decade by decade basis, attempting to analyze secular realignment at the county-level between election results from similar or dissimilar counties. Dr. Jewett’s Methodology is outlined in the Table below.

**TABLE 1.2:** *County Classifications: Dr. Aubrey Jewett Methodology*

County Classification:	Population Boundaries	Population Density Boundaries
Mega Urban	>0.05% of FL Population	> 1.867 (x) FL Pop. Dens.
Urban	0.02%-0.05% of FL Population	> 1.867 (x) FL Pop. Dens.
Suburban	0.0035-0.02% of FL Population	0.27-1.867 (x) FL Pop. Dens.
Exurban	0.0035-0.02% of FL Population	0.27-1.867 (x) FL Pop. Dens.
Rural	<0.0040 of FL Population	< 0.27 (x) FL Pop. Dens.

Note: If a county meets qualifications for two different classifications (i.e.: has the Population boundaries to be considered “Urban”, but the Population Density Boundaries to be considered “Suburban”, I will make a case by case individual decision on how to classify it).

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Section I: Realignment Theory

One would be remiss to write a thesis studying southern politics and realignment theory without first mentioning V.O. Key Jr., often dubbed the “Father of realignment” (Ladd 1991, 25) and described as “The political scientist who first made popular the concept of realignment to describe partisan changes among the electorate” (Speel 1998, 3). In his article, “*A Theory of Critical Elections*”, Key argues that there is a category of elections where voters are “Unusually deeply concerned”, “the extent of electoral involvement is unusually quite high”, “The results reveal a sharp alteration of the pre-existing cleavage within the electorate” and “The realignment resulting from this election persists for several elections” (Key 1955, 4). Key stresses the fact that “critical realignments within the electorate are both sharp and durable” (Key 1955, 11). In the article, Key tracks the political development of several states in New England from 1888 to 1916 and 1916 to 1952. Key notes that at least in New England, the Elections of 1896 and 1928 were realignments of roughly the same sharpness and durability (Key 1955, 16). Key notes that it can often be difficult to classify elections, with elections rarely fitting any concept (Key 1955, 16-17). This is partially due to a “Large and diverse electorate that encompasses different types of voting among different categories of voters” (Key 1955, 17). This is a point that will later become particularly relevant in the analysis of Central Florida’s political development.



V.O. Key's next seminal work on realignment, "*Secular Realignment and the Party system*", came in 1959. Key starts off his article on secular realignment by arguing the importance of including a "Time dimension" in theories explaining shifts in the partisan balance of power (Key 1959, 198). Key argues that "The party framework is thrown into a different interpretative framework if one supposes the existence of long-term, or secular, shifts in party attachment among voters" (Key 1959, 198). Key reminds readers that events of political importance impact the electorate constantly and "Election returns are merely periodic readings of the relative magnitudes of streams of attitudes that are undergoing steady expansion or contraction" (Key 1959, 198). Key argues that while some elections may be "Critical and involve wider movements and more durable shifts" than other elections, "the rise and fall of parties may to some degree be the result of trends that persist over decades in a continuous creation of new loyalties and decay of old" (Key 1959, 198). Key explains that the electorate is often resistant to realignment, arguing "The slow rate at which the process occurs suggests attachment to old symbols, old leaders, old parties" (Key 1959, 198). While abrupt change is only prompted by impactful events or issues of deep, emotion-touching nature, new party alignments and groupings are formed with each passing election (Key 1959, 198-199).

Key defines secular shifts in party attachment, constituting secular realignment, as "A movement of the members of a population category from party to party that extends over several presidential elections and appears to be independent of the peculiar factors influencing the vote at individual elections" (Key 1959, 199). Secular realignment is group-oriented by nature, hoping to assess whether "Categories of people become more or less homogeneous in

partisan attachment” (Key 1959, 199). Key once again tested his theory through application to various elections across New England from 1888 to 1952. Key noted that introduction of new population elements was often a contributing factor behind long-term partisan reorientation (Key 1959, 204). This is a point that will later prove to be relevant to the political development of both Florida and Central Florida’s I-4 Corridor. Two questions arise when addressing the long-term process of the development of group homogeneity: “First, what sets the change in motion and second, how can the slowness of the process be explained” (Key 1959, 204). Key accounts for the long-term nature of secular realignment as the result of a resistance to change from pre-existing partisan affiliations, which might in some cases require a generational replacement of the electorate to fulfil (Key 1959, 204). Key also blames political apathy for the slow nature of secular realignment (Key 1959, 204). Key notes that long term trends can be countered by “Attractive candidates or a fortunate sequence of events” (Key 1959, 208). Key deduces that “A plausible hypothesis would be that the major shifts in partisan balance over the history of the party system have been in considerable measure the product of cumulative secular changes, reflecting both relative increases in some segments of the population and decreases in others as well as the gradual growth in political consciousness and solidarity of the growing population categories” (Key 1959, 209).

At the time his article was published in 1959, Key believed that society was undergoing many secular changes. Key ended his article by addressing secular realignment’s ability to help explain the American society in which our political system exists; one that is not static, but rather undergoes economic and social changes by its very nature (Key 1959, 210). Particularly

relevant to this thesis and the political development of Central Florida's I-4 Corridor, Key in 1959 discussed the beginnings of the "Suburban revolution" and the ability of "Geographical redistribution of population to produce reorientations that were not simply the redistribution of partisans, but the formation of sectors of the electorate with new outlooks" (Key 1959, 210).

In his 1973 work, *"Dynamics of the Party System"*, James Sundquist, further studied the realignment theory and the American partisan system and presented an amplified statement on the realignment process. According to Sundquist, a simple definition of realignment is a process that occurs when "a new issue cleaves the electorate on a different line and divides the parties internally" (Sundquist 1973, 26). "If the issue remains unresolved and public concern continues to grow, the polar forces will increase" (Sundquist 1973, 27). Under these circumstances, realignment is keen. Sundquist's book illustrates three major realignments in American history: The Realignment of the 1850's responding to the issue of slavery, the Realignment of the 1890's responding to agrarian populism and the Industrial Revolution and the Realignment of the 1930's responding to the Great Depression and New Deal (Sundquist 1973, 276).

Sundquist's chapter, an "Amplified statement on realignment", states sixteen points relating to realignment. First, "A realignment is precipitated by the rise of a new political issue (or cluster of related issues)" (Sundquist 1973, 275). Sundquist argues that political parties have great stability and resilience, with upheavals occurring only when new issues become strong enough to shatter the system (Sundquist 1973, 275-276). It is important to note, as found by Everett C. Ladd Jr., that significant alterations to the social, economic or demographic

compositions of a society do not produce realignments unless they first give rise to a genuine political issue (Sundquist 1973, 276). Second, “To bring about a realignment, the new issue must be one that cuts across the existing line of party cleavage” (Sundquist 1973, 276). Thus, the political issues that are most likely to bring about a realignment in the party system are those where the parties are already divided, with some factions of both parties in support and opposition of the issue. Third, “To bring about a major realignment, the new issue must also be one powerful enough to dominate political debate and polarize the community” (Sundquist 1973, 277). Centrists become critical at this point in the realignment process, “The center becomes inhabitable political territory. The centrists move to the poles, or they are crushed” (Sundquist 1973, 278). In these times, political discourse “Becomes charged with a passion that in intervening periods of stability would have been unconvincing and unacceptable” (Sundquist 1973, 278).

Fourth, “The realigning issue must be one on which major political groups take distinct and opposing policy positions that are easily dramatized and understood” (Sundquist 1973, 278). The average voter’s first reaction to disapproval with party leadership is not usually to change parties as political affiliation often has a deep underlying meaning to the voter; but rather to use their participation in the political process to challenge the party’s leadership (Sundquist 1973, 279). Fifth, “Whether a new issue becomes dominant depends not only on its intrinsic power but also on the extent to which the older issues underlying the party system have faded with the passage of time” (Sundquist 1973, 281). A generational aspect of partisan affiliation and emotions is presented. Voters alive to experience “The transfer of emotions to the parties

after the party system realigns to reflect the polar forces” will be more attached to their partisan affiliations than “New voters too young to have identified with emotionally with either side during the time of polarization” (Sundquist 1973, 281).

Sixth, “A new issue is likely to have greater inherent appeal to the voters of one of the major parties and thus potentially a more disruptive effect on that party than on the other” (Sundquist 1973, 283). It is important to remember that the two major political parties contain varying demographics of support that will respond differently to the new issue presented (Sundquist 1973, 283). Seventh, “The normal response of both major parties at the outset is to straddle the new issue” (Sundquist 1973, 283). Remember, party leaders often “Are not crusaders or are issue-oriented towards the old issues of the last realignment, which brought the existing party system into being and are still the basis for the party’s unity, cohesion and strength” (Sundquist 1973, 283). Thus, party leaders will often first attempt to straddle, though this often easier for the out-of-power party than the in-power party (Sundquist 1973, 284).

Eighth, “Within each of the parties, however, there form at each pole political groups that are more concerned with victory for their position on the new issue than with their party’s electoral success” (Sundquist 1973, 285). Eventually, the new issue draws reactions from “Individuals who see the political party as an available and useful vehicle for advancing their cause” (Sundquist 1973, 285). It is possible that some of the politicians advancing the new political issue are more interested in using the party than belonging to it, as their support for the issue at hand is deeper than their support for the political party being used to push the issue (Sundquist 1973, 287). At this point, “If the crosscutting issue loses momentum,

realignment is averted". (Sundquist 1973, 287). If at this point the issue at hand does not disappear, the process of realignment will continue. Ninth, "The polar forces coalesce most rapidly if the party out of power is the one with the greater predisposition toward the new issue" (Sundquist 1973, 287). This is partly explained by the fact that the party in power can use patronage to suppress the development of polar forces (Sundquist 1973, 288). In-party leaders also are "Inclined by virtue of responsibility to be cautious and defensive, thus giving an advantage to members of the in-party who resist a shift of governmental policy" (Sundquist 1973, 289). Tenth, "If both major parties persist in their straddle or come under the control of the polar forces opposing change, supporters of the new issue at some point form a third party" (Sundquist 1973, 289). People who are strongly compelled towards action in response to the new issue will become disgruntled with the straddling by established politicians in both major political parties (Sundquist 1973, 289). While third-parties have formed in past scenarios, it is important to remember that the "Third party does not initially contain more than a fraction of the polar forces supporting the new issue" (Sundquist 1973, 290). In a two-party system, "The major parties are where the action is", and "By staying within the major parties, the polar forces can hope to win one or both over to their point of view" (Sundquist 1973, 290).

Eleventh, "A realignment crisis is precipitated when the moderate centrists lose control of one or both of the major parties- that is, of party policy and nominations- to one or the other of the polar forces" (Sundquist 1973, 290). As time passes and the new issue grows, "The polar forces gain strength and influence at the expense of the moderate forces in the center who are dedicated to holding the party together" (Sundquist 1973, 290). Twelfth, "If the polar forces

supporting the new issue gain control of one major party and so precipitate a realignment crisis, realignment may still be averted if they also succeed in capturing the other major party simultaneously or shortly thereafter” (Sundquist 1973, 292). Sundquist presents as a good example of an averted realignment, the Progressive Era of American history, where both major political parties trended in a progressive direction; thus, leading few to change their political affiliation (Sundquist 1973, 292). Thirteenth, “In any other circumstance, however, the crisis eventuates in a realignment. The degree of realignment is determined by the degree of difficulty encountered by the polar forces supporting the new issue in gaining control of one of the major parties” (Sundquist 1973, 293). The defining factor here is how long it takes for one of the major political parties to respond to the new issue (Sundquist 1973, 293). Depending on at what stage this response occurs, realignment may proceed without the formation of any third parties, with a third party being absorbed by one of the main parties, or with a third party replacing one, or potentially both, of the main parties (Sundquist 1973, 293). Fourteenth, “The realignment reaches its climax in one or more critical elections that center on the realigning issue and resolve it, but the realigning process may extend over a considerable period before and after the critical election” (Sundquist 1973, 294). At this point, straddling on the issue by the two major parties has ended, with both parties taking clearly opposing stances on the issue (Sundquist 1973, 294). Fifteenth, “After the critical election or elections in which the voters make a clear choice on the issue that has polarized the country, polarization gives way to conciliation. As it does, the parties move from the poles toward the center and the distance between them narrows” (Sundquist 1973, 296). The speed at which conciliation occurs can

vary, with political leaders sometimes paying deference to the issue which formed their current partisan coalition for an extended period (Sundquist 1973, 296). “Once the critical issue has been resolved, people are weary of conflict and yearn for years of political peace”. At this point parties might return to political caution and go back towards the center (Sundquist 1973, 296). Sixteenth, “However, if new issues arise that coincide with the existing line of party cleavage, they strengthen party cohesion, increase the distance between the parties, and reinforce the existing alignment”. This would occur if the new issue to arise was not cross-cutting but ran along the already established lines of political division (Sundquist 1973, 297).

