KANSAS ELECTIONS: THEN AND NOW

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I. INTRODUCTION

Kansas voters have never been very kind to Democratic candidates. Even so, the official tally from the 2014 gubernatorial election must have been an especially tough pill to swallow for Kansas Democrats. Despite leading in the polls for weeks prior to the election,[1] Democratic gubernatorial candidate Paul Davis and his Lt. Governor running mate Jill Docking lost to the incumbent Republican ticket of Sam Brownback/Jeff Colyer by 2.7% (49.8% to 46.1%).[2]

If history is any predictor of the present, then Davis/Docking should have won. Table 1[3] provides a detailed summary of the history of Democratic gubernatorial victories in Kansas.[4] The theme of Table 1 is easy to distill. Kansas Democrats tend to win the governorship when they are running against a GOP candidate who has split his GOP base or has suffered from a sagging economy, or both.

The first example stretches back to 1882 when incumbent Republican John St. John sought his third term. Democratic challenger George Glick beat St. John by mobilizing disillusioned German immigrants upset by the passage of the constitutional amendment banning the sale of alcohol in 1880 and voters upset by St. John seeking a third term. The most recent examples involve Republican incumbent Mike Hayden losing his reelection bid to Democrat Joan Finney in 1990 after a bruising Grand Old Party (GOP) primary battle over property tax reclassification and abortion rights. In 2002, abortion rights and school funding would help to propel Democrat Kathleen Sebelius over her GOP challenger, House Speaker Tim Shallenburger, who represented at that time the right-wing insurgency within the Kansas GOP. Sebelius won a second term in 2006, which was a very strong year for Democrats in Kansas and across the nation.

    1. *Insight Kansas 2014 Gubernatorial Poll Averages*, INSIGHT KAN. https://insightkansas .wordpress.com/insight-kansas-2014-gubernatorial-poll-averages/ (last visited Apr. 30, 2016).
    2. KAN. SEC'Y OF STATE, 2014 GENERAL ELECTION OFFICIAL VOTE TOTALS 1 (2014), http://www.kssos.org/elections/14elec/2014%20General%20Election%20Official%20Results.pdf.
    3. *See* Appendix, Table 1, *infra*.
    4. Marvin A. Harder, *Electoral Politics in Kansas: A Historical Perspective, in* POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT IN KANSAS 37–74 (Marvin A. Harder ed.,1989); H. EDWARD FLENTJE & JOSEPH A. AISTRUP, KANSAS POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT: THE CLASH OF POLITICAL CULTURES 52, 53 (2010).

Prior to the November 2014 election, Governor Brownback seemed destined to become another bullet point on this summary of GOP gubernatorial candidates who lost to a Kansas Democrat. This paper seeks to explain the reasons for Brownback's victory by focusing on how the current party alignment in Kansas is so biased toward the GOP that even an incumbent candidate like Brownback—an incumbent who divided his party and who advocated policies that did not produce the advertised public outcomes—was virtually assured of victory.

I begin with a discussion of the politics surrounding the Brownback administration in the first term. I then focus on the past and current party alignments that dominate state and federal elections in Kansas, including Brownback's reelection. The last sections of the paper analyze the key demographic characteristics, party organization elements, and patterns of presidential voting that influenced the gubernatorial election in 2014.

II.   BROWNBACK 1.0

Brownback spent his first year in office largely dealing with the aftershocks of the country's worst economic downturn since the Great Depression and passing a plan to privatize child support enforcement services.[5] Brownback and his aides also spent the first year charting a new conservative course for Kansas, one that would move the state right of its moderate history.[6]

In the second year, the centerpiece of Brownback's agenda became a plan to phase out the state's income tax. Over the objections of the President of the Kansas Senate, Republican Steve Morris, Brownback's Republican allies passed the largest tax cut in the state's history, including completely eliminating the state income tax for privately held companies.[7] Morris could not support creating a cumulative $2 billion hole in the state's budget by 2017.[8] The combination of this issue and a redistricting battle set into motion an open feud between the governor and the senate president, which ended in a GOP primary battle between moderate incumbent senators and supporters of Morris versus Brownback and Kansas Chamber of Commerce-backed challengers to these incumbents. On a hot August 2012 primary election day, 15 of 21 senate moderates lost, including President Morris.[9]

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5. Dave Ranney & Mike Shields, *Privatization Initiative Offers Window on Kansas Government*, KHI NEWS SERVICE (May 27, 2014), http://www.khi.org/news/article/privatization-initiative-offers-window-kansas-gove/.

6. Burdett Loomis, *Does 'Kansas Way' Have Any Real Meaning?*, WICHITA EAGLE (Jun. 7, 2011), http://www.kansas.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article1065973.html; Joseph A. Aistrup, *Legislature Set to Reshape the State*, WICHITA EAGLE (Jan. 13, 2013), http://www.kansas.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article1106371.html.

7. H. Edward Flentje, *Brownback Experiment Out of Sync*, WICHITA EAGLE (Nov. 24, 2013), http://www.kansas.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article1128293.html.

8. H. Edward Flentje, *State Facing Fiscal Cliff*, WICHITA EAGLE (Dec. 16, 2012), http://www.kansas.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article1104770.html.

9. Chapman Rackaway, *Biggest Battle Yet in Republican War*, MARYVILLE ADVOCATE (Aug. 15, 2012), http://www.marysvilleonline.net/opinion/article_f9312c38-0996-5d88-a942-

Brownback claimed the tax cut would be a "shot of adrenaline right to the heart of the Kansas economy,"[10] and that the resulting economic boom would replenish the depleted Kansas state treasury.[11] Unfortunately, the tax cuts did not spur any measurable economic growth, but they did lead to months upon months of disappointing revenue reports as the Kansas economy and its tax system failed to yield enough tax revenue to meet budgetary obligations.[12] As Brownback's "great conservative experiment" failed to produce the advertised results and the budgets for schools, roads, parks, and universities were continually cut, the popularity of Brownback began to sink.[13]

By the beginning of 2014, the Democrats had already settled on the gubernatorial ticket of Paul Davis, from Lawrence, the minority leader of the Kansas State House, and Jill Docking, his Lt. Governor running mate. Davis had no previous statewide campaign experience, but Docking did. She lost a close race against Brownback in the 1996 U.S. Senate contest. If history would have been a predictor of the outcome of this race, this ticket should have won.

