Printing Morality: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Antebellum Political Realignment*

Erdong Xu†

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Abstract

How can a widely circulated cultural narrative contribute to political realignment? This paper examines this question through the publication and diffusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the antebellum United States. Drawing on historical newspaper advertisements and transportation networks, I construct a county-level measure of potential exposure to the novel. Difference-in-differences estimates show that counties with greater exposure experienced larger declines in Democratic vote shares and increases in Republican support following the novel's publication. These electoral differences became particularly pronounced in 1856, when the Republican Party emerged as a major electoral alternative. Complementary evidence from household naming choices, newspaper discussions, and contemporary political statements documents the novel's reception and use beyond direct readership. The findings suggest that widely circulated cultural narratives can contribute to electoral realignment by bringing political ideas and moral arguments into broader public life.

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†Department of Economics, George Washington University, Email: exu02@gwu.edu

1 Introduction

A moral issue can divide a society long before it reshapes electoral politics. How such issues become central to political competition depends in part on how they are understood and communicated to the broader public. Cultural narratives offer one possible channel, transforming abstract moral and political arguments into stories that reach a mass audience. Can the widespread circulation of such a narrative influence electoral outcomes? This paper studies this question in the antebellum United States through the publication and diffusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which rapidly reached a mass audience with over 300,000 copies sold within its first year (Stowe, 1852; Parfait, 2016).

Published in book form in 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became an influential cultural expression of antislavery sentiment. Through stories of family separation, personal suffering, and Christian sympathy, the novel presented slavery as a question of moral responsibility and evoked deep sympathy among northern readers (Reynolds, 2012). Propelled by extensive newspaper advertising and the rapidly expanding railway network, the book spread swiftly across the North (Zboray, 1993; Parfait, 2016). Its cultural reach extended beyond the printed book, generating a broad public response that left multiple observable traces: newspapers carried extensive discussion and commentary, stage and song adaptations flourished, parents named their newborn daughters "Eva" after a central character, and politicians praised the book for its moral appeal (Reynolds, 2012). Abraham Lincoln is even said to have greeted Stowe as "the little lady who made this great war," an oft-repeated anecdote reflecting the enduring perception of the novel's significance in the sectional conflict.[1]

Uncle Tom's Cabin provides an ideal setting to examine the political consequences of a widely circulated cultural narrative. First, its publication coincided with a major electoral realignment, during which the collapse of the Whig Party and the emergence of the Republican Party transformed northern political competition. Second, historical county-level

[1] For a discussion of whether Lincoln actually made this widely circulated remark, see Vollaro (2009).

election returns make it possible to examine changes in electoral support before and after the novel's publication across a broad geographic area. Third, the novel's extensive commercial promotion provides an opportunity to trace differences in its potential geographic reach. In particular, the publisher and local booksellers relied heavily on newspaper advertising, allowing me to identify locations where the novel was advertised using digitized historical newspaper archives.

Nevertheless, newspaper advertising locations were not randomly chosen. Publishers and booksellers may have targeted more populous, commercially connected, or politically receptive places, making direct comparisons between advertising and non-advertising counties potentially misleading. I therefore use advertising locations as sources of diffusion rather than treating the presence of an advertisement as the treatment itself. Drawing on historical railroad and stage-route networks, I construct a continuous county-level measure of potential exposure based on travel times to advertising locations. Counties more closely connected to these locations receive higher exposure. I then restrict the analysis to northern counties without recorded advertisements, reducing concerns about the endogenous placement of advertisements. This approach allows me to examine whether the novel's political influence extended beyond its recorded advertising locations through the broader transportation network.

Using this county-level exposure measure, I estimate a difference-in-differences (DID) specification comparing changes in presidential vote shares before and after the novel's publication. The results show that more exposed counties experienced larger declines in Democratic support and increases in the harmonized Whig/Republican vote-share series. In the preferred specification, a one-standard-deviation difference in log exposure corresponds to a 2.66 percentage-point larger decline in Democratic presidential vote share and a 4.00 percentage-point larger increase in Whig/Republican vote share. Event-study estimates show no systematic differential trends before publication. The partisan divergence emerges following the novel's publication and becomes particularly pronounced in 1856, when the

Republican Party first contested a presidential election. Similar patterns are observed in congressional elections, suggesting that the electoral changes extended beyond presidential contests. The findings remain robust across a range of alternative specifications and sensitivity checks.

I next examine complementary evidence of the novel's cultural reception and political use. At the household level, counties with greater exposure experienced larger increases in the number of girls named Eva, a central character in the novel, suggesting that its cultural influence extended into family naming choices. In public discourse, contemporary newspapers invoked the novel's characters and moral arguments to interpret actual events and debate slavery, while its critics challenged its political implications. Finally, contemporary political figures recognized the novel's importance to the antislavery cause and invoked it in political debates. These findings illustrate how the novel entered household culture, public discussion, and political expression, providing historical context for the electoral results.

This paper makes three contributions. First, it contributes to the literature on the political and social consequences of cultural narratives. Recent studies show that widely circulated cultural works can influence racial attitudes, intergroup relations, and social behavior (Ang, 2023; Esposito et al., 2023). This paper extends that literature by examining how the circulation of an antislavery novel contributed to electoral realignment. By linking differences in exposure to the novel with changes in partisan electoral support, the analysis highlights how widely circulated cultural narratives may participate in the reorganization of political allegiances during periods of ideological and partisan change.

Second, the paper contributes to the literature on information diffusion and political behavior. Existing research demonstrates that exposure to newspapers, radio, and television can influence political attitudes and electoral outcomes (Gentzkow, 2006; Gentzkow et al., 2011; Wang, 2021; Campante et al., 2018). Information transmitted through historical communication networks can also facilitate the diffusion of collective action (García-Jimeno et al., 2022). Related studies show that fictional narratives and entertainment content can

shape individual choices and political behavior (Ferrara et al., 2012; Durante et al., 2019). This paper highlights literary works as vehicles for the diffusion of political ideas and moral narratives. To my knowledge, it provides some of the first quantitative evidence linking the geographic diffusion of a major literary work to changes in electoral support.

Third, the paper contributes to the historical literature on antislavery politics and the electoral realignment of the 1850s. Existing scholarship emphasizes sectional conflict, economic interests, political leadership, party organization, and the ideological foundations of the emerging Republican coalition (Ashworth, 1995; Foner, 1995; Gienapp, 1987; Dippel and Heblich, 2021). This paper complements these explanations by examining the diffusion of a widely read antislavery narrative. Although the novel's moral critique was not identical to the Republican Party's political platform, its widespread circulation coincided with the reorganization of northern party competition. The findings suggest that cultural diffusion may have contributed to the reorganization of northern electoral support as slavery became increasingly central to political identities and party competition.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 provides the historical background. Section 3 describes the data, and Section 4 presents the empirical strategy. Section 5 reports the electoral results and robustness checks. Section 6 examines the novel's cultural reception and political uses. Section 7 concludes.

2 Historical Background

2.1 The Novel and Its Antislavery Narrative

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* against the backdrop of growing sectional conflict over slavery. Having lived for several years in Cincinnati, across the Ohio River from Kentucky, Stowe was familiar with the experiences of fugitive slaves and the tensions surrounding slavery in the border region. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which strengthened federal enforcement of the return of escaped slaves even from free states,

further motivated her opposition to slavery. Stowe sought to convey this opposition through a literary work that could appeal to readers beyond established abolitionist circles (Hedrick, 1995).

Rather than presenting slavery primarily as a constitutional or economic controversy, the novel portrayed its human consequences through the experiences of individual characters and families. The threatened separation of Eliza from her child, Uncle Tom's suffering under successive owners, and the compassion embodied by the young Eva brought the institution of slavery into the realm of family relationships, personal suffering, and moral responsibility. By placing these experiences at the center of the narrative, Stowe invited readers to evaluate slavery through the lives of those subjected to it rather than solely through abstract arguments over law and political authority.

Christian morality and sentimental storytelling were central to this approach. The novel emphasized sympathy for suffering, the obligations of individuals toward others, and the moral contradictions between slavery and Christian principles. Its characters offered readers recognizable figures through which to understand and discuss these conflicts. In this sense, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did more than articulate an antislavery position: it presented slavery through a narrative that connected a political institution to familiar moral and emotional experiences (Tompkins, 1986).

This distinction is important for understanding the novel's potential political significance. Formal antislavery arguments had long circulated through abolitionist organizations, political speeches, and reform newspapers. A popular fictional narrative could convey related concerns through forms of storytelling accessible to audiences who did not necessarily identify with organized abolitionism. The novel's political relevance therefore lay not only in the position it advanced, but also in how its characters and stories made slavery a subject of personal identification and moral judgment.

2.2 Commercial Publication and Circulation

The novel initially appeared as a serial in the *National Era*, an antislavery weekly newspaper published in Washington, D.C., beginning in June 1851. Its installments attracted substantial attention before the story was completed, demonstrating an early audience for Stowe's narrative. The transition from newspaper serialization to book publication in March 1852 substantially expanded its commercial reach. John P. Jewett, a Boston publisher associated with religious and reform literature, issued the novel in two volumes and undertook an extensive promotional campaign (Parfait, 2016).

Publishing a work with such an explicit antislavery message involved commercial and political risks, particularly for firms with interests in Southern markets. Yet the novel's reception also demonstrated the potential for a politically purposeful literary work to reach a mass audience through ordinary commercial channels. Jewett promoted the book through newspaper advertisements, including advance notices announcing its publication and subsequent announcements emphasizing its rapidly growing sales. Local booksellers and agents also advertised the novel in regional newspapers, extending its commercial visibility beyond the publisher's immediate market (Parfait, 2016).

The scale of the novel's success was extraordinary. More than 300,000 copies were sold in the United States within its first year, making it one of the most widely circulated American literary works of the period. Its readership could extend beyond individual purchasers through shared copies and reading aloud. The story also reached audiences through theatrical performances, popular songs, and other adaptations. These forms of circulation allowed its characters and moral themes to become recognizable beyond the printed novel itself.

The expanding transportation network facilitated the geographic distribution of books and other printed materials. By the early 1850s, railroads increasingly connected major publishing centers to regional markets, while stage routes continued to link smaller towns and rural communities. These connections enabled publishers and booksellers to distribute books, replenish inventories, and exchange information across increasingly integrated markets

(Zboray, 1993). Together with newspaper advertising and decentralized bookselling, the transportation system provided the commercial infrastructure through which the novel could reach readers across the North.

The case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* thus illustrates the intersection of political purpose and commercial cultural production. Stowe's antislavery narrative reached a broad audience not primarily through a political party or formal reform organization, but through publishers, booksellers, newspapers, and popular adaptations. Through commercial publishing and distribution, the novel brought its antislavery narrative to a broad audience, including readers beyond established abolitionist circles.

2.3 Slavery and Electoral Realignment

The political significance of the novel's circulation must be understood in the context of the transformation of the American party system during the 1850s. Before this period, national politics was dominated by the Democratic and Whig parties, both of which maintained support across Northern and Southern states. Although slavery had long generated sectional tensions, the two-party system helped contain these divisions within broader political coalitions (Ashworth, 1995; Forbes, 2009).

During the 1850s, a series of political crises increasingly brought slavery to the center of national politics. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 intensified Northern opposition to slavery, while the Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854 reignited controversy over its expansion into western territories. These developments deepened sectional divisions, accelerated the collapse of the Whig Party, and contributed to the formation of the Republican Party. The new party brought together former Whigs, Free Soilers, and antislavery Democrats around opposition to the expansion of slavery (Gienapp, 1987).

When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared in book form in 1852, the established party system was still intact, although increasingly strained. Opposition to slavery was expressed through reform movements, cultural discourse, and several political organizations rather than a uni-

fied national party. By 1856, however, the Republican Party had emerged as a major electoral alternative, with John C. Frémont as its first presidential nominee. The reorganization of political competition continued through 1860, when Abraham Lincoln won the presidency. This transition created new opportunities for antislavery concerns to be expressed through partisan choice.

The novel's commercial success thus coincided with a period of profound political change. Although its moral critique of slavery was not identical to the Republican Party's political platform (Foner, 1995), the novel brought questions of slavery and moral responsibility to a broad audience as these issues became increasingly important in electoral competition. This historical setting motivates the empirical analysis of whether counties with greater exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* experienced different patterns of electoral change during the realignment of the 1850s.

3 Data

3.1 Uncle Tom's Cabin: Newspaper Advertisements

The first step is to identify locations where *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was commercially advertised. Its publisher, John P. Jewett, was a relatively small player in the nineteenth-century book industry. Despite the novel's extraordinary success, Jewett's company went bankrupt during the Panic of 1857, and he subsequently left the publishing business. Unlike the records of established publishers such as Ticknor & Fields in Boston and Harper & Brothers in New York, no surviving business records from Jewett's firm are available to trace the novel's geographic distribution.

Nevertheless, Jewett invested heavily in marketing, particularly through newspaper advertising. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold more than 300,000 copies in its first year, an extraordinary achievement for the period. Newspapers were a principal channel through which the novel was promoted to a broad readership. Advertisements appeared both through the publisher's

promotional efforts and through local booksellers and agents. To trace this early commercial circulation, I search four historical newspaper databases[2] for the phrases "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Uncle Tom Cabin" in 1852, yielding approximately 30,000 pages of search results. For each identified advertisement (examples in Figure 1), I record its publication date, newspaper title, and any bookstore or agent addresses mentioned. I define advertising counties by the locations of the newspapers in which these advertisements appeared.

This procedure identifies 94 counties with recorded advertisements for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. These counties, hereafter referred to as advertising counties, provide observable locations associated with the novel's early commercial promotion and distribution. Figure 3 maps their geographic distribution alongside the historical transportation network. I use these locations as diffusion sources to construct a county-level measure of potential exposure through transportation connections, as described in Section 4.

3.2 Transportation network: Railroads and Stage Routes

The rapid expansion of railroads during the 1850s transformed book distribution by connecting previously fragmented regional markets into a more integrated national network (Zboray, 1993). To approximate the transportation routes through which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could circulate, I construct an integrated network of railroads and stage routes around the time of the novel's publication. Railroads connected major cities and commercial centers, while stage routes continued to serve smaller towns and rural areas beyond the railroad system. Together, they provided important overland connections for the movement of books, newspapers, and correspondence.

