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

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Abstract

In the 1850s, the United States experienced one of the most consequential political realignments in its history: the collapse of the Whig Party, the fragmentation of the Democratic coalition, and the rise of a Republican North. This paper argues that Uncle Tom's Cabin played a pivotal role in this transformation by diffusing anti-slavery ideas across the northern states. Using advertisement records extracted from digitized historical newspapers, I construct a county-level exposure to the novel based on travel times along the 1850 transportation network. Instrumental-variable and difference-in-differences estimates consistently show that counties with greater exposure experienced larger declines in Democratic vote shares and a stronger shift toward the emerging Republican Party during the 1850s. The evidence indicates that exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin triggered a moral awakening that reshaped public attitudes toward slavery and strengthened the anti-slavery political coalition. This moral awakening was reflected in two observable outcomes: exposed counties recorded more newborns named "Eva," a central character in the novel, as well as higher numbers of Union Army enlistments. Partisan newspapers and the newly emergent Republican Party further amplified this moral awakening by incorporating the novel's themes into their political discourse, thereby transforming a cultural movement into a broader process of political realignment.

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1 Introduction

At pivotal historical moments, widely read books have appeared alongside major intellectual and political changes—for example, Diderot's *Encyclopédie* during the Enlightenment, Paine's *Common Sense* during the American Revolution, and *New Youth* in early twentieth-century China. Existing studies have examined these works largely through their influence on intellectual and political elites (Squicciarini and Voigtländer, 2015; Bai et al., 2023). Yet the very reason they resonated so widely, namely their ability to reach ordinary readers and shape belief formation at scale, has received little systematic causal attention. Can the diffusion of a single cultural work measurably influence political preferences and electoral outcomes in a mass democracy? This paper examines this question in the antebellum United States by studying the publication and subsequent 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 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin became not only one of the most widely read works in American history but also a moral touchstone of the antislavery movement. The novel vividly depicted the human suffering behind slavery and evoked deep sympathy among northern readers (Reynolds, 2012). Propelled by the publisher's aggressive marketing campaign and the rapidly expanding railway network, the book spread swiftly across the North (Zboray, 1993; Parfait, 2016). Its impact extended well beyond the printed page: 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 powerful moral appeal (Reynolds, 2012). The most famous contemporary acknowledgment came from Abraham Lincoln, who reportedly greeted Harriet Beecher Stowe as "the little lady who made this great war," a remark that reflected the widespread recognition of the novel's political impact.

The case of Uncle Tom's Cabin offers three features that make it well suited to study how the diffusion of a cultural work can shape political outcomes. First, the decade before the Civil War witnessed deepening sectional conflict and the transition from the Second to the Third Party System—a period of political upheaval and realignment. Second, rich county-level voting records allow for a detailed examination of collective preference changes over time and space. Third, the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852 created a sudden and widely observed cultural shock that spread rapidly across the North. To document the novel's initial reach, I draw on the fact that the publisher and local booksellers relied heavily on newspaper advertisements for marketing, which allows me to identify the counties where the book was directly available using a digitized historical newspaper database (Parfait,

2016).

Nonetheless, counties with newspaper advertisements may not represent random treatment. The publisher and local booksellers could have chosen more populous or commercially connected places, making a direct comparison between advertised and non-advertised counties potentially endogenous. In addition, counties without sales outlets might still have been influenced through interactions with advertised areas.

I address these concerns in two ways. First, I use the advertisement counties as the origins of diffusion and construct a continuous measure of exposure that captures how easily each county could be influenced by Uncle Tom's Cabin through the 1850 transportation network. I then restrict the analysis to counties without direct access to the novel. This approach separates the exogenous timing of the novel's publication from the endogenous placement of advertisements, providing a cleaner source of variation by focusing on the diffusion of exposure from advertisement counties to other areas.

Second, to further mitigate concerns that exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin may reflect underlying county-level cultural or informational demand, I implement an instrumental variable strategy that exploits the contemporaneous publication of Melville (1851), a comparable bestseller without political inclination. Following Borusyak and Hull (2023), I construct a recentered instrument based on Moby Dick's diffusion to isolate the quasi-random component of network accessibility unrelated to systematic spatial patterns. Moby Dick was likely distributed through similar commercial and transportation networks, making it a comparable reference for isolating contemporaneous accessibility effects. The recentering procedure further strengthens the exclusion restriction by explicitly removing systematic variation in accessibility through subtracting each county's expected exposure under random publication geography. These features make the recentered Moby Dick exposure a valid instrument for identifying the causal effect of Uncle Tom's Cabin's diffusion on political realignment in the 1850s.

Ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates indicate that counties more exposed to Uncle Tom's Cabin experienced larger declines in Democratic vote shares and greater support for the emerging Republican Party during the 1850s. To isolate the causal impact, I employ the recentered Moby Dick exposure as the instrument. The 2SLS estimates point to a sizable political impact in the 1852 election, a 10% increase in exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin is associated with a 0.27 percentage-point decrease in Democratic vote share and a comparable increase in Whig vote share. These results suggest that the novel's diffusion had an immediate political effect in the election held just months after its publication. For the 1856 election, the point estimates remain similar in magnitude but are no longer precisely estimated. This decline in precision is consistent with the broader political dynamics of

the mid-1850s: the Kansas-Nebraska crisis accelerated sectional polarization. As cross-county differences narrowed, the instrument captured less spatial variation, resulting in wider confidence intervals despite similar point estimates.

I then turn to a difference-in-differences (DID) framework that tracks within-county changes in presidential vote shares before and after the novel's publication. The results reassure Uncle Tom's Cabin's political impact: exposure to the novel is associated with a decline in Democratic vote shares and a corresponding rise in Republican support. These findings are robust to using either a continuous measure of exposure or a discretized treatment definition based on exposure terciles. An event-study analysis provides evidence for the parallel trends assumption and illustrates the dynamic effects of the novel's diffusion. Counties with different levels of exposure show no pre-existing differences before 1852 but diverge clearly in vote shares thereafter.

To shed light on the mechanism behind these political effects, I first examine whether Uncle Tom's Cabin triggered a moral awakening that heightened northern sympathy toward enslaved people. I present two pieces of evidence consistent with this mechanism. First, the adorable young girl Eva, whose tragic death is among the novel's most memorable scenes, became a powerful cultural symbol of innocence and compassion. Following the novel's publication, counties more exposed to Uncle Tom's Cabin recorded a larger number of newborn girls named "Eva." Second, by linking the exposure measure to Union Army enlistment records, I find that men from more exposed counties were more likely to join the Union Army during the Civil War. Together, these patterns suggest that exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin fostered a moral awakening across the North, transforming attitudes toward slavery from indifference to empathy and moral conviction.

I next explore how this moral awakening may have been amplified by newspapers and political parties. Using newspaper text data, I show that discussions of slavery increased sharply after the novel's publication. Newspapers, then the most influential medium of mass communication, actively engaged with the popular discourse surrounding Uncle Tom's Cabin, reinforcing the spread of anti-slavery sentiment and extending the novel's reach beyond its readership. Meanwhile, building on this moral climate, the emerging Republican Party might have further transformed compassion into political mobilization. Textual evidence shows that Republican campaign songsters of 1856 closely resembled the "Tom songs" that were composed in the wake of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Topic-model evidence indicates that the two corpora drew on a shared semantic domain, as reflected in overlapping moral vocabularies. Sentiment analysis further suggests that Republican songsters follow broadly similar emotional profiles, yet selectively heighten the more mobilizing sentiments—especially anger, fear, and disgust—relative to the Tom-song tradition.

These findings make several contributions. Most directly, this paper adds to the literature on the origins of the American Civil War. In the antebellum United States, a complex interplay of forces, including slavery, tariffs, immigration, and regional interests, shaped the sectional tensions that ultimately culminated in war (Ashworth, 1995; Foner, 1995; Doyle, 2014; Alsan et al., 2020; Dippel and Heblich, 2021). Yet the formation of moral opposition to slavery has received far less attention. This study introduces a new perspective by documenting how a literary work, Uncle Tom's Cabin, helped cultivate that moral consciousness. With more than 300,000 copies sold in its first year, the broad circulation of the novel accelerated the spread of anti-slavery ideology, pushing the nation's ideological frontier toward the Civil War. More broadly, by tracing the emergence of moral conviction as a political force, this research also speaks to the longer trajectory of the American struggle for justice and equality, from Reconstruction through the civil rights movement and beyond (Naidu, 2010; Derenoncourt, 2022; Testa and Williams, 2025).

Beyond the context of the Civil War, this paper contributes to the broader literature on how ideas shape societies, a central theme in economics and political science (North, 1990; Acemoglu et al., 2001, 2005). A growing body of recent research has provided new empirical evidence on the transmission and political consequences of ideas using novel identification strategies (Dippel and Heblich, 2021; Bai et al., 2023; Wang, 2021; Ang, 2023). My study adds to this literature by offering causal evidence on how Uncle Tom's Cabin influenced public opinion and shaped political behavior in antebellum America. To my knowledge, this is the first paper to provide causal evidence that a major publication can meaningfully contribute to the large-scale spread of ideas.

Lastly, by documenting the direct impact of Uncle Tom's Cabin on voting outcomes, this paper shows that cultural works can serve as powerful vehicles for ideological change. In doing so, it contributes to the broader literature on the political effects of media. Previous research has established that different forms of media, from newspapers and radio to television, film, and more recently the internet and social media, can shape public attitudes and behavior (Gentzkow, 2006; Gentzkow et al., 2011; Campante et al., 2018; Wang, 2021, 2025; Ang, 2023). This study extends that analysis to the nineteenth-century United States by examining an earlier form of mass communication: the printed book. The evidence from Uncle Tom's Cabin demonstrates that books can also exert powerful political effects, influencing public opinion and collective political outcomes in ways comparable to modern media.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides historical background on the political realignment of the 1850s and the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Section 3 describes the data. Section 4 outlines the empirical design. Section 5 presents the main results, including the baseline OLS, IV, and DID estimates. Section 6 discusses

mechanisms. Section 7 concludes.

2 Historical Background

2.1 Political Realignment in the 1850s

In the early nineteenth century, American politics was structured around the two-party system of the Democrats and the Whigs. For decades, this arrangement maintained a delicate balance over slavery through a combination of legislative compromises and procedural restraints. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had drawn a geographic line limiting the expansion of slavery, while the congressional "gag rule" muted debate on abolitionist petitions (Ashworth, 1995; Forbes, 2009). Together, these mechanisms preserved a fragile equilibrium between North and South, allowing both parties to compete nationally without taking explicit positions on slavery.

This balance broke down with the Compromise of 1850, a legislative package intended to ease sectional tensions following the Mexican–American War. While the compromise admitted California as a free state and left the status of other western territories undecided, its most explosive provision was the Fugitive Slave Act, which required citizens and local authorities in free states to assist in the capture of escaped slaves. The enforcement of this law provoked outrage across the North, transforming slavery from a distant question of policy into an immediate political crisis. Among those deeply affected was Harriet Beecher Stowe, who began writing Uncle Tom's Cabin after personally witnessing the law's consequences (Hedrick, 1995).

In the wake of the Fugitive Slave Law, northern politics became increasingly unsettled. New tensions over slavery, immigration, and religion fueled the brief rise of the Know-Nothing Party, an anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic movement that gained popularity in parts of the Northeast(Alsan et al., 2020). Yet its appeal proved short-lived: as sectional polarization deepened, debates over nativism were quickly eclipsed by the question of slavery's expansion. The 1850s thus opened as a decade of mounting instability in the political order of the North.

The decisive rupture came with the Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854, which repealed the Missouri Compromise and left the expansion of slavery to "popular sovereignty." The act triggered a massive influx of settlers into Kansas—both pro-slavery and anti-slavery—culminating in violent clashes known as "Bleeding Kansas." The turmoil discredited the Whig Party, which collapsed under the strain of sectional division, and paved the way for the emergence of the Republican Party. Formed in 1854, the new party united former Whigs, Free Soilers, and anti-Nebraska Democrats around the principle that slavery should not extend into the

western territories (Gienapp, 1987).

Although the Republicans lost the 1856 presidential election, their candidate John C. Frémont carried most of the northern states, signaling the consolidation of a distinct anti-slavery political platform in the North. Between 1850 and 1856, the United States thus underwent one of the most rapid political realignments in its history: the collapse of an old party system, the rise of a new one, and the elevation of slavery from a sectional policy dispute to the central axis of political conflict. It was in this moment of profound transformation that Uncle Tom's Cabin was published in 1852—a work that translated the politics of slavery into the moral and emotional language of everyday life, as discussed in the next section.

2.2 The Publication and Reception of Uncle Tom's Cabin

Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin, had spent several years in Cincinnati, where she witnessed fugitive enslaved people crossing the Ohio River to seek freedom. Those encounters left a lasting impression. When Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, mandating the return of escaped slaves even from free states, Stowe resolved to respond through literature, intentionally crafting it as an anti-slavery work (Hedrick, 1995).

At the time, publishing an openly anti-slavery novel was commercially risky. Prominent houses such as Harper & Brothers and Phillips & Sampson declined her manuscript, concerned that taking on so controversial a title would alienate Southern customers. The manuscript was finally accepted by John P. Jewett, a Boston publisher known for religious and reform literature, who recognized the potential of a morally charged narrative in a time of growing national tension. Jewett then issued the novel as a two-volume set and embarked on one of the most ambitious marketing campaigns in antebellum publishing (Parfait, 2016).

To reach a mass audience, Jewett's unprecedented marketing strategy relied heavily on newspaper advertisements. Before the book's official release, he placed advance notices in major dailies and local weeklies announcing its forthcoming publication on March 24, 1852, effectively creating public anticipation. After the launch, the advertisements continued but shifted in tone, now highlighting the novel's remarkable sales figures with phrases such as "5,000 Copies in a Day" and "Over 100,000 Sold."(Figure 1) These repeated campaigns maintained the book's visibility and signaled its emergence as a cultural event. Importantly, promotion was not limited to Jewett himself: local bookstores and independent agents across the North also advertised Uncle Tom's Cabin in their regional newspapers, multiplying its exposure through decentralized marketing (Parfait, 2016).

The rapid diffusion of the novel was further aided by the railroad network, which by the early 1850s had begun to integrate regional book markets into a national system. Rail-

roads enabled publishers to distribute books far beyond their home cities, to restock distant booksellers quickly, and to maintain regular contact with agents in smaller towns (Zboray, 1993). The combination of an aggressive newspaper campaign and a rapidly expanding transportation infrastructure allowed Uncle Tom's Cabin to reach readers on an unprecedented scale—transforming what might have been a regional success into the first truly national bestseller in American history. Within its first year, sales exceeded 300,000 copies, an astonishing figure in a nation of roughly twenty-three million people. Considering that a single copy was often shared among several readers, the novel's actual readership likely encompassed a remarkable share of the Northern population.

