The Racial and Cultural Divide in the 2008 Democratic Primaries

By

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Abstract. Using exit poll data from 37 Democratic primaries and contextual state data, we show how the vote for Barak Obama and his support among white voters were polarized along racial and cultural lines. The exit data include information on key voter characteristics such as race, religion, gender, age, education, income, ideology, and the importance of race in the voting decision. The contextual data include information on a state's racial make-up and selected indicators of political subculture, including Elazar's measure of cultural dominance. Using social identity theory, we show how candidate choice in presidential primaries is conditioned by voters' social identities and how these in turn are activated by the racial and cultural context through the politics of ethnic nepotism, i.e., the universal tendency of people to favor those who are most like themselves. Taking into account the interaction between voter characteristics and the racial-cultural context, our model explains more than 87% of the variation in the overall Obama vote and more than 83 percent of the variation in his share among white voters. In addition, the results demonstrate statistically significant racial as well as effects. Rather than signaling the end of race and culture, we conclude that the nomination and election of Obama may actually indicate a growing racial and cultural polarization of American electoral politics.

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"He made the case we've been here before, but not this time will we linger. This time we're going to higher ground." (Comments by Jesse Jackson on Obama's March 18, 2008:Philadelphia speech, Associated Press)

By taking the presidential oath on January 20, 2009, Barack Obama released the nation from its self-inflicted bondage to a politics distorted by race. (Gerald Pomper, "The Presidential Election: Change Comes to America.")

Why was Barak Obama, the "African-American" son of a Kenyan immigrant father and a liberated hippie mother from Kansas, able to win the Democratic nomination in 2008?[1] And why was he able to beat a seasoned political veteran and war hero in a general election where almost three-fourths of the voters were white? In his victory speech before some 100,000 cheering supporters, Obama took note of his historic achievement: "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer."

For many, it signaled the end of the American race dilemma. The nation had finally put the racial demons behind them. No longer would voters judge people by the color of their skin. They would judge them by the content of their character. It was enough to make the Reverend Jesse Jackson weep.

But if American electoral politics has become post-racial, then why did Obama win? One widely-held theory is that he was able to raise the most money. As Marian Currinder (2010, 175)

[1]Genetically Obama is as white as he is black. Hence the term "African-American" technically can only be applied by the rule of hypo-descent, which many sociologists view as racist (Marger 2006, page).

notes, the Obama campaign was able to raise some $742 million, $153 million in September alone after he rejected public funding for the general election. This shattered the previous record of $65 million that he set in August. By comparison, Hillary Clinton attracted only $230 million in her eighteen-month bid to become the Democratic nominee, while John Edward's efforts came in a close third at $222 million. Obama's total also far outstripped the $261 million raised by John McCain, $84 million of which included public funding for the general election. As in congressional elections, the presidential candidates who raise the most money generally go on to win both the nomination and the general election.

Another view holds that he developed the best campaign organization in American history. Besides lagging far behind in raising money, his opponents failed to keep pace with his exhaustive grassroots organization and his innovative use of the communications technologies it borrowed from the private sector including the Internet and text messaging.. As Ben Smith and Jonathan Martin (2008) note in their *Politico* post-mortem, "Earlier campaigns had celebrated their technological prowess, but in Obama's cutting-edge campaign, new political technology was implemented and came of age, evidenced by the campaign's vaunted fund-raising machine and its "Houdini" computer system, which enabled the campaign as late as Tuesday afternoon to identify and bring to the polls a last wave of supporters who hadn't yet voted." In addition, the Obama campaign far outstripped his opposition in the number of field offices it was able to set up in the 50 states, the number of paid workers on his staff, and the number of unpaid volunteers. Moreover, he attracted good people to direct his quest for the presidency.

A third often-cited answer is that he had a winning campaign theme that resonated with the voters–"Change you can believe in"–and the courage to stick with it, even when things were

not going well. Clinton offered herself as the candidate with the most experience. In the general election, McCain offered himself as a man who had demonstrated leadership. But voting to send troops into Iraq and going along with Bush's failed economic policies were not the kind of experience and leadership that most voters wanted. When exit poll voters were asked what candidate traits influenced them the most, some 14 percent cited the ability to bring about change. Of this group 91 percent preferred Obama; only 9 percent preferred McCain. This translates into an 11 percent advantage for Obama, several percentage points more than his overall winning margin of 7 percent (Pomper, 2010).

