Center for American Progress Action Fund

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Demographic Change and the Future of the Parties

Ruy Teixeira June 2010

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Introduction and summary

The tectonic plates of American politics are shifting. A powerful concatenation of demographic forces is transforming the American electorate and reshaping both major political parties. And, as demographic trends continue, this transformation and reshaping will deepen. The Democratic Party will become even more dominated by the emerging constituencies that gave Barack Obama his historic 2008 victory, while the Republican Party will be forced to move toward the center to compete for these constituencies. As a result, modern conservatism is likely to lose its dominant place in the GOP.

The bulk of this paper provides a detailed analysis of the demographic shifts transforming the electorate. This analysis is followed by a brief discussion of the geographical dimension of these changes. It concludes by exploring the long-term implications of these changes for the parties.

Key findings on the electorate's demographic transformation are examined below.

Heavily Democratic minority voters (80 percent for Obama) increased their share of votes in U.S. presidential elections by 11 percentage points between 1988 and 2008, while the share of increasingly Democratic white college graduate voters rose 4 points. But the share of white working-class (not college-educated) voters, who have remained conservative in their orientation, has plummeted by 15 points.

That's a pattern that's repeated in state after state, helping send those states in a Democratic direction. In Pennsylvania, for example, the white working class declined by 25 points between 1988 and 2008, while white college graduates increased by 16 points and minorities by 8 points. And in Nevada, the white working class is down 24 points over the same time period, while minority voters are up an amazing 19 points and white college graduates by 4 points.

These trends will continue, and the United States will be majority-minority nation by 2042. By 2050, the country will be 54 percent minority as Latinos double

from 15 percent to 30 percent of the population, Asian Americans increase from 5 percent to 9 percent, and African Americans move from 14 to 15 percent.

Other demographic trends accentuate Democrats' advantage. The Millennial generation (those born between 1978 and 2000) is adding 4 million eligible voters to the voting pool every year, and this group voted for Obama by a stunning 66-32 margin in 2008. By 2020—the first presidential election in which all Millennials will have reached voting age—this generation will be 103 million strong, and about 90 million of them will be eligible voters. Those 90 million Millennial eligible voters will represent just under 40 percent of America's total eligible voters.

Professionals are now the most Democratic and fastest-growing occupational group in the United States, and they are a huge chunk of the burgeoning white college graduate population. They gave Obama an estimated 68 percent of their vote in 2008. By the middle of this decade, professionals will account for around one in five American workers.

Democrats also generally do better among women than men, and they do particularly well among growing female subgroups such as the unmarried and the college educated. Seventy percent of unmarried women voted for Obama, and an estimated 65 percent of college-educated women supported him. Unmarried women are now 47 percent, or almost half, of adult women, up from 38 percent in 1970, and college-educated women are an especially rapidly growing population. Their numbers have more than have tripled in recent decades, from just 8 percent of the 25-and-older female population in 1970 to 28 percent today.

Finally, growing religious diversity favors Democrats as well, especially rapid increases among the unaffiliated (75 percent of whom voted for Obama). Unaffiliated or secular voters—not white evangelical Protestants—are the fastest-growing "religious" group in the United States. The percentage of adults reporting no religious affiliation almost tripled from 1944 to 2004, rising from 5 percent to 14 percent. Projections indicate that by 2024, 20 percent to 25 percent of U.S. adults will be unaffiliated.

This trend—combined with growth among non-Christian faiths and race-ethnic trends—will ensure that by the 2016 election (or 2020 at the outside) the United States will have ceased to be a white Christian nation. Looking even farther down the road, white Christians will be only around 35 percent of the population by 2040, and conservative white Christians, who have been such a critical part of the Republican base, will be only about a third of that—a minority within a minority.

It's difficult to look across these many demographic changes and not believe that the Republican Party as currently constituted is in need of serious and substantial changes in approach. These changes could include the following:

- **Move to the center on social issues.** The culture wars may have worked for a while, but shifting demographics make them a loser for the party today and going forward. A more moderate approach would help with Millennials, where the party must close a yawning gap, and with white college graduates, who still lean Republican but just barely. The party also needs to make a breakthrough with Hispanics, and that won't happen unless it shifts its image toward social tolerance, especially on immigration.

- **Pay attention to whites with some college education and to young white working-class voters in general.** The GOP's hold on the white working class is not secure, and if that slips, the party doesn't have much to build on to form a successful new coalition. That probably also means offering these voters something more than culture war nostrums and antitax jeremiads.

- **Another demographic target should be white college graduates, especially those with a four-year degree only.** The party has to stop the bleeding in America's large metropolitan areas, especially in dynamic, growing suburbs. Keeping and extending GOP support among this demographic is key to taking back the suburbs. White college graduates increasingly see the party as too extreme and out of touch.

- **In the long run the GOP has to have serious solutions of its own that go beyond cutting taxes. These solutions should use government to address problems but in ways that reflect conservative values and principles.** Antigovernment populism is something the party is clearly comfortable with—witness its evolving line of attack on the Obama administration. But it's likely not enough to just denounce the other side and what they have done or propose to do in populist terms.

In short, the "party of no" has a limited shelf life. That strategy might help the party make significant gains in 2010, but it will not be enough to restore it to a majority status. For that, a conservatism must be built that is not allergic to government spending when needed and even to taxes when there is no responsible alternative. The party must paradoxically find a way to combine its standard antigovernment populism with pro-government conservatism.

This sounds and is different from what the party has done in the recent past. No doubt many will say that such a "new conservatism" is not conservatism at all. To be sure, it certainly is not conservatism as we have known it. But if the party hopes to once again achieve electoral dominance, there is no alternative moving forward.

The Democrats, for their part, are in a considerably more comfortable position. They have exchanged their old coalition for a new one based on emerging demographics and have already gone through the painful process of ideological reexamination and change that the GOP is currently avoiding.

Their chief challenge now is governance, which is daunting in its own right. They have an ambitious agenda in areas such as health care, financial reform, education, energy, and global relations that they are having some success in pursuing. If these policies have their intended effects and make serious progress toward remedying problems in these areas, Democrats will be in very good shape indeed and will solidify their support among emerging demographics while destabilizing what is left of the GOP coalition.

Conversely, if the Democrats fail to produce—whether through ineffective programs, fiscal meltdown, or both—even an unreformed GOP will remain very competitive despite the many demographic changes that are disadvantaging the party. The next few years will tell the tale.

Demographic shifts

Minorities

Minorities are Democrats' strongest constituency, and their numbers are growing rapidly. Overall, the share of minority voters in the national exit poll rose to 26 percent in 2008 from 23 percent in 2004. Back in 1988, that share was just 15 percent. That's a rise of 11 percentage points over 20 years, or about half a percentage point a year.[1]

Between 2004 and 2008, the share of African-American voters rose from 11 percent to 13 percent[2] —hugely impressive for a group whose share of the overall population is growing very slowly. And the Hispanic share of voters rose from 8 percent to 9 percent over the same period.

Blacks voted 95 percent to 4 percent for Obama in 2008, up from 88 percent to 11 percent for then presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) in 2004. Hispanics voted 67 percent to 31 percent for Obama in 2008, a 36-percentage-point margin that was double Kerry's margin in 2004.

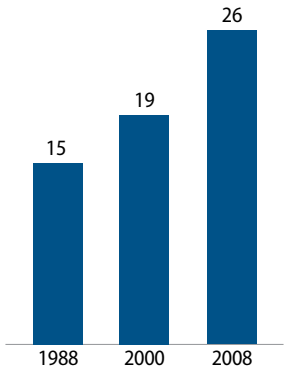
Some observers speculated that racial frictions between Hispanics and blacks would prevent Hispanics from giving Obama their wholehearted support, but that most emphatically was not the case. Finally, Asian Americans supported Obama by a margin of 62 percent to 35 percent, up from the 56-44 margin for Kerry in 2004.

Overall, the minority vote was an impressive 80 percent to 18 percent for Obama, a 62-point margin that's significantly greater than Kerry's 44-point margin in 2004 (71 percent to 27 percent).

These minority gains figured greatly in many key states Obama carried. In Ohio, for example, the share of minority voters rose from 14 percent in 2004 to 17 percent in 2008, with black voters supporting Obama by a stunning 95-point margin (97 percent to 2 percent), compared to Kerry's 68-point margin (84 percent to

Minority vote surges

Share of minority vote, 1988-2008



Source: Author's analysis of 1988-2008 exit poll data.

16 percent). The share of minority voters rose by a full 8 points in Nevada, to 31 percent from 23 percent of voters, driven by a 5-point increase in the Hispanic share of voters. And Obama's support among blacks in the state was 95 percent to 4 percent (up from Kerry's 86-13 margin in 2004), alongside 76 percent to 22 percent Hispanic support, up from 60 percent to 39 percent in 2004.

Other key states with significant increases in the minority vote included Colorado (up 5 points); Minnesota (up 3 points); New Mexico (up 7 points); Oregon (up 4 points); Virginia (up 2 points); and Washington (up 6 points). And in Florida, while the minority share of voters did not increase, blacks supported Obama by 96 percent to 4 percent in 2008 compared to 86 percent to 13 percent support for Kerry, while Hispanics, whom Kerry lost by 56 percent to 43 percent, supported Obama by 57 percent to 42 percent. The latter is truly a sign of change in Florida, since Hispanic voters, spearheaded by relatively conservative Cuban Americans, have long been a key Republican voting bloc in that state.

The advantage Democrats derive from minority voters should continue to grow. As mentioned, from 1988 to 2008 the percent of minority voters increased by 11 points. There is no sign that growth is slowing down. In all of the 10 battleground states studied by myself and demographer William Frey (Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Virginia),[3] the percent of minority voters grew between 2000 and 2006, including spectacular growth of a percentage point a year in Nevada. Nationwide, minorities grew by around 20 percent between 2000 and 2008, accounting for more than four-fifths of U.S. population growth.[4]

This was mostly driven by Hispanic population growth. Hispanics grew by 31 percent in this period, and they accounted for over half of U.S. population growth.[5] Of course, it's true Hispanics' population strength is not currently matched by their voting strength due to the large proportion of Hispanics who aren't citizens and therefore can't vote or are simply too young to vote. As a result of these factors, only 42 percent of Hispanics overall are eligible to vote, compared to 77 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 66 percent of African Americans.[6]

Still, the Hispanic proportion among the voting electorate has grown steadily and will continue to grow. They were only 2 percent of voters in early 1990s, but they were 9 percent in 2008 and will likely surpass the level of black voters sometime in this decade.[7]

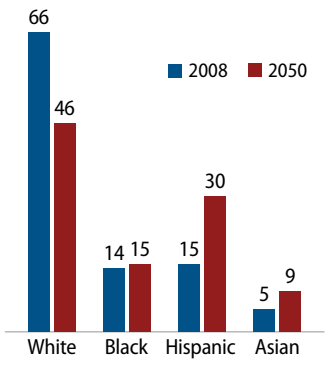
Asian Americans are the other significant contributor to minority growth. In the 1990s their growth rate was actually slightly higher than that of Hispanics. And in the 2000 to 2008 period, they were not been far behind (26 percent versus 31 percent for Hispanics).[8] Right now Asian Americans are about 5 percent of the population and 2 percent of voters.[9] Both figures will increase in the next 10 years due to this group's fast rate of growth, but because they start from a much smaller base than Hispanics, their impact on the population and voting pool will be far more limited.

