The Structure of Party Competition in the South: The Case of Florida

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Although Florida has evolved from a one-party system into an intensely competitive two-party system, many studies of the state's partisan and electoral politics continue to stress the importance of candidate-centered voting and weak party attachments, characteristics of a dealigned party system. This paper argues that such conclusions, based primarily on studies that employ individual-level data, are misleading. The paper examines the structure of the party vote across different political offices utilizing aggregate-level election returns at the county level through principal components factor analysis. Findings indicate that the New Deal vote alignment was disrupted at the presidential level in the 1960s, and a new stable alignment emerged in 1972. Consistent with the notion of a "top-down" or "creeping" realignment, the Post-New Deal alignment penetrated elections for U.S. Senate and governor from 1986 onwards, but came to structure cabinet office elections more gradually, with a culmination of this realignment in the 1990s. Overall, the paper argues that studies relying exclusively on individual-level data to examine Florida's partisan and electoral politics have overlooked a great deal of structure and stability underlying the vote in this politically important state.

One of the central themes developed by V.O. Key, Jr., in his classic *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949) was that a one-party—or no-party—system produced a polity that lacked cohesive and durable political cleavages or alignments. The absence of any underlying structure meant that the politics of the Old South revolved around ad hoc factions in Democratic Party primary elections that were most commonly associated with either localism or personality. Occasionally, a candidate was able to transfer a personal vote to another candidate, but this was most definitely the exception rather than the rule.

Of all the eleven states of the Old Confederacy, Key, citing the fluid social structure and geographic size and diversity of the state, argued that Florida was most afflicted by factionalism. The norm was for many candidates to enter the first Democratic primary election for statewide offices and produce a highly fractured distribution of the vote. As Key observed: "So many candidates make the first-primary race, on the chance that they might get into the run-off, that it has come to be regarded as a lottery" (88). In the absence of any other voting cues to the electorate, Key noted the importance of personality and campaign skills in ultimately deciding elections; it was a case of "every man for himself." Frequently this produced results where

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candidates with markedly distinct ideologies were elected simultaneously. An example was in 1944, with voters electing New Deal supporter Claude Pepper to the U.S. Senate, at the same time that they supported the stridently anti-labor Tom Watson as the state's Attorney General. Overall, Key argued that in the factional politics of Florida there was very little correlation in the county-by-county vote between two candidates who *ought* to have appealed to the same category of voters, or between the pattern of the vote received by the *same* candidate over different elections.

Although Florida has evolved into a mature two-party system in the decades following Key's observations (Carver and Fielder 1999; Scicchitano and Scher 1998; Parker 1988, 1992; Lamis 1990, ch. 13; Beck 1982; Dauer 1972), many observers continue to emphasize the volatility of the state's partisan and electoral politics. This volatility is perceived to be the consequence of the continuing fluid nature of the electorate, one that has weak or unanchored partisan attachments and one that continues to engage in candidate-centered voting. For example, in her analysis of partisan changes in Florida through the early 1990s, Parker (1992) notes: "Rather than a strengthening of party politics in Florida, the recent changes just present more evidence of the multifactionalism and no-party politics of the state" (126). Parker also pointed to split-ticket voting, the rise of independent identification and ambivalence toward political parties, and concluded that partisan changes "do not appear to mark a stable realignment of Floridians' party preferences" (126). Carver and Fiedler (1999) reach similar conclusions in documenting partisan change throughout the remainder of the 1990s: "A surface examination of the electoral results of the 1990s would seem to suggest that Florida is still in the era of factional, every-man-for-himself politics—a Democratic governor, a Republican state legislature, a Democratic U.S. senator and a Republican one, both elected overwhelmingly" (375). Finally, Dye (1998) alludes to this theme: "Florida politics has been unusually volatile and unpredictable, with wide swings in support for Democratic and Republican candidates, from one office to another and one election to the next" (55).

The most recent election cycles provide further evidence for these arguments. Republican strength is evident at the state level, with the GOP holding large majorities in both state house (81 out of 120 seats) and state senate (26 out of 40 seats). Moreover, Jeb Bush's reelection as governor in 2002 proved much easier then many experts had initially expected, Bush winning 56 percent to Democrat Bill McBride's 43 percent. Additionally, the GOP won both contested cabinet office elections, Commissioner of Agriculture and Attorney General, thus holding all three of the cabinet offices.[1] Republicans also have held a majority of U.S. House seats in the state since 1990, and increased its hold following the 2002 elections, now

holding eighteen of the state's twenty-five seats. Despite this Republican strength, the Democrats can take solace in the fact that the party holds both U.S. Senate seats. Robert Graham has held one seat since 1986, while former Treasurer-Insurance Commissioner Bill Nelson won the other in 2000. Moreover, at the presidential level, elections since 1992 indicate that having once been a solid Republican state, Florida is now a competitive battleground state. Furthermore, most observers agree that both the presidential election in 2004 as well as the open U.S. Senate contest are likely to be very competitive.

The Dealignment Perspective

Central to many explanations of partisan change in Florida is the notion of *dealignment*, meaning the "decline in the centrality of parties to citizen political orientations and behavior" (Stanley 1988, 66). Since the late 1960s, the dealignment perspective has been applied to explanations of partisan change in American politics, and specifically explanations for the absence of *realignment* (see, for example, Burnham 1970; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979; Beck 1984; Norpoth and Rusk 1982; Wattenberg 1991, 1996; Lawrence 1996; Shea 1999). Dealignment had particular appeal for scholars of southern partisan and electoral politics, who since 1968 were confronted with the puzzle of a Republican advantage at the *presidential* level (Black and Black 1992; Rae 1989), but continuing Democratic dominance below the presidency and in party identifications (Beck 1977; Black and Black 1987, ch. 13; Stanley 1988; Glaser 1996).

While the dealignment perspective had a considerable influence on the study of voting behavior and electoral patterns—both in the South and the nation—several scholars have raised questions as to whether the central components of the dealignment perspective can be supported by the empirical evidence. First, Keith et al. (1992) argue that the rise of independent identifiers—arguably the most important indicator of dealignment—has been exaggerated, and that *independent-leaning* partisans should actually be classified as partisans. This is important in that independent-leaners have contributed most heavily to the rise of independent identifiers since the 1960s.