Yet another is that his campaign had a winning game plan. To win the Democratic nomination, his campaign adopted the strategy of campaigning in each of the 50 states. Because Democratic rules insured proportional representation, it was possible to lose all of the mega-states-- including California, New York, Texas, and Florida–and other large states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Ohio and still win the nomination (Burden 2010).

All of these explanations have a certain degree of plausibility. But it is one thing to offer an explanation. It is quite another to prove it.. Consequently, we are still left with the uncomfortable feeling that despite the power of democracy, the racial elephant may still be lurking in the political savannah.

In an historic speech on the racial divide in Philadelphia on March 18, 2008, Obama urged Americans to break "a racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years.'" It was a bold attempt to quiet a growing media maelstrom over the incendiary statements on race made by his former pastor, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright. In one sermon, Wright suggested that the United States brought the September 11 terrorist attacks on itself. In another he said blacks should damn

America for continuing to mistreat them. It may have been standard black liberation ideology, as the renown American theologian Martin Marty suggested on National Public Radio. But it did not sit well with many white voters. In a CBS News poll taken just two days before he gave his address in the city of brotherly love, most respondents said they had heard at least something about Wright's comments. About a third said they made them feel more negative toward Obama. Taking the high road, Obama condemned Wright's statements as racially divisive but was unwilling to disown the pastor who had brought him to Christianity (MSNBC 2008).

In another defining moment at a San Francisco fund-raiser, Obama lamented about the cultural divide he faced in declining industrial states like Pennsylvania.(Inkslwc 2008):

> You go into some of these small towns in Pennsylvania, and like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for 25 years and nothing's replaced them. And they fell through the Clinton administration, and the Bush administration, and each successive administration has said that somehow these communities are gonna regenerate and they have not. *So it's not surprising then that they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.* (Emphasis added)

It is difficult to gauge what effect this unrehearsed comment had on the outcome of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Democratic primaries, which were carried by Clinton. But Obama later confessed that it was the most bone-headed statement he made during the campaign..

So when we are confronted with contrary evidence about the persistence of America's racial and cultural divisions, it is time to ask whether Obama won the Democratic nomination in spite of his race and arguably elitist views or because of them. First, did most Americans really put race behind them in the Democratic primaries and move on to higher ground? Second, did they also leave behind their cultural and regional differences over religion, life-style, and what it

means to be an American?

Our own position in this debate is as follows. It would be nice to believe that racial and cultural differences are disappearing in American politics, and that some day we will all become "one people." But wishing does not make it happen. In fact, long-term changes in the American racial and cultural landscape, as well as an emerging politics of ethnic nepotism, suggest otherwise.

It is our thesis that Obama won the Democratic nomination in 2008 because his candidacy was better positioned to exploit the growing racial-ethnic and cultural divides in the American electorate. In particular, we will argue that the Obama vote and his support among white voters in the 2008 Democratic primaries were polarized along racial and cultural lines

Our case rests on the following arguments::

(1) *That expansionist immigration policies, permissive border policies, and differential rates of fertility among the races are producing a growing racial and cultural divide in the American electorate.*

In 1960, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963) compared the United States to relatively homogeneous countries like Great Britain and Sweden that were known for their political consensus, high levels of participation, and low levels of conflict. Since then, American society and the electorate has become increasingly nonwhite and diverse through expansionist immigration policies that admit some one million legal immigrants each year and permissive border policies that allow some 500,000 to enter illegally.[2]

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[2]If illegal immigrants are caught at the borders, they are merely returned. If they are caught inside the country, they are generally jailed, tried for being in the country illegally, and then deported, often by jetliner to their home country. Now the Obama Administration under

These changes are slowly, but inexorably, transforming American society. In 1960, the U. S. was 88.6 percent white, 10.5 percent black, and less than one percent Asian and other. Today, whites constitute less than 74 percent of the population, while blacks, Latinos, and Asians comprise another 15 percent, 14 percent, and four percent respectively. By 2050, if not sooner, demographers project that nonwhites will constitute a majority of the population.

Moreover, because of significantly higher fertility rates, racial and ethnic minority groups are growing much faster that whites as a proportion of the total population (Camorata 2007). Based on 2000 census data, racial and ethnic minorities already constitute a majority of the population in Hawaii (63.3%), New Mexico (54.7%), and California (51.4%). They are knocking at the door of majority status in Texas (46.9%) and are over a third of the population in the states of Mississippi (38.8%), New York (37.0%), Louisiana (36.7%), Georgia (36.5%), Maryland (36.5%), Arizona (35.3%), Florida (33.4%), and South Carolina (33.1%).

