Rocky Mountain blue: a shifting terrain in the Rocky Mountain west

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Rocky Mountain Blue:

_A Shifting Terrain in the Rocky Mountain West_

By

Cannon Brooke

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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Cannon Brooke
May 25th, 2010
Rocky Mountain Blue:

A Shifting Terrain in the Rocky Mountain West

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of

Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Cannon Brooke

May 2010
Abstract

This study examines the changes in partisan distribution across the states of the Rocky Mountain West. Previous research on realignment explained the movement of states toward the Democratic Party as an issue-based phenomenon and fracturing of the party in power. Specifically, research from scholars such as V.O Key and Sundquist find that a critical juncture normally triggers change in party system. This study tests whether the secular realignment in the region may perhaps be better explained by demographics. A longitudinal case study along with Lijphart’s most similar design system will be used to consider three demographic variables to test if they affect voting trends: the migration of liberal voters moving to the region from California; percent of Hispanic/Latino voters present in the state and the number of Mormon/Catholic adherents in the region. The hypothesis that this is a demographic realignment and not issue-based is confirmed, although, further research on the migration from other parts of the United States and its impact on the region must be considered as well. My findings suggest that instead of voters abandoning their political ideology/party affiliation, what is occurring in the Rocky Mountain Region, is a watering down effect of Republican voters - tipping the balance in favor of the Democratic Party.
Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Demographics, Composition Change and Realignment Theory

Introduction

The Mountain West\(^1\) is one of the fastest-growing regions in the country and has become more influential in national politics.\(^2\) The importance of the area was particularly apparent after the 2004 elections. George W. Bush was victorious, in part, due to the unanimous support of the Rocky Mountain region.\(^3\) Each state is electorally insignificant on its own, but together the region controls 44 electoral votes and helps to determine the winner in close elections. For the past thirty years the region has voted predominantly Republican. Recently, there seems to be a trend that some states (Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada) in the region might be shifting towards favoring the Democrats (see Figure 1-1). Initially, this thesis tests whether if in fact, there is a realignment in the region towards the Democratic Party. Coalition change is later determined by graphing presidential and lower house election results for the last thirty years and looking for an upward trend illustrating a power shift. As the results suggest, the region is slowly trending towards the Democratic Party. My hypothesis is then tested to see whether demographic variables such as: migration from California, percent of Hispanic/Latino population and number of Mormon/Catholic adherents possibly contributes to the shift.

Majorities in several Rocky Mountain States voted for Barack Obama during the 2008 election inspiring the leadership of the Democratic Party to increase their recruiting

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\(^1\) The Intermountain West is a region of North America lying between the Rocky Mountains to the east and the Cascades and Sierra Nevada to the west. It consists of eight states including: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

\(^2\) (Sperling 2004)

\(^3\) (Edwards 2004)
efforts targeting younger voters in the constituency. The Rocky Mountain region is not a conservative monolith, however; it is affected by context and may be shifting allegiance to the Democratic Party. This kind of change constitutes a “political realignment,” of which the scholar V.O. Key identifies two kinds: secular and critical realignment. Critical realignments represent dramatic changes in the composition of parties or coalitions that arise at a cataclysmic event (critical juncture) such as an economic depression or civil war. Voters are likely to shift loyalty during these times. In a critical realignment a critical juncture disrupts the equilibrium in which the two parties find themselves, creating a new party system. Secular realignment is a slower process that happens over a long period of time with slow gradual changes in voter preferences, consequently leading to the formation of a new party over many years. For this project, I will investigate if the region comprising of Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and Idaho – to see if it is experiencing a secular realignment and what the contributing factors are.

The goal of this project is to examine why there are different trends in political party preference across states in the Rocky Mountain Region. Or in other words, why are some states trending more Democratic while others are not? For example, although the region has been categorized as a safe Republican Party stronghold, Colorado New Mexico and Nevada in the previous election [2008] voted for Obama (Democrat) while Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Arizona favored McCain (Republican). This thesis hypothesizes that demographic composition change might be a major contributing factor. By drawing upon numerous indicators of possible realignment throughout the region with voting records, vote

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5 (Key 1956)
share in elections, public support and seats in the legislature, along with migration, this project seeks to measure composition change and see if the alteration occurring is in fact a secular realignment or just noise. Next, by comparing party election results, this paper will then juxtapose the different states in the region and test V.O. Key’s theory of realignment and see if the region is an example of such a case.

Regional Background of the Rocky Mountain states

The Rocky Mountain region consists of eight states: Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. The former territories were among the last to enter statehood with Wyoming being the last to enter the republic in 1890. The region stretches approximately 1,260 miles and is equivalent to the combined area of 13 European states.\(^6\) The continental divide or the Rocky Mountain range can be found within these states. Every state shares a high desert climate and has an annual rainfall of about 20 inches a year. Nonetheless, despite the climate similarities, each of the political and economic environments of these states is unique. Each state in the region has begun to create its own political culture, formulated by years of diverse influence from immigration, agriculture, businesses and government policy. The Rocky Mountain Region is one of the fastest growing in the United States, attracting interstate immigration from the West as well as the East. The Federal Government also has a defining role in the area. Many states house military bases and strategic sites such as the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) located at Peterson Air force Base in Colorado. The state of Nevada was the site of the Nevada Test Site (NTS), which until recently, was a testing site for nuclear weapons.

\(^6\) (Peirce 1972)
Despite the presence of government military facilities and heavy political influence, these two states are trending towards the Democratic Party that formally were Republican dominated.

Voters in Utah and Idaho preferred Republican candidates in the last ten presidential elections between 1972-2008. Both states control only 9 electoral votes, but voters in these two states are apparently “resisting” the slow realignment with the Democratic Party. Idaho remains more to the “right” on the political spectrum than its neighbors in Oregon, Washington and Montana. The 1994 elections in Idaho resulted in the first unified state government in 24 years with the Republican Party controlling both branches of government.

Utah is also more conservative than its surrounding neighboring states, but has a very different political culture that may help explain the “leaning” to the right by its voters. Utah and Idaho are one example of the region’s diverse demographics. Politically conservative Mormons outnumbered all other religious affiliations and continue to do so (90% of them occupying both legislators at state and federal level in 2008). Thus, the Mormon Church influences political decision-making in Utah and must be accounted for. By contrast, religious affiliation is far less important in Montana, Wyoming and Colorado where about 52.9-55%, respectively, of voters in Colorado, Wyoming and Montana listed no religious affiliation. Voters in Montana and Wyoming voted Republican and Colorado went Democratic during the 2008 election (see Figure 2). One possible explanation for the different voting patterns in the other six states might be explained by the Catholic Church’s presence in the region. Traditionally, scholars generally agree that Catholic adherents vote

8 (Deady 2004)
9 (Peirce 1972)
10 (Shipps and Silk 2004)
Democratic.\textsuperscript{11} Perhaps explained by the rise of Hispanic/Latino migration, Colorado, Nevada, Arizona and even Utah, are experiencing a rise in the Catholic adherents in the region. The religious voting patterns of Mormons and Catholics are pronounced enough in previous literature and cases that this thesis will employ religion as a variable to investigate if changing demographics might be an explanatory factor.

**Theoretical explanations**

*Literature review*

The two-party structure in the United States creates a system of stability and makes it difficult for a third party to form, which explains why there have only been six realignments.\textsuperscript{12} The pluralist system along with the first-past-the-post-electoral system helps insure relatively stable and powerful coalitions. Some scholars’ link this stability created by the thirty-year political cycle where voting patterns would shift to the opposite side of the political spectrum. Habitually, this cycle is path dependent until a critical juncture or composition change that would inevitably allow for a third party to move in and consolidate the electoral votes.\textsuperscript{13} The main theory explaining change in the political system that constitutes the framework for this project is *secular realignment* and the composition change in the Rocky Mountain region.

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\textsuperscript{11} (Abramowitz 2007; Humphrey 2008; Brewer 2003; Campbell 2007; Reese 1996; Weber 2000)

\textsuperscript{12} (Donovan and Bowler 2004)

\textsuperscript{13} Sundquist and Paulson claim that realignments occur 36 years apart starting with 1860, 1896, 1932 and finally 1968 – therefore, we are due for another realignment according to this theory.
A shift in loyalty from one party to another by voters is what Key considers realignment. Realignment describes the new political coalitions that replace older alliances typically led by the other party. Realignment does not necessarily involve leadership shifting from one party to another. In some cases, the shift is to an intermediary state like the stalemate that took place when Republicans enlarged their voting base in the 1896 election when William McKinley defeated Democrat William Jennings Bryan. It was the beginning of a shift towards the Republicans in voting preference subsequently until the New Deal Era.

As referenced earlier, critical realignment is usually triggered by a critical juncture, some sort of momentous shock, for example a civil war or an economic depression. Morley Winograd and Michael Hais note that five of the last realignments in the mid west were triggered by these two factors. Donald E. Stokes and V. O. Key, attribute political realignment to a shift in party loyalty and the decaying of old symbols and leaders to explain shifting to the other party. More contemporary authors such as Morley, Winograd and Paulson believe it is a function of ethnological and generational alteration, a shift in age, race and ethnicity compositions. Change may also occur when new issues cause voters to line up behind either party. For example, the Republican Party addressed the ethical question of slavery, which the Whig and Democratic Party refused to acknowledge, leading to a realignment of voters.

Donald E. Stokes and Key note that the regional allegiances to one party or another will shift for a variety of reasons and some elections may be “critical” only because they

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14 (Winograd and Hais 2008)
15 (Key 1956; Stokes 1969)
16 (Winograd and Hais 2008; Paulson 2007)
involve wider movements like economic concerns.\textsuperscript{17} Acknowledging the many interpretations is crucial to understanding realignment. Stokes and Key consider critical junctures (e.g. economic depressions and conflicts) to be crucial enough to cause a shift in voting patterns. By contrast, Paulson et al. argue that there is a pattern of cycles associated with these shifts in regional loyalty to a particular party. Paulson does not view critical junctures to be a major factor in producing shifts but instead relies on a cycle of thirty or so years of party loyalty. Comparable to Paulson, Winograd and Morley, Key acknowledges that the rise and fall of parties might be more of a slow evolutionary trend that perhaps persists over decades, instead of a sudden, critical event. However, Key maintains also that only events with widespread and powerful impact or issues touching on deep emotions produce abrupt changes, which helps explain the first realignment in 1860 on the eve of the American Civil War.\textsuperscript{18}

There are many interpretations for what are the likely cause and effect factors when these shifts occur. Sundquist provides a general set of circumstances that might precipitate a shift.\textsuperscript{19} Sundquist devised his own variables to determine when or if and to what scale realignment has taken place. He created five variables to determine the scale of realignment. They are: the breadth and depth of underlying grievance, the capacity of the proposed remedy to provoke resistance, the motivation and capacity of party leadership, the division of the polar forces between the parties and the strength of the ties that bind voters to the existing parties.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} (Key 1958)
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} (Sundquist 1973)
\textsuperscript{20} (Sundquist 1973)
David Garland, while echoing the theme of a critical juncture causing realignment, puts it into the context used for studying crime and the role political realignment has on social conditions. He states that after World War II, social, economic and cultural changes were the characteristic of later modernity and the rise of abundant technology, which was pronounced from the 1960s onwards.21 One explanation for the cultural changes Garland notes was the alteration in demographic characteristics in the Rocky Mountain region.

Authors such as Bishop and Frey & Teixeira have arguments that resonate with the same theme as Garland’s.22 In The Big Sort, Bishop argues that modernity has changed America insomuch that people tend to choose to immigrate to areas that fit their political beliefs. This clustering of like-minded people is creating liberal enclaves in otherwise conservative regions such as Colorado (Boulder/Denver County), and Idaho (Ada County). Frey & Teixeria continue Bishop’s and Garland’s argument and suggest that residents from liberal states are changing the political composition of the Rocky Mountain Region. Intrinsically, these authors suggest, the migration of educated, upper and middle class residents from traditionally liberal states like California, New York and Massachusetts, are changing the composition in the region and swinging the spectrum ‘left.’23

**Demographic Factors**

One of the central explanatory factors this project will examine is demography and how it modifies the region’s composition. Demography is the study of population organization (e.g., age, ethnicity, religion, social status, etc.) and the changes due to fertility,
mortality and migration. Shifts in regional loyalty to a particular party can also be affected by changes in the demographic characteristics. Demography plays such a significant role in determining constituents’ voting preference that this project is going to look at the inter-relationships between demographics and voting. The underlying theory for this project is that some demographic groups are more likely to have particular issue preferences; therefore, these differences might explain party system changes in the region. Party system change refers to changes in the balance of power between major parties. It is important to understand the role demographics plays in determining voter preferences for the reason that it might aid in predicting a new constituent base or even elections.

A century ago, the Republican Party prized itself of the fact they were the party that freed the slaves, therefore gaining much of the black and immigrant votes. After the New Deal Era, there was a realignment of political affiliation and the Democratic Party began to be the party of the minority. As of the election of 2008, both the Republican and the Democratic Party were jockeying to gain favorable status of the black and Hispanic/Latino vote. Interestingly, Subramanian Ramakrishnan notes that recent studies have shown that voting among immigrant minorities does not necessarily increase with age, education and income. Therefore, he challenges traditional models of political participation by suggesting that age has a significant negative relationship with voting behavior in Latino and Asian immigrants, translating into less electoral participation. Lorretta Base resonates the same argument. She suggests that naturalized citizens display political behavior and voting patterns different from those of native born. Base further notes that there are many more

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24 (Ramakrishnan 2005)  
25 (Ramakrishnan 2005)  
26 (Bass and Casper 2001)
barriers to voting other than naturalization and registration, such as employment, home ownership, education and English language proficiency.27

**Age change**

The presidential election of 2008 reminded political scientists of the importance of demography as a tool to predict electoral outcomes. As the region continues to grow through the 21st century, the make up of suburban areas surrounding metropolitan areas is going to be ever more decisive for the future triumphant party. Prior studies illustrate how suburban areas are typically made up of more conservative constituents.28 However, this trend has been changing since the late 1960s. One example currently, the Democratic Party is benefiting the urban sprawling areas outside of Denver, the Front Range area including Boulder and Larimer (Fort Collins). As more rural pockets of Colorado become developed, this transition changes the voting patterns from predominantly Republican to Democratic voting base. One explanation for the possible benefit to the Democratic Party in the 2008 election in suburbia is the younger populace making up a large portion of the suburban residents.