Indeed, up to the very end, there was a high probability that Brownback would lose. Polls had Davis up by four percent points.[14] However, after all the votes were counted, Brownback, along with Republican U.S. Senatorial incumbent Pat Roberts were the narrow victors, each winning a plurality of 49% and riding the coattails of a host of Republican statewide and congressional candidates, all of whom won by safe margins. At the end of the evening, the Republicans pitched a shutout.[15] No Democrats won a major statewide or congressional seat and only 27 Democrats won out of the 125 Kansas House seats being contested (the Kansas Senate holds elections every four years on presidential election years).[16]

So, what explains Brownback's victory? Some may choose to emphasize campaign spending, political strategy, or each candidate's turn-out-the-vote efforts. Even though these factors can be important, in a contest pitting two well-funded candidates with professionally run campaigns, these types of factors tend to cancel each other out.[17] The explanation presented below is more historically grounded, showing how party alignments, party organizations, and presidential down-ticket politics shape election outcomes. I begin first by discussing party alignments in Kansas from a historic and contemporary point of view.

2e1bd5df4866.html.

10. Duane Goossen, *Tax Plan's Back-Door Success*, HAYS POST (Feb. 11, 2016), http://www.hayspost.com/2016/02/11/insight-kansas-tax-plans-back-door-success/.

11. *Id.*

12. H. Edward Flentje, *State Budget High Jinks*, WICHITA EAGLE (Feb. 24, 2013), http://www.kansas.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article1109340.html.

13. Flentje, *supra* note 7.

14. INSIGHT KANSAS, *supra* note 1.

15. KAN. SEC'Y OF STATE, *supra* note 2.

16. *Id.*

17. GARY C. JACOBSON, THE POLITICS OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS 45 (7th ed. 2009); MARJORIE R. HERSHEY, PARTY POLITICS IN AMERICA 223 (14th ed. 2011).

III.   PARTY ALIGNMENTS IN KANSAS

The father of party realignment theory is V.O. Key. His original framework for a party alignment conceptualized it as a set of typical voting outcomes among a set of jurisdictions – specifically, precincts, cities or counties.[18] His theory followed the ontology of the way that party officials and election observers (news reporters for example) interpret voting outcomes. County X is a "blue-collar Democratic stronghold" or county Y is a "wealthy, suburban, Republican leaning" area. This view continues to be ingrained into the reporting of election results on the 24/7 cable news networks where analysts use GIS maps to show viewers the voting histories of exemplar counties. All of this constructs an important election night narrative that centers around the development of expectations regarding how jurisdictions (usually counties, but sometimes precincts or cities) may vote based on the way they voted in the past (usually associated with predominant aggregate characteristics of the jurisdictions) and the analysis of whether the current voting patterns align with these expectations or vary from them. The problem with this ontological approach is that analysts often focus on "the majority" question: Which party generally wins? This has led to many overgeneralizations about realignments based on landslide election results, especially when these landslides run against the incumbent majority party.

In response to these issues at the state level, I developed a new framework for analyzing party alignments and realignments based on county-level vote shares data.[19] This approach resolves the overgeneralizations associated with the ontological approach by using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model where the cases are counties and the variables are aggregate election outcomes over time within a state. Simply put, a party alignment is a form of "structured partisan competition" represented by a specific pattern in the covariance matrix of a factor analysis. Thus, a party alignment is denoted by a single factor loading on a series of adjacent election outcomes over multiple cycles at the presidential and gubernatorial levels. A party realignment occurs when a new factor (a different pattern in the covariance matrix) emerges and loads primarily on the next set of adjacent election outcomes for multiple election cycles at both the presidential and gubernatorial levels.

These analyses use county-level voting data for president and governor from 1900 to 2014. Together, these two elected offices represent surrogate indicators of aggregate voting preferences for the Democratic and Republican parties. I recognize that the changes in the structure of partisan competition in these offices are not always immediately mirrored at the other federal levels; there is, however, strong evidence that changes in these two offices do eventually reverberate over time into the other levels in other states.[20] For

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18. V. O. Key, *A Theory of Critical Elections*, 17 J. POL. *3*, 3–18 (1955); V. O. Key, *Secular Realignment and the Party System*, 21 J. POL. 198, 198–210 (1959).

19. Joseph A. Aistrup, *Structured Partisan Competition: A Vote Shares Model of Party Alignments and Realignments*, 93 SOCIAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY 750, 750–78 (2012).

20. *See* Charles S. Bullock, *Regional Realignment from an Officeholding Perspective*, 50 J.

purposes of discussion, presidential voting represents more national forces while gubernatorial voting represents more state-level concerns.

The aggregate county-level voting data from 1900 to 1990 generally come from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research's (ICPSR) data set,[21] a collection that is 99 percent complete. County-level presidential voting data from 1992 to the present were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's Mastdata set, which can be found online.[22] County-level gubernatorial voting data from 1992 to 2014 were obtained online from the Kansas Secretary of State's website.[23] In each county, the GOP proportion of two-party vote in presidential and gubernatorial elections are calculated, where values toward 0 represent Democratic domination, values toward .5 represent two-party competition, and values toward 1 represent Republican domination.

When applied to Kansas, this factor analysis approach finds that there have been three party alignments at the presidential and gubernatorial levels from 1900 to 2010.[24] The first party alignment began in 1900 and lasted until 1932. Based on James L. Sundquist's analysis, I call this alignment the Post Civil War alignment,[25] although others may prefer the Progressive alignment, named for the Progressive politicians and politics that dominated most of this era.[26] Map 1 shows that during the Post Civil War alignment most of the state is strongly Republican or leaning Republican (white and light grey respectively), with only a smattering of counties that are two-party competitive.[27] Barton (BT) and Thomas (TH) counties are Democratic leaning counties, while Ellis (EL) and Decatur (DC) counties are Democratic strongholds. Note that most of these Democratic counties were settled by German/Volga Germans or were railroad towns.[28] Table 2 shows that on average during this period, GOP candidates for governor obtain 57% of the weighted GOP two-party vote, while at the presidential level this percentage is 56%.[29] Needless to say, Republicans dominate this era. The GOP won 80% to 90% of the seats in the state legislature and won almost all statewide offices,[30] except for an occasional Democratic

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POL. 553 (1988); DAVID LUBLIN, THE REPUBLICAN SOUTH: DEMOCRATIZATION AND PARTISAN CHANGE 60-63 (2004).