Our growing racial and ethnic diversity is also reflected in a persistent and growing diversity of contending regional subcultures. Based on 1980 census and religious survey data, Lieske (1993) identified 10 regional subcultures that he linked to historic settler and immigrant waves that populated America and established our dominant social and political institutions.

In a followup study using 2000 census and religious survey data, he (2010) identified 11 regional subcultures that were very similar with those he found earlier. Morever, he developed a

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Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano is preparing to set up detention camps to separate illegal immigrants from convicted felons and treat them more humanely, supposedly at no additional cost to the taxpayer. But the major source of illegal immigration appears to be foreign visitors who overstay their visas. Last year, some 2.9 million visitors on temporary visa checked in but never officially checked out. Immigration officials estimate that about 40 percent of the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in the country overstayed their visas (McKiinley and Preston 2009).

measure of state culture that did a better job in explaining differences in state performance, including differences in turnout and support for George W. Bush in the 2000 presidential election, than other commonly used indicators.

In a recent paper, he (2008) has demonstrated how his 11-dimensional vector variable can be reduced to a unidimensional variable that is highly correlated (r=.78) with a unidimensional measure of Elazar's three-fold typology of moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic subcultures. This work has helped put Elazar's brilliant insights about American political culture and its contending subcultures on a more solid theoretical and empirical foundation.

Ironically, the growing racial and cultural fragmentation of America is a political fact that many political scientists seem to accept in principle but reject in practice. On the one hand, America's growing racial and cultural pluralism is not denied. But despite growing evidence to the contrary, it is often claimed that the nation's racial, ethnic, religious, and regional divisions are not that important now, are waning over time, and will ultimately become insignificant (Erikson, Luttbeg, and Tedin 1989).

In support of these claims, post-racial commentators often point to the growing acceptance of well-qualified minority candidates by white voters. For instance, Barak Obama, who received his bachelors from Columbia and juris doctorate from Harvard, is the second African-American to win a U. S. Senate seat in Illinois. Louisiana, long considered a Deep South state, elected Bobby Jindal, a Harvard-educated Indian-American, as its first minority governor. Moreover, a 2007 Pew survey suggested that, if anything, the American electorate was far more Anti-Mormon that it was racist. Only four percent said they would be less likely to vote for a black. Some 30 percent said they would be less likely to vote for a Mormon (Shea and Reece

2008, 23).

Others have cited the evanescence of demons past. Though some liberal journalists fretted about a possible “Bradley effect” in the 2008 Democratic primaries and general election, state and national exit polls indicated otherwise. It simply failed to materialize.

Finally, multiculturalists have pointed to the impact of generational change on the changing racial and cultural climate. As old generations die off, new ones are emerging that are more tolerant and accepting of racial and ethnic minorities (Putnam 2000).

Yet, there is a growing literature which suggests that ethno-cultural differences in American society are still persistent and consequential. And rather than decreasing, they may actually be on the rise. This evidence includes recent census data on the racial and ethnic identifications of Americans (Camarota 2007), survey data on church membership (Jones et al.2002), sub-cultural studies of American state government and politics (Lieske 2010), and cultural explanations of American voting behavior (Lieske 1991; Leege et al., 2002).

As Leege, Lieske, and Wald (1989, 31) have observed, "Racial and ethnic diversity-and the group consciousness that accompanies them have accelerated rapidly in recent years." Moreover, with growing numbers of nonwhites in large metropolitan areas, many states are becoming more receptive to minority Democratic candidates by the sheer force of numbers. Strong support from the black community helped Barak Obama win the vacant Senate seat in Illinois in 2004. Overwhelming support from Latino voters in Orange County, which is now over 50 percent Hispanic, helped Loretta Sanchez defeat a Republican conservative in 1996. Until then, Orange County had long been considered a bastion of white conservative Republicanism. Finally, Latino support played a pivotal role in the election of Antonio

Villaraigosa as mayor of Los Angeles in 2005. Not only did they display the greatest ethnic solidarity, they also had the highest turnout rates, even higher than mainline whites.

In a democracy, all votes are created equal. Truly demography is power. This may be the real meaning of Obama's oblique reference to the "power of our democracy" in his Chicago victory speech.