Second, the notion that party identification has declined in salience in terms of its affect on vote choice at the individual-level has been challenged. For example, Miller (1991) examines the correlation between party identification and presidential vote choice from 1952 through 1988 and concludes, "there is no indication . . . that party identification is less relevant to the vote decision in the 1980s than it was three decades earlier" (565; see also Miller and Shanks 1996). Bartels (2000) reaches the same conclusion when

examining the affect of party identification through the 1990s on *both* presidential and congressional vote choice, noting "the American political system has slipped with remarkably little fanfare into an era of increasingly vibrant partisanship in the electorate" (44).

A third challenge to the dealignment perspective—and the one most pertinent to this paper—is that the volatility in aggregate-level election *outcomes* has not characterized the post-1968 period. Although much of the dealignment perspective has focused on individual-level attitudes and behavior, an important corollary was that an electorate, basing its collective vote choice less on partisan identifications and more on short-term considerations such as issues and candidate image, would produce electoral outcomes that would increasingly be unrelated over time and across different political offices, as well as exhibiting large party-to-party swings (see, for example, Ladd and Hadley 1975). However, as Lawrence (1997) notes, "dealignment theorists cannot quite deal convincingly with the consistency with which successful candidate-based coalitions have generally, since 1952, been Republican" (30). Shafer (1991) makes a similar point about the electoral order in the 1968-1988 period that provided fairly *stable* and *non-random* electoral outcomes; the presidency was usually Republican, while Congress was usually controlled by the Democrats. At the same time, if, as Jacobson (1990) and Petrocik (1981) argue, this distinctive pattern of divided government was the result of different issues being central to presidential and congressional elections, and different parties preferred on those issues, then this suggests the continuing relevance and salience of political parties. This clearly runs contrary to the expectations generated by the dealignment perspective.

Related to the latter point, studies that focus on aggregate-level electoral outcomes also suggest far more stability to the *structure* of the vote in presidential elections than one would expect if dealignment was evident. For example, Rabinowitz, Gurian, and MacDonald (1984) use principal components factor analysis to demonstrate that every presidential election since 1964 has loaded on a single factor. The authors note that their findings indicate "how little impact the partisan dealignment of the nineteen sixties and early seventies seem to have had on the extent of structuring" (621). These findings are largely confirmed by Bartels (1998) in an examination of state-by-state presidential election results from 1868 through 1996. He notes: "Despite the widespread belief among political scientists that the American electoral system is more volatile and unconstrained by partisan loyalties than ever before, systematic analysis of election returns suggest just the opposite: the unusual political turmoil of the 1960s and '70s has given way to a *period of partisan stability and predictability unmatched since the end of the 19th century*" (297, emphasis is mine).

Analyzing the Structure of the Vote in Florida

In light of the evidence that suggests that dealignment may have been overstated in the United States, especially with respect to its propensity to introduce volatility and instability into partisan and electoral politics, this paper seeks to reexamine its applicability as an explanation for partisan development and electoral competition in Florida. The paper makes use of county-level election data, marking something of a departure from many studies of partisan change that frequently rely on survey data. Of course, survey data has its advantages, allowing the researcher to probe the antecedents of political attitudes and behavior. However, it is limited in its capacity to chart partisan change over an extended time period. While the American National Election Study surveys extend back to 1952,[2] reliable state level surveys have only become available since the late 1970s. Despite this limitation, studies of partisan development in Florida—such as those cited above—have generally employed survey data in deriving conclusions that support the notion of a dealigned polity. This is not to deny that Floridians have become more likely to register and identify as independents, or hold more ambivalent attitudes about political parties. Rather, it is to suggest that such individual-level data provides a limited basis on which to make judgments about the existence—or lack thereof—of underlying and enduring partisan attachments that provide the structure to party competition.[3]

The use of county-level data also follows the approach employed by Key (1949) to the study partisan or factional attachments. Of course, Key's use of aggregate-level data was necessitated by the fact that he was working prior to the widespread availability of survey data. However, the use of aggregate-level data does seem consonant with the specific research question at hand. It should also be noted that there has been limited use of aggregate-level data in examining the developments of two-party competition in Florida.[4] The use of aggregate-level data raises the problem of the ecological fallacy, making inferences about individual-level behavior from an aggregate-level analysis. However, it is worth reiterating that the concern here is *not* directly with the political behavior of individual voters in Florida. Rather, it is with identifying similarities between the vote across elections over time and the existence of an underlying *structure* or pattern to statewide electoral outcomes.

Should such a structure underlying the vote exist in Florida, then not only would this call into question the applicability of dealignment, it would make a strong case for *realignment*. Although scholars have devoted considerable time debating the exact meaning and utility realignment (Mayhew 2002; Carmines and Stimson 1989), the concept as introduced by Key (1955, 1959) explicitly dealt with the notion of change in *societal cleavages* (Hoffman 2000). The work of Schattschneider (1960) dovetails nicely with that of

Key in this respect in that he identifies the critical elections of 1896 and 1932 as involving a "conflict displacement." Building on the work of both Schattschneider and Key, Sundquist (1983) places the emergence of a new line of cleavage—or a new structure to the nature of the political conflict—as being central to the notion of realignment, which is defined as "those redistributions of party support, of whatever scale or pace, that reflect a change in the structure of the party conflict and hence the establishment of a new line of partisan cleavage on a different axis within the electorate" (14).[5] The existence of such a stable cleavage or alignment in the electorate ought to be empirically discernible through an identifiable structure to the aggregate-level vote pattern over time and across political offices.