Looking over the long term, we are rapidly approaching being a majority-minority nation. People tend to think of 2050 as the year America will become majority-minority. But it could be closer than that—the 2008 U.S. census projections put the tipping point dates at 2042 for the entire population and at 2023 for the population under 18.[10] By 2050 the United States will actually be 54 percent minority.

Hispanics will drive minority growth above all. Their numbers will triple to 133 million by 2050 from 47 million today, while the number of non-Hispanic whites will remain essentially flat. Hispanics will double as a percentage of the population from 15 percent to 30 percent. The population of Asian Americans will also come close to doubling, going from 5 percent to 9 percent. The number of blacks, however, will grow only from 14 percent to 15 percent of the population, making them only half the size of the Hispanic population by 2050. The foreign-born percentage in the population will also grow, reflecting the growth of nonblack minorities. By 2050, about one in five Americans will be foreign born, up from one in eight today.

Hispanics and Asian Americans will double in size by 2050

Population projections by race, 2008-2050



Source: Author's analysis of 2008 U.S. Census Bureau population projection.

These trends indicate that the voting electorate's race-ethnic composition will continue to evolve rapidly. Political scientist and author Alan Abramowitz has projected that minorities will be 34 percent of voters by the 2020 election.[11] If minorities retain their current political leanings, this shift in the distribution of voters should substantially advantage the Democrats.

But how likely is it that minority voters will continue to lean heavily toward the Democrats? Of course, change is always possible. At this point, however, those leanings look very solid. Consider black voters. Besides their historic ties to the party, they are strong supporters of active government both to combat discrimination and to provide services and opportunity. Their party identification was overwhelmingly Democratic in a 2010 Gallup analysis:[12] Eighty-three percent identify with or lean toward the Democrats,[13] compared to just 8 percent who identify with or lean toward the Republicans—a yawning 75 point gap.

Hispanics also have historic ties to the Democrats, if not as strong as blacks' ties. But they are as strong or stronger in their support for active government, the safety net, and generous government service provisions. And the issue of immigration looms large, with Democrats viewed overwhelmingly as the most favorable party to immigrants. In the same Gallup analysis quoted above, Hispanics' party identification was 53 percent Democratic to 21 percent Republican, a 32 point pro-Democratic gap. The last survey from the authoritative Pew Hispanic Center, conducted in mid-2008, had a larger 39-point gap in the Democrats' favor (65-26).[14]

Asian Americans, perhaps surprisingly, are now about as Democratic-oriented as Hispanics. They show strong support for Democratic stands on active government and immigration. Asians' party identification favored Democrats by 61-24 in the 2010 Gallup analysis—a 37-point gap even larger than that among Hispanics in the same analysis. And Asian Americans were the only race-ethnic group where self-identified liberals (31 percent) outnumbered self-identified conservatives (a mere 21 percent).

Republicans have tried to argue that today's GOP has considerable appeal to minorities, and that if they can just get their message out, Democratic support will be substantially eroded over time. Of course, that's what they said after the 2004 election, when President Bush received 40 percent of the Hispanic vote. But that turned out to be a false dawn, and Democratic dominance today is clear and overwhelming.

Consider the various approaches Republicans have taken to get their message out, particularly to Hispanics whom they believe (correctly) are a much better target for conversion than blacks. A longtime favorite has been the idea that Hispanics are socially conservative and can be induced to vote for the GOP if the party emphasizes "values" issues like abortion or gay marriage. This has not been effective so far, and there are no indications it will succeed in the future. Hispanics, it turns out, are actually much less likely than whites to vote on the basis of cultural issues.[15]

Hispanics overall also are not nearly as socially conservative as many believe. A Center for American Progress survey in 2009 showed that Hispanics actually had the highest average score of all racial groups on a 10-item progressive cultural index.[16] Surveys have repeatedly shown that Hispanics are no more conservative on gay marriage than whites are.[17] And younger Hispanics are typically more progressive than their older counterparts on social issues, so generational replacement will make tomorrow's Hispanic population less socially conservative than today's.

It has also been argued that the Hispanic population will become more conservative as native-born Hispanics become a larger share part of that population (projected to increase by 7 points to 67 percent of Hispanics by 2050).[18] But native-born Hispanics' party identification is overwhelmingly Democratic (+32 points),[19] so that shift doesn't seem likely to have much of a conservatizing effect. On the other hand, it will be another factor increasing Hispanics' weight among voters since a higher proportion of that population will be eligible to vote.[20] That is likely to hurt the GOP, not help it.

Finally, Hispanics' educational upgrading does not seem likely to have a pro-GOP effect. The party identification of Hispanic college graduates (+42 Democratic) is actually higher than that of high school dropouts.

These data suggest that there is really only one way for the GOP to effectively compete for minority voters, and it's a way that Republicans have rejected so far. The party must, quite simply, become less conservative. They will have to jettison their bitter hostility to active government, spending on social services, and immigration reform and develop their own approach in these areas that minorities might find appealing.

White college graduates

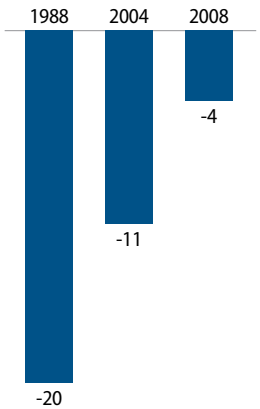
Democrats fare much more poorly, of course, with white voters. But they're doing much better among some white voters than others. They have been gaining particular strength among white college graduates, for example. Obama only lost white college graduates by 4 points in 2008, compared to an 11-point deficit for Kerry in 2004 and a 20-point deficit for then presidential candidate Gov. Michael Dukakis in 1988.

Moreover, white college graduates are a growing constituency, especially in the suburbs of America's most dynamic metropolitan areas, where they are marked by relative social liberalism and strong interest in effective public services. Their share of voters has gone up by 4 points since 1988 even as the share of white voters overall has declined.

White college graduates' shift to Obama played a key role in his victories in many important states. For instance, in Pennsylvania college-educated whites swung Obama's way by 17 points, turning a 12-point deficit in 2004 into a

Democrats close the gap with white college graduates

Democratic deficits, white college graduate voters, 1988-2008



Source: Author's analysis of 1988-2008 exit poll data.

5-point advantage in 2008. And they increased their share of voters over the two elections by 13 points.

Obama turned Kerry's 2-point deficit among white college graduates in Colorado into a 14-point advantage. Colorado's white college graduates also increased their share of voters by 4 points over the two elections. In Ohio, Obama lost white college graduates by only a single percentage point, but that's 15 points better than Kerry did, losing this group by 16 points in 2004. Similarly, Obama lost Michigan's white college graduates by a point, which is 16 points better than Kerry's 17-point loss among the group in 2004.

More broadly, there are 18 states plus the District of Columbia—adding up to 248 electoral votes—which Obama, Kerry, and Dukakis won, and which Bill Clinton also won twice. In every one of these states save two (Michigan and, oddly enough, Illinois), Obama carried white college graduates. Moreover, his margins were quite spectacular in a number of these states. He carried white college graduates by 11 points in California, 10 points in Delaware, 30 points in Hawaii, 24 points in Maine, 26 points in Massachusetts, 13 points in Minnesota, 18 points in New Hampshire, 15 points in New York, 28 points in Oregon, 49 points in Vermont, 26 points in Washington, and 12 points in Wisconsin.

Looking over the long term, Obama's 2008 performance among white college graduates was startlingly better than Dukakis's 1988 performance in many key states. Case in point: Obama's white college graduate margin in Ohio was 34 points better than Dukakis's in 1988. Other large shifts among white college graduates over the time period include 25 points in Florida, 24 points in Michigan and Pennsylvania, and 20 points in Nevada.

Recent trends suggest that white college graduates should continue to increase as a share of voters in the immediate future, which should benefit Democrats. In all of the 10 2008 battleground states Frey and I studied, the percent of white college graduate voters grew between 2000 and 2006, with (interestingly enough) the highest growth rate recorded in Pennsylvania.

Yet the durability of this trend—in contrast to the minority voter trend—is open to debate. The basic issue is how long the white adult population's educational upgrading will continue to outweigh the decline of whites as a share of the population, producing a net increase in the share of white college graduate voters. This upgrading depends on two factors. The first is whether and at what rate younger

whites' educational credentials—in this case, attaining a four-year degree or more—are increasing. The second is the rate at which younger, more educated whites replace older, less-educated ones.

Inspection of Census Bureau data indicates that both factors continue to be relevant—the educational credentials of younger whites are still rising (albeit more slowly than in the 1990s),[21] and generational replacement is still exerting significant upward pressure on education credentials. It therefore seems likely that the share of the adult population who are white college graduates will continue to increase for quite some time,[22] which, amplified by the group's relatively high turnout, should result in significant ongoing increases in the share of white college graduate voters.

Moreover, since college completion rates can potentially be boosted by public policy—and there is plenty of economic room to do so, as Massachusetts Institute of Technology labor economist Paul Osterman points out[23]—these projected increases in white college graduate voters could be even stronger than they appear today.

But even if the electoral share of white college graduates seems likely to continue increasing, will this group continue to trend toward the Democrats? This is less clear.

On the one hand, the factors propelling these voters toward the Democrats are well known. They are far less conservative than white working-class voters on social issues,[24] less likely to be reflexively antigovernment,[25] and have a strong interest in effective public services like transportation and education. These views have led to disenchantment with the GOP and increased warmth toward the Democrats.

On the other hand, when compared to truly Democratic groups like minorities, white college graduates have a more modest and incrementalist orientation toward government programs, are less responsive to economic populism, and are more concerned with fiscal responsibility. A GOP that appealed to those sentiments while moving to the center on social issues might well be able to stop or reverse the current trend among white college graduates toward the Democrats. But a GOP that stands pat and maintains strict economic and social conservatism seems likely to continue to lose ground among this critical group.

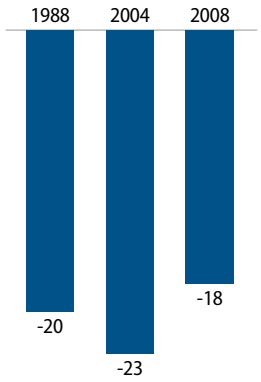
White working class

Democratic performance among white working-class voters (defined here as whites without a four-year college degree) has improved little in contrast to white college graduates. These voters tend to be more socially conservative and to blame the government for their long-term economic difficulties.