21. *United States Historical Election Returns, 1824-1968*, INTER-U. CONSORTIUM FOR POL. & SOC. RES. https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/1 (last visited Apr. 30, 2016); *and General Election Data for the United States, 1950-1990 (ICPSR 13)*, INTER-U. CONSORTIUM FOR POL. & SOC. RES. https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/13 (last visited Apr. 30, 2016). The data referenced is available on these websites in a variety of typical formats.

22. *USA Counties Information*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU http://www.census.gov/support /USACdata.html (last visited Apr. 30, 2016).

23. *Election Results*, KAN. SEC'Y OF STATE http://www.kssos.org/elections/elections_ statistics.html (last visited Apr. 30, 2016).

24. Aistrup, *supra* note 19, at 764–71.

25. JAMES L. SUNDQUIST, THE DYNAMICS OF THE PARTY SYSTEM 168–69 (Brookings Institution *rev. ed.* 1983).

26. Aistrup, *supra* note 19, at 763.

27. *See* Appendix, Map 1, *infra*.

28. FLENTJE & AISTRUP, *supra* note 4, at 61.

29. *See* Appendix, Table 2, *infra*; *also see* Appendix, Map 1, *infra*.

30. FLENTJE & AISTRUP, *supra* note 4, at 56–60; Allan Cigler & Burdett Loomis, *Kansas:*

victory at the gubernatorial level.[31]

The Great Depression facilitated a party realignment, which came home to roost in the 1934 and 1936 elections at the gubernatorial level and the 1936 election at the presidential level. In 1936, FDR soundly beat Kansas' native son and GOP presidential nominee Governor Alfred "Alf" Landon. The New Deal alignment in Kansas lasts until 1980, however, there are signs of its demise as early as the 1964 elections. Map 2 shows that during the New Deal conditions improve for Democrats at the gubernatorial level.[32]

The Democrats develop strongholds around Crawford (CR) County in the Southeast and Sedgwick (SG) County in the south central, two areas of the state with much union activity due to aircraft (Wichita) and mining operations (Pittsburg). Several agrarian counties in the Southwest, hit hardest by the Dust Bowl, also develop more of a bias toward the Democrats, the most populous of which is Ford County (FO). Ellis County remains the most Democratic county in the state, while Wyandotte (WY) County in the Northeast evolves into a Democratic stronghold. Table 2 shows that on average, GOP gubernatorial candidates obtain 51.1% of the weighted GOP two-party vote during the New Deal.[33] This is a six percentage point decline in support compared to the Post Civil War alignment. Interestingly, GOP presidential candidates increase their level of support during the New Deal. When compared to the Post Civil War alignment, the weighted GOP two-party vote grows by two percent to 58%.

The first signs of the New Right realignment begin at the gubernatorial level in 1964 and in 1968 at the presidential level. By 1980 and Reagan's election, the New Right realignment solidifies in Kansas and the New Deal alignment ceases to exist. Over the years, the New Right alignment evolves into one that strongly favors the GOP. Map 3 shows that except for Ellis, Cloud (CD), and Reno (RN) counties, which are two-party competitive, there is a strong GOP bias in the counties west of U.S. Highway 81.[34]

During the New Right alignment, two-party counties develop around Sedgwick County along with five counties in the Southeast corner of the state near Crawford County. A number of counties in the Northeast also develop two-party competition beginning with Geary (GE) and Riley (RL) and swinging around to the north and east to include Nemaha (NM), Jackson (JK) and Atchison (AT) counties, and finally swinging back to the South and west through Shawnee (SN) and Lyon (LY) counties. Only Douglas (DG) and Wyandotte have a strong partisan bias toward the Democrats. Johnson County (JO), which is now the most populous county in Kansas (556,000),[35] leans to the GOP.

Figure 1 graphs the relationship between the average GOP two-party vote

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Two-Party Competition in a One-Party State, in PARTY REALIGNMENT AND STATE POLITICS 163, 175 (Maureen Moakley ed., Ohio State Univ. Press 1992).

31. *See* Appendix, Table 1, *infra.*
32. *See* Appendix, Map 2, *infra.*
33. *See* Appendix, Table 2, *infra.*
34. *See* Appendix, Map 3, *infra.*
35. WOODS & POOLE ECONOMICS, 2012 DESKTOP DATA FILES (2012).

for governor and president during the New Right alignment (1980 to 2010).[36]
This figure contains three reference lines.[37] The first is a vertical line placed at
the .50 (50%) grid point for the GOP two-party vote for president.[38] Every
county but Wyandotte and Douglas (just barely) is on the right hand side of this
line.[39] This means that on average, Republican presidential candidates win a
majority of the votes in 103 out of 105 counties in Kansas.[40] Table 2 shows that
on average during the New Right alignment, GOP presidential candidates obtain
61% of the weighted GOP two-party vote.[41]

The second reference line is a horizontal line placed at the .50 (50%) grid
point for the proportion of GOP two-party vote for governor. The counties
above this line tend to provide a majority of their votes to Republican
gubernatorial candidates. This means that on average, Democratic gubernatorial
candidates obtain a majority in only 14 out of 105 counties in Kansas. The good
news for the Democrats is that these counties contain a large percentage of the
more populous cities. As noted before, Wyandotte and Douglas maintain a
strong bias toward the Democrats.   Shawnee, Ellis, Crawford, Geary,
Leavenworth (LV), Sedgwick and Cowley (CL) all tend to cast a slight majority
of their votes for Democratic gubernatorial candidates.   However,
counterbalancing this small Democratic edge is the Republicans' domination of
Johnson, Barton (BT), Ford, and Finney (FI) counties, along with the seemingly
countless rural counties in the west and east central parts of the state. Almost
all of these counties tend to cast over 70% of their votes for GOP gubernatorial
candidates.