Data and Methods

The dependent variable in the subsequent analyses is the Democratic Party vote in each of Florida's sixty-seven counties.[6] Election year/office are the variables and the county is the unit of analysis. Data for presidential elections are from 1932 through 2000, for U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections from 1960 through 2002,[7] and for cabinet offices elections from 1978 through 2002.[8] With the exception of the elections that featured a significant third-party candidate, percentages are based on the Democratic share of the two-party vote.[9]

The county-by-county vote will be subject to a factor analysis with varimax rotation.[10] Factor analysis rests on the assumption that there are underlying factors responsible for the covariation among the observed variables.[11] Thus, this method is consonant with the research question posed in this paper; the extent to which there is a structure to the vote in Florida over time and across political offices. Three possible patterns reflecting a structuring of the vote—or lack thereof—could emerge from the factor analysis.

First, if Florida's electoral politics has remained a dealigned environment where it is still "every man for himself," no dominant factors across time and political office ought to be evident. Elections for different offices should have weak loadings on multiple factors. Alternatively, elections with the same candidate may have a high loading on a single factor, which would be associated entirely with voting behavior made solely on the basis of *short-term forces* such as transient issues, candidate characteristics, or the retrospective performance evaluation of incumbents (Wattenberg 1991), rather than any underlying partisanship.

Second, Florida may have developed an alignment at the state and local level that is distinct from that found in presidential elections. As Beck (1992) noted, "subpresidential politics often has a life of its own, nurtured by local personalities and other unique forces, that can insulate it from national trends or at least channel them in unexpected ways" (260). This

theme was developed by Gimpel (1996), who argues that many western states have developed autonomous state politics alignments that are distinct from alignments at the national level.[12] Speel (1998) presents a similar argument, describing the different patterns of partisan change in northern states at the presidential and subpresidential level as "federalized realignment." While such a disjuncture between the structure of the vote at different levels may also be labeled as dealigning, in actuality such a pattern might better be described as one of "split-level" realignment (Phillips 1969) or "two-tiered" realignment (Ladd 1985). That is, there exists an underlying structure to the vote; there is just a different structure at different levels of party competition.[13]

Third, if a stable alignment exists that structures party competition across political offices over time, then that one should expect to find adjacent elections clustering together and loading on a single factor. Such a finding would be indicative of durable party attachments. As Bartels (1998) noted: "To the extent that successive elections with different candidates, issues and political conditions produce essentially similar voting patterns, it seems safe to infer that *these patterns somehow reflect the organizing force of partisanship*" (280, emphasis is mine). If a durable alignment has penetrated competition for all statewide political offices, then elections for different offices ought to load on the same factor. However, the congruence of the presidential and state alignments may not occur simultaneously. Indeed, the capacity for the new alignments to be *first* evident at the presidential level and to later filter down to elections at the state and local level was recognized by Key (1956), who noted that "changes in the politics of a state government may lag considerably behind alterations in the presidential voting habits of the people of the state" (27). This point was later elaborated by Sundquist (1983), who viewed much of the partisan change in the post-World War II period at the state and local level—in both the South and the rest of the nation—as "aftershocks" following the New Deal realignment at the presidential level. Scholars examining southern partisan changes have especially embraced this notion in an attempt to explain the slow growth of Republicanism at the subpresidential level, with southern realignment variously characterized as "creeping" (Bullock 1988a), "top-down" (Aistrup 1996), or "delayed" (Lamis 1999).[14] Unlike the notion of an autonomous state alignment, the existence of such a lag between presidential and subpresidential voting patterns would most likely be revealed by subpresidential elections loading on the factor that *previously* structured presidential elections. One might expect that factor loadings for subpresidential elections would decline gradually over time on one factor, and begin to gradually increase over time on the most recent factor underlying presidential elections.

Results and Discussion

The factor analysis resulted in the extraction of six factors with an eigenvalue of at least one.[15] The principal component results are presented in Table 1. The first two factors explained much of the overall variance, 54.9 and 22.7 percent, respectively. The remaining factors explained little variation individually, and collectively explained an additional 12.1 percent in variation across elections. The fact that two dominant factors emerged is one initial indication that there is more structure to elections in Florida than has been otherwise suggested. Although elections for all offices were factor analyzed together in order to facilitate presentation, factor loadings are presented separately, first for presidential elections, then for U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections, and finally for cabinet office elections.

Table 1. Summary of Principal Components Factor Analysis (with Varimax Rotation) of Democratic County-by-County Vote in Presidential, Gubernatorial, U.S. Senate, and Cabinet Office Elections

Component	Eigenvalue	Percent Variance Explained	Cumulative Percent Variance Explained
1	42.842	54.926	54.926
2	17.760	22.769	77.694
3	3.948	5.062	82.756
4	2.557	3.278	86.034
5	1.777	2.278	88.313
6	1.168	1.498	89.810

Note: Only the components with an eigenvalue greater than 1 are reported.

Presidential Elections

Table 2 presents the factor loadings for the rotated component matrices of the Democratic presidential vote in Florida. Examining the elections chronologically, the contests from 1932 through 1960 load on Factor II. This factor seems self-labeling as the *New Deal Elections*, as it marks the period that scholars agree sustained the New Deal party system (see, for example, Miller and Shanks 1996; Ladd and Hadley 1975). The elections of 1932 through 1948 also load on Factor IV, and may be indicative of these elections representing the zenith of the New Deal era. In each case, however, the loadings are fairly modest and considerably lower the loadings for each election on Factor II.

Table 2. Factor Loadings for Presidential Elections in Florida, 1932-2000

Election	Factor I Post-New Deal Elections	Factor II New Deal Elections	Factor III Racial Protest Elections	Factor IV
1932 (Roosevelt)		.725		.579
1936 (Roosevelt)		.699		.563
1940 (Roosevelt)		.784		.560
1944 (Roosevelt)		.788		.561
1948 (Truman)		.690		.370
1952 (Stevenson)		.864		
1956 (Stevenson)		.906		
1960 (Kennedy)		.898		
1964 (Johnson)			.832	
1968 (Humphrey)	.401		.777	
1972 (McGovern)	.607		.699	
1976 (Carter)		.884		
1980 (Carter)	.488	.824		
1984 (Mondale)	.833		.385	
1988 (Dukakis)	.850		.426	
1992 (Clinton)	.886		.353	
1996 (Clinton)	.902			
2000 (Gore)	.852	-.368		

Notes: Cell entries are factor loadings for the rotated component matrix. Loadings less than .350 are not reported to facilitate presentation. Democratic candidate's name is in parentheses. Bold type denotes that the Democratic candidate won the election. A summary of the principal components extracted is reported in Table 1.

