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Joel Turner

*Western Kentucky University*

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## The Great Divide: The Political Implications of Southern Regional Identification in Kentucky

Joel Turner, Jeff Kash, Scott Lasley & Erika Binnix

Western Kentucky University  
[joel.turner@wku.edu](mailto:joel.turner@wku.edu)

Kentucky occupies a unique place on the American political landscape. The Commonwealth has never been fully embraced as Southern by most observers, but at the same time it is not necessarily a Northern state. As the intersection of North and South in the United States, Kentucky presents a unique opportunity to study the impact of regional identity on public opinion. Utilizing data from a 2014 survey of a random sample of Kentucky residents, we are able to demonstrate that Southern regional identification is fairly high in Kentucky, and that this identification has a significant influence on opinion regard politicians and policy preferences in Kentucky.

**Key Words:** Kentucky, party identification, voting behavior

In many ways Kentucky represents the political crossroads of America. During the Civil War, Kentucky was considered a border state with divided loyalties between North and South. The divided nature of its politics continues today with observers rarely agreeing on whether the Commonwealth is a Southern or Midwestern state. The answer to this question is not very clear and depends heavily on the criteria used to define what a Southern state is. From a political and demographic standpoint, the state clearly has Southern sensibilities. Democratic candidates dominated Kentucky electoral politics during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century; however, there always existed pockets of Republican strength with Republican candidates scoring notable victories in elections. These limited but consistent Republican victories lend credence to the argument that Kentucky is more Midwestern than Southern. In many cases, textbooks on Southern politics do not include Kentucky as part of the South (Bullock and Rozell 2013), yet the University of Kentucky, which is closer to Cincinnati than Nashville, has been a longtime athletic member of the Southeastern Conference. The unsettled nature of Kentucky's political culture makes it an interesting subject for the study of regional political identity.

Acknowledging that there is clear disagreement among political observers regarding whether Kentucky is Southern, perhaps a better question to ask is whether Kentuckians see themselves as Southern. Regardless of how the state is classified by others, Kentuckians' perceptions of themselves as Southern, Midwestern, or something else could have major implications for understanding public opinion and public policy positions in the state. Using recent survey data, this study examines the following questions: First, do Kentuckians perceive themselves to be Southern? Second, if they do, does this identity vary by demographic or regional factors within the state. Finally, does Southern regional identification in Kentucky influence attitudes on the role of government as well as public opinion on specific policy issues? The results of the analysis reveals that most Kentuckians do perceive themselves to be Southern, that there are clear patterns that emerge with regard to who is more likely to see themselves as Southern and where these people are located, and that Southern regional identification has a tremendous impact on the political attitudes of Kentuckians.

#### **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

The distinctive nature of the American South has long been recognized by scholars. At both the aggregate and individual levels, the American South has simply been different from the rest of the country. From a cultural standpoint, the region differs from the rest of the country in its preferences regarding religion, music, sports, and literature (Grantham 1994). From a public opinion standpoint, research demonstrates that Southerners differ from their non-Southern counterparts on a number of racial and moral issues (Key 1949; Rice, McLean and Larsen 2002; Valentino and Sears 2005). Most relevant for this examination, however, is the political behavior aspect of Southern distinctiveness, and how this distinctiveness influences policy preferences.

From a partisan standpoint, Democrats monopolized political power in the "Solid South" from after the Civil War to the late 1960s. This Democratic Party dominance in Southern states led to an emphasis on primary, rather than general, elections, disproportionate numbers of uncontested elections (Squire 2000) and a lack of interparty competition (Holbrook and Van Dunk 1993). This translated to weaker Southern party organizations and an emphasis on individual politicians, particularly those with seemingly larger than life personalities (Gibson, et al. 1983). In the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement two-party competition emerged in Southern states. The emergence of Republican success has resulted in many Southern politicians growing in prominence and influence nationally (Bullock 2009).

Institutionally, Southern legislatures also differ from legislative bodies in other regions. Party leadership is generally weak in Southern legislatures (Harmel and Hamm 1986; Hamm and Harmel 1993), and there has been little desire by legislators for increased legislative professionalism in the region (King 2000).