The railroad component comes from the historical GIS dataset developed by Atack (2016), which reconstructs the U.S. railroad network as of 1852. I supplement this with stage routes digitized from *Disturnell's New Map of the United States and Canada* (Burr, 1850), depicting the network around 1850. The original map is reproduced in Figure 2. I combine the two

[2]The four databases are Newspapers.com, Chronicling America, NewspaperArchive.com, and *19th Century U.S. Newspapers*.

layers into an integrated transportation network, shown in Figure 3, and use it to calculate shortest travel times between counties and advertising locations.

3.3 Electoral Outcomes and County Characteristics

The main analysis focuses on counties in fifteen northern states.[3] The main electoral outcomes are county-level Democratic and Whig/Republican presidential vote shares, measured in percentage points, from 1840 to 1860. The Whig/Republican series combines Whig voting through 1852 with Republican voting in 1856 and 1860, reflecting the changing structure of opposition-party competition during this period. Election returns come from the ICPSR 8611 collection (Clubb et al., 2006), which provides historical county-level presidential and congressional election results.

To characterize pre-publication county conditions, I assemble demographic, economic, political, and geographic characteristics. Demographic and economic variables are drawn primarily from the ICPSR 2896 collection (Haines et al., 2010), which compiles historical U.S. Census data, including the 1850 census. Geographic boundaries and related spatial features come from the Atlas of Historical County Boundaries (Siczewicz, 2011). I use county boundaries as of 1852 and harmonize electoral and census observations to a consistent geographic framework for the analysis.

4 Empirical Strategy

This section describes the analytical sample and the construction of county-level exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, followed by the difference-in-differences framework used to examine its relationship with electoral change.

[3]Southern states are excluded because the novel encountered widespread hostility and opposition in the South. Pro-slavery newspapers criticized its portrayal of slavery and promoted counter-narratives, including *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is*.

4.1 Measuring Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin

Sample construction. The analysis focuses on northern counties without recorded advertisements for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I exclude the 94 advertising counties identified in the historical newspaper records (see Section 3). This restriction reduces concerns about the endogenous placement of advertisements. Publishers, booksellers, and local agents may have targeted counties with larger markets, higher literacy rates, or greater receptiveness to antislavery ideas. Including these counties could therefore make it difficult to distinguish the political consequences of the novel's circulation from the local conditions that shaped advertising decisions.

Focusing on non-advertising counties shifts the analysis from locations where the novel was directly promoted to those potentially reached through the transportation network. This distinction is important not only for identification but also for understanding the geographic reach of cultural diffusion. If exposure to the novel is associated with electoral changes even in counties without recorded advertisements, its political influence may have extended beyond the locations of direct promotion. The analysis thus examines how a commercially circulated cultural work could reach a wider audience and contribute to political change beyond its recorded advertising locations.

Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. To measure potential diffusion through the transportation network, I construct a continuous exposure index based on travel times between each county and the novel's advertising locations. Let $\mathcal{A}$ denote the set of advertising locations used as diffusion sources, and let t_{ca} represent the shortest travel time between advertising county a and county c, calculated using the integrated railroad–stage network described in Section 3. County-level exposure is defined as

$$\text{Exposure}_c = \sum_{a \in \mathcal{A},\, a \neq c} \exp\left(-\frac{t_{ca}}{\tau}\right), \tag{1}$$

where τ governs the rate at which exposure declines with travel time. I use an eight-hour half-

life, so that the contribution of an advertising location is reduced by half for every additional eight hours of travel.[4] The measure relies on network travel time rather than geographic distance, capturing differences in accessibility through the historical transportation system.

The exposure index aggregates potential exposure from multiple advertising locations rather than relying solely on the nearest source. Counties connected to several advertising locations receive greater exposure, while contributions from more distant locations decline smoothly with travel time. This approach reflects the possibility that the novel circulated through multiple commercial and transportation routes. The resulting index captures potential exposure to the novel, rather than observed purchases or readership.

4.2 Difference-in-Differences Design and Identification

The empirical strategy exploits differences in county-level exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* before and after its publication in 1852. The main analysis uses presidential elections from 1840 to 1860 and compares changes in party vote shares across counties with different exposure intensities. Specifically, I estimate the following continuous-treatment difference-in-differences specification:

$$\text{Vote}_{ct} = \beta \log(\text{Exposure}_c) \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \mathbf{X}_c' \boldsymbol{\lambda}_t + \varepsilon_{ct}, \tag{2}$$

where Vote_{ct} denotes the vote share received by a given party in county c and election year t. The main outcomes are Democratic vote share and a harmonized Whig/Republican series, which records Whig presidential voting through 1852 and Republican presidential voting in 1856 and 1860. The latter captures successive opposition-party choices rather than the vote share of a single party throughout the period.

The treatment variable, $\log(\text{Exposure}_c)$, is the logarithm of county-level exposure to the novel, while $Post_t$ equals one for elections in 1852 and later. County fixed effects, δ_c, absorb

[4] An eight-hour half-life corresponds to $\tau = 8/\ln 2 \approx 11.54$ hours. Estimates using six- or ten-hour half-lives are quantitatively similar (Table A.8).

time-invariant county characteristics, and state-by-election-year fixed effects, θ_{st}, account for shocks common to counties within the same state in a given election year. The vector $\mathbf{X}_c$ includes pre-treatment demographic, economic, geographic, and political characteristics, interacted with election-year indicators to allow their relationships with electoral outcomes to vary over time. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

The coefficient of interest, β, captures the average post-publication difference in party vote-share changes associated with a one-unit difference in log exposure, conditional on the fixed effects and controls. To complement this continuous-treatment specification, I also divide counties into terciles of exposure and estimate separate post-publication interactions for the medium- and high-exposure groups, using low-exposure counties as the reference category. This alternative specification allows electoral changes to vary across exposure groups without imposing a linear relationship in log exposure.

The causal interpretation of the continuous-treatment DID estimates relies on assumptions about counterfactual electoral trends and treatment responses across counties with different exposure intensities (Callaway et al., 2024). The key parallel-trends assumption is that, conditional on the fixed effects and pre-treatment characteristics, counties with different exposure levels would have followed comparable electoral trends in the absence of the novel's circulation. Interpreting the estimated exposure gradient as a causal response to differences in exposure intensity additionally requires comparability of potential treatment responses across counties. Under these assumptions, the design provides evidence on the electoral consequences of differential exposure to the novel. Section 5.2 examines pre-publication electoral trends, while Section 5.4 provides further sensitivity checks.

5 Electoral Results

5.1 Baseline Electoral Effects

I begin with the difference-in-differences estimates from Equation (2). Table 2 reports the baseline election results, with and without pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with election-year indicators. All specifications include county and state-by-election-year fixed effects. The outcomes are Democratic vote share and a harmonized Whig/Republican series, which records Whig presidential voting through 1852 and Republican presidential voting in 1856 and 1860. The latter captures successive opposition-party choices rather than the vote share of a single party throughout the period.

In Panel A, Columns (1) and (2) show that counties with greater exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* experienced larger post-publication declines in Democratic presidential vote share. In the preferred specification, which includes the full set of controls, the estimated coefficient is -2.387, significant at the one-percent level. A one-standard-deviation difference in log exposure corresponds to a 2.66 percentage-point larger decline, equivalent to approximately 5.7 percent of the sample mean. Columns (3) and (4) report the corresponding estimates for the Whig/Republican series. The preferred coefficient is 3.591, also significant at the one-percent level, implying a 4.00 percentage-point larger increase for a one-standard-deviation difference in log exposure, or approximately 8.7 percent of the sample mean. Panel B reports congressional election results, which exhibit the same directional patterns, with statistically significant declines in Democratic vote shares and increases in Whig/Republican vote shares. These estimates indicate a post-publication electoral gradient away from the Democrats and toward the evolving Whig/Republican opposition in counties with greater exposure to the novel. The following analysis examines how this relationship evolved as the party system changed.

As a complementary check, Table 3 reports DID estimates based on terciles of exposure, with low-exposure counties as the reference group. The results follow the same broad pattern:

counties with medium and high exposure experienced larger declines in Democratic vote share and greater gains in Whig/Republican vote share relative to low-exposure counties. These findings suggest that the baseline relationship is not driven solely by the functional-form assumption imposed on continuous exposure.

5.2 Dynamic Electoral Responses

To examine the timing of these electoral changes, I estimate an event-study specification that replaces the post-publication interaction with exposure interacted with election-year indicators. Figure 5 presents the estimates for Democratic and Whig/Republican presidential voting, using 1848 as the omitted election year.

Three patterns emerge. First, there is no systematic evidence of differential electoral trends before the novel's publication. For both outcomes, the pre-1852 coefficients are jointly indistinguishable from zero relative to 1848. Second, the two series diverge after publication, with Democratic vote share declining and Whig/Republican vote share increasing more in highly exposed counties. Third, the divergence becomes most pronounced in 1856 and remains statistically significant in 1860. Notably, 1856 marked the Republican Party's first presidential contest. The timing therefore coincides with the emergence of a new partisan alternative through which opposition to the Democrats could be expressed. While the 1852 estimate reflects Whig voting, the estimates for 1856 and 1860 directly capture Republican electoral support.

The average and dynamic estimates thus point to a relationship between exposure to the novel and electoral change that became particularly pronounced during the reorganization of northern party competition. Figure 6 presents analogous event studies by exposure tercile, showing patterns broadly consistent with the continuous-exposure estimates.

5.3 Accounting for Network Access

Exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* depends both on where the novel was advertised and on the transportation network connecting those locations to other counties. Counties with better network access may also have had greater access to political information, commercial activity, and other printed materials. The estimated electoral relationship may therefore partly reflect broader differences in connectivity. I assess this concern through three complementary exercises: controlling for network centrality, measuring exposure relative to overall network accessibility, and accounting for exposure to other commercially circulated books. Table 4 presents the results alongside the baseline estimates. Detailed definitions and construction procedures are provided in the Appendix.

Network centrality. The first exercise examines whether the baseline relationship reflects counties' overall positions in the transportation network. I retain the original UTC exposure measure and control for harmonic centrality, which summarizes each county's proximity to other locations in the network. Interacting centrality with election-year indicators allows electoral trajectories to vary with general network accessibility, independently of the variation captured by UTC exposure.

Column (2) shows that the estimated UTC coefficients become somewhat larger in magnitude after accounting for network centrality, while retaining their original signs and statistical significance. The baseline relationship is therefore not absorbed by differences in general network proximity, suggesting that the geographic distribution of UTC advertising locations contains information beyond counties' overall positions in the transportation network.

Relative advertising coverage. The second exercise considers whether the results depend on measuring exposure in absolute terms. The baseline measure captures potential access to UTC through transportation connections to its advertising locations, but also reflects differences in overall network accessibility. I therefore construct an alternative measure

of relative advertising coverage, denoted by R, by dividing transportation-weighted access to UTC advertising locations by transportation-weighted access to all counties in the northern reference network. This ratio measures UTC advertising coverage relative to broader network connections. I replace the original exposure measure with R and additionally control for overall network accessibility interacted with election-year indicators.

Despite this change in how exposure is defined, Column (3) continues to show a negative relationship with Democratic voting and a positive relationship with Whig/Republican voting, both statistically significant. The consistency in direction across absolute and relative measures indicates that the electoral pattern does not depend exclusively on counties' total accessibility to UTC advertising locations. Rather, it is also present when exposure is evaluated relative to the broader transportation network.

Comparison-book exposure. The third exercise addresses a related but distinct concern: counties with greater UTC exposure may also have had better access to commercially circulated books more generally. Using the same network-based approach, I construct a comparison-book exposure measure from advertising locations for eight other books circulating during the same period. I retain the original UTC exposure measure and control for comparison-book exposure interacted with election-year indicators. This specification examines whether the baseline relationship persists after accounting for geographic patterns of book circulation shared with other titles.

Column (4) shows that the estimated UTC relationships retain their original directions and statistical significance after controlling for comparison-book exposure. In complementary specifications that reverse the roles of the two exposure measures, comparison-book exposure is not significantly associated with average post-publication electoral changes once UTC exposure is controlled for. This asymmetry is consistent with UTC exposure capturing variation beyond the common advertising geography represented by the comparison books. The complementary estimates and additional sensitivity checks are reported in the appendix.

Together, the three exercises indicate that the electoral relationship associated with UTC exposure is not readily explained by general network access alone. These findings lend additional support to the interpretation that the circulation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* contributed to the electoral changes documented above.

5.4 Robustness Checks

Continuous-treatment diagnostics. The continuous-treatment DID design relies on the comparability of counties with different exposure intensities. While the event-study results in Section 5.2 show no systematic differential pre-publication trends, the baseline estimates may still be sensitive to differences in observed county characteristics or the assumed functional form of the exposure-response relationship. I conduct two additional exercises to examine these possibilities.

First, following Cook et al. (2023), I implement a propensity score matching DID procedure that compares counties with similar pre-treatment characteristics and re-estimates the baseline specification on the matched sample. Appendix Table A.2 shows that the estimated relationships retain their original directions, although the decline in Democratic presidential vote share is estimated less precisely in the matched sample. Second, I estimate nonparametric binned DID specifications that allow electoral responses to vary flexibly across the exposure distribution. Appendix Figure A.2 displays an exposure-response pattern broadly consistent with the baseline specification, particularly for gains in Whig/Republican voting. Together, these exercises indicate that the main findings are not solely driven by observable differences across counties or the imposed log-linear exposure specification.

Alternative exposure measures. The baseline analysis measures potential exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* using travel times along the historical transportation network. To examine whether the results depend on this particular construction, I consider simpler geographic measures of proximity to advertising locations. Appendix Table A.3 reports estimates using

indicators for adjacency to an advertising county and distance to the nearest advertising location. The results are broadly consistent with the baseline findings, suggesting that the electoral patterns are not driven solely by the functional form of the network-based exposure measure.

Population weighting. The baseline estimates give equal weight to counties regardless of population size. To examine whether the results are sensitive to this choice, I reestimate the specifications using a proxy for the voting-eligible population, based on the number of adult white males in each county. Appendix Table A.4 reports the results. The estimates remain similar in direction, indicating that the main findings are not confined to the unweighted county-level specification.

Local newspaper availability. Counties with a local newspaper may differ systematically from those without one in literacy, commercial development, and access to information. To assess whether these differences affect the results, I restrict the sample to counties with a local newspaper. Appendix Table A.5 shows that the estimated electoral relationships remain broadly consistent with the baseline, suggesting that the findings are not driven solely by differences between counties with and without local newspapers.

Alternative standard errors. The baseline analysis clusters standard errors at the county level (Abadie et al., 2023). As an additional robustness check, I examine the sensitivity of statistical inference to alternative approaches for accounting for spatial dependence across counties. Appendix Table A.6 reports estimates using state-clustered standard errors and Conley spatial standard errors. The main conclusions remain broadly consistent under these alternative approaches.