Bill Bishop uses demographic data to show how Americans have been sorting themselves into homogenous communities. In his work, he suggests that we have been choosing our neighborhoods, television shows and places of worship that reflect our individual values.29 By using IRS tax return data, Bishop illustrates how liberal residents are leaving liberal states and moving to other areas, transforming the political culture by

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27 Ibid.
28 (Kasperson 1969)
29 (Bishop and Cushing 2008)
establishing liberal enclaves in previously conservative environments. William Frey and Teixeira also note the importance of migration from California affecting the political balance in the region. In their work, they attribute the growing migration from Californian liberal counties to Nevada and Colorado as a major source in turning the states more decisively “blue.”

Population replacement (assortative migration) is another variable this project will explore for the shift of party loyalty. Some studies suggest that the dilution of the population of voters occurred after 1948, when the elderly generation for the first time voted heavily Republican rather than Democratic. During the 1930s and 1940s, there was no significant difference in voting patterns by the elderly (over age 65) and younger voters but this changed and the gap has continued to grow since.

A further factor that might explain the shift to the Democratic Party in the urban outskirts is the rise of the high-tech suburb. By the close of the twentieth century, the American landscape had changed drastically, becoming more decentralized and more diverse in form and function. With the rise of shopping malls, residential developments and the infamous “cul-de-sac” came another distinctive and yet highly influential metropolitan element – the high-tech suburb. Familiar communities include examples such as California’s Silicon Valley, Boston’s Route 128 and Washington’s Redmond area. These cultural high tech areas are an important aspect to politicians because they are comprised mostly of white-collar upper class elites who yield a lot of voting power. More importantly, as the Rocky Mountain region, especially Colorado and Nevada, continues down the path of

30 (Frey 2010)
31 (Gimpel and Schuknecht 2003; Bishop and Cushing 2009)
32 Ibid.
33 (Kruse and Sugrue 2006)
its burgeoning tech communities, areas outside of Denver, Boulder and Clark County (Las Vegas) will continue to attract younger voters who vote Democratic.

**Methodology**

In my thesis I pose the questions, is there really a political realignment happening in the Rocky Mountain region? How long has the trend towards the Democratic Party been occurring - and lastly, does this shift in partisan preference really constitute a political realignment? My hypothesis will follow the same principles behind that of V.O Key and Paulson, insomuch that there might be a secular realignment occurring in the Rocky Mountain western states explained by a shift in demographics.\(^3^4\)

My dependent variables for this study is the strength of the Democratic Party each year from 1970-2008, measured as vote share in elections, states’ political ideology and party identification and seats won in the legislature.\(^3^5\) Since there is substantial confusion surrounding the term realignment due to numerous definitions that have been identified by authors over the years, this paper is going to focus on *secular realignment*.\(^3^6\) In order to see if there is any evidence of a *secular realignment*, I will look at partisan trends for the past thirty years for state and federal elections.

As Arthur Paulson proposes, the 1928-1936 period in American political history is often cited as the prototype in realignment due to the seminal work of V.O Key on the subject. Furthermore, this era will be juxtaposed with the election of 2008 because of other

\(^{34}\) (Key 1958; Paulson 2007)  
\(^{35}\) Party ID and Ideology will be measured by polls taken from CBS/New York Times.  
\(^{36}\) Secular realignment describes the process of voters shifting from one party to another over a gradual period of time, such as a decade or two. This is opposed to critical realignment, which signifies that there has been a major shift in voting patterns in a single election or two.
similarities that might be useful in illustrating realignment such as a new Democratic majority, a stable governing coalition and a new policy agenda which all have a resemblance in the 2008 election. I use the New Deal (1928-36) era as a model to compare the last elections in the Rocky Mountain region and see if it truly constitutes realignment or if there is another explanation for the shift.

Additional independent variables will be considered to grasp the full complexity that surrounds the topic of realignment and ensure the most accurate conclusion possible. Initially, demographic factors such as race, state-to-state migration, religious affiliation (Mormon and Catholic) and registered votes will be considered important independent variables and inspected to see if there has been a dramatic change in the make up of the Rocky Mountain region. As Jeffrey M. Stonecash notes, the house and presidential voting patterns are affected in similar ways by district conditions. In other words, the consequence of this similarity between district make up and voting patterns illustrates a correlation between house and presidential results – which means elections are now shaped by social conditions from changing demographics, while regionalism plays less of a role in deciding electoral outcomes.

The religious factor, more specifically, Latter Day Saints and Catholic adherents, will be considered as the last independent variable to determine why some states trend more towards the Democratic Party. Charles Lippy suggests that currently there is a secular realignment occurring in American politics as the Republican Party is attempting to capitalize on the family value agenda and, in doing so, is attracting more conservative Mormons and some Catholic and Jewish constituents into the party. Lippy contends this can

37 (Stonecash, Bond, and Fleisher 2009)
38 (Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani 2002)
be seen in the rise of religious adherents in the Republican Party. For this project I will use data calculated by The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) and see if there is a rise in particularly liberal or conservative sects. This will be done by graphing the data from 1970 to 2000 of the percent of Catholic and Mormon adherents in the region, to see if in fact, there is a rising trend in either religious sect and if it correlates with voting patterns.

There are countless questions in electoral studies on what actually constitutes realignment and when they occur. Using the definitions and concepts of secular realignment mentioned previously, I will test for gradual changes in partisan strength in the Rocky Mountain region by using data from both federal and state elections. In order to understand change and how it might be affected by the rise of the Mormons and Catholics I will employ Arend Lijphart’s most similar research design. This method consists in comparing very similar cases, all of which however differ in the dependent variable.
Chapter 2: Ideology, Partisan Identification and Polarization

Ideology and Partisan Identification

This project attempts to measure secular realignment by assessing party strength between the Democratic and Republican in the Rocky Mountain states. There are numerous ways to measure the strength of a certain party. Common methods used for research include: collecting poll information, measuring party identification and raw vote data from previous elections. This thesis will employ these methods in order to describe party strength. The strength of a party will be defined as the overall preference voters have to a certain party. By viewing previous polls asking participants to categorize themselves as Republican, Democrat or Independent along with voter returns from 1970 to 2008 this thesis will calculate and plot any possible trends the Rocky Mountain states might have had in the past in party preference (strength) or evidence that some states might be leaning to in the coming elections.

When determining trends in public affinity for parties, there are numerous ways to measure “strengths” of preferred groups in particular states. The first and most common way is polling. National or local opinion polls are conducted, usually, to identify partisanship – or loyalty to a certain party. A simple question is asked to gauge respondents’ affinity for a certain party such as, “Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat or Independent?” In order to assess a particular ideology a certain region might encompass, a simple question asked in a poll akin to “How would you describe your views on most political matters? Would you consider yourself a liberal, conservative or moderate?” Simple
questions like these are a great way to measure the strength a certain party might have a region.

An additional measurement used to gauge the strength of a political party is raw election data collection – or voter returns. Arguably, this means of measurement is the easiest to quantify due to the vast amount of available data accessible. Collecting data at the federal level as well as the state level is relatively easy and can be exceptionally useful in aiding the research and comparison of voting trends between states. This study uses *The Book of the States* to gather information on vote returns in order to see if there have been any trends in preference for a particular party for the past forty-two years. The *Book of the States* contains essential and hard-to-find information from each state and U.S. territory. The reference guide has been published since 1935 and is critical in the research of U.S. voting trends.

This method of measuring the strength of a party has its drawbacks. Initially, when comparing data at the state level with the federal, the results may seem noisy because of the different turnout patterns in state and federal elections. Another problem with using election returns to identify any voting patterns or preferences to a particular party is the *incumbency advantage*. The term incumbency advantage refers to the electoral edge enjoyed by in-office persons and the advantage candidates have running again as incumbents to perform better.\(^{39}\) Essentially this theory suggests that candidates already holding office perform better in elections because of the pork distributed to their constituents, the large amount of money in their coffers for campaigning and the weak challengers that contest them. So in other words,

\(^{39}\) (Mayhew 2008)
attempting to measure secular trends in party support might be skewed because of popular incumbents running for a second or even fifth term in some cases.

The issue of incumbency advantage also illuminates the problem of long term-punctuated equilibrium in state elections. Research from measuring voting trends indicates this problem becomes more evident at the local election level. For example, a senator might be running unopposed for many years and/or one seat is only open for a certain election. This causes the punctuated equilibrium, that is, long-term stability in one party because a seat is up for election or a senator is running unopposed, which makes it seem as if a state is trending in a particular direction.

Lastly, raw data does not explain the charismatic affect. Using voting return records alone does not explain the outliers that throw off long-term trends. One example of this charismatic affect from a politician can be seen with the 1984 presidential election with Ronald Reagan. In the 1984 election, Reagan had a complete mandate with an overwhelming victory of 525 electoral votes compared to his opponent Walter Mondale, who won only 13 votes (Minnesota and Washington D.C.). Elections like in 1984 when even the most liberal states historically, like California and Hawaii, voted for a Republican, can throw off and skew any trends that might be occurring.

*Party Identification*

Arguably, one of the most useful concepts in political science to understanding voter loyalty and understanding political behavior is party identification. Before the mid 20th century, political scientists did not have the necessary data to study individual behavior at this level. However, since this data has become more accessible it has become the leading
role in studying this political phenomenon in voting behavior analysis. Today a great deal of the extant voting literature focusing on the American electorate relies heavily on data pools from polls taken such as The Genera Social Survey (GSS), American National Election Studies (ANES) and private polls from New York Times (NYT poll) and Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and the Gallup poll. These polls are essential to systematically gathering voter preferences, ideology and party identification.

When analysts classify and categorize constituents into groups by their political affiliation, preferences, similarities and differences, the standard term used is partisanship and ideology. According to Erikson et. al., partisanship is much easier and more accurate to quantify due to its adherent nature.\(^{40}\) That is, most people who associate with a particular party tend to favor and vote party line. This makes it easy to gauge a county or state’s ideological leaning because scholars can easily use state voting records and history to identify partisanship, while measuring ideology, on the other hand, tends to be more precarious. Available indicators to classify ideology are indirect and confusing.\(^{41}\) It is easier for the average citizen to identify with a political party rather than an ideological belief.

Ideally, every analyst in a perfect world would like to have an equal amount of participants from every state to ensure the study is not plagued by selection bias - unfortunately, this is not the case. For practical reasons, political scientists do not have sufficient data to study ideology and political identification at the state level because of the cost involved in conducting a comparative state survey, especially over fifty times. According to political scientist Gerald C. Wright, “a single state survey is not that much

\(^{40}\) (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993)
\(^{41}\) (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993)
A common issue that reoccurs with anyone attempting to use this data for research purposes is the uneven distribution of populations polled in these surveys. For example, states with smaller populations like Wyoming and Montana will only have a data pool of roughly 300 participants whereas behemoth states (population wise) such as California or Texas have constituents polled in the numbers of 3,000+.

To begin, measuring public opinion at the state level is the first step in determining partisanship leanings and/or majority ideology leanings. One approach used by scholars and analysts is conducted through CBS/NYT polls. The method used is straightforward and done by aggregating responses by participants polled by either telephone or in person polls. The questions stay consistent throughout the polls and three different methods are used for data collection. The first is referred to as a general survey, which attempts to represent the adult population. The second type of survey employed only surveys registered voters. Lastly, election day polls or commonly referred to as exit polls, are conducted as the voter leaves the voting booth. The general survey and registered voter surveys are generally conducted by random telephone interviews and make use of identical sampling designs.

Despite the inconsistencies that may arise from using these methods to measure state ideology leanings, scholars generally agree that these methods, when used in conjunction with one another, are the best indicators for state level ideology. Since self-identification and party loyalty are interchangeable because usually people identify themselves as either conservative or liberal, which is then associated with a party, partisanship is an important

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42 Ibid.
43 (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993)
44 (Brewer and Stonecash 2009; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Cain, Donovan, and Tolbert 2008)
influence on political behaviors and voting behaviors. According to Flanigan et. al., party identification is uncomplicated and easily measured by responses to simple questions such as:

- Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?
- (If R or D) Would you call yourself a strong (R) or (D) or not very strong?
- (If independent) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican party or the Democratic party?

Partisanship and Ideology

Partisanship is crucial to the understanding of American voting behavior. It is a useful concept for tracing the dynamics of behavior in the electorate and useful for predicting future outcomes in elections. This section will begin by looking at ideology and voting behavior and the consequence of having strong or weak party preference. At a basic level, the notion of political ideology inheres in American democracy. In the United States, we have had a long history of creating a shared political culture, which is channeled through political ideology. Ideology provides an outlet for strong identification of citizens with one another and also affords a shared national purpose. Ideology plays an important role in joint interests in the citizenry and collaboration.

Political ideology is conveyed from generation to generation to citizens, usually in the form of a political party. In order to achieve a certain agenda, parties use principles to spread their message. Ideology usually consists of beliefs of what should be and how it ought to be, laid out on a political spectrum that we know, from left to right. It assists in shaping the way people receive information, issues and most importantly – affects

45 (Flanigan and Zingale 1998)
candidates. To further complicate the issue, ideology consists of principles and views of what is right or wrong and how society should be organized. Usually we see labels for these ideologies broken down to the simple liberal vs. conservative argument, which is expressed through an individual’s party preference.

Political ideology brings on another important issue that affects voting behavior in the American electorate – the issue of partisanship. In the most simplistic matter, partisanship is the sense of attachment or belonging an individual feels towards a certain political party.\(^{46}\) Support for a party may or may not fluctuate over time depending on a party’s particular stance on social or economic issues.