The novel's impact extended far beyond the printed page. It inspired a wave of cultural and social responses that reflected the depth of its moral appeal. First, naming records show a surge in newborn girls named Eva, after the beloved young girl in the novel. Second, newspapers across the North began to feature more frequent discussions of slavery, freedom, and Christian duty, suggesting that the novel had supplied editors and readers with a new moral vocabulary for public debate (Reynolds, 2012). Third, in the realm of popular culture, Uncle Tom's Cabin gave rise to an entire genre of "Tom songs" and "Tom shows," musical and theatrical adaptations that carried its message to audiences far beyond the reach of print.

Politicians soon recognized the novel's mobilizing power. Henry Wilson, a founder of the Republican Party and later vice president under Ulysses Grant, reflected that many of the votes cast for John Fremont in the 1856 presidential election "were but the rich fruitage of seed widely broadcast by Harriet Beecher Stowe." Later, at the 1860 Republican National Convention, copies of Uncle Tom's Cabin were distributed among delegates as tokens of the party's cause. In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln reportedly greeted Stowe with the famous remark, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war."

3 Data

3.1 Uncle Tom's Cabin: Newspaper Advertisements

The first step is to identify where Uncle Tom's Cabin was available for purchase. Its publisher, John P. Jewett, was a relatively small player in the 1850s book industry. Despite the novel's extraordinary success, Jewett's company went bankrupt during the Panic of 1857, and he soon left the publishing industry. As a result, unlike well-established firms such as Ticknor & Fields in Boston or Harper & Brothers in New York, no archival business records from Jewett's firm survive.

Nevertheless, Jewett invested heavily in marketing, most notably through extensive newspaper advertising. Uncle Tom's Cabin sold more than 300,000 copies within its first year, a remarkable achievement for its time. Newspapers, the most influential medium of the era, served as the principal channel for promoting the novel. Jewett placed advertisements directly in several papers, while local booksellers and agents also promoted it through regional newspapers. To trace the novel's early commercial circulation, I search four historical newspaper databases[1] for the keywords "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Uncle Tom Cabin" from 1852 to 1853, which yielded roughly 30,000 pages of results. For each advertisement found (examples in Figure 1), I record the publication date, newspaper title, and the addresses of bookstores or agents mentioned.

This procedure identifies 95 counties in the Northern states [2] where Uncle Tom's Cabin was advertised and demonstrated to be available for purchase (Figure 3). These counties, hereafter advertised counties, represent the initial nodes through which the novel entered the northern markets. In the next section, I use these nodes as the origin points for constructing a continuous measure of exposure across all non-advertised counties, based on travel-time distance within the 1850 transportation network. This approach captures how accessibility through rail and stage routes shaped each county's potential to encounter the novel (see Section 4.1 for full details on the exposure construction).

3.2 Transportation network: Railroads and Stage Routes

In the 1850s, the rapid expansion of railroads revolutionized book distribution, transforming the publishing industry from a largely decentralized system into a more connected national network (Zboray, 1993). To model how Uncle Tom's Cabin could reach different parts of the North, I construct a county-level transportation network that combines both railroads and stage routes as they existed around 1850. Railroads linked major cities and industrial centers, while stage routes continued to serve towns and rural areas not yet reached by rail. In combination, these two transportation systems formed the backbone of the overland communication network that enabled the circulation of books and correspondence across the United States.

The railroad component is based on the dataset by Atack (2016), which digitizes the entire U.S. railroad system as of 1852 from historical sources. Next, I digitize the 1850 stage

[1]The four historical newspaper databases are: Newspapers.com, Chronicling America, Newspaperarchive.com, and 19th Century U.S. Newspapers

[2]Southern states are excluded from the analysis because Uncle Tom's Cabin was widely condemned there. Pro-slavery newspapers denounced the novel as a distortion of plantation life and published counter-narratives such as Aunt Phillis's Cabin and Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is to defend slavery. Given this context, the analysis focuses exclusively on the Northern states.

route network from Disturnell's New Map of the United States and Canada (Burr, 1850), the original map of which is shown in Figure 2. I then merge this layer with the Atack railroad shapefile to create an integrated transportation network, representing all major overland connections available to Northern counties in 1852, as shown in Figure 3.

3.3 Electoral Outcomes and County Characteristics

The main outcomes of interest are county-level vote shares (in percentage points) for the Democratic and Republican Parties in the years following the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin. The election data are drawn from the ICPSR 8611 collection (Clubb et al., 2006), which provides county-level presidential and congressional returns since 1840.

To characterize baseline county conditions, I assemble a complementary set of demographic, economic, and geographic variables. County-level demographic and economic characteristics for 1850 come from the ICPSR 2896 collection (Haines et al., 2010), which compiles digitized data from the U.S. Census. Geographic boundaries and related spatial features are taken from the Atlas of Historical County Boundaries(Siczewicz, 2011), using county boundaries as of 1852 to ensure consistent historical alignment across counties and time.

4 Empirical Design

This chapter outlines the empirical design. It first describes the construction of the analytical sample and the development of a network-based measure of county-level exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. It then introduces the empirical framework used to estimate the novel's political impact.

4.1 Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin

Sample construction. The analysis begins with the universe of northern counties in the 1850s. I exclude the 95 "advertised counties," where newspaper advertisements for Uncle Tom's Cabin are directly observed (see Section 3.1). This exclusion is motivated by three considerations.

First, advertising and distribution were unlikely to be random: publishers and local agents probably targeted counties that were more populous, more literate, or more receptive to anti-slavery sentiment. Including these counties would therefore confound the marketing strategy with the diffusion effect that this paper seeks to identify.

Second, the surviving newspaper record may be incomplete, and some counties that stocked or advertised the novel may have left no archival trace. Relying solely on observed

advertisements would thus risk misclassifying certain treated counties as untreated, introducing measurement error.

Third, advertised counties plausibly served as origins from which books and discussions spread to other areas through social and commercial networks. Even if a nearby county did not stock the book directly, it could still be indirectly exposed through these channels.

By focusing on non-advertised counties, I isolate the downstream effect of diffusion—how the novel reached and influenced regions that were not directly targeted by the publisher. The advertised counties are therefore treated as diffusion nodes, serving as the sources from which exposure radiated outward through the transportation network.

Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. To capture this network-based diffusion process, I construct a continuous exposure index that reflects how easily the novel could reach each county through existing transportation links. Let $\mathcal{A}$ denote the set of advertised counties, and let t_{ca} represent the shortest travel time between ad county a and county c, computed on the integrated 1850 railroad–stage network described in Section 3.2. County-level exposure is defined as:

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

This measure assumes that the influence of each advertised county decays exponentially with travel time.[3] Counties that are closer in network space receive stronger exposure, while more distant counties contribute less because their influence is discounted by travel cost. The exponential kernel imposes a smooth decline in influence as travel time increases, avoiding arbitrary thresholds that sharply divide counties with similar levels of accessibility. The parameter τ controls the rate of decay [4].

Moreover, the exposure aggregates potential influence from all advertised counties rather than relying on the single nearest source. This approach captures the multi-source nature of book and information circulation and reflects the historical reality that ideas, news, and printed materials could diffuse along multiple routes simultaneously.

Discretized exposure for robustness. For interpretability and robustness, I also discretize the continuous exposure measure into terciles of exposure intensity—low, medium,

[3]Because the index is based on travel time rather than Euclidean distance, it better approximates the actual cost of circulation across the railroad and stage route system of the 1850s.

[4]Exposure decays with travel time as $\exp(-t/\tau)$, where t is hours on the 1850 rail–stage network. I set $\tau = 8$ as the benchmark, which implies a half-life of $8 \ln 2 \approx 5.5$ hours. This scale is consistent with the 1850s connectivity, where a half-day's travel plausibly attenuated circulation. Results are robust to alternative decay rates: $\tau = 6$ and $\tau = 10$ yield quantitatively similar estimates.

and high—yielding a categorical specification that facilitates comparison across counties experiencing different levels of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. The continuous specification remains the baseline measure throughout the analysis, while the tercile version serves as a complementary robustness check in Section 5 and 6.

4.2 Identification Strategy

The empirical analysis proceeds in three stages. I begin with a baseline OLS specification that provides a descriptive benchmark of how voting outcomes vary with exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. To address potential endogeneity and strengthen causal interpretation, I then employ two complementary strategies: an instrumental-variables approach and a difference-in-differences design, both discussed below and implemented in Section 5.

Baseline OLS. For each post-publication election year, I estimate the following cross-sectional regression:

$$Vote_c = \beta \, log(Exposure_c) + \delta' \mathbf{X}_c + \eta_s + \varepsilon_c \tag{1}$$

where $Vote_c$ is the presidential vote share received by Democratic Party (or Republican) in county c ; $log(Exposure_c)$ is the continuous exposure measure defined in Section 4.1, measured in logarithms; X_c is a vector of baseline county characteristics measured in 1850, including including demographic, economic, and geographic controls; η_s are state fixed effects, controlling for any differences across states that might influence vote share; ε_c is the error term. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.[5]

The coefficient of interest, β, captures how political outcomes vary with exposure to the novel. Because the exposure is continuous and measured in logarithms, β can be interpreted as the semi-elasticity of vote share changes with respect to exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. While this specification provides an intuitive benchmark, it may still capture correlations driven by pre-existing economic or ideological differences. These concerns motivate two complementary identification strategies that address potential endogeneity and exploit different dimensions of variation in exposure.

Instrumental Variables Strategy. To address potential endogeneity in the spatial diffusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, I construct an instrumental variable based on the contemporaneous publication of *Moby Dick*, a comparable bestseller without political inclination.

[5]Robustness checks with alternative standard error specifications are presented in Section 5.4.

Following Borusyak and Hull (2023), I build a recentered instrument that captures the quasi-random component of network accessibility uncorrelated with systematic spatial patterns. The recentered instrument provides a plausibly exogenous source of variation in cultural diffusion while preserving the same historical transport and commercial context (see Section 5.2 for details).

Difference-in-Differences Design. I further exploit within-county changes in voting outcomes before and after the novel's publication using a difference-in-differences framework. The specification includes county fixed effects and state-by-year fixed effects to absorb persistent local characteristics and state-specific shocks over time. This approach examines whether counties more exposed to the novel experienced larger partisan shifts after 1852 relative to less exposed counties.

5 Results

5.1 Baseline OLS

Equation (1) provides a baseline estimate of how county-level exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin is associated with presidential vote shares. The identifying assumption is that, conditional on controls and state fixed effects, $log(Exposure)$ is not correlated with other unobserved factors that also influenced local political preferences. To make this assumption more credible, I include an extensive set of pre-treatment county characteristics such as urbanization, demographic composition, economic structure, transport access, literacy, and schooling. I then implement placebo tests by regressing pre-1852 presidential vote shares and their changes on $log(Exposure)$.

As shown in Table 2, the placebo coefficients are small and statistically insignificant across most pre-treatment elections, indicating little systematic correlation between exposure and earlier voting patterns. The only marginally significant coefficient appears for the 1848 Democratic vote share, which may reflect the distinct political dynamics of that election, when the Free Soil Party temporarily diverted votes from traditional party alignments. Overall, the results suggest that exposure is not mechanically related to preexisting partisan geography. The next section introduces an instrumental-variable design to address any remaining endogeneity concerns more directly.

Table 3 reports OLS estimates for 1852, 1856, and 1860. I present three specifications: (i) with state fixed effects, (ii) with state fixed effects plus county characteristics, and (iii) with extra past electoral result averages. Panel A shows a consistently negative association

between exposure and the Democratic vote in the North. In 1852, immediately after publication, the coefficients are already negative, consistent with the novel's rapid circulation. In the most saturated specification, a one-unit increase in $log(Exposure)$ is associated with a 1.8–percentage–point decrease in the Democratic vote share, implying that a 10% increase in exposure corresponds to roughly a 0.18–percentage–point decline. The same negative relationship persists in 1856 and 1860, though with somewhat smaller magnitudes.

Panel B examines the Whig and Republican vote shares. In 1852, exposure correlates positively with Whig support, suggesting that counties more exposed to Uncle Tom's Cabin exhibited slightly higher Whig support, even though the party itself did not take an explicit stance on slavery. The contrast becomes much sharper in 1856, the year of the Republican Party's first presidential campaign centered on an explicitly anti-slavery platform. In the fully controlled specification, a one-log-point increase in $log(Exposure)$ is associated with about a 4.6-percentage-point higher Republican vote share. A positive association of similar direction remains in 1860. Putting Panels A and B together, the results suggest that exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin is associated with a shift away from the Democrats and toward the emerging Republican coalition, with the strongest associations appearing as party alignments crystallized in 1856.

Two observations help interpret these baseline results. First, the signs and relative magnitudes of the coefficients are broadly stable across specifications. Second, the OLS patterns are descriptive and serve as a foundation for causal identification. The next section turns to an instrumental-variable strategy to address potential endogeneity more directly.

5.2 Instrumental Variable Approach

The publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin constituted a major and plausibly exogenous cultural shock, yet the spatial pattern of its diffusion across counties was unlikely to be random (Borusyak and Hull, 2023). Counties that were better connected through transportation networks may have been more accessible to publishers and booksellers, leading to systematically higher exposure to any publication. Such network-driven diffusion implicitly favored counties that were more accessible along major routes, creating correlation between exposure and unobserved local characteristics, thereby biasing OLS estimates. To address this concern, I construct an instrumental variable based on the contemporaneous publication of Moby Dick, which appeared one year earlier but carried no political content.

Following the approach of Borusyak and Hull (2023), I build a recentered exposure instrument in two steps. First, I compute each county's exposure to Moby Dick, $log(Exposure_c^{MD})$, using the same transportation network described in Section 4.1. Second, I randomly assign

24 hypothetical publication nodes across the North [6] and simulate 500 replications of the resulting exposure surfaces. For each county, I then calculate its average simulated exposure across these replications, representing the expected exposure under random publication geography for a typical bestseller. The difference between the observed Moby Dick exposure and its expected value yields the recentered instrument, Z_c, which isolates the residual component of network accessibility orthogonal to systematic spatial patterns.

$$Z_c = log(Exposure_c^{MD}) - E(log(Exposure_c^{MD}))$$

The exclusion restriction assumes that, conditional on observed covariates and state fixed effects, the recentered instrument affects political outcomes only through its correlation with exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. This assumption is plausible for two reasons. First, Moby Dick serves as a close counterfactual because it was published in the same period, likely distributed through similar commercial and transportation networks, and widely read despite being apolitical. Its spatial circulation therefore reflects logistical rather than ideological forces. Second, the recentering procedure removes the systematic component of network accessibility by subtracting each county's expected exposure under random publication geography, effectively eliminating the influence of counties that are predictably more reachable under any publication pattern. These properties make the recentered Moby Dick exposure a credible instrument for the diffusion of Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Table 4 reports the 2SLS estimates. In 1852, the IV coefficients are large and precisely estimated. Counties more exposed to Uncle Tom's Cabin show significantly lower Democratic vote shares and higher Whig support. The coefficients are larger than the corresponding OLS estimates, consistent with attenuation bias from measurement error in exposure. The instrument also isolates the variation most relevant for diffusion across the transportation network. The first-stage F statistics are well above conventional thresholds, confirming that the Moby Dick recentered instrument strongly predicts actual exposure (Stock and Yogo, 2005; Lee et al., 2022). When pre-1852 presidential vote averages are added as controls, the estimates remain significant, suggesting that the exclusion restriction is unlikely to be violated by long-run partisan culture. In column 3, a 10 percent increase in exposure implies roughly a 0.4–0.5 percentage-point decline in the Democratic vote share. Under the LATE interpretation, the estimates reflect the response of counties whose network positions made them more accessible to the diffusion pattern captured by the Moby Dick instrument, and whose exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin therefore rose most relative to others.