In the 1991 book *“The End of Realignment: Interpreting American Electoral Eras”*, Everett Carl Ladd Jr.’s chapter, “Like Waiting for Godot: The Uselessness of “Realignment” for understanding change in contemporary American politics”, provides a view of realignment theory that is slightly to the contrary of that which has been discussed to this point. Ladd summarizes the realignment model as “Too tight a box, too crimped conceptually to guide us productively” (Ladd 1991, 27). Ladd invokes Edward Carmines and James Stimson in stating that the prevailing account of a realignment occurring roughly every three decades “Is clearly incomplete” (Ladd 1991, 27). Ladd seeks to answer the question: “What do we know about the party system and its changes?” (Ladd 1991, 29). Ladd focuses on understanding the differences between party elites and copartisans in the electorate, and whether there exists a gap between their concerns (Ladd 1991, 29). Ladd inquires about the social and ideological makeup of both parties; hoping to identify key groups within the coalitions that comprise the party (Ladd 1991, 29). Ladd seeks to identify the stability of coalitions between elections (Ladd 1991, 29). On a



more fundamental basis, Ladd seeks to understand the principle features of party organization, nomination processes and campaign structures and how well the party system is performing (Ladd 1991, 29). Ladd identified the existence of a “Two-tier party system”, with one existing at the Presidential level and another at the sub-Presidential level (Ladd 1991, 31). Ladd also argued that the electorate had become more volatile, and less attached to partisan labels (Ladd 1991, 31). Ladd also identified a generational aspect of political affiliation, showing perhaps that voters identify with the party of the most favorably viewed political leader at the time they come of age politically (Ladd 1991, 33). Ladd identifies that “Cultural class conflict, organized around different levels of formal education and attributable to jarringly different world views thus transmitted, forms the core of today’s moral disputation” (Ladd 1991, 33). Ladd ends by stating that “It requires of us the task-laborious and prosaic- of charting the many shifts that have occurred in the party system and seeking their diverse sources and implications”. (Ladd 1991, 34).

## **Section II: Realignment Theory applied to the South**

Stanley and Castle (1988) begin their analysis of Southern Realignment by stating that the “The search for signs of realignment in American party politics has generated a considerable body of scholarship and the transformation of Southern party politics plays a prominent role therein” (Stanley & Castle 1988, 238). Drawing from Key’s definition of Critical Realignment, as previously explained in this thesis, Stanley and Castle conclude that “the recent South seems to fit the criteria for Critical Realignment: high salience elections with high turnout and sharply altered cleavages, perhaps persisting” (Stanley and Castle 1988, 238). Scholars on Realignment

and Southern Politics in the late-1980's were not yet in full agreement on whether or not Realignment had occurred. Some argued in favor of Dealignment, described as "a durable weakening of individual partisan attachments, either a switch from identifying with parties to independence or a reduction in connection between identifying with a party and voting for the party's candidates" (Stanley and Castle 1988, 241).

Stanley and Castle's article describes many potential sources of Realignment in the South. First considered is the idea that "Southern Partisan change stems from the conversion of white Democratic identifiers to Republicanism" (Stanley and Castle 1988, 242). While the conclusion was reached that as of the late 1980's, "most of the Democratic decline did not result from individuals switching to identify with Republicans", Campbell noting the trend from 1952 to 1972 stated "the conclusion seems unavoidable that conversion has been responsible for more change than any other causes" (Stanley and Castle 1988, 242-243). Alternatively, the "mobilization" of southern African American voters plays a huge large role in Southern partisan changes during this period (Stanley and Castle 1988, 243). "Unquestionably many southern blacks permanently switched from an apolitical orientation in the 1950s to Democratic identification in the 1960s" (Stanley and Castle 1988, 243). Generational Replacement was also considered as a factor of Southern Realignment and "Petrocik (1987) and Wolfinger and his coauthors found that the younger southerners were leading the way towards two-party politics in the South" (Stanley and Castle 1988, 244).

Scholars reached varying conclusions on the impact that migration to the South from other regions played on the development of Southern Political Identification (Stanley and Castle 1988, 245). It is to be noted that using 1952-1976 Survey Research Data, Wolfinger and Arseneau found that “in-migrants remain predominantly white Republicans, and these in-migrants vote at a higher rate than native white southerners” (Stanley and Castle 1988, 245). However, Petrocik, Nie and Verba found that “In overall effect, comparing the early 1950s with the 1970s, the decline in Democratic identification would have been almost as great (only 6 percent difference) if no newcomers had arrived” (Stanley and Castle 1988, 245). Last, scholars considered the impact of economic class on southern realignment. While all groups of native southern whites were found to have Democratic decline and Republican gains, the largest margins of such were recorded among upper class southern whites (Stanley and Castle 1988, 247). To conclude, Stanley and Castle noted that they had found evidence of dealignment, secular realignment and critical realignment in the South: “the increased partisan independence of southern whites reflected dealignment; the shift of black partisan identification around 1964 indicates critical realignment; and southern white partisanship provides evidence of secular realignment” (Stanley and Castle 1988, 251).

The 1996 book, *“Race, Campaign Politics and Realignment in the South”* by James Glaser, continues the focus on Realignment in the South. Again, we pay deference to V.O. Key Jr., whose 1949 work *“Southern Politics in State and Nation”*, was an early addition to the study of Southern Politics. Key wrote that “The maintenance of southern Democratic solidarity has depended fundamentally on a willingness to subordinate to the race question all great social

and economic issues that tend to divide people into opposing parties” (Glaser 1996, 2).

Southern Republicans had no divisive issue to call upon and often were “not even inclined to challenge Democratic dominance” (Glaser 1996, 3). This worked to the favor of Southern Democratic leaders who “were able to minimize the possibility of a class-based political movement emerging” (Glaser 1996, 3). Glaser places emphasis on the important role that passage of civil rights and voting rights legislation in the 1960s played on Southern politics, calling it the “death knell of the old political system” and stating that “as blacks entered the electorate in large numbers and became an important new constituency, the defends of the Old South lost the most potent issue in their political arsenal” (Glaser 1996, 4). Glaser also points out that economic changes in the 1950s, especially in urban and suburban areas, lead to a “new and important base of support for Republicans in the South” (Glaser 1996, 4).

Glaser stresses the fact that realignment in the South has been a slow-moving process. The earliest signs of Southern realignment towards the Republican party came at the Presidential Election level. In 1952 and 1956, Eisenhower picked up about half the electoral votes in the South (Glaser 1996, 10). Barry Goldwater’s 1964 campaign proved to be a breakthrough in the South, though only 19% of southerners identified as Republican in 1964 (Glaser 1996, 7 & 11). After Nixon’s plurality win of the Southern vote in 1968, Republicans would solidify their status as the Southern party of choice in Presidential contest (with the exception of 1976), however they would still struggle in down-ballot elections and partisan identification (Glaser 1996, 7-12). Even despite the Republican presidential success in the South from 1980 to 1992 delineating itself to partisan identification with 43% of white southerners identifying as Republican and

42% as Democrat in 1992, Republicans continued to struggle with Congressional Elections, holding 36% of southern seats in 1980 and 37% of southern seats in 1992 (Glaser 1996, 13). This is simply because Democrats continued to dominate in open-seat elections in the South (Glaser 1996, 14). The Congressional breakthrough for Republicans in the South would come in the Midterm Elections of 1994, after which Republicans held 51% of southern Congressional seats (Glaser 1996, 13). Glaser concludes that: "Realignment was thus not the result of a new issue redefining the political landscape. It was the result of a new cleavage on an old issue" (Glaser 1996, 17).

In his Chapter, "Realignment", published in 2012's *The Oxford Handbook of Southern Politics*, Ronald Keith Gaddie, provides us with further understanding of the impact of the 1994 Elections on Southern Realignment. Before the Republican gains in 1994, several events occurred throughout the 1980s that benefited Republicans in the South. The mobilization of white evangelicals, and a positive Southern response to Reagan's conservatism and leadership as President (Gaddie 2012, 308). Gaddie believes that 1994 was the year of realignment, due to the shifts in partisan officeholding that began in 1994 (Gaddie 2012, 309). Cited as proof of critical realignment occurring in the South in the 1990s are seat-gains in the U.S. House and at the state-level among Governorships and State Legislatures, as well as an increase in Republican Party Identification (Gaddie 2012, 309). Republicans can attribute their Southern electoral success in the 1990s to a convergence of national issues into Congressional and statewide elections, widespread candidate recruitment and mobilization of white evangelicals (Gaddie 2012, 309). Perhaps the importance of national issues converging onto Congressional

and statewide elections cannot be understated. Writing in 2018, we can see from an updated perspective that many of the Southern Republican gains in State Legislatures, Governorships and Congressional seats which began in the 1994 midterm in response to the Clinton Administration would come to full fruition in response to the Obama Administration in the elections following the 2010 midterms. Knuckey (2005, 2006) termed the events of 1994 “a critical realignment that punctuated a secular realignment already under way” (Gaddie 2012, 309). Campbell (2006) described 1994 as “an endgame, a consolidation of the hollow realignment that began in 1968” (Gaddie 2012, 310). To that degree, I would argue that sixteen years later, 2010 had a similar effect to 1994 on solidifying the strength of southern Republicanism.

At this point, one must question “Is the South destined to remain a Republican stronghold forever?” To answer this question, we turn to the 2002 book by John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, *“The Emerging Democratic Majority”*. Walter Dean Burnham refers to realignments as “America’s surrogates for revolution” (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 12). The book argues that “realignment occurs when a dominant political coalition fails to adapt to or contain a growing social and political conflict” (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 12). One example of such a social and political conflict was the Southern civil rights movement (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 12). The book examines postindustrial politics and determines that in areas where there has been an increased transition to a postindustrial economy, there is larger support for Democratic nominees (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 71). Of the Southern states, Florida, was noted to be increasingly postindustrial (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 71). The Urban-rural divide plays a

prominent role here, with Judis and Teixeira concluding that “postindustrial politics is not defined by states, but metropolitan areas within states, called ideopolises, which they identify as the breeding ground for a new Democratic majority” (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 71). Since 1988 in Florida, the Democrats have benefited from the five-largest counties by population in the state, including Orange and Hillsborough, all trending Democratic (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 109). Aside from Florida’s advanced and increasingly postmodern economy driving urbanization, the Democrats have also benefitted from a growth of the state’s minority population; the Hispanic population in Orange County increasing from 10% to 19% in the 1990s (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 110). These factors lead Judis and Teixeira to conclude that “Growth in Florida is very definitely on the side of the Democrats” (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 110).

### Section III: Realignment Theory applied to Florida

In his 1984 book, *The Two-Party South*, Alexander Lamis, includes a chapter on Florida, titled Florida: Recast by Rapid Growth. Rapid population growth has defined Florida since the end of World War II, at the rates of 37.1% in the 1960s and 30.2% in the 1970s (Lamis 1984, 179). The “extensive urbanization of Florida completely transformed Central and South Florida” (Lamis 1984, 179). The “influx of Northerners, many Republicans, provided the basis for the start of two-party competition” (Lamis 1984, 179). This is one area where Florida could differ from the South at-large. The rapid population growth in Florida and large number of migrants with Republican affiliation, could lead migration to have a larger impact on the political development of Florida than other states. Early Republican Presidential strength in Florida was

centered in an “urban horseshoe” running from Sarasota up the Gulf Coast to St. Petersburg, over through Central Florida, including Polk, Osceola, Orange and Seminole Counties, down the Atlantic Coast to Broward County (Lamis 1984, 180-181). Those urban counties developed more consistently with the “Rim South” states, than the “Deep South” states, which developed more consistently with Florida’s panhandle counties. An interesting development occurred between 1960 and 1964: while the “urban horseshoe counties” had been Nixon’s strongest and Kennedy’s weakest in 1960, they were notably more negative towards Goldwater, as the Panhandle went for Goldwater (Lamis 1984, 180-181).

At the statewide level, Republicans would start to have breakthroughs in Florida in the mid-to-late 1960s. Republican Claude R. Kirk was elected Florida Governor in 1966 with 55.1% of the vote, and Republican Edward J. Gurney was elected U.S. Senator from Florida in 1968 with 55.9% of the vote. (Lamis 1984, 183). “The significance of the 1970 elections for Florida’s Democratic Party cannot be emphasized enough, as the party entered the elections in statewide disarray” (Lamis 1984, 183). The Democrats got their much-needed victories in Florida, electing Governor Reubin Askew and U.S. Senator Lawton Chiles (Lamis 1984, 185). “The pull of party tradition was a major factor in bringing these North Florida Democrats back to their party’s attractive ticket after the defections in 1966 and 1968” (Lamis 1984, 185). In the 1974 U.S. Senate Election, Democrat Richard Stone proved that a South Florida Democrat could find electoral success in North Florida (Lamis 1984, 186). The key to Democratic victories in Florida in this era was ideological perception: As Richard Stone was able to be perceived as a conservative in 1974, retiring Democratic U.S. Senator Spessard Holland had asserted that both



he and Lawton Chiles were “moderate conservatives” while campaigning for Chiles in 1970 (Lamis 1984, 185-186). In Gov. Reubin Askew’s 1974 re-election campaign, you again saw a regional aspect to partisan success in Florida; with Governor Askew underperforming his 1970 margins in North Florida and overperforming his 1970 margins in Central Florida counties (Lamis 1984, 187). As the 1970’s continued, Democrat’s continued to win in Florida with Senator Chiles easily winning re-election in 1976, and Bob Graham winning the open Governor seat in 1978 (Lamis 1984, 188). The ideal Democratic nominee in this era was able to “hold together the traditional North Florida Democratic vote, with a coalition of blacks and blue-collar whites in the large urban centers, plus the heavily Democratic areas of South Florida” (Lamis 1984, 189). Then came 1980. After having voted for Jimmy Carter in 1976, Florida gave Ronald Reagan his largest margin of victory in the South in 1980 and Republican Paula Hawkins simultaneously won the open U.S. Senate seat (Lamis 1984, 189). Despite Senator Chiles and Governor Graham’s easy re-election victories in 1982, Republican partisan identification continued to grow- reaching 30.8% by 1982, up from 25.4% in 1970 and 29.7% in 1980 (Lamis 1984, 191).