The disruption to the New Deal party system is evident in the elections of 1964, 1968, and 1972, which all load on Factor III. Given the prominence of racial issues in the 1964 and 1968 elections in Florida and throughout the South (Black and Black 1992), this factor is labeled *Racial Protest Elections*. Interestingly, the 1972 election also has its highest loading on this factor, although racial issues were not as pervasive in the Nixon-McGovern contest as in the previous two contests. Indeed, 1972 *also* loads highly on Factor I, which appears to mark the beginning of a new alignment and party system at the presidential level.

All elections since 1972, with the exceptions of 1976 and 1980, load on the Factor I, labeled the *Post-New Deal* factor. Again, this is consistent with the notion of the emergence of a new party system, at least at the presidential level after 1968 (Shafer 1991; Aldrich and Niemi 1996). The elections of 1976 and 1980 both featured the candidacy of Jimmy Carter, who succeeded in reassembling something akin to the New Deal coalition in Florida and

throughout the other states of the South (Lamis 1990, 187; Black and Black 1992, ch. 12). Thus, although Florida has evolved from a reasonably strong Republican presidential state to one that is now intensely competitive, as evidenced by the 2000 vote, the basic *structure* of this competition has remained remarkably stable since 1972.

Gubernatorial and U.S. Senate Elections

To what extent did the presidential alignment penetrate down to elections for the most visible statewide offices? Table 3 presents the factor

Table 3. Factor Loadings for U.S. Senate and Gubernatorial Elections in Florida, 1960-2002

Office, Election, and Democratic Candidate	Factor I Post-New Deal Elections	Factor II New Deal Elections	Factor III Racial Protest Elections
Governor, 1960 (Bryant)		.898	
U.S. Senate, 1962 (Smathers)		.903	
Governor, 1964 (Burns)		.866	
U.S. Senate, 1964 (Holland)		.846	
Governor, 1966 (High)	.430	.461	
U.S. Senate, 1968 (Collins)			.848
Governor, 1970 (Askew)		.641	
U.S. Senate, 1970 (Chiles)		.900	
Governor, 1974 (Askew)		-.413	.794
U.S. Senate, 1974 (Stone)		.673	.363
U.S. Senate, 1976 (Chiles)		.830	
Governor, 1978 (Graham)	.452	.674	
U.S. Senate, 1980 (Stone)		.889	
Governor, 1982 (Graham)		.913	
U.S. Senate, 1982 (Chiles)	.400	.889	
Governor, 1986 (Pajcic)	.766		
U.S. Senate, 1986 (Graham)	.685	.365	
U.S. Senate, 1988 (McKay)	.766	.423	
Governor, 1990 (Chiles)	.772		
U.S. Senate, 1992 (Graham)	.770	.428	
Governor, 1994 (Chiles)	.884		
U.S. Senate, 1994 (Rodham)	.891		
Governor, 1998 (McKay)	.919		
U.S. Senate, 1998 (Graham)	.898		
U.S. Senate, 2000 (Nelson)	.935		
Governor, 2002 (McBride)	.937		

Notes: Cell entries are factor loadings for the rotated component matrix. Loadings less than .350 are not reported to facilitate presentation. Democratic candidate's name is in parentheses. Bold type denotes that the Democratic candidate won the election. A summary of the principal components extracted is reported in Table 1.

loadings for U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections since 1960. Overall, it appears that the structure underlying presidential elections—i.e., New Deal, Post-New Deal, and Racial Protest factors—also structure the vote in gubernatorial and U.S. Senate elections.

With just two exceptions, every U.S. Senate and gubernatorial election from 1960 until 1982 loaded on the New Deal factor. This indicates that the New Deal alignment was still structuring the vote in these subpresidential contests some time *after* it ceased to be relevant at the presidential level. The important point to stress here is that the success of Democratic candidates for major statewide offices, such as Ruben Askew, Lawton Chiles, and Robert Graham in the 1970s and early 1980s, was *not* simply attributable to them being attractive and skilled candidates.[16] If one wishes to explain their electoral success as being entirely the result of candidate-centered voting, one must also explain why this voting produced similar vote patterns for these candidates.

A more plausible explanation—one that actually fits the empirical findings—is that the success of Democrats in this period was the result of the New Deal alignment continuing to structure the pattern of the vote at the *subpresidential* level. This is not to suggest that it was completely irrelevant as to the *type* candidates running as Democrats in Florida during this period. Rather, it is to suggest that the candidates such as Askew, Chiles, and Graham were successful because they were able to hold together a coalition of voters that Democratic presidential candidates—with the sole exception of Carter—had been unable to do since 1960.

Only two gubernatorial elections in the 1960-1982 period did *not* load on the New Deal factor: the 1968 U.S. Senate election and the 1974 gubernatorial election. Both of these elections had their highest loadings on the Racial Protest factor, and indeed each of these elections was distinguished by the high salience of racial issues. The 1968 Senate election occurred when the intensity of racial issues were, arguably, at their height throughout the South. The open seat was won by Republican Edward Gurney, who placed racial issues at the forefront of his campaign against former governor, and racial moderate, LeRoy Collins (Lamis 1990, 183).[17] The 1974 pattern also reflected the presence of racial issues in that Governor Askew had supported—or at least had not opposed—busing to integrate public schools in the early 1970s. Although Askew won re-election by a landslide, defeating his Republican challenger Jerry Thomas, 61 percent to 39 percent, his support in the racially conservative counties in the panhandle dropped dramatically compared to 1970.[18]

The ability of the New Deal alignment to structure the vote in subpresidential elections persisted until 1986. Since 1986, *every* U.S. Senate and gubernatorial election has its highest loading on the Post-New Deal factor. Interestingly, there appears to have been a fairly rapid penetration of the

Post-New Deal alignments to U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections, with no noticeable deterioration in the factor loadings on the New Deal alignment prior to 1986. For example, the gubernatorial and Senate elections of 1982, the last elections to have their highest loadings of the New Deal factor, both had *high* loadings (.913 and .889, respectively). In 1982 there was no obvious sign that these would be the last U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections in which the vote would be structured by the New Deal alignment. More generally, the fact that the factor loadings for U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections *did not* exhibit a pattern of gradual decline on the New Deal factor, and gradual increase on the Post-New Deal factor, suggests that there was nothing inevitable about the alignment at the presidential level being driven slowly down through lower levels of party competition. This is indicative of the mid-1980s marking a critical period in the development of the "creeping" realignment—to use the description of Bullock (1988a)—at the subpresidential level.