(2) *That this growing racial and cultural divide is producing a similar racial and cultural divide in presidential elections and the two-party system*

One indicator of a growing racial divide can be found in the changing racial face of the American electorate. As NES data from 1992 to 2008 suggest, the proportion of the American electorate that is nonwhite has doubled, from about 13 to 26 percent (Abramowitz 2009).

Another manifestation of this divide is evident in the effects of racial diversity on candidate preferences in presidential elections. To test the effects of racial diversity on racial voting in presidential elections, Lieske and Hasecke (2009a) merged NES and census data from 1956-2004. Their results show that the correlations between racial identities and the presidential vote tend to be significantly higher in more racially heterogeneous than homogeneous counties. Thus the correlations tend to fall in the low range (less than .20 in magnitude) for counties that are 90 percent or more white. They tend to fall in the moderate range (.20-.40 in magnitude) for counties that are 60-90 percent white. Finally they fall in the moderately strong range (greater than .40 in magnitude) for counties that are less than 60% white. In support of a cultural dominance perspective, the counties with the most polarized voting patterns are those in which the percentage of whites is about equal to the percentage of nonwhites.

In a companion piece using the same data set, they (2009b) test the effects of racial

diversity in linking voter's racial identities to long-term party identifications. Consistent with their mobilization hypothesis, the correlations between voters' racial identities and their party identifications tend to be higher in more racially heterogeneous than homogeneous counties. Thus the correlations tend to fall in the low range (<.20) for counties that are 90 percent or more white, while they tend to fall in the moderate to moderately strong range (.20 to .37) for counties that are less than 90 percent white. Consistent with a cultural dominance perspective, the counties with the most polarized voting patterns are those in which whites no longer constitute a dominant racial majority.

One sign of a growing cultural divide is the post-1964 regional bifurcation of the country into heartland red and bi-coastal blue states. However, in 2008 Obama and the Democrats were able to pick the Republican lock on three mountain states–Nevada, Colorado, and New Mexico–with growing numbers of Latino votes, two Great Lakes states–Ohio and Indiana–that have been experiencing long-term economic decline, and two Atlantic seaboard states–Virginia and North Carolina-- with significant black populations and growing numbers of immigrants. Iowa and Florida, which went for Bush in 2004, have been swing states in recent elections. So their political paths are less certain. But they have also been admitting more legal and illegal immigrants.

A second indicator of this cultural divide is the racial and ethnic bifurcation of the two parties into largely mainline settler and white-ethnic-and-minority immigrant groups Howard Dean, the Chairman of the National Democratic Committee may not have been too far off the mark when he noted that the Republican Party was largely a party of white Protestants. This was perhaps one reason why party regulars picked Michael Steele, the black former Lieutenant

Governor of Maryland to chair the Republican National Committee and prove him wrong. Nonetheless, most Republicans can trace their roots to Protestant ancestors from Great Britain and northern Europe who came over in two great settlement waves between 1607-1775 and 1848-1880. Conversely with the exception of African-Americans, most Democrats can trace their forebears to two great immigrant waves that came to America from 1880-1924 and after 1965.

Yet a third measure of this cultural divide is the bi-polar distribution of Democratic primary states that were won by Obama and Clinton (see Figure 1). Obama largely carried racially homogeneous states in the North and all of the southern states with large black populations. By comparison, Clinton carried most of the states with racially and ethnically mixed populations..

Figure 1 about here

(3) *That the Obama candidacy was well positioned to win the support of the two key constituencies in the Democratic Party, black and liberal voters.*

In support of this contention, we first compare exit poll data on key characteristics of voters in the Democratic primaries and in the general election (see Table 1). Our selected indicators include race (percent white), religion (percent Catholic), gender (percent female), age, (percent who are under 30 years of age), education (percent with a college degree) income (Percent with family incomes over $100 thousand), ideology (percent liberal), and the importance of race in the voting decision (percent saying race was important).

Table 1 about here

The data show that the two most distinctive groups are black and liberal voters. Relative

to voters in the general election, voters in the Democratic primaries were much more likely to have black racial identities and liberal ideologies. Other exit poll data show that Obama took the correct ideological stands on key issues that most concerned these two voting groups: his strong opposition to the war in Iraq, a comprehensive health care plan that included a public option, educational reform, and a strong commitment to clean renewable sources of energy..