An update to Lamis’ 1984 description of Florida’s political history would appear in Lamis’ 1999 edited book *“Southern politics in the 1990s”*, with the chapter “Florida: A National Microcosm” written by Joan Carver and Tom Fiedler. Mobility and increased diversification both impacted Florida political development in the 1990s, causing the state to mirror the nation at-large (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 344). Throughout the 1980s, Republican political affiliation continued to increase in Florida as Florida voted Republican by large margins at the Presidential

level for both Ronald Reagan in 1984 and George H.W. Bush in 1988 (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 344). By 1984 Republican Partisan Affiliation in Florida was 34.0%, rapidly rising to 36.2% by 1986, 39.0% in 1988 and 40.6% in 1990 (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 344). “By the 1990s Florida had clearly moved from the status of a one-party Democratic state to that of a highly competitive two-party state, with a tilt towards the Republicans” (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 345). The Central Florida portion of the state again developed slightly differently than Florida at-large. Labeled as “Linchpin”, voter registration in Central Florida in 1996 was 43.6% Democratic and 43.1% Republican (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 346). The Central Florida region’s traditional Republican strength was shown as late as 1992, when “Linchpin” counties voted 42.8% for Republican Bush and 36.1% for Democrat Clinton (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 346). The traditional Republican strength of the Central Florida counties would eventually come to be tested, with early signs of this showing in 1996 as the “Linchpin” counties voted 45.5% for Democrat Clinton and 44.8% for Republican Dole (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 346).

For the remainder of the 1980s, Republicans continued to find electoral success in Florida, with Republicans Bob Martinez winning the Governorship in 1986 and Connie Mack winning Chiles’ open Senate seat in 1988 (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 346-349). In 1990, incumbent Republican Governor Bob Martinez would face a strong challenge by popular former Democratic Senator Lawton Chiles, who provided the Democrats with a victory by a margin of 56.5-43.5% (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 350). The 1990 results, as stated by Frank Fahrenkopf, “reversed the tide that we’ve had running for us these past 10 years” (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 350). In 1992, Florida would split its ballot, re-electing Senator Bob Graham in a landslide; while

continuing to vote Republican at the Presidential level by choosing President Bush over Bill Clinton by a 1.9% margin, in a three-way election with Ross Perot capturing 19.8% of the vote in Florida (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 351). The 1994 Senate Election would prove to be a Republican landslide for Connie Mack, as the 1992 Senate Election had been a Democratic landslide for Bob Graham (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 359). However, the 1994 Governor's race was perhaps as competitive as the 1992 Presidential election, minus a third-party candidate; with former President George H.W. Bush's son, Jeb Bush, mounting a strong challenge to Governor Chiles who only won re-election by a margin of 50.8%-49.2%. (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 355).

Despite Chiles' narrow success at the Gubernatorial level in 1994, Republican growth at the State Legislature level in Florida throughout the 1980s and 1990s mirrored Republican growth in Republican Partisan Affiliation during this period (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 361). In 1980, Republicans had held only 32.5% of both State Senate and State House seats in Florida (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 361). In 1994, Florida elected a Republican-majority State Senate, and in 1996, Florida elected a Republican-majority State House (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 361). In doing so, Florida would become one of the first Southern states to see a Republican breakthrough at the State Legislature level. Similar breakthroughs were seen in U.S. Congressional races. Republicans held 25% of Florida House seats in 1970 (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 364). Republicans would hold a majority of seats for the first time in 1989 and would control 65.2% of Florida House seats by 1996; benefiting from the 1992 redistricting (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 364-366). Florida in the mid-1990s was described as volatile, containing a

Democratic Governor, Republican Legislature and two U.S. Senators from opposing parties who both won landslide victories (Carver and Fiedler 1999, 375-376).

### CHAPTER 3: The End of the Solid South, 1944 to 1950

We begin our analysis of the Political Development of the I-4 Corridor in 1944, the year in which Franklin D. Roosevelt won his fourth and final term. In that era, the American South was a Democratic Stronghold. However, change would soon come to the region. Before discovering the Development of Central Florida, let us first analyze the “End of the Solid South” in the I-4 Corridor. As seen below in TABLE 3.1, at the time of the 1940 census, Hillsborough was by far the most populous county in the I-4 Corridor, and comprised 9.5% of Florida’s at-large population. The region at-large comprised 22.33% of the Florida population in 1944.

*TABLE 3.1: 1940 Census County Population Classifications*

County Name	Population	Percent of FL Population	Population Density	Relative to FL Pop. Density	County Classification
State of FL	1,897,414	N/A	13.6/sq.km.	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough	180,148	0.095%	66.2/sq. km.	4.87	Mega Urban
Polk	86,665	0.046%	17.9/sq. km.	1.32	Urban
Osceola	10,119	0.0053%	3.0/sq. km.	0.22	Rural
Orange	70,074	0.037%	29.8/sq. km.	2.19	Urban
Seminole	22,304	0.012%	27.9/sq. km.	2.05	Suburban
Volusia	53,710	0.028%	18.8/sq. km.	1.38	Exurban

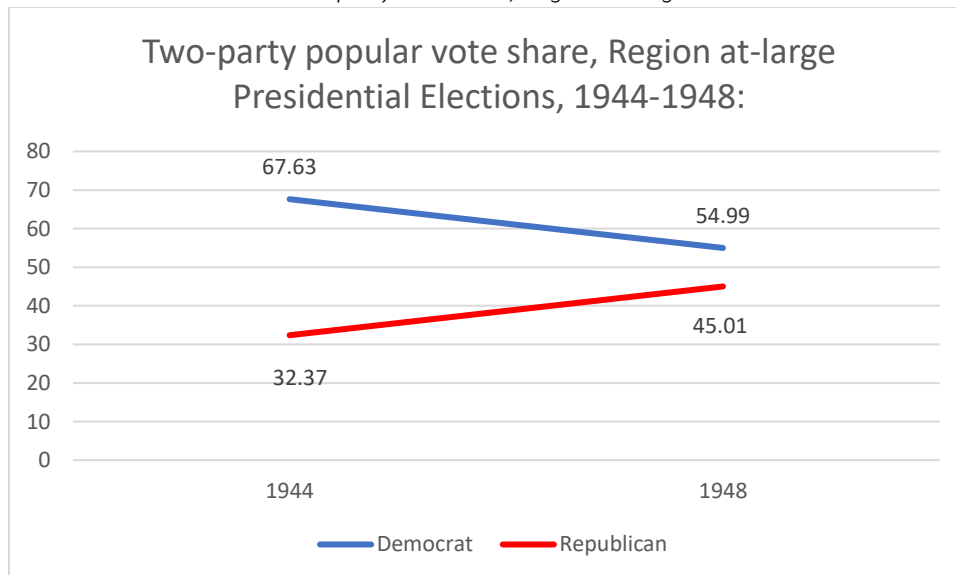
(Source: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)

**TABLE 3.2: Presidential Election Results, 1944-1950:**

County	Presidential Election Year			
	1944		1948	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide
Hillsborough County	75.24% D 24.76% R	(+) 4.92 D (-) 4.92 R	45.67% D 32.77% R	(-) 3.15 D (-) 0.86 R
Polk County	71.86% D 28.14% R	(+) 1.54 D (-) 1.54 R	52.57% D 33.60% R	(+) 3.75 D (-) 0.03 R
Osceola County	55.74% D 44.26% R	(-) 14.58 D (+) 14.58R	44.65% D 44.59% R	(-) 4.17 D (+) 10.96R
Orange County	57.64% D 42.36% R	(-) 12.68 D (+) 12.68R	39.23% D 46.67% R	(-) 9.59 D (+) 13.04R
Seminole County	68.50% D 31.50% R	(-) 1.82 D (+) 1.82 R	45.16% D 33.25% R	(-) 3.66 D (-) 0.38 R
Volusia County	57.20% D 42.80% R	(-) 13.12 D (+) 13.12R	46.70% D 39.46% R	(-) 2.12 D (+) 5.83 R

(Source: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)

**FIGURE 3.3: Two-party vote share, Region at-large. 1944-1950.**



(Source: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)

Figure 3.2 tracks the two-party share of popular vote, across the six I-4 Corridor counties from 1944 to 1948. As it only considers votes for the two major political party, third party votes for Strom Thurmond or Henry Wallace in 1948 are not considered in the calculation. As you can see, while the region voted Democratic in both 1944 and 1948, the Democratic Party's two-party share of the vote decreased by a 12.64-point margin. Considering vote trends from 1944 to 1948, two counties stand out. While four of the counties voted Democrat by a plurality (Osceola County by a 2-vote margin), Polk County had a majority-Democratic vote and Orange County had a plurality Republican. This change was not without precedence as Orange County had given the Democrat's their lowest margin of victory in 1944, and would become one of the most Republican leaning counties in the I-4 Corridor.

## CHAPTER 4: Emerging Republican Florida, 1952 to 1968

At the time of the 1950 census, the I-4 Corridor comprised 21.68% of the Florida population, a slight decrease from 1940. Holding relatively consistent, the I-4 Corridor would comprise 21.18% of Florida’s population by the time of the 1960 Census. All counties experienced growth during this “Emerging Republican Florida” era. Between 1950 and 1960, the population of Orange County would come to exceed that of Polk County, and by 1960 Orange County would become the region’s second Mega Urban County. Noted in this time period are increases in Population Density in Orange and Seminole Counties, and decreases in Hillsborough, Polk and Volusia. Osceola remains a Rural County in this era.

*TABLE 4.1: 1950 Census County Population Classifications*

County Name	Population	Percent of FL Population	Population Density	Relative to FL Pop. Density	County Classification
State of FL	2,771,305	N/A	19.8/sq.km.	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough	249,894	0.09%	91.8/sq. km.	4.64	Mega Urban
Polk	123,997	0.045%	25.5/sq. km.	1.29	Urban
Osceola	11,406	0.0041%	3.3/sq. km.	0.17	Rural
Orange	114,950	0.041%	48.9/sq. km.	2.47	Urban
Seminole	26,883	0.0097%	33.7/sq. km.	1.70	Suburban
Volusia	74,229	0.027%	26.0/sq. km.	1.31	Exurban

(Source: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

*TABLE 4.2: 1960 Census County Population Classifications*

County Name	Population	Percent of FL Population	Population Density	Relative to FL Pop. Density	County Classification
State of FL	4,951,560	N/A	35.5/sq.km.	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough	397,788	0.08%	146.1/sq. km.	4.12	Mega Urban
Polk	195,139	0.039%	40.2/sq. km.	1.13	Urban
Osceola	19,029	0.0038%	5.6/sq. km.	0.16	Rural
Orange	263,540	0.053%	112.1/sq. km.	3.16	Mega Urban
Seminole	54,497	0.011%	68.9/sq. km.	1.94	Suburban
Volusia	125,319	0.025%	43.9/sq. km.	1.24	Exurban

(Source: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))



TABLE 4.3: Presidential Election Results, 1952-1968

County	Presidential Election Year									
	1952		1956		1960		1964		1968	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation From Statewide
Hillsborough County	47.80% D 52.20% R	(+) 2.83 D (-) 2.79 R	47.96% D 52.04% R	(+) 5.23 D (-) 5.23 R	56.01% D 43.99% R	(+) 7.52 D (-) 7.52 R	58.48% D 41.52% R	(+)7.33 D (-) 7.33 R	32.24% D 34.77% R 32.99% I	(+) 1.31 D (-) 5.76 R (+) 4.46 I
Polk County	48.37% D 51.63% R	(+) 3.40 D (-) 3.36 R	44.02% D 55.98% R	(+) 1.29 D (-) 1.29 R	42.68% D 57.32% R	(-) 5.81 D (+) 5.81 R	44.98% D 55.02% R	(-) 6.17 D (+) 6.17 R	21.12% D 36.98% R 41.90% I	(-) 9.81 D (-) 3.55 R (+)13.37 I
Osceola County	37.75% D 62.25% R	(-) 7.22 D (+) 7.26 R	34.81% D 65.19% R	(-) 7.92 D (+) 7.92 R	31.71% D 68.29% R	(-) 16.78 D (+) 16.78R	43.85% D 56.12% R	(-) 7.30 D (+) 7.30 R	19.68% D 43.90% R 36.43% I	(-)11.25 D (+) 3.37 R (+) 7.90 I
Orange County	28.94% D 71.06% R	(-) 16.03 D (+) 16.07 R	27.94% D 72.06% R	(-) 14.79 D (+) 14.79R	29.02% D 70.98% R	(-) 20.46D (+) 20.46R	43.90% D 56.10% R	(-) 7.25 D (+) 7.25 R	22.40% D 50.54% R 27.07% I	(-) 8.53 D (+)10.01R (-) 1.52 I
Seminole County	39.98% D 60.02% R	(-) 4.99 D (+) 5.03 R	34.85% D 65.15% R	(-) 7.88 D (+) 7.88 R	35.37% D 64.63% R	(-) 13.12 D (+) 13.12R	47.52% D 52.48% R	(-) 3.63 D (+) 3.63 R	25.27% D 44.69% R 30.04% I	(-) 5.66 D (+) 4.16 R (+) 1.51 I
Volusia County	37.54% D 62.46% R	(-) 7.43 D (+) 7.47 R	36.60% D 63.40% R	(-) 6.13 D (+) 6.13 R	45.18% D 54.82% R	(-) 3.31 D (+) 3.31 R	58.28% D 41.72% R	(+)7.13 D (-) 7.13 R	35.58% D 39.91% R 24.51% I	(+) 4.65 D (-) 0.62 R (-) 4.02 I