From a demographic standpoint, Southern states are less likely to have female legislators than other regions, and they are more likely to be composed of a disproportionate number of lawyers, realtors, and insurance agents (Squire 2000). These legislators also are more likely to exhibit higher levels of progressive ambition (Turner, Lasley, and Kash 2012). The distinct characteristics exhibited by Southern legislators suggest the existence of a common political identity that directly affects their approach to public policy problems.

At the individual level, the South exhibits distinctiveness in political behavior in a number of ways. Historically Southern voters have been less likely to turn out to vote, more likely to split their tickets, and generally have a different political decision making calculus than non-Southerners (Burden and Kimball 2002; Wattenberg 2002; Hillygus and Shields 2008). Ideologically, southerners are more conservative and stronger advocates of smaller government and localized control, than are voters from most other regions of the country (Wright, Erikson, and McIver 1985; Cowden 2001; Johnston 2001; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Squire 2000; Holbrook and Van Dunk 1993; Gibson, et al. 1983; King 2000; Harmel and Hamm 1986; Hamm and Harmel 1993). These individual level differences in political behavior and ideology from other areas of the country confirm the impact of Southern distinctiveness on political behavior.

Scholars have long wrestled with explaining where Southern political distinctiveness comes from. It has long been assumed that the values defining Southern political distinctiveness are rooted in history and political culture. Political culture has three components: what government should do, who participates in politics, and how government operates (Elazar 1966). Elazar identifies three political subcultures. The first, individualists, tend to use government for utilitarian reasons. This means that members of subcultures that fit this description are motivated primarily by self-interest. The second political subculture, moralists, believe that government should promote the common good. The third subculture is traditionalist. Traditionalists operate in a world where social connections and prestige matter. Elazar argues that traditionalist politics center on dominant personalities or families, who control the concerns of the political system with little input from outside groups. They define what issues are of importance and they confer prestige to leadership positions, social connections, and political behaviors that support their control of the status quo.

According to Elazar's classification, the traditionalist subculture was predominant in the Southern states. Traditionalistic states tend to have more restrictive voter registration laws and lower voter turnout (King 1994). Traditionalistic states tend to have differently structured political institutions (Johnson 1976; Hero and Fitzpatrick 1988). Traditionalistic states also tend to have government programs that are smaller in scope and lower in cost (Johnson 1986) and tend to have less policy innovation (Morgan and Watson 1981). Other

scholars have explained parts of Southern distinctiveness with the concepts of race, gender, and income (Key 1949; Reed 1974; Rice and Coates 1995; Griffin 2006). Also a recent examination has argued that unique personality characteristics are a key component of Southern distinctiveness (Turner, Lasley, and Kash 2015). The preponderance of research supports the pursuit of Southern regional identity as an explanatory factor in the politics of the region. The impact of this regional identity in Kentucky serves as an excellent path for exploring its effect on politics because the state combines a mixture of political identities that can be compared against each other.

Although researchers may have trouble pinning down exactly what constitutes the concept of Southern distinctiveness, the important takeaway from this review is that scholars generally recognize the importance of Southern regional identification. The impact of this distinctiveness is what this study explores in greater detail below. Specifically, the research is interested in determining whether Southern regional identification influences political attitudes in Kentucky. First, the study investigates the extent to which Kentuckians consider themselves to be Southern. Second, it examines whether Southern identification varies by demographic and economic region. Finally, the investigation concludes with an examination of whether Southern identification in Kentucky influences opinion on both the role of government in people's lives and specific public policy issues.

#### **DATA & METHODS**

Data for the study were obtained from a survey of a random sample of Kentucky residents conducted by the Social Science Research Center at Western Kentucky University in the fall of 2014. This mixed-mode survey included 776 telephone and web completions. From a demographic standpoint, 75% of the respondents were white, and the median age of respondents was 38. Republicans, Democrats, and Independents were almost equally represented in the sample (36%, 34%, and 30%, respectively), and from an ideological perspective 40% of respondents identified as conservative, 30% identified as moderate, and 18% identified as liberal. The survey provided data on opinions regarding a number of specific public policy issues, information about the proper role of government, and regional identification.