Despite variations in electoral outcomes throughout the past century, most voters have a basic support for candidates afforded to them by either political party.\(^{47}\) This is why when political analysts and scholars classify the American electorate in terms of their differences and/or similarities, they usually refer to the terms – ideology and/or partisanship. Partisanship is best described as the close tie to a particular party. This relationship with a certain party usually consists of a voter having the feeling of a close emotional tie. Depending on the strength of party identification, partisanship provides an excellent source of voter studying because of the specific relationship that has been found between political information and voting behavior, which is a relationship built upon the strength of partisanship.\(^{48}\)

\(^{46}\) (Flanigan and Zingale 1998)

\(^{47}\) (Flanigan and Zingale 1998)

\(^{48}\) (Ruben 1985)
Chapter 3: Results by state

Presidential elections

To test the realignment theory of the Rocky Mountain Region, the following states are juxtaposed with one another by multivariate analysis (see Figure 1-1). The research focuses on the fundamental question: is realignment occurring? In this results section, the definition of secular realignment will be a slow incremental change in traditional party loyalty over more than four presidential elections, or sixteen years. Since most elections are maintaining elections, that is, the majority party wins with an electoral coalition this study will be looking for deviating elections following a reverse trend in party loyalty trend.49

The data used in this section came from numerous sources such as the Census Bureau, America Votes series, The Almanac of American Politics and American National Election Studies. The following states were measured by Presidential, Gubernatorial, Senatorial and House election results. Party identification and ideology were measured over a twenty-six year time span as well to see if there are any trends or deviations in party loyalty or identification.

49 (Paulson 2007)
Figure 1-1: Highest Percent voting Democratic for Presidential elections by state

![Highest Percent voting Democratic for Presidential elections by state](image1)

Figure 1-2: Lowest Percent voting Democratic for Presidential Elections

![Lowest Percent voting Democratic for Presidential Elections](image2)

Figure 1-1 illustrates that at the presidential level, there seems to be a steady trend in voting behavior across states. The most conservative, Wyoming, Utah and Idaho stay between 20%-35% voting for a Democratic candidate (see Figure 1-2), while Arizona and Montana keep in the 40%-45% range, with the most liberal being Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico. All states except for Idaho, Wyoming and Utah have a trend of slowly voting
more Democratic over the forty years from 1968-2008. The data suggests that five of the eight states in the region have an increasingly Democrat voting pattern at the presidential level over the past forty years. However, in order to be sure if this is an actual trend, and not just at the presidential level, each state must be investigated.

**Arizona**

To begin, Arizona stands out as a misnomer of the states. Long thought as a barren and destitute area, it stands at sixth in land area among the fifty states and is one of the fastest growing in the union. As a result of this growth, Arizona’s electoral votes have gone from four in 1960 to ten in 2010. Most of Arizona’s population lives in the affluent, diversified and rapidly growing areas around Tucson and Phoenix. Undoubtedly, these two metropolitan areas are key to understanding voting patterns in Arizona.

By the beginning of statehood, Arizona’s political regimes were influenced by outside interests from the cattle, mining and railroad industries. As a result, the political parties were pro-development and weary of federal government intervention in state matters. Interests predominately surrounding economic development persisted until the late 1920s, which ultimately led to dislocations in the parties and led to the creation of third parties and the policy-adjustment of the Democratic Party. The Great Depression helped change Arizona’s politics and usher in a conservative, one-party regime that helped make the Rocky Mountain states synonymous with conservatism. This conservative ideology has lasted and can be seen especially after the state legislature was reapportioned.\(^{50}\)

\(^{50}\) (Berman 1998)
From 1948-2008, Arizona has voted for a Democratic president twice. The first time in 1948, voting for Truman and the second time in 1996, electing Clinton. For most of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, Arizona has solidly gone Republican at the presidential level. However, because of continuing demographic change in Arizona, the state is increasingly becoming a swing state and losing its reputation as being Republican. Evidence of Arizona becoming a swing state can be seen in the state level elections. From 1960 on, the Republican dominance at the state level has increasingly become weaker and districts oscillate between Republican and Democrat.

**Results**

**Figure 1-3: Arizona - Percent voting for a Democratic President**

At the presidential level (see Figure 1-3), Arizona seems to have been fairly consistent for the past twelve years. However, a closer look at the voting trend for the past forty years reveals a slow progression towards the Democratic Party. With exception to the Reagan administration years (1980-1988) the trend has been increasing for the percent of the state voting for the Democratic Party. From 1968-1996, the percent voting Democratic
fluctuated from 35%-40%. Then, after the Clinton victory, the numbers shot up to 45% and have been consistent for the last four elections. Despite the presidential candidate being from Arizona (Senator John S. McCain), the Republican victory was comparatively dismal. McCain in the previous election [2008] received 53% of the vote in Arizona, while Barack Obama got 45%. Overall there is a 15% gain in Democratic preference for Arizona compared to Utah, Wyoming and Idaho.

Arizona at the state level

The gubernatorial elections in Arizona do show a higher percentage of citizens voting Democratic (see Figure 1-4). The trend is more prevalent at the presidential level than the gubernatorial. In comparison, the presidential election illustrates a 15% gain while the gubernatorial election demonstrates a 10% gain overall. In 1966, the state voted 60% for a Democratic governor. Then shortly after, the number dropped to roughly 40% and stayed that way until the 1986 election, when it rose to 62%. The trend then repeats, and the number drops to 50% and decreases to 46% in 2006. With exception to the mid to late 1980s, following a short lived spike in favoring a Democratic candidate, Arizona shows no long-term trends at the governor level favoring the Democratic Party.
Comparing the Arizona state Senate with the Gubernatorial, there is evidence of clear shift in the number of seats (see Figure 1-5). The 1976 election resulted in a shift in the number of seats held in the state senate. The Democrats had their first majority with 18 seats and the Republicans received only twelve. Nevertheless, this victory was short lived and after the 1984 election, the numbers shifted, and the same pattern can be seen for the next twenty-five years. In 2002, the Democrats almost deviated from their pattern of control in the Senate and switched power control, but in the subsequent election they lost seats (only receiving 12), and the previous pattern continued. For the past thirty years the Arizona state Senate has remained roughly 30% controlled by Democrats, with a few outliers such as 1978 and 2003, when the party gained a few more seats.

The Democratic control percentages in Arizona’s House of Representatives are 5%-10% higher than those in the Senate (see Figure 1-6). Beginning in 1968, the Republicans controlled 34 seats and the Democrats held 26, with a small shift resulting in 38 seats controlled by the Republicans in 1974. Again in the early 1980s, the Republican seats
continued to rise, controlling 44 seats, then lowering back down to the mid 30s. This trend has continued from 1990 all the way to present. Both parties show no real change in control of the house, with exception to the 1980s for the Republicans, and the numbers have remained relatively consistent.

In the state Senate and House, there is no evidence of a secular realignment over the last forty years. However, there is evidence of an increasing Democratic voting trend in the House of Representatives. Since 1982, there has been a fifteen-point increase. Conversely, at the federal level, there is a trend in voting Democratic. Data from both the presidential and senate elections over the past forty years suggest a slow, progressive trend in voting Democratic. Since the beginning of data collection in 1968, the percent voting for a Democratic candidate at the presidential level was around 35% while at the Senatorial level it was 20%. Since then the numbers have leveled off to about 40-45%, while at the state Senate level, the percentage of seats held by the Democrats have been 36-40% or eleven to twelve seats. At the House of Representatives, the number has been 20-25 seats or 33%-41%.
Figure 1-5: Arizona - Percent of Democrats in state Senate

Figure 1-6: Arizona - Percent of Democrats in House of Rep.

_Ideology and Party I.D._

According to the CBS/New York Times polling data available, in the past several elections there has been a slight shift in ideology and party identification. The data used, a collection of the years from 1976 to 2002, ask participating constituents to define themselves...
as Liberal or Conservative and Republican or Democrat. As discussed earlier, the CBS/New York Times polling data had some discrepancies in the number of people polled. For example, the lowest number in the twenty-seven years of collecting data was fifty in 1978 and the highest number was 521 in 1996. Overall, the average number of people polled for the 27 years is 240.

In 1976, roughly 42% claimed to be conservative and 21% to be liberal. This number spiked, as expected, to 50% in the 1980s during the Reagan Administration. In the 1990s the number stayed consistently in the high 30th percentile for self-identification as a conservative. After the 2000 election with George W. Bush, there was a slight rise and decline in the number of people identifying them selves as conservative and liberal, respectively (see Figure 1-7).

**Figure 1-7: Arizona - Percent identifying as being Liberal/Conservative**

Arizona’s party identification on the other hand, has been much closer in comparison to ideological leanings. From 1976 to 1980, conversely, more people identified with the
Democratic Party rather than the Republican Party. Since 1976, there has been a noticeable declining trend in the number of constituents identifying with the Democratic Party. Starting at 35% in 1976, this number lowers to just below 25% in 2002 (see Figure 1-8).

Figure 1-8: Arizona - Percent Identifying with Republican/Democrat

Unlike Arizona, Colorado is not known as being as staunchly conservative when voting at the presidential or state level elections. Since 2004, Colorado has been one of the most competitive when comparing two-party dominated states out of the region. The state has a history of oscillation in party trends and cycles, although the GOP has not had a strong presence since 2000. Elections at the federal and state level seem to give a picture different from the other Rocky Mountain states. Unlike other states in the region, there are numerous examples of a near-split between the Democratic and Republican parties controlling seats.
Juxtaposing the presidential election returns with the state house elections one can see an example of this split.

This should not come as a surprise, since in recent election cycles Democrats have taken particular interest in the Rocky Mountain states – especially Colorado. Playing off of the conservative ethos, many politicians have been making common cause with voters by pandering to them on new energy and taking a moderate stance on the gun control issue. Coloradans throughout their history have always been individualists when it came to voting and political preferences. The state is split politically now, much as it had been in the 1880s – however, the bases of party strength have shifted somewhat.\textsuperscript{51} Duplicating national patterns, the Republican base is the suburbs while the Democrats hold Denver. Both major parties have laid claims to electoral victories; however, results remain inconclusive to who has the majority. When Coloradans elect in a Democrat at the state level, usually they follow up by voting for a Republican at the presidential level or vice versa.

\textit{Results}

Just like Arizona, however, Colorado is another state showing a trend in voting Democratic at the presidential level (see \textbf{Figure 2-1}). Beginning at 41\% in 1968, there is a slow upward trend in the Democrat vote, later receding, dropping to 30-40\% during the Reagan Administration, but ultimately rising again. The 1992 election seems to be an outlier in the data plot. One possible explanation for the deviation or the sudden drop in Democratic preference in Colorado can be explained by the independent candidate Ross Perot. In 1992,

\addcontentsline{toc}{section}{Results}
\footnotetext{\textsuperscript{51} (Ubbelohde, Benson, and Smith 1982)}
Perot was able to capture 23.32% of the popular vote, bringing the Democratic vote to 40% and the Republican to 35%.

From 1988 to 2004, the number was in the mid to high 40th percentile, then eventually rising to over 50% in the 2008 election with Obama. Figure 2 illustrates a clear rising trend in Democratic preference in presidential candidates. Colorado has experienced a 23% increase in Democratic preference for presidential candidates since 1980, strongly suggesting a partisan change. Interestingly, the presidential election results in Colorado mirror Arizona’s. Both states began roughly having the 35-40 percent favoring the Democratic Party in 1968, then a slow trend increasing to 45-50%.

**Figure 2-1: Colorado - Percent voting for a Democratic president**

![Graph showing the percent of votes for a Democratic president in Colorado from 1968 to 2008.](image)

*Colorado State Level*

The Gubernatorial election shows a completely different trend than the presidential (see **Figure 2-2**). In the 1960s, Colorado voted in the low 40th percentile for a Democratic governor. After 1970, there was an increase in the number of people voting for a Democratic
governor, peaking at 65% in 1982. After that, the number decreased to 33% in 2002, then started the trend over, again increasing. From 2002 to the next election in 2006, the number jumps from 32% to 57%. Depending on the upcoming election in 2010, this might suggest a realignment at the state level due to the drastic change from the 30th percentile to almost the 60th in 2006.

**Figure 2-2: Colorado - Percent voting for a Democratic Governor**

Colorado’s state Senate (see Figure 2-3) paints a picture similar to its presidential voting history. In 1968, 24 Republicans controlled the Senate while Democrats only received 11 seats. This equates to Republicans obtaining 68% of the Senate, while the Democrats only captured 31%. As Figure 2-3 illustrates, from 1968 to 1982, the Republicans lost seats in the Senate only to gain a couple during the 1988-1990 elections. Later, from 1994 on to 2008, Republicans lost seats while the Democrats gained more control of the Senate. The percentage of seats held by the Republicans dropped from 68% in 1968 to 37% in 2008.
The Colorado House of Representatives exhibits the same trend as the state Senate, although not at the same frequency (see Figure 2-4). Unlike the Senate, the house does not have a clear progressive trend lowering on the Republican side. Similar to the Senate, the Republican Party was the dominant coalition in the house. Nevertheless, in 1976 there was a switch in party control, and the Republicans lost many seats in the house, bringing their total number to 26 seats held, or just 38%. After the 1976 election, the Republicans gained control once again; their share of the vote peaked in 1988 but declined subsequently. Although it should be noted that the Republicans did have a slight gain after the 1994 midterm election, this was short lived and later the trend began to reverse.

**Figure 2-3: Colorado - Percent of Democrats in Senate**
Colorado’s political ideology seems to have a lot of noise, meaning there is no clear trend going either way. From the early 1970s to mid 1980s, the percentage of people identifying themselves as liberal fluctuates between 15 and 30 percent. There is no sign of a trend occurring until after the 1994 election, when the percentage of constituents identifying with the Republican Party begins to decrease (see Figure 2-5).

One explanation for the “noise” is the amount of people who were interviewed for the CBS/New York Times poll. For example, in 1976 when the survey began, there were 121 people surveyed. The next three years, Colorado had a small amount of people surveyed, dropping from 121 to 62 and then in 1978 to only 48 people. This can explain how the data might be skewed and should be a caveat when attempting to interpret this data. Colorado and the other Rocky Mountain states, partially due to their population and amount
of electoral votes, did not receive as much attention as California, which in comparison had well over 3,000 people polled for a year.

Colorado’s party identification does not present a clear picture either (see Figure 2-6). The number of constituents claiming to identify with the Democratic Party peaked in 1978 at around 40% and slowly dropped and stayed level at around 30%. The Republicans, on the other hand, began fairly low and after 1980 slowly trended up reaching 40% in 1980 and 1994 and leveled off just above the Democrats at 33-35 percent. The party identification, unfortunately, does not illuminate a clear trend in favoring either party. Instead, the ideology and party identification illustrate the competitive nature of Colorado’s state elections.