(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)

**TABLE 4.4:** *Gubernatorial Election Results, 1956-1968*

County	Gubernatorial Election Year			
	1956	1960	1964	1968
	D%-R%	D%-R%	D%-R%	D%-R%
Hillsborough County	80.35% D 19.65% R	70.43% D 29.57% R	66.68% D 33.32% R	53.87% D 46.13% R
Polk County	78.51% D 21.49% R	64.46% D 35.54% R	56.67% D 43.23% R	43.85% D 56.15% R
Osceola County	61.30% D 38.70% R	46.50% D 53.50% R	56.28% D 43.72% R	30.99% D 69.01% R
Orange County	61.73% D 38.27% R	42.13% D 57.87% R	53.57% D 46.43% R	31.77% D 68.23% R
Seminole County	73.15% D 26.85% R	52.19% D 47.81% R	54.59% D 45.41% R	35.45% D 64.55% R
Volusia County	62.64% D 37.36% R	49.03% D 50.97% R	53.47% D 46.53% R	43.32% D 56.68% R

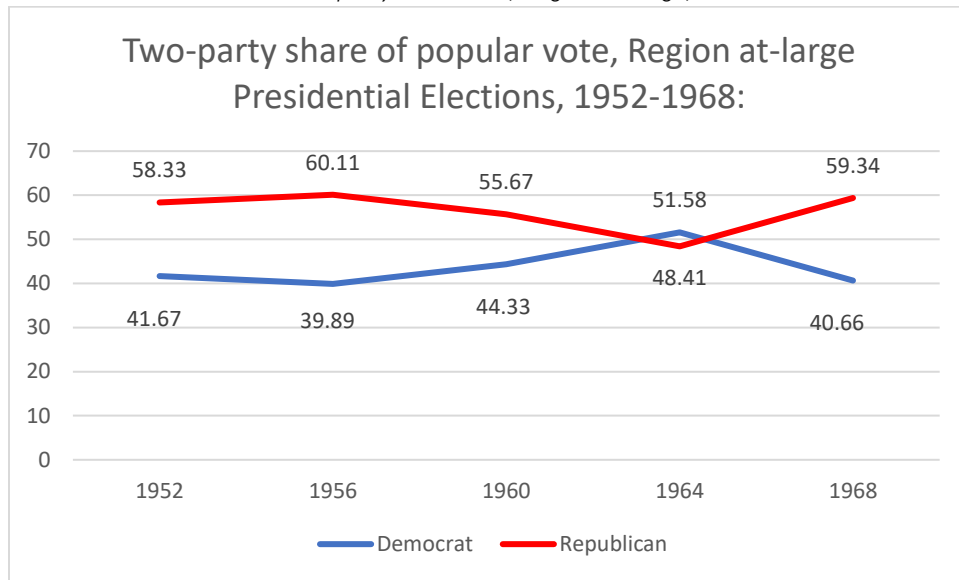
(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

**TABLE 4.5:** *U.S. Senate Election Results, 1962-1968*

County	U.S. Senate Election year		
	1962	1964	1968
	D%-R%	D%-R%	D%-R%
Hillsborough County	77.43% D 22.57% R	69.58% D 30.42% R	51.32% D 48.68% R
Polk County	74.63% D 25.37% R	66.02% D 33.98% R	37.01% D 62.99% R
Osceola County	64.46% D 35.54% R	66.40% D 33.60% R	26.57% D 73.43% R
Orange County	69.17% D 30.83% R	65.15% D 34.85% R	28.05% D 71.95% R
Seminole County	71.45% D 28.55% R	66.97% D 33.03% R	29.89% D 70.11% R
Volusia County	63.37% D 36.63% R	62.63% D 37.37% R	47.62% D 52.38% R

(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

FIGURE 4.6: Two-party vote share, Region at-large, 1952-1968:



(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)

In the “Emerging” Republican Florida era, you see a remarkable turnaround for Republicans at the Presidential level in 1952 and 1956, with all six counties in the I-4 Corridor voting for Republican Dwight Eisenhower over his Democratic opponent, Adlai Stevenson. In 1952, the four eastern-most counties had the largest swing towards the Republican Party, with Osceola, Orange, Seminole and Volusia counties all giving Eisenhower greater than 60% of the vote. Hillsborough and Polk Counties were much narrower, each preferring Eisenhower by less than a 5-point margin. From 1952 to 1956, there was much consistency with five out of six counties voting stronger for Eisenhower in 1956 than they had in 1952, the two largest shifts in Eisenhower’s favor occurring in Polk and Seminole counties. The one exception was in Hillsborough County, which voted for Eisenhower at a slightly lower rate in 1956 compared to

1952. Overall, from 1944 to 1956, considering the two-party vote share at the Presidential level, the I-4 Corridor transformed from voting 67.63% for Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt to 60.11% for Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Beyond analysis of Presidential Election results, starting in 1956, we will begin to analyze Gubernatorial Elections. As incumbent Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower won re-election carrying all six counties in the I-4 Corridor in 1956, incumbent Democratic Governor LeRoy Collins simultaneously won re-election carrying all six counties in the I-4 Corridor. The 1956 Gubernatorial Election results show that, consistent with the Presidential Election, Hillsborough and Polk were the strongest basins of support for the Democratic nominee. Again consistent with the Presidential Election, Orange and Osceola, despite voting Democratic, provided the regions highest levels of support for the Republican Gubernatorial Nominee. One interesting county to analyze is Seminole County, which voted 65% for Eisenhower and 73% for Collins. Of the three counties to give Collins greater than 70% of their vote (Hillsborough, Polk and Seminole), Seminole County simultaneously voted for Eisenhower by a 30-point margin versus Hillsborough's 4-point and Polk's 12-point margins.

Entering 1960, there were two valid questions relating to incumbency and vote preference. First, at the Presidential level: Would Richard Nixon be able to carry the same level of support across the I-4 Corridor that Dwight D. Eisenhower had achieved? At the state level, would the Democratic nominee for the open gubernatorial seat see the same large margins of Democratic support that had been afforded to the incumbent in 1956? At the macro-level (considering all six counties in the analysis), the I-4 Corridor would vote in favor of Richard Nixon over the

Democratic nominee, Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy in the Presidential Election and in favor of Democratic nominee Farris Bryant in the Gubernatorial Election. However, at the micro-level, there was increased division in 1960 compared to 1956. In 1956, all six counties had voted for both Eisenhower and Collins. In 1960, the counties split 3-3 in the Gubernatorial Election, and Kennedy would prevail over Nixon in Hillsborough County.

Considering County level margins of support in 1960, Hillsborough remained the region's most preeminently Democratic county, supporting Democrats at both the Presidential and Gubernatorial level. Polk County continued the trend identified in 1956 of splitting its ticket, but giving the Democratic Gubernatorial nominee higher levels of support than the Republican Presidential nominee. In Orange County, the counties Republican tilt was solidified with the county giving Nixon greater than 70% of their vote, and preferring the Republican Gubernatorial nominee by 15-points. One interesting thing to note was that in the 1960 Gubernatorial Election, Volusia County would narrowly favor the Republican nominee and Seminole County would narrowly favor the Democratic nominee. Keep this in mind.

Beginning in 1962, we will introduce our third and final form of Election to be analyzed: U.S. Senate Elections. In 1962, Democratic U.S. Senator George Smathers would be re-elected, carrying more than 60% of the vote in each county across the I-4 Corridor. Similarly, in 1964, Democratic U.S. Senator Spessard Holland would be re-elected carrying more than 60% of the vote in each county across the I-4 Corridor. So far, in this era titled "Emerging Republican Florida", we have seen Republican victories at the Presidential level and slightly increased margins at the Gubernatorial level, but as of 1964, we have yet to see a Republican elected as

Governor or Senator from Florida. Will this trend continue? First, let us analyze the 1964 Presidential Election.

Looking at Figure 4.6, you might identify a “blip of Blue” in the midst of an otherwise Republican leaning trend. This represents the 1964 U.S. Presidential Election, with incumbent Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson, running against Republican Barry Goldwater. Johnson’s nationwide landslide was less of a landslide in Florida and across the I-4 Corridor than elsewhere, owing perhaps to Goldwater’s margins of support across the South, or the historically Republican nature of the I-4 Corridor. As was identified in the Literature review, the 1964 Presidential Election in Florida represented a realignment of the usual party support. While Goldwater still carried the Republican-leaning urban and suburban areas of Orange and Seminole Counties, he did so with less support than Nixon and Eisenhower had. Goldwater received a smaller percentage of the vote than Nixon in all six of the counties in our analysis. Hillsborough remained in the Democratic column, with a slight increase in the Democratic margin. Four of the five counties that voted for Nixon would vote for Goldwater despite his margin of victory being smaller than Nixon’s. The county where Goldwater experienced the smallest loss was Polk County, which had given Eisenhower his narrowest margin of victory in 1952 and had also been the only county to give Truman more than 50% of the vote in 1948. Goldwater received a margin of support 2.30% less than Nixon had, whereas Goldwater recorded losses of double digit margins in Osceola, Orange, Seminole and Volusia counties; with the losses being enough to cost him Volusia County. Despite winning only two counties across

the I-4 Corridor, Johnson was able to eke out a narrow win over Goldwater across the I-4 Corridor in 1964.

Heading into 1966, Republicans had seen another Gubernatorial Election go by in 1964, in which all six counties in the analysis had voted for the Democratic Nominee. 1966 would provide Republicans with their first break through at the gubernatorial level, with Claude Kirk elected as Florida Governor. Across the I-4 Corridor, Kirk would record wins in all of the counties except for Hillsborough. Again, Orange, Seminole and Osceola would be the Republican bastions of the region, with Volusia and Polk supporting Kirk by a smaller margin. Having experienced victory at the gubernatorial level, Republicans also looked to expand their victories into Senate races. Their first break through would come in 1968 with Edward Gurney, who would also win every county in the I-4 Corridor, except for Hillsborough.

A glance at Figure 4.6 would show that the Democratic victory at the Presidential level in 1964 would not extend to 1968, however the story of the Election is not as simple as Republicans were preferred in the two-party share of the vote by a nearly 20-point margin. The 1968 Election contained third-party candidate, George Wallace, who came in either first or second place across five of the six counties. We will first consider Polk County, the only county in our analysis which Wallace won. Wallace eked out victory over Nixon in Polk County, by a little less than 5-points. Of the six counties, Orange was the only county to give a majority of support to any candidate, with Nixon receiving just over 50%, solidifying the “urban Republican” support. Hillsborough was almost a three-way split, with the first place winner performing only 2.53-points stronger than the third-place nominee. Democratic nominee

Hubert Humphrey fared poorly in the region, finishing in third place in all counties except for Volusia County, which gave Wallace his smallest margin of support across the region. Including George Wallace, the region voted 40.55% for Nixon, 31.66% for Wallace and 27.78% for Humphrey. By the end of the 1960s, the I-4 Corridor had elected a Republican Governor, a Republican U.S. Senator, and had voted for the Republican nominee either via majority or plurality in four out of the last five elections.

Before continuing on to the “Solid Republican” era of this analysis, let us first analyze variations by county type up to this point. One major point of contrast to consider is that the two “Mega Urban” counties in the analysis, Orange and Hillsborough, have wildly different political orientations. While Orange has established itself as one of the most reliably Republican counties in the I-4 Corridor, Hillsborough is one of the most reliably Democratic counties. The sole county that we have categorized as urban, Polk, has been distinguishable in several ways as the only county to give Truman a majority of their vote in 1948, the county that gave Eisenhower his smallest margin of victory in 1952, the county where Goldwater lost the least support compared to Nixon, and the only county in the analysis where Wallace won in 1968. The sole county we have labeled as rural, Osceola, has trended similarly to neighboring Orange County, so far, albeit favoring the Republican by a slightly smaller margin in most scenarios. Seminole and Volusia, categorized up to the end of this section as suburban and exurban, respectively, have proven an interesting contrast. While Volusia has a larger population, Seminole has a larger population density. Seminole is also closer to the Mega Urban Orange County, whereas Volusia is farther removed at the Eastern end of the I-4 Corridor. We have



seen a gradual shift towards the Republican Party in Seminole County, and towards the Democratic Party in Volusia County.

## CHAPTER 5: Solid Republican Florida, 1970 to 1988

As we enter, the Solid Republican era of Florida history, let us consider the population changes that would impact the region in the 1970 and 1980 censuses. First, in 1970 the region comprised 19.75% of Florida’s population and held steady at 19.77% in 1980, signaling that growth along the I-4 Corridor mirrored growth at the statewide level during this period. We begin to see a slight tick in the population density of Osceola during this period. During this era, we see a slight decline in the Population Densities of Mega Urban Hillsborough and Orange Counties, and we see a population boom enough in Seminole and Volusia Counties to change their classifications, respectively, to urban and suburban, by the time of the 1980 census.