When summed together, GOP candidates start with a very large advantage
over their Democratic challengers. Table 2 shows that during the New Right
alignment, GOP gubernatorial candidates obtain on average 55.3% of the
weighted GOP two-party vote.[42] This does not match the GOP's dominance
during the Post Civil War alignment, but it does come close.

IV.   THE ELECTORAL ADVANTAGE OF THE NEW RIGHT ALIGNMENT

Brownback won despite of his political maladies. The GOP's New Right
electoral advantage was just too large. For purposes of comparison, I begin this
part of the analysis with Brownback's coalition in the 2010 elections.

In his first gubernatorial campaign, Brownback's electoral strength was on
full display. First, Brownback's anticipated candidacy scared away a number of
potentially strong Democratic challengers. As a consequence, the Democratic
nominee was the relatively unknown state senator, Tom Holland, who ran a
vastly underfunded campaign compared to that of Brownback.   Figure 2

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36. *See* Appendix, Figure 1, *infra.*
37. *Id.*
38. *Id.*
39. *Id.*
40. *Id.*
41. *See* Appendix, Table 2, *infra*
42. *Id.*

compares the proportion of two-party vote for Brownback in 2010 to the average proportion of GOP two-party vote for president during the New Right era in Kansas counties.[43]

This figure shows the key elements of how a party alignment shapes electoral outcomes.[44] Republican predisposed counties (rural counties like Washington, Kiowa (KW) and Logan (LG)) remain on the Republican extreme end of the two-party alignment/continuum.[45] While counties like Wyandotte (WY), Douglas (DG), Crawford (CR), and Shawnee (SN) remain on the left side of this continuum.[46] The fit is not perfect ($r^2=.838$), but pretty close.[47] There are some counties that are traditionally on the Democratic side of the continuum that moved toward the middle, most significantly Ellis (EL) and Geary (GE).[48] Note also that in a landslide like the 2010 elections, the partisan continuum shifts toward the winning party.[49] Thus, Brownback won 60% or more of the two-party vote in 101 of 105 counties.

Figure 3 compares the proportion of two-party vote for Brownback in 2014 to the average proportion of GOP two-party vote for president in Kansas counties during the New Right era.[50] Similar to Figure 2, the New Right alignment shapes the relative positions of each county along the partisan continuum.

(Figure 3 about here)

In 2014, however, the proportion of votes for Brownback in each county shifts toward the Democratic end of the continuum. But note, even though Brownback hemorrhages more than 12 percentage points between 2010 and 2014, the partisan alignment of counties remains intact. The presidential party alignment in Kansas explains 75% of the variance in Brownback's 2014 county-level voting patterns. The point of these analyses is straight forward: The existing party alignment loads the dice in favor of the GOP's candidate, whoever that may be. So, this is how a candidate like Brownback, who divides his party and has a rough ride in his first-term, can win.

V.   PARTY ORGANIZATIONS AND DEMOGRAPHIC COALITIONS

In this section of the paper, I shift gears to focus on how party organizations in counties and demographic characteristics influence the electoral voting patterns in the 2014 gubernatorial elections. The purpose of this analysis is to identify which factors contribute to Brownback's reelection in 2014. But which demographic factors are important for defining these patterns?

43. *See* Appendix, Figure 2, *infra*.
44. *Id.*
45. *Id.*
46. *Id.*
47. *Id.*
48. *Id.*
49. *Id.*
50. *See* Appendix, Figure 3, *infra*.

Scholars studying voting behavior and party alignments usually explain outcomes of an election within the context of the coalition of voters who typically support a candidate and his/her party.[51]   Which characteristics are salient is a function of the major cleavage issue(s) that define the ideological differences between the parties. These demographics usually include some combination of variables measuring age, ethnicity and race, socioeconomic status, urban/rural context, and religious characteristics.[52]   In the case of the New Right coalition, exit polls of voters in recent elections suggests that Republican-leaning voters tend to be older, white, Evangelical and Catholic.[53] In the case of Kansas, rural context is also important. There are very few Democratic officeholders west of U.S. Highway 81.   On the other hand, measures of socioeconomic status may not be as significant as they were in the New Deal. For example, whites with less than a bachelor's degree tend to support Republicans more so than those who have earned a bachelor's degree.[54]

In addition to demographic factors, the analysis includes measures of political party activity. A political party is defined as a group of individuals who unite together to contest and win elections for the purpose of controlling government.[55] This means that one of the fundamental measures of a political party's activities is its capacity to recruit candidates for elective office; while another is the party's capacity to run successful campaigns to win public office. Usually, any county party that fills its local candidate slate and wins elections also tends to do other activities well, including raising campaign funds and get-out-the-vote efforts.[56] Thus, my measure of party activities assumes that where there is smoke, there is fire.

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51. *See* Seymour M. Lipset & Stein Rokkan, *Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction, in* PARTY SYSTEMS AND VOTER ALIGNMENTS 1 (Seymour M. Lipset & Stein Rokkan eds., The Free Press 1967); *see* JOHN PETROCIK, PARTY COALITIONS *(Univ. of Chicago Press* 1981).

52. When analysts are using survey data, demographic variables like age, education, income etc., are defined using survey responses to questions.   When conducting an aggregate analysis, survey questions, usually administered by the U.S. Census Bureau, are aggregated to the unit of analysis, which in this case is the county.   Researchers using aggregate data have several options for operationalizing a variable like age, including the average age of all residents in a county, or alternatively the percentage of residents who are between the ages of 18 and 45. Which of these two variables representing age is the best predictor of Brownback's voting patterns? I have no a priori reason to choose one operationalization over the other, except to choose the operationalization that does the best job of explaining the aggregate voting pattern.

53. Aaron Bycoffe & David Wasserman, *What Would It Take to Turn Red States Blue*, FIVETHIRTYEIGHT (Dec. 3, 2015, 2:00 PM), http://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-swing-the-election/.

54. *Id.*

55. James A. Schlesinger, *The New American Political Party*, 79 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 1152, 1153 (1985).

56. *See* HERSHEY, *supra* note 16, at chs. 11–12.