Moving to 1856, the IV coefficients decline in magnitude and become less precise once

[6] 24 is the number of observed advertisement counties for Moby Dick. See Table A1 across for a full list.

controlling for past presidential vote averages. The first-stage F statistics remain well above conventional thresholds, indicating that the weaker precision reflects not a loss of instrument strength but changes in underlying variation. This likely occurs because the historical vote shares absorb much of the persistent political variation correlated with both the instrument and the exposure variable, leaving less independent variation for identification. This pattern also reflects the broader political context of the mid-1850s. The Bleeding Kansas crisis in 1854 intensified sectional polarization and accelerated the process of party realignment. As Northern counties increasingly coalesced around the emerging Republican platform, cross-county differences in anti-slavery sentiment narrowed, thereby reducing the spatial variation the instrument captures.

Turning to 1860, the coefficients continue to decline across most specifications. The exception is column 9, where the IV estimate for Republican vote share becomes positive and statistically significant. This pattern suggests that the novel's persuasive influence had by then been absorbed into the broader Republican alignment, yet such an interpretation should be viewed with caution. Eight years had passed since the novel's publication, and much of the remaining variation in vote shares might reflect long-run partisan consolidation rather than the direct influence of cultural diffusion. These temporal shifts in the nature of variation motivate the difference-in-differences and event-study analysis in the next section, which examines how Uncle Tom's Cabin shaped political change within counties over time.

Heterogeneous Effects Having established the baseline IV results, I next examine how the political effect of Uncle Tom's Cabin varied across different local contexts. The analysis focuses on the 1852 cross-section, which captures the short-run electoral response observed immediately after the novel's publication. As is shown in Table 5, I interact $log(Exposure)$ with pre-treatment county characteristics reflecting economic, demographic, and religious environments. All heterogeneity variables are mean-centered before interaction, so that the main coefficient on $log(Exposure)$ represents the marginal effect at the average level of each factor.

Columns 1 and 2 consider economic factors. The interaction between exposure and domestic manufacturing value is not statistically significant, nor is the interaction with farm value. The absence of significant moderation by these variables suggests that the novel's political influence was not concentrated in counties with either more developed manufacturing or greater agricultural wealth. This lack of economic heterogeneity implies that the estimated effects are not driven by differences in local production structures. The diffusion of cultural influence thus appears to have operated largely independently of economic composition, which in turn suggests that the observed relationships reflect a more general

political response rather than variation in economic interests.

Column 3 examines the share of foreign-born residents. The interaction term has the same sign as the main effect and is statistically significant in both panels. Counties with a higher proportion of immigrants experienced stronger partisan shifts in response to exposure: lower Democratic vote shares and higher Whig support. This pattern suggests that immigrant populations helped transmit and amplify anti-slavery ideas, possibly through denser social networks and greater engagement with printed materials (Dippel and Heblich, 2021). A greater presence of immigrants thus appears to have enhanced the cultural diffusion underlying the novel's political impact.

Column 4 considers total church accommodation, which measures the aggregate capacity of religious institutions within each county. The interaction term carries the same sign as the main effect of *log(Exposure)* and is statistically significant in both panels. This pattern indicates that the cultural influence of Uncle Tom's Cabin was stronger in counties with greater religious capacity. Because the measure aggregates all denominations, it captures overall religious intensity rather than the stance of particular churches. The result suggests that more extensive religious infrastructure facilitated the diffusion and reinforcement of cultural ideas, providing a social environment in which the novel's message could more readily translate into political attitudes.

The heterogeneity results suggest that economic factors show no systematic differences in response to exposure, whereas demographic and religious characteristics amplified the political influence of Uncle Tom's Cabin. The ideas carried by immigrant communities and the moral narratives sustained by local churches point toward a broader moral awakening—an interpretation developed in greater detail in Section 6.

5.3 Evidence from Difference-in-Differences

The IV results establish a clear immediate response in 1852, but estimates for subsequent years are substantially less precise. This imprecision likely reflects the political upheavals of the mid-1850s, particularly the Kansas–Nebraska crisis of 1854, which intensified sectional polarization and reduced the cross-sectional variation available for identification. I now turn to a difference-in-differences design that tracks within-county changes in presidential vote shares before and after 1852. Specifically, I estimate:

$$\text{Vote}_{ct} = \beta log(Exposure_c) \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \sum_t \lambda_t' \mathbf{X}_c \ + \varepsilon_{ct} \tag{2}$$

$$\text{Vote}_{ct} = \beta High_c \times Post_t + \gamma Medium_c \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \sum_t \lambda_t' \mathbf{X}_c \ + \varepsilon_{ct} \tag{3}$$

where $Vote_{ct}$ is the presidential vote share received by a Party in county c and year t; $log(Exposure_c)$ is the (continuous) exposure in log; $High_c$ equals one if county c lies in the top tercile of the exposure distribution, and $Medium_c$ equals one if county c lies in the middle tercile; $Post_t$ is an indicator for post-treatment period; δ_c are county fixed effects; θ_{st} are state-by-year fixed effects that absorb state-specific shocks in year t; $\mathbf{X}_c$ is the vector of pre-treatment county characteristics measured in 1850, entered with fully flexible year interactions; ε_{ct} is the error term. Standard errors are clustered at the county level.

Equation (2) is a difference-in-differences model with a continuous treatment intensity, which relies a stronger form of the parallel-trends assumption (Callaway et al., 2024). In this context, the identifying assumption is that, had each county experienced a different level of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin, its voting outcomes would have evolved in the same way as those that actually experienced that exposure intensity. This assumption is demanding because it must hold at every point along the continuous exposure distribution. To make this assumption more plausible, I include state-by-year fixed effects to absorb time-varying political shocks specific to each state, so that the parallel trend assumption only needs to hold conditionally on the evolution of state-level trajectories. Moreover, I interact with all pre-treatment covariates with year dummies, allowing the characteristics of each county to evolve flexibly over time.

I also discretize exposure into three terciles: *High*, *Medium*, and *Low* groups, as shown in Equation (3). The discrete specification imposes a weaker and more empirically plausible requirement: that counties in the high- and medium-exposure groups, if they had instead experienced the low level of exposure, would have followed the same average trend in voting outcomes as the low-exposure group. The results remain robust under this discrete treatment specification, providing additional reassurance for the baseline findings.

To visualize the dynamics of the treatment effect and to provide further evidence supporting the identifying assumptions, I estimate event-study specifications based on both the continuous and discrete exposure measures. Specifically, I replace $Post_t$ with a full set of election-year indicators (omitting 1848 as the baseline year) in Equations (2) and (3).

Figure 5 shows the dynamic pattern from 1840 to 1860 for the continuous exposure specification. The estimated coefficients reveal no systematic differences before 1852, as those for 1840 and 1844 are close to zero and statistically insignificant. Beginning in 1852, the coefficients move downward for the Democratic vote share and upward for the Whig or Republican vote share. The divergence becomes more pronounced in 1856, when the Republican Party

first entered the presidential election, and persists through 1860. Figure 6 shows a similar dynamic pattern when using the discrete exposure specification, where treatment is defined by terciles of exposure. Counties in the high- and medium-exposure groups display parallel pre-treatment trajectories relative to the low-exposure group, supporting the plausibility of the parallel trend assumption. After 1852, these groups experience a marked decline in Democratic vote shares and a corresponding rise in Republican support, with the largest gap observed in 1856.

Table 6 reports the difference-in-differences estimates based on both the continuous and discrete exposure measures. Panel A shows that exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin is associated with a significant decline in Democratic vote shares after 1852. Across specifications, the coefficients on $log(Exposure)$ are negative and statistically significant, corresponding to declines of about 1.6 to 2.2 percentage points. When exposure is discretized into terciles, the estimated effects become larger in magnitude: counties in the high-exposure group show roughly 3 to 4 percentage point lower Democratic support relative to the low-exposure group, and those in the medium-exposure group show declines of around 2.6 to 4.6 percentage points. These patterns are robust to the inclusion of state-by-year fixed effects and to the interaction of pre-treatment controls with year dummies. Panel B reports the corresponding estimates for the Republican vote share. Coefficients on $log(Exposure)$ are positive and significant, ranging from 2.3 and 4.1, while the discrete specification yields even larger effects. Counties in the high- and medium-exposure groups exhibit Republican vote shares about 5 to 11 percentage points higher than those in the low-exposure group. The magnitudes are consistent with the interpretation that Uncle Tom's Cabin facilitated the Republican Party's early electoral mobilization in the 1850s.

The continuous specification offers richer variation but relies on a stronger version of the parallel trends assumption that is difficult to verify in practice. The tercile-based specification, which requires only that broad exposure groups follow parallel trends, yields comparable results. Taken together, the two specifications complement each other and align closely with the instrumental-variable estimates, providing convergent evidence that exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin led to a substantial partisan shift away from the Democratic Party and toward the emerging Republican coalition.

5.4 Robustness

This section presents a series of robustness checks to reinforce the validity of the main findings. The corresponding results are reported in the Appendix.[7]

[7]This section is being expanded. Supplementary tables in this section will be added to the Appendix in the next draft.

Alternative treatment measure. As a robustness check on the network-based continuous exposure measure, I construct two alternative, more model-free treatment variables. First, I define a binary indicator equal to one if a county borders any county where *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was advertised. Adjacency provides a simple proxy for potential spillovers, since neighboring counties were more likely to experience incidental exposure even when the book was not directly sold locally. Second, I replace the continuous exposure with a purely geographic measure: the Euclidean distance from each county to the nearest advertised county. This specification requires no decay parameter and relies only on the assumption that counties located closer to advertising nodes were more likely to encounter the novel. Table XX shows that both alternative measures produce estimates that closely mirror the baseline results.

Alternative instrument. In the IV specifications, the baseline instrument is the recentered instrument based on Moby Dick exposure. As a robustness check, I replace it with the minimum network travel time to Boston or Cleveland, exploiting the historical fact that printing was centralized in these two cities where books were shipped outward to local bookstores (Parfait, 2016). Let $t(\cdot, \cdot)$ denote the minimum travel time on that network. For each county c, define instrument:

$$\mathrm{Z}_c \;=\; \min\big\{t(c,s)\big\}, s \in \{\text{Boston}, \text{Cleveland}\}$$

Intuitively, Z_c summarizes how quickly a shipment can reach c from whichever printing house is faster on the historical transportation network. The narrative is consistent with the two-stage diffusion: books first ship from s to some regional hubs or local bookstores and then diffuse locally. For any source $s \in \{\text{Boston}, \text{Cleveland}\}$ and county c, the time-minimizing path decomposition implies:

$$t(s,c) \;=\; \min\big\{\, t(s,j) + t(j,c) \,\big\}$$

Thus, the shortest time from s to c equals the sum of a two-leg route through some intermediate node j. We do not observe the true (endogenous) set of hubs $A*$, but the time-minimizing operator *implicitly selects* the optimal corridor and transshipment node j. Hence $t(s,c)$ measures the minimum feasible shipping time to c via an optimal intermediate node, while keeping the instrument free of the endogenous set $A*$. Moreover, because rail links were much faster than stage roads, $t(\cdot, \cdot)$ also embeds the historical speed advantage of rail corridors that facilitated national book distribution in the early 1850s. Empirically, this design produces strong first-stage statistics.

Resampling and sample restrictions. The results are robust to resampling and sample restrictions: including (i) estimating the model separately by broad districts and (ii) excluding counties bordering advertised counties to sharpen the exogeneity of the diffusion shock. Point estimates remain close to the baseline across all subsamples.

Standard errors and spatial correlation. Throughout all specifications, standard errors are clustered at the county level (Abadie et al., 2023). Table XX reports alternative standard errors: (i) Conley (spatial) standard errors, (ii) nonparametric bootstrap, and (3) clustering at the state level.

6 Mechanism

This chapter examines how the diffusion of Uncle Tom's Cabin translated into measurable political change. The novel reached Northern households through the expanding transportation networks of the early 1850s, transforming slavery from an abstract institution into a moral question that demanded personal reflection. Yet the link between a sentimental novel and aggregate political outcomes requires unpacking. How did reading and discussing a story become a force capable of reshaping party politics?

I propose a two-stage sequence linking cultural exposure to political mobilization: an initial phase of individual moral response, followed by an institutional process that amplified and organized these sentiments.

The first stage traces the direct moral and behavioral responses to exposure. In counties more connected to the novel's circulation routes, citizens exhibited stronger signs of moral awakening—naming their daughters Eva, after the beloved character in the novel, and later enlisting in greater numbers to fight for the Union cause. These behaviors reflect the symbolic and active dimensions of moral empathy, suggesting a movement from emotional identification toward moral engagement.

The second stage examines how this moral awakening evolved into political mobilization. While Uncle Tom's Cabin generated individual moral sentiment, collective action required channels that could amplify and structure it. Anti-slavery newspapers played a supporting role by circulating the novel's moral vocabulary. Another important step came from the emerging Republican Party, which selectively drew on the sentimental and moral themes circulating through popular culture and reworked them into a strategic language of political mobilization.

6.1 Moral Belief: The Awakening of Moral Empathy

The first step in the sequence is the moral awakening triggered by the diffusion of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Exposure to the novel encouraged Northern citizens to view slavery through the lens of human sympathy rather than political debate. In doing so, the novel redefined moral boundaries and left behavioral traces observable in the demographic and social records of the 1850s. Counties that were more exposed to the novel's advertising and distribution network were more likely to experience this moral awakening. Residents internalized the novel's moral vocabulary not only in words but also through actions that reflected emotional identification and civic commitment.

To capture this process empirically, I focus on two behavioral manifestations of moral empathy. The first is symbolic, expressed in naming newborn girls "Eva" after the novel's beloved young girl. The second is active, reflected in higher voluntary enlistment in the Union Army during the Civil War. Together, these outcomes illustrate how moral sympathy was translated into both cultural expression and costly civic action.