Figure 2-5: Colorado - Percent identifying with Liberal/Conservative
Idaho

U.S. Elections

Idaho is a state bordered between six other ones in the upper Northwest region of the United States. Idaho is historically characterized by consistently being dominated by conservative Republicans. This state is not, however, as conservative as its reputation alleges it to be. Gaining statehood in 1890, Idaho had a history of both Republicans and Democrats winning elections up to 1928. However, during the Great Depression and throughout World War II constituents of this state voted for FDR all four times and subsequently elected Harry Truman – a Democrat. Idaho’s turn toward the conservative side of the political spectrum did not occur until the 1952 election, when the state elected Dwight Eisenhower. Idaho has only voted for a Democrat once since 1952, electing Lyndon Johnson over Barry

52 It should be noted that the Democratic Party of the early 20th century differs greatly from the party today. It would be fallacious to compare the two today.
Goldwater. Even then, the turnout in the state was almost 80% and Johnson defeated Goldwater 50.92% to 49.08%, hardly an overwhelming victory for the Democrats.

Since the 1952 election, with exception to a few elections, Idaho has voted well over 60% Republican, although there are some outliers, like the 1964 election, when Idaho voted for a Democrat. The 1992 election is another example when Ross Perot (Independent) was able to capture 27.05% of the votes in the state, bringing the Republican popular vote for George Bush to 42.03%.

Worth only four electoral votes, Idaho is hardly considered a battleground state, and campaigning politics pay it very little attention. This is because it is considered such a strong Republican state that there is really no reason to attempt to budge it in the opposite direction. Recent polls all put the state at 60+% favoring the Republican Party, such as the 2008 Actual, American Research, Rasmussen and 2004 Actual.\textsuperscript{53} According to the 15\textsuperscript{th} annual Idaho Public Policy study (2004) conducted by BSU, 67% of Idahoans considered themselves conservative and for their political orientation 41% considered themselves Republican, with just 21% claiming to be Democrat.\textsuperscript{54}

Results

As predicted, Idaho has stayed constant in percentage voting Democratic at the presidential level, fluctuating around 30-35%. Significant drops can be seen during arguably two of the most conservative regimes the United States has had in the past century, the Reagan Administration and the George W. Bush Administration. In both cases, the percentage favoring a Democratic candidate dropped to around 25%. There is a slight trend

\textsuperscript{53} http://www.270towin.com/states/Idaho
\textsuperscript{54} http://sspa.boisestate.edu/ssrc/archive/2004-annualsurvey15.pdf
from 2000 to 2008, when support for the Democrats rose from 28 to 35%, although it would be hardly considered a realignment or deviating election.

**Figure 3-1: Idaho - Percent voting Democratic President**

![Graph showing percentage voting Democratic President in Idaho from 1968 to 2008](image)

Idaho at the state level

At the state level, especially the gubernatorial elections, most states show signs of “federalized” realignment: usually favoring one party to dominate the federal elections while at the state level choose the opposite party. Until recently, Idaho followed this trend that many other states in the Rocky Mountain region embody, favoring in the lower levels of government a different party. After 1962, there is an upswing in the percentage voting Democratic that reaches an all time high of 70% twice in 1974 and again in 1990. As expected, there is a downward trend during the 1980s, then again a rise in the early 90s (see **Figure 3-1**). From 1970 to 1998, there is a thirty-point drop in preference of a Democratic governor, down to 29% in 1998.
Idaho’s state Senate exemplifies the swing at the lower level (see Figure 3-3), favoring the Republican Party. From the early 1970s to the 1990s, the number of seats the Republicans held over the Democrats was roughly 57-65%. However, after the 1990 election, this number jumps to a staggering 80th percentile and even hits 91% in 2002, when the Democrats only had two seats. Clearly after 1990, there is a polarization in the Senate, and after 2002 the numbers on both sides seem to level off.

The Idaho House of Representatives has a similar pattern as the state Senate (see Figure 3-4). In the late 1960s and early 70s, the numbers of seats held in the house were relatively close, with the Republicans controlling ten or more seats. After 1974, there is a clear trend in the number of members elected to the house that are Republican compared to the Democratic Party. This trend continues until 1998, when there is a slight upswing in the number of seats held by the Democrats that lasts until 2002. Comparing the state Senate and House, there is no evidence of a deviating election or a slow gradual trend favoring the
Democratic Party. Unlike many other of the Rocky Mountain states, Idaho is an outlier and is progressively becoming more Republican.

**Figure 3-3: Idaho - Percent of Democrats in Senate**

![Graph showing the percent of Democrats in the Senate of Idaho from 1972 to 2010. The graph shows a trend of decreasing Democratic representation over time.]

**Figure 3-4: Idaho - Percent of Democrats in House of Rep.**

![Graph showing the percent of Democrats in the House of Representatives of Idaho from 1972 to 2010. The graph shows a trend of decreasing Democratic representation over time.]

42
Ideology and Party Identification

Interestingly, Idaho’s identification with a political ideology does not correlate with the House of Representatives or the Senate. For example, the 1998 election resulted in a significant amount of seats lost in both houses for the Democrats. But as Figure 3-3 indicates, the 1998 election is one of the three points in over twenty-seven years of data collection where the ideologies polled were contiguous. Again, it should be noted that there is a flaw with the sampling data for Idaho. During the 1970s, the number of people polled for this survey was around 50-70. The only date when this number exceeded 100 from 1976 to 1994 was in 1980. Despite this caveat in the data, Figure 3-3 still illustrates a clear preference to the “right” or conservatism and even begins to trend upward after 1998.

Idaho’s party identification emulates that of the ideological preferences for the state. Both charts illustrate a trend towards the “right” after the 2000 election; on the other hand, Figure 3-4 has some points that throw off the trend. The years 1976 and 1984 seem to throw off the prevalent trend and suggest a Democratic surge in the state. The sheer numbers of control of the Senate and House do not suggest this surge in Democratic preference. In 1976, the Republicans controlled 21 seats in the Senate while the Democrats only held 14 and the same for 1984. In the house, the Republicans dominated both years. 1976 the Republicans controlled 42 seats while the Democrats only had 28 and in 1984, the picture is worse for the Democrats, who controlled only 19 seats while the Republicans had 51. So evidently, the problem persists in that the number of people polled skews the charts. In 1976, only fifteen people were polled and in 1984 only forty six people.
Figure 3-5: Idaho - Percent identifying with Liberal/Conservative

Figure 3-6: Idaho - Percent Identifying with Republican/Democrat
Montana

U.S. Elections

Historically, Montana has been a swing state. Montana has a history of cross-ticket voting (or federalized realignment), sending liberals to the state capital and conservative politicians to Washington. Nevertheless, Montana has had oscillations in party control as well. The state has been reliably Republican dominated at the presidential level, similarly to Idaho, voting only two Democrats in since 1952. In addition, parallel to Idaho, Montana voted all four times for FDR and for Harry Truman. In the last fifty years, Montana has voted twice for the Democratic Party at the presidential level, once in 1964 voting for Lyndon Johnson 58.95% and in 1992 voting for William Clinton 37.63%. On the other hand, it should be noted that during the 1992 election with Clinton, Bush and Perot the margins were extremely small, with Clinton received 37.63% and Bush getting 35.12%. Similar to other states during this election, Perot was able to capture 26.12% of the vote in the state.

Similar to many of the Mountain states, Montana is worth very little (only three Electoral College votes) and by itself not really a destination for politicians. Sparsely populated, according to the U.S. Census Bureau Montana is ranked 44th in the nation, currently [2010] has a population of 967,440 and is one of the most homogenous states with the population being 90.6% white.55 Unlike its neighbor to the West Idaho, Montana has more people categorizing themselves as liberal (44%) than conservative (42%).56

As discussed previously, Montana has a history of split ticket voting. At the federal presidential level, the state heavily votes Republican. However, at the state level, especially

55 http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/30000.html
56 http://www.gallup.com/poll/122003/Political-Party-Affiliation-States-Blue-Red-Far.aspx
gubernatorial, there have been long streaks of Democratic control as well as Republican. From 1953 to 1962, Republicans were elected as governor in Montana, and then consequently from 1969 to 1981 Democrats controlled the office. The next streak from 1989 to 2001 was Republican dominated, and then in 2005 Brian Schweitzer, a Democrat, was elected to office. We are yet to see if there is going to be another Democratic trend in 2010. From 1960 to 1988, there was no clear majority at the state level. However, in 1993 Montana decided to join a group of states by eliminating the second seat and the remaining seat was elected At-large.

Results

At the presidential level, Montana for the past 40 years (eleven elections) has averaged voting about 40% Democratic. There are two periods when Montana rose in support for Democratic candidates. Trends in support for the Democratic Party are noticeable in the periods 1980-1988 and 2000-2008 (see Figure 4-1). Unfortunately, since Montana is known for its mixed support, the presidential voting history alone is not significant to illustrate conclusively if there is a trend occurring in the state. The previous election [2008] with Barack Obama was a historic high for the state in the past forty years, reaching almost 50% support for a Democratic candidate.
Montana at the state level

Figure 4-2: Montana - Percent voting Democratic for Governor

The gubernatorial elections in Montana do have a slight upward trend (see Figure 4-2). From 1964 to 1984, the percentage makes a 20% increase, then drastically declines to
20% until 1996. Despite the drop from 1980 to 1996, the trend does show a slight increase in the forty-four years of 16.8% from 1964.

The voting history of the state House and Senate illustrates the competitive nature of Montana politics. Both houses show instances of switches in party control. The Senate and the House of Representatives mirror one another and both show trends of Republican as well as Democratic control. Instead of a realignment, Montana’s lower house illustrates fierce party competition and obvious voter punishment, such as the 1994 and 2006 elections. In the Senate, the Democrats had control until after the 1978 election; then control flipped. As expected, there is disparity during the 1980s and again after the 1994 change of power in the house. Although after 1996, Montana’s Senate controlled more seats historically in the past 38 years (see Figure 4-3). Then there was a sudden drop and party power switch after the 2006 elections, though the trend is now reversing.

Montana’s lower house replicates the senate, except that the points of power shift are more prolific (see Figure 4-4). During the 1970s, the Democrats controlled roughly 60 seats in the House (60 percent) and then there was ten years of oscillation between the Democrats and the Republicans. Similar to the Senate, the house gained control in the mid to late 1990s; however, now there is an almost tie in the house for seat control.
Figure 4-3: Montana - Percent of Democratic control in Senate

Figure 4-4: Montana - Percent of Democratic control in the House of Rep.

**Ideology and Party Identification**

Montana’s party identification emulates that of both lower houses. In the twenty-seven years that the residents of the state were polled by CBS/New York Times, the party preference reflects more so the lower house than the Senate. Figure 4-4 illustrates the
constant shifting of party preference, with the Democratic Party being favored three times in the twenty-seven years and the Republicans four times. Between those points, there is constant oscillation and power exchanging until the early 2000s. In Figure 4-5, the spike in Republican Party preference can probably be explained by the post 9/11 trend.

Montana’s political ideology preference does not correlate with party identification. Looking at Figure 4-5, you can clearly see that more people identify with being conservative rather than liberal. Over the twenty-seven years, on average, 20.9% of constituents claimed to be liberal while 35.4% identified with conservatism. Conversely, unlike the party identification, which shows an increasing trend for the Democrats, the ideological classification (Figure 4-6) shows a decline in liberalism.

**Figure 4-5: Montana - Percent identifying with Republican/Democratic party**

![Graph showing percentage of people identifying with Republican or Democrat over time]
Nevada

U.S. Elections

The “silver state” has arguably one of the most interesting voting histories in the whole Rocky Mountain region. Being one of two states to join the union during the American civil war [1864], Nevada also has voted the winner in every presidential election since 1912, with one exception being 1976, when the state gave its vote to Gerald Ford over Jimmy Carter. Since 1960, Nevada has predominantly voted Republican except for the 1960, 1964, 1992, 1996 and 2008 elections. This trend, however, does not illustrate that the state is a solid Republican state. From 1900 to 2008 the state voted Democratic fourteen times, including all the terms for Roosevelt. Although the Republican Party has won eight of the last eleven elections from 1972 to 2008, there is no indication that this trend is going to continue. The changing demographic composition in Nevada (especially Washoe and Clark
County) suggest a large influx of Hispanic/Latino immigrants as well as younger middle
class Caucasians from California that may later the ideological leaning.

In the previous election [2008] Nevadans voted for Barack Obama over John
McCain by margins of 55% to 43%. The numbers illustrate quite a discrepancy between the
two parties for such a “conservative” region. Furthermore, according to Nevada’s Secretary
of State voter registration figures, Democratic voters outnumber Republican voters. By the
last registration figures released (January 2009) Democratic voters made up 44% [579,813]
compared to 35% [471,507] of Republicans out of the total number of registered voters
[1,329,291].

Recent polls also indicate that the voters seem to prefer the Democratic Party. The
2008 Actual polled the Democratic Party at 55% while the Public Policy gave them 51% and
Reuters/Zogby also gave the party 51%. Currently, the two biggest counties (Washoe and
Clark), which are home to Reno and Las Vegas, are also the counties with the majority of
the population. These two counties dominate the state’s politics, and they are also the fastest
growing cities in the United States. The influx of population could therefore affect how
Nevada casts its votes in future elections. Depending on the 2010 census, Nevada could be
up for one more electoral vote. Another element that affects the state’s voting is that in 1994
and again in 1996 Nevada amended the state constitution to set term limits for politicians in
the state to twelve years. This legislation could be the final blow to the Republican Party as
many are forced to resign and new politicians take office.

58 http://www.270towin.com/states/Nevada
Results

Nevada is one of the three states in the Rocky Mountain region that show signs of significant preference to voting for a Democratic candidate at the presidential level. Since 1970, there has been a slow, progressive increase in Democratic Party preference in presidential elections, peaking at 45.81% in 1976, then as expected with most of the other states in the region, there was a slow decline in the early 1980s. The lowest spot in the past forty years was reached in 1980 with only 26.89% favoring Jimmy Carter (see Figure 5-1). Subsequent to the 1980 election, Nevada has one of the strongest trends favoring Democratic presidential candidates in the Rocky Mountain Region peaking at 55.18% in 2008 – a 28.29% percent increase.