A.   Methods, Variables, and Hypotheses

The dependent variable in this analysis is the percentage of GOP two-party vote for Brownback.[57] This is a ratio level variable that is easily amenable to standard linear regression. Because Kansas counties vary dramatically in population, all of the regression analyses are weighted by county population.

To assess the level of activities in the Democratic and Republican parties' in each county, the analysis uses election data from the 2012 Kansas State House general election. Each state house district is disaggregated to the county level, creating two measures. First, the proportion of state house seats contested in 2012 by Republicans versus Democrats in each county. And second, the proportion of these seats won by Republicans versus Democrats in each county.[58] Each indicator ranges between -1 (one-party Democratic domination) – 0 – (two-party competitive) +1 (one-party Republican domination). Note that this measure assumes that each party's activities at the state house level in 2012 are broadly representative of other recent election years. The hypothesis is straightforward: the higher the proportion of seats contested and won in counties by Republicans versus Democrats, the higher the percentage of two-party votes for Brownback.

Demographic data come from two primary sources, the U.S. Census for 2010 distributed by Woods and Poole,[59] and "U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2010."[60] I initially included in the regression analysis variables measuring the percentage of Hispanics and African Americans, median age, percentage of rural population,[61] percent of population change (2000 to 2010), per capita income in 2010 (measured in 2005 constant dollars), the percentage of low income households (making $30,000 or less), the percentage of moderate income households (making between $30,001 and $59,999), and the number of adherents per 1,000 people for Evangelical religions, Catholics, and the Methodist religions, respectively. I expected Brownback's county-level voting patterns to be negatively associated with Hispanics and African Americans, population change, and low income. For the other variables I hypothesize a positive relationship.

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57. Note, that the previous analyses used the proportion of vote. I have simply multiplied the proportion of GOP vote by 100 to calculate the percentage.

58. Any state house district that wholly or partially is a part of a county is counted as a state house district in that county. For example, Ellis County has two state house districts, the 111th, which is contained wholly within Ellis County, and 110th, which includes the areas of Ellis County not represented by the 111th, but also goes north to encompass all of Rooks, Phillips, and Norton.

59. WOODS & POOLE, *supra* note 35.

60. *See* CLIFFORD GRAMMICH ET AL., 2010 U.S. RELIGION CENSUS: RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS & MEMBERSHIP STUDY (Ass'n of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies 2012).

61. Defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as people who live in rural settings or who live in cities with less than 2,500 people.

B.   Findings

Table 3 shows the findings from this analysis.[62] The table represents the initial regression analysis including all of the independent variables listed above. Table 4 presents the reduced form of this regression, including only those variables that achieve statistical significance (or come very close).[63] Two null findings standout from the initial regression shown in Table 3: First, none of the measures of income achieve statistical significance (a significance level of .05 or below).[64] This suggests that the old social class basis of the New Deal coalition in Kansas is dead.[65] Instead, the analysis implies that religious factors associated with the percentage of Evangelicals and Catholics are a key party cleavage. Interestingly, since Alfred Smith ran for president in 1928, Catholics were strongly associated with Democratic voting patterns in U.S.[66] No more in Kansas. Table 4 shows that for every increase of 1 Catholic per 1,000 residents in a county, Brownback's percentage went up .035%.[67] Evangelicals, a religious group that was largely apolitical prior to the 1980s,[68] also increases Brownback's percentage of two-party votes (.045% for every increase of 1 Evangelical adherent per 1,000 residents).

Second, the percentage of blacks does not significantly relate to Brownback's voting patterns, but the percentage of Hispanics do. Any aggregate data analysis can be subject to ecological fallacies. We know from survey data that African Americans and Hispanics strongly support Democratic candidates.[69] In Kansas, blacks tend to concentrate in only three counties, Sedgwick, Shawnee, and Wyandotte. This does not provide much variance for purposes of conducting a regression analysis. Hispanics, on the other hand, are spread throughout Kansas' urban counties and rural counties in the Southwest part of the state. However they tend not to vote in proportion to their population because of status issues and weak political socialization patterns.[70] This finding needs further investigation to determine if Hispanics in Kansas are really more likely to support Republican candidates.

Three other variables play a significant role in increasing the percentage of vote for Brownback.[71] First, the percentage of rural residents in a county aids Brownback's percentage of votes. No surprise here. Second, going from a score of 0 on contesting elections variable (no Republican advantage over Democrats) to 1 (only the GOP candidates contest state house elections) increases

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62. *See* Appendix, Table 3, *infra.*

63. *See* Appendix, Table 4, *infra.*

64. *See* Appendix, Table 3, *infra.*

65. FLENTJE & AISTRUP, *supra* note 4, at ch. 4; Aistrup, *supra* note 19, at 772.

66. Key, *A Theory of Critical Elections, supra* note 18.

67. *See* Appendix, Table 4, *infra.*

68. *See* THOMAS EDSALL, & MARY EDSALL, CHAIN REACTION (1992).

69. Bycoffe & Wasserman, *supra* note 53.

70. Harold Stanley, *The Latino Vote in 2008, in,* PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN THE SOUTH: PUTTING 2008 IN POLITICAL CONTEXT (Kapeluck DuBose, Robert P. Steed, and Laurence W. Moreland, eds., 2010).

71. *See* Appendix, Table 4, *infra.*

Brownback's percentage of votes by 6.3%. Third, the effect for winning state house elections is 6.9%. Given that the GOP contests almost all state house districts and won more than 90 state house districts, the activities of the local GOP parties gives any GOP gubernatorial candidate a huge leg up.

All of this suggests that religion and rural contexts have supplanted social class in Kansas,[72] while a party's political activities to contest and win elections really do matter. . . a lot.

C.   *The Obama Factor*

Most red-state Democrats have not benefited from the presidency of President Barack Obama. The numbers speak loudly. In 2008, the Democrats control both state legislative chambers in 27 states, while Republicans control 14 states, and eight states have split control. In 2014, the numbers are almost reversed. Republicans control 26 state legislatures, including all of the South. While Democrats control 18 states and four states have split control. Going into the 2010 elections, 52% state senators and 56% of state house members across the U.S. are Democrats, whereas by 2014, only 42% of both chambers are Democrats. [73]

The location of most of these Democratic losses is in rural states or rural districts. Kansas is but one example. Prior to the 2010 general election, Democrats control a paltry 44 of 125 state house seats. After the 2010 GOP landslide, the Democrats are down to 33 seats.[74] After the 2014 elections, Democrats are down to only 27 seats in the Kansas State House.