To test the independent influence of our selected voter characteristics on the outcome of the Democratic primaries, we correlated them with the percentage of all primary voters who supported Obama and the percentage of white voters who supported him. The results are presented in Table 2. They show that the best predictor of the overall Obama vote was race. Blacks were far more likely to support him than whites. Females and young people were also more likely to support him. The best predictor of white support was a liberal ideology. Catholics, the college-educated, and upper-income people were also more likely to support him. The best predictor of opposition to his candidacy was the importance that voters attached to race.

Table 2 about here

(4) *That Obama won the Democratic nomination because he was able to get the support of black and liberal voters and exploit the racial and cultural divide in the Demovratic state primaries.*

We now take up the problem of sorting out the relative influence of individual voter characteristics and cultural differences on the Obama vote. Based on social identity theory,.we hypothesize that candidate choice in state presidential primaries is conditioned by voters' racial, ethnic, religious, and social class identities. These in turn are presumably activated by the racial and cultural context through the politics of ethnic nepotism, i.e., the universal tendency of people to favor those who are most like themselves.. In racially and culturally diverse settings, voters are

more likely to vote their racial and ethnic identities. In racially homogeneous settings, they are more likely to vote on the basis of religious and social class identities.

Two implications immediately follow from this proposition. First, the importance of race will vary by the cultural context. Based on the cultural research of Elazar (1966, 1970, 1994) and Lieske (2008, 2010), voters in moralistic subcultures should be the most color blind. By comparison, voters in traditionalistic subcultures should be the least color blind. And voters in individualistic subcultures should fall in between.

Second, this body of research suggests that culture will have both direct and mediating effects on the Obama vote. All things equal, support for Obama should be lower in moralistic states because there are fewer blacks to vote for him. But whites in moralistic states should be more likely to support him because they are less likely to feel threatened by relatively small black populations. Conversely, support for Obama should be higher in traditionalistic states because there are more blacks to vote for him. But whites in traditionalistic states should be less likely to support him because they are more likely to feel threatened by sizeable black populations.

To test this theory, we merged our data on individual voter characteristics with contextual data on a state's racial make-up (percent white, percent black, percent Latino), Elazar's measure of cultural dominance (moralistic, individualistic, traditionalistic), and Lieske's new measure of state culture (percent Nordic, percent Mormon, percent Anglo-French, percent Germanic, percent Heartland, percent Rurban, percent Global, percent Border, percent Blackbelt, percent Native-American, percent Latino). The results of correlating these measures with the percentage of all primary voters who supported Obama and the percentage of white voters who supported him are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 about here

Consistent with social identity theory, they show that support for Obama was higher in states with larger black populations and Blackbelt subcultures. But it was lower in states with larger white populations and Heartland and Border subcultures that are distinctive for their conservative religious beliefs, traditional rural values, patriotism, and love of "natural" liberty and the out-of-doors (Fischer 1989; Lieske 1993, 2010).[3]

Consistent with contextual voting theory, white support for Obama was significantly lower in states with significant black populations and Border and Blackbelt subcultures. But it was higher in states with larger Latino populations and Moralistic and Native American subcultures.

To test the validity of our contextual theory of voting, we regressed the percentage of all primary voters who supported Obama and the percentage of white voters who supported him on our selected voter characteristics and interactive measures of white population size and cultural dominance (see Table 4).[4] The high levels of explained variance show that our interactive model provides a relatively good fit with the data.

Table 4 about here

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[3]When Heartland and Border residents are asked in surveys whether they identify with any other ethnic group besides "American," they usually choose "none," the assimilated response. Ward Connerly, the former black chairman of the California Board of Regents, who authored the 1996 California Civil Rights Initiative that ended state-run affirmative action programs and favors ending the collection of racial and ethnic data by state agencies, would probably be proud (Huntington 2004).

[4]In the first regression we suppressed states with a predominantly individualistic subculture. In the second we suppressed states with either an individualistic or traditionalistic subculture to avoid problems of multicolinearity in the data.

As expected, the results demonstrate that the greatest levels of support for Obama came from black and liberal voters. On average, his vote increased about one-half percent for every percentage increase in the proportion of black voters and almost nine-tenths percent for each percentage increase in the proportion of liberal voters. The negative regression coefficient for the proportion of primary voters who had a college degree indicates that, all things equal, his opponents did better among the college educated. Consistent with our theory, the results also show that lower numbers of blacks in moralistic cultures depressed his vote but higher proportions of whites elevated it.