The first set of dependent variables included in this analysis involves opinions on politicians and public policy issues. The issues included dichotomous measures of approval or disapproval of the President, as well as support or opposition to raising the minimum wage, Obamacare, Right to Work legislation, and gay marriage, with 0 signifying opposition and 1 signifying support in each instance. The additional policy questions examined opinions on what the focus of our immigration policy should be (coded 0 for halting the flow of immigrants or 1 for dealing with those already here illegally), and what we

should do with those currently here illegally (coded 0 for creating a pathway to citizenship, 1 for a guest worker program, or 2 for deportation).

The second set of dependent variables included in this analysis examined views on federalism. Three questions measured how much trust and confidence respondent had in local, state, and the federal government, coded 0 for none at all, 1 for not very much, 2 for a fair amount, and 3 for a great deal in each instance. A fourth question asked whether government was doing things that should be left to individuals and businesses (coded 0) or whether government should be doing more to solve problems (coded 1). The final question gauged level of agreement with the statement that the federal government should only be doing things that cannot be done at the state or local level (ranging from 0 for strong agreement to 3 for strong disagreement).

There are ten independent variables used in our primary analysis. The primary independent variable of interest, Southern, measures whether the respondent indicated identifying as a Southerner. The next two independent variables indicated whether the respondent identified as a Republican or a Democrat. Dichotomous controls for gender, race, and whether the respondent lived in a rural area were included in the model, as well as categorical controls for education, age, religiosity, and income. In an examination of where Southern identifiers in the Commonwealth resided, the study utilized dichotomous controls for residence in one of the nine economic regions of Kentucky: Bowling Green, Paducah-Purchase, Owensboro, Mountain, Lexington, Cumberland, Louisville, Northern Kentucky, and Ashland.<sup>1</sup>

## RESULTS

The key initial question for this analysis is what percentage of Kentuckians identifies as Southern. This is important because if only a trivial number of Kentuckians identify as Southern then the influence this identification has on politics in the Commonwealth would likely not warrant further investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on these regions see Paul Coomes' "Improving Earnings per Job: The New Economic Development Challenge in Kentucky" at <http://cber.uky.edu/Downloads/coomes02.htm>.

**Table 1. Percentage of Regional Identification in Kentucky**

Southern	62%
Midwest	18%
Neither	20%

N=776

As table 1 indicates, Southern regional identification in the state is anything but trivial. In our sample 62% of Kentuckians identify as Southern, as compared to 20% that identify as Midwestern, and 18% that identify as something else. Having established the existence of a significant number of Southern identifiers in the Commonwealth, the next step is to determine if any demographic patterns emerge regarding who is more likely to identify as Southern.

**Table 2. Southern Identification in Kentucky by Demographic Characteristics**

Constant	-.178 (.226)
White	.639 (.264)**
Republican	.910 (.274)***
Democrat	-.307 (.274)
Rural	1.354 (.218)***
Income	-.121 (.073)*
Age	.042 (.076)
Education	.111 (.070)
Religiosity	.140 (.068)**
Gender	.240 (.214)

N = 701

Chi2 = 110.08

Prob&gt;Chi2 = .00

Adj. R<sup>2</sup> = .164

\*p&lt;.10; \*\*p&lt;.05; \*\*\*p&lt;.01

*standard errors in parentheses*

Table 2 illustrates clear patterns with regard to Southern regional identification. Because Southern regional identification is a dichotomous variable, a logit model was used for this investigation. The significant, positive coefficients for Whites, Republicans, those who consider themselves to be more

religious, those who reside in rural areas, and those who are lower on the income scale indicate that respondents in these groups were significantly more likely to identify as Southern. The variables controlling for Democrats, education, and gender failed to reach statistical significance, indicating no significant difference in Southern regional identification for these respondents. These findings support previous studies that have been done of Deep South states regarding the demographics of those who are most likely to identify as Southern (Griffin, Evenson, and Thompson 2005).