*TABLE 5.1: 1970 Census County Population Classifications*

County Name	Population	Percent of FL Population	Population Density	Relative to FL Pop. Density	County Classification
State of FL	6,791,418	N/A	48.6/ sq. km.	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough	490,265	0.0722	180.1/sq. km.	3.71	Mega Urban
Polk	228,515	0.0337	47.1/ sq. km.	0.97	Urban
Osceola	25,267	0.0037	7.4/ sq. km.	0.15	Rural
Orange	344,311	0.051	146.5/sq. km.	3.02	Mega Urban
Seminole	83,692	0.012	104.9/sq. km.	2.15	Suburban
Volusia	169,487	0.025	59.3/ sq. km.	1.22	Exurban

(Source for Tables 5.1 and 5.2: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/> )

*TABLE 5.2: 1980 Census County Population Classifications*

County Name	Population	Percent of FL Population	Population Density	Relative to FL Pop. Density	County Classification
State of FL	9,746,961	N/A	69.8/ sq. km.	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough	646,939	0.066	237.7/sq. km.	3.41	Mega Urban
Polk	321,652	0.033	66.3/ sq. km.	0.95	Urban
Osceola	49,287	0.005	14.4/ sq. km.	0.21	Rural
Orange	470,865	0.048	200.4/sq. km.	2.87	Mega Urban
Seminole	179,752	0.018	225.3/sq. km.	3.23	Urban
Volusia	258,762	0.027	90.6/ sq. km.	1.30	Suburban

TABLE 5.3: Presidential Election Results, 1972-1988

County	Presidential Election Year									
	1972		1976		1980		1984		1988	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation From Statewide
Hillsborough County	29.71% D 70.13% R	(+) 1.91 D (-) 1.78 R	54.01% D 44.82% R	(+) 2.08 D (-) 1.82 R	42.99% D 51.71% R	(+) 4.49 D (-) 3.81 R	35.31% D 64.67% R	(+) 0.65 D (+) 0.65 D	39.49% D 59.89% R	(+) 0.98 D (-) 0.98 R
Polk County	21.20% D 78.42% R	(-) 6.60 D (+) 6.51 R	51.01% D 47.72% R	(-) 0.92 D (+) 1.08 R	40.75% D 56.11% R	(+) 2.25 D (+) 0.59 R	29.65% D 70.33% R	(-) 5.01 D (+) 5.01 R	32.96% D 66.45% R	(-) 5.55 D (+) 5.58 R
Osceola County	16.69% D 82.94% R	(-) 11.11 D (+) 11.03 R	48.63% D 49.82% R	(-) 3.30 D (+) 3.18 R	36.27% D 59.67% R	(-) 2.23 D (+) 4.15 R	26.53% D 73.45% R	(-) 8.13 D (+) 8.13 R	31.27% D 68.05% R	(-) 7.24 D (+) 7.18 R
Orange County	20.07% D 79.57% R	(-) 7.73 D (+) 7.66 R	44.80% D 54.01% R	(-) 7.13 D (+) 7.37 R	34.05% D 61.06% R	(-) 4.45 D (+) 5.54 R	28.51% D 71.39% R	(-) 6.15 D (+) 6.07 R	31.27% D 67.86% R	(-) 7.24 D (+) 6.99 R
Seminole County	19.01% D 80.84% R	(-) 8.79 D (+) 8.93 R	41.89% D 56.94% R	(-) 10.04 D (+)10.30 R	28.86% D 66.16% R	(-) 9.64 D (+)10.64 R	24.02% D 75.91% R	(-)10.64 D (+)10.59 R	27.06% D 72.20% R	(-)11.45D (+)11.33R
Volusia County	29.01% D 70.69% R	(+) 1.21 D (-) 1.22 R	55.72% D 42.53% R	(+) 3.79 D (-) 4.11 R	43.69% D 51.69% R	(+) 5.19 D (-) 3.83 R	39.06% D 60.93% R	(+) 4.40 D (-) 4.39 R	42.28% D 56.56% R	(+) 3.77 D (-) 4.31 R

(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/> )

TABLE 5.4: Gubernatorial Election Results, 1970-1986

County	Gubernatorial Election Year									
	1970		1974		1978		1982		1986	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation From Statewide
Hillsborough County	61.62% D 38.38% R	(+) 4.75 D (-) 4.74 R	69.80% D 30.20% R	(+) 8.60 D (-) 8.60 R	55.60% D 44.40% R	(+) 0.01 D (-) 0.01 R	70.68% D 29.32% R	(+) 5.98 D (-) 5.98 R	47.97% D 52.03% R	(+) 2.53 D (-) 2.53 R
Polk County	54.75% D 45.25% R	(-) 2.12 D (+) 2.13 R	59.26% D 40.74% R	(-) 1.94 D (+) 1.94 R	46.30% D 53.70% R	(-) 9.29 D (+) 9.29 R	69.63% D 30.37% R	(+) 4.93 D (-) 4.93 R	41.14% D 58.86% R	(-) 4.30 D (+) 4.30 R
Osceola County	35.80% D 64.20% R	(-) 21.07 D (+) 21.08 R	51.22% D 48.78% R	(-) 9.98 D (+) 9.98 R	50.49% D 49.51% R	(-) 5.10 D (+) 5.10 R	58.06% D 41.94% R	(-) 6.64 D (+) 6.64 R	42.44% D 57.56% R	(-) 3.00 D (+) 3.00 R
Orange County	34.68% D 65.32% R	(-) 22.19 D (+) 22.20 R	54.46% D 45.54% R	(-) 6.74 D (+) 6.74 R	53.82% D 46.18% R	(-) 1.77 D (+) 1.77 R	60.67% D 39.33% R	(-) 4.03 D (+) 4.03 R	42.48% D 57.72% R	(-) 2.96 D (+) 2.96 R
Seminole County	40.34% D 59.66% R	(-) 16.53 D (+) 16.54 R	54.76% D 45.24% R	(-) 6.44 D (+) 6.44 R	50.71% D 49.29% R	(-) 4.88 D (+) 4.88 R	58.69% D 41.31% R	(-) 6.01 D (+) 6.01 R	37.24% D 62.76% R	(-) 8.20 D (+) 8.20 R
Volusia County	53.34% D 46.66% R	(-) 3.53 D (+) 3.54 R	62.31% D 37.69% R	(+) 1.11 D (-) 1.11 R	56.42% D 43.58% R	(+) 0.83 D (-) 0.83 R	65.55% D 34.45% R	(+) 0.80 D (-) 0.80 R	49.56% D 50.44% R	(+) 4.12 D (-) 4.12 R

(Source for 1970, 1978, 1982 and 1986: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>; Source for 1974: Our Campaigns: <https://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=96892> ).

**TABLE 5.5: U.S. Senate Election Results, 1974-1986**

County	U.S. Senate Election Year		
	1974	1980	1986
	D%-R%	D%-R%	D%-R%
Hillsborough County	38.87% D 47.92% R 13.19% I	51.57% D 48.42% R	62.46% D 37.54% R
Polk County	32.66% D 45.62% R 21.71% I	48.26% D 51.74% R	58.43% D 41.57% R
Osceola County	34.41% D 47.04% R 18.55% I	46.00% D 54.00% R	50.54% D 49.46% R
Orange County	37.28% D 45.81% R 16.89% I	49.16% D 50.82% R	51.56% D 48.43% R
Seminole County	36.89% D 46.69% R 16.42% I	42.86% D 57.14% R	50.15% D 49.85% R
Volusia County	43.31% D 40.21% R 16.47% I	57.72% D 47.28% R	57.39% D 42.61% R

(Source for 1974 Senate Election, Our Campaigns:

<https://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=6367>; Source for 1980 and 1986: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>).

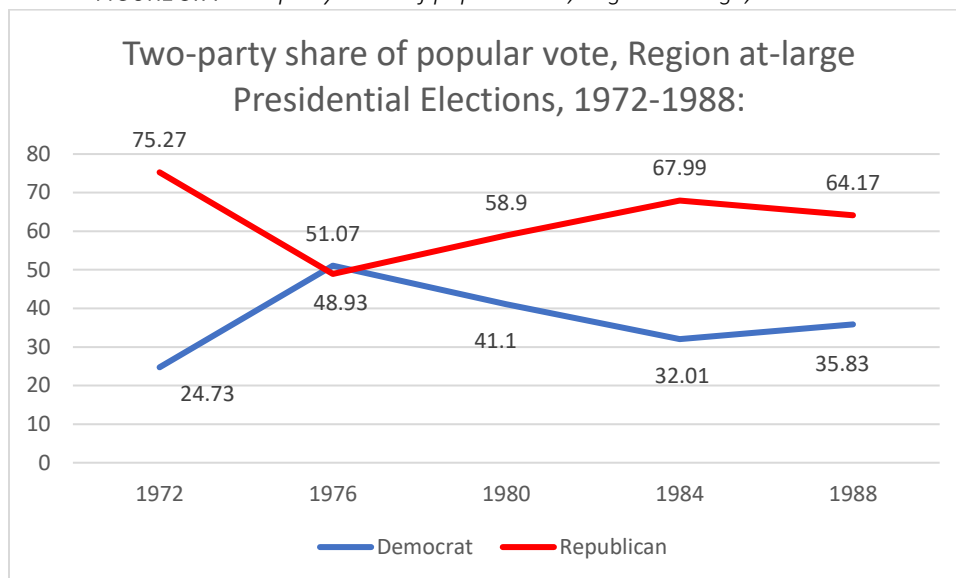
TABLE 5.6: U.S. Senate Election Results, 1970-1988

County	U.S. Senate Election Year							
	1970		1976		1982		1988	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide
Hillsborough County	55.27% D 44.73% R	(+) 1.41 D (-) 1.40 R	70.82% D 29.18% R	(+) 7.84 D (-) 7.84 R	67.30% D 32.70% R	(+) 5.58 D (-) 5.56 R	54.46% D 45.36% R	(+) 4.89 D (-) 5.06 R
Polk County	60.97% D 39.03% R	(+) 7.11 D (-) 7.10 R	65.79% D 34.21% R	(+) 2.81 D (-) 2.81 R	66.30% D 33.70% R	(+) 4.58 D (-) 4.56 R	50.17% D 49.82% R	(+) 0.60 D (-) 0.60 R
Osceola County	39.18% D 60.82% R	(-) 14.68 D (+) 14.69 R	59.62% D 40.38% R	(-) 3.36 D (+) 3.36 R	55.80% D 44.20% R	(-) 5.92 D (+) 5.94 R	42.26% D 57.73% R	(-) 7.31 D (+) 7.31 R
Orange County	36.38% D 63.62% R	(-) 17.48 D (+) 17.49 R	61.56% D 38.44% R	(-) 1.42 D (+) 1.42 R	54.70% D 45.20% R	(-) 7.02 D (+) 6.94 R	43.74% D 56.22% R	(-) 5.83 D (+) 5.80 R
Seminole County	40.56% D 59.44% R	(-) 13.30 D (+) 13.31 R	58.25% D 41.75% R	(-) 4.73 D (+) 4.73 R	48.90% D 51.00% R	(-) 12.82 D (+) 12.74 R	44.49% D 55.51% R	(-) 5.08 D (+) 5.09 R
Volusia County	52.12% D 47.88% R	(-) 1.74 D (+) 1.75 R	64.40% D 35.60% R	(+) 1.42 D (-) 1.42 D	59.55% D 40.43% R	(-) 2.17 D (+) 2.17 R	49.35% D 50.65% R	(-) 0.22 D (+) 0.23 R

(Source for 1970, 1982 and 1988: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>;

Source for 1976: <https://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=6290> ).

FIGURE 5.7: Two-party share of popular vote, Region at-large, 1972-1988:



(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)

As we begin to analyze the Solid Republican era of Florida history and its impact on the political development of the I-4 Corridor, you might immediately identify a parallel on Figure 5.7, compared to Figure 4.6. Republicans fairly consistently hold an advantage in the two-party share of the vote in all elections considered on both figures, with two exceptions. The 1964 and 1976 Presidential Elections. Let us begin by analyzing whether or not Republicans have the same advantage in Gubernatorial and Senate Elections during this period.

As we closed out the Emerging Republican Florida section, we noted Republican victories in the 1966 Gubernatorial Election and 1968 Senate Election. Heading into 1970, there was a clear question: will the new Republican advantage remain? The answer becomes clear, Florida would remain a lean-Democratic state at the Presidential and Senate level throughout the 1970s,

electing no Republicans to either position during this decade. In the 1970 Gubernatorial Election, Democrat Reubin Askew would defeat incumbent Republican Governor Claude Kirk, and in the 1970 Senate Election, Democrat Lawton Chiles would hold the seat for the retiring Spessard Holland. In both elections, you would see the counties split on a 3-3 basis, with Hillsborough, Polk and Volusia voting Democrat and Osceola, Orange and Seminole voting Republican.

The 1972 Presidential Election would be relatively boring across the I-4 Corridor, with President Richard Nixon winning over 70% of the vote in each of the six counties. McGovern was strongest in Hillsborough and Volusia Counties, and weakest in Osceola, Orange and Seminole Counties.