6.1.1 Eva Naming

I begin by examining whether exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin influenced symbolic behaviors reflecting the novel's moral message. One immediate expression appears in naming practices: in more exposed counties, parents were more likely to name their newborn daughters Eva. This behavior provides a unique window into how Uncle Tom's Cabin entered the moral imagination of everyday life.

I estimate the effect of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on naming behavior using a difference-in-differences framework, in which the structure follows previous specifications, with the outcome variable replaced by the number of newborn girls named Eva in county c and year t.

$$\text{Eva}_{ct} = \beta log(Exposure) \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \sum_t \lambda_t' \mathbf{X}_c + \varepsilon_{ct} \tag{4}$$

$$\text{Eva}_{ct} = \beta High_c \times Post_t + \gamma Medium_c \times Post_t + \delta_c + \theta_{st} + \sum_t \lambda_t' \mathbf{X}_c + \varepsilon_{ct} \tag{5}$$

The identifying assumption for equation (4) is the strong parallel trend assumption: had each county been assigned a different intensity of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin, the number of newborns named Eva would have evolved in the same way as in the counties that actually experienced that exposure intensity. Because naming decisions are largely household-level choices, this assumption is more plausible here than for many other behavioral outcomes.

In addition, I relax the strong parallel-trends requirement by including state-by-year fixed effects and interactions between pre-treatment characteristics and year dummies. The preferred specification therefore follows equation (4), where continuous exposure serves as the treatment variable.

To examine the dynamics of naming behavior and to assess the validity of the parallel-trends assumption, I estimate an event-study version of equation (4) by replacing $Post_t$ with year indicators (omitting 1851 as the baseline year). Figure 7 Panel A plots the estimated coefficients. Before the novel's publication, the coefficients fluctuate narrowly around zero, showing no systematic differences across exposure levels; after 1852, they rise sharply, indicating an increase in Eva naming in more exposed counties. Panel B presents the discretized (terciles) specification, revealing a similar pattern: no clear pre-trend differences but post-publication divergence. For completeness and robustness, I also provide estimation of a discretzied treatment as equation (5).

Table 7 reports the difference-in-differences estimates of the effect of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on the number of newborn girls named Eva. Columns 1–4 use the continuous measure of exposure as the treatment. Across specifications with and without controls, the coefficient on $log(Exposure)$ is positive and statistically significant. The preferred specification in column 2 indicates that a one unit increase in $log(Exposure)$ is associated with roughly 0.39 additional Eva names per county-year. The magnitude is similar under the PPML estimator (column 4), confirming that results are not sensitive to the skewness or discreteness of the dependent variable. Columns 5–8 replace the continuous exposure measure with a discretized treatment dividing counties into terciles of exposure intensity. Relative to the low-exposure group, counties in the top tercile experienced about 0.88-1.83 more Eva names after the novel's publication under OLS (column 5-6), and 0.42-0.53 more under PPML (columns 7–8). Counties in the middle tercile show smaller effects.

Together, these estimates provide evidence of moral awakening in the immediate response of the novel's publication. The increase in Eva naming reflects how Uncle Tom's Cabin entered domestic life and everyday language, transforming private reading experiences into symbolic acts of moral empathy.

6.1.2 Union Army Enlistment

The second dimension of moral awakening examines whether exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin led to deeper moral engagement, one that inspired individuals to act when the question of slavery became a national conflict. If the novel fostered not only empathy but also a sense of moral duty, we should observe higher voluntary enlistment in the Union Army during the Civil War in counties more exposed to Uncle Tom's Cabin. While enlistment was influenced

by many economic and political factors, moral conviction offers a distinct channel through which cultural exposure influenced civic behavior.

To test this mechanism, I estimate the following equation, in which the structure follows equation (1), with the outcome variable replaced by the number of enlistment[8] of county c.

$$\log(\text{enlistment}_c) = \beta \log(\text{Exposure}_c) + \delta' \mathbf{X}_c + \eta_s + \varepsilon_c. \tag{6}$$

Table 8 reports the estimated effect of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on voluntary enlistment in the Union Army. Columns 1–3 present OLS estimates using continuous measures of exposure. The coefficients on exposure are positive and highly significant across all specifications. Because the dependent variable is in logarithmic form, the coefficients can be interpreted as elasticities. Column 2 implies that a one percent increase in exposure is associated with approximately a 0.7 percent increase in enlistment. In column 3, the inclusion of controls attenuates the coefficient because several control variables are missing for a subset of observations. Columns 4–6 implement an instrumental variable approach using the recentered Moby Dick exposure as instruments. The 2SLS coefficients match the patterns of OLS estimates, and the first-stage KP-rk Wald F-statistics are large in all models, confirming strong instrument relevance. The stability of the estimates across OLS and 2SLS mitigates concerns about omitted variable bias and supports a causal interpretation: greater exogenous exposure to the novel increased enlistment in the Union Army, suggesting that the moral shock induced by Uncle Tom's Cabin translated into tangible civic action. Columns 7–9 provide robustness checks using a discretized treatment dividing counties into terciles of exposure. The specification with discrete treatment confirms the same pattern: counties more exposed to the novel were more likely to supply enlistment for the Union Army.

Viewed jointly, the Eva-naming and enlistment results reveal two complementary aspects of the same moral awakening. The rise in Eva naming represents a symbolic expression of moral empathy, reflecting the absorption of the novel's message into the intimate domain of households and communities. The enlistment findings show that this empathy extended beyond sentiment and influenced costly civic behavior when moral conviction required action. Together, these outcomes capture the full spectrum of moral awakening, from private emotion to public duty. The next section turns to the public sphere, examining how anti-slavery newspapers amplified this emerging moral sentiment and transformed it into a shared political discourse.

[8]Union Army enlistment data comes from Dippel and Heblich (2021)

6.2 Public Amplification: Newspapers and Moral Discussion

In the 1850s, newspapers were the most influential medium for information and opinion in the United States. The rapid expansion of printing technology and the postal system made newspapers accessible in nearly every county. Most papers were openly partisan, whether Democratic, Whig, Free Soil, or reform-oriented, and served not only as channels of information but also as instruments of political advocacy. Through their choice of language, imagery, and emphasis, editors shaped how readers interpreted social and political issues. Newspapers were therefore not passive mirrors of public opinion but active participants in shaping it.

The publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin introduced a powerful moral vocabulary into this partisan media environment. The novel's vivid depictions of slavery and its anti-slavery message resonated with editors, who increasingly integrated its themes into their coverage and commentary (Reynolds, 2012). After the novel's publication, anti-slavery newspapers devoted greater attention to discussions of slavery, freedom, and moral duty. These discussions likely reached audiences extending well beyond the novel's direct readership. Through this process, the moral awakening initiated by the novel entered the public sphere and became a subject of collective discussion.

To examine this mechanism empirically, I draw on the American Stories database from Dell et al. (2023) and construct a quarterly panel of Northern newspapers from 1851 to 1855. The data include the full text of newspaper articles, which allows me to observe within-newspaper changes in language use over time. For each newspaper and quarter, I calculate the share of articles that contain key moral or slavery-related words (such as slavery, freedom, and rights). This variable captures the extent to which each paper engaged with moral themes in its coverage. I then estimate a difference-in-differences model that compares anti-slavery newspapers with other Northern newspapers before and after the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin. The specification is:

$$Y_{it} = \beta Treatment_i \times Post_t + \delta_i + \theta_t + \sum_t \lambda_t' \mathbf{X}_c \ + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{7}$$

where Y_{it} denotes two outcome variables: (i) the frequency of the keyword measured in logarithms, and (ii) the proportion of articles containing at least one occurrence of the keyword. $Treatment_i$ identifies newspapers with an anti-slavery editorial stance[9], and $Post_t$ is an indicator equal to one for 1852Q1 and later quarters. δ_i are newspaper fixed effects that

[9]Information on newspapers' editorial stance is drawn from Wang (2025). Among the 35 Northern newspapers in the sample, 6 are classified as anti-slavery. Because the number of treated newspapers is small, I additionally apply the estimator proposed by Lee and Wooldridge (2025) to account for the limited treated-group size, and the results remain robust.

control for time-invariant editorial style; θ_t are quarter fixed effects that absorb aggregate shocks in each period. $\mathbf{X}_c$ contains pre-treatment county characteristics measured in 1850, interacted flexibly with quarter dummies; ε_{it} is the error term. Standard errors are clustered at the newspaper level.

To trace the dynamics of newspaper content and to assess the validity of the parallel trends assumption, I estimate event-study versions of equation (7) for four keywords—slavery, freedom, fugitive, and rights. In these specifications, the post-treatment indicator is replaced with quarter dummies interacted with the treatment variable. This allows the coefficients to capture how the intensity of moral language evolved before and after the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Figures 8 present the dynamic effects. In all cases, the coefficients in the pre-publication period fluctuate narrowly around zero, providing support for the parallel-trends assumption. After the second quarter of 1852, however, the estimated effects become sharply positive, indicating that anti-slavery newspapers began using moral and slavery-related vocabulary more frequently and in a larger share of their articles following the novel's release.

Table 9 reports the difference-in-differences estimates from equation (7). Panel A examines the frequency of each keyword measured in logarithms, while Panel B focuses on the proportion of articles containing at least one occurrence of the term. Across both panels, columns 1 and 2 show that the coefficients on *anti_slavery* are positive and statistically significant for the two core terms—*slavery* and *freedom*—which are central themes in Uncle Tom's Cabin. The results indicate that, after the novel's publication, anti-slavery newspapers increased both the frequency and the share of articles that explicitly engaged with these moral and political themes. The magnitude of the coefficients suggests a sizable shift: anti-slavery papers published roughly 0.62-1.12 more references to slavery-related language than before 1852 and devoted 2–4 percent more of their articles to the same topics.

Column 3 shows that Uncle Tom's Cabin also renewed public discussion of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, as reflected in the rise in keyword frequency. However, the number of articles using the term did not increase correspondingly, suggesting that the law was more often reconsidered within broader discussions of slavery and freedom rather than as a separate topic. Column 4 indicates that the novel also stimulated discourse on "rights." The coefficients are not precisely estimated, though.

In contrast, the placebo terms *Sunday* and *east* show no systematic changes, confirming that the observed pattern is specific to slavery- and moral-related discussions rather than reflecting a general expansion in newspaper length or editorial style. These placebo tests reassure that the novel's publication triggered a measurable shift in the language of the partisan press, suggesting that newspapers actively participated in, and in this way, possibly

amplified the moral sentiment awakened by Uncle Tom's Cabin.

6.3 Political Mobilization: The Republican Adoption of Moral Sentiment

When reflecting on the early success of the Republican Party, Henry Wilson, one of its founders and later Vice President under President Grant, observed that many of the votes cast for John Fremont in 1856 "were but the rich fruitage of seed widely broadcast by Harriet Beecher Stowe." He believed that readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had received "the needed preparation for the arguments and appeals of Republican presses and speakers that were so soon to follow."[10] Grant (1998) emphasizes the novel's portrayal of characters such as Ophelia, whose journey from indifference to genuine concern embodies a powerful model of moral awakening. This transformation offered Republicans an important rhetorical resource for channeling moral sentiment into collective political action

These historical reflections point to a deeper question: how did the moral awakening ignited by Uncle Tom's Cabin translate into electoral gains for the Republican Party? I argue that Republicans did not passively benefit from the novel's influence, but rather actively and strategically harnessed it. In their rhetoric, Republicans incorporated the moral language of the novel, positioning their political appeals to resonate with a moral sensibility already shaped by Stowe's narrative. In their emotional framing, they amplified the novel's most mobilizing sentiments, transforming diffuse sympathy into a firmer commitment to collective political action.

To document this process, I analyze two sets of popular lyrics: the Tom songs that proliferated after the novel's publication and the Republican campaign songsters produced for the 1856 election (Drew, 1856). These lyrics are well suited for examining rhetorical and emotional patterns because they translated ideas into a musical and poetic form aimed at broad audiences (Gentzkow et al., 2019). I first apply Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) to assess whether Republican campaign lyrics engaged with semantic themes similar to those found in the Tom-song tradition. I then complement this analysis with the NRC emotion lexicon, which allows me to quantify and compare the emotional tone of the two sets of songs.

LDA is an unsupervised machine learning method that identifies latent topics by analyzing patterns in word co-occurrence. I estimate a three-topic LDA model, and Table X reports the topic proportions for each corpus along with representative words. Two patterns align

[10]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.

with expectations: each corpus loads most heavily on its own distinctive theme—the Tom songs on a narrative topic and the Republican songsters on a political-mobilization topic. Yet both corpora also assign a nontrivial share to a third semantic topic, whose vocabulary includes terms such as home, brother, and love, as well as figures like Eva and Jessie. The presence of this shared expressive domain suggests that Republican songsters drew on family-centered moral themes that Uncle Tom's Cabin had helped diffuse across the North, making these themes available as a resource for political mobilization. This pattern is consistent with the Republican Party's strategic promotion of Jessie Benton Frémont during the 1856 presidential campaign, when the Frémonts' harmonious domestic life was strategically highlighted to overshadow James Buchanan's bachelorhood.

Next, I analyze the emotional content of the lyrics using the NRC Emotion Lexicon, which classifies words into ten affective categories.[11] Figure 9 summarizes the contrasts across the two corpora. Panel A plots average emotion scores on a radar chart. The overall emotional profiles share a broadly similar shape, but Republican songsters assign noticeably greater weight to high-arousal, mobilizing emotions—anger, fear, disgust, and negative sentiment collectively—relative to the Tom songs. Panel B shows the difference-in-means chart, making the contrast between the two corpora visually explicit.

Figure 10 offers a complementary view by projecting the full ten-dimensional emotion vectors into two dimensions using t-SNE. The black arrow connecting them visualizes the aggregate shift in emotional space, indicating that the emotional profile of Republican songsters differs from that of Tom songs in a systematic direction. The grey loading arrows clarify the sources of this shift: anger, fear, and disgust all tilt strongly toward the Republican centroid, showing that these high-arousal emotions were disproportionately amplified in Republican campaign music relative to the Tom-song corpus.

In sum, the thematic and sentiment analyses provide suggestive evidence that the Republican Party participated in a coordinated mobilization effort during the 1856 campaign. This mechanism complements the earlier two—moral awakening and public amplification—by showing how cultural products, once taken up by political institutions, could be translated into coordinated political action and shape collective behavior.

7 Conclusion

This paper investigates how the diffusion of Uncle Tom's Cabin, one of the most influential cultural works in American history, shaped political attitudes and voting behavior in the

[11] The ten NRC categories are: positive, negative, anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, and trust.

antebellum North. Using newly digitized newspaper data and county-level election returns, I show that the novel's spread had a measurable and lasting political impact. Counties with greater exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin experienced larger declines in Democratic vote shares and stronger support for the emerging Republican Party during the 1850s. Instrumental-variable estimates based on a recentered instrument confirm that these effects stem from the exogenous diffusion of the book along the preexisting transportation network. Difference-in-differences estimates further indicate that the impact appeared immediately after the book's publication and persisted through 1860, consistent with a genuine political realignment.