Cabinet Office Elections

Table 4 presents the factor loadings for cabinet office elections since 1978. If a separate state-level alignment were to exist, one that was distinct from a national alignment, then it is for these cabinet office elections that one might expect to find such an alignment to exist. However, cabinet office elections since 1978 load on just the New Deal and Post-New Deal factors. Unlike Senate and gubernatorial elections, the New Deal alignment appears to have persisted *after* 1986. All of the cabinet offices elected in 1986 have a higher loading on the New Deal factor, although the elections for Attorney General, Comptroller, Commissioner of Education, and Secretary of State also had loadings of above .40 on the Post-New Deal factor.

It would appear that at the cabinet office level of party competition the penetration of the Post-New Deal factor did not take place as rapidly as it did for Senate and gubernatorial elections. The first elections to have their highest loadings on the Post-New Deal elections were both in 1988, although both were special elections for Treasurer and Secretary of State and elected in presidential election years. The gradual evolution of the Post-New Deal alignment at this level is also demonstrated by the fact that from 1988 to 1984 eleven cabinet office elections have their highest loading on the Post-New Deal factor, but also have loadings of over .40 on the New Deal factor. Thus the process of partisan change at this level of party competition appears to have been more *gradual* than that found for U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections. It would appear, however, that the ability of the New Deal alignment to structure the vote in cabinet office elections continued to decline through the 1990s. It was not until 1994 that *every* cabinet office

Table 4. Factor Loadings for Cabinet Office Elections in Florida, 1978-2002

Office, Election, and Democratic Candidate	Factor I Post-New Deal Elections	Factor II New Deal Elections
Comm. of Education, 1978 (Turlington)		.929
Secretary of State, 1978 (Firestone)		.698
Treasurer, 1978 (Gunter)		.890
Comm. of Agriculture, 1982 (Conner)		.920
Secretary of State, 1982 (Firestone)		.899
Attorney General, 1986 (Butterworth)	.439	.861
Comm. of Agriculture, 1986 (Conner)		.803
Comm. of Education, 1986 (Castor)	.497	.793
Comptroller, 1986 (Lewis)	.518	.793
Secretary of State, 1986 (Firestone)	.507	.791
Treasurer, 1986 (Gunter)		.890
Secretary of State, 1988 (Moore)	.751	.528
Treasurer, 1988 (Jenne)	.594	.572
Comm. of Agriculture, 1990 (Crawford)	.621	.675
Comm. of Education, 1990 (Castor)	.630	.544
Comptroller, 1990 (Lewis)	.518	.793
Secretary of State, 1990 (Minter)	.688	.526
Treasurer, 1990 (Stuart)	.459	.433
Attorney General, 1994 (Butterworth)	.802	.524
Comm. of Agriculture, 1994 (Crawford)	.819	.416
Comm. of Education, 1994 (Jamerson)	.865	.400
Comptroller, 1994 (Lewis)	.706	.651
Secretary of State, 1994 (Saunders)	.797	.489
Treasurer, 1994 (B. Nelson)	.808	.467
Attorney General, 1998 (Butterworth)	.928	
Comm. of Agriculture, 1998 (Crawford)	.856	
Comm. of Education, 1998 (Wallace)	.920	
Comptroller, 1998 (Daughtrey)	.853	
Secretary of State, 1998 (Gievers)	.915	
Treasurer, 1998 (B. Nelson)	.908	
Comm. of Education, 2000 (Sheldon)	.905	
Treasurer, 2000 (Cosgrove)	.926	
Attorney General, 2002 (Dyer)	.954	
Comm. of Agriculture, 2002 (D. Nelson)	.872	

Notes: Cell entries are factor loadings for the rotated component matrix. Loadings less than .350 are not reported to facilitate presentation. Democratic candidate's name is in parentheses. Bold type denotes that the Democratic candidate won the election. A summary of the principal components extracted is reported in Table 1.

election had a higher loading on the Post-New Deal factor than on the New Deal factor. And by 1998, *every* cabinet office election had a sizeable loading on the Post-New Deal factor, with no election loading having a loading on the New Deal of above .40. Overall, this suggests the widening and deepening of the Post-New Deal alignment to party competition in Florida where all statewide elections are now structured along highly partisan lines.

The Post-New Deal Alignment in Florida

Having identified a new alignment that structures the vote in Florida, two important questions to consider are what is the substantive nature of the Post-New Deal alignment, and how does it differ from the New Deal alignment? In order to begin to provide answers to these questions, factor scores for the New Deal and Post-New Deal factors were regressed on six demographic variables: population growth of a county from 1990-2000; percentage of a county's population living in an urban area; black percentage of a county's population; Hispanic percentage of a county's population; median income of a county; and the percentage of a county's population over the age of 65.[19] Additionally, dummy variables representing the distinctive sub-regions of Florida are included in the analysis.[20] As the factor scores for the Democratic and Republican vote are essentially the mirror image of each other, only the factor scores for the Democratic vote are regressed on these independent variables. Table 5 presents the result of the regressions.

Although the independent variables explain similar amounts of variation on both factors—69 percent for the New Deal factor and 65 percent for the Post-New Deal factor—there are clearly substantive differences between both factors. The three demographic variables that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for the New Deal factor were median income, percentage of county population over 65, and population density. Each of these variables exhibited a negative relationship with Democratic support in Florida. Additionally, the northern panhandle counties of Florida were significantly more Democratic than those in any of Florida's other sub-regions. These findings are broadly consistent with accounts of Florida's emerging party system, and the location of Republican strength at the presidential level (see, for example, Dauer 1972; Lamis 1990, ch. 13).