The results in the second column show that the greatest levels of support among white voters came from liberals and Catholics. On average white support for his candidacy increased about nine-tenths percent for each percentage increase in the proportion of liberal voters. Conversely, the results demonstrate that the proportion of voters who had white racial identities, a college degree, and thought that race was important significantly reduced white support for his candidacy. Consistent with our theory, the results also show that lower numbers of blacks in moralistic cultures depressed his vote among white voters but higher proportions of whites elevated it.

We can now estimate the independent effects of differences in individual voter characteristics and state culture on the percentage of all primary voters who supported Obama and the percentage of white voters who supported him. Since we fitted a linear regression model to the data, it is only necessary to multiply the difference between a given variable and its minimum value by the unstandardized regression coefficient and then compute the average over the sample of primary states. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 about here

They show that black voters boosted Obama's vote proportion in the primaries by some 8 percent, while liberal voters added almost a 13 percent bump. Young voters added an average of 4 percent to his vote margin. But college graduates gave about 8 percent more support to his opponents. Ironically, the marginal effects of gender benefitted Hillary Clinton his chief rival only minimally, about 1-2 percent. By comparison, the marginal effects of state culture were virtually a wash. In predominantly moralistic states, he only received a net advantage of 2 percent from the interplay of race and culture. In traditionalistic states, the gain in black voters was completely offset by the antipathy of white voters to his candidacy.

The results also show that liberal voters boosted the percentage of white voters who supported him by some 13 percent. But for this group he suffered net losses of 7 percent from voters with college degrees, 11 percent from white voters themselves, and 12 percent from those who felt race was important. Consistent with our contextual hypothesis, the percentage of white voters who supported him was some 11-12 percent less in moralistic states. But this loss was more than offset by the greater willingness of the white population in these states, some 13 percent, to vote for a qualified black candidate.

(5) *That his candidacy was well-equipped to exploit the racial and cultural divide in the 2008 general election.*

A systematic analysis of the racial and cultural divisions in the 2008 presidential election is beyond the scope of this paper (see Pomper 2010; Mellow 2010). But given the perfect storm that developed just before the election, it was probably one that the Democrats could only lose

through sheer stupidity and miscalculation.[5] In fact, Obama was so sure of his election that he had appointed a transition team in late Summer to lay the groundwork for his eventual move into the White House. So we will confine ourselves to a demonstration of the racial divisions in the vote that provided him with his margin of victory in the general election.

In Table 6 we present the results of calculating presidential vote margins by race and ethnicity. These were computed by multiplying the proportion of each racial and ethnic group that voted in the 2008 election by their respective difference in support for Obama and McCain. Though 74 percent of all voters were white, they only gave McCain a net advantage of 12 percent, which yielded a net vote margin of 8.9 percent. By comparison, blacks only constituted 13 percent of all voters. But they accorded Obama a net advantage of 91 percent, which translates into a vote margin of 11.8 percent. If we add in the vote margins contributed by Latino (3.2 percent), Asian (0.5 percent), and other (1.1 percent) voters, the net sum exceeds the overall difference of 7 percent for the entire electorate.

Table 6 about here

We rest our case..

Conclusions

[5]Public dissatisfaction with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan was at an all time high. Public approval of the incumbent president was the lowest since 1952. The stock market had taken its biggest hit since the crash of '29. The biggest banks and investment houses were either failing or teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. The economy was in the worst recession since the Great Depression. Unemployment and home foreclosures were on the rise and showed no signs of abating. And the American people and their elected representatives were in panic mode. The President and Congress quickly enacted an ill-considered $770 billion bailout package just before the presidential debates. The Democrats talked about the need for an $800 billion economic stimulus package. And public opinion polls showed that many Americans were deeply concerned and worried about the future.

The results of this study support several conclusions. The first is that, for better or worse, expansionist immigration policies, permissive border policies, and differential rates of fertility among the races are producing a growing racial and cultural divide in the American electorate. The second is that this growing racial and cultural divide is producing a similar racial and cultural divide in presidential primaries and elections and the two-party system itself. The third conclusion is that our results provide further evidence that as the country becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, a politics of racial and ethnic identity is coming to overshadow and supplant longstanding divisions of social class and religion in American electoral politics. The fourth conclusion is that Barak Obama won the 2008 Democratic nomination and general election not in spite of his race, but because of it. Most whites may have put race behind them based on his appeals for racial unity, but clearly most blacks and members of other racial minorities did not.