Opinion columnists attach this shift in rural states and districts to some combination of complaints about the federal deficit, the Wall Street bailout, the Chevy bailout, Obamacare, increased business regulation and gun control, on top of climate change, abortion rights, gay marriage, and disputes over the place of religion in public life, especially in public schools.[75] Red state politicians and voters believe that the Democratic Party under Obama's leadership has moved too far to the left on all of these concerns, which translates into big losses for the Democrats in county governments, state houses, and Congress.[76]

For their part, the Davis/Docking ticket did everything they could to ameliorate this perception about them, painting the picture that they are the progeny of Kansas' moderate tradition and that Brownback is the ideological extremist. For example, they won the endorsements of Republican statesmen

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72. *See* THOMAS FRANK, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS (2004).

73. *State Partisan Composition*, NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES (Jan. 29, 2016), http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/partisan-composition.aspx.

74. *Id.*

75. Erick Erickson, *Yes, Barack Obama Has Been Terrible for Democrats Nationwide*, REDSTATE (Nov. 15, 2015), http://www.redstate.com/erick/2015/11/05/yes-barack-obama-has-been-terrible-for-democrats-nationwide/.

76. Alec MacGillis, *Who Turned My Blue State Red*, N.Y. TIMES (November 20, 2015), http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/22/opinion/sunday/who-turned-my-blue-state-red.html ?_r=0.

like Dick Bond, Steve Morris, and a host of other GOP stalwarts from the past, all of whom claimed that Brownback had moved the state too far to the right and that Davis would bring the state back to its moderate foundations. [77]

To address the Obama question, I develop a new variable that estimates "Obama's pull factor" by subtracting the average two-party vote for Republican presidents during the New Right alignment (1980-2008) from Romney's GOP two-party vote in 2012. The assumption is that the extent to which Romney outpolled his GOP presidential peers in a county is a reflection of the general level of distaste that voters in that county have for Obama as opposed to a more favorable opinion of Romney. This also cuts the other way. To the extent that Romney polled less than his GOP peers in a county, I assume that it is because Obama was more popular in that county than his previous Democratic presidential peers. Thus, in these counties, I hypothesize that Brownback will receive fewer votes. Romney, who is from Massachusetts, may have been the one GOP candidate over the past generation with the least amount of appeal to Kansas Republican voters. Indeed, Romney did not win the GOP caucuses in Kansas in 2012. Rick Santorum did.[78] Significantly, Romney outpolled his New Right GOP peers in 93 of 105 Kansas counties. However, Romney did worse than his peers in the largest counties in Kansas including Douglas, Johnson, Shawnee, Sedgwick, and Wyandotte counties.

I include Obama's pull factor into the reduced form regression analysis. These findings are in Table 5.[79] The results are astounding, but not surprising. For every one percent increase in the Obama pull factor, Brownback increased his two-party vote by .862%.[80] Interestingly, including Obama's pull factor in the reduced form regression equation renders the slope coefficients for Catholics and percentage rural residents in counties insignificant.[81] This suggests there is a great deal of overlap among counties that are largely rural and/or Catholic and higher levels of dislike for Obama.[82] Interestingly, the variance explained in Brownback's voting patterns for this regression model is a robust 84%.[83]

But did Obama's pull factor contribute to Davis' loss? I use the regression coefficients from Table 5 to answer this question. In Ellis, Obama did worse than his Democratic presidential peers by 14.37%. This percent is then multiplied by the slope coefficient for Obama's pull factor (.862*14.37=12.39), which equals 12.39% of the two-party vote. With a total of 9,157 two-party votes (Brownback+Davis) in Ellis County, this means that Obama's pull factor increased the Brownback's share by approximately 1,134 (.1239*9,157) votes.

77. Bryan Lowry, *Paul Davis Secures Endorsement of more than 100 Former and Current Republican Officials*, THE WICHITA EAGLE (July 15, 2014), http://www.kansas.com/news/politics -government/article1148593.html.

78. Felicia Sonmez & Brady Dennis, *Santorum wins Kansas Caucuses*, WASH. POST (March 10, 2012), https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/santorum-wins-kansas-caucuses /2012/03/10/gIQAFyZ33R_story.html.

79. *See* Appendix, Table 5, *infra.*

80. *Id.*

81. *Id.*

82. *Id.*

83. *Id.*

On the other end of the extreme, Obama did better than his Democratic presidential peers by 12.6% in Douglas County. Performing the same calculation I find that Obama decreased Brownback's two-party vote in Douglas County by 10.86% (12.6*.862) or 4,015 votes. Repeating this calculation for all 105 counties and summing the votes, I find that Obama's pull factor actually added a grand total of 2,053 votes (with the margin of error, there is a 95% probability that the vote total ranges between 1,827 to 2,278 votes) to Davis' vote total of 401,100. Brownback beat Davis by a total of 32,096 votes. Obama loomed large in Kansas, but his popularity in the large metro centers counterbalances his negative appeal in the rural counties of Kansas. Davis lost, but not because of Obama. Davis lost because the Democrats' local party organizations are so weak.

VI.   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I find:

- That the New Right party alignment at the presidential and gubernatorial levels tilts the Kansas party system so far to the right that Democrats have a substantial hill to climb to win elective statewide office.
- This GOP advantage was large enough to save the gubernatorial candidacy of Sam Brownback, who won despite some intraparty squabbling, some troubling budgetary outcomes, and the history of Democrats winning the governorship in Kansas when GOP candidates suffer from these types of issues.
- Religion and rural contexts have supplanted social class[84] in Kansas as the major cleavage structures in elections.
- Each party's efforts to contest and win state house elections really do matter for winning votes at the gubernatorial level. Parties matter!
- Obama loomed large in the Kansas gubernatorial election in 2014, however his popularity in urban centers counterbalances his unpopularity in rural counties. As a consequence, Obama's pull factor adds a grand total of 2,053 votes to Davis' vote totals.