The demographic variables that reached statistical significance ($p < .05$) for the Post-New Deal factor were black percentage of a county's population, median income, population density, and population growth. That the black percentage variable is significant is, of course, predictable, given that blacks have become a core Democratic constituency, as is the continuing significance of the median income variable, given the class-based patterns of voting. Interestingly, the population density and population growth

Table 5. Regression of New Deal and Post-New Deal Factor Scores (based on Democratic Vote Percentage) on Selected Demographic Variables

Independent Variable	New Deal Factor beta	New Deal Factor Sig. Level	Post-New Deal Factor beta	Post-New Deal Factor Sig. Level
Population density	-.214	.018	.181	.057
Population growth	.071	.417	.192	.040
% Black	-.027	.760	.738	.000
% Hispanic	-.171	.177	-.192	.153
% over 65	-.231	.091	.205	.153
Median income	-.233	.057	-.446	.001
Sub-regions				
North	.441	.005	-.396	.017
Gold Coast	.133	.159	.350	.001
South West	-.059	.562	-.154	.156
South Central	.118	.244	.035	.973
	N = 67		N = 67	
	R^2 = .736		R^2 = .704	
	Adj. R^2 = .688		Adj. R^2 = .651	
	SEE = .558		SEE = .590	

Note: Dependent variables are the factor score loadings for each county on the New Deal and Post-New Deal factors. Beta weights are the standardized regression coefficients. The excluded sub-region is Central Florida.

variables are both positive, suggesting that Democrats now perform, on average, *better* than Republicans in counties with large urban populations and those with high growth rates. This marks a reversal of the pattern found in the party support found in the 1950s and 1960s. This finding is further underscored by the fact that the predominantly rural counties in the northern panhandle are now significantly *less* supportive of Democrats, while the predominantly urban Gold Coast counties are significantly *more* Democratic.

A further implication of these regression results is that the Post-New Deal structure represents an *ideological cleavage* underlying voting in Florida. Although, there is no direct way in which the ideological composition of a county can be measured that is independent of the presidential vote, the finding that the culturally conservative counties of the panhandle have become significantly less Democratic, as have the more rural counties in general, is suggestive of an ideological cleavage. At the same time, several studies have stressed the on-going ideological realignment in both the South (Abramowitz et al. 2002; Black and Black 1987, 2002; Carmines and Stanley 1990) and the rest of the nation (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998;

Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Rabinowitz, Gurian, and Macdonald 1984). If this interpretation of the Post-New Deal alignment is accurate, then it would suggest that not only is there a stable structure underlying the presidential vote in Florida, but that it is based around a liberal-conservative alignment. Again, realignment, rather than a dealignment, is the more plausible description of this pattern.

Why this ideological realignment finally penetrated subpresidential contests in the mid-1980s can be debated, but the effect of the presidency of Ronald Reagan seems to loom large in any explanation. Scholars of southern politics acknowledge the crucial role Reagan played in realigning the partisan identifications of southern whites, especially conservative southern whites (Black and Black 2002, ch. 8). While the ability of the New Deal alignment to structure subpresidential contests may have been eroding, it seems likely that the Reagan presidency accelerated the process by which the Post-New Deal alignment was pushed down from the presidential level. Scholars have noted the importance of the Reagan presidency on party competition in Florida, but have argued that Reagan's appeal was the result of candidate-centered voting, and thus the potential for realignment at the subpresidential was limited. For example, Parker (1992) does acknowledge that "the major force driving the changes in party identification during the 1980s among whites was the popularity of Ronald Reagan" (125). However, she interprets this not as realignment but as "strong period forces that favored the Republicans" (125). The analysis presented here, however, suggests that Reagan's popularity appears to have had a profound affect on subpresidential voting, driving the ideologically based Post-New Deal alignment down to elections for governor and U.S. Senator. However, as the findings for cabinet office elections demonstrate, this "Reagan realignment" would take more than a decade before it progressed downwards to fully structure elections for cabinet offices. In part this could be a function of the absence of serious Republican contestation of these offices. Alternatively, it could be the result of voters not viewing these elections, at least until the 1990s, as contests being shaped by ideology, and hence the structure of the Post-New Deal factor.

Party Politics in Florida: Beyond "Every Man for Himself"?

Overall, the findings from the above analysis somewhat undermines the notion of Florida still being characterized as a politics where it is "every man for himself." If electoral coalitions were purely candidate-centered, then elections that featured the same candidate ought to have clustered together, possibly loading on a unique factor. This is not the case, as the example of Robert Graham illustrates. Graham has been a candidate in five statewide elections since 1978, winning by comfortable margins on each occasion.

Had his victories been attributable just to the candidate-centered voting, then the structure of the vote in each of these elections ought to have resembled each other. However, it is clear that the structure of Graham's vote was affected by the underlying New Deal and Post-New Deal alignments. Graham's gubernatorial victories in 1978 and 1982 both had their highest loadings on the New Deal alignment (.641 and .913, respectively), but his three Senate victories in 1986, 1992, and 1998 all had their highest loading on the Post-New Deal factor (.685, .770, and .898, respectively).[21]

The pattern of support exhibited for Robert Butterworth in elections for Attorney General also illustrates this point. Butterworth was elected to this office four times beginning in 1986, and was unopposed in the general election of 1990. Although elected by large margins on each occasion, the pattern of support for Butterworth changed over time. In his initial election of 1986, Butterworth's county-by-county vote loaded heavily on the New Deal factor (.861). In his 1994 reelection, however, the highest loading was on the Post-New Deal factor (.802), although there remained a substantial loading on the New Deal factor (.524). Finally, in 1998, the loading was decisively on the Post-New Deal factor (.928). Again, this suggests that Butterworth's vote was affected by the penetration of the Post-New Deal alignment to the level of cabinet office elections, and was not merely a function of candidate-centered voting.