**Table 3. Predicted Probabilities of Southern Identification in Kentucky by Demographics**

White	.67
Non-White	.51
Republican	.76
Non-Republican	.44
High Religiosity	.70
Low Religiosity	.54
Rural	.79
Non-rural	.48
High Income	.58
Low Income	.70

Although logit coefficients provide insight into the significance and direction of relationships, they cannot be directly interpreted. Therefore, predicted probabilities were calculated to further examine these patterns. White respondents have a .67 probability of identifying as Southern, as opposed to a .51 probability for non-Whites. Republicans have a .76 probability of identifying as Southern, while Independents and Democrats only have a .44 probability of identifying as Southern. Respondents exhibiting the highest level of religiosity have a .70 probability of identifying as Southern, while those who have low levels of religiosity only have a .54 probability of identifying as Southern. Lower income respondents have a .70 probability of identifying as Southern, as opposed to a .58 probability for those in the highest income category. The strongest predictor of Southern identification is residing in a rural area, as these respondents have a .79 probability of identifying as Southern, as opposed to a .48 probability for those who live in urban areas or the suburbs. The results of



these predicted probabilities indicate that Southern regional identity plays an important role in identifying Kentuckians by demographic, regional, economic, and religious dimensions. This supports the contention that Southern regional identity may play a coordinating role in organizing political beliefs.

The next question of interest is whether there are patterns regarding where respondents who identify as Southern live in the state. To determine this, a logit model was run that regressed Southern regional identification on the nine economic regions of Kentucky to determine which examined, if any, of these economic regions of the state Southern identifiers are most likely to reside in.

**Table 4. Southern Identification by Economic Region of Kentucky**

<b>Constant</b>	-.178 (.226)
<b>Lexington</b>	.832 (.282)***
<b>Mountain</b>	1.430 (.398)***
<b>Cumberland</b>	.828 (.422)**
<b>Bowling Green</b>	1.153 (.333)***
<b>Paducah-Purchase</b>	1.159 (.407)***
<b>Owensboro</b>	.955 (.370)***
<b>Louisville</b>	.326 (.264)
<b>Northern Kentucky</b>	.178 (.420)
<b>Ashland</b>	.583 (.509)

N = 773

Chi2 = 31.61

Prob>Chi2 = .00

Adj. R<sup>2</sup> = .031

\*p<.10; \*\*p<.05; \*\*\*p<.01

*standard errors in parentheses*

As Table 4 illustrates, Southern identifiers are significantly more likely to reside in the Bowling Green, Paducah-Purchase, Owensboro, Mountain, Lexington, or Cumberland regions of the state. No significant relationship with regard to Southern identification was found for the Louisville, Northern Kentucky, and Ashland regions of the state, which is not completely surprising given that these regions share borders with Midwestern states and their populations are more likely to include individuals from both areas. Again, predicted probabilities were calculated to gather further insight into the location of Southern regional identifiers, and these can be found in Table 5.

**Table 5. Predicted Probabilities of Southern Identification in Kentucky by Demographics**

<b>Mountain</b>	.78
<b>Bowling Green</b>	.73
<b>Paducah-Purchase</b>	.73
<b>Owensboro</b>	.69
<b>Lexington</b>	.66
<b>Cumberland</b>	.66

N=773

Mountain region residents were most likely to identify of Southern, with a predicted probability of .78. This is followed closely by respondents in the Bowling Green and Paducah-Purchase regions, both with a .73 probability of identifying as Southern. Respondents in the Owensboro region had a probability of identifying as Southern of .69 and, finally, respondents in the Lexington and Cumberland regions each had a .66 probability of identifying as Southern. Essentially, as one gets closer to the border Kentucky shares with Indiana and Ohio, the likelihood of the region having significant Southern identification diminishes significantly.

The next section explores the differences between Southern and non-Southern identifiers with regard to public policy preferences. In these logit and ordered logit models, public policy positions on gay marriage, right to work legislation, immigration policy, minimum wage, Obamacare, and presidential approval were regressed against a number of demographic characteristics, most notable Southern regional identification.

As Table 6 demonstrates, there are clear differences between Southern and non-Southern identifiers on each of the policy issues under examination. The coefficients in column one indicate that, perhaps least surprisingly, Southern identifiers (Southern, White, Republican, Rural, and Religiosity) are significantly less supportive of President Obama than non-Southern identifying Kentuckians. This lower approval level among Southern identifiers is consistent with President Obama's approval in other traditional Deep South states. These opinions are likely connected to opposition to the President and opposition to Obamacare. Southern identifiers in Kentucky are significantly more likely to oppose the President's signature piece of legislation, even though Kentucky is cited by many observers as an example of how the program is supposed to work. Southern identification is also far and away the strongest predictor of opposition to right to work legislation in Kentucky. There has traditionally been a strong anti-union sentiment in the South (Simon 1997), which as a region has led in passing Right