Obama lost the white working class by a very large 18-point margin in 2008, which is somewhat better than Kerry's 23-point deficit in 2004 but actually a little worse than vice president and then presidential candidate Al Gore's 17-point deficit in 2000. Moreover, Democrats' continuing difficulties with the white working class are thrown into stark relief if we look back to 1988. The Democratic deficits in that year among the white working class and white college graduates were identical: 20 points. The respective deficits in 2008 were 18 points and 4 points. Obama thus only improved over Dukakis by 2 points among white working-class voters but by 16 points among white college graduates. Quite a contrast.

Democrats' difficulties with white working-class voters continue

Democratic deficits, white working-class voters, 1988-2008



Source: Author's analysis of 1988-2008 exit poll data.

That's the overall story. But there were still some notable Democratic successes among this group in specific states. Obama did very well, for example, among white working-class voters in four of the five highly competitive states that were won by Gore and Kerry (Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, and Wisconsin). The average white working-class deficit for Kerry in these states in 2004 was 8 points. But in 2008 Obama had an average advantage in these states of 6 points—a Democratic swing of 14 points.

Obama did worse than Kerry, however, in Pennsylvania, the other highly competitive state Democrats won in 2000 and 2004. There he lost the white working class by 15 points, as opposed to Kerry's 10-point deficit. And in the highly competitive states lost by both Gore and Kerry (Florida, Missouri, Nevada, and Ohio), Democrats also lost ground among the white working class. The average Democratic white working-class deficit in these states was 13 points in 2004. In 2008 the average deficit was slightly worse, at 14 points.

Democrats' continuing difficulties with white working-class voters are, however, considerably mitigated by the fact that there are now far fewer of them in the voting pool. According to the exit polls, the proportion of white working-class voters is down 15 points since 1988, while, as discussed above, the proportion of white college graduate voters is up 4 points and the proportion of minority voters is up 11 points. This general pattern—a sharp decline in the share of white working-

class voters accompanied by increases in the shares of minority voters and white college graduate voters—has been replicated in state after state since 1988.

Consider these results from contested states in the 2008 election. Since 1988, the share of white working-class voters in Florida has declined 17 points, while the share of white college graduates has risen 4 points and the minority share is up by 12 points. Even more spectacularly, in Pennsylvania white working-class voters are down 25 points over the same time period, while white college graduates are up 16 points and minorities have increased by 8 points.

Change in shares of minority, white college graduate and white working-class voters by state, 1988-2008

State	Share of voters		
	Minorities	White college graduates	White working class
California	19	-2	-18
Connecticut	14	2	-17
Florida	12	4	-17
Illinois	9	6	-17
Indiana	5	8	-14
Iowa	6	12	-18
Maryland	17	-3	-15
Massachusetts	15	0	-14
Michigan	2	1	-5
Minnesota	6	11	-17
Mississippi	13	7	-21
Missouri	8	8	-15
Nevada	19	4	-24
New Jersey	7	5	-14
New Mexico	11	5	-17
New York	14	3	-17
North Carolina	6	0	-6
Ohio	6	8	-15
Oregon	5	9	-14
Pennsylvania	8	16	-25
Texas	9	7	-17
Vermont	1	12	-14
Washington	7	8	-16
Wisconsin	5	6	-11

Source: Authors' analysis of 1988 CBS/New York Times and 2008 NEP state exit polls.

Note: Only states where both 1988 and 2008 data are available are shown.

Moving to the Midwest, in Ohio the share of white working-class voters fell by 15 points between 1988 and 2008, while white college graduates rose by 8 points and minorities by 6 points. White working-class voters in Iowa are down 18 points, while white college graduates are up 12 points and minorities are up 6 points. In Minnesota, white working-class voters have fallen by 17 points, while white college graduates have increased by 11 points and minorities by 6 points. The share of white working-class voters is down by 14 points in Indiana over this time period, while white college graduates and minority voters are up 6 points and 9 points, respectively. Finally, in Missouri, which Obama lost by only one-eighth of a percentage point, white working-class voters have declined by 15 points, while both white college graduates and minority voters have risen by 8 points.

In the Southwest the changes in Nevada have been remarkable. White working-class voters are down 24 points since the 1988 election, while white college graduates are up 4 points and minorities an amazing 19 points. New Mexico has also seen big changes, if not quite as dramatic as those in Nevada. The white working-class vote share in that state has fallen 17 points, while the shares of white college graduates and minority voters have increased by 5 and 11 points respectively.

In the Northwest, both Oregon and Washington have seen substantial shifts that follow this general pattern. In Oregon, white working-class voters have declined by 14 points since 1988, while white college graduates are up by 9 points and minority voters by 5 points. And in Washington, white working-class voters are down 16 points over the same time period, while white college graduates and minority voters have risen by 8 and 7 points respectively.

Clearly these shifts tell us a great deal about how the country has changed since 1988 and why Democrats are now doing so much better in presidential elections. Indeed, on a very broad level you can account for the 15-point pro-Democratic swing between the 1988 and 2008 elections simply by factoring in the decline in the number of white working-class voters along with the increases in the numbers of minority voters and increasingly progressive white college graduates.

Further, it is inevitable that the white working class will continue to decline as a proportion of the population. A shrinking white population, combined with continued educational upgrading among whites, ensures that outcome. The only question is the rate of decline.

Over the last two decades, exit polls have shown a decrease in the share of white working-class voters of three-quarters of a percentage point per year. A slowdown in educational upgrading among whites could certainly reduce this rate of decline, though so far this has not happened. But even if the rate falls to, say, a half a percentage point per year,[26] that's quite enough to chip away significantly at the share of white working-class voters every election cycle.

Over time, these seemingly modest decreases add up. By 2020, for example, the white working-class share would still be 6 points lower under this reduced rate of decline than it was in the last election.

It's fair to say that white working-class voters are the GOP coalition's mainstay. For the GOP to win elections or, indeed, just to be competitive, it is dependent on achieving a supermajority of these voters. The rapid shrinkage of this group, therefore, could not be worse news for Republicans.

On the other hand, the GOP benefits from the fact that the white working class remains an enormous group of voters—still larger than white college graduates, according to the exit polls. And there are good reasons to suspect that the exit polls may significantly underestimate the size of this group.[27] Census Voter Supplement data regularly shows a share of white working-class voters substantially higher than that indicated by the exit polls. That disparity showed up again in 2008, where exit polls put the proportion of white working-class voters at 39 percent, while the Census Voter Supplement said their share was around 48 percent.

But whatever the correct figure, the GOP is still strongly tempted to rely on this group and the conservative appeals that have mobilized this group in the past. Succumbing to that temptation, however, is likely a recipe for failure. First of all, the magnitude of the supermajorities the GOP needs for electoral success will get ever larger as the white working class continues to shrink. That means conservative appeals must not just remain effective but become even more effective in the future.

Second, the white working class itself is likely to become more liberal time goes on, not more conservative. That's because younger cohorts of the white working class are far more progressive,[28] especially on social issues, than the older ones they are replacing. Consistent with these leanings, Obama actually carried white working-class Millennial generation voters (those born 1978 or later),[29] in contrast to the 18-point deficit he ran among white working-class voters as a whole.

Some may question this finding's significance, since the group of 18- to 29-year-old non-college-educated whites contains a considerable proportion of students and is therefore a flawed representation of the young white working class. But the results are even stronger if analysis is confined to 25- to 29-year-olds to eliminate the problem of mixing students on track for a four-year degree with other white non-college-educated youths. Obama won 25- to 29-year-old white noncollege voters by 12 points, 54-42, a stunning 40-point swing relative to Kerry's 35-63 drubbing among the same group in 2004. This indicates that standard conservative appeals are likely to become a less and less effective tool for maintaining (much less expanding) supermajorities among the white working class.

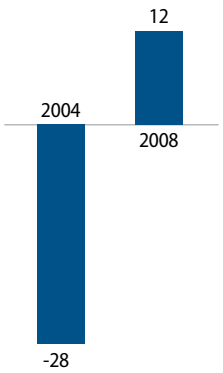
Third, just because the white working class tends to blame government for its economic problems doesn't mean they don't want their economic problems solved. The conservative economic approach in recent years, however, has proved itself more adept at taking electoral advantage of these antigovernment sentiments than in actually solving this group's economic problems.

Because of this, conservative writers Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam argue that a simple antigovernment, tax-cutting philosophy is inadequate for retaining supermajorities of the white working class vote.[30] They propose a new approach based on a series of substantial government programs that directly address health care and other aspects of economic insecurity but do so in a way that reflects conservative principles—market-friendly, reliant on individual initiative, and family oriented. Thus, simply treading water among the white working class may require a different economic orientation than the GOP is currently displaying.

Finally, doubling down on hardline economic and social conservatism is guaranteed to alienate minorities, white college graduates, and other rising demographic constituencies even if it is appealing to substantial segments of the white working class. These losses will hurt the GOP over the long run more than retaining conservative white working-class support can possibly help them.

Democrats fare better with white working-class 25- to 29-year-olds

Democratic margin, white working-class 25- to 29-year-olds, 2004 and 2008



Source: Author's analysis of 2008 exit poll data.

The Millennial generation

Speaking of rising constituencies where hardline conservatism does not go over well, consider the Millennial generation,[31] those born in the years 1978-2000. As is widely known, the youth vote was hugely favorable for Barack Obama in 2008. This was also the first year the 18- to 29-year-old age group was drawn

exclusively from the Millennial generation, and they gave Obama a whopping 34-point margin, 66 percent to 32 percent. This compares to only a 9-point margin for Kerry in 2004.

Obama's support among 18- to 29-year-olds was remarkably broad and extended across racial barriers. He carried not just Hispanics in this age bracket (76 percent to 19 percent) and blacks (95 percent to 4 percent), but also whites (54 percent to 44 percent). Obama's 10-point advantage among white 18- to 29-year-olds contrasts starkly with his 15-point deficit among older whites.

Another way of looking at the strength of Obama's support among Millennials is how many electoral votes he would have carried if just 18- to 29-year-olds had voted. Obama would have received at least 448 electoral votes and probably more like 475, based on exit poll results. The higher figures incorporate Colorado, Oregon, and Washington's electoral votes, where the exit polls did not report results for this age group but which were highly likely to have had an 18- to 29-year-old majority for Obama.

It's also worth noting that Obama got 60 percent of the youth vote or more in every swing state in the 2008 election with the lone exception of Missouri. That was also the only swing state Obama lost—and by a very slim margin. Further, if Missouri's margin for Obama among this age group had been just a little closer to his average swing state margin among 18- to 29-year-olds (about 30 points), he would have won that state as well.

Obama's 66-32 performance among the Millennial generation is even more impressive when compared to the 47-53 support Michael Dukakis received in 1988 from 18- to 29-year-olds (at that time a mix of late boomers and early Gen Xers).[32] That's a 40-point youth swing toward Democrats over the two elections.