The analysis sheds light on the mechanism underlying this transformation. Evidence from naming and enlistment behavior suggests that exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin generated a moral awakening that deepened empathy toward enslaved people and strengthened civic commitment. Counties more exposed to the novel recorded more newborn girls named "Eva" and higher voluntary enlistment in the Union Army during the Civil War. In the public sphere, anti-slavery newspapers amplified these sentiments by incorporating the novel's moral language and imagery into their coverage, extending its reach beyond direct readers. The emerging Republican Party then built upon this moral climate, transforming sympathy into political mobilization. Taken as a whole, the results reveal a sequence linking cultural diffusion, moral awakening, public amplification, and ultimately political realignment.

Beyond the historical setting, the evidence demonstrates that cultural works can function as powerful vehicles for ideological change. The case of Uncle Tom's Cabin shows that moral persuasion can shift political preferences even in a mass democracy, long before the advent of modern media. By identifying a causal link between the diffusion of a cultural narrative and collective political behavior, this study contributes to the broader literature on the political economy of ideas and belief formation. It highlights that cultural expression, when widely disseminated and institutionally reinforced, can redefine how societies perceive moral issues and translate them into durable political change.

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Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of County Characteristics

Variable	**Mean**	**SD**	**Min**	**Max**	**Obs.**
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

Notes: This table reports summary statistics for all county-level characteristics used as control variables in the regression analysis. The variables capture demographic, economic, geographic, and infrastructural features of each county. Demographic controls include population size, sex ratio, share of the foreign-born population, age composition, literacy, and the proportion of free colored residents. Economic characteristics cover measures of agricultural and manufacturing activity, such as farm value, home manufacturing output, and the share of manufacturing labor. Geographic controls include longitude, latitude, and county area. Infrastructure variables indicate whether the county was connected to major rivers or railroads, as well as the total length of rail and stage routes within its boundaries. All variables are measured circa 1850. Percentages are expressed in percentage points; dummy variables equal one if the condition holds.

Table 2: 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: Republican				
$log(Exposure)$	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 voting and past presidential vote shares. Each column represents the results from a separate OLS regression following Equation (2), 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 Republican 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 all controls as in column 3 of Table 3. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

Table 3: Baseline OLS: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Vote Share, Continuous Treatment

	1852			1856			1860		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Panel A: Democratic Party									
log(Exposure)	-4.103***	-3.024***	-1.839***	-4.130***	-2.577**	-2.989***	-3.376***	-1.799**	-2.819***
	(0.572)	(0.947)	(0.607)	(0.839)	(1.002)	(0.865)	(0.639)	(0.889)	(0.795)
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Past electoral controls			Yes			Yes			Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	51.87	51.73	51.63	44.10	44.26	44.39	45.28	45.39	45.48
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	10.47	10.40	10.32	13.88	13.76	13.89	12.04	12	12.09
R-squared	0.210	0.389	0.852	0.368	0.604	0.829	0.727	0.814	0.881
Observations	512	499	469	510	497	468	510	497	467
Panel B: Whig/Republican Party									
log(Exposure)	2.034***	2.856***	1.910***	7.145***	4.666***	5.544***	4.175***	2.980***	3.886***
	(0.558)	(0.824)	(0.441)	(1.053)	(1.135)	(1.391)	(0.707)	(0.897)	(0.713)
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Past electoral controls			Yes			Yes			Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	42.45	42.59	42.57	43.66	43.36	43.04	52.94	52.83	52.69
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	8.939	8.856	8.789	20.32	20.20	20.33	12.65	12.61	12.71
R-squared	0.126	0.255	0.817	0.368	0.697	0.772	0.256	0.556	0.783
Observations	512	499	469	510	497	468	510	497	467

Notes: This table reports the estimated effects of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on voting outcomes in the 1852, 1856, and 1860 presidential elections. Each column presents results from a separate OLS regression following Equation (1), where each observation corresponds to a county. Panel A reports estimates for the Democratic Party, while Panel B presents results for the Republican Party. The explanatory variable is exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. Control variables include county-level characteristics (all variables listed in Table 1) and past electoral outcomes (average vote shares of the Democratic and Republican Parties during 1840–1848). Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

Table 4: IV: Uncle Tom's Cabin and Vote Share

	1852			1856			1860		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Panel A: Democratic									
Second stage: vote share									
log(Exposure)	-4.221	-5.548	-2.783	-3.930	-3.913	-1.484	-3.425	-2.771	-2.252
	(0.979)	(1.450)	(1.078)	(1.313)	(1.587)	(1.779)	(1.118)	(1.400)	(1.788)
KP rk Wald F	103.4	128.8	144.8	101.3	125.1	163.8	103.2	129.3	145.7
First stage: log(Exposure)									
Z	1.274	0.995	0.787	1.259	0.996	0.784	1.274	0.996	0.790
	(0.125)	(0.088)	(0.065)	(0.125)	(0.089)	(0.061)	(0.125)	(0.088)	(0.065)
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Past electoral controls			Yes			Yes			Yes
R-squared	0.724	0.881	0.861	0.771	0.911	0.901	0.725	0.881	0.861
Observations	512	499	469	510	497	468	510	497	467
Panel B: Whig/Republican									
Second stage: vote share									
log(Exposure)	1.952	5.239	2.706	6.811	4.089	2.376	4.647	4.641	4.539
	(0.894)	(1.449)	(1.066)	(1.747)	(1.911)	(2.672)	(1.263)	(1.489)	(1.657)
KP rk Wald F	103.4	128.8	144.8	101.3	125.1	163.8	103.2	129.3	145.7
First stage: log(Exposure)									
Z	1.274	0.995	0.787	1.259	0.996	0.784	1.274	0.996	0.790
	(0.125)	(0.088)	(0.065)	(0.125)	(0.089)	(0.061)	(0.125)	(0.088)	(0.065)
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Past electoral controls			Yes			Yes			Yes
R-squared	0.724	0.881	0.861	0.771	0.911	0.901	0.725	0.881	0.861
Observations	512	499	469	510	497	468	510	497	467

Notes: This table reports the estimated effects of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on voting outcomes in the 1852, 1856, and 1860 presidential elections. Each column presents results from a separate OLS regression following Equation (1), with the recentered *Moby Dick* Exposure as instrument. Each observation corresponds to a county. Panel A reports estimates for the Democratic Party, while Panel B presents results for the Republican Party. The main explanatory variable is exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. Control variables include county-level characteristics (all variables listed in Table 1) and past electoral outcomes (average vote shares of the Democratic and Republican Parties during 1840–1848). Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

Table 5: Heterogeneous: Different Factors & Vote Share in 1852

	X = Domestic Mfg. Value (1)	Fram value (2)	% Foreign (3)	Church acc. (4)
Panel A: Democratic				
$log(Exposure)$ * X	0.536	0.086	-0.197	-0.385
	(0.335)	(0.303)	(0.101)	(0.214)
$log(Exposure)$	-3.034	-2.733	-3.243	-2.914
	(1.146)	(1.068)	(1.157)	(1.045)
X	-0.567	0.464	0.419	0.017
	(0.390)	(0.579)	(0.120)	(0.265)
Full controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
KP rk Wald F	8.044	62.67	10.82	67.08
AR p-value	0.0400	0.0500	0.0100	0.00600
Observations	469	469	469	467
Panel B: Republican				
$log(Exposure)$ * X	-0.057	0.244	0.232	0.397
	(0.348)	(0.280)	(0.096)	(0.154)
$log(Exposure)$	2.733	2.850	3.249	2.803
	(1.144)	(1.053)	(1.184)	(1.041)
X	0.031	0.207	-0.405	-0.216
	(0.429)	(0.605)	(0.112)	(0.238)
Full controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
KP rk Wald F	8.044	62.67	10.82	67.08
AR p-value	0.040	0.032	0	0.002
Observations	469	469	469	467

Notes: This table explores heterogeneous effects for Uncle Tom's Cabin's persuasiveness. 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. The outcome variable is presidential vote share in 1852. Panel A shows the results for the Democratic Party, and panel B does so for the Republican Party. Each column examines an interaction between $log(Exposure)$ and another county characteristic X in 1850, where X is, column 1: the domestic manufacturing value (in log); column 2: total farm value (in log); column 3: foreign born share; column 4: total church accommodation (in log). Each regression controls for all controls as in column 3 of Table 3. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

Table 6: DID: Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin and Voting Outcomes, 1840–1860

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Democratic						
$log(Exposure) * Post$	-1.669	-1.418	-2.150			
	(0.429)	(0.508)	(0.682)			
$High * Post$				-3.957	-3.055	-3.141
				(0.914)	(1.327)	(1.320)
$Medium * Post$				-4.682	-3.849	-2.649
				(0.996)	(1.240)	(1.087)
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes			Yes		
State by year fixed effects		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
County characteristics			Yes			Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	46.44	46.44	46.40	46.44	46.44	46.40
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	14.63	14.63	14.63	14.63	14.63	14.63
R-squared	0.643	0.894	0.914	0.645	0.895	0.914
Observations	2,698	2,698	2,682	2,698	2,698	2,682
Panel B: Republican						
$log(Exposure) * Post$	2.318	4.021	4.121			
	(0.494)	(0.703)	(0.845)			
$High * Post$				4.974	9.180	6.989
				(1.212)	(2.092)	(1.715)
$Medium * Post$				7.207	11.337	6.881
				(1.313)	(1.957)	(1.414)
County fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes			Yes		
State by year fixed effects		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
County characteristics			Yes			Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	46.18	46.18	46.21	46.18	46.18	46.21
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	13.52	13.52	13.50	13.52	13.52	13.50
R-squared	0.562	0.683	0.817	0.566	0.689	0.818
Observations	2,698	2,698	2,682	2,698	2,698	2,682

Notes: This table shows the estimated effects of exposure to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on voting in presidential elections during 1840-1860. Columns 1–3 report results from separate OLS regressions based on the continuous difference-in-differences specification in Equation (2), while Columns 4–6 present results from separate OLS regressions using the discrete specification in Equation (3). Each observation is a county-year. Panel A reports estimates for the Democratic Party, and Panel B presents results for the Republican Party. The explanatory variable is the interaction between exposure in 1852 and a dummy variable Post that equals one for the year after 1851 and zero for the year before 1851. Each regression controls for county fixed effects. Column 1 and 4 controls for year fixed effects; column 2 and 5 controls for state-by-year fixed effects; and column 3 and 6 further controls for the interactions between each of the baseline county characteristics. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

Table 7: Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin and "Eva" Namings, 1848–1855

	OLS		PPML		OLS		PPML	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
$log(Exposure) * Post$	0.271	0.389	0.251	0.458				
	(0.038)	(0.147)	(0.075)	(0.151)				
$High * Post$					1.836	0.883	0.536	0.427
					(0.232)	(0.284)	(0.291)	(0.392)
$Medium * Post$					0.842	0.359	0.174	-0.028
					(0.149)	(0.171)	(0.281)	(0.345)
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State by Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	0.696	0.813	1.002	1.031	0.696	0.813	1.002	1.031
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	2.337	2.515	2.750	2.792	2.337	2.515	2.750	2.792
R-squared	0.715	0.772			0.720	0.772		
Observations	4,800	4,080	3,331	3,219	4,800	4,080	3,331	3,219

Notes: This table reports the estimated effects of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on the naming of "Eva" during 1848–1855. Columns 1–4 present results from separate OLS regressions based on the continuous difference-in-differences specification in Equation (4), while Columns 5–8 show results from separate OLS regressions using the discrete specification in Equation (5). Each observation corresponds to a county–year. The explanatory variable is the interaction between exposure in 1852 and a post-treatment indicator that equals one for years after 1851 and zero otherwise. All regressions include county fixed effects. Columns 1, 3, 5, and 7 also include state-by-year fixed effects, while Columns 2, 4, 6, and 8 further control for interactions between baseline county characteristics and year dummies. Columns 3, 4, 7, and 8 are estimated using Poisson pseudo–maximum likelihood (PPML). Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

Table 8: IV: Uncle Tom's Cabin and Union Army Enlistment

	OLS			2SLS			OLS		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
$log(Exposure)$	0.573	0.701	0.445	0.560	0.756	0.559			
	(0.035)	(0.059)	(0.117)	(0.042)	(0.078)	(0.178)			
$High$							2.148	2.444	0.585
							(0.166)	(0.212)	(0.170)
$Medium$							1.619	1.846	0.565
							(0.167)	(0.196)	(0.148)
State fixed effects		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Full controls			Yes			Yes			Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	6.555	6.555	7.021	6.555	6.555	7.021	6.555	6.555	7.021
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	1.595	1.595	1.064	1.595	1.595	1.064	1.595	1.595	1.064
KP rk Wald F				1631	251.6	91.07			
R-squared	0.475	0.569	0.634	0.475	0.568	0.632	0.313	0.437	0.613
Observations	572	572	466	572	572	466	572	572	466

Notes: This table reports the estimated effects of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on Union Army enlistment. Each observation corresponds to a county. The explanatory variable is exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. Columns 1–3 present results from separate OLS regressions following Equation (6). Columns 4–6 use the recentered Moby Dick exposure as an instrumental variable for exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. Columns 7–9 replace the continuous exposure measure with a discrete version that divides counties into High, Medium, and Low exposure groups, with the Low group serving as the reference category. Control variables include county-level characteristics (all variables listed in Table 1) and past electoral outcomes (average vote shares of the Democratic and Republican Parties during 1840–1848). Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

Table 9: Newspaper Text Content: 1851Q1-1853Q4

	Keyword = Slavery (1)	Freedom (2)	Fugitive (3)	Rights (4)	Sunday (5)	East (6)
Panel A: Word Frequency						
Anty_Slavery $*$ *Post*	1.126	0.622	1.607	0.152	-0.188	-0.277
	(0.171)	(0.190)	(0.247)	(0.169)	(0.122)	(0.102)
Newspaper FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	2.802	4.684	2.448	4.618	4.300	5.102
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	1.692	1.167	1.519	1.006	1.243	1.166
R-squared	0.874	0.934	0.857	0.924	0.916	0.916
Observations	342	357	331	357	357	357
Panel B: Proportion of Articles						
Anty_Slavery $*$ *Post*	2.035	4.040	0.265	1.439	-0.332	-0.469
	(0.249)	(0.565)	(0.614)	(1.233)	(0.678)	(0.483)
Newspaper FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean of Dep. Var.	1.655	6.153	1.058	5.800	4.345	7.809
Std. Dev. of Dep. Var.	3.985	4.193	1.871	2.533	1.635	3.218
R-squared	0.969	0.895	0.902	0.633	0.532	0.708
Observations	357	357	357	357	357	357

Notes: This table shows the estimated effects of Uncle Tom's Cabin on newspaper content during 1851Q1–1853Q4. Each column reports results from separate OLS regressions based on the difference-in-differences specification in Equation (7). Each observation corresponds to a newspaper–quarter. Panel A presents the results for word frequency (in logs), and Panel B presents the results for the proportion of articles that include at least one keyword. Columns 1–6 represent different keywords: slavery, freedom, fugitive, rights, sunday, and east. The explanatory variable is the interaction between *Anti_Slavery* and a post-treatment indicator that equals one for quarters after (or including) 1852Q1 and zero otherwise. All regressions include newspaper fixed effects, quarter fixed effects, and controls for interactions between baseline county characteristics and year dummies. Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the newspaper level.