Of course, nonwhite voters were not the only key swing group in 2008. Another key voting group in the general election were young people between the ages of 18 and 30. In recent years, this group has become more liberal and Democratic over the issues of war, health care, the economy, and gender equality. In 2008, McCain and the Republicans had nothing to offer this group except ideology and false promises of a better and more secure tomorrow if we stayed the course on indefensible foreign and domestic policies. So in the 2008 general election some 18 percent turned out to vote. And 66 percent voted for Obama vs. 32 percent for McCain, giving him a swing vote of some 6 percent from this group alone. This was not enough to decide the election but enough to put him at the finishing tape.

But while young white voters can conceivably be wooed back into the Republican fold,

the Party currently lacks a vision and strategy to include the growing numbers of nonwhites in the American electorate

What is the meaning of our findings? Perhaps that the nomination and election of Barak Obama may signal not so much a resurgence of progressive politics at the national level as an emerging politics of racial and ethnic nepotism. Demography, after all, is power. And this is the real "power of our democracy" that counts in the long run.

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2008 Democratic Primary/Caucus Electoral Map

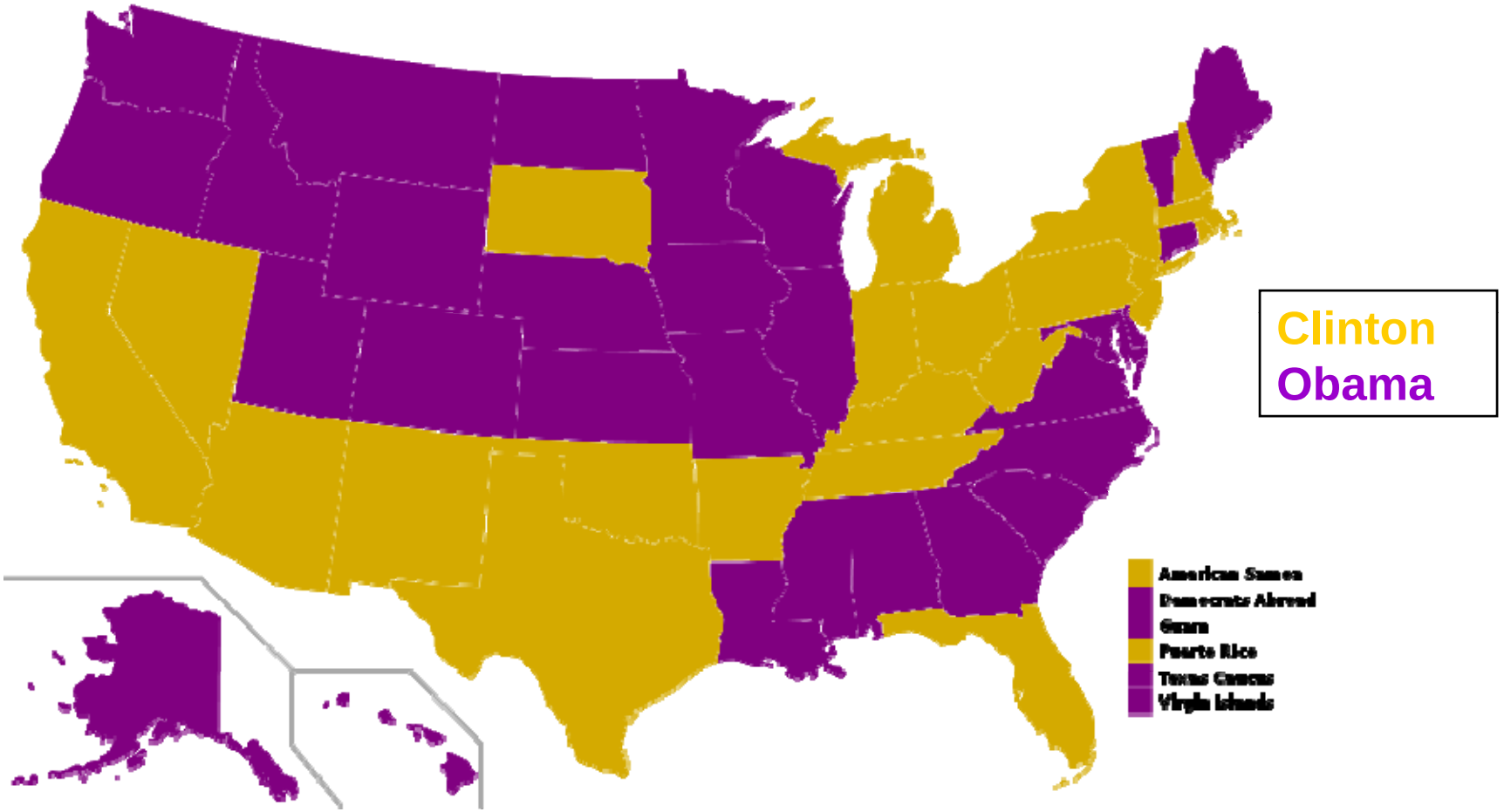

TABLE 1

PROFILE CHARACTERISTICS OF 2008 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY AND GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS

	Primary	General Election
% White	65	74
% Catholic	27	27
% Female	58	56
%<30 Years	14	18
% College Degree	47	44
% >$100K	24	26
% Liberal	47	22
% Race Important	19	9

Source: National and State Primary Exit Polls, CNN

TABLE 2

Intercorrections of Obama Vote with Voter Characteristics

Voter Characteristics	% Obama Vote	% Whites for Obama
% White	-.46**	.13
% Black	.46**	-.41**
% Catholic	-.05	.32*
% Female	.31*	-.14
% < 30 Years	.30*	.15
% College Degree	.15	.47**
% > $100 K	.16	.39**