Impressive youth swings in most states accompanied the large national youth swing between 1988 and 2008.[33] This includes not just states where Democrats have become dominant like California (a 52-point pro-Democratic swing), Connecticut (73 points), Illinois (45 points), Maryland (61 points), Massachusetts (50 points), New Jersey (53 points), New York (41 points), and Vermont (67 points), but also many contested states in the 2008 election. In Florida, for example, Obama carried 18- to 29-year-old Millennials by 61-37. Dukakis lost his same age group by a 36-64 margin in 1988. That's a pro-Democratic swing of 52 points across the two elections. Similarly, in Indiana Obama carried 18- to 29-year-olds by 28 points, while

Dukakis lost this group by 35 points, which translates into a pro-Democratic swing of 63 points between 1988 and 2008.

Other large swing state youth shifts toward Democrats include 46 points in Michigan (from 45-52 Dukakis to 68-39 Obama), 40 points in Missouri (from 39-59 Dukakis to 59-39 Obama), 58 points in Nevada (from 38-60 Dukakis to 67-31 Obama), 51 points in New Mexico (from 45-52 Dukakis to 71-27 Obama), and 61 points in North Carolina (from 43-56 Dukakis to 74-26 Obama). Smaller but still substantial progressive youth shifts took place in the swing states of Iowa (21 points), Minnesota (29 points), Ohio (26 points), Pennsylvania (34 points), and Wisconsin (23 points).

Democratic margins among 18- to- 29-year-olds by state, 1988 and 2008

	Democratic margins		
State	1988 president	2008 president	Democratic shift, 1988-2008
California	1	53	52
Connecticut	-12	61	73
Florida	-28	24	52
Illinois	-2	44	46
Indiana	-35	28	63
Iowa	4	25	21
Maryland	-17	44	61
Massachusetts	7	57	50
Michigan	-7	39	46
Minnesota	1	31	30
Mississippi	-15	13	28
Missouri	-20	20	40
Nevada	-22	36	58
New Jersey	-17	36	53
New Mexico	-7	44	51
New York	14	55	41
North Carolina	-13	48	61
Ohio	-1	25	26
Pennsylvania	-4	30	34
Texas	-14	9	23
Vermont	-4	63	67
Wisconsin	6	29	23

Source: Authors' analysis of 1988 CBS/New York Times and 2008 NEP state exit polls

The 2008 election also saw 18- to 29-year-olds increase their share of voters from 17 percent in 2004 to 18 percent. Moreover, that 18 percent figure actually understates the current level of Millennial influence on the electorate, because the 18- to 29-year-old group does not include the oldest Millennials—the 30-year-olds who were born in 1978. Once they are figured in, a reasonable estimate is that Millennials were around 20 percent of voters in this election.

This figure will steadily rise as more Millennials enter the voting pool. About 55 million Millennials were of voting age in 2008, and roughly 48 million were citizen-eligible voters. The number of Millennials of voting age will increase by about 4.5 million a year between now and 2018. And in 2020—the first presidential election in which all Millennials will have reached voting age—this generation will be 103 million strong, of which about 90 million will be eligible voters. Those 90 million Millennial eligible voters will represent just under 40 percent of America's eligible voters.[34]

These trends mean that every election up until 2020 will see a bigger share of Millennial voters—both because more of them will be eligible to vote and because the leading edge of the Millennials will be aging into higher turnout years. In 2012 there will thus be 74 million Millennials of voting age and 64 million Millennial eligible voters, 29 percent of all eligible voters. Assuming that Millennials' relatively good turnout performance continues (but doesn't get any better), that should translate into roughly 35 million Millennials who cast ballots in 2012 and an estimated 26 percent of all voters.

There will be 93 million Millennials of voting age by 2016, and 81 million Millennial eligible voters, making them 36 percent of all eligible voters. This should produce an estimated 46 million voting Millennials, which represents 33 percent of all voters. And in 2020, those 90 million Millennial eligible voters should translate into 52 million Millennial votes, representing 36 percent of all votes cast in that election.

Millennial voting-age population, eligible voters and estimated actual voters, 2008–2020

Year	Millennial voting-age population	Millennial eligible voters	Millennial percent of eligible voters	Estimated millennial actual voters	Estimated millennial percent of actual voters
2008	55 million	48 million	23	25 million	20
2012	74 million	64 million	29	35 million	26
2016	93 million	81 million	36	46 million	33
2020	103 million	90 miillion	39	52 million	36

Moreover, because more and more Millennial voters will be aging into their higher turnout years after 2020, the proportion of actual voters who are Millennials should continue to rise for a number of elections, despite the fact that all Millennials will already be in the voting pool. For instance, Millennials will be between the ages of 28 and 50 by 2028, and their share of voters should be about 38 percent, or 2 points higher than in 2020.

These trends couldn't be more positive for Democrats. This generation not only is growing rapidly and voting consistently Democratic but also leans heavily Democratic on party identification. The recent difficult political environment for the Democrats has seen their overall party identification lead slip considerably, but they have retained a double digit lead (14 points) among Millennials in the latest Pew analysis.[35] And Millennials hold a raft of progressive positions in various issue areas that should continue to propel them toward the Democrats.[36]

On social issues, Millennials support gay marriage, take race and gender equality as givens, are tolerant of religious and family diversity, have an open and positive attitude toward immigration, and generally display little interest in fighting over the divisive social issues of the past. They are also notably progressive on foreign policy issues, and favor a multilateral and cooperative foreign policy more than their elders. Millennials, more so than other generations, want a stronger government to make the economy work better, help those in need, and provide more services. These views extend to a range of domestic policy issues including education, clean energy, and, especially, health care.

But will Millennials remain as progressive as they are today? Some argue that Millennials will surely become more conservative as they age—a lifecycle effect will moderate their youthful progressivism and send them toward the GOP. While it is possible that the Millennial generation may become more conservative as they age, evidence suggests that they are likely to remain largely progressive. Dismissing Millennial progressivism as just the product of youth would be misguided.

To being with, while the degree to which people maintain the attitudes and opinions that they currently have throughout their life is a point of much debate, the general thrust of academic literature is that political ideas and attachments that are developed in early adulthood tend to last.[37] Research suggests that a socialization process occurs that leads young adults to hold onto the party identification and opinions that they developed in their formative years.

This is especially true with partisan identification.[38] Party identification is the single strongest predictor of how people vote and tends to stick with individuals once they form an attachment early in their political lives. Duane F. Alwin and Jon A. Krosnick analyzed NES panel data over several decades and argue in a study in the *American Journal of Sociology* that "party loyalties either increase or persist with age."[39]

There is less research about whether people maintain their support for specific issues rather than general partisanship. Yet many of these academic studies raise considerable doubt about claims that people naturally become less progressive as they age. Alwin and Krosnick argue that attitude stability "appears to occur immediately following early adulthood … and appears to remain at a constant and high-level throughout the remainder of the life cycle."[40] A gerontology handbook notes that, "It is a stereotype that individuals become more conservative as they age."[41]

Several studies have even found that people actually become more progressive as they get older. A generational analysis textbook argues, "According to almost any constant definition of conservatism people typically become less rather than more conservative as they age."[42] The findings of a 2007 study of 30 years of public opinion data in the *American Sociological Review* "contradict commonly held assumptions that aging leads to conservatism."[43]

A New America Foundation report argues, "It appears that we are witnessing a 'cohort change' in this new generation."[44] This thorough review by university academics confirms the idea that Millennials' views are more progressive than previous generations. The report's authors write, "Millennials have a more progressive identity than did previous generations at their age and are likely to move the country leftward on economic and social issues for decades to come."[45]

It therefore seems unlikely that aging will make this generation any more amenable to strict economic and social conservatism. Here as elsewhere the GOP will have to move to the center to compete for these voters and mitigate its currently large disadvantage.

Professionals

Democrats do unusually well among professionals, which are a huge chunk of the burgeoning white college graduate population. This occupational group typically has forthrightly liberal views on social issues as well as moderate, reformist tendencies on economic issues and a distaste for aggressive militarism in foreign policy.

Fifty years ago professionals were actually the most conservative occupational group. But over time—especially the last couple of decades—they have shifted to a strongly progressive stance. Professionals supported the Democratic candidate by an average of 52 percent to 40 percent in the 1988-2000 presidential elections. And in 2004 they moved still further in this direction, supporting Kerry over Bush by a 63 percent to 37 percent margin.[46]

The 2008 election was no exception to this pattern. Using those with a post-graduate education as a proxy for this group (the exit polls have no occupation question), Obama received 58 percent to 40 percent support, which is up from 55 percent to 44 percent for Kerry in 2004 and 52 percent to 44 percent for Gore in 2000.[47] The 2008 figure included 54 percent to 44 percent support among white postgraduates.

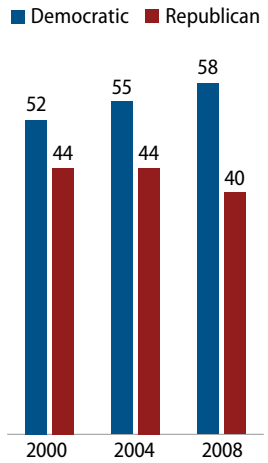
This is especially good for Democrats because professionals are a growing group in American politics and society. In the 1950s they made up about 7 percent of the workforce. But the professional class has expanded as the United States has moved away from a blue-collar industrial economy to a post-industrial one that produces more ideas and services. Today it constitutes just under 17 percent of the workforce. In another 10 years they will be 18 percent to 19 percent of the workforce.

Moreover, reflecting their very high turnout rates, they are an even larger percent of voters—and not just of employed voters but of voters as a whole. Nationally, they account for about 21 percent of voters. In many Northeastern, Intermountain West, and Far Western states they are likely one-quarter of the electorate, with even higher representation in these states' most dynamic metropolitan areas.

This powerful and growing group of voters is likely to continue leaning strongly Democratic as long as the GOP retains a hardline conservative stance. But if Republicans adopt a more centrist, moderate approach, it may be possible for them to reduce currently high levels of Democratic dominance among this group.

Postgraduates show increasingly stronger Democratic support

Postgraduate presidential vote, 2000-2008



Source: Author's analysis of 2000-2008 exit poll data.

Unmarried, working, and highly educated women

It's well known that Democrats typically do better among women than men. And in 2008 women voted 56 percent to 43 percent for Obama compared to a very slim one-point margin for Obama among men (49 percent to 48 percent).

But women voters are a vast group, and Democrats' true areas of strength are among three subgroups: unmarried, working, and highly educated women. Single women went for Obama by 70 percent to 29 percent in 2008, up from a 62 percent to 37 percent margin for Kerry in 2004. And while working women voted for Kerry by a slender 51 percent to 48 percent margin in 2004, they voted for Obama by an impressive 60 percent to 39 percent. Exit poll data for college-educated women in 2008 have not yet been released, but in all likelihood Obama's support among this group was significantly higher than Kerry's 57 percent support in 2004 (a reasonable estimate based on historical patterns would be around 65 percent Obama support).