Table 10: Latent Topics in Tom Songs and Republican Campaign Songs

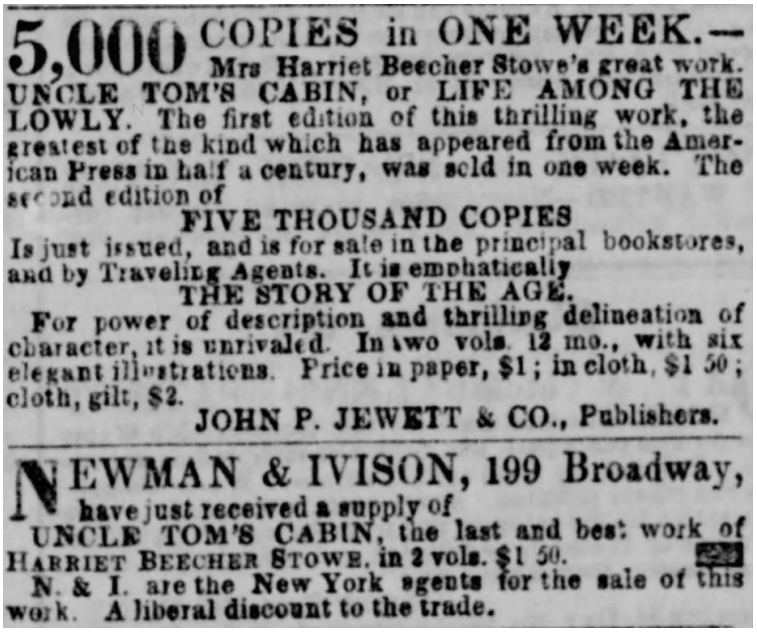
Song Type	**Tom Narrative** (%)	**Shared Vocabulary** (%)	**Republican Mobilization** (%)
Republican	20.06	33.52	46.42
Tom	59.39	27.65	12.96
Representative Words	Tom, Uncle, Eva, Poor, White, Sing, Night, Shall	Eva, Jessie, Home, Sweet, Away, Come, Bound, Brother	Hurrah, Fremont, Freedom, Liberty, Rally,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

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.

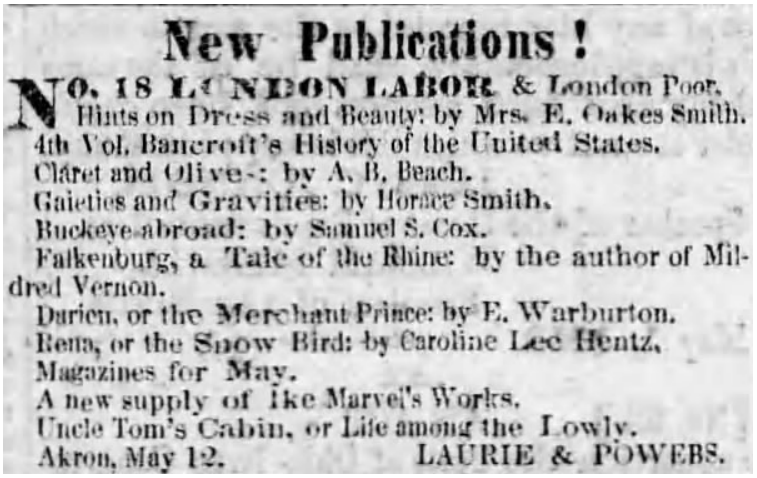
For power of description and thrilling delineation of character, it is unrivaled. In two vols. 12 mo., with six elegant illustrations. Price in paper, $1; in cloth, $1 50; cloth, gilt, $2.

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 Olives: 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.

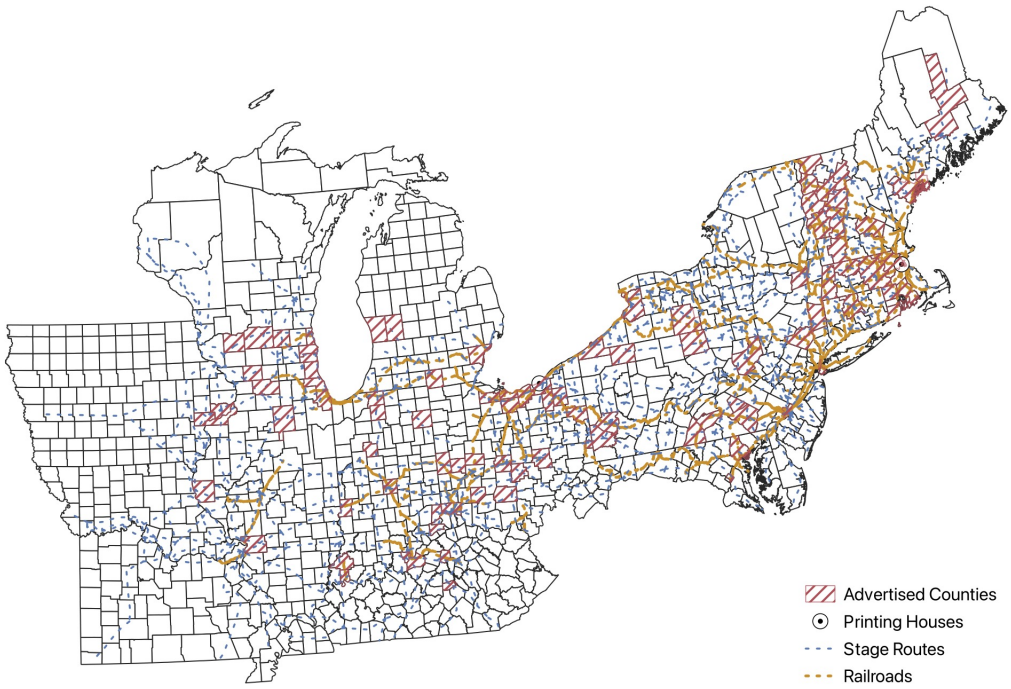
Notes: Panel A shows two newspaper advertisements for Uncle Tom's Cabin, one placed by the publisher and the other by a local agent. Source: New York Tribune, April 5, 1852, p. 1. Panel B shows another advertisement placed by a local bookstore. Source: The Summit County Beacon, May 26, 1852, p. 3.

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.

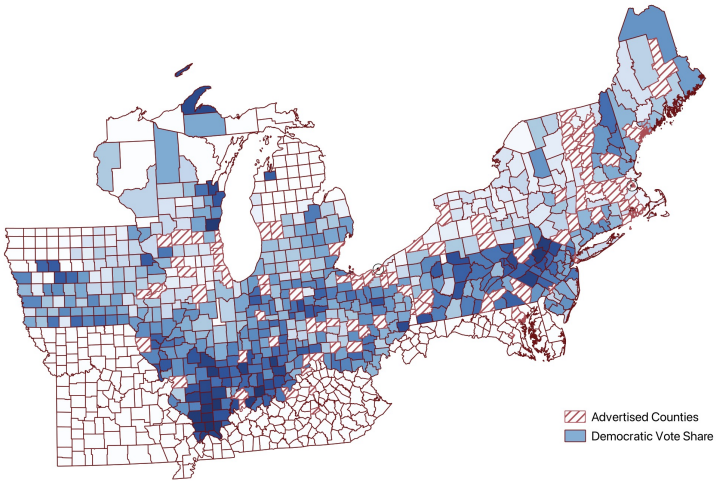
Figure 3: Advertised Counties and Transportation Network



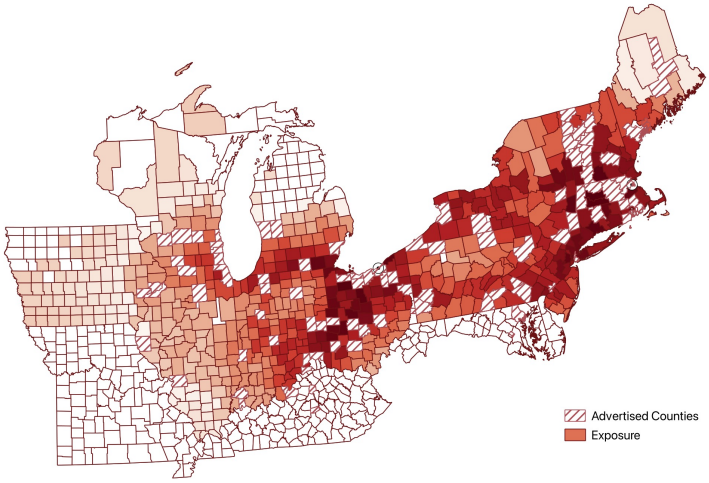
Notes: This figure illustrates the transportation network used to measure county-level exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin. Red-shaded counties indicate locations where newspaper advertisements for the novel appeared. Circles mark the two printing houses located in Boston and Cleveland. Dashed blue lines represent 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



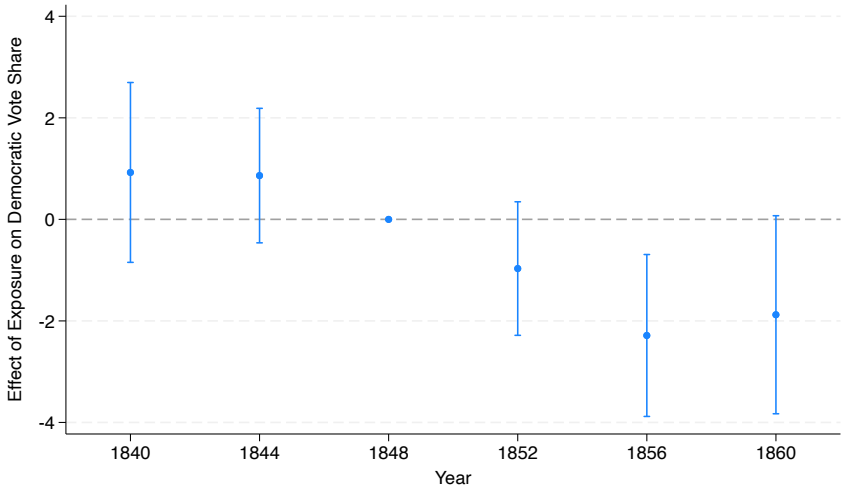
Panel B: Exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin



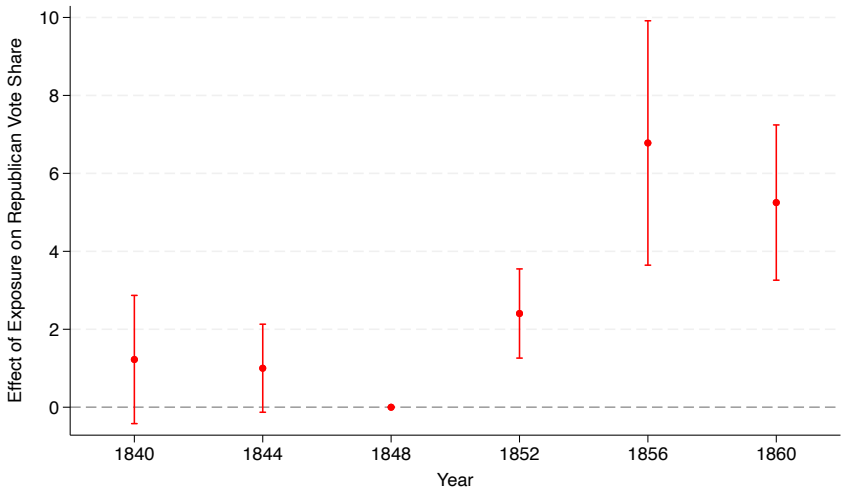
Notes: Panel A shows the Democratic vote share in the 1856 presidential election, based on data from Clubb et al. (2006). Darker blue shades indicate higher Democratic support. White counties correspond to areas where county-level vote returns are unavailable, including the border states, which are excluded from the main analysis. Panel B displays (continous) 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: Event Study with Continuous Treatment: Vote Share Dynamics, 1840–1860

Panel A: Impact of Uncle Tom's Cabin on Democratic Vote Shares



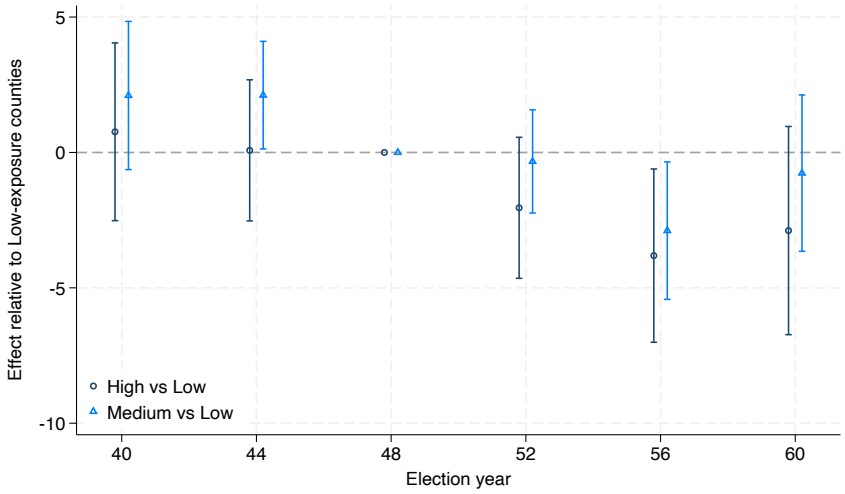
Panel B: Impact of Uncle Tom's Cabin on Whig/Republican Vote Shares