6 Cultural Reception and Political Uses

The electoral results document a relationship between exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the realignment of northern party support during the 1850s. To better understand how a commercially circulated literary work entered the social and political environment in which this realignment occurred, I examine evidence of the novel's reception and political use. I consider three settings: household naming practices, newspaper discussion, and political references and campaign culture. These sources provide complementary evidence of the novel's reception, circulation, and political use across different spheres of social life.

6.1 Household Reception: Eva Naming

I first examine whether the circulation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was reflected in household naming choices. The novel conveyed its antislavery message through personal suffering, family separation, and moral sympathy. Among its most memorable characters was Eva, a young girl whose compassion and death became central to the novel's sentimental appeal. Naming a child after a fictional character offers an observable trace of cultural reception, suggesting that the novel's influence extended beyond readership into everyday family life.

Contemporary accounts suggest that Eva's popularity translated into naming behavior soon after publication. In December 1852, a Boston newspaper reported that more than three hundred infants in the city had already been christened Eva following the novel's success.[5] This account motivates a county-level analysis of whether places with greater exposure to the novel experienced larger increases in Eva naming after publication.

I construct county-year counts of girls named Eva using birth and baptism records from Ancestry.com for 1848–1855.[6] Following the baseline electoral design, I estimate

$$\text{Eva}_{ct} = \beta \log(\text{Exposure}_c) \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \mathbf{X}_c' \boldsymbol{\lambda}_t + \varepsilon_{ct}, \tag{3}$$

[5] *Boston Evening Transcript*, December 22, 1852, accessed via Newspapers.com.

[6] I searched Ancestry.com for individuals born between 1848 and 1855 with the first name "Eva."

where Eva_{ct} is the number of recorded girls named Eva in county c and birth year t. The specification includes county and state-by-year fixed effects, along with pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with year indicators. The coefficient β captures whether counties with greater exposure experienced larger post-publication increases in Eva naming. I also estimate specifications using exposure terciles and Poisson pseudo-maximum likelihood (PPML) to examine sensitivity to the functional form and the count nature of the outcome.

Figure 7 presents event-study estimates using 1851 as the reference year. Before publication, the estimates show no systematic relationship between exposure and changes in Eva naming. Following publication, the coefficients become positive, indicating larger increases in Eva naming in more exposed counties. The tercile-based event study displays a broadly similar pattern, with greater divergence among counties in the higher-exposure groups.

Table 5 reports the corresponding estimates. Panel A presents OLS estimates, and Panel B presents PPML estimates. In each panel, Columns (1) and (2) use continuous exposure, while Columns (3) and (4) use exposure terciles. In the preferred OLS specification, a one-unit increase in log exposure is associated with approximately 0.39 additional recorded Eva names per county-year after publication, significant at the one-percent level. The PPML estimates also indicate a positive relationship. The tercile specifications show larger increases in Eva naming among high-exposure counties relative to low-exposure counties, although the estimates are less precise in some specifications. Together, these results suggest that the relationship is not confined to a particular functional form or estimation method.

The naming evidence provides a household-level indication of the novel's cultural reception. Parents' adoption of the name Eva suggests that a character associated with the novel's sentimental and moral themes entered everyday family choices, particularly in counties with greater exposure. Although naming behavior does not directly reveal political attitudes, this pattern illustrates how a commercially circulated literary narrative could reach beyond the printed text and become part of domestic cultural life.

6.2 Newspaper Discussion and Circulation

The circulation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* extended beyond book sales and advertisements into public discussion, as reflected in contemporary newspaper accounts. Local newspapers reprinted discussions from other publications, debated the novel's portrayal of slavery, and invoked its characters in accounts of contemporary events. Through these exchanges, the novel's narrative became part of broader debates over slavery and the political implications of antislavery ideas, extending its public presence beyond the circulation of the book itself.

Contemporary newspaper accounts illustrate how the novel became a reference point for interpreting actual events. In February 1853, the *Litchfield Enquirer* in Connecticut reprinted an article from the *Springfield Republican*, titled "Uncle Tom's Cabin Vindicated," which used a reported case of violence against an enslaved woman in Georgia to challenge claims that Stowe had exaggerated the brutality of slavery.[7] Similarly, in October 1853, the *Grant County Herald* in Wisconsin compared a real slaveholder accused of extreme violence to Simon Legree, the novel's notorious villain.[8] These accounts illustrate how the novel's characters and depictions of slavery provided familiar reference points for interpreting real events.

The novel also became an object of political opposition. In June 1853, the Democratic *Miners' Express* in Iowa portrayed *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as encouraging abolitionist agitation and intensifying sectional conflict, linking its popularity to British criticism of American slavery.[9] Such hostile responses suggest that the novel was regarded not merely as a literary success but also as a work with political implications. These examples illustrate how the novel's narrative circulated through newspaper exchanges, was used to interpret slavery, and became a subject of political contestation.

[7] *Litchfield Enquirer*, February 10, 1853, "Uncle Tom's Cabin Vindicated," reprinted from the *Springfield Republican*.

[8] *Grant County Herald*, October 12, 1853.

[9] *Miners' Express*, June 22, 1853, "Mrs. Stowe in England."

Beyond these direct discussions of the novel, I also examine changes in the broader language of antislavery debate during the same period. Comparing newspapers with different preexisting positions on slavery provides a complementary perspective on the public discourse surrounding the novel's circulation. I therefore examine how slavery-related language evolved in antislavery newspapers relative to other Northern newspapers around the time of publication.

Using the American Stories database from Dell et al. (2023), I construct a quarterly panel of 35 Northern newspapers from 1851 to 1853, including six classified as antislavery. I examine the frequency of four terms—*slavery*, *freedom*, *fugitive*, and *rights*—and the share of articles containing them. The event-study specification compares changes in these measures between antislavery and other newspapers around the novel's publication, controlling for newspaper and quarter fixed effects and pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with quarter indicators. Figure 8 presents the estimates. Following publication, antislavery newspapers exhibit relative increases in slavery-related language, particularly the terms *slavery* and *freedom*, while the patterns for other terms are less consistent.

Overall, these findings illustrate how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* circulated beyond its original commercial distribution and entered the political discourse surrounding slavery. Contemporary newspaper accounts show that the novel's characters and moral arguments were invoked to interpret real events and debate the realities of slavery, including by those who opposed its message. The event-study results place these discussions within a period of changing antislavery discourse. The novel thus became more than a widely circulated literary work: its narrative provided a recognizable reference point in competing interpretations of slavery and sectional politics.

6.3 Political References and Campaign Culture

The circulation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* also extended into political discourse and popular campaign culture. As antislavery politics gained momentum during the 1850s, political

figures increasingly recognized the novel's potential to bring moral arguments about slavery to a broader audience. Their contemporary statements and the use of the novel in partisan debate provide evidence of how a widely circulated cultural narrative became connected to the political realignment documented in Section 5.

Political figures explicitly acknowledged the novel's significance for the antislavery movement soon after its publication. In a December 1852 speech before the House of Representatives, Joshua R. Giddings praised *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for bringing the realities of slavery to audiences who had previously been unwilling to confront them.[10] In May 1853, George W. Julian invoked the novel at a Free Soil Party convention in Indianapolis, calling it "the world's great missionary of freedom." Discussing the weakening of established parties and the future of antislavery politics, Julian portrayed the novel's popularity as evidence that moral opposition to slavery was gaining strength beyond formal political organizations.[11] These statements show that antislavery political leaders recognized the novel as a means of reaching audiences and sustaining political ideas outside conventional party channels.

By the 1856 presidential election, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had become a recognizable reference in partisan debate. An article from the *New York Freeman's Journal*, reprinted in *The Commercial* during the campaign, grouped Stowe's novel with prominent antislavery figures and newspapers in criticizing the political forces associated with sectional agitation.[12] Such criticism indicates that the novel had acquired political significance even among its opponents. Looking back on the election, Republican leader Henry Wilson similarly associated the novel's circulation with the support received by John C. Frémont, describing Republican votes as the result of ideas disseminated by Harriet Beecher Stowe.[13] These accounts illustrate how the novel came to be understood in relation to the emerging Republican electoral

[10] Joshua R. Giddings, "Cuban Annexation—The Slave Question," speech delivered in the House of Representatives, December 14, 1852; reprinted in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, January 7, 1853.

[11] George W. Julian, "The State of Political Parties—The Signs of the Times," speech delivered at the Free Soil State Convention, Indianapolis, May 25, 1853, in *Speeches on Political Questions* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1872), pp. 90–94.

[12] "The Crisis," *New York Freeman's Journal*, reprinted in *The Commercial*, June 14, 1856, p. 4.

[13] Henry Wilson, *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, Vol. 2 (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1875), p. 519.

coalition.

The novel's characters and moral themes also circulated through popular antislavery songs. For example, the 1854 song *The Ghost of Uncle Tom*, performed by the Hutchinson Family, drew on characters from the novel to criticize slavery and the inaction of political and religious leaders.[14] To examine the broader cultural overlap, I compare songs inspired by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with Republican campaign songsters from the 1856 presidential election (Drew, 1856). Topic modeling identifies shared sentimental themes, including family, affection, and moral sympathy, while an emotion-lexicon analysis reveals more pronounced negative and confrontational language in Republican campaign songs (Figure 9). These patterns reveal both thematic overlap and differences in emotional expression between the novel's popular adaptations and Republican campaign culture.

The evidence in this section traces the novel's reception and political use across different settings. Eva naming suggests that its characters entered household cultural choices, newspaper accounts show how its narrative became a reference point in public debates over slavery, and political statements and songs illustrate its place in the language of antislavery politics. These observations complement the electoral findings by showing how a commercially circulated cultural narrative became part of the social and political environment surrounding the emergence of the Republican Party.

7 Conclusion

This paper examines how the circulation of a cultural narrative contributed to electoral realignment in the antebellum United States. Combining historical newspaper advertisements and transportation networks, I construct a measure of potential exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* across the North. The results show that counties with greater exposure experienced larger declines in Democratic presidential vote shares and stronger gains in the

[14]Martha Hill, *The Ghost of Uncle Tom* (New York: Horace Waters, 1854), Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection, Johns Hopkins University.

Whig/Republican vote-share series following the novel's publication. The electoral divergence became particularly pronounced in 1856, when the Republican Party emerged as a major national electoral alternative, and remained evident in 1860. These findings suggest that the diffusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* contributed to the reorganization of northern electoral support during the 1850s.

Complementary evidence illustrates the novel's cultural reception and political use. Counties with greater exposure experienced larger increases in the number of girls named "Eva," suggesting that the novel entered household culture. Contemporary newspapers invoked its characters and moral arguments in discussions of slavery, while political figures recognized its significance for the antislavery movement and referenced it in political debates. These observations show how the novel's cultural reach extended beyond direct readership into public discourse and political expression.

More broadly, the findings highlight the importance of cultural narratives in shaping political change. Narratives do more than transmit information: they provide frameworks through which people interpret political conflicts, evaluate competing ideas, and form political judgments. By tracing the diffusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and linking its geographic reach to electoral outcomes, this paper illustrates how widely circulated narratives can become politically consequential. The findings suggest that understanding political change requires attention not only to material interests, political institutions, and formal political communication, but also to the stories through which societies understand and debate their most consequential issues.

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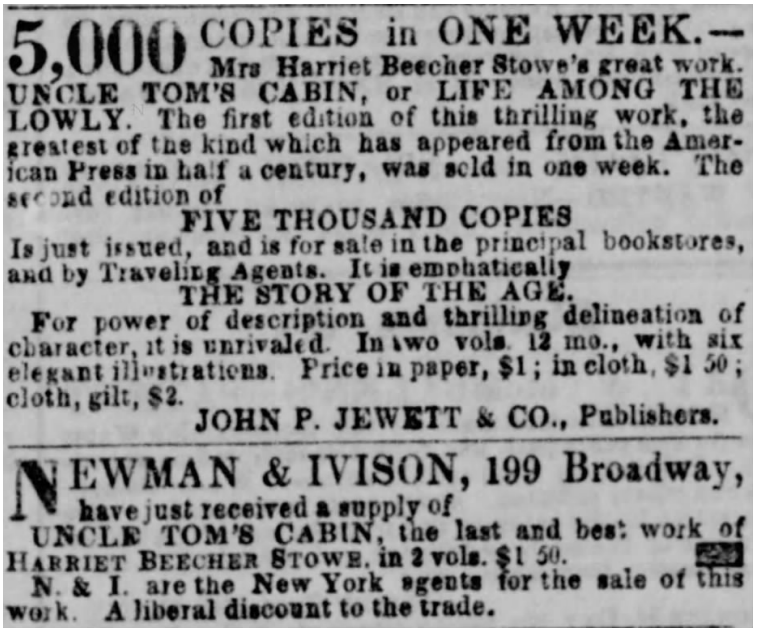
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Figures

Figure 1: Advertisements

Panel A:



5,000 COPIES in ONE WEEK.—Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe's great work. UNCLE TOM'S CABIN, or LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY. The first edition of this thrilling work, the greatest of the kind which has appeared from the American Press in half a century, was sold in one week. The second edition of

FIVE THOUSAND COPIES

Is just issued, and is for sale in the principal bookstores, and by Traveling Agents. It is emphatically

THE STORY OF THE AGE.

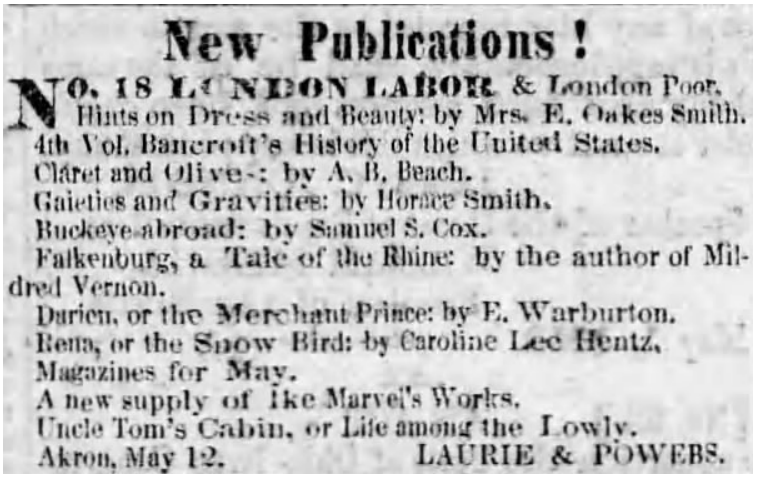
For power of description and thrilling delineation of character, it is unrivaled. In two vols. 12 mo., with six elegant illustrations. Price in paper, $1; in cloth, $1 50; cloth, gilt, $2.