Table 6. Public Opinion by Respondent Characteristics

	Obama Approval	Obamacare	Right to Work	Minimum Wage
Southern	-.548** (.240)	-.582** (.239)	6.997*** (.706)	-.394** (.195)
White	-.378 (.284)	.538* (.286)	-.451 (.616)	.483** (.237)
Republican	-.818** (.328)	1.524*** (.315)	3.272*** (.641)	.979*** (.221)
Democrat	1.678*** (.270)	-.924*** (.252)	-.663 (.577)	-.934*** (.218)
Age	.083 (.085)	-.014 (.082)	.370** (.162)	.020 (.062)
Income	.151** (.081)	.045 (.080)	.413** (.169)	.034 (.060)
Education	.091 (.077)	-.240*** (.075)	-.182 (.153)	-.019** (.055)
Gender	-.201 (.239)	-.260 (.228)	.030 (.467)	-.737*** (.176)
Rural	-.999*** (.249)	.244 (.238)	-.580 (.509)	-.026 (.184)
Religiosity	-.146** (.075)	.187** (.074)	.113 (.152)	.253*** (.059)
	N = 751 LR Chi2 = 70.37 Prob>Chi2 = 0.000 Pseudo R2 = .0595	N = 749 LR Chi2 = 35.87 Prob>Chi2 = 0.000 Pseudo R2 = .0229	N = 768 LR Chi2 = 38.46 Prob>Chi2 = 0.000 Pseudo R2 = .0235	N = 764 LR Chi2 = 25.84 Prob>Chi2 = .0011 Pseudo R2 = .0210

\*p<.10  
\*\*p<.05  
\*\*\*p<.01  
Standard errors in parentheses

Table 6 (continued). Public Opinion by Respondent Characteristics

	Gay Marriage	Immigration Focus	Immigration Policy
Southern	-1.317*** (.230)	-.649*** (.216)	.356* (.210)
White	.327 (.273)	.074 (.259)	-.160 (.242)
Republican	-.729** (.292)	-1.051*** (.250)	.645*** (.228)
Democrat	1.066*** (.253)	-.136 (.241)	-.509* (.233)
Age	-.019 (.078)	.031 (.071)	.148** (.068)
Income	.129* (.075)	-.065 (.068)	-.120* (.066)
Education	.024 (.071)	-.007 (.064)	-.050 (.059)
Gender	-.129 (.222)	.409** (.200)	-.400** (.188)
Rural	.014 (.233)	-.308 (.208)	.347* (.196)
Religiosity	-.114 (.071)	-.071 (.066)	.123* (.632)
	N = 761 LR Chi2 = 70.37 Prob>Chi2 = 0.000 Pseudo R2 = .0595	N = 769 LR Chi2 = 35.87 Prob>Chi2 = 0.000 Pseudo R2 = .0229	N = 755 LR Chi2 = 38.46 Prob>Chi2 = 0.000 Pseudo R2 = .0235

\*p<.10  
\*\*p<.05  
\*\*\*p<.01  
Standard errors in parentheses

to Work legislation, and this sentiment is likely also strong among Southern identifiers in the Commonwealth.

Southern regional identifiers in Kentucky are also far more likely to oppose gay marriage. This finding should also be consistent with expectations, given the importance of religion to a large portion of Southern identifiers, as well as the strength of religious based opposition to the unions. Finally, Southern regional identifiers have vastly different positions on immigration policy than their non-Southern counterparts in the Commonwealth. When asked what the focus of our national immigration policy should be, Southern identifiers were significantly more likely to indicate that our resources should be directed toward stemming the tide of those illegally crossing the border rather than focusing on dealing with those already in the country. With regard to what should be done with those already living here illegally, Southern identifiers were far more supportive of deportation, as opposed to non-Southerners, who were more likely to advocate the creation of a pathway to citizenship for these individuals.