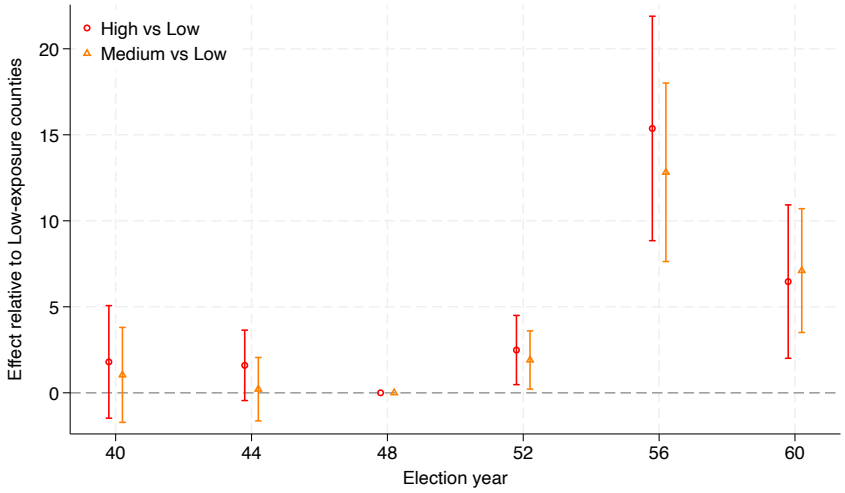
Notes: This figure plots the event-study estimates of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on party vote shares in presidential elections between 1840 and 1860. The estimates are obtained from regression following an event-study version of equation (2), where the post-treatment indicator is replaced with year dummies, with 1848 as the omitted category. The sample includes all northern counties used in the main analysis. The outcome variable is the county-level vote share for each major party, and the explanatory variables are the interaction terms between exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin and year dummies. The specification includes 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 6: Event Study with Discrete Treatment: Vote Share Dynamics, 1840–1860

Panel A: Impact of Uncle Tom's Cabin on Democratic Vote Shares



Panel B: Impact of Uncle Tom's Cabin on Whig/Republican Vote Shares



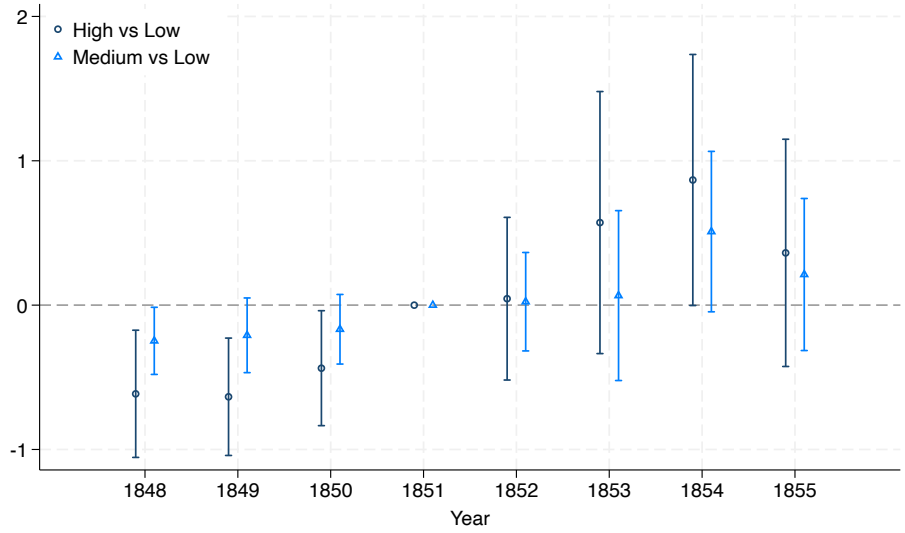
Notes: This figure plots the event-study estimates of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on party vote shares in presidential elections between 1840 and 1860. The estimates are obtained from regression following an event-study version of equation (3), where exposure is discretized into three groups, High, Medium, and Low, with the Low group serving as the reference category. The model replaces the post-treatment indicator with year dummies, using 1848 as the omitted year. The sample includes all northern counties used in the main analysis. The outcome variable is the county-level vote share for each major party, and the explanatory variables are the interaction terms between the exposure-group dummies and year dummies. The specification includes 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 7: Event Study: Eva Naming Dynamics

Panel A: Continuous Exposure (OLS–TWFE)



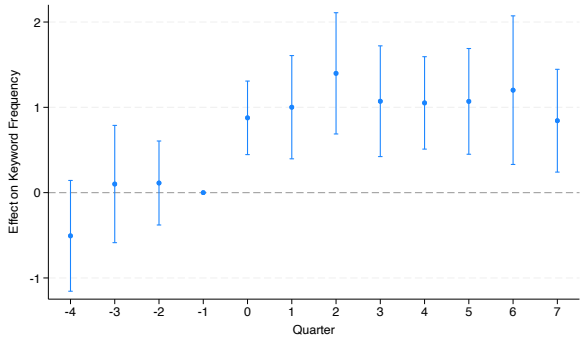
Panel B: Discretized Exposure (OLS–TWFE)



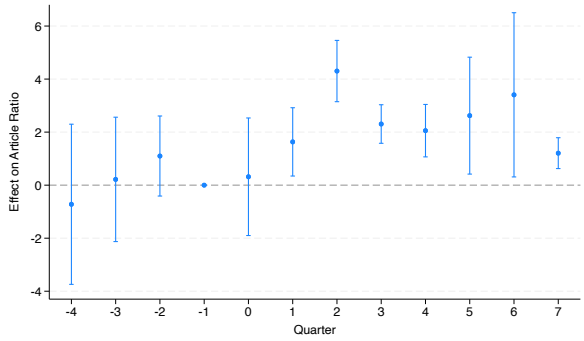
Notes: This figure plots the event-study estimates of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on "Eva" namings between 1848 and 1855. Panel A presents estimates obtained from regressions following the event-study specification in Equation (4), while Panel B presents estimates based on Equation (5), where exposure 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

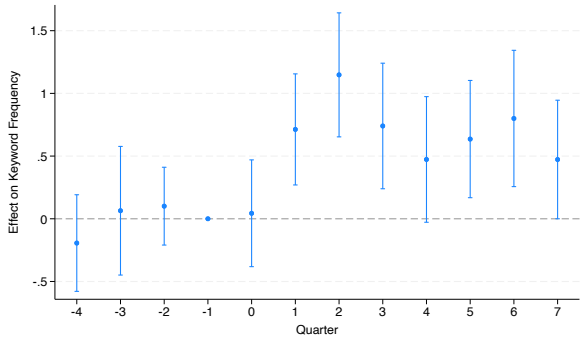
Panel A: *slavery* – Frequency



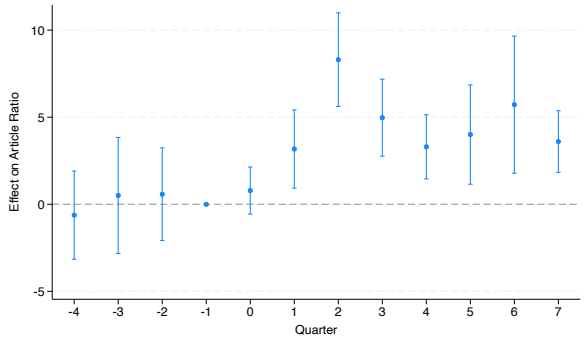
Panel B: *slavery* – Article Ratio



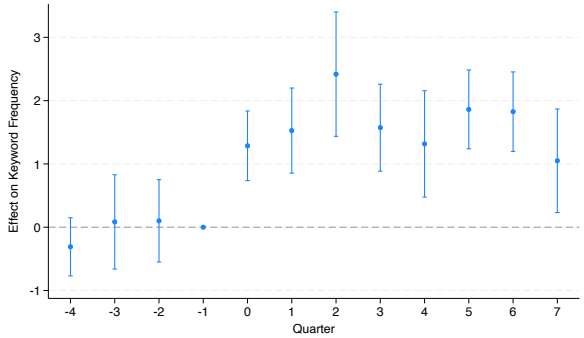
Panel C: *freedom* – Frequency



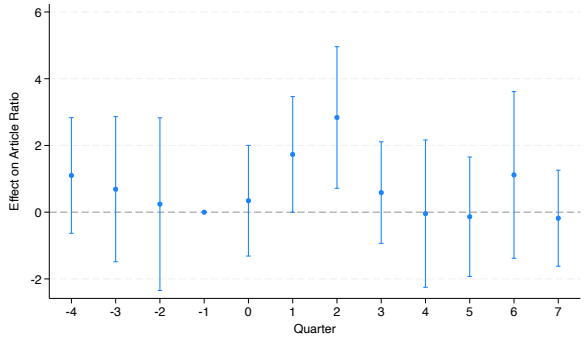
Panel D: *freedom* – Article Ratio



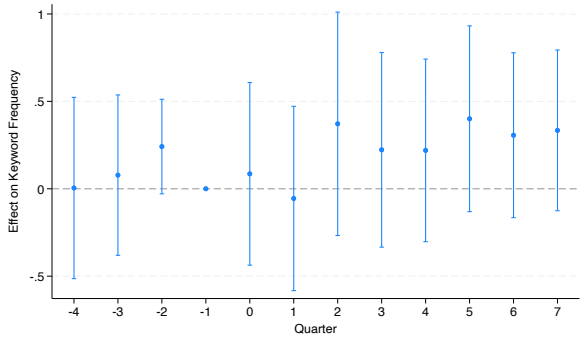
Panel E: *fugitive* – Frequency



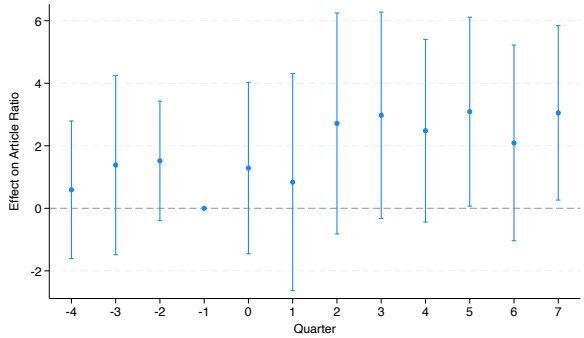
Panel F: *fugitive* – Article Ratio



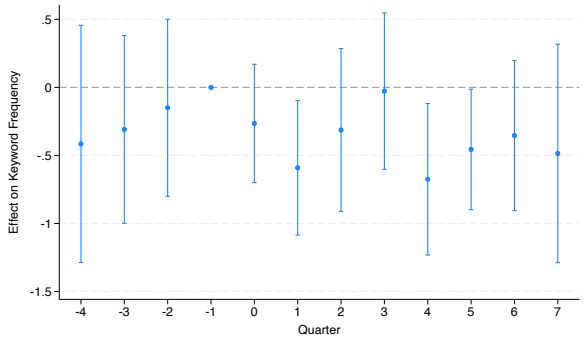
Panel G: *rights* – Frequency



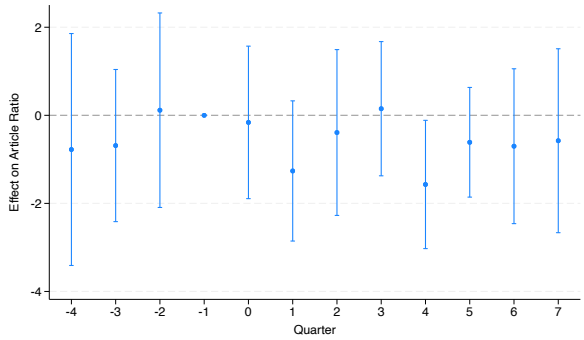
Panel H: *rights* – Article Ratio



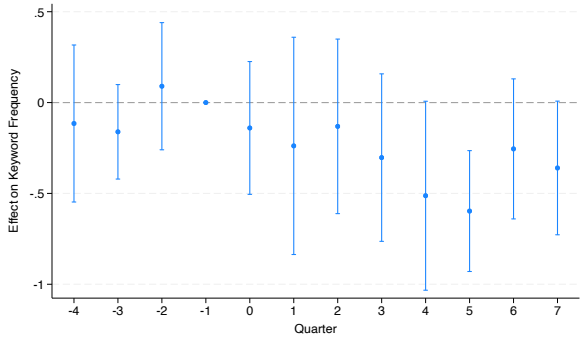
Panel I: *sunday* – Frequency



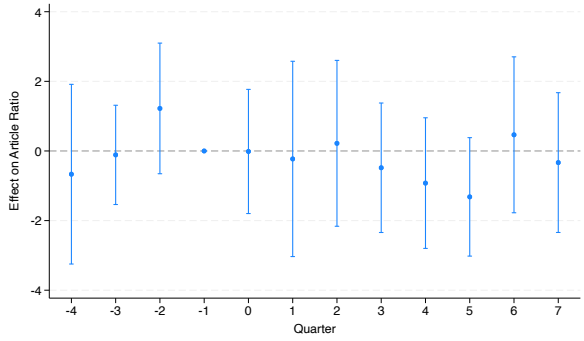
Panel J: *sunday* – Article Ratio



Panel K: *east* – Frequency



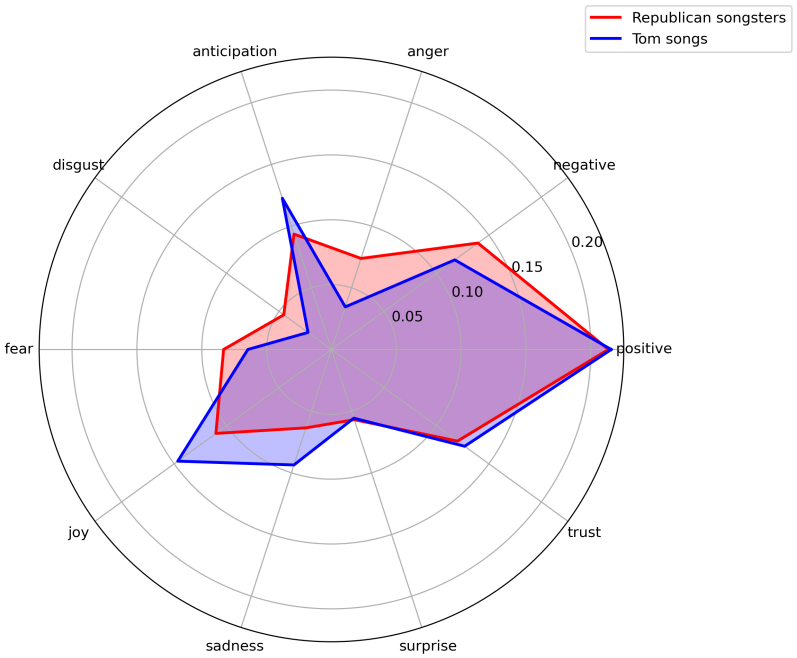
Panel L: *east* – Article Ratio



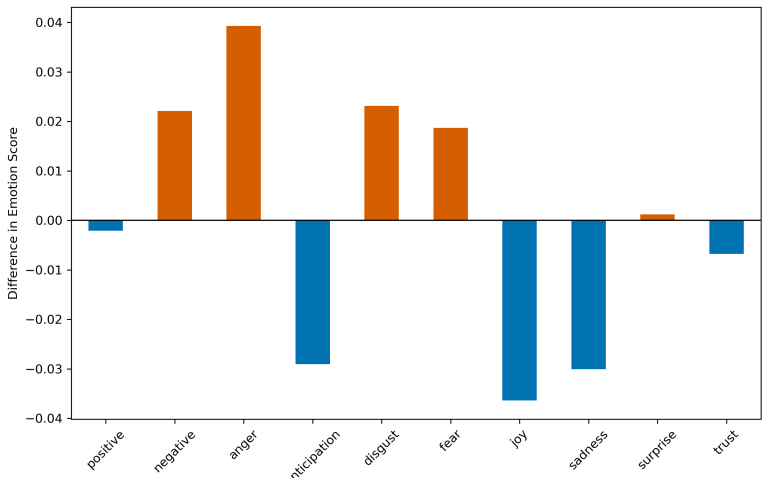
This figure plots the event-study estimates of the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin on newspaper content between 1851Q1 and 1853Q4. Panels A–L present six keywords in terms of word frequency and article ratio. The keywords are slavery, freedom, fugitive, rights, sunday, and east. For each panel, the estimates are obtained from a separate regression following an event-study version of Equation (7). Each specification includes 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 9: Emotional Profiles of Tom Songs and Republican Campaign Songsters