JOHN P. JEWETT & CO., Publishers.

NEWMAN & IVISON, 199 Broadway, have just received a supply of UNCLE TOM'S CABIN, the last and best work of HARRIET BEECHER STOWE, in 2 vols. $1 50.

N. & I. are the New York agents for the sale of this work. A liberal discount to the trade.

Panel B:



New Publications!

NO. 18 LONDON LABOR & London Poor.
Hints on Dress and Beauty: by Mrs. E. Oakes Smith.
4th Vol. Bancroft's History of the United States.
Claret and Olive: by A. B. Beach.
Gaieties and Gravities: by Horace Smith.
Buckeye abroad: by Samuel S. Cox.
Falkenburg, a Tale of the Rhine: by the author of Mildred Vernon.
Darien, or the Merchant Prince: by E. Warburton.
Rena, or the Snow Bird: by Caroline Lee Hentz.
Magazines for May.
A new supply of Ike Marvel's Works.
Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life among the Lowly.
Akron, May 12. LAURIE & POWERS.

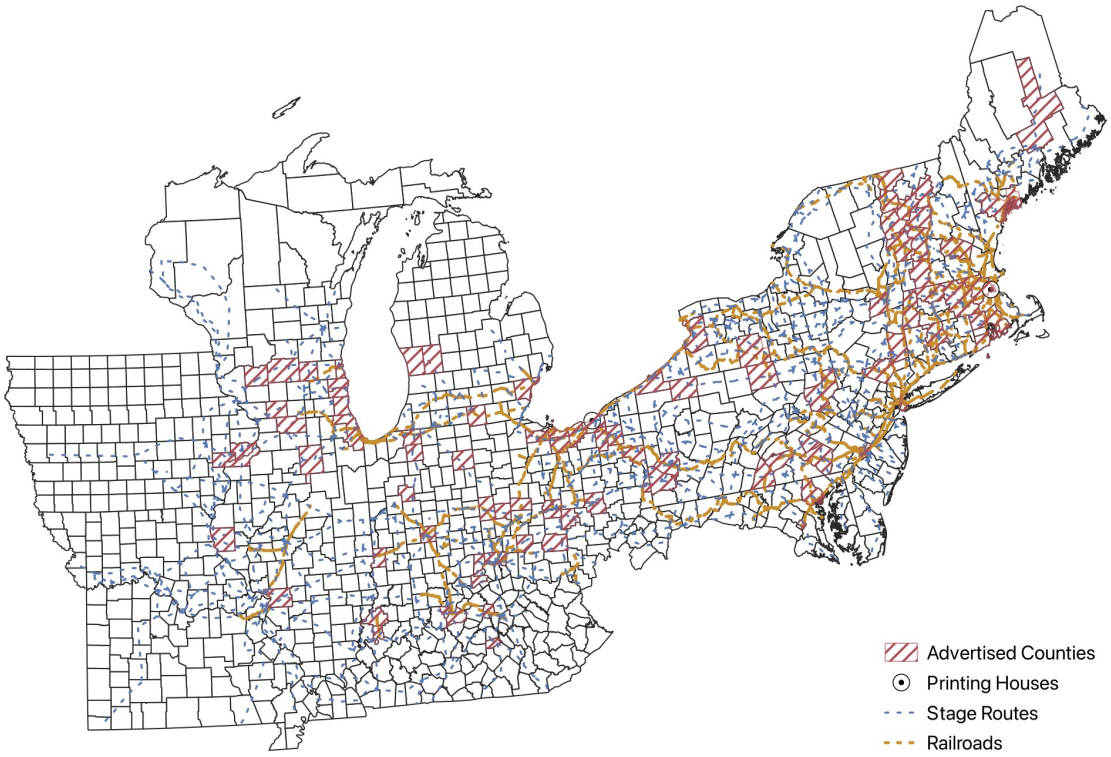
Notes: Panel A shows two newspaper advertisements for Uncle Tom's Cabin, one placed by the publisher and the other by a local agent. Source: New York Tribune, April 5, 1852, p. 1. Panel B shows another advertisement placed by a local bookstore. Source: The Summit County Beacon, May 26, 1852, p. 3.

Figure 2: Disturnell's New Map of the United States and Canada



Notes: This map, *Disturnell's New Map of the United States and Canada: Showing All the Canals, Rail Roads, Telegraph Lines and Principal Stage Routes* (Burr, 1850), provides a comprehensive depiction of the transportation infrastructure in 1850. It is used to digitize the stage routes shown in Figure 3.

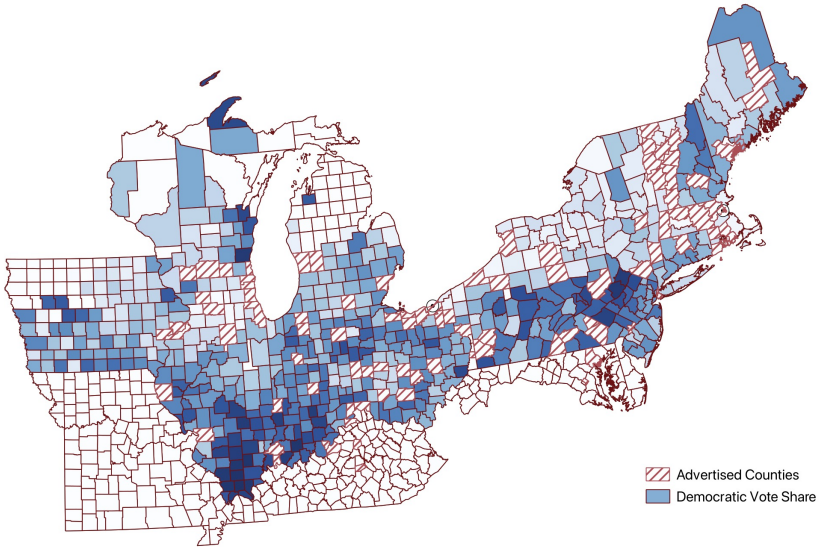
Figure 3: Advertising Counties and Transportation Network



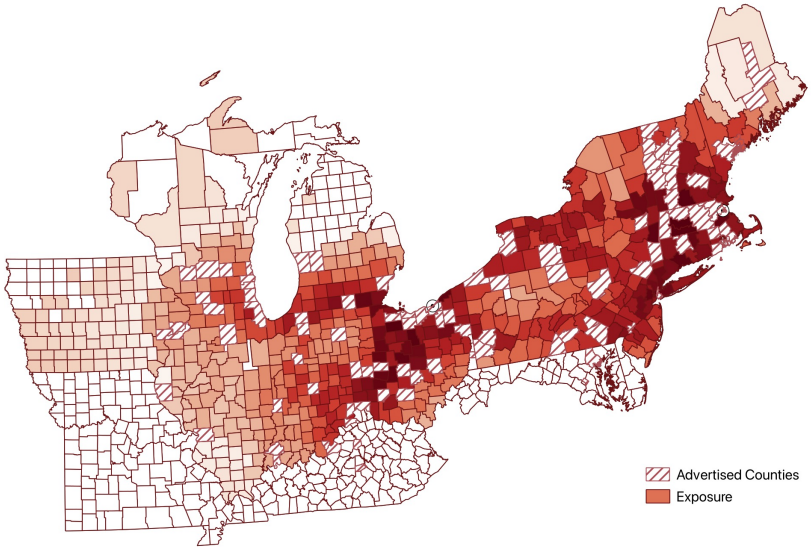
Notes: This figure illustrates the transportation network used to measure county-level exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. Red-shaded counties indicate locations where newspaper advertisements for the novel appeared. Circles mark the two printing houses located in Boston and Cleveland. Dashed blue lines represent stage routes digitized from Burr (1850), and dashed orange lines represent railroads as of 1852 from Atack (2016).

Figure 4: Democratic Vote Share and Exposure

Panel A: Democratic Vote Share in 1856



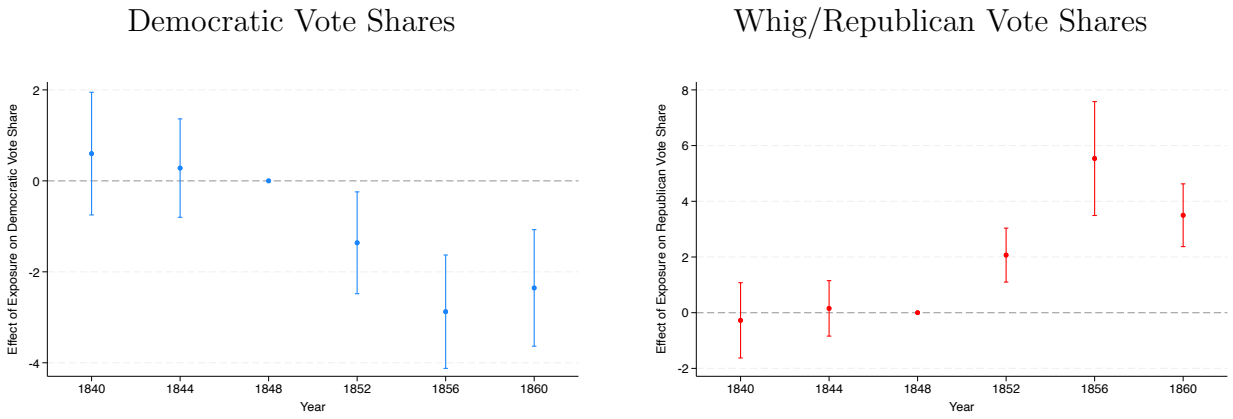
Panel B: Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin



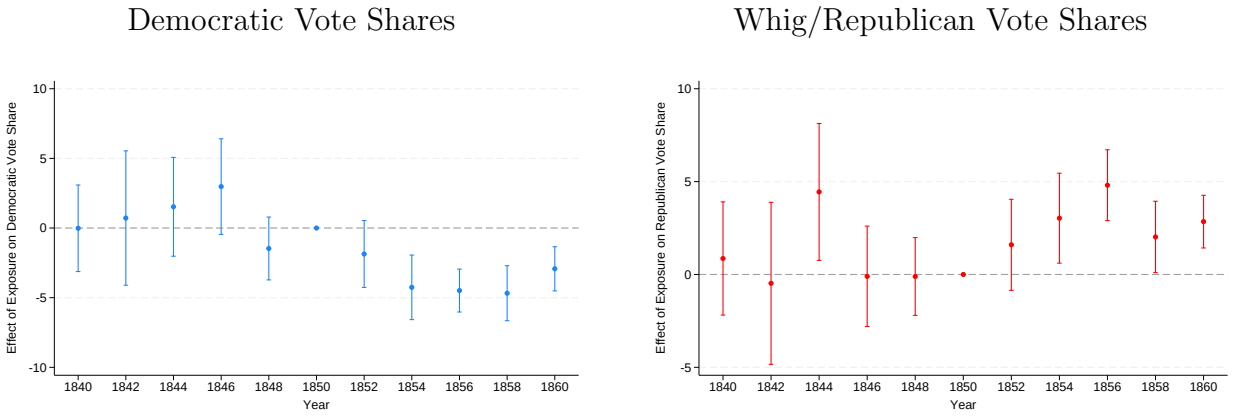
Notes: Panel A shows the Democratic vote share in the 1856 presidential election, based on data from Clubb et al. (2006). Darker blue shades indicate higher Democratic support. White counties correspond to areas where county-level vote returns are unavailable, including the border states, which are excluded from the main analysis. Panel B displays (continuous) exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. Red-shaded counties indicate locations where newspaper advertisements for the novel appeared, serving as the sources of exposure, and darker red shades represent higher exposure intensity. White counties denote areas without available vote returns, aligned with Panel A.

Figure 5: Vote Share Dynamics, 1840–1860, continuous treatment

Panel A: Presidential elections



Panel B: Congressional elections

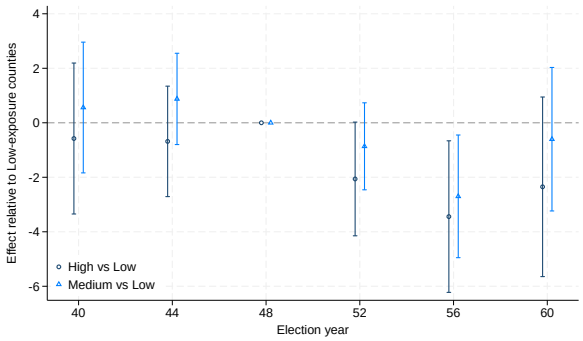


Notes: This figure plots event-study estimates of the relationship between exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and party vote shares, measured in percentage points, between 1840 and 1860. Panel A reports presidential-election results, and Panel B reports congressional-election results. In each panel, the left figure reports Democratic vote shares, and the right figure reports Whig/Republican vote shares. For presidential elections, the Whig/Republican series combines Whig voting through 1852 with Republican voting in 1856 and 1860. The estimates are obtained from event-study versions of Equation (2), replacing the interaction between log exposure and the post-publication indicator with interactions between log exposure and election-year indicators. The omitted election year is 1848 for presidential elections and 1850 for congressional elections. The sample consists of northern counties without recorded advertisements for the novel and with the data required for the corresponding election analysis. All specifications include county fixed effects, state-by-election-year fixed effects, and pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with election-year indicators. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. The dots represent estimated coefficients, and the vertical lines denote 95% confidence intervals.