Figure 5-1: Nevada- Percent voting for a Democratic President

Nevada at the state level

Nevada’s gubernatorial election illustrates a drastically different trend in Democratic Party preference (see Figure 5-2). Oscillating between 50 and 65% for ten years, there were
three election cycles of an upward trend ending in 1980, with just over 70% of the state voting for a Democratic governor. After the 1980 election year, Nevada experienced 16 years of a downward trend. It seems that Nevada could be experiencing a realignment at the lower house. In 1986, Richard Bryan (Democrat) won 71.9% of the popular vote while Republican candidate Patty Cafferata only received 25% of the votes. This all time high for the Democratic Party drops dramatically, reaching a low of 22% in 2002 with a sudden increase in the 2006 election to 43.9%. Although there is a trend in Nevada at the gubernatorial level to vote Republican, the 2010 election will really be the deciding election in determining a realignment at this level. In 2006, Kenny Guinn was re-elected at 47.9% compared to the 68% in 2002; however, Nevada has a two-term year absolute limit.

**Figure 5-2: Nevada - Percent voting Democratic for Governor**

In the last thirty-six years, Nevada’s state Senate has switched majority control only twice (see Figure 5-3). The first came in 1988, when the Democratic majority of 12 seats fell to 8 in the 1990 election. The second was in 2008, when after eighteen years of Republicans controlling roughly 3-4 more seats, a power change occurred, with Democrats
winning 12 and Republicans only able to hold on to 9 seats. Nevada’s Senate does not necessarily show a sharp alteration in political cleavages at this level. In spite of this, the lower house does illustrate a better example of an adjustment in power control over the last thirty-six years.

In the lower house, for the last seventeen elections, all but two Democrats controlled more seats in Nevada’s legislature (see Figure 5-4) with exception to the 1972 and 1988 elections. Since 1996, there has been an increasing trend in Democratic preference in the house with a small drop in seats 2004, which was quickly regained in the next election. Depending on the outcome in this year’s election [2010], Nevada might be seeing Democratic seat control in the lower house akin to the 1970s. Since 1972, there has been a 20% increase of control by the Democratic Party in Nevada’s lower house.

**Figure 5-3: Nevada - Percent of Democratic control in Senate**
Ideology and Party Identification

Conversely, according to the data from the CBS/New York Times polls the reverse trend is happening in party and ideological identification in Nevada (see Figure 5-5). For the past 27 years, in both party i.d. and ideological identification, constituents have increasingly identified with being conservative and favoring the Republican Party. In the ideological identification, there was a slight increasing trend from 1976 to 1981, with 61.2% of Nevada constituents claiming to be liberal. The next year, this figure dropped to 35%, and in 1983 hit 20%. The opposite seems to have occurred with Nevadians considering themselves conservative. From 1976 to 2003, there was an apparent trend in more constituents claiming to be conservative, reaching 44.1% in 2001, than liberal.

In Figure 5-5, the same trend, although not as clear as Figure 5-6, is occurring. Interestingly, in 1978 only 13% of people polled identified with the Republican Party. This number steadily increased until 1991, when 49.1% of participants claimed to favor the
Republican Party. After 1993, the number of constituents in Nevada identifying with the Democratic Party leveled off at around 35% while the Republican Party preference slightly increases to 39% in 2003.

**Figure 5-5: Nevada - Percent identifying with Liberal/Conservative**

**Figure 5-6: Nevada - Percent identifying with Republican/Democratic party**
New Mexico

New Mexico is really the outlier in the Rocky Mountain West region of the United States. Now leaning Democratic [2010], New Mexico has participated in 25 presidential elections since its admittance into the union in 1912. Results at the presidential level have almost been split right down the middle. In the past 96 years, New Mexico has voted for 13 Democrats and 12 Republicans for president. Noticeably, in the past election [2008] with neighboring senator John McCain (Arizona) running against Barack Obama, New Mexico gave Obama the vote for presidency. New Mexico has had streaks of voting for both parties at the presidential level. From 1976 to 1988 the state voted predominately Republican and from 1992 to 2008 gave the Democratic Party their vote except for 2004.

At the state level, unlike the presidential elections, New Mexico has voted Democratic. Since 1968, the state has elected more Democratic senators with exception to 1988, when there were 22 Republican and 20 Democratic senators. The lower house mirrors the senatorial elections as well. The Democrats elected in the House of Representatives have consistently been above 40 members since 1968, while the Republican count has been around the upper 20s and dipping to a low 14 Republicans in 1994, respectively. The gubernatorial elections seem to illustrate the same Democratic Party leaning trends as well. The percent of the state voting for a Democratic governor beginning in 1960 hovered around 48%. Slowly over the next forty years the number would grow from the upper 40s to almost 68.8% in 2006.

Like many other of the Rocky Mountain states, New Mexico began with only three electoral votes from 1912 to 1940 and then gained one more from 1940 to 1980. Now worth five electoral votes, New Mexico might gain one more due to its drastic increase in
population in the past years. This population growth will not only put it up for another electoral vote but may also affect its status as a swing state and modify the composition, changing it to a Democratic state. The burgeoning Hispanic population in the state can explain the compositional change of New Mexico. According to the PEW Hispanic Research Center, currently the population of Hispanics in New Mexico is 873,000, putting them at 44% of the state’s population make up. Further, the state is ranked 9th in total Hispanic population in the country and ranked 1st in terms of percent of state population. As Hispanics continue to favor the Democratic Party, New Mexico will presumably continue to lean more Democratic, which will affect the Republican reliance on this region.

Results

U.S. Elections

New Mexico voted the highest percent for Barack Obama in the 2008 Presidential Election, out of the eight Rocky Mountain states. Voting overwhelmingly Democratic, New Mexico gave the Democratic Party 56.91% of the vote in 2008. This brings New Mexico close to some of the more liberal known states on the East Coast, such as Massachusetts which voted 60% Democratic in the previous election. As Figure 6 illustrates, since the early 1980s there has been a steady trend favoring the Democratic Party. In 1980, the share of the popular vote a Democratic candidate received in New Mexico was 36.78%. In just twenty-eight years, this number jumps to almost in the prior election. At the presidential level, New Mexico is most certainly moving towards support for the Democratic Party.

59 http://pewhispanic.org/states/?stateid=AZ. Accessed 2/24/20010
New Mexico at the state level

New Mexico’s gubernatorial elections illuminate a different picture than the presidential elections. From 1966 to 1982, there is a slight upward trend in favoring Democratic candidates, although it does not increase significantly in this time frame, staying at around 50-53% preference. Later, New Mexico has a slight drop in Democratic Party preference to 47%, still considerably high for this region (see Figure 6-2). Again in 1994 there is a slight drop to 40%. One explanation for this drastic dip in popular votes can be explained because Gary E. Johnson (Republican) was an incumbent and also there was a significant third party option available for the state. Roberto Mondragon ran as the Green party candidate and was able to capture 10.3% of the popular vote in New Mexico.
New Mexico’s state Senate is not as “noisy” as other states in the region (see Figure 6-3). Over the previous thirty-six years, the Democrats have held the majority of seats. Peaking at 33 in 1976, then again in 1984, the numbers of Democratic held senate seats dropped as the Democratic Party held a slight majority for six years; then the numbers split. From 1990 to 2008, the Democrats have held on to roughly 25 seats or 59% of the Senate. New Mexico’s Senate illustrates a clear party preference to the Democratic Party; however, there is no long term increasing trend currently.
Figure 6-3: New Mexico - Percent of Democratic control in Senate

New Mexico’s lower house numbers represents a pattern similar to the Senate, with a few differences. For example, there is no power switch or even split number of seats between the two parties (see Figure 6-4). Even during the conservative Regan Administration years, the numbers held by the Democrats were 41 seats compared to 29 by the Republican Party. This represents about 58% of the house during the early 1980s. For the last 36 years the Democrats have held between 40-50 seats in the lower house and the Republicans have been able to only capture 20-30, with both peaks being during a Republican presidency. The Democratic Party’s peak was in 1994 after the party switch in Congress, gaining 56 seats or 80% in the house. The number of seats held, like in the senate, have been fairly consistent and show no dramatic increases or long term trends.
Paradoxically, the CBS/New York Times polling data illustrates a different trend occurring in New Mexico compared to the lower houses and presidential party preference. For the last 27 years, the political ideology that most of New Mexico’s constituents identified with was conservatism. From 1976 to 1980, the numbers were intermittent, although there was still a clear leaning toward conservative on the self-identification (see Figure 6-5). After 1980, the number begins to stabilize and the percentage oscillates between 30 and 40. Even during the power change in Congress during the early 1990s, the number rose to 40% of New Mexicans who claimed to be conservative.

Even more surprisingly, despite the evidence that New Mexico favors the Democratic Party at the executive branch and lower houses, from 1984 to 1994 there is a downward trend of people identifying with the Democratic Party. From 1978 to 1994 the percentage of constituents who claimed to identify more with the Republican Party rose.
from a weak 12.9% in 1978 to 49.4% in 1993. Even after the power change in Congress after the 1994 election the number of people claiming to identify with the Republican Party was more than the Democrats sitting at 36.8% compared to 34.8%. The slow incremental upward trend in identifying with the Democratic Party did not begin until 1993, going from 25.4% to 42.3% in 2003. Nevertheless, comparing the ideological and party identification with the lower houses and executive branch, there seems to be an opposite trend occurring.

**Figure 6-5: New Mexico - Percent identifying with Liberal/Conservative**
Without any surprise, Utah is heavily conservative and votes Republican. Similar to Idaho and Wyoming, Utah votes the most Republican in the Rocky Mountain states. Being the last state to gain statehood in the 19th century, Utah gained admittance into the union in 1896 and has voted Democratic for only two periods. The first period was during the Franklin Roosevelt era 1932-1944 and his successor Harry Truman. The second was in 1964. when Utah voted for Lyndon Johnson. Other than that, the state has been solidly Republican for presidential and state elections. Throughout the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, Utah has voted well over the margin of 50% for Republican candidates, with one exception being the 1992 election when Ross Perot was able to capture 27% of the votes and even beat the Democratic candidate William Clinton.

Despite Utah leaning solidly Republican at the presidential level, at the state level, there were periods of mixed partisanship in the senate and lower house. In the period from
1970 to 1980, Utah elected more Democratic senators; however, this trend was short lived. Immediately after the 1980 election, the senate in Utah began the trend resembling Idaho and became polarized, electing Republican senators far more than Democratic ones. After 1980 and to 2010, the number of Republican senators fluctuates around 20-25 while the Democratic ones remain around 5-10. The lower house illustrates the same trends as well. From 1970 to 1978, Democrats had the majority in the lower house, but in 1980, similar to the state senate, the figures split and Republicans dominate the house. Republicans keep roughly 55-60 seats from 1980-2010 while Democrats can only maintain 20-25.

Similar to many of the Rocky Mountain states, Utah’s Hispanic population is burgeoning. From 1990 to 2000, Utah’s Hispanic population grew 138%, which is more than twice as fast as the population nationwide. Second to whites, Hispanics are the second largest ethnic group in Utah. As of 2007, the Hispanic population was 307,000 making up about a quarter of the state’s population. However, unlike other states such as Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Nevada – Utah shows no signs of leaning Democratic. One possible explanation for this is the large proportion of the LDS population in the state, who typically vote Republican. Since Utah’s population has been growing, depending on the 2010 census the state is likely to gain another electoral vote, making it worth 6 electoral points.

Results

U.S. Elections

Throughout Utah’s previous eleven presidential elections, the percent of constituents voting for a Democratic candidate has been relatively low compared to the other states in the region. In last forty years, the average percent of Utahns voting Democratic at the presidential level is roughly just 28.9 percent (see Figure 7-1). The lowest was the 1980 election with Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, where Utahns voted just 20.57% for Carter, and the Bush Administration years, with the popular vote for the Democrats being just 26%. The previous election with Obama vs. McCain was the second highest percent the state has gone for a Democratic candidate, voting just 34.22% for Barack Obama. There is no upward trend in voting for the Democratic Party at the executive level.

Figure 7-1: Utah - Percent voting for a Democratic President
Utah at the state level

The gubernatorial elections in Utah exemplify the same downward trend in percentage of the state voting for a Democratic candidate. From the late 1960s to early 1970s, Utah voted predominantly for a Democratic candidate, peaking in 1972 when Calvin Rampton received 69% of the popular vote (see Figure 7-2). After 1972, the number dropped drastically for the next twenty-four years until 1996 with James Bradley only receiving 23% of the vote. From 1994 to 2006, the percent of Utahns voting for a Democratic governor has stabilized around 30%.

Figure 7-2: Utah - Percent voting Democratic Governor

Utah’s state Senate has become extremely polarized after the 1980 election (see Figure 7-3). The Democrats controlled more seats in the Senate in 1978 (14 to 12), after that the numbers split and have not come close ever since. The number of seats the Republicans held slightly went down during the 1990s; however, they still had a majority (18-20 seats). In the last three elections, the number of seats the Republican Party has been able to keep has leveled off at around 21 seats compared to 8 (72% to 27% in comparison of control).
The lower house in Utah emulates the senate in the number of seats controlled by the Republican Party (see Figure 7-4). From 1980 to 1988, the Republicans held around sixty seats in the lower house while the Democrats were only able to capture 16. Unlike the U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections, the lower house has remained the most Republican controlled throughout the forty years, oscillating very little. In the early 1990s, the number of seats dropped a little from 60 to 48 or 80% to 64% - still a clear majority. Undoubtedly, there is no specific trend occurring in Utah suggesting there is a realignment toward the Democratic Party.

Figure 7-3: Utah - Percent of Democratic control in Senate
Figure 7-4: Utah - Percent of Democratic control in House of Rep.

I**deology and Party Identification**

Not surprisingly, Utah’s political ideological leanings are split like the lower houses. Peaking in 1984 with 51% of constituents polled identifying with conservatism, since 1986 there has been a steady upward trend (see Figure 7-5). The percent of Utahns leaning towards liberalism has declined since 1988. Reaching a low after the 1994 congressional power switch, the percent of Utahns identifying with being liberal has remained well under 20%.

The number of constituents in Utah who identify with the Republican Party has been on an upward trend as well. Figure 7-4 and 7-5 similarly illustrate how the state has become more solidly Republican. Beginning in the early 1980s, when the number of people identifying with the Democratic Party was at much higher levels (25-30%), the preference to the Democratic Party trended downward to 14% in 2001. There was a slight increase in 2003 to 25%, although it is highly unlikely that this is a substantial trend in the state.
Figure 7-5: Utah - Percent identifying with Liberalism/Conservatism

Figure 7-6: Utah - Percent identifying with Republican/Democratic party
Wyoming

Wyoming is one of the three most conservative voting states in this study (see Figure 1-2). Essentially, the state has voted almost identically with its neighbor Idaho since 1904, except for the 1944 election, when Wyoming voted for Republican Thomas Dewey instead of FDR. The state has voted for a Democrat just once since 1952 at the presidential level, giving Lyndon Johnson its vote. Furthermore, another similarity Wyoming has with Idaho is that it became a state one-week after it in July 1890.