Panel A: Emotion Radar Chart

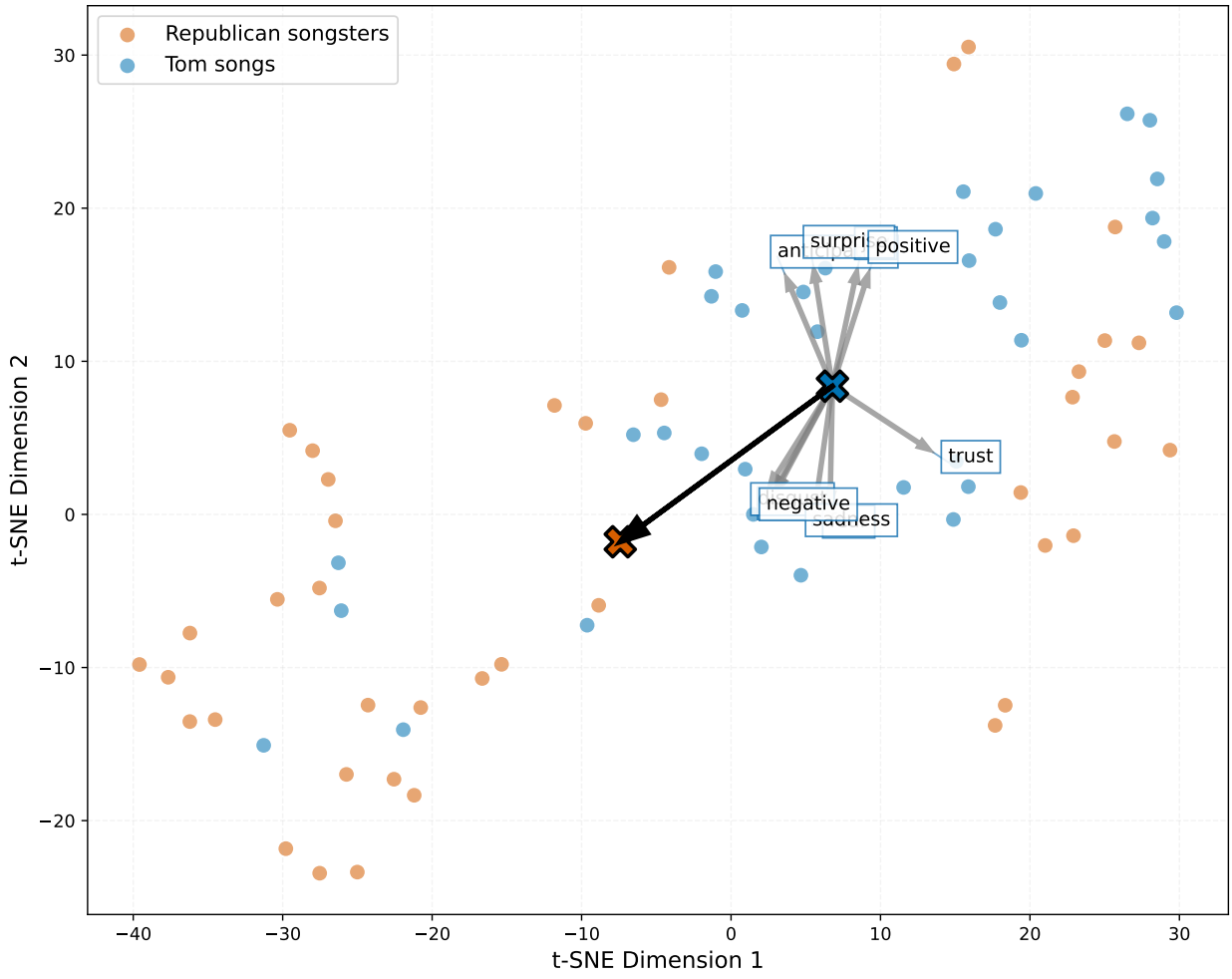


Panel B: Emotion Difference (Republican Songsters - Tom Songs)



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.

Figure 10: 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.

Appendix

Table A1: Counties with Advertisements for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Moby Dick*

State	County	UTC	MD	State	County	UTC	MD
Connecticut	Hartford	1	1	Ohio	Champaign	1	
D.C.	D.C.	1	1	Ohio	Clinton	1	
Illinois	Adams	1		Ohio	Columbiana	1	
Illinois	Cook	1		Ohio	Cuyahoga	1	1
Illinois	La Salle	1		Ohio	Darke	1	
Illinois	Lake	1		Ohio	Erie	1	
Illinois	Madison	1		Ohio	Fairfield	1	
Illinois	Ogle	1		Ohio	Franklin	1	1
Illinois	Rock Island	1		Ohio	Hamilton	1	1
Illinois	Stephenson	1		Ohio	Huron	1	
Indiana	Allen	1		Ohio	Lorain	1	
Indiana	Carroll	1		Ohio	Miami	1	
Indiana	Dearborn	1		Ohio	Muskingum	1	
Indiana	Floyd	1	1	Ohio	Portage	1	
Indiana	Gibson	1		Ohio	Ross	1	
Indiana	Marion	1	1	Ohio	Sandusky	1	
Indiana	Marshall	1		Ohio	Summit	1	1
Indiana	St. Joseph	1		Pennsylvania	Allegheny	1	1
Indiana	Switzerland	1		Pennsylvania	Cumberland	1	
Indiana	Vanderburgh	1		Pennsylvania	Erie	1	
Indiana	Vigo	1	1	Pennsylvania	Franklin	1	
Iowa	Muscatine	1		Pennsylvania	Lancaster	1	
Iowa	Scott	1		Pennsylvania	Lebanon	1	
Kentucky	Boyle	1		Pennsylvania	Luzerne	1	
Kentucky	Franklin	1		Pennsylvania	Philadelphia	1	1
Kentucky	Jefferson	1	1	Pennsylvania	Tioga	1	
Maine	Cumberland	1		Pennsylvania	Warren	1	
Maine	Penobscot	1	1	Pennsylvania	Washington	1	
Maine	Sagadahoc	1	1	Rhode Island	Newport	1	
Maryland	Baltimore	1	1	Rhode Island	Providence	1	1
Massachusetts	Berkshire	1	1	Rhode Island	Washington	1	
Massachusetts	Bristol	1	1	Vermont	Addison	1	
Massachusetts	Franklin	1		Vermont	Caledonia	1	
Massachusetts	Middlesex	1		Vermont	Chittenden	1	
Massachusetts	Suffolk	1	1	Vermont	Franklin	1	
Massachusetts	Worcester	1	1	Vermont	Orange	1	
Michigan	Hillsdale	1		Vermont	Rutland	1	
Michigan	Kent	1		Vermont	Washington	1	
Michigan	Ottawa	1		Vermont	Windham	1	
Michigan	Wayne	1	1	Vermont	Windsor	1	
New Hampshire	Merrimack	1		Wisconsin	Dane	1	
New York	Albany	1		Wisconsin	Iowa	1	
New York	Dutchess	1		Wisconsin	Jefferson	1	
New York	Erie	1	1	Wisconsin	Kenosha	1	
New York	Kings	1		Wisconsin	Milwaukee	1	1
New York	New York	1	1	Wisconsin	Racine	1	
New York	Orange	1		Virginia	Ohio	1	
New York	Steuben	1					

Notes: Each row represents one county with at least one newspaper advertisement for either *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or *Moby Dick*. A "1" indicates that at least one advertisement appeared in that county. "UTC" denotes *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and "MD" denotes *Moby Dick*. The table is split evenly into two halves for compact presentation within a single page.

Table A2: Uncle Tom's Cabin and Vote Share, Binary Treatment

	1852			1856			1860		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Panel A: Democratic Party									
Neiborgh	-2.885	-2.707	-0.682	-3.813	-4.688	-1.871	-8.268	-3.917	-1.483
	(0.919)	(0.945)	(0.406)	(1.222)	(1.128)	(0.617)	(1.671)	(1.057)	(0.722)
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Past electoral controls			Yes			Yes			Yes
R-squared	0.019	0.120	0.847	0.019	0.341	0.827	0.046	0.715	0.878
Observations	512	512	469	510	510	468	510	510	467
Panel B: Whig/Republican Party									
Neiborgh	-0.139	0.044	0.071	8.668	7.899	3.289	5.165	4.106	0.948
	(0.794)	(0.801)	(0.382)	(1.765)	(1.757)	(1.155)	(1.103)	(1.139)	(0.626)
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Past electoral controls			Yes			Yes			Yes
R-squared	0.000	0.090	0.809	0.046	0.329	0.767	0.042	0.204	0.768
Observations	512	512	469	510	510	468	510	510	467

Notes: This table reports the estimated effects of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on voting outcomes in the 1852, 1856, and 1860 presidential elections. Each column presents results from a separate OLS regression following Equation (1), where each observation corresponds to a county. Panel A reports estimates for the Democratic Party, while Panel B presents results for the Republican Party. The explanatory variable is an indicator equal to one if a county borders at least one county where newspaper advertisements for the novel appeared, and zero otherwise. Control variables include county characteristics (all variables listed in Table 1)and past electoral outcomes (average vote shares of the Democratic and Republican Parties during 1840–1848). Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

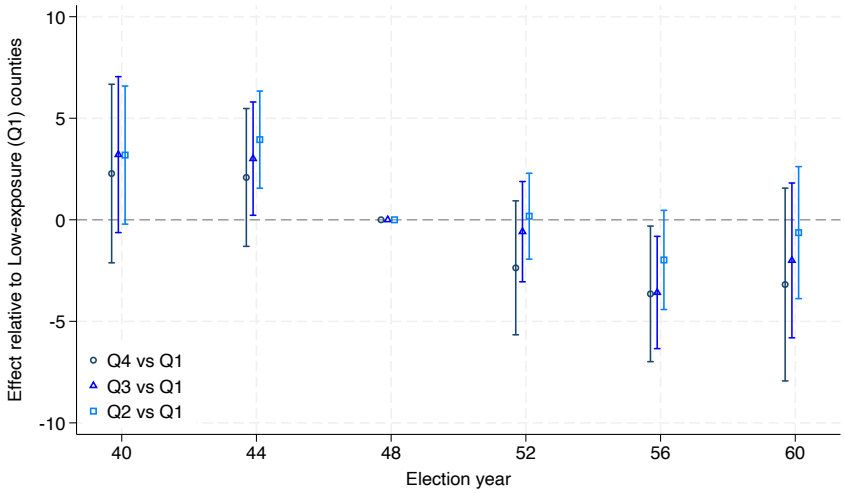
Table A3: Uncle Tom and Vote Share, distance as treatment

	1852			1856			1860		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Panel A: Democratic Party									
Distance	0.041	0.055	0.018	0.008	0.039	0.026	0.079	0.038	0.033
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.012)
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Past electoral controls	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
R-squared	0.049	0.160	0.848	0.001	0.332	0.825	0.053	0.714	0.879
Observations	512	512	469	510	510	468	510	510	467
Panel B: Whig/Republican Party									
Distance	-0.018	-0.025	-0.018	-0.033	-0.064	-0.040	-0.029	-0.043	-0.032
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.020)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.012)
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
County characteristics	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Past electoral controls	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
R-squared	0.013	0.106	0.812	0.008	0.316	0.765	0.017	0.205	0.771
Observations	512	512	469	510	510	468	510	510	467

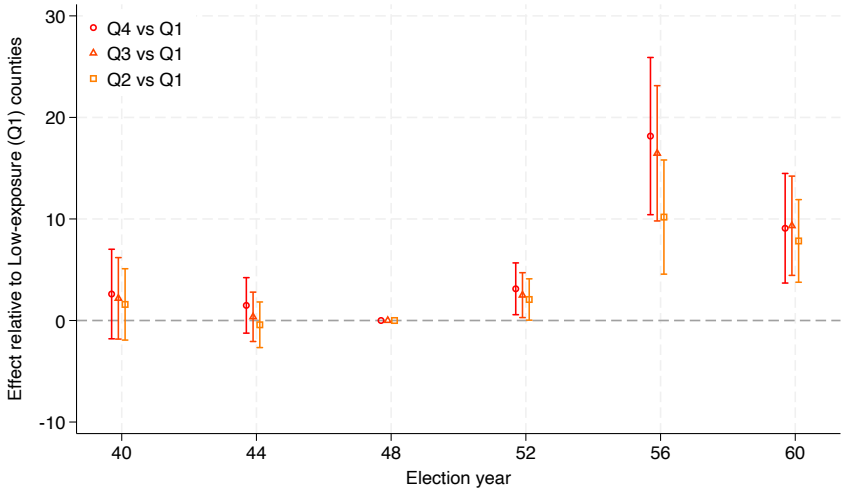
Notes: This table reports the estimated effects of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on voting outcomes in the 1852, 1856, and 1860 presidential elections. Each column presents results from a separate OLS regression following Equation (1), where each observation corresponds to a county. Panel A reports estimates for the Democratic Party, while Panel B presents results for the Republican Party. The main explanatory variable measures the average distance (in kilometers) to the three nearest counties where newspaper advertisements for the novel appeared. Control variables include socioeconomic characteristics (all variables listed in Table 1), the county's geographic attributes (area, latitude, and longitude), and past electoral outcomes (average vote shares of the Democratic and Republican Parties during 1840–1848). Standard errors, shown in parentheses, are clustered at the county level.

Figure B1: Event Study with Discrete Treatment: Vote Share Dynamics, 1840–1860

Panel A: Impact of Uncle Tom's Cabin on Democratic Vote Shares



Panel B: Impact of Uncle Tom's Cabin on Whig/Republican Vote Shares



Notes: This figure plots the event-study estimates of exposure to Uncle Tom's Cabin on party vote shares in presidential elections between 1840 and 1860. The estimates are obtained from regressions following an event-study version of equation (3), where exposure is discretized into four quartile groups, Low, Medium-Low, Medium-High, and High, with the Low (Q1) group serving as the reference category. The model replaces the post-treatment indicator with year dummies, using 1848 as the omitted year. The sample includes all northern counties used in the main analysis. The outcome variable is the county-level vote share for each major party, and the key explanatory variables are the interaction terms between the quartile-group dummies and year dummies. The specification includes 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.