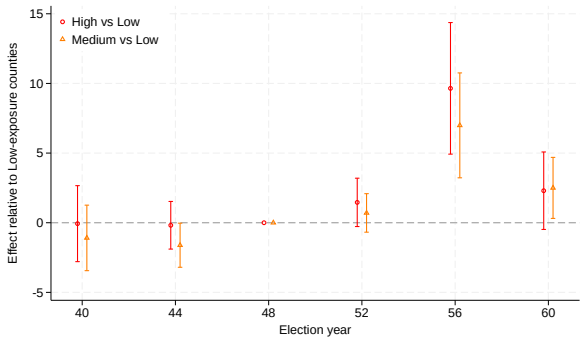
Figure 6: Vote Share Dynamics, 1840–1860, tercile treatment

Panel A: Presidential elections

Democratic Vote Shares

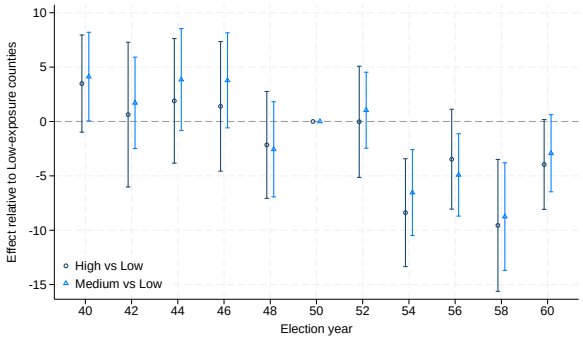


Whig/Republican Vote Shares

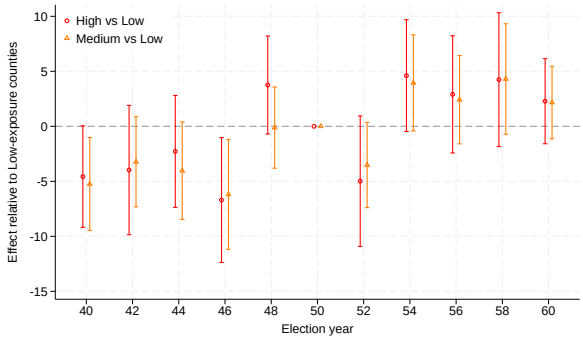


Panel B: Congressional elections

Democratic Vote Shares



Whig/Republican Vote Shares



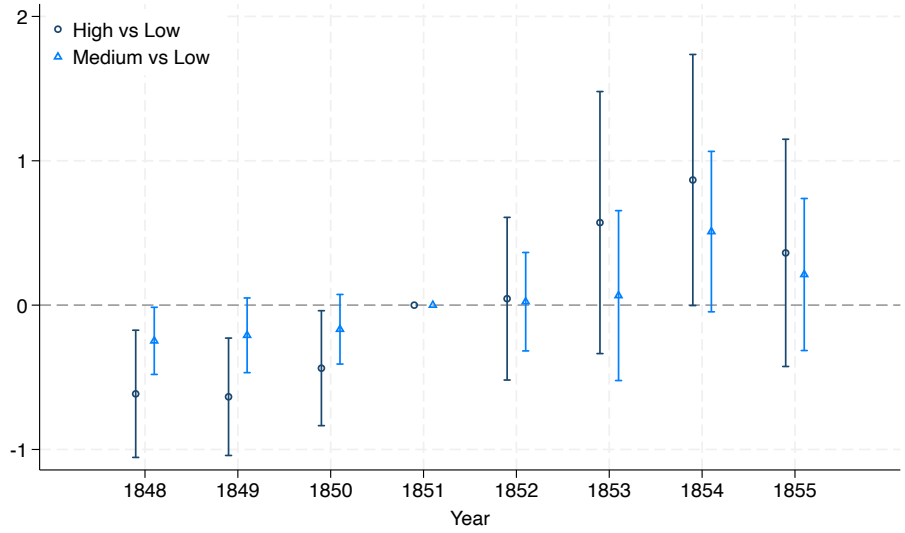
Notes: This figure plots event-study estimates of the relationship between terciles of exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and party vote shares, measured in percentage points, between 1840 and 1860. Panel A reports presidential-election results, and Panel B reports congressional-election results. In each panel, the left figure reports Democratic vote shares, and the right figure reports Whig/Republican vote shares. For presidential elections, the Whig/Republican series combines Whig voting through 1852 with Republican voting in 1856 and 1860. Counties are divided into low-, medium-, and high-exposure terciles, with low-exposure counties serving as the reference group. The event-study specifications interact indicators for medium and high exposure with election-year indicators. The omitted election year is 1848 for presidential elections and 1850 for congressional elections. Each coefficient therefore measures the change in the vote-share gap between the indicated exposure group and the low-exposure group, relative to the omitted election year. The sample consists of northern counties without recorded advertisements for the novel and with the data required for the corresponding election analysis. All specifications include county fixed effects, state-by-election-year fixed effects, and pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with election-year indicators. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. The dots represent estimated coefficients, and the vertical lines denote 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 7: Event Study: Eva Naming Dynamics

Panel A: Continuous Exposure (OLS–TWFE)



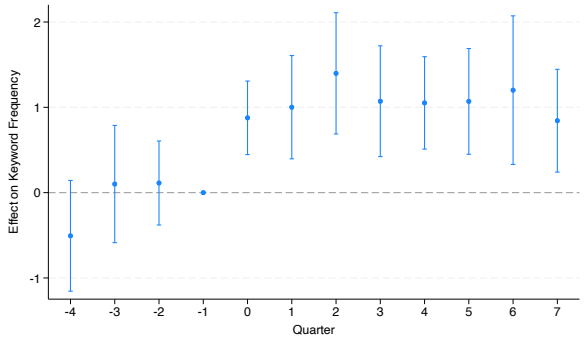
Panel B: Discretized Exposure (OLS–TWFE)



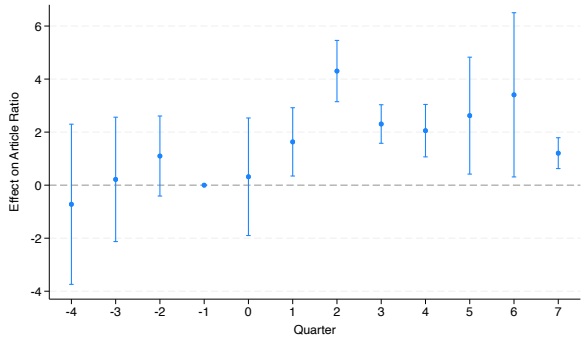
Notes: This figure plots the event-study estimates of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on "Eva" namings between 1848 and 1855. Panel A presents estimates obtained from regressions following the event-study specification in Equation (3), while Panel B presents estimates where exposure is discretized into three groups—High, Medium, and Low—with the Low group serving as the reference category. Both models replace the post-treatment indicator with year dummies, using 1851 as the omitted year. The sample includes all northern counties used in the main analysis. The outcome variable is the number of newborn girls named Eva, and the explanatory variables are the interaction terms between the treatment variable and year dummies. Both specifications include county fixed effects, state-by-year fixed effects, and a full set of baseline county characteristics interacted with year dummies. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. The dots represent the estimated coefficients, and the vertical lines denote the 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 8: Event Study: Keyword Dynamics in Newspapers