Recent polls from the 2008 Actual, SurveyUSA, American Research and Rasmussen all gave Wyoming a rating deep into the conservative spectrum. The lowest indicator on the “safeness” of the state to the Republican Party was from the SurveyUSA (10/20/2008) and gave the state 58% Republican and 37% Democrat. In the previous election with John McCain and Barack Obama, Wyoming had McCain’s widest margins of victory, beating Obama by 32%. In the last forty years, the two elections where Wyoming voted the most Democratic were in 1976 and 1988. In 1976, Jimmy Carter received 39.81% of the vote and Michael Dukakis yielding 38.01% in 1988. With the exception of these two elections, Wyoming’s average support for a Democratic president is 32.75%, one of the lowest in the region.

Worth only three Electoral College votes, Wyoming is more than likely going to stay at this number in the future elections to come due to its small population. In fact, according to the Census Bureau Wyoming is the least populated state in the union, having only

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544,270 in 2009. Consequently, Wyoming is one of the most over represented states in the United States due to the Electoral College.

Unlike many of the states in the Rocky Mountain region, Wyoming has a relatively low Hispanic/Latino population. The PEW Hispanic Research Center ranks Wyoming 44th in the country with just 37,000 Hispanics/Latinos making up only 7% of the states population. According to the 2000 census, Wyoming’s Hispanic/Latino population was 31,669, meaning the state experienced a 16.8% increase, one of the lowest in the region.

Results

U.S. Elections

Wyoming is one of the three states in the Rocky Mountain region to have a lowering trend in the percentage of the popular vote a Democratic candidate receives. As mentioned earlier, the two high points in the previous forty years have been the 1976 and 1988 elections. Wyoming has been solidly Republican when voting for the executive branch. No Democratic candidate has had a popular vote share over 39%. After the 1988 high point of 38.01%, there has been a dramatic decrease in favoring of the Democratic Party. After the 1996 election with Bill Clinton and Bob Dole, Wyoming has favored a Republican candidate by well over 30%. For example, in 2000 George W. Bush received 67.76% of the vote and 68.86% in 2004. John McCain got 64.78% while Barack Obama was only able to capture 32.54%, respectfully.

62 http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation?_event=Search&_name=&_state=04000US56&_county=&_cityTown=&_zip=&_sse=on&_lang=en&pctxt=fph
63 http://pewhispanic.org/states/?stateid=WY
Figure 8-1: Wyoming - Percent voting for a Democratic President

Wyoming at the state level

The gubernatorial elections in Wyoming, much as many other states in the region, illustrate an example of federalized realignment. From 1966 to 1990, there is an obvious trend occurring at the gubernatorial level in favoring Democratic candidates (see Figure 8-2). After the 1990 election, there is a sudden drop after reaching a high point of 65.4%. In the 1994 election Mike Sullivan (Democrat) was term-limited, and the Republican candidate Jim Geringer was able to capture 58.7% of Wyoming’s vote. Again in 1998, the number was 40% favoring the Democratic candidate John Viniich. This short-term skew might be due to the incumbency advantage in the otherwise upward trend in Democratic preference at the gubernatorial level.
Wyoming’s lower houses both emulate the trends in favoring Republican candidates except for the governorship. In the lower Senate, the Republicans have held a clear majority apart from the 1976 split, when both parties achieved fifteen seats each. After 1976, there is a continuous upward trend with no outliers or years that the Republican Party lost any seats. From 1980 to 1988, both parties kept their seats with no power shift and again briefly from 2000 to 2004. Following the 2006 election the Republican Party was able to capture three seats, bringing the Senate control to 23 to 7.

The House of Representatives in Wyoming has the same trend as the Senate, although with a few minor exceptions. From 1978 to 2006 there is an upward trend in favoring Republican representatives in the state, although, the graph is much more “noisy” or “chattery” than the Senate. Or in other words, the house, which is more conducive to competitive elections due to the nature of the structure, illustrates just that. The number of seats controlled by the Republicans slowly increases over the forty years but there are some years where they lose one or two seats then gained back in the next election. This cycle
continues until the 2008 election, when the Democrats gained four seats. Despite the incremental gain in seats from the last election, the state undoubtedly favors Republican candidates.

**Figure 8-3: Wyoming - Percent of Democratic control in Senate**

![Graph showing the percentage of Democratic control in the Wyoming Senate from 1972 to 2010. The percentage fluctuates with peaks in 1974 and 1992 and a decline in the early 2000s.]

**Figure 8-4: Wyoming - Percent of Democratic control in House of Rep.**

![Graph showing the percentage of Democratic control in the Wyoming House of Representatives from 1972 to 2010. The percentage fluctuates with peaks in 1974 and 1992 and a decline in the early 2000s.]

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Ideology and Party Identification

Wyoming’s ideological and party identification leanings are not as clear-cut as some of the other more conservative states like Idaho and Utah. However, the data nevertheless illustrates a Republican Party and conservative ideology preference. As discussed earlier, Wyoming is the least populated state in the union. This might explain the dramatic increases and decreases in the data because of again, lack of sampling. Viewing the CBS/New York Times data, the years with the most dramatic decreases in Republican preference are the years with the fewest number of people sampled. As expected, since Wyoming is sparsely populated and the state being worth only three electoral votes, not a lot of resources are going to be spent in getting a significant amount of people polled.

Unfortunately, the CBS/New York Times polls do not correlate with the amount of Republicans elected into office for every branch but governor. According to Figure 8-5, the party preference has slowly been declining for the Republicans, while the other figures illustrate that the number of seats and percentage of candidates running under the party have increased. The same is true for Figure 8-6 Since 1976, the percentage of people identifying with being conservative has been slowing declining while self-identification with liberalism has been growing. Since some years only 4 or 5 people are polled for the questionnaire and the largest pool of people polled was 83, the party I.D. and ideology data might not represent Wyoming’s true preference.
Figure 8-5: Wyoming - Percent identifying with Republican/Democratic party

Figure 8-6: Wyoming - Percent identifying with Liberalism/Conservatism
Summary of Results

As noted the results have been mixed and contrast depending on the state. Juxtaposing the eight states of the Rocky Mountain region, this study has come up with two states that show clear signs of partisan change and/or possible realignment. The other two states that showed signs of high percentage of Democratic vote share did so in either the Presidential elections or in the lower houses. Colorado and Nevada were the only two states out of the eight that exhibit a trend at both the Presidential and lower house, although Nevada only had the lower house of Representatives that showed a trend while the lower Senate did not. The other states either decreased in Democratic Party preference or show signs of “federalized” realignment in the lower houses.

Initially, in measuring states that illustrate a trend in party coalition change Colorado is a prime example. No other state in the region had both Presidential and both lower houses have an upward trend in voting Democratic. At the Presidential level, since 1980, the percent of Democratic preference has gone from 31.07% to 56.66% in 2008. That is a 25.59% percent increase in the last twenty-eight years, when the trend started occurring. From the 1962 levels to 2008 (40 years) the increase is 15.34%, still a drastic change. In the lower houses the same results occurred. In the Senate, the change was 20% from 1972 to 2008 and the house of Representatives had a 16.9% increase. All three branches in Colorado show a significant trend in favoring the Democratic Party.

Nevada, as previously mentioned, is the second state out of the Rocky Mountain region to have a strong trend in voting Democratic. The Presidential elections show one of the strongest trends out of the eight states (see Figure 5-1). In 1968, the percent of the popular vote that the Democratic Party received was 39.29%. This number grows to 55.15%
after the 2008 election, equaling a 15.86% increase. As Figure 5 illustrates, from 1968 to 1976, there was a trend in voting Democratic, reaching a high of 45.81%, then this drops to a low 26.89% during the Reagan election and makes a steady climb after. After years of fluctuation and obvious party changes the number returns in 2008 to the 1972 levels around 60%. The House of Representatives graph (Figure 5-4) indicates an increasing trend as well. In 1972, the percent of control that the Democratic Party had in the house was 47.5%. This number jumps to 70% in 2008, equaling a 22.5% increase, more than at the Presidential level.

New Mexico was the third state in Figure 1 to demonstrate the greatest increase in Democratic presidential vote preference in the region. In the last forty years, the number has increased by 17.16%. In 1968, New Mexico voted 39.75% for a Democratic candidate and this number increased to 56.91% in 2008. Both figures for the lower houses in New Mexico, on the other hand, indicate a decreasing trend. In 1972, the Democrats had a 66.66% control of the Senate. This number drops slightly to 57.14% in 2008. The same can be seen in the lower house of Representatives. In 1972, the Democrats had a 68.57% control of the house, which then declines to 60% in 2008.

The two states in the Rocky Mountain region that are the outliers are Arizona and Montana (see Figure 1-1). Both states show a slight trending towards the Democratic Party only at the presidential level, where the state elections reveal a dissimilar depiction. These two states illustrate a prime example of “federalized” realignment. In other words, they send one party to Washington D.C. and the other to their state’s capital. As Arizona’s population continues to burgeon in coming years, due to immigration (foreign and intra-state), the state will most likely tip to the “liberal” side of the political spectrum. Montana on the other hand
is a different case. The state is sparsely populated and is not known for its booming metropolitan enclaves. A deeper study of the political culture of the state is necessary for explanatory cause of the Democratic preference at the local level.

Arizona has been trending more Democratic at the Presidential level, especially after the 2000 election. The House has also been trending Democratic as well since 1980. As Figure 1-3 demonstrates, the number jumps from 35% in 1968 to 45% in 2008, a 10% increase in forty years. However, at the U.S. Senate, the numbers have been decreasing. The same can be seen in the gubernatorial elections. In 1966, Arizona was relatively high in voting Democratic, sitting around 62.6%. Since the last gubernatorial election, the number declines to 46.2% in 2006. The Houses demonstrate a split (see Figures 1-5 and 1-6). The Senate begins at 40% in 1972 and the same in 2008. The House of Representatives decreases from 43.3% in 1972 to 41.6% in 2008.

Montana is the second state in Figure 1-2 that illustrates an outlier state. Although not as drastic as Arizona, Montana is another state that has signs of “federalized” realignment. At the Presidential level, Montana has increased about 5% over the last forty years. At the gubernatorial level, there is an increasing trend of 17% (48.5% in 1968 to 65.5% in 2008). Both Houses are competitive and do not demonstrate a clear pattern or trend for either party until 1996. After the 1996 election, there is a trend in both houses in voting Democratic. As Figure 4-2 and 4-3 illustrate, from 1996 to 2008, the Democrats have a 17-point increase in the Senate and the House gains 19 points.

The last three states, which show no trends, should not come as a surprise since they are considered to be the most conservative in the country. Idaho, Utah and Wyoming are the three states in Figure 1-2 that show no increases in Democratic preference (with exception to
Idaho at the Presidential level) and show evidence of actually becoming more conservative. Idaho is the only state with a slight increase at the Presidential level going from 30% in 1968 to 35% in 2008. Both Houses in Idaho show the largest decreasing trends, the Senate dropping from 45% to 20% and the lower house from 41% to 25.7%. Utah’s numbers also show a dramatic drop. At the Presidential level the number dips from 37% in 1968 to 34% in 2008 and from 56% to 31%. The gubernatorial elections (68%-41%) as well as both lower houses (41%-27% and 50%-29%) have dropped over the last forty years. Wyoming echoes the trends of Idaho and Utah. At the Presidential level, Wyoming drops 3% from 35% to 32%. The gubernatorial election is the only one that saw an increase from 45% to 70%. Both Houses dropped as well (36%-23% and 32%-29%).

The question still remains, what is causing this shift in political preference in only some states and not the others? As this chapter discussed, five of the eight states are showing evidence of long term trending towards the Democratic Party. What makes Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico different from Idaho, Utah and Wyoming? Chapter 4 will attempt to unpack all of the differences in order to show what may be causing the coalition changes and inevitably a secular realignment. The following chapter discusses the demographic differences between states that may explain the separate voting trends. This thesis hypothesizes that intra-state migration from liberal Californian counties; Hispanic/Latino migration and percent of Mormon and Catholic adherents present in the state might be an explanatory factor in determining these voting trends.
Chapter 4: Explanations for Partisan Change

In the previous chapter all eight states were juxtaposed, and three of the states (New Mexico, Nevada and Colorado) came up significantly higher in voting Democratic at the presidential level. Arizona and Montana, on the other hand, did show some increase but stayed in the 45% range compared to 50%-55% for Nevada, New Mexico and Colorado.

Figure 9: Increase in Democratic presidential candidate preference

The last three states, Idaho, Utah and Wyoming all remained in the 30%-35% range and illustrated no increase in favoring the Democratic Party. All of the five states that increased Democratic preference began around 40% in 1968, except for Arizona voting 35.02% for Hubert Humphrey. Arizona has increased 10% over the last forty years while Montana has increased roughly 12%. As Figure 9 illustrates, New Mexico, Nevada and Colorado have significant increases around 15%.

The question becomes: why has every state in the region except Idaho, Utah and Wyoming made significant increase in Democratic Party preference? This chapter seeks to
illuminate possible causes for the burgeoning coalition change in the region by examining immigration patterns, Hispanic/Latino population increase and percentage of Mormon adherents in the states. The immigration pattern data comes from the Missouri Census Data Center (MCDC), which has collected IRS (Internal Revenue Service) tax return information for the past ten years and created detailed data sets on the migration patterns of U.S. citizens. The Hispanic/Latino population data comes from the Census Bureau and the PEW Hispanic Research Center. The Census data is compiled every ten years while the PEW Hispanic Research Center relies on survey reports and polls, compiling their data annually. Lastly, the religious adherence data has been aggregated by the Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA) collected by annual polls.