In 1974, the elections for Governor and U.S. Senator developed very differently. Governor Askew had proven popular, and was able to win all six counties in his bid for re-election, albeit performing lowest, as per usual, in Osceola, Orange and Seminole (Our Campaigns). However when Askew's nearly 9-point victory in Orange County is considered against the fact that he lost Orange County by 30 points in his 1970 race for Governor, a significant shift is acknowledged. The Senate race, however, was a very different story. This was Edward Gurney's seat, which had provided the Republicans with their Senate victory in 1968. However Gurney was not running for re-election. Democrats nominated Richard Stone, Republicans nominated Jack Eckerd, and there was a third-party nominee, John Grady (Our Campaigns). The 1974 U.S. Senate race is notable, as Democrat Richard Stone would defeat Jack Eckerd by three points



statewide, building a coalition of both Miami Democrats and Panhandle Democrats (Our Campaigns). The one region of the state that largely supported Eckerd, was the I-4 Corridor (Our Campaigns). Despite Stone's victory at the statewide level, five of the six counties in our analysis voted for Eckerd (Our Campaigns). Even Hillsborough County, which to this point had been one of the most Democratic-leaning counties in our analysis, voted for Eckerd. Volusia, which had been emerging as more Democratic than the region at-large, was the only county to vote for Stone over Eckerd. This illustrates that the I-4 Corridor could still be overruled when Democrats were able to win both in North Florida and Miami.

Up to 1976, we have seen Democratic victories at the statewide level in every Gubernatorial and Senate Election analyzed. 1976 would continue the trend, with Democratic Senator Lawton Chiles winning re-election with the support of all six counties in our analysis, and former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter eking out a narrow victory over President Gerald R. Ford in the I-4 Corridor. The 1976 Presidential Election once again featured a frequent 3-3 split in this era of Florida politics with Hillsborough, Polk and Volusia voting for Carter and Osceola, Orange and Seminole voting for Ford.

Advancing to the 1978 Gubernatorial Election, in what might have been expected to be a Republican-leaning year as it was the first midterm of a Democratic Presidency, and Republicans would again find no luck at the ballot box in Florida, with Democrat Bob Graham's election to the office of Governor, winning support across all six counties in our analysis. This might leave some of you wondering how this period of Florida politics is described as "Solid

Republican Florida”? Enter 1980. In the 1980 Presidential Election, Ronald Reagan defeated Jimmy Carter in all six of the I-4 counties, and Republican Paula Hawkins was elected to the open Senate seat vacated by the retiring Richard Stone. Let us briefly analyze the county-level results of the 1980 Senate race, as they present an interesting result. At first glance, the 3-3 split of Hillsborough, Polk and Volusia voting Democrat and Osceola, Orange and Seminole voting Republican might seem worn and tired. However, let us take a look at the margins of support for the nominees by county. The Republican advantage in Orange County has been diminished, with Hawkins winning the county only by one-point, a smaller margin than she won Osceola and Seminole Counties by.

The 1982 Elections would see the re-election of two incumbent Democrats, Governor Bob Graham and Senator Lawton Chiles. All six counties voted for Graham, and five of the six counties voted for Chiles. Seminole County, perhaps in an early bid to establish itself as the new “Most Republican county in the I-4 Corridor”, was the sole county that did not vote for Chiles.

In 1984, there was no Gubernatorial or Senate Election in Florida, only the Presidential Election between Republican Ronald Reagan and Democrat Walter Mondale. Reagan was easily re-elected in a landslide, however the landslide for Reagan was not as large as Nixon’s had been twelve years earlier when he had won greater than 70% in all six counties in the analysis. Reagan achieved this feat in four of the six counties, however Reagan fell short of achieving 70% of the vote in Hillsborough and Volusia Counties. Polk County, which had historically sided with the Democrats along with Hillsborough and Volusia in the well-tested 3-3 counties

coalition, would remain the county with the third-highest Democratic percentage of the vote in 1984, however its margin of support for Reagan was more than five-points larger than Hillsborough's margin and almost ten-points larger than Volusia's. Orange County would have the fourth largest margin of votes for the Democrats, with Seminole County, after having been the only county in the I-4 Corridor to vote against Chiles in 1982, giving Reagan his largest victory in 1984.

1986 would send mixed signals to the political parties in Florida. After two popular two-term Democratic Governors, Republicans would win the open gubernatorial seat in 1986. However the latter of those aforementioned popular Democratic Governors, Bob Graham, would unseat incumbent Republican Paula Hawkins in the Senate Election. We will analyze the Senate race first. Bob Graham won each of the six counties in the I-4 Corridor, although he won Seminole County by a 0.30-point margin and won by 3-points or less in Orange and Osceola Counties. Similarly, the Senate race also saw all six counties in the I-4 Corridor delivered to the same candidate, Republican Bob Martinez. Volusia County gave Martinez his narrowest victory, by a margin of less than one-point. Following a trend established in this era, Seminole County was again the strongest Republican county in the gubernatorial race. Something interesting that stands out, however, is that Polk County voted for Martinez at a slightly higher rate than Orange County. This was however a trend to be reversed in 1988, as Orange County would vote slightly stronger for George H.W. Bush than Polk County, and would vote for the Republican nominee for Senate as Polk County slightly preferred the Democratic nominee.

To close out the Solid Republican era, we will analyze 1988. The 1988 Election in Florida brought a landslide Republican victory at the Presidential level and a narrow Republican victory in a hotly contested Senate race to replace retiring Sen. Lawton Chiles. George H.W. Bush would win all six counties in the I-4 Corridor, with Dukakis' strongest margins coming in Hillsborough and Volusia Counties. In 1988, Polk County would again, at the Presidential level, appear closer to Orange, Osceola and Seminole than Volusia or Hillsborough, continuing a trend. The 1988 Senate race saw three clearly Republican counties, one clearly Democratic county, and two swing counties. Orange, Osceola and Seminole voted for Republican Connie Mack, as Hillsborough voted for Democrat Buddy McKay. Volusia County narrowly preferred Republican Mack, and Polk County narrowly preferred Democrat McKay.

In this era, we see Mega Urban Hillsborough County remain one of the most Democratic leaning counties in the state, although it does vote Republican in several elections. Similarly, Mega Urban Orange County retains its Republican lean, while voting Democrat in wave elections and starting to have a slight trend towards the Democrats by the end of the era. Urban Seminole County began to establish itself as the most Republican county in many elections, as rural Osceola continued to maintain a Republican lean. The interesting counties to analyze in this period are Volusia and Polk. Volusia would continue to remain more Democratic than the region at-large, despite voting Republican in several closely contested Presidential races. In Presidential Elections, Polk would begin to mirror the Republican margins of Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties, while continuing to be slightly friendlier to Democrats in Governor and Senate Elections

## CHAPTER 6: Competitive Florida, 1990 to 2004

In the era of Competitive Florida, population growth continues in all six counties. In 1990, the I-4 Corridor comprised 20.73% of Florida’s population, ticking up from the percentages in 1970 and 1980. In 2000, the I-4 Corridor comprised 21.02% of Florida’s population, continuing its increase from 1990. Hillsborough, Polk and Volusia see slightly declined population densities during this period, as the population density grows in Osceola, Orange and Seminole. By the 2000 census, I believe Osceola has undergone enough growth in population and population density to classify it as “suburban”. I have also reclassified Polk as suburban, beginning in 1990.

*TABLE 6.1: 1990 Census County Population Classifications*

County Name	Population	Percent of FL Population	Population Density	Relative to FL Pop. Density	County Classification
State of FL	12,938,071	N/A	92.6/ sq. km.	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough	834,054	0.064%	306.4/sq. km.	3.31	Mega Urban
Polk	405,382	0.031%	83.5/ sq. km.	0.90	Suburban
Osceola	107,728	0.008%	31.5/ sq. km.	0.34	Rural
Orange	677,491	0.052%	288.3/sq. km.	3.11	Mega Urban
Seminole	287,521	0.022%	360.3/sq. km.	3.89	Urban
Volusia	370,737	0.029%	129.8/sq. km.	1.40	Suburban

(Source: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

*TABLE 6.2: 2000 Census County Population Classifications*

County Name	Population	Percent of FL Population	Population Density	Relative to FL Pop. Density	County Classification
State of FL	15,982,378	N/A	114.4/sq. km.	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough	998,948	0.063%	367.0/sq. km.	3.21	Mega Urban
Polk	483,924	0.03%	99.7/ sq. km.	0.87	Suburban
Osceola	172,493	0.011%	50.4/ sq. km.	0.44	Suburban
Orange	896,344	0.056%	381.4/sq. km.	3.33	Mega Urban
Seminole	365,196	0.023%	457.6/sq. km.	4.00	Urban
Volusia	443,343	0.028%	155.2/sq. km.	1.36	Suburban

(Source: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

TABLE 6.3: Presidential Election Results, 1992-2004:

County	Presidential Election Year							
	1992		1996		2000		2004	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide
Hillsborough County	37.13% D 42.07% R	(-) 1.87 D (+) 1.18 R	46.80% D 44.33% R	(-) 1.22 D (+) 2.01 R	47.06% D 50.17% R	(-) 1.78 D (+) 1.32 R	46.23% D 53.01% R	(-) 0.86 D (+) 0.91 R
Polk County	35.26% D 45.21% R	(-) 3.74 D (+) 4.32 R	44.45% D 45.26% R	(-) 3.57 D (+) 2.94 R	44.60% D 53.56% R	(-) 4.24 D (+) 4.71 R	40.80% D 58.61% R	(-) 6.29 D (+) 6.51 R
Osceola County	33.16% D 42.29% R	(-) 5.84 D (+) 1.40 R	47.05% D 39.44% R	(-) 0.97 D (-) 2.88 R	50.61% D 47.11% R	(+) 1.77 D (-) 1.74 R	47.00% D 52.45% R	(-) 0.09 D (+) 0.35 R
Orange County	34.89% D 45.90% R	(-) 4.11 D (+) 5.01 R	45.66% D 45.89% R	(-) 2.36 D (+) 3.57 R	50.06% D 48.02% R	(+) 1.22 D (-) 0.83 R	49.83% D 49.62% R	(+) 2.74 D (-) 2.48 R
Seminole County	30.33% D 48.57% R	(-) 8.67 D (+) 7.68 R	39.21% D 52.04% R	(-) 8.84 D (+) 9.72 R	42.98% D 55.00% R	(-) 5.86 D (+) 6.15 R	41.34% D 58.10% R	(-) 5.75 D (+) 6.00 R
Volusia County	41.94% D 38.05% R	(+) 2.94 D (-) 2.84 R	49.28% D 39.39% R	(+) 1.26 D (-) 2.93 R	52.98% D 44.84% R	(+) 4.14 D (-) 4.01 R	50.46% D 48.89% R	(+) 3.37 D (-) 3.21 R

(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)

TABLE 6.4: Gubernatorial Election Results, 1990-2002:

County	Gubernatorial Election Year							
	1990		1994		1998		2002	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide
Hillsborough County	62.70% D 37.30% R	(+) 6.19 D (-) 6.18 R	48.60% D 51.40% R	(-) 2.15 D (+) 2.15 R	44.20% D 55.80% R	(-) 0.52 D (+) 0.53 R	43.03% D 56.28% R	(-) 0.13 D (+) 0.27 R
Polk County	56.20% D 43.80% R	(-) 0.31 D (+) 0.32 R	47.20% D 52.80% R	(-) 3.55 D (+) 3.55 R	40.80% D 59.20% R	(-) 3.92 D (+) 3.93 R	38.09% D 61.26% R	(-) 5.07 D (+) 5.25 R
Osceola County	52.30% D 47.70% R	(-) 4.21 D (+) 4.22 R	45.30% D 54.70% R	(-) 5.45 D (+) 5.45 R	38.40% D 61.60% R	(-) 6.32 D (+) 6.33 R	38.72% D 60.44% R	(-) 4.44 D (+) 4.43 R
Orange County	55.30% D 44.70% R	(-) 1.21 D (+) 1.22 R	48.00% D 52.00% R	(-) 2.75 D (+) 2.75 R	41.30% D 58.70% R	(-) 3.42 D (+) 3.43 R	42.42% D 56.93% R	(-) 0.74 D (+) 0.92 R
Seminole County	50.70% D 49.30% R	(-) 5.81 D (+) 5.82 R	44.30% D 55.70% R	(-) 6.45 D (+) 6.45 R	36.40% D 63.60% R	(-) 8.32 D (+) 8.33 R	35.48% D 63.91% R	(-) 7.68 D (+) 7.90 R
Volusia County	53.50% D 46.50% R	(-) 3.01 D (+) 3.02 R	53.20% D 46.80% R	(+) 2.45 D (-) 2.45 R	47.0% D 53.0% R	(+) 2.28 D (-) 2.27 R	45.39% D 53.80% R	(+) 2.23 D (-) 2.21 R

(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)

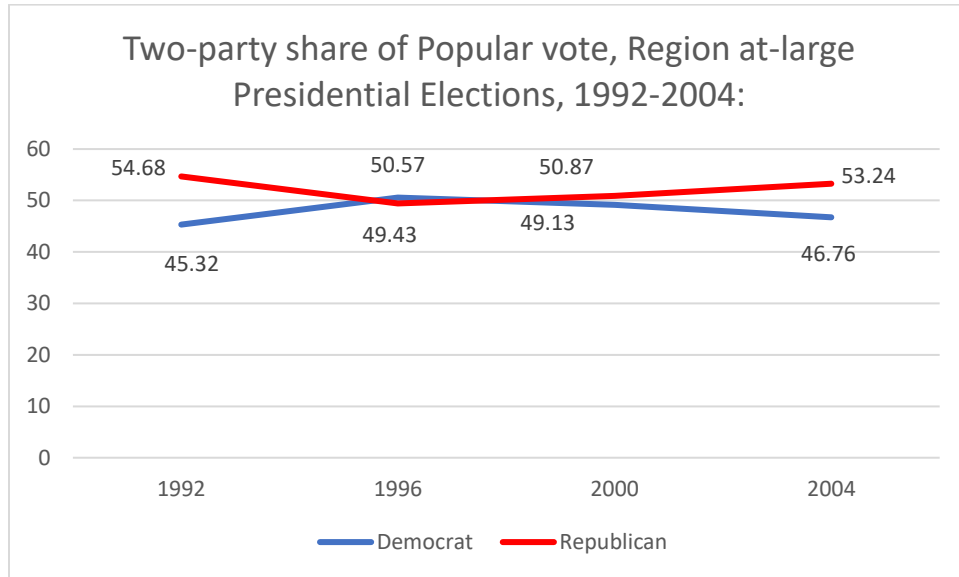
TABLE 6.5: U.S. Senate Election Results, 1992-2004:

County	U.S. Senate Election Year									
	1992		1994		1998		2000		2004	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation From Statewide
Hillsborough County	61.40% D 38.60% R	(-) 4.00 D (+) 4.01 R	28.50% D 71.50% R	(-) 0.98 D (+) 1.00 R	55.10% D 44.90% R	(-) 7.37 D (+) 7.37 R	50.81% D 45.95% R	(-) 0.23 D (-) 0.24 R	51.42% D 46.29% R	(+) 3.10 D (-) 3.14 R
Polk County	62.20% D 38.80% R	(-) 3.20 D (+) 4.21 R	25.40% D 74.60% R	(-) 4.08 D (+) 4.10 R	58.90% D 41.10% R	(-) 3.57 D (+) 3.57 R	49.05% D 48.16% R	(-) 1.99 D (+) 1.97 R	44.81% D 52.28% R	(-) 3.51 D (+) 2.85 R
Osceola County	62.40% D 37.60% R	(-) 3.00 D (+) 3.01 R	26.10% D 73.90% R	(-) 3.38 D (+) 3.40 R	59.70% D 40.30% R	(-) 2.77 D (+) 2.77 R	53.83% D 43.24% R	(+) 2.79 D (-) 2.95 R	45.16% D 52.00% R	(-) 3.16 D (+) 2.57 R
Orange County	61.40% D 38.60% R	(-) 4.00 D (+) 4.01 R	26.40% D 73.60% R	(-) 3.08 D (+) 3.10 R	60.80% D 39.20% R	(-) 1.67 D (+) 1.67 R	53.07% D 45.07% R	(+) 2.03 D (-) 1.12 R	49.00% D 49.15% R	(+) 0.68 D (-) 0.28 R
Seminole County	57.70% D 42.30% R	(-) 7.70 D (+) 7.71 R	21.90% D 78.10% R	(-) 7.58 D (+) 7.60 R	54.50% D 45.50% R	(-) 7.97 D (+) 7.97 R	46.57% D 51.65% R	(-) 4.47 D (+) 5.46 R	41.76% D 56.11% R	(-) 6.56 D (+) 6.68 R
Volusia County	67.00% D 32.90% R	(+) 1.60 D (-) 1.69 R	31.10% D 68.90% R	(+) 1.62 D (-) 1.60 R	62.00% D 38.00% R	(-) 0.47 D (+) 0.47 R	55.26% D 42.43% R	(+) 4.22 D (-) 3.76 R	51.05% D 46.21% R	(+) 2.73 D (-) 3.22 R

(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)



FIGURE 6.6: Two-party share of popular vote, Region at-large, 1992-2004:



(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: <https://uselectionatlas.org/>.)

The first election to consider in the Competitive Florida era is the 1990 Gubernatorial Election. Former Democratic Senator Lawton Chiles challenged incumbent Republican Governor Bob Graham, and won each of the six counties across the I-4 Corridor in his victory. Seminole County remains the county with the strongest support for the Republican nominee, and Orange County places as the county with the third strongest support for Chiles, behind Hillsborough and Polk.

After Republican landslides across all six counties in 1984 and 1988, 1992 would emerge into a competitive election, with a strong third-party challenge. Turnout overall was higher in 1992 than 1988, partially due to increased turnout in favor of the third-party candidate. Despite the emergence of third-party candidate Ross Perot diluting overall vote percentages, Bill Clinton

received higher raw vote totals in all six counties in 1992 than Michael Dukakis received in 1988 and George H.W. Bush received less raw votes in each of the six counties. This is evident in the two-party share of the vote, decreasing from favoring Republicans over Democrats by 28.34-points in 1988 to favoring Republicans by 9.36-points in 1992. If you include votes for Ross Perot, Bush carried 43.71% of the I-4 Corridor's votes compared to 36.22% for Clinton and 20.07% for Perot. One thing is evident: In 1992, the I-4 Corridor remained overall more Republican than the nation-at-large. In fact, despite increased Democratic vote counts and decreased Republican vote counts in all six counties, only Volusia County would vote for Bill Clinton in 1992.

Now we will discuss the 1992 and 1994 Florida Senate Elections. Both were landslides in which the incumbents, from opposing parties, would win re-election by a large margin carrying all six counties in the I-4 Corridor. In 1992, Bob Graham easily won a second term and in 1994, Connie Mack easily won a second term. However, the 1994 Gubernatorial Election was much more competitive. 1994 was a Republican dominated year, especially across the South. While this might have played some part in Senator Mack's landslide re-election, and it produced an extremely competitive Gubernatorial Election, Governor Chiles would defy the national odds to win a second term as Governor. Despite his victory statewide, Chiles did not fare as well across the I-4 Corridor, with five out of six counties voting for Republican Jeb Bush, after all six had voted for him in 1990. Of the I-4 Corridor counties, only Volusia County, would vote for Gov. Chiles in 1994. This is reminiscent of the 1974 Senate Election, where of the six counties in this

analysis, only Volusia County voted for Richard Stone, despite both Stone and Chiles prevailing statewide.

Transitioning into 1996, the two-party vote margin became extremely competitive, with Democratic support continuing to grow for incumbent President Bill Clinton, across the region. After having only won a plurality in one of the counties in 1992, President Clinton would win a plurality of the vote in four out of six of the counties. Clinton's 1996 victory in Osceola County made him the first Democrat to carry Osceola since Harry Truman had secured the county by two votes in 1948. While Clinton narrowly lost Orange County to Republican nominee Bob Dole, his coming within 0.23 points of winning there was a notable increase from past Democratic fortunes in Orange County, and would foreshadow future Democratic success. Seminole County was the only county in our analysis that gave either nominee a majority of the vote, giving Bob Dole 52% of the vote. Overall in the two-party share of the vote, not considering votes cast for Ross Perot, Clinton edged out Dole across the I-4 Corridor, becoming the first Democrat to win the I-4 Corridor since Carter in 1976.

Consider the Election results that we have analyzed so far in this era: one Republican Presidential victory, one Democratic Presidential victory, one victory for an incumbent Democratic Senator, one victory for an incumbent Republican Senator, and two Democratic Gubernatorial victories, with the second being extremely close. It is no wonder why this era was titled "Competitive Florida". 1998 would bring a Senate race that would be the last statewide race for one prominent Florida politician and the first for another prominent Florida politician,

and a gubernatorial race between two politicians previously mentioned in this analysis. The Senate race would feature Bob Graham's third election to the Senate against Republican nominee Charlie Crist and the gubernatorial race would again feature Jeb Bush, who narrowly lost in 1994, as the Republican nominee against Democrat Buddy McKay. True to this era being named "Competitive Florida", in 1998 Florida re-elected Democratic Senator Graham and elected a Republican Governor. Across the I-4 Corridor, Graham and Bush would both win each of the six counties.

We now turn to the 2000 Presidential Election in Florida, which was infamously close. Across the I-4 Corridor, it was also close, with Republican George W. Bush eking out a 50.87-49.13% victory in the region over the Democratic nominee, Vice President Al Gore. 2000 would produce a result backwards of what we are familiar with: Hillsborough and Polk Counties voted Republican, as Orange and Osceola Counties voted Democratic. For Orange County, this was the first time it had voted Democratic in a Presidential Election since 1944. The transition in Orange and Osceola Counties has already been discussed earlier. Let me briefly address Hillsborough County. It can be noted that Hillsborough County had voted for George H.W. Bush over Bill Clinton in 1992, and had favored Bill Clinton over Bob Dole at a margin smaller than the statewide margin in 1996. Thus, there were signs that foretold Hillsborough County voting for George W. Bush in 2000. Seminole County would remain the region's strongest Republican County and Volusia County would remain the region's strongest Democratic County. The simultaneous Florida Senate Election in 2000, was not as close as the Presidential Election, with

five of six counties across the I-4 Corridor voting for Democrat Bill Nelson over Republican Bill McCollum, who won Seminole County.

There is only one election from 2002 to analyze, the 2002 Florida Gubernatorial Election in which incumbent Republican Governor Jeb Bush would carry all six counties along the I-4 Corridor.

To close out the “Competitive Florida” era, we will analyze the 2004 Elections which featured a competitive Senate race and a Presidential Election. Incumbent Republican President George W. Bush won 4 of 6 counties, recapturing Osceola County from the Democrats after they had won it in 1996 and 2000. Bush’s strongest county in 2004 was Polk County, which voted Republican at a slightly higher rate than Seminole County. Democratic Nominee, U.S. Senator for Massachusetts John Kerry eked out a 0.21-point win in Orange County and won Volusia County by a 1.57-point margin. As Orange County narrowly remained in the Democratic column at the Presidential level, Hillsborough became increasingly Republican voting for President Bush by a 6.78-point margin. In the coinciding U.S. Senate race, Republican Mel Martinez narrowly edged out Democrat Betty Castor. Reversing their trends at the Presidential level, Orange County narrowly voted for Republican Martinez by a 0.15-point margin and Hillsborough voted for Democrat Castor. Castor would only prevail in two counties: Hillsborough and Volusia.

When considering voting patterns by county classification during the Competitive Florida era, the first thing that stands out is how by the end of this era, the two Mega Urban counties

seemingly changed allegiances. Historically Republican Orange County had voted Democrat in the past two Presidential Elections and historically Democratic Hillsborough County had voted Republican in the past two Presidential Elections. During this era, Seminole would retain its Republican tilt, despite increased Republican margins in Polk County leading to Polk voting for Bush in 2004 at a stronger margin than Seminole County. As Osceola transitioned from rural to suburban, it became a swing county. Volusia would retain its slight Democratic tilt during this era.

## CHAPTER 7: Emerging Democratic Florida, 2006 to present

As we begin to analyze the current era, Emerging Democratic Florida, let us first consider the 2010 Census and the 2016 Census estimate. The six counties of the I-4 Corridor continues to house an increasing portion of Florida’s population, up to 22.14% in 2010 and 22.69% in 2016. All of the counties have population growth and increased population density, however population density relative to Florida dropped in Volusia and Seminole Counties, while increasing in Hillsborough, Polk, Osceola and Orange.

*TABLE 7.1: 2010 Census County Population Classifications:*

County Name	Population	Percent of FL Population	Population Density	Relative to FL Pop. Density	County Classification
State of FL	18,801,310	N/A	134.6/sq.km.	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough	1,229,226	0.066%	451.6/sq.km.	3.36	Mega Urban
Polk	602,095	0.032%	124.0/sq.km.	0.92	Suburban
Osceola	268,685	0.014%	78.5/sq.km.	0.58	Suburban
Orange	1,145,956	0.061%	487.6/sq.km.	3.62	Mega Urban
Seminole	422,718	0.022%	529.7/sq.km.	3.94	Urban
Volusia	494,593	0.026%	173.1/sq.km.	1.29	Suburban

(Source: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

*TABLE 7.2: 2016 Census Estimate County Population Classifications:*

County Name	Population	Percent of FL Population	Population Density	Relative to FL Pop. Density	County Classification
State of FL	20,612,439	N/A	147.6/sq.km.	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough	1,376,238	0.067%	505.6/sq.km.	3.42	Mega Urban
Polk	666,149	0.032%	137.2/sq.km.	0.93	Suburban
Osceola	336,015	0.016%	98.1/sq.km.	0.66	Suburban
Orange	1,314,365	0.064%	559.3/sq.km.	3.79	Mega Urban
Seminole	455,479	0.022%	570.8/sq.km.	3.87	Urban
Volusia	529,364	0.026%	185.3/sq.km.	1.26	Suburban

(Source: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

**TABLE 7.3: Presidential Election Results, 2008-2016:**

County	Presidential Election Year					
	2008		2012		2016	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide
Hillsborough County	53.05% D 45.94% R	(+) 2.14 D (-) 2.16 R	52.71% D 46.04% R	(+) 2.81 D (-) 2.99 R	50.99% D 44.19% R	(+) 3.58 D (-) 4.41 R
Polk County	46.34% D 52.45% R	(-) 4.57 D (+) 4.35 R	45.95% D 52.75% R	(-) 3.95 D (+) 3.72 R	40.92% D 54.86% R	(-) 6.49 D (+) 6.26 R
Osceola County	59.41% D 39.72% R	(+) 8.50 D (-) 8.38 R	61.73% D 37.27% R	(+)11.83 D (-) 11.76 R	60.41% D 35.56% R	(+)13.00 D (-)13.04 R
Orange County	58.96% D 40.35% R	(+) 8.05 D (-) 7.75 R	58.56% D 40.36% R	(+) 8.66 D (-) 8.67 R	59.77% D 35.37% R	(+)12.36 D (-)13.23 R
Seminole County	48.12% D 50.90% R	(-) 2.79 D (+) 2.80 R	46.12% D 52.57% R	(-) 3.78 D (+) 3.54 R	46.55% D 48.10% R	(-) 0.86 D (-) 0.50 R
Volusia County	52.19% D 46.53% R	(+) 1.28 D (-) 1.57 R	48.78% D 49.94% R	(-) 1.12 D (+) 0.91 R	41.44% D 54.32% R	(-) 5.97 D (+) 5.72 R