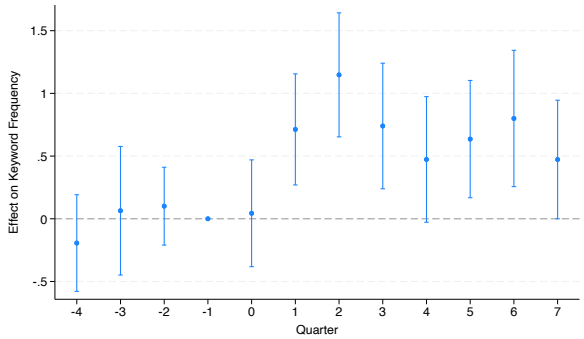
Panel A: *slavery* – Frequency



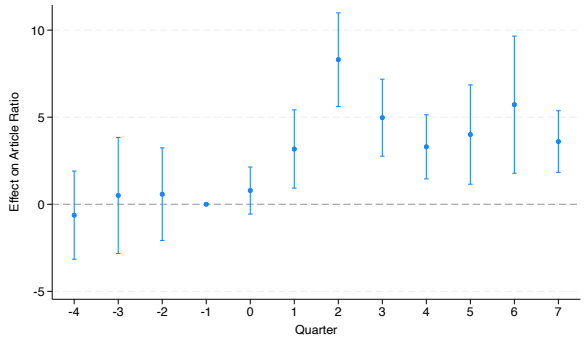
Panel B: *slavery* – Article Ratio



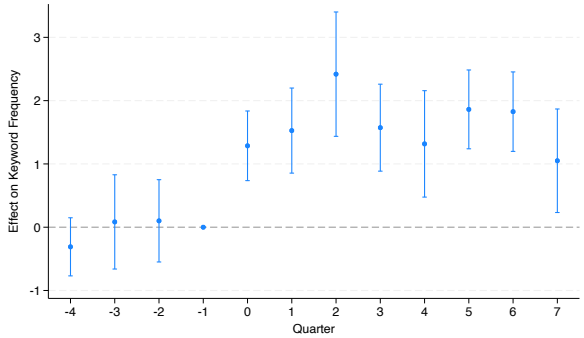
Panel C: *freedom* – Frequency



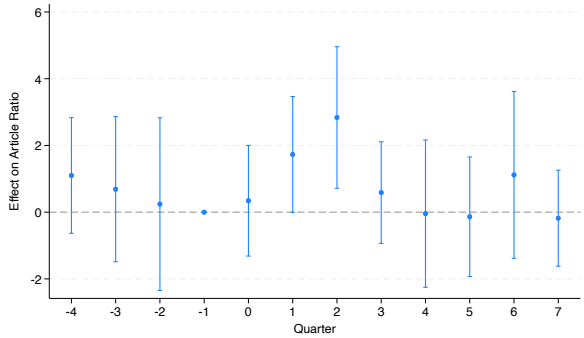
Panel D: *freedom* – Article Ratio



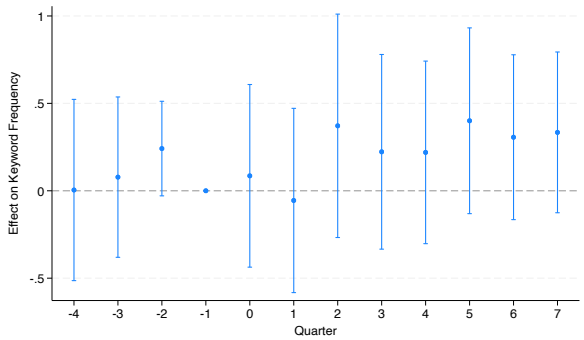
Panel E: *fugitive* – Frequency



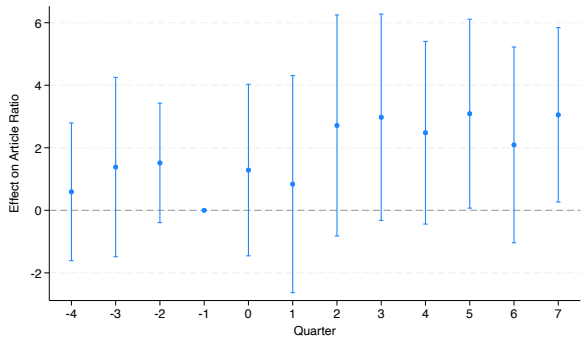
Panel F: *fugitive* – Article Ratio



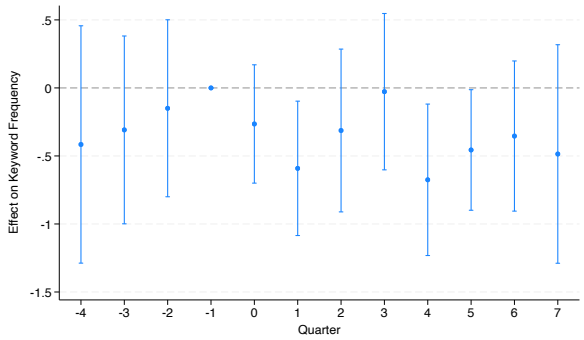
Panel G: *rights* – Frequency



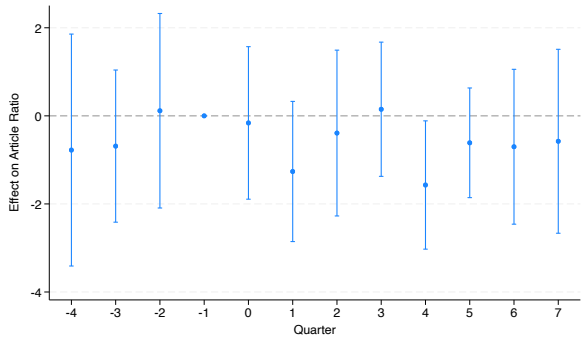
Panel H: *rights* – Article Ratio



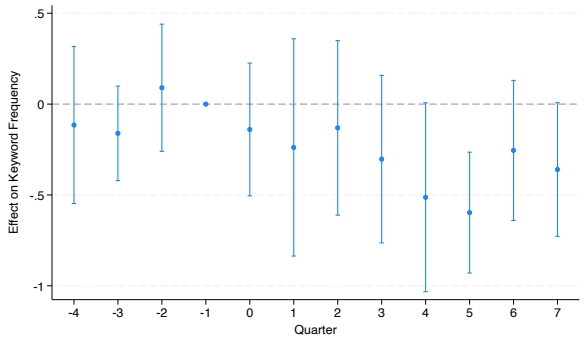
Panel I: *sunday* – Frequency



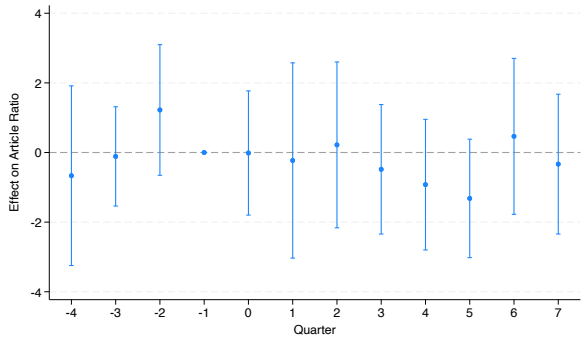
Panel J: *sunday* – Article Ratio



Panel K: *east* – Frequency



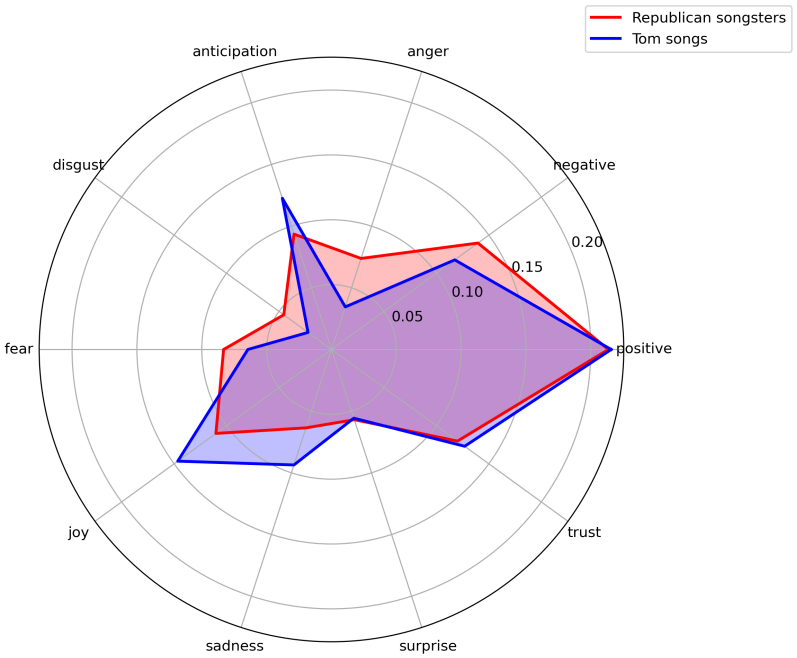
Panel L: *east* – Article Ratio



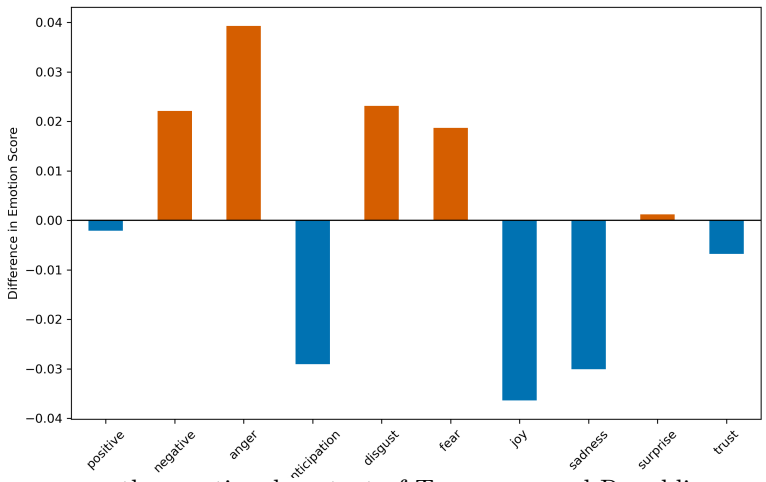
Notes: This figure plots the event-study estimates of the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin on newspaper content between 1851Q1 and 1853Q4. Panels A–L present six keywords in terms of word frequency and article ratio. The keywords are slavery, freedom, fugitive, rights, sunday, and east. For each panel, the estimates are obtained from a separate regression following an event-study specification. Each specification includes newspaper fixed effects, quarter fixed effects, and a full set of baseline county characteristics interacted with quarter dummies. Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level. The dots represent the estimated coefficients, and the vertical lines denote the 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 9: Emotional Profiles of Tom Songs and Republican Campaign Songsters

Panel A: Emotion Radar Chart



Panel B: Emotion Difference (Republican Songsters - Tom Songs)



Notes: This figure compares the emotional content of Tom songs and Republican songsters using the NRC Emotion Lexicon, which classifies words into ten affective categories: positive, negative, anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, and trust. Panel A reports the average emotion scores for each corpus across all categories, while Panel B shows the difference in mean emotion intensity (Republican minus Tom songs). Higher values indicate stronger relative representation in Republican songsters. Emotion scores are normalized frequencies at the song level.

Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	**Mean**	**SD**	**Min**	**Max**	**Obs.**
Democratic presidential vote share	46.44	14.63	0.00	97.00	2,698
Whig/Republican presidential vote share	46.18	13.52	0.20	87.50	2,698
Democratic congressional vote share	47.59	18.43	0.00	100.00	4,819
Whig/Republican congressional vote share	41.09	21.49	0.00	100.00	4,824
log(Exposure)	1.34	1.11	-6.50	2.67	474
log(Population)	9.32	1.12	4.37	11.79	504
% Male	52.10	2.46	45.57	81.89	504
% Foreign Born	9.12	9.26	0.00	64.72	504
% Age 60 and Above	3.60	1.76	0.59	10.19	504
% Free Colored	0.95	1.58	0.00	11.03	504
% Illiterate	4.54	4.24	0.00	26.83	504
log(Home Manufacturing + 1)	8.69	2.18	0.00	11.84	502
% Manufacturing Labor	2.64	3.87	0.00	34.46	504
log(Mfg. Output per Capita + 1)	2.75	1.26	0.00	5.40	504
Connected to River (dummy)	0.52	0.50	0.00	1.00	503
Connected to Railroad (dummy)	0.33	0.47	0.00	1.00	503
Number of Farms	1,369.32	1,166.29	0.00	6,292.00	503
log(Farm Value + 1)	14.01	2.18	0.00	17.05	502
Number of Libraries	24.46	65.17	0.00	437.00	504
Number of Schools	99.03	93.61	0.00	483.00	500
Longitude	-83.31	6.60	-95.90	-67.64	512
Latitude	41.11	1.72	37.19	46.66	512
Area (square miles)	647.34	575.25	25.00	6,830.00	512
Rail and Stage Route Length (miles)	44.15	41.24	0.00	215.94	512
1848 Democratic presidential vote share	46.15	13.80	5.90	87.80	469
1848 Whig presidential vote share	43.18	10.15	12.20	79.70	469
1848 Free Soil presidential vote share	10.66	12.63	0.00	58.40	469
1850 Democratic congressional vote share	52.56	17.17	0.00	100.00	470
1850 Whig congressional vote share	23.36	24.92	0.00	85.10	470
1850 Free Soil congressional vote share	2.13	11.18	0.00	89.00	470

Notes: This table reports summary statistics for the main electoral outcomes, the exposure measure, and county-level characteristics used as control variables in the regression analysis. Vote shares are measured in percentage points. County characteristics capture demographic, economic, geographic, and infrastructural features measured circa 1850, while the 1848 presidential and 1850 congressional vote shares capture pre-treatment voting patterns. Dummy variables equal one if the condition holds.

Table 2: DID: Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin and Voting Outcomes

	Democratic		Whig/Republican	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Presidential elections				
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	-1.418***	-2.387***	4.021***	3.591***
	(0.508)	(0.505)	(0.703)	(0.549)
Mean of Dep. Var.	46.44	46.41	46.18	46.20
R-squared	0.894	0.933	0.683	0.884
Observations	2,698	2,671	2,698	2,671
Panel B: Congressional elections				
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	-1.928***	-4.035***	3.746***	2.514***
	(0.611)	(0.823)	(0.621)	(0.784)
Mean of Dep. Var.	47.69	47.60	41.11	41.25
R-squared	0.696	0.764	0.766	0.827
Observations	4,824	4,727	4,824	4,727
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics × year	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports difference-in-differences estimates of the relationship between exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and party vote shares, measured in percentage points. Panel A reports presidential-election results, and Panel B reports congressional-election results. Columns (1) and (2) report Democratic vote shares, while Columns (3) and (4) report Whig/Republican vote shares. For presidential elections, the Whig/Republican series combines Whig voting through 1852 with Republican voting in 1856 and 1860. The treatment variable is log exposure interacted with a post-publication indicator equal to one for elections in 1852 and later. The sample consists of northern counties without recorded advertisements for the novel and with the data required for each specification. All specifications include county fixed effects and state-by-election-year fixed effects. Columns (2) and (4) additionally include pre-treatment county characteristics, reported in Table 1, interacted with election-year indicators. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Table 3: DID: Exposure Terciles and Voting Outcomes

	Democratic		Whig/Republican	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Presidential elections				
$High \times Post$	-3.055**	-2.216*	9.180***	4.508***
	(1.327)	(1.163)	(2.092)	(1.304)
$Medium \times Post$	-3.849***	-1.848*	11.337***	4.247***
	(1.240)	(0.983)	(1.957)	(1.112)
Mean of Dep. Var.	46.44	46.41	46.18	46.20
R-squared	0.895	0.932	0.689	0.883
Observations	2,698	2,671	2,698	2,671
Panel B: Congressional elections				
$High \times Post$	-5.607***	-5.776***	8.810***	3.827**
	(1.748)	(1.866)	(1.933)	(1.681)
$Medium \times Post$	-7.193***	-5.956***	9.577***	4.740***
	(1.613)	(1.477)	(1.690)	(1.367)
Mean of Dep. Var.	47.69	47.60	41.11	41.25
R-squared	0.698	0.764	0.766	0.827
Observations	4,824	4,727	4,824	4,727
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics × year	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports difference-in-differences estimates of the relationship between terciles of exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and party vote shares, measured in percentage points. Panel A reports presidential-election results, and Panel B reports congressional-election results. Columns (1) and (2) report Democratic vote shares, while Columns (3) and (4) report Whig/Republican vote shares. For presidential elections, the Whig/Republican series combines Whig voting through 1852 with Republican voting in 1856 and 1860. Counties are divided into low-, medium-, and high-exposure terciles, with low-exposure counties serving as the omitted reference group. The treatment variables are indicators for high and medium exposure, each interacted with a post-publication indicator equal to one for elections in 1852 and later. The sample consists of northern counties without recorded advertisements for the novel and with the data required for each specification. All specifications include county fixed effects and state-by-election-year fixed effects. Columns (2) and (4) additionally include pre-treatment county characteristics, reported in Table 1, interacted with election-year indicators. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Table 4: Accounting for Network Access

	(1) Baseline	(2) Harmonic	(3) $R + \log(D)$	(4) Comparison Books
Panel A: Democratic presidential vote share				
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	-2.387^{***}	-3.221^{***}		-2.697^{**}
	(0.505)	(0.630)		(1.195)
$R \times Post$			-3.311^{***}	
			(0.956)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	46.41	46.41	46.41	46.41
R-squared	0.933	0.933	0.933	0.933
Observations	2,671	2,671	2,671	2,671
Counties	468	468	468	468
Panel B: Whig/Republican presidential vote share				
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	3.591^{***}	4.047^{***}		5.397^{***}
	(0.549)	(0.703)		(1.339)
$R \times Post$			3.179^{**}	
			(1.284)	
Mean of Dep. Var.	46.20	46.20	46.20	46.20
R-squared	0.884	0.886	0.885	0.885
Observations	2,671	2,671	2,671	2,671
Counties	468	468	468	468
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics × year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Harmonic centrality × year	No	Yes	No	No
$\log(D)\times$ year	No	No	Yes	No
$\log(Exposure_{comparison})\times$ year	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports difference-in-differences estimates for presidential vote shares, measured in percentage points. Panel A reports Democratic vote shares. Panel B reports Whig vote shares through 1852 and Republican vote shares in 1856 and 1860. The post-publication indicator equals one for elections in 1852 and later. Column (1) reproduces the baseline specification. Column (2) adds harmonic centrality—the mean inverse shortest travel time to other northern counties—interacted with election-year indicators. Column (3) replaces absolute log exposure with relative coverage; the reported coefficient corresponds to a 0.10 increase in R. Column (3) also interacts $\log(D)$ with election-year indicators. Column (4) adds the comparison measure based on the log exposure to the union of 39 advertising counties associated with eight contemporaneous books, fully interacted with election-year indicators. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Table 5: Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin and "Eva" Naming, 1848–1855

	Continuous exposure		Exposure terciles	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: OLS				
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	0.271***	0.389***		
	(0.038)	(0.147)		
$High \times Post$			1.836***	0.883***
			(0.232)	(0.284)
$Medium \times Post$			0.842***	0.359**
			(0.149)	(0.171)
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.696	0.813	0.696	0.813
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	2.337	2.515	2.337	2.515
R-squared	0.715	0.772	0.720	0.772
Observations	4,800	4,080	4,800	4,080
Panel B: PPML				
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	0.251***	0.458***		
	(0.075)	(0.151)		
$High \times Post$			0.536*	0.427
			(0.291)	(0.392)
$Medium \times Post$			0.174	-0.028
			(0.281)	(0.345)
Mean of Dep. Var.	1.002	1.031	1.002	1.031
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	2.750	2.792	2.750	2.792
Observations	3,331	3,219	3,331	3,219
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics × year	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports estimates of the relationship between exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the number of recorded girls named Eva during 1848–1855. Each observation corresponds to a county–year. Panel A reports ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates, and Panel B reports Poisson pseudo-maximum likelihood (PPML) estimates. Columns (1) and (2) use log exposure interacted with a post-publication indicator equal to one for birth years in 1852 and later. Columns (3) and (4) instead interact indicators for high and medium exposure terciles with the post-publication indicator, using low-exposure counties as the omitted reference group. Panel A uses a linear conditional-mean specification, while Panel B uses an exponential conditional-mean specification. PPML entries report coefficients rather than marginal effects. All specifications include county fixed effects and state-by-year fixed effects. Columns (2) and (4) additionally include pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with year indicators. Outcome means and standard deviations are reported for the estimation sample of each specification. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Appendix

Network Access: Definitions and Construction

This appendix describes the construction of the network-access measures and the specifications reported in Table 4. These exercises examine whether the baseline relationship reflects exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* beyond differences in general transportation access and access to other commercially circulated books.

Baseline exposure and specification. Following the main text, let $\mathcal{A}$ denote the set of advertising counties for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and let t_{ca} denote the shortest travel time between counties c and a along the integrated railroad–stage network. Baseline exposure is

$$\text{Exposure}_c = \sum_{\substack{a \in \mathcal{A} \\ a \neq c}} \exp\left(-\frac{t_{ca}}{\tau}\right). \tag{A.1}$$

Column (1) reproduces the preferred baseline specification:

$$\text{Vote}_{ct} = \beta \log(\text{Exposure}_c) \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \mathbf{X}_c' \boldsymbol{\lambda}_t + \varepsilon_{ct}. \tag{A.2}$$

where Vote_{ct} is the presidential vote share of the party series under consideration, measured in percentage points, and $Post_t$ equals one for elections in 1852 and later. County fixed effects, δ_c, absorb time-invariant county characteristics, while state-by-election-year fixed effects, θ_{st}, account for shocks common to counties within the same state and election year. The vector $\mathbf{X}_c$ contains the baseline pre-treatment county characteristics, interacted with election-year indicators.

Network centrality. Column (2) accounts for a county's general position in the transportation network. Let $\mathcal{N}$ denote the set of northern counties in the historical network.

Harmonic centrality is defined as

$$\text{Centrality}_c = \frac{1}{|\mathcal{N}| - 1} \sum_{\substack{j \in \mathcal{N} \\ j \neq c}} \frac{1}{t_{cj}}. \tag{A.3}$$

This measure is the average inverse travel time to other northern counties. Counties with shorter travel times to other locations receive higher centrality. Its construction does not depend on where the novel was advertised. Unlike baseline exposure, harmonic centrality uses inverse travel time rather than exponential discounting.