Intra-state Migration

Background

The first approach that this paper examines as a source of partisan change is population mobility - or migration into the Rocky Mountain region from other U.S. states. This section employs a voter migration hypothesis in order to explain the shift away from the Republican Party in the Rocky Mountain region. The theory is founded upon the concept that torrents of younger, more “liberal” groups of voters are moving into the region from California. As presented earlier, the Rocky Mountain West has experienced significant growth, especially in the last twenty years. According to the Bureau of Census 2008, the region posted three of the nation’s top eight migration states between 1990 and 1995 and three of the top twelve states between 1995 and 2000.64 The decision to choose California as

64 (Robinson and Noriega)
a variable is based on migration data. According to Frey [2008] and Robinson & Noriega [2010], counties with the highest inflows of people from other states were also the counties with the highest support for Democratic candidates. Furthermore, these authors also note that more out-of-state migrants were coming from Democratic counties than Republican, and a staggering 40% of all migrants into the Rocky Mountain are from Democratic California.\textsuperscript{65}

This section is going to test the combination of the migration hypothesis and the California hypothesis to see if the migrants are driving the Mountain West “left.” The California hypothesis is based on the notion that many liberal residents are fleeing the high housing costs of their state and moving East, and by doing so changing the political landscape.\textsuperscript{66} This paper explores the migration and California theories through an examination of the Internal Revenue Service tax-filer data. The IRS through the Missouri Census Data Center provides county-level migration data based on tax returns. From 1995 to 2000, the data reports how many tax filers moved in and out of counties. The data also breaks down the original county the filer moved from. Using this data, this project was able to calculate and measure which counties have experienced substantial migration from California.

The 2000 Census data immediately reveals one trend: the Rocky Mountain West is exploding in population, and a large majority of its immigrants are coming from California. As Table 2 illustrates, in five years 642,465 residents moved into the region from California. Table 2 breaks down the figures by the counties designated as liberal and conservative. As expected, the states that had the most drastic change in voting patterns were the ones with

\textsuperscript{65} (Frey 2008; Robinson and Noriega)
\textsuperscript{66} (Martin and Tom)
the highest number of immigrants. Arizona, Colorado and Nevada all had the largest inflow of immigrants from 1995 to 2000.

Idaho, Montana and Wyoming had the smallest immigration in the five years and showed the smallest amount of disparity between the amount of liberal and conservative county immigrants. As anticipated, Wyoming had the smallest population increase and only 191 resident differences between the categories. Utah and Idaho are the two outliers in this section. Both states had a larger influx of immigrants from liberal counties than conservative (although Idaho’s difference is merely five, Utah’s differentiation is almost 4000), yet the two states remained conservative. Idaho has gone up six percent since 2000 at the presidential level, still only giving the Democratic Party 36% of their vote – which remains relatively conservative. But Californian immigration has shown little to no impact on Utah. One possible explanation for this are the limitations of the data analyzed in this study: the numbers focus only on California for a liberal state and do not include immigration from other liberal or conservative states such as New York, Massachusetts, Texas and Florida.

The scores given for each state in Table 1 represent tax return information compiled from 1995-2000. Individuals who migrated from the previous year had to file a tax return in their new home state; therefore, providing information from which state and county they migrated from. For this project, the state of California was chosen due to its close proximity to the Rocky Mountain Region and the discrepancy between counties and their voting patterns. Then to determine the counties to be used, the eight most populated ones in California were broken down into liberal and conservative determined by their voting patterns in the last twenty years. The counties that were deemed liberal were: Alameda, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, and Santa Clara. The counties that were labeled as conservative
include: Orange, San Diego, Fresno, and Riverside. By dividing the number of conservative migrants to a state by liberal ones, a ratio was determined. The closer to zero the score, means the more liberal migrants traveled to the particular state and the scores over one mean the more conservative. The states that scored the lowest, meaning more migrants from determined liberal counties traveled to were Nevada (0.52) and Colorado (0.57), the more conservative states that scored the highest included Montana (1.34) and Wyoming (1.45). Arizona and Utah received scores less than one, while Idaho was given a one, meaning the proportion of liberal to conservative is equal. An explanation for Montana and Wyoming receiving a higher score may be the proximity to California compared to the other states. Also, Montana and Wyoming had the lowest migration influx out of the region. Although it is nearly impossible to determine the number that determines the threshold when a state becomes liberal or conservative, however, the scores do correlate somewhat with Figure 1 and the states that are trending liberal – Montana being an exception receiving a score of 1.34.

As Table 1 exemplifies, Colorado and Nevada are the two states with the largest difference between liberal and conservative county influx. Further, these two states also give evidence of Bill Bishop’s theory of “ assortative migration.” In his work The Big Sort, Bishop theorizes that the power of assortative migration would attract more Democrats to Democratic counties and more Republicans to Republican counties. Both major metropolitan (and solidly Democratic) counties in Colorado and Nevada saw the most immigration. Tracking migrants from the Census data, evidence suggest that counties with the highest inflows, particularly from California, are where support for Democratic

67 (Bishop and Cushing 2008)
presidential candidates is growing the most. For example, Denver and Boulder County saw the most migrants from California, particularly from heavily Democratic Los Angeles County and both have voted primarily Democratic in the past decade. The majority of Nevada’s immigration has also been to heavily Democratic Washoe and Clark counties home to Reno and Las Vegas.

Even solidly conservative Idaho has seen more competition in its most populated county. The state has not gone Democratic since Lyndon Johnson in 1964; however, Ada county has been more competitive in the previous years. John McCain only carried Ada County by eleven percentage points in the 2008 election. Democrat David H. Bieter has also won reelection comfortably as mayor the past two elections in Boise. Ada County, similarly to Boulder, Denver, Clark and Washoe counties, has seen a large influx of migrants from Los Angeles and Santa Clara counties, heavily Democratic.

**Results**

**Table 1: Ratio of Liberals Moving to Rocky Mountain Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal to Conservative Ratio in State:</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Migration from Californian Counties 1995-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1995-2000 Migration From California</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>49,367</td>
<td>38,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>19,874</td>
<td>11,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>2,859</td>
<td>2,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>1,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>75,601</td>
<td>39,998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>5,867</td>
<td>3,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>15,546</td>
<td>11,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Migration out of California

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California Migration</th>
<th>1995-2000</th>
<th>% of state population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>186,151</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>111,322</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>35,529</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>14,849</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>199,125</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>28,678</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>60,389</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>6,422</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration (Region)</td>
<td>642,465</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hispanic/Latino migration

Background

The Hispanic/Latino population may come from roughly twenty primarily Spanish-speaking countries, all-differing in economic, social and political cultures. Therefore, the Hispanic population arguably is one of the most diverse populations in the United States today. The three largest Hispanic groups are Mexican (58.5%), Puerto Ricans (9.6%) and Cubans (3.5%).\(^{68}\) It is generally accepted that the Hispanic/Latino population favors the Democratic Party. Moreover, one example of the political clout they wield is that the 8% voter turnout that they represent helped Obama win the 2008 election.\(^{69}\) Conversely, the Cuban constituency, unlike the Mexican and Puerto Rican, is known for being heavily conservative and votes for the Republican Party, aiding in Bush’s win of Florida in 2000 and 2004.

According to some pollsters, the Bush Administration was able to capture a higher percentage of the Hispanic vote, resulting in the reelection. National exit survey data in 2004 revealed that the Bush Administration was apparently able to increase the Hispanic percentage from 31 to 44, although this number is contended to be too high.\(^{70}\) Nevertheless, despite this discrepancy the Hispanic population undoubtedly has a strong pull in the American electorate.

The importance of the Latino/Hispanic voters for the Democratic Party has been academically contentious, especially in the last election cycle. Hispanics/Latinos are increasingly becoming the dominant minority in the United States, and evidence suggests

\(^{68}\) (Schmidt, Shelley, and Bardes 2005)  
\(^{69}\) (Velasquez and Cobble 2004; Latino Voters 2008; Jordan, Eaton, and Casselman 2008)  
\(^{70}\) (Denton 2009)
that both parties are pandering to this group in order to win voter share. Scholars have made claims of the importance of Hispanics to the Republican Party as well as the Democratic Party. It seems that both parties lay claim to having their support and are increasingly jockeying for their votes. Due to the oscillation of party preference in the past three elections some scholars even contend that the Hispanic/Latino vote is more purple and should be considered a swing constituency.\(^{71}\)

In this decade, the bulk of Hispanic/Latino immigration has been from Mexico and Central America.\(^{72}\) This is important to note for this study since the immigration data focuses on the West and Southwest of the United States, where the majority of the Hispanic/Latino population comes from Mexico and Latin American, not Cuba. In comparison to the South, where the majority of the immigration comes from Cuba, a completely different political and electoral culture is developing in the Rocky Mountain region. The notion of Latino politics brings up many questions, especially about partisanship, that need to be addressed. As mentioned earlier, Mexican and Puerto Ricans have a strong adherence to the Democratic Party, which will be the underlying theory for this project. Also, as with all other populations, class becomes an important factor in determining partisanship. Affluent Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans vote Republican at higher levels compared to poorer Latin Americans.\(^{73}\)

*Colorado and Nevada*

As the previous chapter and Figure 9 illustrate, Colorado and Nevada are discernibly voting more Democratic. New Mexico is voting more Democratic at the presidential level;

\(^{71}\) (Lopez, Montoya, and Santana 2005; Ewers 2008)

\(^{72}\) (Fineman 2006)

\(^{73}\) (DeSipio 1996)
however, the lower houses and gubernatorial elections do not exemplify a clear rising trend, contrary to Colorado and Nevada. The possible shift in coalitions in these two states might be explained by a rise in the Hispanic/Latino population.

To begin, Colorado’s population has been burgeoning since 1990. According to the U.S. Census estimates, the change from 1990 to 2000 is 73.40% in Hispanic/Latino growth. Further, according to the U.S. Census, the average share of persons in the U.S. with Hispanic/Latino origin is 15%; Colorado’s Hispanic/Latino population is a little over this average at 20.2%.

Table 4: Counties with most Hispanic/Latino population in Colorado

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arapahoe</td>
<td>21,743</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>57,612</td>
<td>165.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>175,704</td>
<td>63.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>34,473</td>
<td>69.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>30,791</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>52,449</td>
<td>70.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 4 demonstrates, Colorado’s Hispanic/Latino population is booming, especially in the four most populated counties in the state. But a closer look reveals that the percentages can be misleading. For example, Arapahoe County boomed 165% in ten years.
However, looking at the graph you can see the numbers started relatively small at 21,743 and only jumped to 57,612. Also, looking at Colorado’s population beginning from 1940, when the state began really taking demographic data, also illustrates a small jump comparatively (see Table 5). According to the data from Figure 9-2, Colorado’s Hispanic/Latino population has only increased by 6.94% from 1940 to 2000.

**Table 5: Colorado’s Hispanic/Latino population 1940-2000**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>735,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>424,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>419,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>339,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>92,549</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevada was the second state to show signs of coalition change in both upper and one lower house over the last forty years. Unlike Colorado, Nevada has a greater Hispanic/Latino population. From 1990 to 2000, Nevada’s Hispanic/Latino population increased 291% from 124,419 to 487,022. This means that the Hispanic/Latino population makes up 25% of the population in the state. All of the largest counties also showed much higher rates of Hispanic/Latino growth than Colorado. As Table 6 displays, all four of the most populated counties in the state had well over 100% growth in the last decade. Out of the eight states in the Rocky Mountain region, Nevada had the highest relative increase from 1940 to 2000 at 158.8% in the sixty years.
Using the most recent data available, Nevada’s four most populated counties average slightly more in make up of Hispanic/Latino population. Although Denver County is made up of 34.8% (in 2006) of Hispanics/Latinos, the rest of the counties are between 13% and 16% compared to Nevada, which holds a slight edge over Colorado (see Table 7). Overall,
in the four most populated counties in both states, Hispanics/Latinos make up 19.4% in Colorado and 20.02% in Nevada.

**Table 8: Counties in Colorado and Nevada compared**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>Arapahoe County</th>
<th>16.7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Denver County</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>El Paso County</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Jefferson County</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Clark County</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Washoe County</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Carson City</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Lyon County</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Idaho, Utah and Wyoming*

This project will now look at the three states that did not increase or even decreased in the percentage voting Democratic over last forty years. As Figure 1-2 demonstrates, Idaho, Utah and Wyoming seem to be the outliers in the Rocky Mountain region. Wyoming starts off voting the most Democratic around 35%-40% and decreases substantially after the 1976 election. From 2000 to 2008, Wyoming is now the most conservative state, voting 32.54% for Barack Obama in 2008. Utah, on the other hand is without a surprise the most conservative state until 2000. The state fluctuates between 25% and 30% in popular vote for a Democratic candidate and even drops to 20% in 1980. Lastly, Idaho is in the middle of the
three states and has voted the most liberal in the last three elections, voting 35.91% for Barack Obama.

Initially, Idaho is another case of where the large increase in the past decade really skews the data. In 1990, the population of Hispanics/Latinos was 52,927. This number jumps to 101,690 in 2000, equating to only 7.8% of the population. Canyon County, the largest county in Idaho, had only 24,455 Hispanics/Latinos in 2000. Idaho is such a small state that at first glance the 92.1% change seems like a lot; however, 52,927 to 101,690 is a small addition to the state’s population (see Table 10).

The same issue becomes evident when viewing Idaho’s population from 1940 to 2000. In 1940, the number of Hispanics/Latinos in the state was 2,719. In 2000, this number jumped to 101,690, equating to a 36.39% increase but still well under the United States average of 12%.74 The majority of Hispanics/Latinos living in Idaho are located in Canyon County, apart of the Boise metropolitan statistical area.

Table 9: Number of Hispanics/Latinos in Idaho’s counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>5,556</td>
<td>13,467</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon</td>
<td>11,838</td>
<td>24,455</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonneville</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Population of Hispanics/Latinos in Idaho 1940-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>101,690</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>52,927</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>51,679</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>18,476</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>2,719</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wyoming is the second state in the Rocky Mountain region that has stayed conservative and whose Hispanic/Latino population constitutes only a small percentage of the total population. As noted before, Wyoming is the least populated state in the Union, with some counties only receiving increases of only a few hundred people in the last decade. From 1990 to 2000, the percent change of Hispanics/Latinos was 22%, from 25,751 to 31,669. Similar to Idaho, the numbers look larger than what they really represent.
Additionally, Wyoming’s largest county Laramie, which has about 85,384 people, has the largest number of Hispanics/Latinos (8,897), so the numbers again might seem larger than what they really are.