The existence of an underlying structure behind subpresidential elections is impressive when one considers the variety of candidates and context in each election. Regardless of whether a popular incumbent—Democratic *or* Republican—has been seeking reelection or whether there has been a competitive open seat contest, the structure of the vote has been consistent. Of course, the *outcomes* of these elections have presented quite different results, and, as noted earlier, this is why many observers continue to perceive Florida's elections to be candidate-centered. Had these different outcomes produced different vote patterns for different candidates of the same party, that is had one Democratic candidate been a weak vote-getter where another was strong and vice-versa, then this would have been the type of electoral environment that Key (1949) described. Again, though, this was not what occurred in subpresidential elections in Florida. Regardless of the overall *level* of support received by a candidate, the pattern of the counties where the vote was most and least supportive was similar.

The Senate elections of 1994 and 1998 serve as a good illustration of this point. In 1994, the Democratic candidate was Hugh Rodham, brother of then First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. Rodham was politically inexperienced and considered a liability as a candidate, especially as his Republican opponent, Connie Mack, was a popular incumbent. As expected, Mack defeated Rodham by a landslide margin, winning 70.5 percent of the vote to

Table 6. Ranking of Florida Counties in the Upper and Lower Quartile of the Democratic Vote in the 1994 and 1998 U.S. Senate Elections

Rodham, 1994		Graham, 1998	
Most Democratic		***Most Democratic***	
Gadsden	48.7%	**Gadsden**	83.7%
Broward	43.7%	**Jefferson**	79.1%
Jefferson	38.6%	**Dade**	78.2%
Palm Beach	37.4%	**Broward**	77.2%
Dade	36.8%	**Leon**	76.7%
Dixie	36.2%	Wakulla	74.9%
Leon	35.7%	**Palm Beach**	72.8%
Alachua	35.6%	**Madison**	72.8%
Hamilton	34.8%	Liberty	72.3%
Madison	33.6%	**Alachua**	72.1%
Flagler	33.0%	**Hamilton**	71.3%
Monroe	32.9%	Calhoun	70.3%
Putnam	32.5%	**Jackson**	70.2%
Volusia	31.1%	Hendry	68.8%
Okeechobee	30.7%	**Glades**	68.2%
Glades	30.3%	Taylor	68.2%
Jackson	30.3%	Washington	67.0%
Least Democratic		***Least Democratic***	
Baker	22.8%	**Baker**	55.4%
Lee	22.6%	Hardee	55.2%
Escambia	22.2%	Hillsborough	55.1%
Lake	22.1%	Charlotte	55.0%
Indian River	22.0%	Highlands	54.9%
Holmes	22.0%	**Seminole**	54.5%
Seminole	21.9%	**Bay**	54.3%
Walton	21.8%	**Lee**	54.1%
Martin	21.5%	**Walton**	53.1%
Suwannee	21.4%	**Escambia**	52.1%
St. Johns	21.2%	Nassau	51.5%
Bay	21.0%	**Indian River**	50.9%
Lafayette	20.2%	**St. Johns**	50.5%
Collier	18.2%	**Santa Rosa**	45.3%
Clay	16.3%	**Clay**	45.1%
Santa Rosa	15.6%	**Okaloosa**	40.6%
Okaloosa	15.5%	**Collier**	38.5%
Statewide Vote	***29.5%***	***Statewide Vote***	***62.5%***

Rodham's 29.5 percent. In contrast, in 1998 a popular Democratic incumbent, Robert Graham, sought reelection. As noted above, Graham had won all his previous statewide elections easily, and 1998 proved to be no exception as he defeated his Republican challenger 62.5 to 37.5 percent. Although Graham's vote percentage was over twice that of Rodham, both had high loadings on the Post-New Deal factor, while the correlation coefficient between the two was also very high ($r = .824$). This indicates that while Rodham trailed behind Graham by a large margin in every county in Florida, the county-by-county pattern of support for each candidate was similar. Table 6 illustrates this point by showing the counties in the upper and lower quartile for each candidate. Eleven counties were in the upper quartile of both Rodham and Graham, while twelve counties were in the lower quartile of both candidates.

Thus it would appear that while the overall *level* of the vote between candidates of the same party can differ quite dramatically, the *structuring* of the vote suggests that the electorate responds to short-term forces in a consistent manner. One might liken this to a surge-and-decline effect, something quite different to the "kaleidoscopic" alteration of alignments associated with different candidates across elections and a dealigned party system.

Conclusions

This paper sought to examine the structure of party politics in Florida. Rather than the chaos or volatility that many observers still claim are the salient features of the state's party system, the paper found a highly structured vote alignment in elections for the presidency and for major statewide offices. Specifically, a *top-down* process has been evident, with the post-New Deal alignment structuring presidential elections from 1972, gubernatorial and U.S. Senate contests from 1986, and cabinet office elections from the mid-1990s. The first disruptions to this alignment occurred in the 1960s as a consequence of racial issues. However, an alignment that revolved *exclusively* around racial issues structured the vote in just five presidential and subpresidential contests and did not replace the New Deal alignment. Instead, a Post-New Deal alignment emerged at the presidential level in 1972, one that has structured *every* subsequent presidential election in Florida with the exceptions of 1976 and 1980. The nature of the Post-New Deal alignment seems to reflect socioeconomic and urban-rural bases of support, although these may all reflect a more generalized *ideological* cleavage. This alignment penetrated U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections in 1986, due in part to the presence of a popular conservative Republican president, and, from the mid-1990s and onwards, came to structure the vote for cabinet office elections.

Overall, these patterns are indicative of *realignment* and the existence of an underlying partisanship among the electorate in Florida. This suggests that prior studies of partisan and electoral politics in Florida that relied on individual-level data to reach conclusions of a dealigned polity have overlooked a great deal of stability and structure that has emerged at the aggregate level. Electoral politics in Florida in the early twenty-first century appears to be highly structured and intensely partisan in nature.