I standardize centrality to have mean zero and unit standard deviation across the unique counties in the estimation sample. Denoting this standardized measure by $\widetilde{\text{Centrality}}_c$, Column (2) estimates

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Vote}_{ct} = \beta \log(\text{Exposure}_c) \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \mathbf{X}_c' \boldsymbol{\lambda}_t \\ + \widetilde{\text{Centrality}}_c' \boldsymbol{\gamma}_t + \varepsilon_{ct}. \end{aligned} \tag{A.4}$$

Relative advertising coverage. Column (3) examines exposure relative to overall network accessibility. Using the same travel-time discounting as in the baseline measure, I define

$$D_c = \sum_{\substack{j \in \mathcal{N} \\ j \neq c}} \exp\left(-\frac{t_{cj}}{\tau}\right). \tag{A.5}$$

Each northern county receives unit weight before travel-time discounting, regardless of its population or advertising status. Thus, D_c measures general access to northern counties through the transportation network. The reference network includes northern counties beyond those retained in the estimation sample.

Relative advertising coverage is

$$R_c = \frac{\text{Exposure}_c}{D_c}. \tag{A.6}$$

The numerator retains the advertising locations used in the baseline analysis, while the denominator measures access to the northern county network. A higher R_c indicates greater access to the novel's advertising locations relative to general network accessibility. This is an accessibility ratio rather than an observed readership share.

Column (3) replaces log exposure with relative advertising coverage and controls for overall accessibility interacted with election-year indicators:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Vote}_{ct} = \beta \left(\frac{R_c}{0.10} \right) \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \mathbf{X}_c' \boldsymbol{\lambda}_t \\ + \left[\log(D_c) \right]' \boldsymbol{\gamma}_t + \varepsilon_{ct}. \end{aligned} \tag{A.7}$$

The scaling ensures that the reported coefficient corresponds to a 0.10 increase in R_c. Allowing the coefficient on $\log(D_c)$ to vary by election year accounts for electoral trajectories associated with overall network accessibility. Because this specification uses a different treatment measure, its coefficient has a different interpretation and scale from the baseline log-exposure coefficient.

Comparison-book exposure. Column (4) accounts for access to the advertising locations of eight other contemporaneous books. The comparison set retains titles with advertisements identified in more than five counties matched to the transportation network.[15]

Let $\mathcal{A}_{\text{comparison}}$ denote the union of advertising counties for these eight books. Comparison-book exposure is defined as

$$\text{Exposure}_{c,\text{comparison}} = \sum_{\substack{a \in \mathcal{A}_{\text{comparison}} \\ a \neq c}} \exp\left(-\frac{t_{ca}}{\tau} \right). \tag{A.8}$$

A county advertising multiple comparison books enters the source set only once. Each source county receives unit weight, so the measure does not weight counties by the number of titles

[15] The eight titles are *Florence; or, The Fatal Vow*, *Heroines of History*, *History of Georgia*, *History of Kentucky, Lyra, and Other Poems*, *Rural Architecture*, *The Two Brides*, and *What I Saw in London*.

or advertisements observed there. It uses the same travel-time network, decay parameter, and exclusion of the receiving county's own contribution as baseline exposure.

To distinguish the two measures, denote baseline exposure by $\text{Exposure}_{c,\text{UTC}}$. Column (4) estimates

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Vote}_{ct} = \beta \log(\text{Exposure}_{c,\text{UTC}}) \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \mathbf{X}_c' \boldsymbol{\lambda}_t \\ + \left[\log(\text{Exposure}_{c,\text{comparison}})\right]' \boldsymbol{\gamma}_t + \varepsilon_{ct}.\end{aligned} \tag{A.9}$$

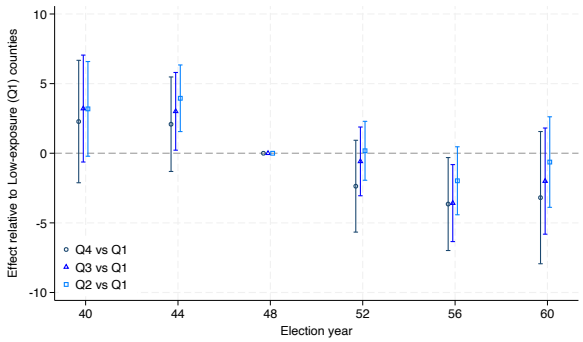
Comparison-book exposure is interacted with election-year indicators, allowing its relationship with electoral outcomes to vary across elections. The coefficient β therefore captures the post-publication relationship associated with UTC exposure after accounting for the advertising geography shared with other commercially circulated books. The comparison-book interactions serve as controls and are not reported in Table 4.

Additional Figures

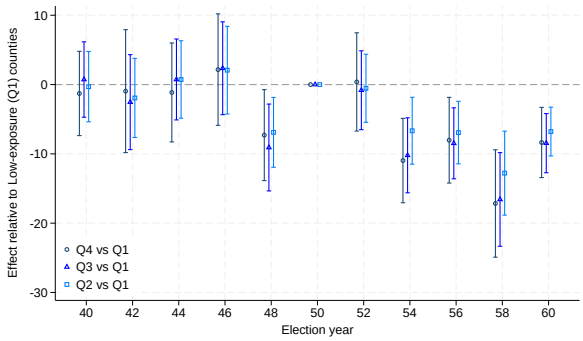
Figure A.1: Vote Share Dynamics, 1840–1860, quartile treatment

Panel A: Democratic Vote Shares

Presidential elections

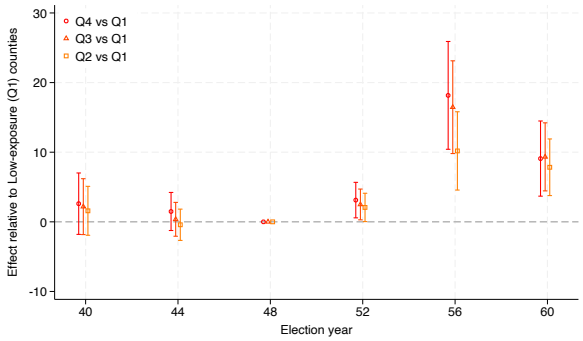


Congressional elections

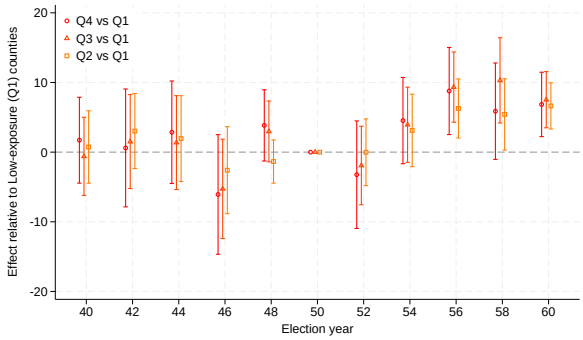


Panel B: Republican Vote Shares

Presidential elections



Congressional elections

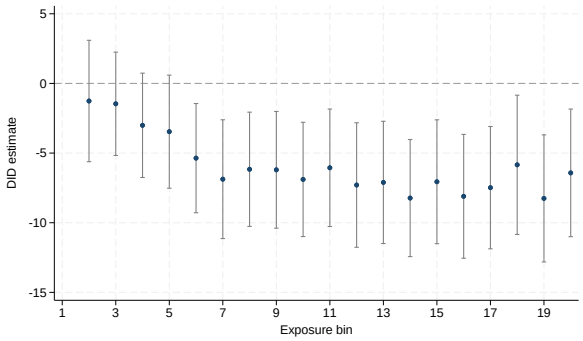


Notes: This figure plots event-study estimates of exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on party vote shares in presidential and congressional elections between 1840 and 1860, using a discrete treatment measure based on quartiles of exposure. Panel A reports effects on Democratic vote shares, and Panel B reports effects on Republican vote shares. In each panel, the left figure reports presidential-election estimates and the right figure reports congressional-election estimates. Exposure is discretized into four groups—Low, Medium-Low, Medium-High, and High—with the Low group serving as the reference category. The omitted category is 1848 for presidential elections and 1850 for congressional elections. The sample includes northern counties used in the corresponding election analysis. The specifications include county fixed effects, state-by-year fixed effects, and pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with year indicators. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. The dots represent estimated coefficients, and the vertical lines denote 95% confidence intervals.

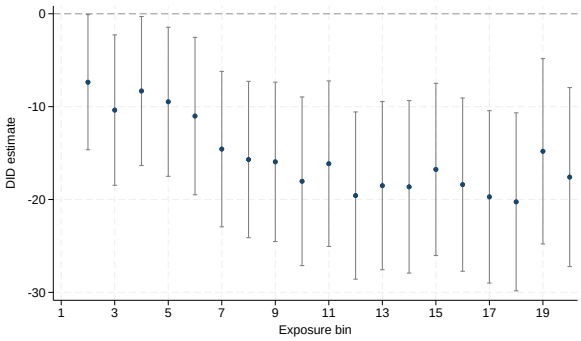
Figure A.2: Nonparametric Binned DID Estimates

Panel A: Democratic Vote Shares

Presidential elections

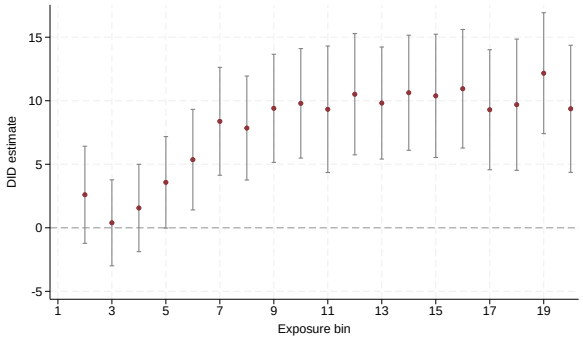


Congressional elections

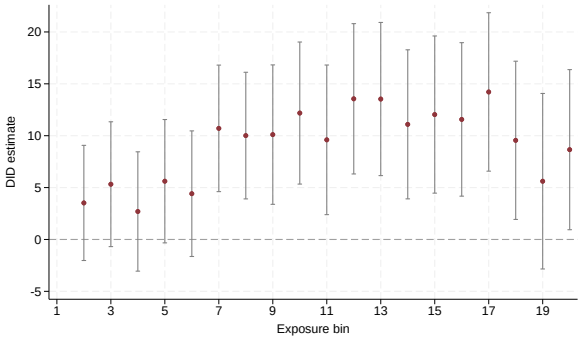


Panel B: Whig/Republican Vote Shares

Presidential elections

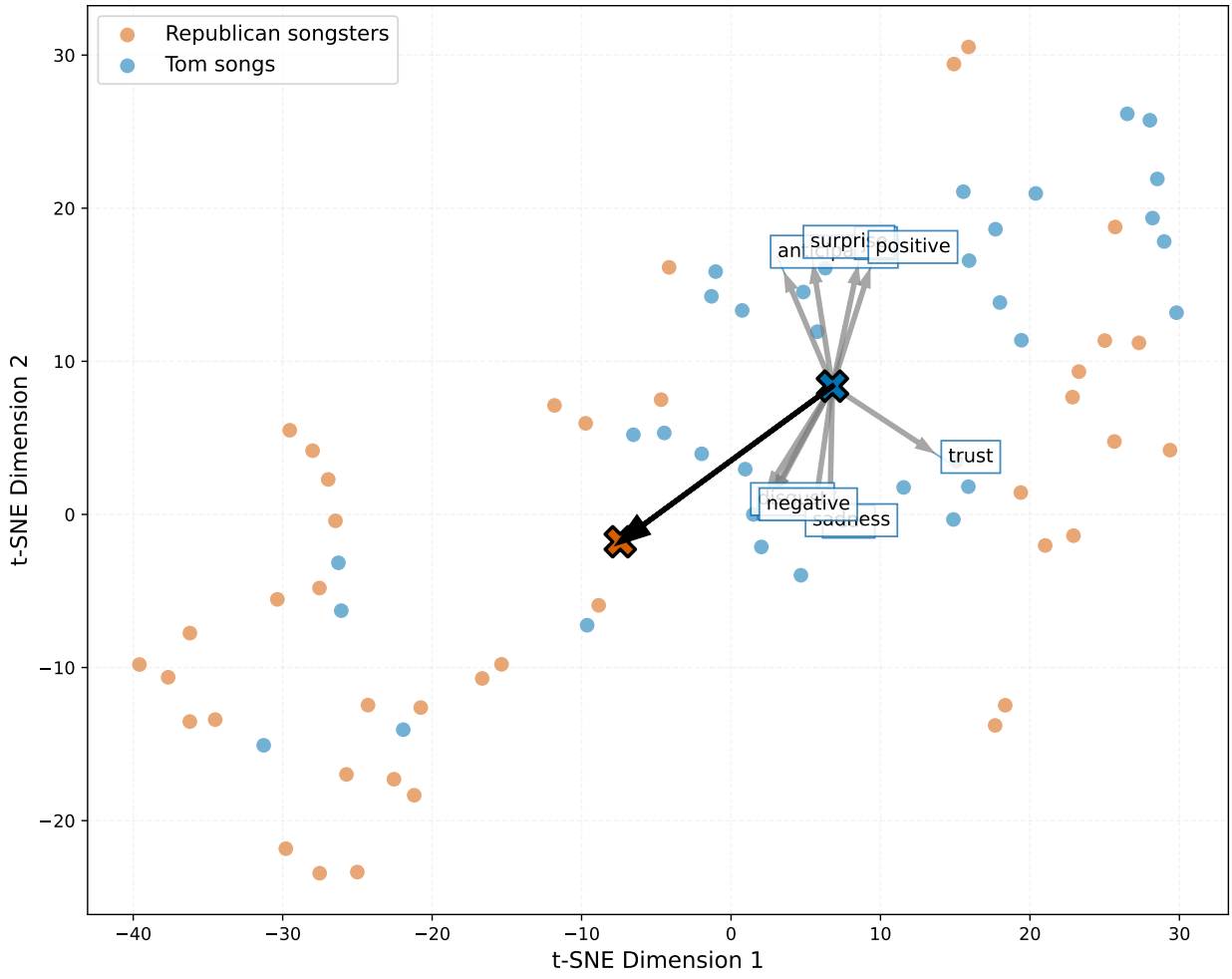


Congressional elections



Notes: The figure reports bin-specific post-publication DID estimates from nonparametric binned specifications. Panel A reports estimates for Democratic vote shares, and Panel B reports estimates for Whig/Republican vote shares. In each panel, the left figure reports presidential-election estimates and the right figure reports congressional-election estimates. Dots report coefficients and vertical bars report 95% confidence intervals. Bin 1 is omitted as the reference group, so all coefficients are relative to the lowest-exposure bin. All specifications include county fixed effects, state-by-year fixed effects, and pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with year indicators.