The balance of women relative to men is changing little, of course. But trends within the female population are quite favorable to Democrats. Unmarried women are now 47 percent or almost half of adult women, up from 38 percent in 1970.[48] Their current size in the voter pool—more than a quarter of eligible voters[49]—is nearly the size of white evangelical Protestants, who are perhaps the GOP's largest base group. And since the current growth rate of the population of unmarried women is relatively high (double that of married women), the proportion of unmarried women in the voting pool should continue to increase.[50]

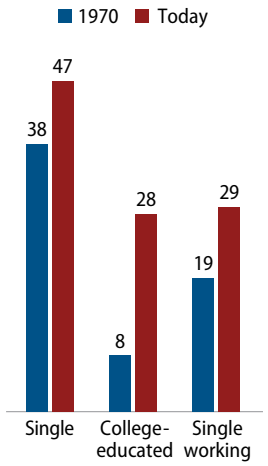
What's more, there is every expectation that this burgeoning population of unmarried women will continue to lean strongly Democratic in its politics. Survey data consistently show this group to be unusually populist on economic issues and generally opposed to conservative foreign policy and social issue positions.[51]

Unmarried working women tend to be a particularly Democratic group. This group gave Kerry 65 percent to 35 percent support in 2004, which was higher than his support among unmarried women as a whole (Data are not yet available for 2008, but a reasonable estimate based on historical patterns would be around 75 percent support for Obama). Unmarried working women are also a rapidly growing group, and they've increased from 19 percent of the adult female population in 1970 to 29 percent today.[52] That's even faster than unmarried women's growth as a whole.

Finally, college-educated women are a rapidly growing population group as well. Their number has more than have tripled, from just 8 percent of the 25-and-older female population in 1970 to 28 percent today.[53] This trend should continue in the future, due to continued educational upgrading and because college attendance and completion rates are increasingly skewed toward women. Right now more young women are attending college than young men: 56 percent of today's undergraduates are women compared to 44 percent who are men. And women now earn 170,000 more bachelor's degrees each year than men do, which reflects this disparity.

Key subgroups of women who lean Democratic are growing

Growth in percent of adult women, key subgroups, 1970-present



Source: Author's analysis of Current Population Survey data.

In the face of these numbers, it seems likely that Republicans' relative position among women voters will continue to slip in the future. But increased GOP moderation on social issues (particularly important for college-educated women) and increased willingness to use government programs to help those in difficult economic conditions (particularly important for unmarried women) could minimize the damage from these trends and perhaps even make up some of the ground they've lost to Democrats among this group.

A mass upper middle class

An important change related to the rise of professionals is the emergence of a mass upper middle class. That is, not only have more and more Americans attained what might be called a middle-class standard of living over time, but more and more Americans have reached a higher level of affluence we might call upper middle class. This term serves to differentiate them from the truly rich on the one hand and the ordinary middle class on the other.

Consider the following. The 80th percentile of family income in 1947 was around $41,000 and the 95th percentile was $68,000 (2008 dollars). At most a few percent had family incomes above $100,000. By 2008 the 80th percentile was around $113,000 and the 95th percentile was about $200,000.[54] If we use $100,000 income as a dividing line for the upper middle class, we've gone from a situation where the upper middle class was a tiny fraction of families to one where they qualify as a mass grouping (even subtracting out a few percent for the truly rich).

On the face of it, this might seem a straightforward benefit for the GOP, since more affluent voters tend to lean Republican. But there are some complications. As this group has gotten larger it has become a mix of affluent, liberal-leaning professionals on the one hand and managers, small business owners, and midlevel white-collar workers on the other who are much more conservative. Indeed, one of the big stories of American politics in the last several decades is the diverging paths of professionals, who have, as just discussed, shifted from the Republicans to the Democrats, and managers, who have retained Republican loyalties.

In the 2004 and 2006 elections, voters with over $100,000 in household income were 18 percent and 23 percent of voters, respectively. These elections revealed a split in political behavior among the mass upper middle class that reflects this difference between managers and professionals. Upper-middle-class voters in 2004

with a four-year college degree only (likely to be a managerial credential) favored Bush over Kerry by 60 percent to 39 percent. But upper-middle-class voters with postgraduate study (likely to be a professional credential) favored Bush by only 51 percent to 48 percent. Similarly, in 2006, upper-middle-class voters with only a college degree favored Republicans for Congress by 56 percent to 42 percent, while upper-middle-class voters with postgraduate study favored Democrats by 50 percent to 48 percent.

Between them, those with a four-year college degree only and those with post-graduate study make up the great majority of upper-middle-class voters and are of roughly equal size within that group, so this split is of potentially great significance as this group continues to increase its share of the American electorate.[55]

Voters with $100,000 in household income were 26 percent of voters in 2008.[56] Exit poll data are unfortunately not yet available that would allow us to break this category down by level of education. It is interesting to note, however, that the upper-middle class as a whole—voters with $100,000 or more in income—split their vote evenly between Obama and then presidential candidate Sen. John McCain (R-AZ). And voters with $200,000 or more in income actually favored Obama by 52 percent to 46 percent—a slightly higher margin than he attained among the $75,000 to $100,000 group (51-48).

The increase in upper-middle-class share of the vote will be quite significant over time. Just how much that share is likely to increase is difficult to estimate. Median family income increased about 150 percent from 1947 to 2008. But most of that increase was in the 26-year period between 1947 and 1973, when family income more than doubled with an annual growth rate of 2.8 percent. Median income only went up 23 percent in the 35 years between 1973 and 2008—an annual growth rate of 0.6 percent.[57] So how much income goes up in the future will depend very much on whether income growth follows the pre- or post-1973 pattern or something in between.

We don't know the answer to this question, and recent history is inconclusive—there was a period of rapid growth in median family income from 1995-2000 (up 11 percent) followed by negative growth from 2000-2008 (down 2 percent). But one approach is to use the growth rate over the entire 1947-2008 period (1.5 percent), which effectively averages the growth rates in the "good" (1947-73) and "bad" (1973-2008) periods. If we apply this 1.5 percent annual increase in family income at the 60th percentile, by the year 2030 the 60th percentile will actually

be slightly over $100,000. That would put roughly 40 percent of families in the upper-middle-class category. Even by the year 2020, that rate of increase would be enough to put roughly one-third of families in the upper middle class.[58]

So the upper middle class's influence on our politics will only grow larger as time goes on. Much will depend on how the political inclinations of the professional and managerial components of this group sort themselves out. The professional component could be especially significant, since Bureau of Labor Statistics projections suggest this is the strongest growth group within the professional-managerial class. At any rate, the comparatively liberal leanings of upper-middle-class professionals should blunt the conservative politics that one might expect from this group sheerly on the basis of income.

Once again, this suggests the GOP may have to back off its hard-right stance on social issues if it hopes to build a strong base among the emerging upper middle class. Such a stance runs the risk of alienating the sizeable professional contingent. Additionally, professionals' views on economic issues tend to be more moderate than managers—less emphasis on tax cuts and more emphasis on government programs that serve the public good (albeit in a fiscally responsible manner). The same Reaganite program found wanting by Douthat and Salam for the white working class is likely also a poor fit for affluent professionals.

Religious diversity

In U.S. politics over the last few decades, a strong relationship has been observed between how often you attend religious services and how you vote, with those who attend most frequently being much more conservative than those who attend least often. This relationship did not go away in 2008, but it did weaken.

Obama ran the same relatively modest 12-point deficit among those who attend services more than once a week as he did among those who attend weekly. In fact, Obama's 17-point improvement to a 43 percent to 55 percent deficit in 2008 from a 35 percent to 64 percent deficit for Kerry among the most frequent attendees in 2004 was Obama's largest improvement among the different attendance groups in 2008. He also improved the Democratic margin by 8 points among those who attend services a few times a month, winning that group by 53 percent to 46 percent; by 10 points among those who attend a few times a year (59 percent to 39 percent in favor of Obama); and by 11 points among those who never attend (67 percent to 30 percent for Obama).

The very strong results for Obama among those who attend services only a few times a year or less (44 percent of voters) are consistent with voting patterns from earlier elections. The least frequent attendees tend to vote heavily Democratic. And it is the nonobservant who have been growing in numbers since the since the late sixties and early seventies. According to the University of Chicago's General Social Survey, the proportion of those who attend services once year or less rose to 42 percent in 2008—the last year for which data are available—from 29 percent of adults in 1972.

In terms of religious affiliation, Obama improved the Democratic margin among Catholics by 14 points from a 5-point deficit in 2004 to a 9-point advantage in 2008. He also reduced the Democratic deficit among Protestant or other Christian voters by 10 points, compressing it from 19 points to 9 points. And he carried Jewish, other religions, and religiously unaffiliated voters by astronomical margins: 78 percent to 21 percent, 73 percent to 22 percent, and 75 percent to 23 percent, respectively.

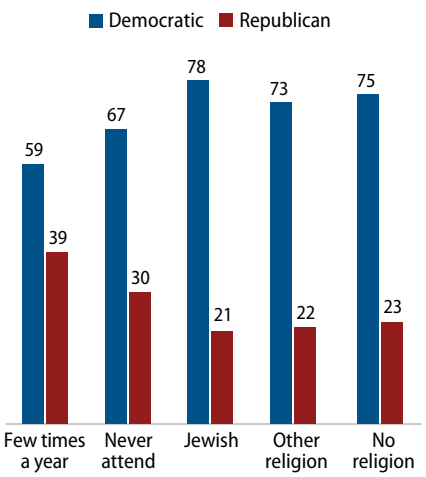
Unaffiliated or secular voters, by the way, are the fastest-growing "religious" group in the United States—not white evangelical Protestants. From 1944 to 2004 the percentage of adults reporting no religious affiliation almost tripled, rising from 5 percent to 14 percent. Projections indicate that by 2024 around 20 percent of adults will be unaffiliated.[59]

This trend, combined with growth among non-Christian faiths and race-ethnic trends, will ensure that in very short order we will no longer be a white Christian nation. Even today, only about 55 percent of adults are white Christians. By 2024 that figure will be down to 45 percent.[60] That means that by the 2016 election (or 2020 at the outside) the United States will cease to be a white Christian nation. Looking even farther down the road, by 2040 white Christians will be only around 35 percent of the population and conservative white Christians (a critical part of the GOP base) only about a third of that—a minority within a minority.

These developments will put increased pressure on the GOP to moderate its socially conservative stance. That stance may appeal strongly to a key segment of their base, but that segment will shrink substantially over time as religious diversity increases. A more moderate approach would have some chance of appealing to this diversity rather than leaving the field wide open for the Democrats.

Key religious groups who lean Democratic

Secular, less observant, and non-Christian vote, 2008



Source: Author's analysis of 2008 exit poll data.

Geographic shifts

It's not just growing demographic groups that are tilting toward Democrats—it's also growing areas of the country where these demographic shifts tend to be concentrated. By and large, Democrats are receiving their strongest support increases in fast-growing, dynamic metropolitan areas, particularly the largest ones. This pattern is swelling their majorities in states that already lean Democratic and pushing many other states into the Democratic column. Conversely, GOP performance improvements are generally confined to stagnant or declining areas in rural or small-town America. The result is a political map with a distinct lean toward Democrats—a lean that seems likely to increase in coming years.

We can see these geographic shifts by looking at the broad national picture of the location and types of states Democrats recently carried compared to Republicans. We can also see them by looking at types of areas within states, which involves comparing voting shifts in areas of different population sizes and densities from the urban cores of large metropolitan areas down to the most thinly populated rural areas.