**Table 7. Predicted Probabilities for Public Opinion by Southern Identification**

	Southern	Non-Southern
Obama Approval	.25	.37
Obamacare Opposition	.70	.50
Right to Work Support	.90	.12
Min Wage Increase Support	.30	.79
Gay Marriage Opposition	.78	.48
Immigration/Secure Border	.58	.42
Immigration/Deportation	.53	.44

As Table 7 illustrates, predicted probabilities were also calculated to further illustrate the differences between Southern and non-Southern identifiers in Kentucky on these issues. First, Southern identifiers only have a .25 probability of approving of President Obama, as opposed to a .37 probability of approval for non-Southerners. This probability of approval of the president is third lowest in the model, following only rural respondents (.19 probability) and Republicans (.20 probability). A similar pattern emerges with regard to Obamacare, as Southern identifiers have a .70 probability of opposing the law, as opposed to a .50 probability of opposition for non-Southern identifiers. This level of opposition is second only to the level of opposition expressed by Republicans (.83 probability).

Support for Right to Work in the Commonwealth appears to be largely driven by Southern identifiers, as this group has a .90 probability of supporting

this legislation. Non-Southern identifiers in the Commonwealth only exhibited a .12 probability of supporting right to work legislation. The next closest variable to Southern identification with regard to predicting support for Right to Work legislation is Republican identification, which has a .57 probability of supporting the legislation. Southern identification is also the strongest predictor of opposition to gay marriage of the variables under examination, with a .78 probability of opposing gay marriage. Non-Southern identifiers in the state only have a .48 probability of opposing these unions.

Kentuckians identifying as Southern are also significantly less likely to support an increase in the minimum wage. This group has a .39 probability of supporting this increase, as opposed to non-Southerners who only have a .70 probability of support. The only stronger predictor of opposition to a minimum wage increase is identifying as a Republican (.48 probability). Finally, with regard to what the focus of our immigration policy should be, Southern identifiers are significantly more likely to want government to work on halting the flow of immigrants at the border (.58 probability) rather than dealing with those that are already here (.42 probability). With respect to what to do with those illegal immigrants already here, Southern identifiers are far more likely to support deportation of illegal immigrants currently in the United States (.53 probability) than a guest worker program (.17 probability) or a pathway to citizenship (.30 probability).

Finally, the analysis examines differences in philosophies regarding the role of government between Southern and non-Southern identifiers in Kentucky. In these logit and ordered logit models, opinion of levels of trust and confidence in the federal, state, and local government, as well as opinion on whether government is too "activist", were regressed against a number of demographic characteristics, most notable Southern regional identification.

As Table 8 illustrates, the general pattern that emerges is that Southern identifiers are more supportive of state and local power than their non-Southern counterparts in the Commonwealth. First, respondents were asked how much trust and confidence they have in the federal, state, and local government. With regard to the federal government, the positive, significant coefficient indicates that Southern identifiers were significantly less likely to indicate they had a great deal of trust and confidence. The opposite pattern emerges for state and local government, as Southern identifiers were more likely to indicate trust and confidence at these two levels of government as opposed to the federal government.

Table 8. Attitudes Toward Governmental Performance by Respondent Characteristics

	Trust/Con Federal	Trust/Con State	Trust/Con Local	Gov't Do Too Much	Federalism
	.367				
	(.607)				
Constant					
Southern	.315 (.196)	-.493** (.214)	-.469** (.201)	-.511** (.237)	-.475** (.198)
Republican	.724*** (.228)	-.230 (.240)	-.413* (.228)	-.913*** (.294)	-.380 (.235)
Democrat	-.044*** (.224)	-.770*** (.240)	-.633*** (.224)	.989*** (.256)	.661*** (.217)
White	.407* (.236)	.093 (.253)	-.158 (.237)	-.805*** (.282)	-.218 (.232)
Age	.144** (.064)	.187*** (.069)	.062 (.064)	-.031 (.081)	-.121* (.065)
Rural	-.106 (.187)	-.195 (.200)	.175 (.180)	-.067 (.235)	-.424** (.194)
Gender	-.337* (.178)	.177 (.191)	.369** (.180)	.839*** (.222)	.252 (.182)
Religiosity	.297*** (.061)	-.029 (.064)	.065 (.060)	-.239*** (.073)	-.237*** (.060)
Education	-.085 (.056)	-.131** (.062)	-.080 (.057)	-.079 (.073)	.028 (.059)
Income	-.093 (.062)	-.093 (.067)	-.115* (.062)	.082 (.076)	.049 (.063)
	N = 765 LR Chi2 = 14.42 Prob>Chi2 = .0715 Pseudo R2 = .0092	N = 744 LR Chi2 = 17.01 Prob>Chi2 = .0300 Pseudo R2 = .0119	N = 756 LR Chi2 = 29.89 Prob>Chi2 = .0002 Pseudo R2 = .0191	N = 741 LR Chi2 = 19.40 Prob>Chi2 = .0128 Pseudo R2 = .0125	N = 752 LR Chi2 = 58.61 Prob>Chi2 = 0.000 Pseudo R2 = .0329