Wither Kansas' contested elections? The party alignment in Kansas does not tilt toward supporting a strong two-party system of competition where Democrats compete effectively with the GOP. This hurts the Democrats capacity to build a strong farm system of candidates at the county and state legislative level, which the party can leverage to nominate viable candidates for Congressional and statewide contests. An opening for a Democrat to beat the odds and win a major office in Kansas will not likely occur until a Republican wins the presidency and faces his/her first mid-term election. This is traditionally the type of election when down-ticket officeholders from the president's party lose elections. This may occur in two years, six years, or ten years, depending on when a Republican candidate finally wins the presidency. No matter who that GOP nominee may be, Kansas' six electoral votes are

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84. FRANK, *supra note* 72.

securely in that Republican nominee's hip pocket. For above all else, that is the nature of Kansas elections.

VII. APPENDIX

Table 1: Election of Democratic Governors in Kansas[85]

1882 - John St. John (R) loses to George Glick (D)	Key issue was the prohibition constitutional amendment, ratified by voters in 1880. German speaking Republicans were disillusioned with St John for supporting it. Still other Republicans were upset with St. John for seeking an unprecedented third term. Glick lost reelection bid in 1882.
1890s - Populist uprising: Lorenzo Lewelling (P) 1892, John W. Leedy (P/D) 1896 win gubernatorial races.	Farmers' Alliance mobilizes around commodity prices, railroad fees, mortgage rates, and the gold standard. New Populist party forms, siphoning off GOP support among farmers. Republican gubernatorial candidates lost two elections in 1892 and 1896. There was also a pitched battle between Populists and Republicans for control of the state legislature in the 1890s.
1912 - Arthur Capper (R) loses to George Hodges (D)	Republicans were divided between progressives and "standpat" machine Republicans, who were the tools of the railroad interests. In 1912, Capper, a progressive Republican, loses to Hodges because the standpatters abandoned the GOP for the Democrats. Democrats also took control of both houses of the state legislature for first and only time. William Allen White, upset with the standpatters, promotes the development of the Progressive Party-following lead of Ted Roosevelt. Effort fails when Capper stays in the GOP. Republicans regain control under Capper's leadership in 1914.
1922-William Morgan (R) loses to Jonathan Davis (D)	Davis wins because of post WWI farm recession, aggravation over Governor Allen's (R) Industrial Court proposal, and lingering progressive v standpatter (Morgan, editor of Hutch paper, was a standpatter)

85. FLENTJE & AISTRUP, *supra* note 4, at 52–53.

1930-Frank Hauke (R) loses to Harry Woodring (D)	Woodring wins in a three-way race. Dr. John Brinkley runs a third party campaign for Governor, promoting a whole set of social welfare policies in the aftermath of the stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression. His campaign appealed to the down trodden and growing numbers of unemployed. Hauke (R), a standpatter, beats incumbent Governor Reed (R) in the Republican primary because Reed was an arrogant progressive who alienated most the state's GOP leadership. In 1932, Woodring is beaten by Alf Landon (R).
1936-Will West (R) loses to Walter Huxman (D)	Kansas follows national landslide for FDR over native son Alf Landon. Huxman aligned himself with FDR. GOP factionalism is not the cause of West's loss. Huxman loses in 1938.
1956-Warren Shaw (R) loses to George Docking (D)	Governor Hall's (R) administration is on the wrong side of the "Right-to-work" legislation, which is anti-labor and supported by Republican legislature. Shaw (R) beats Hall in the GOP primary. But the fissure between "Hall men" and "anti-Hall" men was too wide, allowing Docking to win. Docking wins reelection in 1958. He is the first incumbent Democratic governor to do so in the state's history.
1966-William Avery (R) loses to Robert Docking (D)	Avery (R) promoted increased taxes to support expanded social services. Robert Docking (D), son of George Docking, ran a conservative campaign ("austere but adequate") against tax increases and won. Docking succeeded in winning reelection three more times, becoming the first governor in Kansas to win third and fourth terms in office.

1978-Robert Bennett (R) loses to John Carlin (D)	Bennett, an incumbent Republican, was a Johnson County attorney who was perceived as distant by many voters, particularly in western Kansas. This perception, coupled with prospective utility rate hikes associated with the opening of Wolf Creek Nuclear power facility, allowed John Carlin, an under financed challenger, to pull off the upset. Carlin won a second term in 1982 by promoting a severance tax, a position popular in eastern Kansas, but not in western Kansas.
1990-Mike Hayden (R) loses to Joan Finney (D)	A moderate Republican, Mike Hayden (R) was challenged in the GOP primary by a conservative real estate agent Nestor Weigand over implementation of the new property assessment system and support of abortion rights. Hayden won the battle but lost the war. In the general election, social conservatives voted for Joan Finney, a pro-life Democrat. Democrats also took control of the Kansas House. Facing certain defeat, Finney chose not to run for reelection in 1994.
2002-Tim Shallenburger (R) loses to Kathleen Sebelius (D)	Tim Shallenburger (R), who led to rise of polar alliance Republicans in the Kansas House in 1995, ran and beat two moderates in the GOP primary. However, he was unable to rally moderate Republicans to support him in the general election, losing to Sebelius. In a repeat of the 2002 election, Sebelius easily beat Jim Barnett in 2006. Sebelius won reelection with 58% of the vote, one of the most lopsided Democratic victories in the state's history, second only to Docking's reelection in 1972.