Figure A.3: Emotion Space of Tom Songs and Republican Songsters (t-SNE Projection)



Notes: This figure presents a two-dimensional t-SNE projection of the NRC emotion vectors for Tom songs and Republican songsters. Each point represents a song; the blue and orange markers denote Tom songs and Republican songsters, respectively. The large X markers indicate the centroids of the two corpora, with the black arrow illustrating the shift from the emotional center of Tom songs to that of Republican songsters. The gray arrows depict the loading directions of the underlying NRC emotion categories, highlighting how high-activation emotions—anger, fear, and disgust—tilt toward the Republican cluster. Emotion scores are normalized at the song level before projection.

Additional Tables

Table A.1: Counties with Advertisements for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

State	**County**	**State**	**County**
Connecticut	Hartford	Ohio	Champaign
D.C.	D.C.	Ohio	Clinton
Illinois	Adams	Ohio	Columbiana
Illinois	Cook	Ohio	Cuyahoga
Illinois	La Salle	Ohio	Darke
Illinois	Lake	Ohio	Erie
Illinois	Madison	Ohio	Fairfield
Illinois	Ogle	Ohio	Franklin
Illinois	Rock Island	Ohio	Hamilton
Illinois	Stephenson	Ohio	Huron
Indiana	Allen	Ohio	Lorain
Indiana	Carroll	Ohio	Miami
Indiana	Dearborn	Ohio	Muskingum
Indiana	Floyd	Ohio	Portage
Indiana	Gibson	Ohio	Ross
Indiana	Marion	Ohio	Sandusky
Indiana	Marshall	Ohio	Summit
Indiana	St. Joseph	Pennsylvania	Allegheny
Indiana	Switzerland	Pennsylvania	Cumberland
Indiana	Vanderburgh	Pennsylvania	Erie
Indiana	Vigo	Pennsylvania	Franklin
Iowa	Muscatine	Pennsylvania	Lancaster
Iowa	Scott	Pennsylvania	Lebanon
Kentucky	Boyle	Pennsylvania	Luzerne
Kentucky	Franklin	Pennsylvania	Philadelphia
Kentucky	Jefferson	Pennsylvania	Tioga
Maine	Cumberland	Pennsylvania	Warren
Maine	Penobscot	Pennsylvania	Washington
Maine	Sagadahoc	Rhode Island	Newport
Maryland	Baltimore	Rhode Island	Providence
Massachusetts	Berkshire	Rhode Island	Washington
Massachusetts	Bristol	Vermont	Addison
Massachusetts	Franklin	Vermont	Caledonia
Massachusetts	Middlesex	Vermont	Chittenden
Massachusetts	Suffolk	Vermont	Franklin
Massachusetts	Worcester	Vermont	Orange
Michigan	Hillsdale	Vermont	Rutland
Michigan	Kent	Vermont	Washington
Michigan	Ottawa	Vermont	Windham
Michigan	Wayne	Vermont	Windsor
New Hampshire	Merrimack	Wisconsin	Racine
New York	Albany	Wisconsin	Dane
New York	Dutchess	Wisconsin	Iowa
New York	Erie	Wisconsin	Jefferson
New York	Kings	Wisconsin	Kenosha
New York	New York	Wisconsin	Milwaukee
New York	Orange		
New York	Steuben		

Notes: Each entry represents one county with at least one newspaper advertisement for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The table is split into two halves for compact presentation within a single page.

Table A.2: PSM-Matched Difference-in-Differences Estimates

	Presidential elections		Congressional elections	
	Democratic	Whig/Republican	Democratic	Whig/Republican
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	-1.753	4.009***	-4.904***	3.313**
	(1.066)	(1.184)	(1.787)	(1.654)
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics × year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,556	1,556	2,657	2,657
R-squared	0.945	0.883	0.791	0.831

Notes: This table re-estimates the preferred continuous DID specification in a propensity-score matched county sample. Counties with high exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are matched to observationally similar lower-exposure counties based on pre-treatment covariates. The matched sample is then used to estimate the same county fixed effects, state-by-year fixed effects, and controls-by-year specification as in the baseline table. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Table A.3: Robustness: Alternative Measures of Exposure

	Presidential elections		Congressional elections	
	Democratic	Whig/Republican	Democratic	Whig/Republican
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Neighboring advertising county				
Treatment $\times Post$	-1.244***	1.420**	-2.912***	1.268
	(0.453)	(0.565)	(0.833)	(0.828)
Observations	2,671	2,671	4,727	4,727
Panel B: Distance to nearest advertising county				
Treatment $\times Post$	0.032***	-0.031***	0.061***	-0.022
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.014)
Observations	2,671	2,671	4,727	4,727
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics $\times$ year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: Panel A uses an indicator equal to one if a county neighbors at least one advertising county. Panel B uses the distance to the nearest advertising county. Each treatment measure is interacted with the post-publication period. All specifications match the preferred baseline fixed-effect structure: county fixed effects, state-by-year fixed effects, and pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with year indicators. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Table A.4: Robustness: Population-Weighted DID Estimates

	Presidential elections		Congressional elections	
	Democratic	Whig/Republican	Democratic	Whig/Republican
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	-1.687***	3.462***	-4.250***	2.785**
	(0.596)	(0.726)	(1.270)	(1.222)
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics × year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,671	2,671	4,727	4,727

Notes: This table re-estimates Table 2 using analytic weights equal to the proxy for voting-eligible white adult men, defined as total white males minus white males ages 0, 0–4, 5–9, 10–14, and 15–19. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Table A.5: Robustness: DID Estimates in Counties with Newspapers

	Presidential elections		Congressional elections	
	Democratic	Whig/Republican	Democratic	Whig/Republican
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	-1.323**	2.886***	-3.158***	2.448**
	(0.613)	(0.718)	(1.046)	(1.115)
Mean of Dep. Var.	44.88	47.35	45.66	42.47
R-squared	0.941	0.880	0.774	0.829
Observations	2,071	2,071	3,567	3,567
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics × year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: This table re-estimates Columns (2) and (4) of Table 2 after restricting the sample to counties with at least one newspaper. All specifications include county fixed effects, state-by-year fixed effects, and pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with year indicators. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Table A.6: Robustness: Alternative Standard Errors for Baseline DID

	Clustered at state level (1)	Conley 50 km (2)	Conley 100 km (3)	Conley 200 km (4)	Conley 300 km (5)
Panel A: Democratic presidential vote share					
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	-2.387***	-2.387***	-2.387***	-2.387***	-2.387***
	(0.696)	(0.380)	(0.373)	(0.392)	(0.451)
Panel B: Whig/Republican presidential vote share					
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	3.591***	3.591***	3.591***	3.591***	3.591***
	(0.604)	(0.476)	(0.522)	(0.597)	(0.603)
Panel C: Democratic congressional vote share					
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	-4.035**	-4.035***	-4.035***	-4.035***	-4.035***
	(1.484)	(0.712)	(0.787)	(0.780)	(0.863)
Panel D: Whig/Republican congressional vote share					
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$	2.514**	2.514***	2.514***	2.514***	2.514***
	(1.044)	(0.712)	(0.767)	(0.793)	(0.819)
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics × year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations, presidential	2,671	2,671	2,671	2,671	2,671
Observations, congressional	4,727	4,727	4,727	4,727	4,727

Notes: This table re-estimates Columns (2) and (4) of Table 2. Panels A and B use presidential vote shares; Panels C and D use congressional vote shares. Column (1) clusters standard errors at the state level. Columns (2)–(5) report Conley spatial standard errors with distance cutoffs of 50, 100, 200, and 300 kilometers. All specifications include county fixed effects, state-by-year fixed effects, and pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with year indicators. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Table A.7: Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin in Past Presidential Elections (Placebo Tests)

	1840	1844	1848	Δ1848-1844
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Democratic				
$log(Exposure)$	-1.240	-0.456	-0.993*	-0.914
	(1.249)	(0.593)	(0.586)	(0.616)
Full controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	48.63	48.60	45.71	-5.706
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	11.28	11.28	13.92	9.228
R-squared	0.314	0.867	0.883	0.697
Observations	394	392	412	412
Panel B: Whig				
$log(Exposure)$	1.518	0.445	0.059	-0.520
	(1.260)	(0.493)	(0.519)	(0.545)
Full controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	50.94	45.58	43.56	-1.971
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	11.14	10.24	10.19	6.355
R-squared	0.296	0.862	0.837	0.537
Observations	394	392	412	412

Notes: This table shows the correlation between exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin and pre-publication presidential vote shares. Each column represents the results from a separate OLS regression, where each observation is a county. The sample consists of all counties in the North. Panel A shows the results for the Democratic Party, and panel B does so for the Whig Party. In each panel, the outcome variables are the vote shares of the party in each presidential election during 1840–1848 (columns 1–3) and the change in vote shares during 1844–1848 (column 4). The explanatory variable is the exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852. Each regression controls for the full set of baseline controls used in the main specifications. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

Table A.8: Robustness: Alternative Exposure Half-Lives, One-Standard-Deviation Effects

	6-hour half-life (1)	8-hour half-life (2)	10-hour half-life (3)
Panel A: Democratic presidential vote share			
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$ (one SD)	-2.531^{***}	-2.659^{***}	-2.733^{***}
	(0.539)	(0.563)	(0.579)
Panel B: Whig/Republican presidential vote share			
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$ (one SD)	3.632^{***}	4.001^{***}	4.235^{***}
	(0.585)	(0.612)	(0.626)
Panel C: Democratic congressional vote share			
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$ (one SD)	-4.857^{***}	-5.045^{***}	-5.150^{***}
	(0.981)	(1.030)	(1.059)
Panel D: Whig/Republican congressional vote share			
$\log(Exposure) \times Post$ (one SD)	2.701^{***}	3.144^{***}	3.474^{***}
	(0.941)	(0.980)	(1.001)
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
State-by-year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics × year	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations, presidential	2,671	2,671	2,671
Observations, congressional	4,727	4,727	4,727

Notes: This table reports the change in party vote share, in percentage points, associated with a one-standard-deviation increase in county-level $\log(Exposure)$. For each column and election sample, the raw DID coefficient and its standard error are multiplied by the cross-county standard deviation of the corresponding log exposure measure. Standard deviations are calculated across counties in the relevant estimation sample, assigning equal weight to each county rather than to each county-election observation. For the six-, eight-, and ten-hour half-lives, these standard deviations are 1.383, 1.114, and 0.938 in the presidential sample, and 1.557, 1.250, and 1.051 in the congressional sample. Thus, every coefficient in the table represents a one-standard-deviation change and is comparable across alternative half-life parameters; it is not the effect of a one-unit change in raw log exposure. The post-publication indicator equals one for elections in 1852 and later. All specifications include county fixed effects, state-by-election-year fixed effects, and pre-treatment county characteristics interacted with election-year indicators. The presidential specifications include 1848 presidential party shares among the pre-treatment controls; the congressional specifications instead include 1850 congressional Democratic and Whig/Republican shares. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level and are scaled by the same exposure standard deviation as the corresponding coefficient. Significance levels: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

Table A.9: Latent Topics in Tom Songs and Republican Campaign Songs

Song Type	**Tom Narrative** (%)	**Shared Vocabulary** (%)	**Republican Mobilization** (%)
Republican	20.06	33.52	46.42
Tom	59.39	27.65	12.96
Representative Words	Tom, Uncle, Eva, Poor, White, Sing, Night, Shall	Eva, Jessie, Home, Sweet, Away, Come, Bound, Brother	Hurrah, Fremont, Freedom, Liberty, Rally, Beat, Dayton

Notes: Topic proportions report the average posterior weights assigned by the three-topic LDA model to each corpus (Tom songs and Republican campaign songs). Representative words are the top-probability terms defining each latent topic.

Additional Materials

Example: An Uncle Tom Song

Dry the tears for holy Eva,
With the blessed angels leave her,
Of the form so sweet and fair
Give to earth the tender care.

For the golden locks of Eva
Let the sunny southland give her
Flowery pillow of repose
Orange bloom and budding ros
Orange bloom and budding rose.

All is light and peace with Eva,
There the darkness cometh never,
Tears are wiped and fetters fall,
And the Lord is all in all.

Weep no more for happy Eva
Wrong and sin no more shall grieve her,
Care and pain and weariness
Lost in love so measureless,
Lost in love so measureless.

Gentle Eva loving Eva
Child confessor, true believer,
Listen'r at the Master's knee,
"Suffer such to come to me."

Oh for faith like thine, sweet Eva,

Lighting all the solemn river,

And the blessing of the poor

Wafting to the heavenly shore,

Wafting to the heavenly shore.

Source: Caroline Moseley, recording of "Little Eva; Uncle Tom's Guardian Angel," recorded at Taplin Auditorium, Princeton University, with James Moses as recording engineer. Copyright © 1999 by Caroline Moseley. Digitized by Adam Soroka, Johnny Lee, and Lisa Gottschalk at the Digital Media Center, Clemons Library, University of Virginia.

Example: A Campaign Songster

Fremont Rallying Song.

Tune: Vive La Compagnie

The people are rising for Freedom and Right—
Fremont's the man for the Free—
The ruffians of slavery are trembling with fright—
Fremont's the man for the Free.

Ho ! Fremont and Freedom ! Fremont 's the man !
Fremont and Freedom ! Fremont 's the man !
Fremont's the man ! Fremont 's the man !
Fremont's the man for the Free.

In Kansas the sway of the ruffians shall cease—
Fremont's the man for the Free !
And o'er our broad land shall be justice and peace—
Fremont's the man for the Free !
Ho ! Fremont and Freedom ! etc.

Let Buchancers quarrel for Cuba and slaves —
Fremont's the man for the Free.
We'll stand for the soil where our starred banner waves —
Fremont's the man for the Free !
Ho ! Fremont and Freedom ! etc.

Restore the old landmarks the fathers have set —
Fremont's the man for the Free.

We will not be robbed, nor the robbers forget —
Fremont's the man for the Free !
Ho ! Fremont and Freedom ! etc.

Then rally, boys, rally for justice and right —
Fremont's the man for the Free.
With firmness and courage we're sure of the fight —
Fremont's the man for the Free !
Ho ! Fremont and Freedom ! etc.

Source: Republican campaign songster for John C. Frémont, 1856. Ralph E. Becker Collection of Political Americana, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Associated institution: Republican National Party.