\*p<.10; \*\*p<.05; \*\*\*p<.01  
Standard errors in parentheses

Next, respondents were asked if they thought government was doing too many things that should be left to individuals and businesses, or if government should be more involved in problem solving. Again, the coefficient indicates that Southern identifiers thought that the federal government was doing too many things that they should not be involved in. Also, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the federal government should only do things that cannot be managed at the state level. Southern identifiers were significantly more likely to want the government to do fewer things than their non-Southern counterparts.

**Table 9. Predicted Probabilities for Federalism Issues by Southern Identification**

	Southern	Non-Southern
Trust/Confidence Federal	.04	.20
Trust/Confidence State	.16	.18
Trust/Confidence Local	.26	.16
Government Doing Too Much	.68	.54
Government Only Do What States Can't	.55	.42

Predicted probabilities for these relationships are illustrated in Table 9. First, Southern identifiers have a very low opinion of the federal government, as they demonstrate only a .04 probability of having a great deal of trust and confidence in that level of government. They exhibit significantly higher degree of trust and confidence in state (.16 probability) and local (.26 probability) governments. The level of trust and confidence in state and local government, rather than the federal government, exhibited by Southern identifiers in the state is similar to that of traditionally small-government advocating Republicans (.035, .12, and .22 probability, respectively). Southern identifiers also indicated that they thought the government was generally being too activist for their liking, as this group had a .68 probability of indicating that they thought government was doing too many things, as opposed to only a .55 probability for non-Southerners. In addition, Southerners in the Commonwealth were significantly more likely to agree with this statement that the government should only do things that cannot be done at the state level (.54 probability) than non-Southerners were (.42 probability). The analysis provides convincing evidence that Southern regional identity in Kentucky exists and provides a means for explaining the political behavior of its adherents.



## CONCLUSION

Kentucky is often described as the intersection of North and South in the United States. Despite this, there has been a scarcity of research on what this unique positioning actually means as it relates to regional identification and politics. This research addresses this shortcoming by examining whether strong regional identities exist in the Commonwealth and, if so, what the implications of these identities are for politics in the state. The study finds that clear preferences of political identity do exist. Kentuckians largely view themselves as Southerners, and this regional identification has a significant influence on their opinions concerning public policy issues as well as philosophies on the role of government.

First, the analysis finds that a significant number of Kentuckians identify as Southern. Beyond sheer percentages, it reveals that respondents in six of the nine economic regions of Kentucky were significantly likely to identify as Southern, and that, consistent with prior research on the South in general, whites, Republicans, those in rural areas, the very religious, and those lower on the income scale were likely to identify as Southern. Secondly, the analysis illustrates that Southern regional identifiers in Kentucky were more likely to have ideologically conservative views on a variety of policy issues than their Southern counterparts in the state. Finally, the data reveal that Southern regional identifiers in Kentucky had significantly more conservative views on the role of government, favoring state action as opposed to federal, exhibiting more trust and confidence in government at the state and local level, and wanting a government that was generally doing as little as possible.

These findings are significant for a couple of reasons. First, they lend support to the idea of Southern distinctiveness. Even when controlling for a host of traditionally powerful explanatory variables like party identification, race, and gender, Southern regional identification still played a key role in Kentucky on views regarding government and politics. There was something about these identifiers that was just different, or distinct, from everyone else, and this had a tremendous influence on their political worldview. This is important, as it demonstrates that being "Southern" still matters.

Secondly, these findings contribute to the larger debate on what exactly constitutes a Southern state. Major textbooks in the field of Southern politics do not classify Kentucky (as well as West Virginia) as Southern states, commonly citing their lack of association with the confederacy as the reason why. However, with nearly 2/3 of its population identifying as Southern, sharing a border with several Southern states, and espousing political views that are commonly associated with the South, perhaps it may be time to take another look at the Southern credentials of the Commonwealth.

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