Future research on the structure of elections in Florida could move the analysis down to other political offices at the state legislative and local level. This would indicate the extent of the widening and deepening of the presidential alignment in the state's party system. A further avenue for future research could also apply the methodological approach taken in this paper to other southern states. An interesting question to pursue would be the extent to which the pattern found in Florida also exists in the other ten states of the Old Confederacy. Specifically, was the New Deal alignment disrupted at the presidential level in the 1960s? Did the New Deal alignment continue to structure subpresidential contests after it ceased to do so at the presidential level? Did the presidential alignment in other states penetrate to U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections in the mid-1980s, and finally to other state and local offices in the 1990s? Examination of patterns in other southern states will help to demonstrate differences in the realignment process across the southern states, across different political offices, and over time.

NOTES

[1]The number of elected cabinet offices was reduced in 2002. Only the Attorney General, Agricultural Commissioner, and Chief Financial Officer—the latter a new office combining the old posts of Treasurer-Insurance Commissioner and Comptroller—are now directly elected. All three posts are currently held by Republicans.

[2]The small number of respondents found in a single state in NES surveys mitigates against using such data. However, even if the number of respondents was larger, using a sample from a single state would violate the NES sample design that is representative of specific regions, rather than the single state. Thus, any sample taken from Florida is designed to be representative of the NES Solid South region, rather than of Florida.

[3]An argument could be made that studies of party politics in Florida relying on survey data to reach conclusions of electoral volatility commit the individualistic fallacy. Indeed, the application of the entire dealignment concept appears guilty of this. Dealignment is usually defined with respect to a variety of individual-level attitudes or behavior, such as the rise of independent identification and split-ticket voting (Beck 1984), and then applied to explain aggregate-level phenomena such as divided government and variability in election outcomes across political offices.

[4]Exceptions include the research of Seagull (1975) and Lamis (1990). Both make extensive use of correlation analysis in analyzing the county-by-county vote for different offices.

[5]Of course, realignment has been defined in numerous other ways, most often with the emergence of a new majority party (Campbell 1966). In fact the emergence of a new majority is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for realignment. For example, Key (1955) noted that the critical election of 1928 did displace the Republican majority in some of the New England states but not others. Pomper (1967) introduced the notion of a "converting election" the existing majority party could maintain its position even though a new structure or alignment of the vote emerged. Petrocik (1981) makes a similar point, using the term "noncritical realignment" to refer to the situation where the social group bases of party coalitions can be altered without changing the relative size of the party coalitions.

[6]Data for presidential, U.S. Senate, and gubernatorial elections through 2000 were taken from Scammon (1965) and Scammon (1956-57 through 2001). Data for cabinet office elections and for the 2002 gubernatorial election were obtained from the web site of the Florida Secretary of State, Elections Division, at http://election.dos.state.fl.us/elections/resultsarchive/index.asp.

[7]Serious Republican contestation of statewide elections below the presidency in Florida was not evident until the 1960s. Even though Republican presidential nominee Dwight D. Eisenhower carried the state twice in 1952 and 1956, the Republican gubernatorial vote in 1956 was 26.3 percent, while the party did not even contest the U.S. Senate election of the same year. In 1958, the Republican vote in the U.S. Senate election was 28.8 percent.

[8]Competitive elections for cabinet offices were not evident until the 1980s. Indeed, a Republican was not elected to a cabinet position until 1988.

[9]Presidential elections with a significant third-party candidate were 1948, 1968, 1980, 1992, and 1996. The 1974 U.S. Senate election also featured a significant third-party candidate. In each of these cases, the Democratic percentage is based on the three-party vote.

[10]Varimax rotation was employed to derive a terminal solution to the factor analysis because it is generally more suitable for identifying patterns among variables.

[11]For similar application of factor analysis in the identification of the structure of the vote see MacRae and Meldrum (1960), Wildgen (1974), Rabinowitz, Gurian, and Macdonald (1984), and Renner (1999).

[12]Renner (1999) challenges notion of separate federal and state alignments. A factor analysis of the county-by-county vote in ten northern and western states from 1986 through 1996 revealed that elections for different political offices all loaded on a single factor.

[13]It is important to note that scholars who have noted differences in voting at the presidential and subpresidential level (see, for example, Bullock 1988b; Beck 1988; Wattenberg 1987) have usually focused on differences in outcomes across offices rather than differences underlying the structure of those elections.

[14]Aldrich (2000), on the other hand, has argued that southern partisan changes reflect a "bottom-up" process. For a interesting overview of the both the top-down and bottom-up perspectives—and findings that indicate that both may be evident in explaining recent southern partisan changes—see Aistrup (2004)

[15]Factors V and VI appeared to be "noise"—and thus are not displayed in the following tables. All elections with loading on these factors also had much higher loadings on one of the four other factors, specifically Factors I and II.

[16]The electoral success of Chiles and Graham is frequently attributed toward candidate-centered voting. Each of these candidates utilized what can only be described as election time "gimmicks." Chiles drew attention in 1970 for his 1,000 mile walk across

the state, while Graham, in attempt to downplay the fact that he was a multi-millionaire, worked "100 jobs in 100 days" during the 1978 gubernatorial campaign (Lamis 1990, 185-190).

[17]The racial protest appeal of Gurney is further illustrated by his vote exhibiting high correlations coefficients with the Goldwater vote in the 1964 presidential election (r = .683) the Wallace vote in the 1968 presidential election (r = .589). In contrast, Gurney's vote had weak and negative correlations with the "traditional" Republican vote in Florida, represented by Eisenhower's vote in 1952 (r = -.353) and 1956 (r = -.327) and by Nixon's in 1960 (r = -.171) and 1968 (r = -.392).

[18]Askew's mean vote in the northern panhandle counties in 1970 was 65.7 percent, while in 1974 it had fallen to 47.8 percent.

[19]These variables have been used to in prior studies to explain aggregate vote patterns. See, for example, Beachler (1999).

[20]These sub-regions are derived from Carver and Fiedler (1999).

[21]A correlation analysis also demonstrates the point. Graham's vote pattern in the 1978 and 1982 gubernatorial elections correlated quite strongly (r = .740). However, the correlation between both of these elections with the 1986, 1992 and 1998 Senate elections is much lower. The average correlation between Graham's 1978 vote and the three Senate elections is .540, while the average correlation between his 1982 vote and the three Senate elections is .515. On the other hand, the average correlation between the three Senate elections is .731.

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