The national picture

Let's first consider the tally of states Obama won. He carried all 18 states (plus the District of Columbia) that Kerry won in 2004 (as did Gore in 2000 and Clinton in 1992 and 1996), plus nine states that Kerry lost: Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia. Moreover, in each of the states that had been previously won by Kerry—some by very narrow margins—Obama won by more than 10 percentage points.

Another way of looking at the state tally is to note that there were five states where Gore and Kerry's average margin of victory was under five points: Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Obama carried them by an average of 13 points. And there were three states that split their support between

Gore and Kerry: Iowa, New Hampshire, and New Mexico. Obama carried them all by an average of 11 points. Finally, there were four states that Gore and Kerry lost by an average of under 5 points: Florida, Missouri, Nevada, and Ohio. Obama carried them all save Missouri, where McCain won by the extraordinarily small margin of two-tenths of a percentage point.

By region, this pattern of Democratic victories has reduced core GOP strength to the Upper Mountain West, Great Plains states, and the South. And Republicans have lost their political monopoly in the South as the three fast-growing "new south" states of Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida went Democratic in 2008. The Northeast, the Midwest (with the exception of Missouri), the Southwest (with the exception of Arizona), and the West are now solidly controlled by the Democrats or lean toward them.

Moreover, the states the GOP has been winning tend to be rural and lightly populated. Sixteen out of 28 states carried by Obama had 10 or more electoral votes while just 4 of 21 carried by McCain had that many electoral votes. Obama also carried seven of the eight most populous states: California, New York, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan. Only Texas of the eight most populous states went for McCain.

From large metropolitan areas to rural areas

We can see this population density pattern even more clearly by looking at the types of areas Obama and McCain did well in. Obama ran strongest in large metropolitan areas—those with over 1 million people—winning these areas by 58 percent to 41 percent, a 17-point margin that was 10 points better than Kerry's margin in 2004. Well over half (54 percent) of the U.S. population lives in these 51 large metropolitan areas.

Obama also carried medium metropolitan areas (those with 250,000 to 1 million in population) by 4 points, which is 11 points better than Kerry, who lost these areas by 7 points in 2004. Medium metros contain another 20 percent of the U.S. population.

But Obama lost to McCain by 6 points in small metro areas (9 percent of the country) where population dips below 250,000. And McCain did even better outside of metro areas where population density continues to fall. In micropolitan

areas—think of these areas as the small-town part of rural America—McCain beat Obama by 11 points.[61] Micropolitans are another 10 percent of the population. McCain also bested Obama by 16 points in the rest of rural America, the part most isolated from population centers and most spread out. These areas contain only 6 percent of the population despite the vast land area they cover.

The same density-related patterns of support for Obama and McCain are observed within large metropolitan areas. Here we can use a typology developed by Virginia Tech's Metropolitan Institute and Brookings' Metropolitan Policy Program to break these areas down by density and distance from the urban core.[62] In large metro areas Obama did best in densely populated urban cores (9 percent of the country),[63] carrying counties in this classification by a whopping 53 points, 76 percent to 23 percent.

Moving farther out, Obama carried the densest, closest-in suburban counties—which the typology classifies as inner suburban—by a wide margin (21 points).[64] That margin was a 12-point improvement over Kerry's performance in 2004. Almost a fifth (19 percent) of the nation's population is contained in these inner suburban counties.

Obama also carried mature suburban counties by 15 points, where 16 percent of the population lives. These counties are somewhat less dense than inner suburbs and typically contain no part of the central city. That was a 10-point improvement over Kerry's margin in 2004.

Moving out to the emerging suburbs, it is important to distinguish between these areas and true exurbs, which together constitute what people usually think of as "exurbia." Today's true exurbs contain only 3 percent of the nation's population. Emerging suburbs, on the other hand, contain 8 percent of the nation's population, and on average they are growing faster than any other type of U.S. county, including true exurbs. Emerging suburbs include such well-known counties as Loudoun County, VA, outside of Washington, D.C.; Scott County, MN, outside of Minneapolis; Warren County, OH, outside of Cincinnati; and Douglas County, CO, outside of Denver.

Geographers Robert Lang and Thomas Sanchez in a Metropolitan Institute study describe the true exurbs as:[65]

[T]he most far flung [metropolitan] counties with the lowest—essentially rural—population densities. Large-scale suburbanization is just about to take hold in these places, as they offer even better bargains, and more land (but longer commutes) than emerging counties. Exurban counties are included in metropolitan areas by the census because they share a functional relationship with neighboring counties via commuting. But by appearance, these places are barely touched by urbanization.

The emerging suburban counties are more consequential, though the actual numbers of exurban counties are 60 percent greater in the Metropolitan Institute/Brookings typology. Lang and Sanchez describe these emerging suburban counties as:

...the new "it" county of today. They are mostly the fastest growing counties in the region, and are often found in even slow growing regions such as St. Louis (St Charles County, MO) and Cincinnati (Boone County, KY). Emerging suburbs are almost wholly products of the past two decades and are booming with both people and the beginnings of commerce (although they remain mostly commuter zones). Emerging suburbs are both upscale and downscale and may feature everything from McMansions to trailer parks. Residents in emerging suburbs typically see these places as bargains compared to mature suburbs. That is true for households that buy a McMansion over an older and smaller tract home in a mature suburb, or a first-time homebuyer that "drives to qualify" by finding a modest attached dwelling at the edge of the region.

It's these emerging suburban counties that became the great GOP demographic hope in the early 2000s. It was thought that rapid growth in this part of exurbia would provide an increasing demographic category that could balance the many growth demographic categories benefiting Democrats. With the latest election results it's apparent that this hope was misplaced.

Obama lost to McCain in the emerging suburbs by just 53 percent to 46 percent, a 7-point deficit that did not come close to erasing Obama's hefty advantages in the more densely populated inner suburbs (21 points) and mature suburbs (15 points). And that 7-point Obama deficit was a strong 11-point improvement over Kerry's performance in these counties in 2004.

Indeed, the only part of large metro areas where McCain turned in a strong performance was in the true exurbs. He carried these areas by 16 points. But these

true exurbs boast only 3 percent of the nation's population and under 6 percent of the population of large metros.

A look back to 1988 shows even stronger trends in these geographical categories. The Democratic margin in large metros has increased by 29 points in core counties, 27 points in mature suburban counties, and 25 points in inner suburban counties. Even in emerging suburban counties Democrats did 13 points better in 2008 than 1988. Only in true exurban counties did the Democrats fail to gain significant ground.

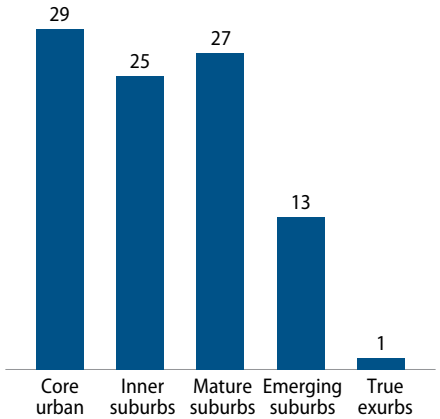
The Democratic margin shift has been 21 points since 1988 in large metros as a whole. Outside of large metros, medium metro counties swung to the Democrats by 15 points over the time period. Only in small metro (7 points) and micropolitan (2 points) counties were Democratic gains modest. And only in the deep rural counties did Democrats actually lose ground (6 points).

The trends in large metro areas deserve particular comment. As we have seen, there is a strong relationship between density and support for Democrats in these areas: Democratic support declines with increasing distances from the urban core and declining density. The political battle line in large metro areas therefore comes down to how far out in the suburbs the dividing line falls between Democratic and Republican dominance. In earlier elections the dividing line was relatively close to the metropolitan core, while in 2008 it was much farther out, with Democrats dominating the suburban rings out through the mature suburbs and being very competitive in the emerging suburbs. If the battle line is drawn that far out in the future, that would decisively advantage Democrats.

This advantage is underscored by the fact that while both components of the metropolitan fringe (emerging suburbs and exurbs) are growing significantly faster than the closer-in, urbanizing suburbs (inner and mature suburbs), the combined population weight of the metropolitan fringe in these large metro areas is still much smaller than that of the urbanizing suburbs (20 percent of these areas compared to 65 percent). Moreover, the inner suburbs in particular are so populous that despite their relatively slow growth rates, they are actually adding more people to these areas than either the exurbs or the emerging suburbs. This situation is unlikely to change anytime soon.

Democratic support in large metros runs high in core urban areas and their immediate suburbs

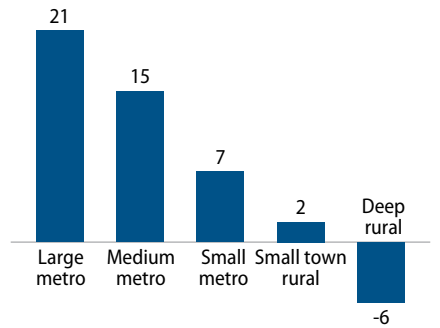
Change in Democratic margin by type of area within large metros, 1988-2008



Source: Author's analysis of 1988-2008 county presidential voting data.

Larger metros show increasingly strong support for Democrats

Change in Democratic margin by type of area, 1988-2008



Source: Author's analysis of 1988-2008 county presidential voting data.

Indeed, as large metro areas continue to grow—we will add our next 100 million people by 2039, a growth rate faster than China's, with that growth heavily concentrated in our large metro areas, particularly the very largest[66]—the percent of these population gains that will be located at the metropolitan fringe is likely to drop significantly. This will be due to changing consumer preferences, more unmarrieds and childless couples, and greater land use regulation and resource constraints. This in turn means that fewer very low-density suburbs of the kind that have favored the GOP are likely to be built.[67] This factor will enhance the political importance of urbanizing suburbs, which should benefit Democrats.

Electoral College shifts

One counter to this line of argument is that when you look at where population growth is and will be occurring by state, it is disproportionately concentrated in red states, which should benefit the GOP in both the House and the Electoral College. It is true that projections indicate a net loss of electoral votes, or EVs, by blue states and a net gain by red states from the 2010 census and the next census in 2020, which would will determine the Electoral College through 2028. A recent set of projections by Edward Burmila finds a net gain of eight EVs for leaning and strong red states,[68,69] and a net loss of nine EVs for leaning and strong blue states (toss-up states gain 1 EV).

Such projections don't necessarily tell us much about where in these states population growth is taking place. But that is where the very trends outlined above are typically relevant and can have large political implications.[70] Consider the cases of Virginia and North Carolina, both categorized as "leaning red" by Burmila and both gaining an EV.

Virginia's growth is driven first and foremost by Northern Virginia, or the Virginia suburbs outside the Washington, D.C., metro area. That area has grown by 16 percent since 2000, fueled by rapid increases in minorities and white college graduates. It casts a third of Virginia's ballots, and it is also the area where Democrats have made their greatest gains.