Table 2: Averages and Standard Deviations of Mean GOP Two Party Vote by Alignment Era

Governor	Unweighted		Weighted	
	Avg	**Std Dev**	**Avg**	**Std Dev**
Progressive	0.580	0.049	0.571	0.041
New Deal	0.540	0.048	0.511	0.059
New Right	0.622	0.072	0.553	0.082
President				
Progressive	0.563	0.042	0.563	0.039
New Deal	0.614	0.051	0.581	0.069
New Right	0.682	0.072	0.612	0.086

Table 3: Regression Explaining Brownback's Percent of GOP Two-Party Vote

	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	b (slope)	Std. Error	Beta	T-statistic	Significance
Intercept	-1.475	15.593		-0.095	0.925
State House 2012 GOP Contest - Dem Contest	**6.844**	**2.393**	**0.225**	**2.86**	**0.005**
State House 2012 GOP win - Dem win	**7.062**	**1.618**	**0.397**	**4.365**	**0.000**
Hispanic Percent (2010)	0.156	0.087	0.142	1.789	0.077
Black Percent (2010)	0.087	0.177	0.049	0.491	0.625
Median Age (2010)	0.226	0.231	0.102	0.978	0.331
Rural Percent (2010)	**0.140**	**0.043**	**0.359**	**3.257**	**0.002**
% Pop Change 2000 to 2010	1.022	0.626	0.173	1.632	0.106
Evangelicals, Adherents per 1,000	**0.036**	**0.012**	**0.179**	**3.065**	**0.003**
Catholics, Adherents per 1,000	**0.033**	**0.011**	**0.198**	**2.919**	**0.004**
Methodist, Adherents per 1,000	-0.004	0.024	-0.014	-0.161	0.873
Income Per Capita (2010)	7.98E-05	1.82E-04	0.05	0.438	0.662
% of HH with $30K or less (2010)	0.107	0.209	0.069	0.511	0.610
% of HH btw $31K & $59K (2010)	0.442	0.307	0.169	1.439	0.154

R	R-Square	Adj.R Square	SSE	F-Statistic
0.878	0.772	0.739	27.95208	23.665

Bolded = Statistically Significant at .05 level or less

Table 4: Regression Explaining Brownback's Percent of GOP Two-Party Vote (Reduced Form)

	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	b (slope)	Std. Error	Beta	T-statistic	Significance
Intercept	27.563	2.47		11.16	0.000
State House 2012 GOP Contest - Dem Contest	6.350	2.027	0.209	3.133	0.002
State House 2012 GOP win - Dem win	6.957	1.256	0.391	5.539	0.000
Hispanic Percent (2010)	0.164	0.062	0.149	2.634	0.010
Rural Percent (2010)	0.162	0.022	0.415	7.444	0.000
Evangelicals, Adherents per 1,000	0.045	0.010	0.224	4.356	0.000
Catholics, Adherents per 1,000	0.035	0.009	0.213	3.846	0.000

R	R-Square	Adj. R Square	SSE	F-Statistic
0.869	0.756	0.741	27.8554	50.546

Bolded = Statistically Significant at .05 level or less

Table 5: Regression Explaining Brownback's Percent of GOP Two-Party Vote (Obama Pull Factor)

	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	b (slope)	Std. Error	Beta	T-statistic	Significance
Intercept	37.175	2.26		16.449	0.000
State House 2012 GOP Contest - Dem Contest	5.168	1.583	0.17	3.265	0.002
State House 2012 GOP win - Dem win	6.832	0.977	0.384	6.994	0.000
Hispanic Percent (2010)	0.172	0.048	0.157	3.551	0.001
Rural Percent (2010)	0.032	0.023	0.081	1.352	0.179
Evangelicals, Adherents per 1,000	0.031	0.008	0.155	3.785	0.000
Catholics, Adherents per 1,000	0.014	0.008	0.085	1.856	0.066
Obama Pull Factor	0.862	0.107	0.482	8.067	0.000

R	R-Square	Adj. R Square	SSE	F-Statistic
0.924	0.854	0.843	21.66049	80.947

Bolded = Statistically Significant at .05 level or less
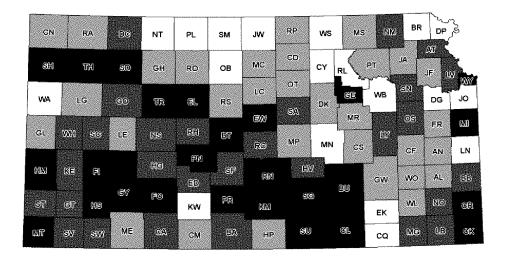
Map 1: Post-Civil War Party Alignment[86]

Legend

■	Strong Democrat
■	Lean Democrat
▨	Competitive
▨	Lean Republican
□	Strong Republican

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86. FLENTJE & AISTRUP, *supra* note 4, at 61.

Map 2: New Deal Party Alignment[87]

Legend
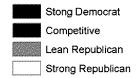
⬛	Strong Democrat
⬛	Lean Democrat
⬛	Competitive
⬜	Lean Republican
⬜	Strong Republican

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87. FLENTJE & AISTRUP, *supra* note 4, at 64.

Map 3: New Right Party Alignment[88]

Legend

■ Stong Democrat

■ Competitive

▒ Lean Republican

□ Strong Republican
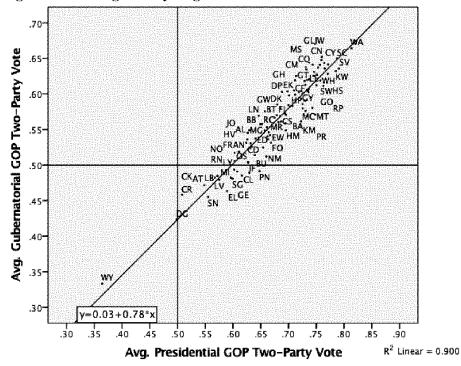
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88. FLENTJE & AISTRUP, *supra* note 4, at 65.
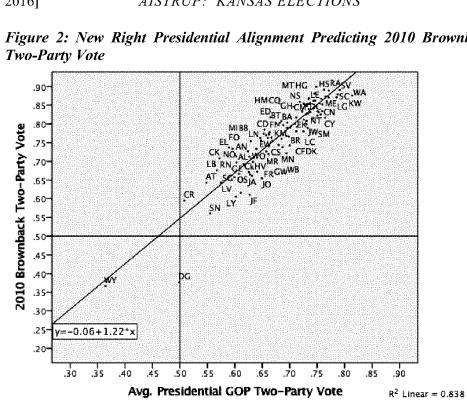
Figure 1: New Right Party Alignment: 1980 – 2010

Figure 2: New Right Presidential Alignment Predicting 2010 Brownback Two-Party Vote

Figure 3: New Right Presidential Alignment Predicting 2014 Brownback Two-Party Vote

R^2 Linear = 0.754