% Liberal	.19	.59**
% Race Important	-.02	-.70**

*p<.05
**p<.01

TABLE 3

Intercorrelations of Obama Vote with State, Racial and Cultural Characteristics

State Characteristics	% Obama Vote	% Whites for Obama
Racial		
% White	-.28*	.14
% Black	.35*	-.45**
% Latino	-.09	.33*
Cultural		
Moralistic subculture	.18	.46**
Individualistic subculture	.01	.06
Traditionalistic subculture	-.17	-.45**
Nordic subculture	-.02	.13
Mormon subculture	.15	.23
Anglo-French subculture	-.08	.11
Germanic subculture	.04	.07
Heartland subculture	-.34*	-.22
Rurban subculture	.16	.07
Global subculture	-.10	.11
Border subculture	-.33*	-.60**
Blackbelt subculture	.41**	-.35*
Native-American subculture	-.00	.34*
Latino subculture	-.04	.27

TABLE 4

Regression of Obama Vote on Individual Characteristics and State Culture

		Unstandardized Regression Coefficients	
Individual Characteristics		% Obama Vote	% Whites for Obama
% Black		.517*	-
% White		-	-.400***
% Catholic		.103	.224*
% Female		-.389	-.433
% < 30 years		.740	.487
% College Degree		-.495**	-.437*
% > $100 K		.046	-.114
% Liberal		.865**	.914**
% Race Important		-.318	-1.34**
D_M		-41.8*	-51.4*
D_M x % White Population		.588*	.672*
D_T		45.7*	-
D_T x % White Population		-.612*	-
Constant		35.0**	84.9**
	R^2	87%	83%
	N	31	31

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001

TABLE 5

MARGINAL EFFECTS OF VOTER CHARACTERISTICS AND STATE CULTURE ON THE OBAMA VOTE AND WHITE SUPPORT FOR OBAMA

	Marginal Effects	
Variables	Obama Vote	White Support for Obama
Voter Characteristics		
% Black	8.3%	-
% White	-	-11.4%
% Catholics	2.0	4.4
% Female	-1.7	-1.9
% <30 Years	3.9	2.6
% College Degree	-8.1	-7.2
% >$100 K	-0.4	-1.3
% Liberal	12.7	13.4
% Race Important	-2.9	-12.2
State Culture		
D_M	-9.4	-11.6
D_M x % White Pop	11.4	13.0
D_T	19.2	
D_T x % White Pop	-19.1	

TABLE 6

KEY SWING GROUPS IN 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS; BY RACE

Racial Identification	Percent of Electorate	Obama-McCain Vote Difference	Vote Margin
White	74%	-12%	-8.9%
African American	13	91	11.8
Latino	9	36	3.2
Asian	2	27	0.5
Other	3	35	1.1

Source: National Election Exit Poll, CNN