Obama carried Northern Virginia by 59 percent to 40 percent, which is 15 points better than Kerry's performance and a staggering 38 points better than Dukakis's. These trends include not only strong performances in the large mature suburb of Fairfax (up 14 points and 44 points, respectively, over the two time periods) but

also huge gains in the two emerging suburbs of Prince William (22 points and 50 points) and Loudoun (20 points and 42 points). The latter county has grown by 64 percent since 2000—the fifth-fastest county growth rate in the country.[71]

Democrats have also gained strength in the region of Richmond and eastern Virginia.[72] This region has grown by 10 percent since 2000 and accounts for 19 percent of the statewide vote. Obama won the region by 5 points, which is 17 points better than the Democratic margin in 2004 and 31 points better than 1988. This result is driven by gains in the Richmond metro area including the urban core of Richmond City. But Democrats have also made big gains in the mature suburb of Henrico (up 20 points and 51 points, respectively), and 18 points and 44 points in the emerging suburb of Chesterfield.

In North Carolina, the two large metro areas are Charlotte and Raleigh, which each boast over 1 million in population and rapid growth—24 percent and 31 percent, respectively, since 2000. Democrats made huge strides in each of these metros. For instance, Obama beat McCain in the Charlotte metro 53 percent to 46 percent, a 17-point swing toward progressives since 2004. Since 1988 there has been a 31-point pro-Democratic swing in this metro. Mecklenberg County, the fast-growing heart of the Charlotte metro, has swung even harder toward progressives. It went for Obama by 24 points in 2008, which is a 21-point Democratic swing compared to 2004 and an amazing 44-point swing since 1988.

Obama won 54 percent to 45 percent in the Raleigh metro—16 points better than Kerry's margin in 2004 and 24 points better than Dukakis's in 1988. The leading county in this metro is fast-growing Wake, which supported Obama by 14 points, a Democratic margin gain of 17 points since 2004 and 29 points since 1988.

Thus, the very population growth that is adding EVs to these two leaning red states is also likely to make them "purpler" over time because of where that growth is concentrated within these states.[73]

The same can even be said about a solid red state like Texas. Texas is projected to add 5 EVs over this time period due its high population growth. But about 90 percent of that growth is from minorities, particularly Hispanics. Moreover, the rural share of the Texas vote is declining rapidly, and those votes are being replaced by votes from large, Democratic-trending metros like Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio,[74] where a mix of minorities and college-educated whites is transforming the local political cultures.

Geographic shifts therefore strongly underline the political importance of larger metropolitan areas, particularly their urbanizing suburbs. These urbanizing suburbs are increasingly liberal socially. They also have urgent needs for reinvestment in adequate schools and infrastructure and an evolving demographic mix that wants action in these areas. Current GOP conservatism with its rigid stance on social issues and hostility toward government services would not appear to be well-suited for long-run electoral success in these urbanizing suburbs or, for that matter, maintaining the GOP's dominance over increasingly dense and diverse emerging suburbs.

How the parties should respond to these changes

It is difficult to look across these many demographic changes and their geographic expressions and not believe that the Republican Party as currently constituted is in need of serious and substantial changes in approach. These changes could include the following:

- **Move to the center on social issues.** The culture wars may have worked for a while, but shifting demographics make this strategy a loser for the party today and moving forward. A more moderate approach would help with Millennials, where the party must close a yawning gap, and with white college graduates, who still lean Republican, but just barely. The party also needs to make a breakthrough with Hispanics, and that won't happen without shifting its image toward social tolerance, especially on immigration.

- **Pay attention to whites with some college education and to young white working-class voters in general.** The GOP's hold on the white working class is not secure, and if that slips the party doesn't have much to build on to form a successful new coalition. That probably also means offering these voters something more than culture war nostrums and antitax jeremiads.

- **Another demographic target should be white college graduates, especially those with a four-year degree only.** The party has to stop the bleeding in America's large metropolitan areas, especially in dynamic, growing suburbs. Keeping and extending GOP support among this demographic is key to taking back the suburbs. White college graduates increasingly see the party as too extreme and out of touch.

- **In the long run the GOP has to have serious solutions of its own that go beyond cutting taxes. These solutions should use government to address problems but in ways that reflect conservative values and principles.** Antigovernment populism is something the party is clearly comfortable with—witness its evolving line of attack on the Obama administration. But it's likely not enough to just denounce the other side and what they have done or propose to do in populist terms.

> In short, the "party of no" has a limited shelf life. That strategy might help the party make significant gains in 2010,[75] but it will not be enough to restore it to a majority status. For that, a conservatism must be built that is not allergic to government spending when needed or to taxes when there is no responsible alternative. The party must paradoxically find a way to combine its standard antigovernment populism with a pro-government conservatism.

This sounds and is different from what the party has done in the recent past. No doubt many will say that such a "new conservatism" is not conservatism at all. To be sure, it certainly is not conservatism as we have known it. But there is no alternative moving forward if the party hopes to once again achieve a position of electoral dominance.

The Democrats, for their part, are in a considerably more comfortable position. They have exchanged their old coalition for a new one based on emerging demographics and have already gone through the painful process of ideological reexamination and change that the GOP is currently avoiding.[76]

Their chief challenge now is governance, which is daunting in its own right. They have an ambitious agenda in areas such as health care, financial reform, education, energy, and global relations that they are having some success in pursuing. If these policies have their intended effects and make serious progress toward remedying problems in these areas, Democrats will be in very good shape indeed and will solidify their support among emerging demographics while destabilizing what is left of the GOP coalition.

Conversely, if they fail to produce—whether through ineffective programs, fiscal meltdown, or both—the GOP will remain very competitive even if it fails to modernize.

At the moment the latter possibility—Democratic policy failure—seems to be the sum total of GOP strategy. But that is merely a recipe for competitiveness even in the event of such failure. And if the Democrats do not fail in the manner envisioned by today's conservatives, it is a recipe for considerably less. The GOP's wisest course would be to start the long, painful process of ideological reexamination and change now. The country has changed and they need to change with it. Refusing to change risks electoral marginalization in a profoundly demoralizing way. Just ask Walter Mondale.

Endnotes

1 The Current Population Survey or CPS November Voter Supplement and the exit polls agree that minorities were 15 percent of the vote in 1988 but disagree slightly on how much the minority vote has gone up since then. According to the CPS, the minority vote rose 9 points between 1988 and 2008, reaching 24 percent in the last election. Author's calculations.

2 Unless otherwise noted, figures on the demographics of voters or the voting preferences of different demographic groups are based on author's analysis of national and state exit poll data for various years.

3 Part of Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, *Blueprint for American Prosperity* (2008).

4 Alan Berube and others, "State of Metropolitan America" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2010), p. 50-63.

5 Ibid.

6 William Frey, "How Did Race Affect the 2008 Presidential Election?" Population Studies Center Research Report (University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, 2009).

7 Author's analysis of CPS and exit poll data.

8 Berube and others, "State of Metropolitan America."

9 Ibid., with author's analysis of CPS and exit poll data.

10 In 2009, the Census Bureau issued a set of projections that are "supplemental" to the 2008 projections. What this means is that even though the 2008 projections remain the recommended data series for general use, the 2009 supplemental projections can be used to assess the effects of different immigration scenarios on future population levels and distribution. Of the scenarios provided, the "low net international migration" or low NIM, which projects the number of immigrants per year to increase slowly until 2050, is fairly close to the original 2008 projections and quite similar to the projections produced by demographers Jeffrey Passel and D'Vera Cohen in "US Population Projections: 2005-2050" (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2008), based on a constant *rate* of immigration relative to population size. The low NIM scenario puts the majority-minority crossover point at 2045. Some argue that the constant NIM scenario (where the number of immigrants per year remains constant to the year 2050) should be preferred, since it corresponds well to recent US experience with immigrant flows. See William Frey, "Immigration and the Coming 'Majority Minority'" (Washington: Brookings, 2010). The constant NIM scenario has a majority-minority crossover date of 2050, corresponding to the date frequently cited in popular accounts of rising diversity.

11 Abramowitz's projection is based on an exit poll data series that begins in 1992, when the proportion of minority voters (13 percent) appears to have been anomalously low, leading to a possible overestimate of the minority share growth rate. Starting in 1988 instead of in 1992 would produce a slower growth rate and therefore a lower estimated minority share in 2020—perhaps 32 percent instead of 34 percent.

12 Jeffrey M. Jones, "Asian Americans Lean Left Politically" (Washington: Gallup, 2010).

13 As numerous political science analyses have shown, independents who lean toward a given party are not truly independent and behave politically very much like weak partisans of that party. See John Petrocik, "Measuring Party Support: Leaners Are Not Independents," *Electoral Studies* 26 (4) (2009): 562-572.

14 Mark Hugo Lopez and Susan Minushkin, "2008 National Survey of Latinos: Hispanic Voter Attitudes" (Washington: Pew Hispanic Center, 2008).

15 Pew Hispanic Center and Kaiser Family Foundation, "2002 National Survey of Latinos" (2002).

16 Gerstein-Agne, Progressive Studies Program ideology survey, conducted February 5-11, 2010. Only a small part of the difference between whites and Hispanics on this index could be accounted for the one immigration question in the battery. Even without that question, Hispanics still scored much higher than whites on this index.

17 Nate Silver, "Hispanics Back Gay Marriage at Same Rates as Whites," FiveThirtyEight, May 26, 2009, available at http://www.fivethirtyeight.com/2009/05/hispanics-back-gay-marriage-at-same.html.

18 Passel and Cohen, "US Population Projections: 2005-2050."

19 Lopez and Minushkin, "2008 National Survey of Latinos: Hispanic Voter Attitudes."

20 According to unpublished estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center, Hispanics will be 25 percent of eligible voters in 2050, compared to 29 percent of the population, a relatively narrow gap. Personal communication from Mark Lopez, associate director, Pew Hispanic Center, March 19, 2010.

21 There are two reasons for this. First, higher percentages of recent cohorts of white 25- to 29-year-olds have attained a college degree (37 percent in 2008 CPS data, up from 34 percent in 2000). Second, some in these cohorts who have not attained a college degree by ages 25-29 complete the degree later in life.

22 This assessment is consistent with that of a Census Bureau study from the beginning of this decade, which predicted continued educational upgrading through 2028. Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Kurt Bauman, "Have We Reached the Top? Educational Attainment Projections of the US Population," Bureau of the Census Population Division, Working Paper Series 43 (Department of Commerce, 2000).

23 Paul Osterman, "College for All? The Labor Market for College-Educated Workers" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2008).

24 Ruy Teixeira, "The Coming End of the Culture Wars" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2009).

25 Ruy Teixeira, "New Progressive America: Twenty Years of Demographic, Geographic and Attitudinal Changes Across the Country Herald a New Progressive Majority" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2009).