According to the PEW Hispanic Research Center, Wyoming is ranked 44th in the country for the total Hispanic/Latino population in the state. From 1940 to 2000, the increase in the state was 416%, the lowest out of all of the states in the Rocky Mountain region (see Table 11). Currently, the Hispanic/Latino populations only make up 11.9% of the state’s populations, again well under the 15% average in the U.S.

**Table 11: Wyoming’s Hispanic/Latino population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laramie</td>
<td>7,310</td>
<td>8,897</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natrona</td>
<td>2,252</td>
<td>3,257</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetwater</td>
<td>3,470</td>
<td>3,545</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Wyoming’s Hispanic/Latino population change 1940-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino population</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>31,669</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>25,751</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>24,499</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>18,551</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>6,128</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Utah is certainly an outlier in the three most conservative states. The state’s Hispanic/Latino population has surged compared to Idaho and Wyoming. In 1990, the number of Hispanics/Latinos living in Utah was 84,597. This numbers jumped to 201,559 in 2000, a 138% increase. Furthermore, out of the four most populated counties three have increases over 100%. Despite this surge, however, the PEW Hispanic Research Center ranks Utah 21st in the nation for total Hispanics/Latinos living in the state. Despite this larger increase, Utah is the most conservative in the region. The state is also ranked highest in the percentage increase from 1940 to 2000 out of the conservative states. In 1940, the Hispanic/Latino population was 2,572; this number jumped to 201,559 in 2000, a 77% increase.
Table 13: Utah’s Hispanic/Latino population change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percent of increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salt Lake</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>43,647</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>106,787</td>
<td>145%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>8,488</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>25,791</td>
<td>204%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>7,275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>12,955</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>11,047</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>24,858</td>
<td>125%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Utah’s Hispanic/Latino Population Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>201,559</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>84,597</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>60,302</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>43,550</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>2,572</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15: Total Hispanic/Latino Population per State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Hispanic/Latino Population Percent (2000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>1,295,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>735,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>101,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>18,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>393,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>765,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>201,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>31,669</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religious Adherence

Undoubtedly, religious affiliation plays an important role in determining voting behavior. The United States is known for being the most religious out of all of the industrialized nations. Further, in most presidential elections since 1936, over 90% of the ballots cast have been by the four major religious communities residing in the country (evangelical, mainline, black Protestant and Roman Catholic).\(^{76}\) What is also important to note is that regional voting differences among these groups have for the most part disappeared over the last decade.

This study is going to look at the Catholic and Mormon voters that make up the Rocky Mountain region. As discussed earlier, it is generally agreed upon that Catholics vote overwhelmingly for the Democratic Party.\(^{77}\) Catholics even played such a significant role in the election of Barack Obama [2008] that according to exit polls those who identified as

\(^{76}\) (Noll and Harlow 2007)
\(^{77}\) (Weber 2000; Reese 1996; Humphrey 2008)
Catholic voted for Obama 52 to 45 percent, equating to roughly a seven-point improvement for the party from the previous election.\(^{78}\) Although during the Bush Administration some Catholics did deviate from the Democratic Party, the overall majority had a leaning towards the Democratic Party.

The second group, Mormons, is another religious assemblage that can help explain voting patterns in the Rocky Mountain region. However, unlike Catholics, Mormons firmly vote Republican and have not equivocated since FDR. One example is the 2000 and 2004 elections, when the Bush Administration was able to capture the Mormon constituents, giving the Republican Party 85 – 88 percent of their vote.\(^{79}\) What is also important about Mormon constituents that will aid in this study is their political and civic culture. Borrowing from Matthew Wilson, Mormon constituents have what he calls the “dry kindling” effect.\(^{80}\) He states that the Mormon population has the potential for political activity sparked by explicit direction from their church leaders.\(^{81}\) So in other words, where other groups might acquiesce orders from their church leaders, Mormons adhere to the instructions from their church.

The Mormon constituents in each of the states will be used to gauge how conservative the voting patterns are. The main states of concern for investigating any population increases or fluctuations are Idaho and Utah. These two states are (other than Wyoming) the only ones to stay Republican in the region. Wyoming is excluded from this because essentially no one is moving there. Wyoming’s population is the lowest in the country, and according to recent estimates in 2007 the state has not even broken 500,000

\(^{78}\) (Humphrey 2008)  
\(^{79}\) (Campbell 2007)  
\(^{80}\) (Wilson 2007)  
\(^{81}\) Ibid.
residents. The state’s population has barely increased, and the share of Mormon adherents is under 2%. Out of the whole region, only three states had a substantial Mormon population. Idaho’s Mormon population makes up about 23% and not surprisingly, Utah’s is 57%. The only other state that had a population above 5% is Nevada, sitting at around 9% of the state’s population.

Idaho/Utah

One explanation for Idaho and Utah’s constant Republican voting pattern can be explained by the large percent of LDS adherents in the states. Out of the eight states in the Rocky Mountain region, these two have the highest concentration of Mormon members. In Idaho, the majority of the Mormon concentration is located in the South West counties of Madison, Franklin and Bear Lake. Every county in Utah has a significant Mormon population, the highest concentration being in Utah County.

As referenced earlier, Idaho’s Mormon population (according to 2007 estimates) is 23% (see Table 16), whereas the Catholic population is at about 10.1%. It is not surprising that Idaho would have a substantially larger Mormon population since it borders Utah. Looking at Table 16, it is easily seen that the Mormon population burgeons compared to the Catholic one.
Table 16: Idaho’s Catholic/Mormon population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>59,117</td>
<td>70,476</td>
<td>73,897</td>
<td>129,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>193,405</td>
<td>240,843</td>
<td>268,060</td>
<td>310,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Utah, on the other hand, is the only state in the union to break one million Mormon adherents. Even in 1970, when the first data was collected, the state out ranked every other state having 789,419 residents identifying with the LDS church. After 1980, this number broke one million (see Table 17). According to the 2007 estimates, Utah’s population is 2,756,424, so almost 60% of the state’s population is affiliated with the LDS church. The Catholic population in Utah is considerably much smaller. According to the most recent PEW research center/ ARDA poll, there are 273,642 people associated with the Catholic Church - this translates into 9.92%. This is much smaller than Idaho in comparison, which has about 10% Catholics.

Table 17: Utah’s Catholic/Mormon population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>50,581</td>
<td>59,844</td>
<td>66,316</td>
<td>97,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>789,419</td>
<td>985,070</td>
<td>1,236,242</td>
<td>1,272,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Colorado/ Nevada/New Mexico

For the three states that have shown trends toward the Democratic Party, all have a much greater concentration of Catholics compared to Utah and Idaho. According to the U.S. Census estimate for 2007, Nevada has the highest percent of Catholics in the Rocky Mountain region with 27%. New Mexico has the second highest with 26% and Colorado has just under twenty percent with 19.7%. Compared to Utah with 9.92% and Idaho with a total Catholic population of 10.1%, Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico have a much higher Catholic adherent percent than the more conservative states. The discrepancy between the Mormon and Catholic population in the Rocky Mountain region is one factor for the different voting patterns in the states.
Table 18: Colorado/Nevada and New Mexico’s Catholic/Mormon population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>377,214</td>
<td>403,399</td>
<td>482,892</td>
<td>752,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>38,256</td>
<td>51,884</td>
<td>70,313</td>
<td>86,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>92,100</td>
<td>110,105</td>
<td>156,956</td>
<td>331,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>47,269</td>
<td>55,148</td>
<td>89,033</td>
<td>179,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>363,518</td>
<td>435,241</td>
<td>467,356</td>
<td>670,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>21,843</td>
<td>28,804</td>
<td>39,429</td>
<td>57,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis examines the Rocky Mountain region of the United States to see if in fact, there is evidence of a secular realignment occurring. Unfortunately, a large portion of scholarly work neglects this vast and politically important region. This thesis adds to the current literature and knowledge of the complexity of the political culture that makes up this region. As the presidential election of 2008 illustrated, this region is becoming more salient to both parties, as they continue to jockey for more support in the constituency. No longer is the Rocky Mountain West a Republican stronghold or electorally safe region. As this thesis suggests, five of the eight states that make up this portion of the United States have strong evidence of dominate Democratic Party influence.

This study has shown that demography can drastically alter the political culture and change voting trends. By using election results, proportion of legislative control, opinion polls, migration data and religious adherence this study was able to illustrate a strong correlation between these factors and the changing political culture of the region. Out of eight of the states that make up the Rocky Mountain West, only three states have not increased Democratic voting preference in the thirty-eight years this study examined (Idaho, Utah and Wyoming).

Idaho and Utah and Wyoming had a much higher proportion of LDS adherents than anywhere else in the region and country. As it is well known and generally accepted by scholars, there is a strong correlation between LDS adherents and voting conservative, thus, it is safe to assume strong support for the Republican Party. Furthermore, as the literature

82 (Humphrey 2008; Reese 1996)
illustrated, the Mormon Church is synonymous with supporting the Republican Party.\textsuperscript{83} Therefore, it is safe to further make the assumption based off of demographic data supported from Census and church survey returns, that the high percent of Mormon adherents in Idaho, Utah and Wyoming are a contributing factor to the states leaning towards the Republican Party. The political and party identification surveys additionally support this theory. The three states that showed the most trending towards conservative on the political spectrum and further identified with the Republican Party, were these three states. Consequently, these three states also have the highest LDS adherent population as percent of the states population.\textsuperscript{84}

The percent of Hispanic/Latino inhabitants also is another important contributor to a state’s voting inclination to the Democratic Party. Every state that trended Democratic in the region had a Hispanic/Latino population that made up at least 20\% of the total population, with one exception being Montana with 3\%. Although Utah and Idaho do show a increasing amount of immigration, the percent compared to the state’s population has remained relatively low, compared to Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Arizona for example. As the previous literature suggests, Hispanic/Latino’s tend to vote Democratic with support for the Bush Administration being an exception. The Hispanic/Latino voting theory, on top of the strong correlation between increasing population strongly, supports this thesis’s hypothesis that the migration of Hispanics/Latinos to the region is shifting party loyalty. Over the past thirty years, as Hispanics/Latinos migrated to the region, the states with the highest amount of immigration have also had the strongest increases in Democratic loyalty.

\textsuperscript{83} (Wilson 2007)
\textsuperscript{84} http://www.adherents.com/largecom/com_lds.html, Accessed 4/5/2010

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Lastly, this study found that state-to-state migration is arguably changing the region’s political culture and party loyalty. Migration out of California from 1995-2000, contributed to 40% of the region’s growth. By using California’s most populated counties and grouping them into [liberal] and [conservative], this thesis illustrated that larger amounts of residents are immigrating to the Rocky Mountain region. The data suggested that more people from liberal counties in California are moving to liberal or metropolitan areas in the Rocky Mountain region, contributing to the swinging of the political spectrum to the left. The states that had the largest numbers of immigrants from California were Nevada Colorado and Arizona. All three also had significant change in party loyalty in the last thirty years. Furthermore, evidence from the data also illustrate Los Angeles County is by far the number one county were migration from California comes from when migrating to the region. Los Angeles County also is one of the most liberal in the state. Overwhelming in the last twenty years, the county has voted Democratic and even gave Barack Obama approximately 69% of their vote in 2008. The next county that showed the most migration to the region was Santa Clara. Located in South end of the San Francisco Bay area, this county is also tantamount with being liberal. In the previous it also gave Obama 69% of their vote and additionally has one of the highest amount of registered Democrats.\textsuperscript{85} Continuing from Bishop, Martin, Robinson and Tom’s \textit{Californian migration theory}, this thesis has shown that in fact there is a high correlation between migration from liberal counties to the Rocky Mountain region and shifting party preference.

This thesis has not only shown that there is a strong correlation between the three tested demographic variables and the likelihood of a state voting Democratic, but also that

previous literature may not explain this realignment very well. Introduced in the classic literature of V.O. Key, the concept of realignment was put into a historic perspective by analyzing patterns of long-term stability offset by critical events. A large detailed body of literature has evolved around Key’s theory from authors such as: Walter Dean Burnham, James L. Sundquist and Arthur Paulson, suggesting realignment occurs in cyclically, reflecting economic and political conditions. Until recently, very few authors have focused on the connection between changing demographic composition and realignment.

The realignment in the Rocky Mountain West is a completely different case than the previous authors discuss. For example, the realignment of 1828 is a prime example of internal conflict. This split the Democratic-Republicans into two parties later renamed as the Democratic Party and the Whig Party. The Whigs emerged as an opposition to Andrew Jackson. Further and more commonly cited examples of realignment are of 1860 and the 1960s with the Southern Democrats. The realignment of 1860 is case when a third party moves in to fill a policy need – or the question of slavery as the Republicans did. When the South realigned towards the Republican Party in the 1960s, this was partially due to the courting of conservative white southern Democrats by the Republican Party, coined the “southern strategy,” partially in response to Lyndon Johnson’s advocacy towards the Civil Rights Act of 1964.86

The earlier instances of realignment do not fit this certain scenario. Secular realignment in the Rocky Mountain Region seems to be more demographically driven and not a function of party conflict or policy advocation. Existing voters in the region do not seem to be necessarily changing their party identification or ideology, but instead, there

86 (Aistrup 1996)
votes are being diluted by new immigrants. The slow steady trending, along with a high rate of immigration into the region suggests that it is just a case of the Republican voters being watered down by new Democratic voters and not people changing their voting behavior based on a critical event or policy issue. The states with the lowest immigration and highest concentration of Mormon adherents stay relatively conservative in the thirty years investigated. The five states with high immigration and a larger percent of Catholic adherents became much more liberal. Although the larger proportion of Catholics may be linked to the Hispanic/Latino population – further study would determine this link.

As this thesis has shown, secular realignment is a multifaceted and complex subject in American politics. Therefore, in order to afford a suitable explanation many factors and variables must be included in order to grasp the complexity of the topic. For the past sixty years scholars have zealously deliberated causes for secular and critical political realignment; however, still to this day scholars link a multitude of factors that explain this phenomenon in politics.

As this thesis examined only three variables, it would be useful for future research to study political culture more comprehensively to test my hypothesis in order to determine in indeed, my conclusions are correct. Variables such as income, birth rate, employment and migration from other states and counties will benefit this topic for further research. Based upon my limited sampling, it does appear that the majority of the states in the Rocky Mountain region are in fact showing evidence of a long-term trend in shifting preference from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party. This would conclude my hypothesis that the region is experiencing a secular realignment.
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