(Source for Tables 7.3 and 7.4: Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

**TABLE 7.4: Gubernatorial Election Results, 2006-2014:**

County	Gubernatorial Election Year					
	2006		2010		2014	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide
Hillsborough County	44.48% D 52.82% R	(-) 0.63 D (+) 0.64 R	50.07% D 46.74% R	(+) 2.35 D (-) 2.13 R	48.44% D 45.74% R	(+) 1.37 D (-) 2.40 R
Polk County	40.15% D 55.68% R	(-) 4.96 D (+) 3.50 R	42.55% D 53.49% R	(-) 5.17 D (+) 4.62 R	41.41% D 51.17% R	(-) 5.66 D (+) 3.03 R
Osceola County	44.13% D 53.20% R	(-) 0.98 D (+) 1.02 R	51.44% D 45.05% R	(+) 3.72 D (-) 3.82 R	51.79% D 42.98% R	(+) 4.72 D (-) 5.16 R
Orange County	44.34% D 53.33% R	(-) 0.77 D (+) 1.15 R	54.25% D 43.10% R	(+) 6.53 D (-) 5.77 R	53.49% D 41.61% R	(+) 6.42 D (-) 6.53 R
Seminole County	36.53% D 61.13% R	(-) 8.58 D (+) 8.95 R	45.03% D 51.81% R	(-) 2.69 D (+) 3.02 R	43.37% D 50.67% R	(-) 3.70 D (+) 2.53 R
Volusia County	47.23% D 50.11% R	(+) 2.12 D (-) 2.07 R	46.85% D 48.93% R	(-) 0.87 D (+) 0.06 R	45.10% D 48.76% R	(-) 1.97 D (+) 0.62 R

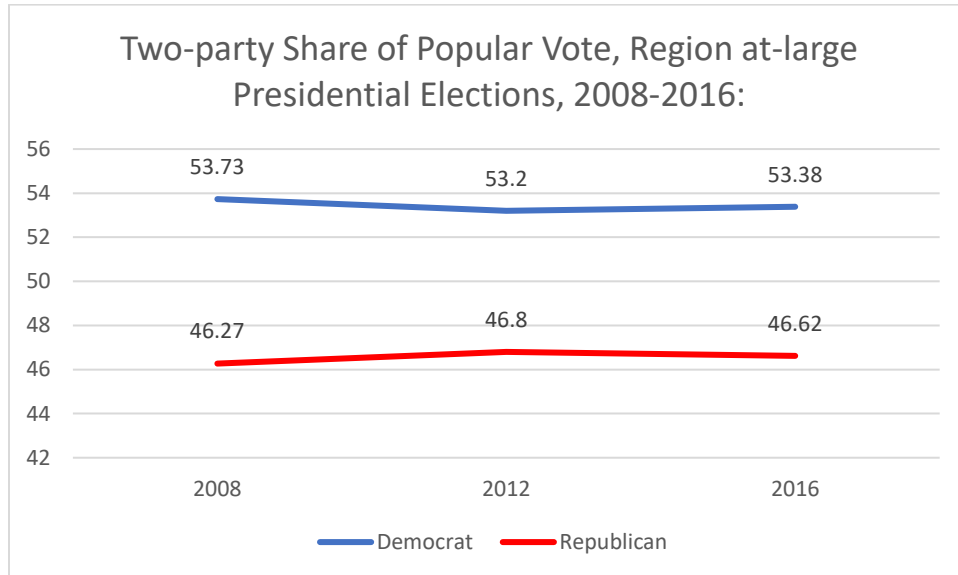


TABLE 7.5: U.S. Senate Election Results, 2006-2016:

County	U.S. Senate Election Year							
	2006		2010		2012		2016	
	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide	D%-R%	D/R Deviation from Statewide
Hillsborough County	61.39% D 36.89% R	(+) 1.09 D (-) 1.21 R	19.76% D 45.13% R 33.99% I	(-) 0.44 D (-) 3.76 R (+) 4.28 I	58.74% D 38.72% R	(+) 3.51 D (-) 3.51 R	47.60% D 48.07% R	(+) 3.29 D (-) 3.91 R
Polk County	56.89% D 41.45% R	(-) 3.41 D (+) 3.35 R	19.04% D 48.84% R 30.73% I	(-) 1.16 D (-) 0.05 R (+) 1.02 I	52.44% D 44.44% R	(-) 2.79 D (+) 2.21 R	39.37% D 55.73% R	(-) 4.94 D (+) 3.75 R
Osceola County	60.21% D 38.34% R	(-) 0.09 D (+) 0.24 R	28.04% D 48.30% R 22.15% I	(+) 7.84 D (-) 0.59 R (-) 7.56 I	66.44% D 30.82% R	(+)11.21 D (-)11.41 R	54.61% D 41.22% R	(+)10.30 D (-)10.76 R
Orange County	62.68% D 35.99% R	(+) 2.38 D (-) 2.11 R	28.95% D 47.61% R 22.27% I	(+) 8.75 D (-) 1.28 R (-) 7.44 I	63.49% D 34.49% R	(+) 8.26 D (-) 7.74 R	54.41% D 41.65% R	(+)10.10 D (-)10.33 R
Seminole County	56.25% D 42.44% R	(-) 4.05 D (+) 4.34 R	19.76% D 57.20% R 21.84% I	(-) 0.44 D (+) 8.31 R (-) 7.87 I	52.75% D 44.72% R	(-) 2.48 D (+) 2.49 R	42.66% D 53.17% R	(-) 1.65 D (+) 1.19 R
Volusia County	63.29% D 35.33% R	(+) 2.99 D (-) 2.77 R	21.31% D 50.09% R 27.19% I	(+) 1.11 D (+) 1.20 R (-) 2.52 I	55.16% D 41.89% R	(-) 0.07 D (-) 0.34 R	40.72% D 54.52% R	(-) 3.59 D (+) 2.54 R

(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

FIGURE 7.6: Two Party share of Popular Vote, Region at-large, 2008-2016:



(Source: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections: [https://uselectionatlas.org/.](https://uselectionatlas.org/))

As shown by Figure 7.6, Election Results from the I-4 Corridor have remained remarkably consistent among the last three U.S. Presidential Elections (2008, 2012 and 2016), with Democrats Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton securing three consecutive victories and performing roughly equal at the aggregate level. In 2008, all six counties showed an increase in Democratic support for Barack Obama over John Kerry's 2004 margins, either voting stronger for Obama than Kerry or weaker for McCain than Bush. Two counties which had voted for Bush in 2004, Osceola and Hillsborough, voted for Obama in 2008. The 2008 Presidential Election in Orange and Osceola Counties is seen as a Critical Election, after which Democrats would frequently win the two counties by large margins. This shift is largely attributable to the population growth in Orange and Osceola Counties, especially an increase in the Hispanic

Population. From 2000 to 2010, the percentage of the population descended from Hispanic Origin in Orange County rose from 18.8% to 26.9%, and from 29.4% to 45.4% in Osceola County (Censusviewer.com).

From 2008 to 2012, there were several different trends in voting behavior. Five out of Six counties trended Republican, voting stronger for Mitt Romney than John McCain. Osceola County trended slightly towards the Democrats. The most frequent trend, witnessed in Hillsborough, Polk and Orange Counties, was a relative consistency between 2008 and 2012 vote margins, each voting weaker for Obama by 0.69 points or less than they had in 2008. The swings would come in Osceola County which voted 4.77 points stronger for Obama in 2012 than 2008, while Seminole County would vote for Romney 3.67 points stronger than it had for McCain in 2008. Volusia County voted Republican for the first time since 1988, choosing Romney over Obama by one point, after favoring Obama over McCain by five in 2008.

In 2016, further evidence presents itself that Orange and Osceola Counties have undergone a realignment in favor of the Democrats. For the first time since the 1992 Election, when the I-4 Corridor counties favored George H.W. Bush over Bill Clinton in the two-party vote share, the I-4 Corridor did not vote for the winner of the Presidential Election. In fact, as the State of Florida voted for Trump after having voted for Obama twice, the I-4 counties gave the Democrats a margin of victory in the two-party vote share that was 0.18-pts. stronger than they had received in 2012. Orange County plays a large role in this, with Orange County voting 6.2 points stronger for the Democratic Nominee in 2016 than 2012. Seminole County, which voted for Romney in

2012 and Trump in 2016, would have the second-largest move towards the Democrats during this period. Despite staying loyal to the Republican nominee, Seminole County voted 4.9 points weaker for the Republicans in 2016 compared to 2012. Osceola County maintained its Democratic tilt, to a lesser degree, giving both nominees a smaller percentage of the vote than was received in 2012, but still voting 0.39-pts. more Democratic than it had in 2012. Similar to Osceola County, Hillsborough County gave both nominees a smaller percentage of the vote in 2016 compared to 2012, but voted 0.13-pts. more Democratic than it had in 2012. The remaining two counties, Volusia and Polk, trended counter to the other four counties, with both counties showing a substantial decrease of Democratic support, down 5.03 points in Polk County compared to 2012 and down 7.34 points in Volusia County compared to 2012.

As we can see, despite relative consistency at the macro-level in this current era of Florida politics across the I-4 Corridor, there have been considerable micro-level changes at the county level. Have those occurred in Gubernatorial and Senate Elections as well? Let us analyze these, beginning in 2006. In the 2006 U.S. Senate race, incumbent Democratic Senator Bill Nelson was re-elected by a wide margin, winning all six counties across the I-4 Corridor, in a showing reminiscent of the past. The same as eight years prior in 1998, Florida re-elected an incumbent Democratic Senator and elected a Republican Governor. As Senator Nelson won in all six counties across the I-4 Corridor, Republican Charlie Crist was elected Governor across all six counties in the I-4 Corridor.

In 2010, Florida had an open Gubernatorial Election and an open Senate Election. The Gubernatorial Election was between Republican Rick Scott and Democrat Alex Sink. The Senate Election was a three way race between Republican Marco Rubio, Governor Charlie Crist running as an Independent and Democrat Kendrick Meek. The 2010 midterms would prove to be competitive across the I-4 Corridor. The counties would split 3-3 in the gubernatorial race, but it would be a different 3-3 coalition than past splits had featured. Volusia, Polk and Seminole would comprise the Republican support for Rick Scott, whereas the two mega urban counties, Hillsborough and Orange, would join Osceola County to support Alex Sink. Marco Rubio won each of the six counties in the I-4 Corridor, four by a plurality and two with a majority. Independent Crist finished in second place in four of the counties: Hillsborough, Polk, Seminole and Volusia while Democrat Meek finished in second place in Orange and Osceola Counties, which have transitioned from some of the least Democratic counties in the I-4 Corridor to some of the strongest Democratic counties in the I-4 corridor. An interesting thing to take note of in 2010 is the increased Republican support in Volusia County, being one of only two counties to give Republican Marco Rubio a majority of the vote compared to a plurality and favoring Republican Rick Scott in the gubernatorial race. This could be foreshadowing to Volusia County voting Republican in a Presidential Election for the first time since 1988 in 2012, and voting Republican by 13-points in 2016.

The 2012 Florida Senate Election featured Democrat Bill Nelson winning re-election over former Senator Mack's son, U.S. Congressman Connie Mack IV. As with 2006, Nelson would again win all six counties in the I-4 Corridor. When you compare county results at the micro-

level, Nelson four counties in 2012 with a decreased margin of support from 2006. However, Nelson's margins in Osceola and Orange Counties were stronger in 2012 than 2006.

In 2014, incumbent Republican Florida Governor Rick Scott successfully ran for re-election against the Democratic nominee, former Governor Charlie Crist. The election results across the I-4 Corridor were similar to the 2010 gubernatorial election, with Scott winning the same 3 counties he had won in 2010 and Crist winning the same 3 counties that Sink had in 2010.

The last election that we will analyze is the 2016 Florida Senate race, between incumbent Republican Senator Marco Rubio and Democratic nominee, U.S. Congressman Patrick Murphy. Senator Rubio won over Murphy by a 50.51-49.49% margin in the six counties that comprise the I-4 Corridor. Rubio won four of the six counties, narrowly winning in Hillsborough County and losing only Orange and Osceola Counties, while carrying over 40% of the vote in those two counties.

As we come to conclusion of our analysis of the Political Development of Central Florida's I-4 Corridor, we note that the region has become increasingly democratic in the "Emerging Democratic Florida" era, now representing a portion of the state that is more Democratic than the state at-large, despite having initially been more Republican than the state at-large. In this era, we have noticed the transformation of Orange and Osceola Counties towards the Democratic Party, two counties which were critical to the region at-large trending towards the Democrats. Hillsborough has trended back towards the Democrats after a period of increased Republican voting margins in the Competitive Florida era. As Seminole County has trended

towards voting Republican by narrower margins in recent elections, Polk County has begun to emerge as the county in the I-4 Corridor that often gives Republicans their strongest margin of support. This era has also been notable for the counter-realignment in Volusia County, where Volusia County has become increasingly Republican since 2008 as Orange and Osceola Counties have become increasingly Democratic.

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NOTE: All Population Data, Population Density Data and Election Results Data is from Dave Leip's Atlats of U.S. Presidential Elections, with the exception only of Florida's 1974 and 1976 Senate Elections and 1976 Gubernatorial Election.

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