26 The rate of decline in the proportion of white working class adults since the World War II era has been around 0.57 percentage points a year according to Census data. See Alan Abramowitz and Ruy Teixeira, "The Decline of the White Working Class and the Rise of a Mass Upper Middle Class." In Ruy Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics* (Washington: Brookings, 2008). So half a point a year would be slightly below this long-term average. It is also worth noting that both the exit polls and the Current Population Voter Supplement show accelerating decline in the proportion of white working class voters in the 2000-2008 period, so a decelerated half-a-point-per-year decline is really quite a conservative assumption.

27 For discussion, see the Appendix to John Judis and Ruy Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (New York: Scribner, 2002).

28 In the Gerstein-Agne Progressive Studies Program ideology survey, white working-class Millennials (ages 18-29) were substantially more progressive than their older counterparts in all four areas covered by the survey: role of government, economic/domestic, cultural and international (as measured by 10-item indices in each area).

29 Scott Keeter analysis of 2008 NEP exit poll data. Personal communication to author, April 17, 2009.

30 Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, *Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

31 In this analysis, I cut off the Millennial generation at birth year 2000, as is common among market researchers and other generational analysts (I emphasize common; there is no consensus on the proper date a this point), so the generation covers birth years 1978-2000. Earlier cutoffs reduce the size of the generation by roughly four and half million a birth year. So, for example, if you cut off the Millennial generation at 1996 instead of 2000, the size of the generation's voting age population in 2020 would be reduced by about 18 million from the 103 million cited below.

32 As Scott Keeter has noted, late boomers are far more conservative than early Boomers, who are the most progressive group in the electorate besides the Millennials. See Scott Keeter, "The Aging of the Boomers and the Rise of the Millennials." In Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics*.

33 Not all states are available for this comparison, since the CBS/*New York Times* 1988 exit poll only interviewed respondents in only about half of the 50 states.

34 Estimates in this and subsequent paragraphs are based on the author's analysis of 2008 Census National Population Projections by single years of age, 2008 NEP exit poll sample composition, and 2004 Census Voter Supplement data by single years of age. Author's calculations.

35 Pew Research Center, "Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next" (2010).

36 For data and discussion, see David Madland and Ruy Teixeira, "New Progressive America: The Millennial Generation" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2009). See also Pew Research Center, "Millenials: A Portrait of Generation Next."

37 See for example, Angus Campbell and others, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960); Duane Alwin and Jon Krosnik, "Aging, cohorts, and the stability of sociopolitical orientations over the life span," *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (1) (1991): 169-195; M. Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi, "Continuity and Change in Political Orientations: A Longitudinal Study of Two Generations," *The American Political Science Review* 69 (4) (1975): 1316–1335; Richard Niemi and Barbara Sobeszek, "Political Socialization," *Annual Review of Sociology* 3 (1977): 209-233; and Marc Hooghe and Britt Wilkenfeld, "The Stability of Political Attitudes and Behaviors across Adolescence and Early Adulthood: A Comparison of Survey Data on Adolescents and Young Adults in Eight Countries." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 31 (2008): 155–167.

38 Larry Bartels, "A Generation of Political Learning" (San Francisco: Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 2001); and Campbell and others, *The American Voter.*

39 Alwin and Krosnick, "Aging, Cohorts, and the Stability of Sociopolitical Orientations Over the Life Span."

40 Ibid.

41 Abraham Monk, ed., *Handbook of Gerontological Services* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

42 Norval Glenn, *Cohort Analysis* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications 1977).

43 Nicholas Danigelis, Melissa Hardy, and Stephen Cutler, "Population Aging, Intracohort Aging, and Sociopolitical Attitudes," *American Sociological Review* 72 (2007): 812–830.

44 Peter Levine, Constance Flanagan, and Les Gallay, "The Millennial Pendulum: A New Generation of Voters and the Prospects for a Political Realignment" (Washington: New America Foundation, 2009).

45 Levine, Flanagan, and Gallay, "The Millennial Pendulum: A New Generation of Voters and the Prospects for a Political Realignment."

46 Data in this paragraph based on author's analysis of National Election Study data. Data on occupational breakdown of the vote not available for 2008 due to confidentiality restrictions. A reasonable estimate based on historical patterns would be around 68 percent support among professionals for Obama in 2008. For more discussion of professionals' political evolution, see Judis and Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, Chapter 2.

47 Author's analysis of national exit polls for indicated years.

48 Author's analysis of Census marital status data.

49 Women's Voices Women Vote, "State of Unmarried America" (2007), available at http://wvwv.org/assets/2007/10/22/unmarriesam0628.pdf.

50 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, "A New America: Unmarrieds Drive Political and Social Change" (2007). Note, however, that recently the growth in the proportion of unmarried women among adult women has slowed down, so the rate of increase in the representation of unmarried women in the electorate should slow down as well.

51 Women's Voices Women Vote, "State of Unmarried America."

52 Author's analysis of Census marital status data.

53 Author's analysis of Census educational attainment data.

54 Data in this paragraph from author's analysis of 1947 and 2008 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement income data.

55 Data in this paragraph from author's analysis of 2004 and 2006 NEP national exit polls.

56 This is a big 8 point jump over the 2004 figure, but at least half or more of this probably due to inflation, lifting more voters into this category.

57 Data in this and following paragraph from author's analysis of 1947-2008 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement income data.

58 Data in this paragraph from author's analysis of 2005 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement income data. Judging from current patterns, it looks like the higher propensity of the upper middle class to vote is roughly cancelled out by the fact that family income tends to be higher than household income which, in turn, is closer to the income of the typical voter. So the family share figure, assuming the projection is right, should closely approximate the share of voters corresponding to that income group—perhaps slightly overestimating it, but not by much.

59 John Green and E.J. Dionne, "Religion and American Politics: More Secular, More Evangelical or Both?" In Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics*. Projections based on the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey are even higher: 25 percent by the year 2028. See Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, "American Nones: The Profile of the No Religion Population" (Hartford: Trinity College Program on Public Values, 2009).

60 Calculations based on author's analysis of data in Green and Dionne, "Religion and American Politics: More Secular, More Evangelical or Both?" The Green and Dionne data include a grab-bag of religions in their other faiths category, ranging from Jews and Muslims to Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses to Unitarians, Humanists and Ethical Culture. Since these groups cannot be disaggregated from the Green and Dionne data, they are all classified outside of the white Christian category.

61 The technical definition used by the Census Bureau is as follows: Any nonmetro county with an urban cluster of at least 10,000 persons or more plus any outlying counties where commuting to the central county with the urban cluster is 25 percent or higher, or if 25 percent of the employment in the outlying county is made up of commuters to the central county with the urban cluster.

62 For a thorough explanation of the categories used in the typology, see Robert Lang, Thomas Sanchez, and Alan Berube, "The New Suburban Politics: A County-Based Analysis of Metropolitan Voting Trends since 2000." In Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics.*.

63 The MI/Brookings typology only covers 50 of the 51 large metropolitan areas (the Raleigh-Cary MSA in North Carolina was not included). Figures given here are based on those 50 metro areas for which the typology is available.

64 Many of these counties include urban core areas as well as the suburbs that immediately surround them.

65 Robert Lang and Thomas Sanchez, "The New Metro Politics: Interpreting Recent Presidential Elections Using a County-Based Regional Typology," 2006 Election Brief (Blacksburg: Virginia Tech Metropolitan Institute, 2006).

66 Robert Lang, "Demographics Shifting but GOP Isn't," *Politico*, November 20, 2008, available at http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1108/15791.html. According to Lang, two-thirds of America's growth to 2039 is likely to be in just 20 "megapolitan" areas—massive urban complexes containing more than 5 million residents that center around big cities like Phoenix, Denver, Chicago, and New York.

67 Robert Lang, Thomas Sanchez, and Alan Berube, "The New Suburban Politics: A County-Based Analysis of Metropolitan Voting Trends Since 2000." In Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics*.

68 Edward Burmila, "The Electoral College after Census 2010 and 2020: The Political Impact of Population Growth and Redistribution," *Perspectives on Politics* 7 (4) (2009): 837-847.

69 Burmila defines red states, blue states and toss-up states with a methodology that uses presidential election results back to 1992, with the most recent elections weighted most heavily and most distant weighted least heavily. Therefore his categorization does not correspond exactly to the 2008 electoral map.

70 For a much more detailed discussion of within state shifts, see Teixeira, "New Progressive America: Twenty Years of Demographic, Geographic and Attitudinal Changes Across the Country Herald a New Progressive Majority."

71 Among counties with 10,000 or more in population.

72 The regional breakdown here follows William Frey and Ruy Teixeira, "The Political Geography of Virginia and Florida: Bookends of the New South," Blueprint for American Prosperity initiative (Washington: Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, 2008).

73 Similar patterns can be seen within another leaning red state, Arizona, which is projected to add 3 EVs over this time period. See William Frey and Ruy Teixeira, "The Political Geography of the Intermountain West: The New Swing Region," ," Blueprint for American Prosperity initiative (Washington: Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program: 2008).

74 For data and discussion, see Paul Starobin, "Code Blue on Red Texas," *National Journal*, November 21, 2009.

75 2012 could be a very different story if the economy keeps recovering. Consider the example of Ronald Reagan. Reagan had to contend with a severe recession, just like Obama—indeed for Reagan, unemployment peaked at 10.8 percent, higher than Obama has experienced. At about this point in Reagan's first term—April of 1982—his approval rating was running just a bit under Obama's current rating . Reagan's approval rating eventually dipped to the low 40s, and his party would end up losing 26 House seats in the 1982 Congressional election. But 1983 and 1984 were years of strong economic growth, and the unemployment rate ticked down over those years, reaching 7.2 percent by Election Day, 1984. In that election, Reagan won a landslide victory with 59 percent of the popular vote.

76 For an extensive discussion of this process that relates it to demographic change, see Ruy Teixeira, "Old Democrats and the Shock of the New." In Peter Berkowitz, ed., *Varieties of Progressivism in America* (Stanford, CA: Hoover, 2004).

About the author

Ruy Teixeira is a Senior Fellow at both The Century Foundation and American Progress, as well as a Fellow of the New Politics Institute. He was recently a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution, where he co-directed a joint Brookings-American Enterprise Institute project on political demography and geography, "The Future of Red, Blue and, Purple America," and wrote a series of reports with William Frey on the political geography of battleground states in the 2008 election.

He is the author or co-author of six books, including *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics*; *The Emerging Democratic Majority*; *America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*; and *The Disappearing American Voter*, as well as hundreds of articles, both scholarly and popular. He also writes "Public Opinion Snapshot," a weekly feature featured on the CAP and TCF websites.

Teixeira's book *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, written with John Judis (Scribner, 2002), was the most widely discussed political book of that year and generated praise across the political spectrum, from George Will on the right to E.J. Dionne on the left. It was selected as one of the best books of the year by *The Economist* magazine. Teixeira's recent writings include "New Progressive America," "The Decline of the White Working Class and the Rise of a Mass Upper Middle Class" (with Alan Abramowitz), "The Politics of Definition" (with John Halpin), "Back to the Future: The Emerging Democratic Majority Re-emerges" (with John Judis) and the New Politics Institute reports "The Next Frontier: A New Study of Exurbia" and "The Progressive Politics of the Millennial Generation.

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